"A Sea That Had No Shores": The Fiction of Violet Trefusis in Relation to V. Sackville-West and V. Woolf

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by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis shows how the notion of androgyny works in the fiction of Violet Trefusis. It also posits her writing in connection to some novels by Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf. Working within a theoretical framework provided by Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytical theory this thesis focusses on and seeks to redress the traditional conceptualization of androgyny providing a notion of the androgyne more in accordance to Woolf's androgynous ideal. The androgyne is understood in this thesis as a carnivalesque figure that disrupts the patriarchal system of hierarchical binary oppositions.

Chapter Two provides a historical framework to Woolf's androgynous ideal. The research focuses, in Chapter Three, on the literary relationship sustained by Sackville-West, Woolf, and Trefusis which produced an, up to now unexplored, intertextual space where Challenge (1919), Orlando (1928) and Broderie Anglaise (1935) are interwoven.

The apprehension of androgyny is an attempt on the part of these three women writers to find a different type of sentence whose construction has been theorised by Kristeva as poetic language. This literary practice is an uncomfortable and dangerous one since it implies the avowal of the maternal semiotic in symbolic language. The difficulties in achieving the symbolic positionality of the subject of poetic language are addressed in Chapter Four in the analysis of Trefusis's Echo (1931) and Woolf's Between the Acts (1941). Chapter Five concentrates on Trefusis's discomforting sense of outsideness. In Pirates at Play (1952) Trefusis explores the dialectics of foreignness. Through the transubstantiation of her self into an armchair in Memoirs of an Armchair (1960) Trefusis acknowledges her abject in an attempt to relax the boundaries that separate self from other. Finally Chapter Six examines the search of a feminine jouissance and its connections to death, or rather undeath, in two novels: Sackville-West's All Passion Spent (1931) and Trefusis's Hunt the Slipper (1937).
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INTRODUCTION

Since the publication of Nicolson's *Portrait of a Marriage* in 1973, Violet Trefusis (1894-1972) has been the subject of five biographies. Trefusis's letters to Vita Sackville-West, published in 1989, are commonly regarded as exceptional writing by critics. However, her literary production has remained unexposed to serious critical enquiry. The only exception is to be found in *The Last Edwardians: An Illustrated History of Violet Trefusis & Alice Keppel*, a catalogue from an exhibition held at The Boston Athenaeum in 1985 and in the Henry Morrison Flagler Museum (Florida) in 1986. This volume includes a chapter by Loma Sage entitled "Violet Trefusis The Writer." In the seven odd pages dedicated to Trefusis "the writer" Sage provides a panoramic view of Trefusis's fictional work. Whilst hinting at the possibilities of Trefusis's novels, Sage seems to be trapped in the tendency, started by Trefusis's biographers, of looking at Trefusis's fictional work as merely autobiographical. Whilst not disregarding the interesting insights that a proper study of Trefusis's *oeuvre* as autobiography would provide, Sage's chapter remains on the surface of Trefusis's texts. Nonetheless, Sage points out a need for further research into Trefusis's work. Talking about Trefusis's defeat at the end of her love affair with Sackville-West she argues:

In the sad event, she'd digested her 'difference' and concealed it. Or partly concealed it. For it *is* there in the writing, in the paradoxes and the mischief and the games. (Sage 1985: 79)

Sage's suggestion has found no echo and the only publication that has since approached Trefusis has been yet another biography: Souhami's *Mrs Keppel and Her Daughter* published in 1996 where, once again, Trefusis's literary work is used as biographical material.

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In view of the critical vacuum surrounding Trefusis's literary production, this thesis sets out to propose a study of her work from a poststructuralist perspective. The aim of this thesis is to show how the notion of androgyny works in the fiction of Violet Trefusis. Trefusis interest in androgyny is not unique or isolated. Many writers contemporary to her such as Mann, Gide, Colette, Gertrude Stein, Hemingway, Forster, Rilke, Djuna Barnes, H.D., Rose Macaulay, to name but a few, showed in different ways a fascination with androgyny. It is not by chance that Eliot introduced in *The Waste Land* (1922) the mythical Tiresias, the man/woman who acquired wisdom through the change of his/her sex. Androgyny is one of the main themes in Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* (1920) and *The Rainbow* (1915) are texts where Lawrence's own perception of the androgynous ideal is explored.

Yet, Trefusis seemed particularly intrigued by Woolf's suggestion in *A Room of One's Own* that the mind of the artist should be androgynous. Within the framework provided by the theoretical work of Julia Kristeva an examination of Woolf's androgynous ideal reveals that far from the traditional notion of the union of complementary halves androgyny can be understood, and it is indeed understood in this thesis, as a hermaphroditic site of struggle that comes out of the transformation of two asymmetrical bodies into one unfinished and unfixed body containing tense traces of the two bodies that constitute it. The idea of wholeness implied in traditional views of androgyny conveys a desire for transcendence whereas what is at stake in the hermaphroditic conceptualization of the androgyne is transformation. Woolf's androgynous ideal is closely related to Kristeva's postulate of the importance of the semiotic mother in the symbolic articulation of a poetic language that participates in the discourse of the carnival. In relation to this different conceptualization of androgyny, the texts discussed in this thesis have been analysed in view of Kristeva's opinion in "From One Identity to an Other" that in analytically approaching a text the critic should:

...search within the signifying phenomenon for the crisis or the unsettling process of meaning and subject rather than for the coherence or identity of either one or a multiplicity of structures. (Kristeva 1981c: 125)
Within this framework the main claim of this thesis is that the so called "delightful" (Jullian and Phillips 1986: 73-81) and "charming" (Sharpe 1981: 96-97) writing of Violet Trefusis presents a textual undercurrent pressing to overflow with devastating consequences. This text has been produced by a mind striving to articulate a perceived "difference" and an imagination receptive to anomalies. Consequently, her writing is a necessary exercise in search of a knowledge that patriarchal discourse cannot provide. The tensions that androgyny posits in Trefusis's texts never resolve and for this reason her fictional work presents a challenge to patriarchal notions of language as univocal and identity as fixed. Trefusis started to write in 1929 when a recovery from the traumatic separation from Sackville-West could be envisioned. This experience of loss made her retreat behind a masking façade and she endeavoured to conquer a world whose social codes of behaviour she profoundly disliked and despised. She never fully belonged to this world. As her multiple biographies repetitively remark, though not aware of the full meaning of the word, she was an "eccentric." The sense of not belonging, her exile, and her constant awareness of being an outsider was a painful reality that she had to endure for most of her life. Paradoxically, through her writing Trefusis enters a carnivalesque world where she can be perceived unmasked, adrift in a "sea that had no shores" (Ovid 1955: 39).

The names of Vita Sackville-West, Virginia Woolf and Violet Trefusis are often connected. Nicolson's *Portrait of a Marriage* is arguably the first publication that fostered this connection. In his edition of Vita's autobiographical account (that discloses the joy, pain, and difficulties of her relationship with Trefusis), Nicolson, contradictorily, displaces the importance of this liaison. He favours, instead, his mother's marital life and, most surprisingly (since Woolf and Sackville-West did not know each other at the time of writing the autobiography in 1920), stresses the importance of the relationship between Sackville-West and Woolf. In this respect he writes:

Her friendship was the most important fact in Vita's life, except Harold, just as Vita's was the most important in Virginia's, except Leonard, and perhaps her sister Vanessa. (Nicolson 1973: 186)
Commenting on *Orlando* he briefly mentions that "Violet, whom Virginia met once, comes into the book as Sasha, a Russian princess, 'like a fox, or an olive tree'" (Nicolson 1990: 190). Nicolson's displacement of Trefusis may be explained by understandable feelings of dread, insecurity, and inability to forgive that she provokes in him. He implicitly acknowledges this fear when explicitly suggesting that: "Vita and Virginia did no damage to each other, and Harold was grateful to her for opening up in Vita 'a rich new vein of ore" (Nicolson 1973: 189).

Yet, the fact remains that in the pages dedicated to the celebration of the friendship between Woolf and Sackville-West, he cannot totally avoid naming Violet Trefusis. From the publication of Nicolson's text onwards the degree to which Trefusis appears in critical studies varies: from a brief footnote to an elaborated explanation of the love-affair between Trefusis and Sackville-West. Most interesting is the work of Suzanne Raitt where the line Trefusis/Sackville-West/Woolf appears in a single sentence: "Sackville-West, Woolf, Trefusis, and Smyth, were all women who acknowledged and acted on lesbian desires" (Raitt 1993: 70). Interestingly, Hermione Lee felt worth mentioning Violet Trefusis in her engrossing biography of Virginia Woolf (Lee 1996). Furthermore, if Woolf is the mind behind the androgynous ideal, Sackville-West was without doubt an inspirational force in Trefusis's interest in the androgyne. For this reason it seems befitting to introduce Violet Trefusis in a triangular relationship with the two writers that, ultimately, provided the *raison d'etre* to her own androgynous ideal. Articulating and giving shape to the fluidity and triangular nature of their relationship is an interest of this thesis. Hence the second part of the title.

In choosing this framework to approach Trefusis's fiction, other interesting areas of debate in relation to this writer such as her connection with French modernism or her autobiographical writing are necessarily only outlined. However, restricting the scope of this thesis is a conscious decision in an attempt to approach Trefusis's fiction in depth rather than breadth in order to show a textual practice that deserves to be rescued from oblivion.
CHAPTER ONE

The Hermaphroditic Dimension Of The Androgyne

The androgynous body and the hermaphrodite

Various periods in history have led to very distinct appreciations of the differences between the androgyne and the hermaphrodite. The OED provides a one-way-only definition by which the term androgyny is said to be interchangeable with hermaphroditism. Yet, hermaphroditism is not interchangeable with androgyny. Pathologized in medicine to designate a being with primary and secondary characteristics of both sexes, the hermaphrodite lacks appeal as an ideal state of being. In this sense, some critics such as Heilbrun, have drawn a line between the androgyne and the hermaphrodite. In her very influential work *Towards a Recognition of Androgyny* (1973), Heilbrun differentiates between an androgynous "ideal" and a hermaphroditic body which she perceives as a freak of nature: "One danger perhaps remains: that androgyny, an ideal, might be confused with hermaphroditism, an anomalous physical condition" (Heilbrun 1973: xii). Heilbrun's pioneering work delineates the path that most scholars in the field have followed; the figures of the androgyne as an ideal and the hermaphrodite as a freak have thus remained unquestioned by most studies on androgyny. Androgyny is an ideal to be pursued. The hermaphrodite is a monster. The terms should not be confused or intermingled. The ideal to be achieved is the capacity of combining male and female characteristics within oneself.

Other critics, such as Neff, do not place importance on Heilbrun's distinction between the two terms and regard them as "synonymous" (Neff 1988: 390). Androgyne and hermaphrodite refer to the same phenomenon: the union of opposite sexes into one being, be it the writer, the text, the reader or all of them at the same time. However, as Neff points out, the concept of an androgynous being is problematic "for there is little consensus on the degree of androcentricism exemplified by such beings" (Neff 1988: 391).
In Androgyny and The Denial of Difference (1992) Weil offers a new approach. Paying attention to the different stories of the androgynous and the hermaphroditic myths in Plato's Symposium and Ovid's Metamorphoses respectively, Weil argues that "although they are often considered synonymous" the terms "androgyne" and "hermaphrodite" "have very different connotations" (Weil 1992: 63). According to Weil, androgyny refers to a balanced state of mind, a wholeness, achieved through the union of symmetrical, oppositely conceived and complementary masculine and feminine traits. The hermaphrodite, on the other hand, evidences "sexed but noncomplementary bodies" (Weil 1992: 63) united through an unsettling process of rejection and wantonness. Weil's sharp distinction between the androgyne and the hermaphrodite is very different from Heilbrun's. Instead of rejecting the hermaphrodite Weil suggests that this figure is a site for "a power struggle between the sexes" (Weil 1992: 19), thus offering a productive realm in the difference it avows, which is further emphasized by the constant tension between the two bodies that form the hermaphrodite's body. As Weil argues:

In Plato the androgyne is said to exist at the beginning, before division and before desire; s/he is a figure of origins, of fullness, and of presence. Ovid's hermaphrodite, on the other hand, results form a transformation; s/he is a figure of the displacement of origin and is the locus of generative play. (Weil 1992: 63)

Weil's insight into myth here is interesting not only because she points to the androcentrism present in traditional studies on androgyny but also because she offers a new approach to the subject by paying attention to the neglected figure of the hermaphrodite. Yet she seems trapped in the polarities that form the basis of patriarchal Western thought. While providing engaging insights into gender, sex and sexuality, she does not question these categories. For instance, in the passage quoted above, Weil establishes the existence of only two sexes as a "physiological fact." However, as numerous medical treatises prove, the hermaphrodite is not only a theoretical construct, or a mythical figure, but also a "physiological fact."

To escape from notions such as sex, heterosexuality and, to a lesser degree, gender roles, is a difficult task. For these notions are often informed by and, in turn, inform the very discourse that tries to undermine them. It can be useful, in this case, to
approach the concept of myth itself. Myth, Barthes argues, is "a message" (Barthes 1993: 109), that "transforms history into nature" (Barthes 1993: 129). In other words, the message of any given myth serves the dominant discourse that produces the myth by naturalising certain notions, such as sex, within patriarchal discourse. The notion thus becomes unproblematic and is taken for granted since it is perceived as natural. In an apparent paradox Barthes suggest that "myth is depoliticized speech" (Barthes 1993: 143). By "depoliticized" he does not mean that myth lacks a political agenda. On the contrary, "depoliticized" is used to refer to the speech act whose function is that of simplification. Far from avoiding a particular subject as problematic, the function of myth is to talk about it, reducing it to its most factual essence and, hence, naturalising it as evident. As Barthes explains:

Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact. (Barthes 1993: 143)

By positing complex notions in the realm of the naturally given, myth provides a perception of "reality" devoid of contradiction or paradox because myth makes apparent the evident. It makes it almost impossible to go beyond the visible. It is a very difficult task to break free from myth for there is always a danger of falling prey to it. However, a resistance to myth can be found in the silences of discourse (Barthes 1993: 135).

Barthes's notion of myth provides a new tool with which to approach Weil's interesting and potentially productive distinction between androgyne and hermaphrodite. Within these two frameworks, it is worth studying the myths of the androgyne and the hermaphrodite, attending not only to what is explicitly stated but also to what is revealed in the silences of discourse.

The Tale of the Androgyne

The most ancient literary source normally alluded to in relation to the androgyne is Aristophanes' speech in Plato's Symposium. According to Aristophanes' narration, at the beginning of time there were three different sexes: masculine, androgyne and feminine:
originally it was different from what it is now. In the first place there were three sexes, not, as with us, two, male and female; the third partook of the nature of both the others and has vanished, though its name survives. (Plato 1951: 59)

These three sexes possessed a completeness suggested by the spherical shape of their bodies:

each human being was a rounded whole, with double back and flanks forming a complete circle; it had four hands and an equal number of legs, and two identically similar faces upon a circular neck, with one head common to both the faces, which were turned in opposite directions. It had four ears and two organs of generation and everything else to correspond. (Plato 1951: 59)

In their attempt to take Heaven from the gods, human beings were defeated and Zeus cut each into half aiming to make them weaker and more profitable, as there would be double the number of human beings to worship the gods. After cutting the "third" sex in half, the androgyne disappeared, seemingly split into its two components: one male and one female. Hence, inverse to the increase in the number of human beings, there was a reduction of the number of sexes. Zeus entreated Apollo to heal the wounds. Their faces were turned round so that they would behave better in the future by having the evidence of their punishment in front of each other.

The consequences of this split into two beings were uncertain even for the gods. As soon as the pair saw each other they embraced in an attempt to reunite in the bodily wholeness of their previous state: "Man's [sic] original body having been thus cut in two, each half yearned for the half from which it had been severed" (Plato 1951: 61). Aristophanes implies that this is how sexual desire in human beings was born. Nonetheless, desire was not alien to these beings for it was a desire to take Heaven from the gods that prompted their punishment in the first place. Therefore the idea that these primeval human beings held an original harmonious wholeness is questioned: their desire to be gods implies, in Lacanian terms, a lack. The idea of original wholeness is then reduced and circumscribed to the circular-shaped bodies of these beings.

The craving for each other, the desire to find one's other half, was so strong that, unable to do anything else but embrace, these beings were perishing from sadness caused by the impossibility of fulfilling their desire. As soon as one half of the couple
died, the remaining half would embrace another severed being. Obviously, this state of affairs did not please Zeus, for instead of having more human beings there were fewer and fewer. Consequently, Zeus moved their sexual organs, hitherto placed on the sides of their bodies, to the front, making possible the physical union of their bodies and, at the same time, allowing "reproduction to take place by the intercourse of the male with the female" (Plato 1951: 61-62).

It is at this point in mythical creation that the naturalization of the apparatus that sustains patriarchy is being shaped. A shift has taken place in the narrative. From the moment that the sexual organs are said to be placed to the front, the aim of the severed beings no longer seems to be the achievement of primeval wholeness. Aristophanes confers on them a role within the social and state apparatus. Paying attention to the origin of these creatures, Aristophanes articulates his distinction between bodily love and spiritual love. Corporeal love has its origins in the androgyne, whereas spiritual love has its origins in the male original beings, in a hierarchical categorisation of love that presupposes the supremacy of the spiritual over the bodily:

Those men who are halves of a being of the common sex, which was called, as I told you, hermaphrodite [sic], are lovers of women, and most adulterers come from this class, as also do women who are mad about men and sexually promiscuous. Women who are halves of a female whole direct their affections towards women and pay little attention to men; Lesbians [sic] belong to this category. But those who are halves of a male whole pursue males (....) when they reach maturity, engage in public life. (Plato 1951: 62, my emphasis)

Reproduction by means of sexual intercourse undoubtedly marked a turning point in the relationship between the "newly born" sexes. It is uncertain whether those beings who proceeded from the original male and female-sex would participate in this reproduction. Accordingly, Aristophanes' speech and his line of thought lead to speculation as to whether the reason for heterosexuality having become common practice is to be found in the fact that those beings who descended from the androgyne were conferred the power of physical reproduction and, thus, outnumbered the other two original sexes. Aristophanes comments no further on this fundamental point. However, later on in the Symposium the subject of reproduction is brought up in the dialectic between Socrates and Diotima.
As narrated by Socrates, the subject arises in connection with Love. Once it is agreed that Love "is desire for the perpetual possession of the good", Diotima explains that the only action that "deserves the name of love" is "procreation in what is beautiful, and such procreation can be either physical or spiritual" (Plato 1951: 86). Human beings desire not only to possess the good, but to possess it permanently. Therefore, procreation is a natural object of Love. Yet, the discussion carries on trying to establish the exact meaning of the word "procreation." According to Diotima, "procreation" endowes the mortal creature, "with a touch of immortality" (Plato 1951: 87). There is a need to perpetuate, to procreate, that is, to be immortal. However, the immortality Diotima is talking about is not only physical, but also spiritual. Better still, the physical immortality is merely a precondition for the immortality of the soul.

The hierarchical nature of love has already been introduced in Aristophanes' speech. Diotima argues for the existence of three different types of lover: the lover of physical beauty, the lover of spiritual beauty even if physical beauty is absent, and the lover of the Form of Beauty. The third type is the least common type, although it is the most desirable. The philosopher belongs to this type. However, the fact remains that, as Walter Hamilton argues in the Introduction to the Penguin edition of the Symposium, women are incapable of procreation beyond the physical level:

spiritual parenthood, with very rare exceptions, is possible only for men. In spite of the emphasis laid on the equality of the sexes in the ideal state of the Republic he [Plato] presumably believed that, as things are, women are incapable of creative activity above the physical level. (Plato 1951: 23)

Diotima is surely one of these "rare exceptions". Yet, it is highly significant that from all the characters that appear in the Symposium, she is the only fictional one. Devoid of the possibility of both physical and spiritual parenthood, the role of those female human being descendants of the primeval female sex appears uncertain to say the least. Yet these women seem to be a disturbing type, judging from the brief and rapid comment they inspire in Aristophanes: "Women who are halves of a female whole direct their affections towards women and pay little attention to men; Lesbians belong to this category." The need to interpose "men" in his account, the difficulty he has in recognising that these women do not pay attention to men, and the total silence that
follows these words signal an uneasiness in Aristophanes' speech. More importantly, these facts evidence the phallocentric connotations of Aristophanes's narration. In this sense, the image of the severed beings provided by Aristophanes' account is an illusory one. They are not two identical halves bisected because they were never symmetrical. As Jane Gallop explains, "symmetry" comes from the Greek:

*summetros* - "of like measure"; from *sun* - "like, same", and *metron* - "measure". Symmetry is appropriating two things to like measure, measure by the same standard. (Gallop 1982: 57)

Weil has pointed out that the story of Aristophanes is not the story of the origin of sexual difference (Weil 1992: 17). Yet, the relocation of the genitalia to the front is a determining act because it highlights the asymmetry of the primeval beings. By being measured differently the naturalization of sex takes place together with the sublimation of the phallus. It is "natural" to have a penis (or the possibility of experiencing one through sexual intercourse). The androgynous being is disguised in a compulsory heterosexuality that requires the presence of a penis. In this economy, female homosexuality "naturally" vanishes and with it female sexuality and the female sex.

The idea of the wholeness which the three original sexes had before the division has survived only in relation to the androgyne, the sex that, according to Aristophanes, disappeared after the punishment. It is worth commenting again that, presumably, reproduction through sexual intercourse takes place among the descendants of the primeval androgyne. In this sense, the idea of wholeness perpetuates a heterosexual system whose aim is reproduction. Therefore, as Butler explains, the categories of "male" and "female" implicit in this wholeness "are the naturalized terms that keep [heterosexuality] concealed and, hence, protected from a radical critique" (Butler 1990: 111). Furthermore, often equated with Plato's own philosophical thought and, thus, seen as a Platonic ideal, the androgyne has permeated patriarchal discourse in Western societies devoid of its corporeal embodiment and is sublimated to a spiritual realm keeping at bay, in this manner, the ancestral memory of sexual difference. The idea of wholeness is, as Cixous argues: "a fantasy of a complete being, which replaces the fear of castration and veils sexual difference" (Cixous 1986: 84). Actually, Aristophanes'
account in the *Symposium* not only naturalizes the notion of two opposed and complementary sexes but it also makes natural the foundational "hierarchisation" of the logocentric system of patriarchal discourse. This system has placed the feminine always on the negative side of the pair of opposites to such an extent that, as suggested by Cixous:

> Philosophy is constructed on the premise of woman's abasement. Subordination of the feminine to the masculine order, which gives the appearance of being the condition for the machinery's functioning. (Cixous 1986: 65)

Ultimately, the myth of the androgyne narrated by Aristophanes is the foundation of what Foucault has seen as the "stubbornness" in modern Western societies to find "a 'true sex'" (Foucault 1980: vii). "True sex" and the gender ascribed to it is so ingrained in Western culture that it "appears to 'qualify' bodies as human bodies" (Butler 1990: 111). For this reason, in Foucault's viewpoint, from the Nineteenth Century onwards a change took place so that doctors were only concerned with "deciphering the true sex that was hidden beneath ambiguous appearances" (Foucault 1980: viii). The restoration of bodies to their human condition has become the objective of scientific discourse because:

> Those bodily figures who do not fit into either body fall outside the human, indeed, constitute the domain of the dehumanized and the abject against which the human itself is constituted. (Butler 1990: 111)

The figure of the hermaphrodite immediately comes to mind as a clear referent for one of "those bodily figures who do not fit into either gender." At this point it is worth exploring a different reading of the myth of the androgyne provided by literature: the tale of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

*The Story of the Fountain Salmacis*

Herculine Barbain, an eighteenth century hermaphrodite legally registered at birth as female and raised according to those days' views as a woman, was legally obliged in her/his early twenties to change her/his register and civil status to male. In her/his memoirs, s/he refers to Ovid's *Metamorphosis* as a literary "discovery [that] had a special bearing on my case" (Foucault 1980: 18).
The story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, told by Alcithoe, daughter of Minyas, accounts for the notorious reputation of the fountain Salmacis whose "enervating waters weaken and soften the limbs they touch." (Ovid 1955:110).

The nymph Salmacis preferred to spend her days looking at herself in the waters of her pond and combing her hair rather than going with her sisters and Diana to hunt. Having set off from the parental home Hermaphroditus, son of Hermes and Aphrodite, arrived in the course of his journey at Salmacis' pond. The place seemed to him so beautiful that he decided to spend some time there. Salmacis, on her return from a brief absence, was immediately attracted by the beauty of Hermaphroditus and a desire to possess him arose in her. Weil has seen this desire as feminine, due to Salmacis' lack of interest in the hunting tools used by Diana and her sisters which she considers as phallic symbols: "Having no interest in javelins, quivers, or other phallic instruments, Salmacis's gaze points toward an other, feminine eroticism" (Weil 1992: 19).

Despite Salmacis's seemingly untrained skills as a hunter Ovid uses language full of hunting motives to represent her. Anxious as she was to approach him "she did not do so until she had composed herself" (Ovid 1955: 111). When her first attempt failed she cunningly recoiled waiting for a better opportunity:

she kept glancing back till, slipping into a thick clump of bushes, she hid there, kneeling on the ground. (...) She could scarcely bear to wait, or to defer the joys which she anticipated. (Ovid 1955:112)

When Salmacis thought Hermaphroditus was most vulnerable she attacked and like "a squid which holds fast the prey," she "twined around him" and she prayed the gods to grant her pleasure by being forever united to him:

"You may fight, you rogue, but you will not escape. May the gods grant me this, may no time to come ever separate him from me, or me from him!" Her prayers found favour with the gods: for, as they lay together, their bodies were united and from being two persons they became one. (Ovid 1955: 112)

Ovid's metaphorical use of language serves to impose a phallic dimension upon Salmacis's act. Yet, as Weil has pointed out: "Not penis envy, but a delight with herself precedes her desire to possess Hermaphroditus" (Weil 1992: 19). Ambushed, Hermaphroditus succumbed to the attack and, resentful, he cursed "man" and wished that every man that drinks from the pond would become "half a man".
"O my father, and my mother, grant this prayer to your son, who owes his name to you both: if any man enter this pool, may he depart hence no more than half a man, may he suddenly grow weak and effeminate at the touch of these waters." (Ovid 1955: 113)

Reversing direction in respect of Aristophanes's tale, Ovid's story departs from a notion of separation. This change of direction is very interesting, for it provides a different point of departure from which to study the myth of the androgyne. As a matter of fact Ovid's story seems to answer a question posed by Aristophanes in the Symposium:

Suppose Hephaestus with his tools were to visit them [the lovers] as they lie together, and stand over them and ask: "What is it, mortals, that you hope to gain from one another? Suppose too that when they could not answer he repeated his question in these terms: "Is the object of your desire to be always together as much as possible, and never to be separated from one another day or night? If that is what you want, I am ready to melt and weld you together, so that, instead of two, you shall be one flesh. (Plato 1951: 63-64)

The outcome of this union, as imagined by Ovid, would have greatly surprised Aristophanes. The flesh resulting from the metamorphoses granted by the gods is far from being a complete harmonious body. Instead, the hermaphrodite represents not the union of two halves craving to be resolved within one body but two undivided bodies antagonistically coexisting within one body. The hermaphroditic body is a metaphor for a body in conflict whose very being lives out the struggle of two different bodies:

Atlas' descendant [Hermaphroditus] resisted stubbornly, and refused the nymph the pleasure she hoped for; but she persisted, clinging to him, her whole body pressed against his. (Ovid 1955: 112)

Despite being both man and woman Hermaphroditus keeps his name, whereas Salmacis seems to disappear within Hermaphroditus's body. However, Hermaphroditus's resentful curse explicitly denotes the presence of Salmacis. The story of Salmacis enacts patriarchal fear of what is perceived as the castrating power of women's sexual desire. Moreover, Salmacis's act blurs the boundaries that shape the body. As Douglas (1984) suggests these boundaries are the expression of any bound system such as the patriarchal system of oppositions. Safeguarding the boundaries is paramount to the patriarchal order, for these borders mean a separation between natural and unnatural, clean and polluted and, ultimately, they distinguish the polarities that form the basis of this
system. Whereas the union of the bodies implied in Aristophanes's story is sanctioned by the sublimation of the wholeness to be achieved, Salmacis's trespassing of the borderline that delimits both her body and Hermaphroditus's body is a disrupting and threatening act because it brings about a polluted body where clear sexual and gender distinctions blur. The fact that Hermaphroditus's spell is expelled from his/her body towards the waters, the fountain named Salmacis, implies an attempt in the narrative to restore separation. Hermaphroditus views Salmacis' presence as abject, in the Kristevan sense of the word,¹ and effectively establishes the alien, that is, the female sex and feminine sexuality vanquished in Aristophanes's account. The prevalence of the name Hermaphroditus in the hermaphroditic being resulting from Salmacis's fulfilment of her desire is a fantasy that compensates patriarchy for the lack experienced when its boundaries are being disrupted. As in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the monster lives in spite of the repentant mind of the creator (in this case Ovid's mind). The hermaphrodite is the beast of the androgyne and for this reason it has been partially silenced in patriarchal discourse - with the exception of botanical and scientific discourses (the latter treating it as a pathology). The feeling of isolation expressed in Herculine Barbain's memoirs accounts for such patriarchal repression of the hermaphrodite:

> What remains to me then? Nothing. Cold solitude, dark isolation! Oh! To live alone, always alone, in the midst of the crowd that surrounds me, without a word of love ever coming to gladden my soul, without a friendly hand reaching out to me! What a terrible, nameless punishment! (Foucault 1980: 92)

The "natural" established in Ovid's tale could be best termed as "negative". In contrast to Aristophanes's tale where the "natural" is more common and visible, Ovid's story is naturalising that which should be perceived as denaturalized. This is achieved through the monstrosity of a hermaphroditic figure born out of feminine sexual desire. The challenging possibilities revealed by the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus are restricted by a story line that appears only to account for the "abnormality" of the hermaphrodite. Withholding Salmacis's identity means that, ultimately, she is being

¹ Kristeva's theory on abjection will be discussed at large in Chapters Five and Six of this thesis.
punished for daring to fulfil a sexual desire; however, the silencing of Salmacis speaks of the fears entertained by patriarchy.

Hence, if as Weil notes, "for Aristophanes androgyne precedes the fall," the hermaphrodite "embodies the fallen state" (Weil 1992: 18). Indeed, the story of Salmacis reverses completely the idea of wholeness resulting from the union of opposites. The hermaphrodite is not the union of two halves into one. S/he is the emergence of one body who contains two bodies, each of them wholly present in her/his difference. The hermaphrodite neither represents harmony nor does it present a non-problematic union of male and female characteristics. The hermaphrodite refuses to be fixed in meaning, because of its being the embodiment of an unfinished body in constant struggle. In this sense, the hermaphrodite provides the body for what Cixous' has called "the other bisexuality". In an attempt to "reassert the value of bisexuality" (Cixous 1986: 84) she explores and discusses the concept of bisexuality. Hence she distinguishes, as has been pointed out, between bisexuality as it exists within patriarchal discourse and "the other bisexuality". Patriarchal bisexuality, Cixous suggests, implies the effacement of the possible recognition of the other within the self by neutralising any difference. However, Cixous' alignment of this bisexuality with Ovid's story is misleading:

Ovid's Hermaphroditic, less bisexual than asexual, not made up of two genders but of two halves. Hence, a fantasy of unity. Two within one, and not even two wholes. (Cixous 1986: 84)

In this statement Cixous is mistakenly blending the two narratives that have been the concern of this chapter. In effect, she seems to be referring to Aristophanes's tale in the Symposion. It is important to point out Cixous' misreading of Ovid's story because it is precisely the hermaphrodite figure that embodies Cixous' vision of "the other bisexuality":

the one with which every subject, who is not shut up inside the spurious Phallocentric Performing Theater, sets up his or her erotic universe. Bisexuality - that is to say the location within oneself of the presence of both sexes, evident and insistent in different ways according to the individual, the nonexclusion of difference or of a sex, and starting with this "permission" one gives oneself, the multiplication of the effects of desire's inscription on every part of the body and the other body. (Cixous 1986: 84-85)
Whereas the androgyne refers to the sublimation of that masculine component able to incorporate feminine traits into its maleness leaving power relations unchanged, the hermaphrodite, far from being an "asexual" figure, refers to difference through the acknowledgement of the two bodies it evinces. It refers to a fluidity or non-fixity of meaning through the struggle these two bodies enact. Furthermore, the figure of the hermaphrodite with his/her silences and contradictions seems a rather attractive figure in so far as it provides a domain where a self-consciously denaturalized position can be achieved. As Butler has suggested, the usefulness of this position resides in the fact that it gives us a way of understanding the taken-for-granted world of sexual categorization as a constructed one, indeed, as one that might well be constructed differently. (Butler 1990: 110)

The figure of the hermaphrodite is seen as a threat to patriarchal discourse because it challenges a clear borderline between the sexes. It makes patriarchy shift grounds. Hence it has been silenced. Once incorporated into the dominant discourse, the hermaphrodite vanished, disguised in the garments of the androgyne. The horror provoked by the hermaphroditic body has its roots in its very different nature. The hermaphroditic body is unfinished because it is one and the other simultaneously. It is an uncomfortable figure. The hermaphroditic body provides a different dimension to the androgynous ideal in that it works as a reminder of the existence of an "other" within ourselves. In this sense, an hermaphroditic androgynous ideal "destabilizes the very distinctions between the natural and the artificial, depth and surface, inner and outer through which discourse about genders almost always operates" (Butler 1990: viii).

In a letter written in May 1927 to Vanessa Bell, Virginia Woolf, talking about Duncan Grant, commented that what she liked most about him was his "hermaphroditic, androgynous mind, as it is the mind of all great artists" (Spalding 1991: 110). By juxtaposing the adjectives "hermaphroditic" and "androgynous" Woolf was implying similitude between the terms. Yet, this juxtaposition posits an unconscious doubt as to whether the terms are synonymous. In a sense, the meaning of the one appears clearer by its proximity to the other. Perhaps unable to decide which adjective better explained her
perception of Grant's mind, Woolf opted for using both. Yet the doubt remained, and in *A Room Of One's Own* (1929) Woolf explored the androgynous mind and its implications for women's artistic creation. In this manner she provided the first feminist theoretical framework for an androgynous ideal.

**The androgynous mind**

One of the most outstanding and shocking ideas Woolf presented in *A Room of One's Own* was that the ideal state of mind in which to produce art is an androgynous one:

> If one is a man, still the woman part of his brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. (...) Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, anymore than a mind that is purely feminine. (Woolf 1977: 106)

At first sight, Woolf's reference to the androgyne is based upon what she seems to perceive as the observable existence of two sexes in nature. She wondered:

> whether there [were] two sexes in the mind corresponding to the two sexes in the body, and whether they also require to be united in order to get complete satisfaction and happiness. (Woolf 1977: 106)

On the surface, this statement shows the ambivalence and difficulty Woolf encountered in trying to explore a possible point of departure for women in relation to their creative activity.

The different possible readings of Woolf's androgynous ideal has led to a major debate on the subject, especially since the renewed interest in androgyny among feminist critics of the Seventies. Nancy Topping Bazin (1973) and Carolyn Heilbrun (1973) read the androgynous ideal proposed by Woolf as the ideal union of opposite characteristics (considered either male or female). They argue that this Jungian vision of the union of opposites would be politically effective since the recognition of the androgyne in society would erase the inequalities between the sexes by making them equal through their similarities. The proposal is, then, to achieve a society where the sexes would be equal. The problem of this "asexual" paradigm is that it is utopian since it does not account for the power relations that sustain society. As long as there are different sexes there will be a reflection of the difference in the social structure. Feminist scholars have rejected the
political effectiveness of this ideal since it rests on the assumption of non-problematic
definitions of masculinity and femininity. Therefore, an ideal equality achieved through
a utopian asexual society leaves several questions unanswered, the most prominently
worrying aspect from a feminist perspective being, perhaps, an unclear definition of the
paradigm that is to sustain this equality. The danger of this proposition is that there is a
risk of finding similarities between the sexes within a patriarchal paradigm. In other
words, the supposed freedom brought about through Bazin's and Heilbrun's androgynous
dream is untenable politically because the elementary components of the androgyne are
left unchallenged. As Lokke has pointed out:


androgyny is a problematical concept, particularly because it often comes
to mean a union of neatly complementary characteristics that are stereotypically
masculine and feminine, an idealized synthesis of opposites that leaves political
or power relations essentially unchanged. (Lokke 1992: 235)

A very different position was taken by many other feminist critics of the period
who rejected the notion of the androgyne as a political or aesthetic tool altogether. Some
critics even saw in Woolf's avowal of the androgyne, a deceptive illusion that served to
make her desert the feminist struggle taking place during her life-time. Among these
critics, Elaine Showalter (1977) and Kate Millet (1973) strongly criticise the role of a
feminist model assigned to Woolf because, according to them, Woolf's writing does not
portray strong images of women. Showalter reads Woolf's androgyny as "the myth that
helped her evade confrontation with her own painful femaleness and enabled her to
choke and repress her anger and ambition" (Showalter 1978: 264). Hence, Showalter
understands Woolf's androgyny as a form of escapism that helped Woolf to avoid
confrontation with reality and concludes: "we should not confuse flight with liberation"
(Showalter 1978: 280). Showalter does not consider the language and structure of
Woolf's essay as being instrumental to Woolf's feminist arguments. However, as Toril
Moi has pointed out: "remaining detached from the narrative strategies of Room is
equivalent to not reading it at all" (Moi 1988: 3).

Indeed, the structure and language of the essay reveals Woolf's profound concern
with an approach to language that could accommodate what she perceived as a different,
but equally valid, point of reference for women. In this respect, Jones (1984) has
perceived in the structure of *A Room of One's Own* an example of how to achieve an androgynous text. She points out that two structures run parallel: "the 'story' Woolf tells [and] (...) the formal rhetorical argument itself" (Jones 1984: 229). According to Jones, rhetoric is a product of a masculine mind because it is a product of logic and because it restricts the imagination. Conversely, the story created by Woolf to explain how she has arrived at her conviction is rampant, and diffuse. This story, in Jones's view, is the product of a feminine mind. Accordingly, Jones concludes, the text is androgynous because in it, a masculine and a feminine mode of expression mingle into a whole: "Woolf creates a new form, a synthesis of disparate modes of discourse and of thought into an artistic whole" (Jones 1984: 231). This concept of an androgynous text moves the Hegelian synthesis of supposedly masculine and feminine characteristics from the individual to the text but it nevertheless assumes, once again, a stereotypical interpretation of masculine and feminine traits. She, accordingly, argues that Woolf "is calling for an androgynous artistic vision which encompasses both sexes but is itself unconscious of either sex" (Jones 1984: 234). However, as Jones herself has suggested: "That men and women perceive the world differently, pursue knowledge differently, and create art differently is essential to Woolf's vision" (Jones 1984: 233). Hence, the argument that Woolf is demanding a universal, neutral type of writing that will emerge from an androgynous artistic creation appears a fragile one. Indeed, Woolf was very cautious in avoiding this kind of statement and took great trouble to avoid giving the impression that she was advocating a reduction through the addition of the sexes. As she pointed out: "if two sexes are quite inadequate, considering the vastness and variety of the world, how should we manage with one only?" (Woolf 1977: 95).

By paying close attention to the structure and language of *A Room of One's Own* certain ambiguities and even some contradictions can be rendered evident. As Minow-Pinkney argues, Woolf is implying that "a writer must be androgynous, sexually unconscious" while, at the same time, she is suggesting that "a woman writer must find or forge the woman's sentence" (Minow-Pinkney 1987: 8). In apparent paradox Woolf is emphasising the importance of *women* writers and the need to forget they are women in order to write. This apparent contradiction hints at the complexity of Woolf's
androgynous ideal. Furthermore, uncertainties and hesitations highlight the novelty of her argument, playing an important role in the text when pushed to the point of confusion and irony. As Gilbert and Gubar have pointed out, in a period when so many ideas were new and so many concepts, especially those addressing gender identity, were being challenged, "the new was often literally and literarily unspeakable, even by those who yearned to bring it into being" (Gilbert and Gubar 1989: xv).

Woolf's use of sexual imagery in her articulation of the androgynous mind has been strongly criticised. Throughout the pages of A Room Of One's Own she displays several representations of the androgyne that have led to accusations that she avows compulsory heterosexuality. It has been shown in the beginning of this section that Woolf advocates the need for "intercourse" between woman and man in order to create art. A further example of her sexual imagery appears in the form of marriage:

Some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the art of creation can be accomplished. Some marriage of opposites has to be consummated. (Woolf 1977: 112)

Perhaps the most notorious image is the representation of the androgynous ideal through the image of a man and a woman leaving in a taxi (Woolf 1977: 104-105) perceived as disappointing (Lokke 1992: 235) by many feminist critics. Showalter has seen in this imagery the interference of the "Angel in the House" in censoring Woolf's text: "Woolf is aware that androgyny is another form of repression, or at best, self discipline" (Showalter 1978: 288). Although her argument is completely different from Showalter's, Marcus has also noticed censorship. In Marcus's opinion, the image of a couple being carried away in a taxi is a self-imposed admonition of the fact that Woolf's journey to lesbianism and a world of women's community is a fantastic one:

Frankly, every woman I know sees this passage as Woolf's mnemonic device to force herself out of her feminist and lesbian fantasy world, back to a realisation of 'heterosexuality makes the world go round.' (...) It is a reminder to herself that the male reader is out there, and she placates him with this mysterious heterosexual romance. (Marcus 1981: 159)

Yet Woolf's continuous reference to a hypothetical male audience throughout the text brings into question Marcus's supposition, for one wonders why Woolf should use this oblique manner of warning herself of the existence of a male audience when she is
specifically referring to this repeatedly in the essay. Providing an answer is certainly not easy. It is equally difficult to account for Woolf’s confusing imagery in *A Room of One’s Own* which clearly seems to point to Plato’s *Symposium*. Nevertheless, it is worth considering Woolf’s text within its historical framework. The scientific discourse of her time, as shown in Chapter Two, laid the foundations of the new science of sexology with the writings of Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, and Magnus Hirschfeld among others. Woolf describes the discourse of the time as "stridently sex-conscious" (Woolf 1977: 107). It is in these scientific texts that a reshaping of the androgyne takes place. If, as has been discussed above, the androgyne as envisioned by Aristophanes lays the foundation of compulsory heterosexuality and the effacement of the female sex, the scientific discourse of late Nineteenth Century and early Twentieth Century posits a figure closely related to homosexuality, starting in Ulrich and his theory of the "third sex."

On reading the text, the psycho-analytical theories propounded by Freud should be taken into account. The introduction of an abstract and untraditional notion through such traditional imagery as marriage and heterosexual coupling is paradoxical, if not contradictory. However, it seems that Woolf wishes to shock the reader so as to put her on her guard with regard to sexuality and gender, rather than fortifying traditional forms of marriage and sexual behaviour. This argument is reinforced by Woolf’s concern with the concept of women’s sexuality and its immediate connection with women’s reproductive role:

Mr John Langdon Davies warns women "that when children cease to be altogether desirable, women cease to be altogether necessary". I hope you will make a note of it. (Woolf 1977: 120)

Furthermore, just a few lines above this statement she declares: "The truth is, I often like women." (Woolf 1977: 120), an assertion that permits the argument that the androgyne Woolf had in mind is closer to the scientific discourse of her period than to Aristophanes’s account. Taking all these arguments together, it seems plausible to cast a shadow of doubt upon the inference that Woolf advocates heterosexuality. Furthermore, considering her doubts in choosing the adjectives "hermaphroditic" or "androgynous" in
her description of Grant's artistic mind and her claim that "two sexes are quite inadequate", it is possible to align Woolf's formulation of the androgyne to the hermaphrodite figure discussed above. In effect, the images used by Woolf frame what Lokke has called "Woolf's highly untraditional notion of Vive la différence!" (Lokke 1992: 236). This notion is very important because an ideology of difference serves as a challenge to a patriarchal ideology of sameness. Yet, the question remains as to just what Woolf means by "difference" and how this in turn relates to women's writing.

The originality of Woolf's essay is that, maybe for the first time, it provides a theoretical framework for the androgynous ideal in connection with women rather than with men. A connection can be seen between Woolf's search for a woman's sentence and her proposal of an androgynous mind. But she did not resolve the paradox and the problem remains. The debate started by Woolf in the Twenties was re-appropriated by some feminists of the Seventies and it has continued to be a controversial subject in the Nineties. A testimony of the on-going debate is Cixous's interest in re-defining, as we have seen in the first section of this chapter, the traditional notion of bisexuality. Significantly, Cixous links her "other bisexuality" with her notion of "écriture feminine."

If, as Barrett suggests, A Room Of One's Own, "offer[s] us (...) a pertinent insistence on the material conditions which have structured women's consciousness" (Barrett 1979: 36) it is precisely how to liberate and expand that very consciousness that informs the deeper argument of the essay:

if one is a woman one is often surprised by a sudden splitting off of consciousness (...) Clearly the mind is always altering its focus, and bringing the world into different perspectives. But some of these states of mind seem, even if adopted spontaneously, to be less comfortable than others. In order to keep oneself continuing in them one is unconsciously holding something back, and gradually the repression becomes an effort. But there may be some state of mind in which one could continue without effort because nothing is required to be held back. (Woolf 1977: 105)

This ideal state of mind for creating art "is androgynous" (Woolf 1977: 106). Explicitly alluding to Freud's theory of the unconscious, Woolf is, in this passage, exposing the social constraints implicitly at work in the formation of womanhood.
In "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex" (1924) Freud implied the concept of a slippery path to the development of a normal female subjectivity "she slips - along the line of a symbolic equation, one might say - from the penis to a baby" (Freud: 1991f: 321). Freud found the development to "normal" femininity extremely problematic. He based his argument upon the axiom "Anatomy is Destiny" (Freud 1991f: 320), relating the development towards a normal femininity to the different anatomies of the sexes. In "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" (1925), he explains how the little girl experiences what he called "penis envy" because of the realisation that her clitoris, that had been taken before for a penis, is not like the real penis of her brother. This penis envy drives her to the castration complex, since she perceives that she is not perfect because she has been castrated. Next, she enters the Oedipus complex that is repressed when the girl takes the father as a love-object and wants a baby by him. The mother becomes the object of her jealousy and is held responsible for the girl's lack of a penis. The important difference is that the boy's fear of castration leads him to the resolution of the Oedipus complex by the promise of becoming like the father in the future (which implies the formation of a strong super-ego). The girl's super-ego is less powerful because there is no object of identification and, therefore, she will have less social and cultural activity:

In girls the motive for the demolition of the Oedipus complex is lacking. (...) Their super-ego is never so inexorable, so impersonal, so independent of its emotional origins as we require it to be in men. Character-traits (...) brought up against women - that they show less sense of justice than men, that they are less ready to submit to the great exigencies of life, that they are more often influenced in their judgements by feelings of affection or hostility - all these would be amply accounted for by the modification in the formation of their super-ego. (Freud 1991g: 342)

However, Freud acknowledged that the construction of pure masculinity or femininity is theoretical only: "pure masculinity and femininity remain theoretical constructions of uncertain content" (Freud 1991g: 342). According to him, human beings, due to their primal bisexual disposition, often combine both masculine and feminine characteristics.
Freud established the pattern by which, going backwards from adulthood to childhood, he was able to prove the importance of the concept of bisexuality in the psychic development of an individual. As Juliet Mitchell puts it:

In changing direction, the concept of bisexuality has moved from being a simple notion, a postulate of a sort of infantile unisex, to being a complex notion of the oscillations and imbalance of the person's mental androgyny. (Mitchell 1974: 51)

This seems to be the point of departure for Woolf's androgynous ideal. Woolf was entirely familiar with Freud's theory of the unconscious, the psychological development of the mind and the importance of unconscious drives and desires over conscious behaviour and the individual's experience of reality.

This recording of reality is central to Woolf's vision of artistic creation. However, because reality is a complex notion Woolf believes that it is to be grasped only in epiphanic moments:

What is meant by "reality"? It would seem to be something very erratic, very undependable - now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper in the street, now a daffodil in the sun. It lights up a group in a room and stamps some casual saying. It overwhelms one walking home beneath the stars and makes the silent world more real than the world of speech - and then there it is again in an omnibus in the uproar of Piccadilly. Sometimes, too, it seems to dwell in shapes too far away for us to discern what their nature is. (Woolf 1977: 118)

A writer should be able to seize this "reality": "It is his business to find it and collect it and communicate it to the rest of us" (Woolf 1977: 119). It is the duty of the writer to discern reality from appearance. A piece of writing will survive if the writer is able to portray this reality into words. It is in order to depict reality that the mind has to cease to be conscious of the writer's sex. In "Professions for Women" (1931) Woolf describes the dangers that the consciousness of being a woman within the patriarchal system could inflict upon the writing:

she had thought of something, something about the body, about the passions which it was unfitting for her as a woman to say. Men, her reason told

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2 Woolf had certainly read Freud's most relevant work. The Hogarth Press had been publishing James Strachey's English translations of Freud's work since 1921. Furthermore, she had had a personal encounter with him: "when Freud arrived in London in 1939 Virginia Woolf went to visit him" (Moi 1988: 10).
her, would be shocked. The consciousness of what men will say of a woman who speaks the truth about her passions had roused her from her artist's state of unconsciousness. She could write no more. (Woolf 1979a: 61-62)

The androgynous state of mind is "the artist's state of unconsciousness." In this sense, the androgynous mind provides a state of mind that is "resonant and porous; that (...) transmit[s] emotion without impediment; that (...) is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided." (Woolf 1977: 106). The passage quoted above suggests that only by avoiding the consciousness of what it means to be a woman in society will "real" femininity be portrayed in the text. For this reason, women should forget all grievances done to them if they are to write. They have to "think of things in themselves" (Woolf 1977: 120) because any departure from their aim will cause damage to the writing:

she wrote as a woman, but as a woman who has forgotten that she is a woman, so that her pages were full of that curious sexual quality which comes only when sex is unconscious of itself. (Woolf 1977: 100)

Language is a fundamental tool since the structure of the writing delineates one of the restrictions the writer will have to confront in order to depict "reality". Woolf is fully aware of the importance of language in connection with women and writing. According to Lacan, the entrance into the Symbolic, that is, the repression of the Oedipus complex, supposes the acquisition of language and culture. The distinctive psychological development in women marks the tempo of their relationship with culture. Woolf perceives that the locus of woman is "outside of [civilization], alien and critical" (Woolf 1977: 105). In Three Guineas Woolf claimed that this "outsiderness" locates the woman writer in an advantageous position from which to counteract patriarchal dominant discourse. The location of women outside the dominant discourse entails that they recognize patriarchal language and culture as "alien." As Cixous has suggested, language "is our master and our mistress (...) it happily remains foreign to those who write" (Cixous 1994: xix). Yet it is only through language that any creative act is conceivable. The quest is, then, to find a position in language suitable for women, one that allows them to express what Woolf sees as their different artistic creativity:

if Chloe likes Olivia and Mary Carmichael knows how to express it she will light a torch in that vast chamber where nobody has yet been. (Woolf 1977: 91)
In order to write this experience Mary Carmichael will have to find a language that has never before been used. The quote above seems to imply that the position in language Woolf is searching for might be a "lesbian" one. As Cixous argues, and as Woolf would probably agree, one has not "to be homosexual to create" (Cixoils 1986: 84). Rather, the position in language Woolf is trying to find is one that allows the articulation of a mind that has been "stirred by anomalies" (Cixous 1986: 84). Woolf points out that the structure of language, as it transpires in some books, has served men "out of their own needs for their own uses" (Woolf 1977: 84). Women, as Woolf asserts in *Women and Fiction* (1929), should twist the shape of the sentence and the structure of language. Language ought to serve the woman writer to express "her thought without crushing or distorting it" (Woolf 1979b: 48).

However, language cannot be just invented. Time and experimentation are needed. It is also important to count on a network of writers who might have experienced the same needs and noticed the same faults in language. In this respect, and in the line of thought of Woolf herself, Cixous has suggested that:

"we are carriers of previous generations (...) of known or unknown ancestors; on the other hand we are full of others originating from the books we have read." (Cixous 1994: xx)

Therefore, tradition is a prerequisite, so that any current generation of writers may learn from their predecessors and also become a source of knowledge for further generations. As Woolf stated in a letter to the Editor of *New Statesman*, the presence of a tradition was fundamental for Shakespeare's writing:

"the conditions which made it possible for a Shakespeare to exist are that he shall have had predecessors in his art, shall make one of a group where art is freely discussed and practised, and shall himself have the utmost freedom of action and experience. (The New Statesman October 16, 1920)"

These conditions, according to Woolf, have coincided for women writers in Sappho's Lesbos and never since. When women writers' encounter with language is difficult and language is felt as deficient when trying to express an experience perceived as different, "it is useless to go to the great men writers for help" (Woolf 1977: 83). Women need a tradition of their own to turn to when approaching the task of writing.
Woolf exhorts women to "think back through our mothers" (Woolf 1977: 83). Women need to be able to express an experience "as a woman" (Woolf 1977: 100).

Woolf believes that women's writing is essentially different from men's writing. Having said this, to state what is specific to women's writing and how women achieve this type of writing poses a problem for her. As she herself argues:

a woman's writing is always feminine; it cannot help being feminine; at its best it is most feminine: the only difficulty lies in defining what we mean by feminine. (TLS October 17, 1918. Reprinted October 17, 1968)

In the context of these words, her apparently contradictory warning, "It is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple" (Woolf 1977: 112), becomes significant. Seemingly, Woolf is hesitant about her conviction relating to the differences between women's and men's writing. She is aware of the dangers of such a postulate which can tacitly imply a sense of biological determinism. She perceives that patriarchy has used biologically determined theories in defending and justifying the ideological superiority of men over women. For this reason, she puts great emphasis on rejecting determinism. By questioning the meaning of "feminine" she is hinting at the possibility that, in fact, femininity might be a matter of representation. As Cixous explains:

It is beyond a doubt that femininity derives from the body, from the anatomical, the biological difference, from a whole system of drives which are radically different for women than for men. But none of this exists in a pure state: it is always, immediately "already spoken," caught in representation, produced culturally. This does not prevent the libidinal economy of woman from functioning in a specific manner which modifies her rapport with reality. (in Oliver 1993: 174)

Woolf encourages women to write because it is only by writing that a new economy of representation other than the one made through the repression of the feminine can be developed. Women's representation, if achieved "unconsciously", will escape the economy of sameness that forms the foundations of patriarchal writing. This is precisely the point of discrepancy between Woolf's concept of the androgynous mind and Freud's concept of bisexuality.

Freud's concept of bisexuality changed over the years. By the end of his days he felt the need to point out the ambiguity of the psychical distinction between the sexes.
He released psycho-analysis from the task of providing an explanation for the enigma of the natural differentiation between the sexes because he was unable to pinpoint any analogy between the biological sex and its reflection in the psyche. In 1938 he wrote:

> Psycho-analysis has contributed nothing to clearing up this problem, which clearly falls wholly within the province of biology. In mental life we only find reflections of this great antithesis; and their interpretation is made more difficult by the fact, long suspected, that no individual is limited to the modes of reaction of a single sex but always finds some room for those of the opposite one. (Freud 1964: 188)

Nonetheless, Freud equated bisexuality to mankind rather than to womankind. As a matter of fact, Freud's theory of the unconscious was first explained only in relation to the boy. In his early works he assumed parallel developments for girls and boys. Yet, in his later work, as we have seen, he implemented important distinctions in the process of the resolution of the Oedipus complex. In this latter argument he establishes a primal bisexual disposition in human beings. As happens with the androgynous beings of Aristophanes's tale, it is only in the moment of separation that the real nature of Freud's theory of bisexuality can be fully analysed. The fact that "penis envy" in girls and the "castration complex" in boys leads to the resolution of the Oedipus complex exposes a refusal on the part of both sexes to acquire a "feminine psyche." Men fear becoming women, and women dread being the women they are. Accordingly, Freud's avowal of bisexuality erases difference and subjugates the feminine to the phallus.

Woolf seems to agree with Freud in that the conscious constructs of masculinity and femininity are social constructs resulting from the resolution of the Oedipus complex. However, Woolf's account of the androgynous mind repudiates the idea of rejecting the feminine since it is important to the relationship between women and fiction (Woolf 1977: 7) that androgyny be put forward as the ideal state of mind in which to produce art. Furthermore, she explicitly expresses her fear that androgyny can, eventually, be equated to man, as is the case with Freud's theory of bisexuality. In this sense she states "It would be a thousand pities if women wrote like men, or lived like men, or looked like men" (Woolf 1977: 95). Woolf's androgyny does not come from her desire of being a man. Her ideal suffers neither from "penis envy" nor does it fear the "castration complex":
The assertion of the specificity of the feminine in language becomes important in this context of the defence of difference against the existing order of a discourse of sameness organised around a single standard, the man. (Minow-Pinkney 1987: 10)

Woolf's androgyne is a claim for further knowledge. As Cixous expresses it:

Writing is the passageway, the entrance, the exit, the dwelling place of the other in me (...) that tears me apart, disturbs me, changes me, who? - a feminine one, a masculine one, some? - several, some unknown which is indeed what gives me the desire to know and from which all life soars. (Cixous 1986: 85-86)

If the artist's aim is to portray "reality" she cannot afford to ignore the various perspectives from which this reality can be observed. The artist, rather than restricting herself to one sex should through a state of mind that is androgynous enhance her knowledge:

Ought not education to bring out and fortify the differences rather than the similarities? For we have too much likeness as it is, and if an explorer should come back and bring word of other sexes looking through the branches of other trees at other skies, nothing would be of greater service to humanity. (Woolf 1977: 95)

The most unsettling aspect of Woolf's androgynous ideal from a patriarchal perspective is the acknowledgement of the two different sexes it conveys. The androgynous mind has as its central and most revolutionary declaration the avowal of a form of writing which will be unconsciously feminine. Such a form of writing will create a text characterized by a "suggestive quality" (Woolf 1977: 110). The number of critical readings inspired by A Room of One's Own accounts for its unique quality. Both the structure of Woolf's essay and the distinctive uses of the language it displays supposes a breakthrough. As Showalter argues, though for different reasons, the text is executed through "repetition, exaggeration, parody, whimsy, and multiple viewpoint" (Showalter 1978: 282). Woolf's use of language far from being a fault, as Showalter claims, enhances precisely the subversive quality of the essay. Through her experimentation with language Woolf is searching for a writing capable of encompassing the "real" world when it is perceived from different angles. Using Kristeva's theoretical work as a framework it might be possible to find the place where
androgynous writing has expression. Exploring this possibility is the purpose of the next section.

Androgynous Writing

Apparently, Woolf's argument for the existence of a specific quality in women's writing that differentiates it from men's writing appears to be closely related to the Cixousian notion of *écriture féminine*. However, there is an important point of disagreement between the two arguments: whilst Cixous seems to be comfortably positioned within her proclamation of the existence of a woman's space outside patriarchal language and culture, Woolf, in spite of her claim in *Three Guineas* for an "outsider's society" (which will be discussed in Chapter Five), was never comfortable with the idea of women as outsiders of society, as her constant search for a voice that operates within the patriarchal discourse proves.

Whilst not particularly restricted to women, Cixous's concept of *écriture féminine* seems to have women at its centre: "I will say: today, writing is woman's" (Cixous 1986: 85). Several doubts, however, arise from Cixous' formulation of *écriture féminine*. Firstly, Cixous's awareness of the "web of age-old cultural determinations" that make it difficult to "speak of 'woman' ( ... ) without being trapped within an ideological theater" (Cixous 1986: 83) does not prevent her theoretical writing being informed by a certain essentialism (present both in her description of *écriture féminine* and in her way of addressing women). Even taking into account her use of male writers such as Jean Genet or James Joyce, she seems to be trapped in the very web she is trying to escape from, by using stereotyped notions of masculine and feminine characteristics. For instance, when she affirms that "if there is a self proper to woman, paradoxically it is her capacity to depropriate herself without self-interest" (Cixous 1986: 87), it is difficult to disassociate her thought from patriarchal images of women as nurturing, caring and generous providers. On the other hand, Cixous suggests the possibility of accomplishing a feminine writing by existing outside of what Lacan has called the Symbolic order. However, as many critics of Cixous have pointed out, within a psychological framework the idea of remaining outside the Symbolic is a problematic
one. Julia Kristeva has referred to this idea as an unproductive one since, as she points out, any rejection of the Symbolic order leads to psychoses (Kristeva 1986a: 199). Furthermore, it is unproductive because, even if it were possible to remain outside the Symbolic, a feminine writing such as the one proposed by Cixous would not eliminate the essence of the problem. As Kristeva argues, the existence of "a woman’s language" is "highly problematical" since it appears to be "more the product of a social marginality than of a sexual-symbolic difference" (Kristeva 1986a: 200).

This quote poses two interesting arguments: firstly, the question of social marginality and secondly, the question of "difference". By "social marginality" Kristeva refers to the idea of forming a counter-society. This marginality has nothing to do with her own theories of the margin as a position for struggle. Kristeva has pointed out the problems implicit in the structuring of this counter-society, which, in her viewpoint, can only be understood as the "alter ego of the official society" (Kristeva 1986a: 202). Therefore, the idea of a counter-society as a revolutionary one seems to be, for her, fictitious: as long as it is formed as a society, it will replicate the patterns of the "official" society it seeks to destroy. In this sense, as any other society, the counter-society would be based upon that which Kristeva has identified as the "sacificial contract." Hence, although this counter-society might be imagined as "harmonious, without prohibitions, free and fulfilling" (Kristeva 1986a: 202), it, "as with any other society, (...) is based on the expulsion of an excluded element, a scapegoat charged with the evil of which the community duly constituted can then purge itself" (Kristeva 1986a: 202). In other words, Kristeva sees any effort to create a counter-society as useless, since it would not escape the very same principles of exclusion that had ultimately created the dissidents. The group forming the counter-society would ascribe to the counter-society the same injustices that supposedly prompted its creation in the first place. Hence, the idea of a feminist counter-society seems to Kristeva pointless with regards to the feminist struggle, since it would, eventually, be accused of perpetuating sexism.

This does not mean that Kristeva refuses to resist the patriarchal dominant discourse that prevails in Western culture. On the contrary, she envisions a feminist
resistance (even though she refuses to call herself a feminist) that could change the course of Western civilisation. Yet, this change can only be possible, in Kristeva's opinion, if the struggle takes place within the Symbolic. Thus, "without refusing or side-stepping this socio-symbolic order", the resistant discourse must "explore the constitution and functioning of this contract". Obviously, although other groups would benefit as well, it would be mainly women who would benefit greatly from this proposed mode of resistance which "leads to the active research, still rare, undoubtedly hesitant but always dissident". This research should attempt "to break the code, to shatter language, to find a specific discourse closer to the body and emotions, to the unnameable repressed by the social contract" (Kristeva 1986a: 200). Kristeva suggests that a point of departure would be to denounce the sacrificial character that forms the patriarchal contract by which women's voices have been suppressed by patriarchal discourse:

women are today affirming - and we consequently face a mass phenomenon - that they are forced to experience this sacrificial contract against their will. (Kristeva 1986a: 200)

From this affirmation a revolt might eventually occur, although society will understand it as murder. As Kristeva points out: "What remains is to break down the resistance to change" (Kristeva 1986a: 201).

This is the idea behind Woolf's feminism as evidenced by her complaint about the insufficiency of two sexes (as quoted in the previous section). This complaint echoes Kristeva's argument of "difference" within the symbolic function. The economy of the symbolic is based, according to Kristeva, upon the paradigm of identity (understood as "sameness") since the subjectivity emergent from the psychological process accepts the paternal law and therefore, as Butler explains, becomes "a bearer or proponent of this repressive law" (Butler 1990: 79). The entrance into the Symbolic presupposes the acquisition of language where linguistic signification, according to Lacan, is meaningful in so far as pre-Symbolic chaos and multiplicity is repressed. Kristeva refutes this theory by proposing a semiotic dimension to language which suggests that the semiotic, connected to the repressed maternal body and the primary drives, is a subversive force
Hermaphodictic dimension of the androgynne present in Symbolic language. Kristeva's concepts of semiotic and symbolic will be discussed later. It suffices to point out that the importance she places on the semiotic (especially regarding poetics) in symbolic language provides a theoretical framework whereby the presence of the maternal body can be traced.

Similarly, Woolf confronts the idea of "Man" as the measure around which the world is structured. In this sense, Woolf is trying to demystify the "identity of the symbolic bond" (Kristeva 1986a: 210) precisely by questioning this very identity. In *A Room of One's Own* Woolf refuses to use phallocentric discourse by criticising the narcissistic "I" in men's writing:

> But I am bored! (…) because of the dominance of the letter 'I' and the aridity, which, like the giant beech tree, it casts within its shade. Nothing will grow there. (Woolf 1977: 108).

The phallic shadow prevents the text providing pleasure to the "I" that is bored and that, as we are told in the opening lines of *A Room of One's Own*, is "only a convenient term for somebody who has no real being" (Woolf 1977: 8). This seems to suggest that the "boring I" belongs to a real being, who refuses to accept the Law of the Father, which threatens to impose upon "it" an alien identity, and remains outside the Symbolic order. If, as Kristeva argues, there is a feminine space outside the symbolic, Woolf's statement could be read as an apparent avowal of the existence of a women's space, a "counter-society" from where to challenge patriarchal discourse. However, on a deeper level the "I" who has no real existence is not portrayed as a celebratory "I". The "I" who has no real existence is an inquiring "I" who is trying to solve the enigma of the "true nature of woman and the true nature of fiction" (Woolf 1977: 8). The inclusion of a different "I" in the discourse challenges the notion of the unified homogeneous identity held by patriarchal discourse. Precisely by confronting the "I" (who bores me with an "I" that has no real existence as yet) the very notion of identity is displaced.

Woolf's argumentative process is not a vindication for the formation of a women's society that would function outside the symbolic. Rather, she attempts to redesign the "I" that at present is caged within patriarchal discourse, the "I" that she perceived as an impediment to artistic production. Freud's concept of the unconscious
plays a fundamental role in this attempt to redefine identity. The existence of the unconscious implies that the constitution of the subject is never totally known. There is always a part of the "I" that remains unknown to the speaking subject but that, nevertheless, exercises an important role in the formation of subjectivity as well as in the later recognition of self. "I" cannot be totally known because of unconscious drives that are, by definition, totally unknown to the subject. As soon as they become known, they form part of the conscious and therefore they belong to a different sphere. Nevertheless, as Kristeva argues:

No "I" is there to assume this "femininity," but it is no less operative, rejecting all that is finite and assuring in (sexual) pleasure the life of the concept. "I," subject of a conceptual quest, is also a subject of differentiation - of sexual contradictions. (Kristeva 1981a: 167)

The fact that the unconscious is not registered at the level of consciousness does not imply that it does not exist. It is important at this point to highlight the fact that Woolf starts challenging a monolithic notion of identity precisely by posing, right from the beginning of her essay, the question of the possibility of an "unknown" "I". The statement of the existence of this "unknown" "I" is given within a textual context in which "I" seems obsessively present. In the opening lines of A Room of One's Own, "I" is scattered in sentences and intermingled with other pronouns such as "you" and "they.

Suddenly, when the signification of the title "women and fiction" is being pondered, the rhythm changes, by the appearance of a series of sentences containing solely the first person pronoun:

But when I began to consider the subject in this last way, which seemed the most interesting, I soon saw that it had one fatal drawback. I should never be able to come to a conclusion. I should never be able to fulfil what is, I understand, the first duty of a lecturer. (Woolf 1977: 7, my emphasis)

This use of the pronoun reaches its peak in a single sentence where it appears three times: "I am going to do what I can to show you how I arrived at this opinion about the room and the money" (Woolf 1977: 8, my emphasis). The reader is surprised when, once caught up in a web formed by the pronoun "I", the narrative informs him/her that this "I" "has no real existence." This technique works in two ways. Externally, in a first instance, in preparing the reader (and the listener) to be able to feel the
claustrophobic presence of the "I" whose shadow impedes growth. It also works internally, towards the subjectivity that is consciously going to abandon a position of identity. It could be seen as a landmark, a signpost that the subjectivity is afraid to lose. In this sense it is important to notice that before this "I" drifts into a fictitious world, the reader / listener is informed: "what I am about to describe has no existence; Oxbridge is an invention; so is Fernham" (Woolf 1977: 8). Immediately, a name is provided:

Here then was I (call me Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or by any name you please - it is not a matter of importance)... (Woolf 1977: 8-9)

The last words of this quote are the starting point of the subtle game that Woolf is about to play. By diminishing the importance of the name of the narrator "I", Woolf is minimising the importance of identity in the text. Yet, at the same time, she insists upon a name. She refuses to leave the "I" of the narrator anonymous and proposes to give her a name. It is precisely at this point that the reader understands that the narrator is a woman, a vital piece of information in the forthcoming development of Woolf's argument.

Moreover, Woolf is attempting to assemble an identity other than the one allocated to women by patriarchal society. In this context, it is not by chance that the name of that "I" is "Mary". In Western Christian culture the name "Mary" is immediately associated with the Virgin. This name, repeated three times (Mary Beaton, Mary Seaton, Mary Carmichael) marks the point of departure for Woolf's examination of female identity and the production of writing. Julia Kristeva notes that patriarchy, interrelated with Christianity in Western culture, "associates women as well with the symbolic order, but only on the condition that they maintain their virginity" (Kristeva 1977: 25). Apparently insignificant, the allusion to the figure of the Virgin through the motif of the narrator's name is, therefore, of great importance. It is, indeed, a fundamental point entirely devoted to unsettling the establishment represented in the text by the male audience hiding behind the curtains.

The myth of the Virgin represents, in Kristeva's viewpoint, the annihilation of women by patriarchy. Following Jones, Kristeva argues that the myth of the Virgin Mary denotes the suppression of the vagina by means of equating it with the anus.
Kristeva arrives at this conclusion by comparing the myth of the impregnation of the woman by the Breath with the fantasy of anal pregnancy shown by some of her male analysands. She maintains that this fantasy illustrates the homosexual economy of patriarchy; homosexual in the most rigorous sense of the word ("same sex") since it is caused by the "denial of sexual difference" resulting from the fantasy of anal pregnancy:

In this homosexual economy, we see that what Christianity recognizes in a woman, what it demands of her in order to place her within its symbolic order, is this: while living or thinking of herself as a virgin impregnated by the Word, she lives and thinks of herself as a male homosexual. (Kristeva 1977: 26)

This economy marks women's entrance into the Symbolic order. Either women identify with this economy and behave as pure, chaste and nurturing beings or they "engage in an endless battle between her sexual maternal body and the symbolic prohibition" (Kristeva 1977: 27). In both cases they are trapped between two extremes that make their relationship with the symbolic problematic: the ecstatic and the melancholic. It is of great importance, then, that the fantasy of the Virgin Mary be re-defined by a secular discourse on motherhood since the myth of the Virgin Mary denies sexual difference.

In her argument, Kristeva considers two different possible outcomes for the girl in her psychological development. In the pre-Oedipal phase the child is constrained by the mother's body without any distinction between this body and the child. There is an auto-erotic pleasure that is inseparable from the body of the mother. Through language, the Oedipal phase prohibits autoeroticism and hints at the importance of the paternal function. At this point, both the boy and the girl have two options:

[They] must renounce his/her pleasure in order to find an object of the opposite sex, or renounce his/her sex to find a homogeneous pleasure without "another" as its object. But if such is the rule, it is realized differently in boys and in girls. (Kristeva 1977: 28)

According to Kristeva, boys and girls have to choose between mother-identification or father-identification. The difference between boys and girls suggested by Kristeva seems to be restricted by what Butler has seen as "her [Kristeva's] acceptance of the structuralist assumption that heterosexuality is coextensive with the founding of the Symbolic" (Butler 1990: 84). The difference is that while the boy can
reject totally the mother, the girl seems unable to do so. Regardless of the identification chosen by the girl it is always difficult for her to keep at bay the repressed component:

Thus, at the price of censuring herself as a woman, she will be able to bring to triumph her henceforth sublimated sadistic attacks on the mother whom she has repressed and with whom she will never cease to fight, either (as a heterosexual) by identifying with her, or (as a homosexual) by pursuing her as erotic object. (Kristeva 1977: 30)

In the first case "the pre-Oedipal phases (oral and anal eroticism) are intensified" and the girl develops into a heterosexual woman who attains "vaginal jouissance" (Kristeva 1977: 28). In the second case, the girl identifies totally with the father and she "represses the oral-sadistic phase, and at the same time represses the vagina" (Kristeva 1977: 29). In other words, the pre-Oedipal stage is totally repressed and the girl "wipe[s] out the last traces of dependence on the body of the mother" (Kristeva 1977: 29) and "pursues her erotically." Some doubts and paradoxes appear in Kristeva's theoretical framework, especially regarding female homosexuality. The most obvious one is that by stressing the importance of the vagina as an erogenous zone, Kristeva seems to be implying, though she never actually says it, that the female homosexual (by identifying with the father and repressing the vagina) is taking the clitoris as a penis. Moreover, the "vaginal jouissance" seems to suggest that it is unlikely that a feminine position may be available to biological men and women alike or, as Moi has explained, that femininity is for Kristeva "the result of a series of options that are also presented to the little boy" (Moi 1988: 165) for the question remains as to how a boy can achieve this jouissance. More important is perhaps the ambiguity in her use of the term "homosexual." In Kristeva's writings it is unclear if the term is used with reference to the pursuit of satisfaction of a sexual desire for a subject of the same sex, as is the case in the discussion above, or if it is used in relation to what Kristeva sees as the homosexual attachment between mother and daughter, intensified in the act of giving birth, regardless of whether the woman is homosexual or heterosexual. For instance she states in "Motherhood according to Bellini" that:

By giving birth, the woman enters into contact with her mother; she becomes, she is her own mother; they are the same continuity differentiating itself. She thus actualizes the homosexual facet of motherhood, through which a
woman is simultaneously closer to her instinctual memory, more open to her own psychosis, and consequently, more negatory of the social, symbolic bond. (Kristeva 1981c: 239)

It appears that Kristeva's notion of homosexuality as posed in the quote above is different from the one she sustains in her explanation of the acquisition of a feminine position in language. Paradoxically, whereas in the above quotation homosexuality seems to be linked to an identification with the mother, Kristeva's latter argument is based upon the identification with the father. This is an important issue because, for instance, Butler's critique of Kristeva's politics springs from the quote detailed above this paragraph. "The homosexual facet of motherhood" is explored by Butler within the theoretical framework of Kristeva's semiotic and poetic language (which is discussed at the end of this Chapter) to conclude that:

By projecting the lesbian as "Other" to culture, and characterizing lesbian speech as the psychotic "whirl-of-words," Kristeva constructs lesbian sexuality as intrinsically unintelligible. This tactical dismissal and reduction of lesbian experience performed in the name of the law positions Kristeva within the orbit of paternal-heterosexual privilege. (Butler 1990: 87)

Certainly Butler's argument is a valid one in so far as she has detected Kristeva's ambiguity and uneasiness with respect to lesbianism (for instance her argument for the psychological development into lesbianism seems to be informed by a heterosexual paradigm). Yet, it is possible that Butler, by aligning "the homosexual facet of motherhood" to lesbian sexuality and lesbian experience might have misread Kristeva. As already discussed above, Kristeva describes patriarchal economy as homosexual in the sense of a "denial of sexual difference." In this respect it could be argued that the homosexuality ascribed to motherhood is for Kristeva the "denial of sexual difference" regardless of the sexuality of the woman 3.

By articulating regret at Kristeva's projection of "the lesbian as 'Other' to culture" Butler is manifesting a desire to inscribe lesbianism within culture, a culture that today in Western societies remains largely heterosexual and patriarchal. Kristeva seems aware

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3 Arguably, an exploration of the use of the term "lesbian" by these two theorists seems necessary. This subject opens up an area for further research which would result in an interesting debate which extends beyond the parameters of this Chapter.
of the precarious and dangerous position that, in her view, women assume with respect to the symbolic as evidenced by her comment that whereas men can laugh at the slips of the unconscious, women have nothing to laugh at because these maternal rhythms are a reminder of an unstable relationship with the symbolic that could lead to psychosis. Kristeva's theory appears suitable since it engages with the possibility of bringing change through women's privileged position with respect to creative activity. This creativity, convenor of jouissance and seen by Kristeva as yet utopian, would produce a discourse that would inhabit at the same time desire and repression within the socio-symbolic order.

As has been shown, Kristeva rejects the concept of "Woman" as an essence intrinsically linked to biology. Following Lacan, Kristeva affirms that Woman "does not exist with a capital 'W', possessor of some mythical unity" (Kristeva 1986a: 205). It is only within the immediate socio-political demands for better conditions for women that the sentence "I am a woman" has any meaning: "On a deeper level, however, a woman cannot 'be'" (Kristeva 1981b: 137). By displacing the dichotomy man/woman to the realm of metaphysics the repression of the feminine becomes a question of positionality rather than of essence:

the struggle is no longer concerned with the quest for equality but, rather, with difference and specificity (...) Sexual difference (...) is translated by and translates a difference in the relationship of subjects to the symbolic contract which is the social contract: a difference, then, in the relationship to power, language and meaning. (Kristeva 1986a: 196)

The domain where "difference" "operates with the maximum intransigence" is "in personal and sexual identity itself" (Kristeva 1986a: 209). It is only within this realm that the struggle becomes effective.

Woolf's distrust of the notion of femininity held by the dominant discourse of her time, her continuous questioning of identity and her ideas regarding the existence of an androgynous mind seem very closely related to Kristeva's political agenda. Indeed, in the light of Kristeva's work the uneasy relationship between Woolf's aesthetic pursuit and her feminism pointed out by some critics does not exist. Demystifying identity implies a questioning of the unitary and univocal nature of language and, therefore,
brings about the relevance of that which is repressed. Woolf's notion of femininity, and, in fact, her refusal to define "woman" asserting that "a woman (...) is not a man" (Woolf 1978: xxxiii) encompasses Kristeva's idea that women can merely play a negative role by denying that which is given. It is in this sense that Kristeva argues that woman does not exist: "In 'woman' I see something that cannot be represented, something that is not said, something above and beyond nomenclatures and ideologies" (Kristeva 1981b: 137). This is so because representation, utterance and ideology are articulated in the symbolic which is founded, as it will be shown, upon the repression of a semiotic function regulated by the mother. The interesting point in Kristeva's theoretical framework is her questioning of the efficiency of this repression. Kristeva is of the opinion that repression is not the same as suppression and therefore the repressed element is potentially present. In this sense:

All speaking subjects have within themselves a certain bisexuality which is precisely the possibility to explore all the sources of signification, that which posits a meaning as well as that which multiplies, pulverizes, and finally revives it. (Kristeva 1981a: 165)

In the same way as Woolf clearly believed that androgyny enhanced artistic creation (as shown above), Kristeva points out that the bisexuality of the speaking subject implies an improvement in the system of signification since it is formed by more than one source and therefore enriched. Kristeva also avoids linking bisexuality with Aristophanes' androgyne; Kristeva's bisexuality is not the union of opposites because this idea would imply "the aspiration towards the totality of one of the sexes and thus an effacing of difference" (Kristeva 1986a: 209). On the contrary, her notion of bisexuality strengthens the idea of "difference". For Kristeva, as for Woolf, the avowal of bisexuality in the individual's subjectivity implies the possibility of acquiring further knowledge. Furthermore, because positionality rather than essence prompts the individual's sexual identity, precluding the other component, it can be argued that the subject is not fixed and unified. Subjectivity, according to Kristeva, is a never-ending process in the dialectic relationships within the bisexual individual. In this sense, rather than referring to subjectivity, Kristeva contrasts the traditional notion of a fixed identity
with her notion of a "subject-in-the-making, a subject on trial" (le sujet-en-procès) (Kristeva 1981a: 167).

Although, as Kristeva argues, the speaking subject has to submit to the Law of the Father and enter the Symbolic order, it is not clear that the symbolic is a unified, transparent, and fixed order. In other words, Kristeva diminishes the importance of the patriarchal symbolic by imagining a symbolic disrupted by "poetic language:"

The symbolic order functions in our monotheistic West by means of a system of kinship dependent on transmission of the father's name and a rigorous prohibition of incest, and a system of verbal communication that is increasingly logical, simple, positive, and stripped of stylistic, rhythmic, 'poetic' ambiguities. Such an order brings this constitutional inhibition of the speaking animal to a zenith never before attained, which is assumed by the role of the father. The mother's share (the "repressed") in such an order includes not only the impulses (of which the most basic is the impulse of aggressive rejection) but the earliest training of those impulses (…) in the oral/anal phases, which is marked by rhythms, intonations and gestures which as yet have no significance. (Kristeva 1977: 31, my emphasis)

By qualifying the symbolic order existent in the "monotheistic West" Kristeva questions symbolic language as univocal. Kristeva is referring here to the fact that there can exist in the symbolic a space other than that marked by linear time. As she argues, the symbolic is not as straight-forward as patriarchy seems to believe. In her view, other forms of signification are hidden within the actual utterances of symbolic language. Since language is "considered as the enunciation of sentences (noun+verb; topic-comment; beginning-ending)" (Kristeva 1986a: 192) a link between language and linear time, which Kristeva correlates to the time of history, can be traced. Yet, she identifies two dissimilar times: monumental (eternity) and cyclical (repetition) times in opposition to linear time, hence to language. These times are associated with the feminine in so far as they are associated with motherhood and reproduction. If the repression of the feminine is a pre-condition for the acquisition of language, monumental time and cyclical time are repressed within linear time. Therefore, the mode of signification "as yet" unknown in symbolic language can be detected if attention is paid to the unspoken of any discourse:

By listening; by recognizing the unspoken in speech, even revolutionary speech; by calling attention at all times to whatever remains unsatisfied,
repressed, new, eccentric, incomprehensible, disturbing to the status quo. (Kristeva 1977: 38)

For this reason, and paralleling her dialectical notion of the "subject in process/on trial," Kristeva advocates a dialectical notion of language that she calls "the signifying process" which involves two realms: semiotic and symbolic. In The Revolution of Poetic Language (1974) Kristeva asserts that the symbolic function, like the Lacanian Symbolic order, is based upon repression. The symbolic is the realm of signification and the locus of society and culture structured through language. However, her stress on the importance of the semiotic and its relation to the symbolic provides a different angle to her approach to language. In Kristeva's view, semiotic and symbolic are understood as "two modalities of language" (Butler 1990: 82). In general the symbolic represses the semiotic which is linked to pre-Oedipal primary processes. It is a pre-conscious, repressed state that is defined by the multiple drives that constitute its prediscursive libidinal economy. It functions as a heterogeneous and endless flow of pulses, complex bodily drives that are gathered in what Kristeva, alluding to Plato's Timaeus, calls the chora: "an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases" (Kristeva 1986b: 93). The chora is related to the mother and is comparable to "vocal or kinetic rhythm". This rhythmical space is heterogeneous because it has not submitted to the paternal law yet it is maternally regulated.

Although devoid of sign and signifier, the semiotic has a fundamental function in the signifying process because the eruptions of semiotic pulses in symbolic language can be perceived, especially in artistic articulation. Kristeva places the semiotic in dialectical opposition to the symbolic while stressing the importance of the symbolic as the realm in which language and culture are constructed and displayed. It is important to stress that the multiple libidinal economy of the semiotic, by being alien to positionality and the thetic, cannot be sustained on its own in culture for it could lead to babbling, incoherence and psychosis. The "thetic phase" marks the threshold between the semiotic and symbolic. It marks the "break, which produces the positing of signification" (Kristeva 1986b: 98). The thetic phase is permeable and allows a dialectic between semiotic and symbolic that is perceived in the signifying process.
In the light of Kristeva's account, Woolf's description of the "woman's sentence" as "the psychological sentence of the feminine gender" (Woolf 1979c: 191) becomes clearer. As Oliver argues, "the semiotic is effective at the frontiers of language" (Oliver 1993: 97). The semiotic then stretches the sentence by disrupting symbolic enunciation. It enlarges, breaks and redesigns the limits of language. However, the semiotic is ineffective in respect of the closure of meaning. Therefore, Kristeva implies, the recognition of the signifying process as a heterogeneous process is essential. Like Woolf, Kristeva exposes the need to explore different forms of utterance:

It is henceforth clear that meaning's closure can never be challenged by another space, but only by a different way of speaking: another enunciation, another "literature". (Kristeva 1981c: 281)

The fact that Woolf was attentive to the perils of such a term as "woman's sentence" implies that she was actually searching for a different kind of language. This language is not exclusive to women as she points out in her review of Dorothy Richardson's Revolting Lights: "Other writers of the opposite sex have used sentences of this description" (Woolf 1979c: 191). It is worth noticing that she uses "feminine" and not "female" or "woman" in her description of this type of writing. Given her elusiveness in describing what is "feminine" the adjective chosen acquires further relevance.

The semiotic is for Kristeva related to the mother in so far as it is the mother who is the figure of importance in this realm. The semiotic also stands in contrast to the symbolic function that operates in relation to the law that is imposed in Lacanian terms in the Name of the Father. Therefore, the semiotic could be said to be a feminine space. However, it should be taken into account that the mother of the pre-Oedipal stage is, by definition, a figure that encompasses both masculinity and femininity. Since there is no positionality in the semiotic, she is a hermaphroditic figure governing a hermaphroditic function. Semiotic eruptions in symbolic language bring about a discourse that leads to a weakening of traditional gender divisions (Moi 1988):

The artist (that make believe Oedipus) suspects that his unverified atemporal truth springs from the side of the mother. The western artist (that fetishist), then, exalts this truth by finding its symbol in the female body. (Kristeva 1977: 36)
Woolf in her essay "Professions for Women" saw two main problems in literary production by women: the need to kill "the Angel in the House" and the difficulty of "telling the truth about my own experiences as a body" (Woolf 1979a: 62). Kristeva, and it seems plausible to assume that Woolf also, estimates that women are in a privileged position to challenge the fixity of language.

Nonetheless, though privileged, it is a perilous position. Women, because separation is never fully completed and, therefore, always maintain a connection with the semiotic mother, either by identifying with the mother or by pursuing her sexually, risk losing control and falling into states of madness and psychosis. Theirs is a difficult and perilous task and, yet, as Kristeva puts it: "the symptom is there - women are writing, and the air is heavy with expectation: What will they write that is new?" (Kristeva 1986a: 207).

The language that results from the tension between semiotic and symbolic is what Kristeva calls "poetic language." Present in poetry and avant-garde texts, "poetic language" disrupts and resists the univocal quality of symbolic language. A notion that closely echoes Woolf's urge to break the sentence. A Woolfian textual proposal, as Barrett points out, "effectively (...) means rejecting the ideal, pure image of woman, and frankly exploring sexuality and the unconscious" (Barrett 1979: 12). Therefore, Woolf, like Kristeva, imagines a text produced in such a way that it brings together politics and textual practice by confronting the speaking subject with poetic language. This process will be revolutionary in so far as these texts prepare the subject for social changes. Women, then, have a great deal to gain from a different type of writing that will eventually bring about a new mode of social contract.
CHAPTER TWO
A Historical Framework For An Androgynous Ideal

And she laughs, laughs softly to herself because the denseness of man, his chivalrous conservative devotion to the female idea he has created blinds him, perhaps happily, to the problems of her complex nature. (George Egerton, "A Cross Line")

Woolf's notion of the androgynous ideal is informed by a vortex of discourses that, starting in the nineteenth century, focused on women's sexuality, on the Woman Question, and on those forms of sexual behaviour that deviated from the norm. Broadly speaking, this new interest on the part of scientific, legal, moral and political discourses has at its source the women's movement, the rise of the New Woman, and the figures of the decadent and the dandy, which challenged the monolithical ideological certainties in relation to sexual difference of mid-Victorian Britain. On the other hand, Darwin's theory of evolution meant that scientific discourse changed its approach to phenomena (hitherto been explained as part of a natural God-given design). Darwin, in The Descent of Man, suggests that signs of hermaphroditism or androgyny in superior vertebrae are, in fact, residues of a primeval disposition in the ascendants of human beings in the evolutionary chain. According to Darwin:

It has long been known that in the vertebrate kingdom one sex bears rudiments of various parts, appertaining to the reproductive system, which properly belong to the opposite sex; and it has now been ascertained that at a very early embryonic period both sexes posses true male and female glands. Hence some remote progenitor of the whole vertebrate kingdom appears to have been hermaphrodite or androgynous. (Darwin 1901: 249)

The link between emancipated women and having masculine traits evidences, according to Darwin, an arrested development that was used, by even in the most liberal authors, as an effective repressive tool. Progression within the women's movement was reworked into regression through the figures of the hermaphrodite or the androgyne: the New Woman, submitted to a process of androgynization, would be seen as a paradigm of an involutive species destined to disappear. The civilized lady, on the contrary, by being distant from the primeval hermaphrodite was in turn the evolved figure desirable by a civilized society. Sackville-West perceived this subtle patriarchal manoeuvre and,
in her autobiography, she places the androgyne not in the past, but in the future: "I hold the conviction that as centuries go on, (...) the sexes [will] become more nearly merged on account of their increasing resemblances" (Nicolson 1973: 101). In what is her most elaborated statement about the androgynous ideal, Sackville-West makes a connection between evolution, androgyny, homosexuality, and anthropological theory:

I hold the conviction that such connections will to a very large extent cease to be regarded as merely unnatural (...) I believe it will be recognized that many more people of my type do exist than under the present-day system of hypocrisy is commonly admitted (...) Such advance must necessarily come from the more educated and liberal classes. Since 'unnatural' means 'removed from nature', only the most civilized, because the least natural, class of society can be expected to tolerate such a product of civilization. (Nicolson 1973: 101-102)

Darwinism also created a need for detailed analysis and classification of the instincts and of human ways of organization. These, apparently, distant spheres were connected by Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* when she argued that the determination by patriarchy to establish clear sexual boundaries and gender roles was provoked by the appearance of the New Woman. New Women unsettled the assertiveness of manhood and, as Woolf wrote,

> when one is challenged, even by a few women in black bonnets, one retaliates, if one has never been challenged before, rather excessively. (Woolf 1977: 107)

Whereas the New Woman was "as a category (...) by no means stable" and as a discursive practice "free of contradictions" (Ledger 1995: 23) her emergence challenged patriarchy. A powerful and attractive figure, frighteningly in the ascendant, the New Woman attempted a re-conceptualization of womanhood and produced a discourse on female sexuality that contradicted the prevailing idea of femininity. Patriarchy's adverse reaction can be observed even in liberal treatises such as Carpenter's *The Intermediate Sex* which opens with a reference to the New Woman and the suggestion that the masculinization of women was the result of the attitude of these independent women:

In late years (and since the arrival of the New Woman amongst us) many things in the relation of men and women to each other have altered, or at any rate become clearer (...) If the modern woman is a little more masculine in some ways than her predecessor, the modern man (it is to be hoped), while by no means effeminate, is a little more sensitive in temperament and artistic in feeling than the original John Bull. (Carpenter 1914: 114)
Furthermore, Carpenter's passage links the New Woman with homosexuality. These connections, as shall be discussed, were also present in some reactionary literature that questioned the morality as well as the physical and psychic health of these women. The term "New Woman", as Jordan has pointed out and contrary to what has been commonly assumed,\(^1\) has an interesting history in itself because the concept the term designates existed before it was adopted in society. The appellation was born in 1894 after many attempts to name the second generation of feminist women:

Two novelists, the feminist Sara Grand and the anti-feminist Ouida, acted as godmothers, while *Punch* played the role of officiating clergyman and performed the ceremony within its pages. (Jordan 1983: 19)

New Woman refers to those upper-middle class women who "had profited from the educational and vocational opportunities won by the pioneer feminists of the sixties [1860s]" (Jordan 1983: 19). By the 1920s educated women wanted access not only to the so-called male professions but also demanded "access to the broader world of male opportunity" (Newton 1984: 564) and night life. Activities seen as exclusive to the masculine world such as drinking or smoking became symbols of women's emancipation. These women "rejected traditional feminine clothing" (Newton 1984: 564) indicating with this gesture a resoluteness to break free from traditional codes of gender behaviour.

The correlation between masculinization, homosexuality and the New Woman aimed to counterbalance the increasing popularity that, especially among middle and upper class women, the New Woman was gaining. By making the New Woman an androgynous figure, dominant discourse was attempting to portray her as a pitiful, unsatisfied, and asexual woman. In fact, this misogynist discourse provided the basis for feminist and lesbian discourses that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, used her image as a code to relativize and, therefore, challenge and defy patriarchal gender roles. Significantly, characteristics of the New Woman are used in the fiction of turn of the

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\(^1\) For instance in *Daughters of Decadence. Women Writers of the Fin-de-Siècle* Showalter suggests that Sara Grand coined the term "New Woman": "She is credited with coining the 'New Woman' in 1884" (Showalter 1993: 323).
century and interwar period as codified signs for providing extra information about androgynous characters. Virginia Woolf, for example, described in Night and Day the character of the Suffragette Mary Datchet as physically both feminine and masculine:

Miss Datchet was quite capable of lifting a kitchen table on her back, if need were, for although well-proportioned and dressed becomingly, she had the appearance of unusual strength and determination. (Woolf 1992b: 44)

Mary Datchet has a woman's figure ("well-proportioned") and dresses as a lady ("becomingly") yet her strength and determination are termed "unusual". Furthermore, the physical features of the worker for the suffrage cause parallel her inner features, which are, as well, androgynous:

She had contracted two faint lines between her eyebrows, not from anxiety but from thought, and it was quite evident that all the feminine instincts of pleasing, soothing, and charming were crossed by others in no way peculiar to her sex. (Woolf 1992b: 44-45)

The cross of male with female takes place in Miss Datchet's personality within the confined space of her thought. Woolf leaves idiosyncratic feminine instincts unchallenged in this case ("pleasing, soothing, and charming") and yet she "crosses" them with others peculiar to the opposite sex. It is the importance given by scientific experts to changes in physical features that gives meaning to these literary characters. It is not, then, gratuitous when the physique of a female character such as Jean in Trefusis's Echo is described as having broad shoulders or, John Shorne in Broderie Anglaise, as having woman's hands.

In "Woman and Her Place in a Free Society" (1894) Carpenter denounced the objectification of women by patriarchy. He equated private property with the submission of women to men: "Man's craze for property and individual ownership (...), culminated perhaps not unnaturally in woman - his most precious and beloved object" (Carpenter 1894: 10). Following Ellis' "angel-idiot" theory which argued that woman had been trapped in the intersection between an angel and an idiot, Carpenter argued that the construction of femininity was something completely alien to women. The objectification of Woman caused, according to Carpenter, a lack of understanding between the sexes. His consideration of female sexuality as a male construct and the need for understanding between the sexes was shared by many feminists of the period.
Olive Schreiner's point of view, for instance, was that Man and Woman were bound together and that it was a mistake to conceptualize the advance of the one without the other (Schreiner 1993: 308-317). Victoria Cross in "Theodora: A Fragment" (1895) provided an image of the two protagonists, a man and a woman, together entering a room: "We were then face to face with a door which she opened, and we both passed over the threshold together" (Cross 1993: 14). The fact that it is the woman who opens the door suggests the importance of the New Woman and gives full meaning to Carpenter's words: "since the arrival of the New Woman among us", "She" is opening the door to a new world in which both will be "as two men-friends or two women-friends might be, open and equal comrades in the great battle of life" (Carpenter 1894: 27). Woolf's image of a man and a woman getting into a taxi in A Room of One's Own certainly echoes the images used by New Women at the turn of the century. Woolf posits the understanding between the sexes, a symbol for the androgynous ideal, within each individual. Therefore, she is alluding directly to the potentialities of the theory of the "third sex" envisioned by Carpenter:

One has a profound, if irrational, instinct in favour of the theory that the union of man and woman makes for the greatest satisfaction, the most complete happiness. (Woolf 1977: 106)

The New Woman defied patriarchy by looking for new narratives that would escape from the tragic endings of the Victorian novel written by women. Their narratives "represent female desire as a creative force in artistic imagination as well as in biological reproduction" (Showalter 1993: xi). As Carpenter put it sex in woman "may more properly be termed a constructive instinct" (Carpenter 1894: 32). In order to make use of this creative force advantageously Woman should free herself from the impositions of patriarchal stereotypes: "The 'lady', the household drudge, and the prostitute" (Carpenter 1894: 12). For this reason, the female protagonist in Schreiner's short story "Life's Gifts" "laugh[s] in her sleep" (Schreiner 1993: 317) having renounced the gift of Love in favour of the gift of Freedom.

Even though the free woman, the New Woman, was seen by reformers as a key figure who would "undo the bands of death which encircle the present society"
(Carpenter 1894: 41) it was difficult for women to escape the patriarchal discourse with regard to marriage and their reproductive function in society. The advances in contraceptive methods during the interwar period did not separate femaleness from reproduction and motherhood. As Smith-Rosenberg argues, puberty and menopause were the two turning points of woman's sexuality and menstruation was the periodical reminder of them. The reproductive organs "controlled her physiology, determined her emotions and dictated her social role" (Smith-Rosenberg 1974: 24). Again in this respect, liberal thinkers such as Carpenter, Ellis, or Freud while acknowledging the need for a revision of the social concepts of maternity and domestic labour, saw both aspects as intrinsic to female nature. If the outbreak of the First World War supposed a massive incorporation of women to the labour force, its aftermath brought about an impasse in the women's struggle. Propaganda launched by the government aimed at bringing women back to their homes, their families and their husbands. Yet, in apparent paradox, the scientific discourse on sexuality reached the general public, as Weeks notes, in the 1920s. Sexology and psychology started to be available to the general public through the publication of manuals such as Marie Stopes' *Married Love* (1918) or Helena Wright's *The Sex Factor in Marriage* (1930). The impact of these publications is two-fold. On the one hand, by stressing the importance of sex for the couple, by informing people about family planning and by being a source of information concerning contraceptive methods these works were breaking the taboo around sex inherited from Victorians. On the other hand, popularizing the works of Krafft-Ebing, Ellis, and Freud among others, these works established the differences between "normal" and "abnormal" sexual behaviour that meant that in most cases "it was inevitable that many women fled into heterosexual marriage or developed great self-loathing or self-pity if they accepted the label of 'invert'" (Faderman 1985: 252). Feminism in the period between the wars engaged in learning the meaning of citizenship and in handling the scientific discoveries and technical advances that so greatly affected women's lives. It is at this point worthwhile to briefly review these scientific accounts for many of them, as has been pointed out, are behind Woolf's postulate of the androgynous ideal.
Sexuality, inversion and the scientific discourse

The turn of the century was a time when as Karl Miller points out, "Men became women. Women became men. Gender and country were put in doubt: the single life was found to harbour two sexes and two nations" (Miller 1985: 209). It was also the period that saw the apparition of the scientific "expert" in relation to sex, gender and sexuality and his intervention in social, political and legal reform. Confronted with the increasing blurring of sexual roles, sciences started to investigate the differences between men and women in order to assert, through an empirical observation that supposedly validated the objectivity of scientific conclusions, the very differences on which their studies were based. Thus, through social science and anthropological discourse, patriarchy and its organisation of social structures and gender roles were justified historically and Evolutionarily by means of re-examining the idea of the timeless role of women in society. In regards to the conceptualization of the role and nature of women in the works of Victorian anthropologists (Maine, McLennan, Spencer, Morgan, Lubbock, Bachofen) Stocking concludes:

They all tended to view marriage in terms of the control of human sexuality, and took for granted some early condition of primitive promiscuity. They all accepted the general priority of matrilineal forms - although they also incorporated Maine's patriarchy as a later evolutionary phase. And of course they all saw the evolutionary process culminating in a monogamous family resembling that of mid-Victorian Britain. (Stocking 1987: 204)

The question of gender differences and the Woman Question also reached the field of biology and medical science in works such as The Evolution of Sex (1889) where Geddes and Thomson concluded, along the line of Spencer and Darwin, that the female human was a case of arrested development. Gendering his study of the cell's metabolic process, Geddes argued that the position of women in society was not the result of acquired social behaviour, but, on the contrary, that "it merely reflected the economy of cell metabolism and its parallel psychic differentiation between the sexes" (Conway 1973: 146). Founding his view in his scientific studies Geddes affirmed that: "What was decided among the prehistory Protozoa cannot be annulled by Act of Parliament" (Geddes 1901: 286), invalidating in this manner women's emancipatory struggle.
Perhaps the field of knowledge that took special relevance, as far as sexual difference is concerned, was the new science of sexology. Sexual scandals and the epidemic of syphilis caused the questioning of the validity of Victorian morals and values, while provoking in people anxiety and fear. This resulted in a stress on the importance of the family as a safeguard against sexual decadence and in a craving for legislative restrictions. Thus, the discourse on sexuality was transferred from the public arena to the household. Oscar Wilde's trial and conviction in 1895, for example, focused public attention on the emerging homosexuality while provoking its medicalization. With the purpose of establishing the borderline between acceptable and abhorrent behaviour, science and civil order allied. As Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg argue:

During the nineteenth century, economic and social forces at work within Western Europe and the United States began to compromise traditional social roles. Some women at least began to question - and a few to challenge overtly - their constricted place in society. Naturally enough, men (...) employed medical and biological arguments to rationalise traditional sex roles as rooted inevitably and irreversibly in the prescriptions of anatomy and physiology. (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg 1973: 333)

The literature of sexology of the period displays this anxiety. Although for many years the nineteenth-century theorists had denied women any sexual trait, paradoxically, the only approach that scientific discourse was able to undertake was precisely solely related to her sex, to such an extent that as Susan Kingsley Kent argues: "women were so exclusively identified by their sexual functions that nineteenth-century society came to regard them as 'the Sex.'" (Kent 1990: 32). Words like "feminism" and "homosexuality" were used now for the first time (Faderman 1985).2

The following pages concentrate on the discourse on sexuality paying particular attention to the study of homosexuality. There are three main reasons for such an approach. Firstly, the three women authors addressed in this thesis maintained, at some point in their respective lives, homosexual relationships and therefore, as educated women, looked into the literature on sexuality for descriptions of womanhood,

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2 Woods explains that the terms "homosexual" and "homosexuality" first occurred in German, in two pamphlets written by Kertbeny in 1869, but that it was Krafft-Ebing who gave them greater currency: "A translator of [Psychopathia Sexualis], Charles Gilbert Chaddock, first used the word homosexuality in English in 1892" (Woods 1994: 36).
femininity and homosexuality. Secondly, because characteristics of homosexual behaviour, seen in many of the scientific works as abnormal, were being ascribed to the New Woman in an attempt to repress her ascendance. By describing a "deviant" conduct, the sexologists were prescribing a normative one and therefore, prescribing the roles that the "manly" man and the "womanly" woman should and ought to perform. Finally because, with Foucault in mind, the homophobic discourse of legislators and scientists produced a "reverse discourse" (Foucault 1981: 101) which meant that marginal groups, such as women and homosexuals, were able to acknowledge and to articulate their difference which implied the emergence of a subculture that began to form and to protest. In this sense, Woolf’s androgynous ideal can be seen as an articulation of such reverse discourse. From a contemporary perspective, the alignment of the women's movement with homosexuality and gender inversion might be seen as politically erroneous. Yet, the history of the women's movement was, during Woolf’s life time, closely intertwined with the development of theories on homosexuality and gender inversion. Homosexuality and gender inversion are in themselves two issues that have been in different historical moments and in different places made synonymous or analysed as completely independent of each other. Indeed, as Foucault argues, the concept of "sexual orientation" is relatively recent. However, the earliest literature on sexuality and inversion, such as Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), evidences a non-differentiation between gender inversion and homosexual desire. Furthermore, as much as Ellis's *Sexual Inversion* (1897) or Carpenter's *The Intermediate Sex* (1915) attempted a distinction between inversion and sexual desire for individuals of the same sex (Chauncey 1989) the correlation between the women's movement, masculinization of women and female homosexuality still appear linked in these works.

Krafft-Ebing's treatise *Psychopathia Sexualis* was presented as a "medico-legal study." Its intention was to isolate, analyze, describe and, if possible, cure sexual behaviours departing from the norm. The fact of its being presented as a medico-legal study deserves attention: both areas, the medical and the legislative, affected directly the individual who (although probably unlettered in both fields) had to acknowledge them
Historical Framework

as the pillars of civilized society. Moreover, the intermingling of research on sexology and legislation (especially when sexology was such a novel field of study within the realm of medical knowledge) has an important effect. A rather descriptive study (such as Krafft-Ebing's) was invested by the subtitle "a medico-legal study" with an halo of empirical veracity. Sexologists had become statesmen:

sexologists, who by and large were also conscious sex reformers, were simultaneously powerful agents in the organisation, and potential control, of the sexual behaviours they sought to describe, for by the inter-war years the new psychology was a potent force in the reconceptualisation of crime and sexual delinquency. (Weeks 1981: 145)

The publication of Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (translated into English in 1892) signified "the eruption into print of the speaking pervert, the individual marked, or marred, by his (or her) sexual impulses" (Weeks 1985: 67); that is, the invert became "a personage" (Foucault 1981: 43). A reverse discourse taking place is evidenced in the number of cases analysed increased from forty-five (in the first edition of *Psychopathia Sexualis*) to two hundred and thirty-eight (in the twelfth edition of 1903) (Weeks 1985). The abundance of new data came to Krafft-Ebing through letters from people who felt compelled to speak out about their difference and perceived that they had found a proper channel for the articulation of that difference.

*Psychopathia Sexualis* is a comprehensive study of sexual deviations and perversions, where Krafft-Ebing establishes a hierarchy for the severity of them. He divides sexual inversions into two main groups: acquired and congenital. Within congenital homosexuality he determines four main categories (in increasing severity of the pathology): psycho-sexual hermaphroditism, homo-sexuality, effeminacy and viragidity, and, finally, androgyny and gynandry. The criterion for establishing the hierarchy of these deviations is, in most cases, the result of intersecting parameters such

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3 An illustrative example on this point has been clearly exposed by Walkowitz's study on prostitution in the Victorian era *Prostitution and Victorian Society* (1980). The Contagious Diseases Act, that is, the joint intervention of medical knowledge and legislation imposed upon prostitutes, meant a "professionalization" of prostitution in the areas of Plymouth and Southampton and the isolation of this group from their community. Women were stigmatized and rejected within their own community: "The eventual isolation of prostitutes from general lower-class life was largely imposed from above, although it received the passive acquiescence of the poor themselves" (Walkowitz 1980: 210).
as sexual instincts (coming from the Darwinian concept of "sexual selection"). Sexuality of the individual (that is, the subject's own urge) and the psyche, giving predominance to the sexual instinct. For individuals belonging to the fourth and last category, androgyny or gynandry, "the form of the body approaches that which corresponds to the abnormal sexual instinct" (Krafft-Ebing 1916: 223). Such affirmation shows that Krafft-Ebing does not distinguish the object of sexual desire from an inversion of biological and behavioural characteristics. Seemingly, he internalizes the Darwinian notion of sexual selection; that is, he takes for granted the individual's struggle for partners and the individual's attempt to perpetuate the species through reproduction. There is, according to Krafft-Ebing, no recorded evidence of a change in the genitalia or a physical transition towards hermaphroditism. The physical changes he refers to affect other parts of the body such as feet, shoulders or, even, the pitch of voice; these physical attributes as well as external factors (such as cross-dressing or "unnatural" behavioural manners) are evidence, for Krafft-Ebing, of a pathology, that is of a behaviour to be studied as caused by a disease. His viewpoint has its roots in the "heterosexual paradigm" prevalent in much medical literature of the time. The heterosexual paradigm implies that the human couple, whether homosexual or heterosexual, has to be made out of a union of opposites: masculine and feminine elements must be found. Since in the ideology of the time women were considered passionless, they could not have a sexual impulse towards other women unless they were in some way or another masculine. Being a treatise on sexual pathologies Krafft-Ebing's study does not, however, provide an explicit discussion on what is "normal" feminine sexual behaviour. Nevertheless, in his case-studies a description of "the norm" becomes implicit precisely through the assumption of deviation. The following passage is part of the confession of a young male homosexual who perceived himself as being what was considered effeminate:

Toward the man I love I feel completely like a woman, and, therefore, in the sexual act I am quite passive. In general, my whole sensibility and feelings are feminine. I am vain, coquettish, fond of ornament, and like to please others. I love to dress myself beautifully, and, in cases where I wish to please, I even make use of the arts of the toilet, in which I am quite skilled. (Krafft-Ebing 1916: 291, my emphasis)
Significantly, for the individual of this case-study feeling completely like a woman is linked to being completely passive in the sexual act. Implicit in this statement is the fact that "normal" sexual behaviour in women was seen at the time as being "the passive objects of male sexual desire" (Chauncey 1989: 89). Apparently, women's pleasure came from the pleasure gained in providing for others. Traits of active female sexual desire, in this period, were not considered bizarre or tasteless; they were seen as deviant. In this respect, Krafft-Ebing describes female inversion in the following terms:

The female uming loves to wear her hair and have her clothing in the fashion of men; and it is her greatest pleasure, when opportunity offers, to appear in male attire. (Krafft-Ebing 1916: 280)

Case 131 examines an example of the female homosexual. This case is interesting for it provides an instance of the relationship between artistic creativity, women, and female inversion. The case deals with a Hungarian Count/Countess who lived all her life in male attire and had even entered into matrimonial contracts. An extremely intelligent woman, the Count/Countess spoke several languages and was trained in classic Latin and Greek. By pointing out her intelligence and literary competence, "The evidence of those qualified to judge literary works shows that S.'s poetical and literary ability is by no means small" (Krafft-Ebing 1916: 313), Krafft-Ebing is assuming that intellectual endeavour is a masculine trait and, therefore, detrimental in a development towards "normal" femininity.

Compelled to find a physical cause but unable to find any physical anomaly Krafft-Ebing places the origin of this deviation in the least known of human organs; the brain: "just as in all pathological perversions of the sexual life, the cause must be sought in the brain" (Krafft-Ebing 1916: 223). Because for Krafft-Ebing a deviant sexual behaviour has to be caused by a physical anomalous condition he concludes that the brain is androgynous.

In order to discredit him, Krafft-Ebing acknowledges the work of the Austrian K.H. Ulrichs (1825-1895) who between 1864 and 1879 published twelve volumes on homosexuality. Ulrichs explains homosexuality in terms of an erroneous development in the embryo that lead to physically male individuals with a female soul:
He called these people "urnings", and demanded nothing less than the legal and social recognition of this sexual love (...) as congenital and, therefore, as right; and the permission of marriage among them. Ulrichs failed, however, to prove that this certainly congenital and paradoxical sexual feeling was physiological, and not pathological. (Krafft-Ebing 1916: 224)

Krafft-Ebing's study does not eliminate from his case-studies the morbid and perverted quality ascribed to sexual behaviours that departed from the norm. Yet, his acknowledgement of Ulrichs's works and his effort in trying to find a physical explanation for such behaviours opened a path to be followed by more liberal sexologists such as Ellis or Carpenter, who tried to remove the evilness and compulsion associated with sexual inversion.

The healing of the pervert

Following Ulrichs's notion of the congenital nature of homosexuality and his theory of the existence of a "third sex" (an anomalous embryonic development that resulted in a female mind with a male body or vice versa), Carpenter departs from the view of homosexuality as an illness:

there are some remarkably and (we think) indispensable types of character, in whom there is such a union or balance of the feminine and masculine qualities that these people become to a great extent the interpreters of men and women to each other. (Carpenter 1914: 115)

Carpenter's perspective, was indebted mainly to two contemporary authors: Freud and Hirschfeld. In "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (1905) Freud postulated a distinction between "sexual object" and "sexual aim." Freud suggests that "sexual aim" refers to the individual's chosen sexual behaviour, that is, whether the person prefers to be active or passive. "Sexual object," on the other hand, alludes to the actual choice of object of desire. In view of this differentiation it was possible to redefine sexual inversion segregating homosexual desire from transvestism and other forms of gender inversion. The word "transvestism" was introduced for the first time by the German Hirschfeld in his work Die Transvestiten (Transvestites) published in 1910. Like Carpenter, Hirschfeld was a campaigner for homosexual rights. In his work he not only incorporated Freud's paramount distinction but also the ongoing study in the early twentieth century of the hormonal system. In his view, the implication of the hormonal
system in sexual differentiation could not but support the existence of a third sex (Weeks 1981: 104). More important is perhaps the discrimination he established between homosexuality and transvestism and the relationship he perceived between transvestites and androgynes. With regard to the first matter, Hirschfeld, supporting his findings on his research of hundreds of examples of cross-dressers, proclaimed that far from being evidence of underlying homosexuality, transvestism was frequent among heterosexual men. In relation to the second issue, he argued that transvestites were invert on a psychical level relating gender to clothing. Androgynes were marked by physical features, beard, breasts, genitalia, body hair, etc. (Garber 1993: 131-132).

Carpenter suggested the existence of a healthy intermediate sex whose individuals are neither in bodily features nor in behaviour notorious. They form a group who mingles with the rest of society and often hold positions of responsibility within it. In the view of this fact Carpenter removed the morbid and perverted quality of Krafft-Ebing's study: "Such a term [morbid] is, in fact, absurdly inapplicable to many, who are amongst the most active, the most amiable and accepted members of society" (Carpenter 1914: 122). Rather than being cases of arrested development, for Carpenter the invert acquired a purpose in the fight for the survival of the species: "yet after all it is possible that they may have an important part to play in the evolution of the race" (Carpenter 1914: 121). Thus, it is to the advantage of society to acknowledge the existence of these different types of individuals and to avow their difference: "it becomes a duty for society not only to understand them but to help them to understand themselves." (Carpenter 1914: 121). Because everything that can be empirically observable and accounted for was regarded as scientific knowledge, Carpenter attempted to measure the number of individuals belonging to the intermediate sex. Although, for obvious reasons, it was difficult to determine the exact number, the proportion of urnings, in Carpenter's estimation, was enough to form "beneath the surface of society, a large class" (Carpenter 1914: 118). In his eagerness to seek acceptance in society for homosexuality, Carpenter, using Freud's and Hirschfeld's theories, disregarded the importance of the existence of transvestites with a homosexual drive. These people he called "extreme specimens" of the intermediate sex and commented: "the extreme specimens - as in most cases of
extremes - are not particularly attractive, sometimes quite the reverse" (Carpenter 1914: 126).

In 1897, Havelock Ellis published "Sexual Inversion", the first published volume of his multivolume work *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1936). This volume, banned after the third copy was sold, consists of a descriptive rather than analytical series of homosexual confessions that serve to corroborate his presupposition of the congenital nature of homosexuality, or sexual inversion, as he called it. His premise is similar to that of Carpenter, in that he wants to implement a "third" category that would blur gender differentiation:

> we have to admit, however, that, in the opinion of the latest physiologists of sex, such as Castle, Heape, and Marshall, each sex contains the latent characters of the other or recessive sex. Each sex (...) is latently hermaphrodite. (Ellis 1936: 79-80)

In this volume, Ellis included, for the first time in Britain, a chapter dedicated to "Sexual Inversion in Women" and a review chapter of the existing data in the field in which he attempts a critical approach to previous works of, among others, Krafft-Ebing, Albert Moll, John Addington Symons and Edward Carpenter. Ellis tried to establish that, as in the case of male homosexuality, inversion in women is congenital and that it has existed throughout the history of humanity as well as in many different cultures. Ellis acknowledges that despite the fact of its existence, very little is known about sexual inversion in women. In the revised edition of 1936 he writes:

> Krafft-Ebing himself, in the earlier editions of *Psychopathia Sexualis*, gave little special attention to inversion in women, although he published a few cases. Moll, however, included a valuable chapter on the subject in his *Konträre Sexualempfindung*, narrating numerous cases, and inversion in women also received special attention in the present Study. Hirschfeld, however, in his *Homosexualität* (1914) is the first authority who has been able to deal with feminine homosexuality as completely co-ordinate with masculine homosexuality. The two manifestations, masculine and feminine, are placed on the same basis and treated together throughout the work. (Ellis 1936: 203)

Three main reasons seem to be the cause of this lack of study. In the first place, Ellis argues, men had been indifferent towards inversion in women, considering it as not offensive. The second reason lay in the fact that society was more used to familiarity
and intimacy among women than among men. Finally, he attributes it to the ignorance and reticence of women regarding their sexuality:

A woman may feel a high degree of sexual attraction for another woman without realizing that her affection is sexual, and when she does realize this, she is nearly always very unwilling to reveal the nature of her intimate experience, even with the adoption of precautions, and although the fact may be present to her that, by helping to reveal the nature of her abnormality, she may be helping to lighten the burden of it on other women. (Ellis 1936: 204)

If Hirschfeld, Carpenter, and Ellis, among others can be credited for a more positive outline of the figure of the male homosexual, the axis that connected the New Woman with masculinization and homosexuality continued unchallenged. Carpenter simply transfers his notion of the masculine intermediate sex type to women belonging to this type: "defined we suppose as 'a male soul in a female body'" (Carpenter 1914: 125). While discrediting the masculinization or feminization of the homogenic individual he is unable to explore female homosexual desire without ascribing a masculine trait to the homosexual woman and without relating the mannish woman with the women's movement. In his essay on homogenic love, he writes that a "growing sense of equality in habits and customs" (he cites university studies, women's access to art, politics, and the use of the bicycle), is bringing women into homoerotic love (Carpenter 1914: 114-116). The reason for Carpenter's inability to separate the female homosexuality from inversion (whereas he was capable of separating male homosexuality from inversion) might lie in the fact that he did not devote enough attention to women: almost four pages to describe the characteristics of the inverted man whilst just over one page is dedicated to the inverted woman. Subsequently, he is unable to put forward a coherent reasoning that could support his theory of the existence of a "normal" type of female homosexual. Similarly, despite Hirschfeld's insistence that transvestism was different from homosexuality, Carpenter related, as Garber points out, female transvestism with homosexuality (Garber 1993: 132). Ellis, following Hirschfeld, argued that transvestism does not necessarily involve inversion. Yet, he maintains the connection between women's homosexuality and "a certain degree of masculinity or boyishness" (Ellis 1936: 244) and "a very pronounced tendency among sexually inverted women to adopt male attire when practicable" (Ellis 1936: 245). An
association between female inversion and depravation and crime (absent from his analysis of male homosexuality) is present in his work. For instance, Alice Mitchell who "cut Freda's [her lover's] throat" is, according to Ellis, "a typical invert of a very pronounced kind" (Ellis 1936: 201). Ellis also distinguishes between what he calls the "true inverted", presumably with masculine traits, and a merely temporal homosexual behaviour which "certainly disappear[s] in the presence of a man" (Ellis 1936: 214). The cause for these authors inability to free women's activity from a women's masculinization is to be found at the core of the patriarchal discourse within which they operated. Within the parameters of this discourse, activity implies and requires the presence of a phallus.

The connection between women's inversion, masculine traits and the women's movement had different consequences in the feminist struggle. On the one hand, it made women the target of stigmatization; on the other hand, many women, in an attempt to re-examine femininity, adopted the role of the "mannish lesbian". In the dynamics of different discourses, and insofar as for women of the period the sexologists's discourse seemed to apply to men and women alike, resistant women internalized this discourse, probably because by inhabiting it they disrupted and interacted with patriarchal dominant discourse more effectively. Accordingly, the muted discourse imposed by patriarchal ideology onto women became an emergent discourse. By the 1920s and 1930s a number of women consciously chose male attire and behavioural manners and a reverse discourse appeared. More or less public partial cross-dressing and duplication of heterosexual roles in lesbian couples was the choice of many lesbians at the beginning of the century. Women such as Gertrude Stein, Radcliffe Hall and Vita Sackville-West fully adopted this pattern of the mannish lesbian; they often held long-standing unions with other women that in many ways mirrored heterosexual marriages within the conventions of their upper-middle class upbringing. Sackville-West found pleasure in cross-dressing. Her pleasure was mainly related to the fact that she was not what people believed her to be: "I dressed as a boy (...) It was marvellous fun, all the more because there was always the risk of being found out." (Nicolson 1973: 105). The first time she
dressed like a man was in London. With Trefusis, she took a taxi "as far as Hyde Park Corner":

I never felt so free as when I stepped off the kerb, down Piccadilly, alone, and knowing that if I met my own mother face to face she would take no notice of me. I walked along, smoking a cigarette, buying a newspaper off a little boy who called me "sir", and being accosted now and then by women.

(...) Well, this discovery was too good to be wasted, and in Paris I practically lived in that role. (Nicolson 1973: 105)

The fact that many lesbians adopted the mannish role (which made them look like the "true invert", the focus of the sexologist's discourse) proves that their use of man's costume was the only channel available by which they could speak themselves. In addition, their behaviour went beyond their expectations in that, as Sandra Gilbert argues, it was:

radically revisionary in a political as well as a literary sense, for it implies that no one, male or female, can or should be confined to a uni-form, a single form or self. (Gilbert 1982: 196)

If the medicalization of lesbianism, even if misogynist, allowed a suggestion of lesbian articulation, this was not the case with regard to legislation. As late as 1921 legislators were still refusing to include lesbianism in the Labouchère Amendment because it was too deeply disturbing even to be forbidden: '"To adopt a clause of this kind', one MP proclaimed, 'would harm by introducing into the minds of perfectly innocent people the most revolting thoughts"' (Showalter 1991: 119). There was no power to articulate a "reverse discourse" since information was being denied. Weeks affirms that if "the late nineteenth century (...) was the crucial period of the male homosexual identity" (Weeks 1989: 80) it took another generation before female homosexuality reached a corresponding level of articulacy, and then it was still restricted to literary women and to women of an upper-class background. It is precisely to this second generation that Virginia Woolf, Violet Trefusis and Vita Sackville-West belong. Their background is that of an absence of lesbian identity, with only the knowledge of the misogynist theories of the sexologists. In fact, among the books of Sackville-West's personal library in her tower at Sissinghurst I was able to find the
works of Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter. Victoria Glendinning corroborates the existence of this literature:

The walls of the tower room are lined with books (...) Here are the books on the psychology of sex that she had read with Violet, and then with Harold: six volumes of Havelock Ellis, with 'V.N' written in each. (...) There is Edward Carpenter's The Intermediate Sex, and Otto Weininger's Sex and Character, with 'V.N. Polperro 1918' on the flyleaf, and passages about male and female characteristics heavily annotated. (Glendinning 1984: 405)

Virginia Woolf writes in A Room of One's Own: "No age can ever have been as stridently sex-conscious as our own" (Woolf 1977: 107). That Trefusis read these books is implicitly acknowledged in her novel Broderie Anglaise through the description, for example of Jeremy Curtis, who is a "dilettante, essayist, connoisseur of pathological 'cases', [and a] Freud enthusiast of indeterminate sex" (Trefusis 1992a: 77).

The "mannish lesbian," by being an visible figure in patriarchal discourse, challenged boundaries between activity and passivity by broadening narrow gender categories. The legislator's resistance to criminalizing her activities is a sign of their anxiety. Cross-dressing gave them the pleasure of outraging society - precisely the power of Carpenter's intermediate sex. By implementing a "third parameter" sexology was dismantling binary thinking and introducing a disturbance in sexual differentiation. The idea of the homosexual as a superior human being, in detriment to the notion of a case of arrested development, a Greek hero between mortals and gods who would bring about the understanding of the two sexes was a very appealing and romantic "one. It is also linked to the idea of the artist as the one who is able to see beyond human nature and to transmit a knowledge which appears as universal:

Certainly it is remarkable that some of the world's greatest leaders and artists have been dowered either wholly or in part with the Uranian temperament - as in the cases of Michel Angelo, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, or, among women, Christine of Sweden, Sappho the poetess, and others. (Carpenter 1914: 134)

Woolf's androgynous ideal clearly participated of the discourse on sexuality that was taking place in her life time. For instance she maintained that "If one is a man, still the woman part of his brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her" (Woolf 1977: 106). Since Woolf proposed the androgynous ideal
as a state of mind that would allow the creation of art, she was clearly alluding to Carpenter's vision of homosexuality. Yet, by using the word "intercourse" in relation to "woman" and not to "man" in front of an all-female audience she was consciously trying to change the line of thought of the discourse on sexuality through an implicit avowal of women's sexual trait. Moreover, Woolf is obviously deconstructing the idea of the masculine woman by hinting at the existence of a male and a female brain in every individual whether "normal" or "invert."

Furthermore, by focusing on women instead of men Woolf is consciously criticising the abasement of women in patriarchal discourse. From an evolutionary and mythological perspective androgyny recalls a prehistoric time in which according to some anthropologists, such as Bachofen and Jane Harrison, a matriarchy existed. By explicitly suggesting the idea of an androgynous mind and by linking it to prehistoric times, Woolf is also alluding to Freud's formulation of the unconscious.

"Every God relies on a mother Goddess"

Though developed upon a patriarchal ideology, Freud's concept of the unconscious was liberating for women insofar as the unconscious supposed a terrain as yet to be explored and hidden, as the female sexual organs were hidden. If women were subjected to a biological clock (Smith-Rosenberg 1974) men and women alike were subjected to the unconscious. Furthermore, as Jacqueline Rose points out in "Femininity and its Discontents" (1982), the great impact made by the concept of the unconscious resides in the fact that for the first time something that was not empirically observable had, nevertheless, a "scientific" validity. Therefore, there was a possibility for a positive meaning of "intuitive" knowledge that at the time was considered worthless and feminine. As Egerton said, referring to Freud's concept of the unconscious:

I did know something of complexes and inhibitions, repressions and the subconscious impulses that determine actions and reactions. I used them in my stories. (in Showalter 1993: xiii)

Moreover, Freud was unable to come to a decision regarding female sexuality. In 1925 he published a paper entitled "Some Psychological Consequences of the
Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes" in which, for the first time, he distinguished between the respective psychological developments in boys and girls. Up to that point he had studied girls' development as analogous to boys'. Female sexuality is for Freud linked to male sexuality and the concept of "penis envy." In this sense, the dénouement of the "castration complex" for women leads to the acknowledgement of "the fact of her castration, and with it, too, the superiority of the male and her own inferiority" (Freud 1991e: 376). Rebellion against this situation causes an abnormal development in Woman whose "penis envy" leads her to a "masculine complex" connected, also in Freud, to female inversion:

To an incredibly late age she clings to the hope of getting a penis some time. That hope becomes her life's aim; and the phantasy of being a man in spite of everything often persists as a formative factor over long periods. This 'masculinity complex' in women can also result in a manifest homosexual choice of object. (Freud 1991e: 376)

Because "anatomy is destiny" Freud thinks the feminist struggle to be pointless:

We must not allow ourselves to be deflected from such conclusions by the denials of the feminists, who are anxious to force us to regard the two sexes as completely equal in position and worth. (Freud 1991g: 342)

Freud's biased perspective is expressed in the above statement that seems to imply that women are less valuable than men. Women, according to Freud's point of view, were pursuing an impossible quest, for it is in the biology of the sexes that the superego of men predisposes them to undertake the most challenging tasks. Women, on the other hand, due to their less strongly formed superego, are capricious and unreliable "social beings" (Freud 1991e: 377). A few years later he published "Female Sexuality" (1931) which expanded on the ideas exposed in the previous paper. Maybe because of his later realization of a possible different psychological development, Freud's point of view on the subject of female sexuality remains hesitant and dubious and he never did come to a clear conclusion on the subject. Moreover, as Freud himself remarks, "pure masculinity and femininity remain theoretical constructions of uncertain content" (Freud 1991g: 342). Therefore, the respective outcomes of neither the Oedipus complex nor the castration complex are ever totally resolved. The primal bisexual disposition remains in the unconscious of both girls and boys. Bisexuality, stronger in girls than in boys due to
the girl's lack of a visible organ of recognition, remains in adulthood and, Freud argues, should be balanced in the individual towards the characteristics of the ideal Woman. Therefore, if biology dooms women to an inferior position, the primitive bisexual disposition opens a door to the convergence of the sexes.

In addition, Freud's theories about female homosexuality cast even more doubts. Exploring "sexual aberrations" Freud describes how the "active inverted" is usually a mannish woman who seeks femininity in her love object. He developed his theories on female homosexuality further in "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman" (1920). His conclusions establish that lesbianism - named as female homosexuality or female inversion - is due to a faulted development of the Oedipal Complex in which the girl, who identifies herself with the phallic father, feels that her father betrays her with her mother and she returns to the pre-Oedipal desire for the fusion with the phallic mother. Much later, in his paper "Female Sexuality" (1931), Freud outlines three possible outcomes for women:

The first leads to a general revulsion from sexuality (...) The second line leads her to cling with defiant self-assertiveness to her threatened masculinity (...) Only if her development follows the third, very circuitous, path does she reach the final normal female attitude. (Freud 1991e: 376)

By perpetuating stereotypes of masculinity and femininity in his theory of the Oedipus Complex, Freud created a debate. His "feminist" colleagues, Karen Horney and Helene Deutsch among others, not denying the value of psychoanalytical theory, challenged Freud's characterisation of femininity. In particular Horney, in 1924, opened what came to be known as the Freud-Jones debate. She argued that masculine narcissism "was responsible for the assumption that the female feels her genital to be inferior" (Roith 1992: 161) In response to her, Freud wrote "Femininity" (1933) where he comes to the definition of femininity as a single unique position for "normal" sexuality in women and he establishes homosexuality in women as a "masculine complex". The importance of Freud's sexual discourse during the interwar period lies in that he left most questions about female sexuality unanswered (e.g. "pure femininity" remains a "theoretical construction") and in the debate he created, which continues today. Woolf, who discovered psychoanalytic theories early because of her friendship
with James Strachey, first mentions Freud's unconscious in her diary in 1918 (Olivier Bell 1979: 110) and although she published the first two volumes of his *Collected Papers* in 1924, she found Freud immediately "upsetting" (Olivier Bell 1985: 250). The theories of psychologists and biologists were termed by Woolf "dangerous and uncertain" (Woolf 1991: 21) and their concepts of women infuriated her. In *Three Guineas*, Woolf wrote:

> That, then, was one of the qualities that the Victorian woman praised and practised - a negative one, it is true; not to be recognized; not to be egotistical; to do the work for the sake of doing the work. (Woolf 1991: 88)

Regarding the re-conceptualization of women Woolf seems to blame the Victorian woman for never questioning the scientists' pronouncements. However, she admits: "Science (...) is not sexless; she is a man, a father, and infected too. Science, thus infected, produced measurements to order: the brain was too small to be examined" (Woolf 1991: 159). Woolf is showing here her anger at the beliefs of Victorian physicians who postulated that women's physiological performance required the use of twenty per cent of their creative energy from brain activity whilst Victorian anthropologists believed that "the frontal lobes of the male brain were heavier and more developed than female lobes and thus that women were inferior in intelligence" (Showalter 1986: 250). Although some scholars envisioned a more egalitarian society, the majority thought that the differences in temperament of the sexes could not and should not be changed. Change was seen as progress only if

> men became more "manly" and women more "womanly" (...) If men became more like women and women more like men, they were both experiencing an atavistic regression to a state of primitive homogeneity or hermaphroditism. (West 1993: 69)

Affirmations such as this mark precisely the link made by writers of the interwar period between prehistory and androgyny or hermaphroditism. If the equality that androgyny emphasizes is a characteristic of prehistoric times, biologists, psychoanalysts and anthropologist looked back to prehistory because it provided the means to explore in their texts a society different to the one they inhabited. Once again Freud together with the anthropologist Jane Ellen Harrison are two relevant scholars in this question
and their writings were influential for the generation of writers that includes Virginia Woolf.

By the end of 1939 Woolf is "gulping up Freud" (Olivier Bell 1985: 249) and she is particularly fascinated by his writings on war and civilisation. Primeval instincts and pre-history are aligned in Freud's "Thoughts for the Time on War and Death": "The man of prehistoric times survives unchanged in our unconscious" (Freud 1991d: 85). He asserts repeatedly that pre-history persists in the individual: "Primitive stages can always be re-established; the primitive mind is (...) imperishable" (Freud 1991d: 73). Moreover, Woolf read in December 1940 Freud's "Why War?" where, with a direct reference to Plato's Symposium, he divided human instincts in two kinds:

Those which seek to preserve and unite - which we call 'erotic', exactly in the sense in which Plato uses the word 'Eros' in his Symposium (...) and those which seek to destroy and kill. (Freud 1991h: 356)

The myth of the appearance of Love when Zeus cut in half the sphere-like shaped entities that existed before human beings ever existed (as narrated by Aristophanes in Plato's Symposium) influenced the discourse on sexuality of this period. Freud opened "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (1905) with a reference to this myth. He omitted the fact that, together with the androgynous beings that originated heterosexual love, Aristophanes also told about the existence of male and female beings which originated homosexual love. Freud conveniently misread the myth so that it suited his theory on bisexuality (the myth and its importance on the androgynous ideal was studied in Chapter One). In "Why War?" Freud directs his readers to look for peace and harmony in those primeval human beings whose wholeness is represented in their circular-shaped bodies. The "ancestral voices" of the past and Freud's connection between the primitive man and the development of the mind inform the following passage of Three Guineas:

As we listen to the voices we seem to hear an infant crying in the night, the black night that now covers Europe, and with no language but a cry, Ay, ay, ay, ay ... But it is not a new cry, it is a very old cry. Let us shut off the wireless and listen to the past. We are in Greece now; Christ has not been born yet, nor St Paul either. (Woolf 1991: 161)
There is another debt in this passage and that is to the scholarship done by Jane Ellen Harrison (1850-1928). Harrison was a famous British Classicist and social anthropologist who wrote influential works on the shift from matriarchy to patriarchy in Asia Minor and Greece. She contributed to the matriarchal discourse initiated by Bachofen in the 1860s. Harrison is inquisitive as to the power structures between the sexes as they are exposed in myths and she places particular emphasis in the "social shift from matrilinear to patrilinear [sic] conditions" (Harrison 1924: 68). In 1903 she published her *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religions*. She argues about the existence of a matriarchal origin in Greek religions and claims that the ancient cult of the female figure has been forgotten and replaced by an obsession with the patriarchal figure. She suggests that patriarchy sought to destroy matrilineal families in order to introduce patriarchal laws of marriage and narrowing concepts of femininity. She proposes that since patriarchal mythology was the tool to impose patriarchal structures, research into matriarchal myths would help subvert patriarchy. Harrison reinforces the thesis of the existence of a matriarchal culture by adding further evidences to it and she also offers alternative modes of femininity and masculinity:

The relation of these early matriarchal, husbandless goddesses (...) to the male figures that accompany them is one altogether noble and womanly, though perhaps not what the modern mind holds to be feminine. It seems to halt somewhere half-way between Mother and Lover, with a touch of the patron saint. Aloof from achievement themselves, they chose a local hero for their own to inspire and protect. They ask of him, not that he should love or adore, but that he should do great deeds (...) And as their glory is in the hero's high deeds, so their grace is his guerdon. With the coming of patriarchal conditions this high companionship ends. (Harrison 1922: 273)

In this passage Harrison offers alternative concepts of gendered subjectivity. She was certain that the power of the figure of the Great Mother was just biding her time and that she would return triumphant. In *Ancient Art and Ritual*, where she describes religious rites and Greek drama, Harrison suggests that art develops from ritual: ritual is "swiftly and completely transmuted into art" (Harrison 1913: 14) and that "they do not seek to copy a fact but to reproduce, to re-enact an emotion" (Harrison 1913: 47). Harrison's work owed much to Freud's. In the Preface to *Epilegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, published in 1921, she presents Freud as a background authority and
acknowledges a debt to his work (Harrison 1921). In turn, Freud grew interested in Harrison's myth of the Great Mother and in the theories she developed on totemistic ceremonies and groups: he explored them in "Totem and Taboo" (1912-13). Harrison's pioneering work also impressed Woolf greatly. In her diaries and letters she mentions meeting the anthropologist and in *A Room of One's Own* she describes her in captivated terms:

>a bent figure, formidable yet humble, with her great forehead and her shabby dress - could it be the famous scholar, could it be J---- H-------- herself? (Woolf 1977: 21)

Woolf's library contained Harrison's *Epilegomena, Aspects, Aorist and The Classical Tripos*, an autographed copy of *Ancient Art and Ritual* (a Christmas present) and she also read *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religions* and *A study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*. In 1925 the Woolf's Hogarth Press published *Reminiscences of a Student's Life*.4 By the twenties and thirties Bachofen's and Harrison's arguments were very popular and many modernists (including Woolf, D.H. Lawrence and H.D) explored in their writings the figure of the Great Mother.

The aim of this chapter is to have provided necessary background information to the variety of aspects that inform Woolf's assertion that the mind of the artist should be "androgy nous" and to emphasize her choice of words ("androgy ny", "hermaphrodite") is not gratuitous. Her ideal, whilst clearly rooted in the discourses of her time, aims to interrupt and subvert those very discourses. Woolf's androgy nous ideal brings to surface and makes obvious underlying complex notions of sex, gender, sexuality and the difficulties encountered by the pioneer feminist movement. With the background provided by the discussion on the androgyne in Chapter One, this chapter provides the historical framework for some issues raised in the chapters that follow. For instance, the interest in prehistory underlines the discussion of Chapter Five whereas Freud's theory

4 See Robinson's "Something Odd at Work: The Influence of Jane Harrison on *A Room of One's Own*" (1987)

5 The Great Mother was also a source of inspiration for Breton and the Surrealists in Paris.
of the unconscious and his hypothesis of the psychoanalytical development are investigated in Chapter Four.
CHAPTER THREE
The Literary Network Of Violet Trefusis, Vita Sackville-West, And Virginia Woolf

The present chapter is constructed around two main ideas. Firstly, it recounts the biographical facts that help in documenting the actual encounters between Vita Sackville-West, Virginia Woolf and Violet Trefusis. Section One, therefore, explores those moments in life when the writers actually met and how these moments, which between Trefusis and Woolf, for example, were few and brief, served as material for writing. The lives of these three writers have been so thoroughly documented and scrutinized that to devote too much attention to the biographical data here might seem superfluous. With regard to their relationships, it seems unnecessary to recount extensively that between Violet Trefusis and Vita Sackville-West and between Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf because they have been documented exhaustively.

Secondly, and more importantly, this chapter explores the fiction, that is, the "literary" encounters, developed around the singular relationship sustained by these three women authors. Section Two, therefore, explores in detail the way in which Trefusis's *Broderie Anglaise*, Woolf's *Orlando* and Sackville-West's *Challenge* act as "fictionalized" correspondence between the three women. Thus, each text becomes, in the words of Barthes, "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (Barthes 1988: 170).

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1 Biographies, letters and diaries dealing with the lives of these three writers are listed in the bibliography. Apart from these works, there is the voluminous correspondence. Unfortunately the letters from Vita to Violet were burned by Violet's husband. Violet's letters, however, have survived. There are references to their relationship in the published letters between Harold and Vita, the letters of Virginia Woolf, the diaries of Virginia Woolf, and the attempts at autobiography of the three women. A highly engrossing study of the relationship between work and friendship is Suzanne Raitt's *Vita and Virginia: The Work and Friendship of Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf*. Although Raitt hints at a connection between these three women, she does not fully develop the triangular relationship.

Actual Encounters

Trefusis and Sackville-West first met, as children, at a party in London in 1903. Although they met sporadically, they constantly wrote letters to each other. Violet's letters, half in French and half in English, were far more sophisticated than Vita's, whose letters brought about Violet's ironical criticism:

Thank you with all my heart, dear correspondent, for your charming dissertation on the mountains of Scotland and the delights that they offer at this moment of the year. I have to ask myself again if this letter is really from you? Vainly I force myself to look for a symbolic sense, a sequel... (Leaska and Phillips 1990: 61)

According to Trefusis, their sporadic meetings seemed to attenuate this lack of sophistication: "Clearly, no letter writer. Our meetings, however atoned for this epistolary pusillanimity" (Trefusis 1952: 42). In 1913, despite her attraction towards women and her subsequent relationship with them, Vita decided to marry Harold Nicolson, a man whom she perceived as a good playmate, funny, with whom she could converse, and although she did not know it at the time, was also homosexual: "Harold meant to propose to me and I knew I should say yes" (Nicolson 1973: 34). Meanwhile, Trefusis was devoted to Vita: "Had you been a man, I should most certainly have married you" (Leaska and Phillips 1990: 74).

When, Vita married Harold Nicolson. "Violet Keppel sent an amethyst and diamond ring, but did not come to the wedding" (Glendinning 1984: 62). The episode of the ring, although apparently futile, continued for over forty years and the ring became one of the many talismans that nurtured their relationship. Whilst in one of her letters, Violet told Vita: "I love you, Vita, because you never gave me back my ring" (Leaska and Phillips 1990: 61), Vita ensured in her will that "my small sapphire and diamond ring" went back to Violet. (Glendinning 1984: 72). In 1962, when Vita died, Harold Nicolson sent the ring back to Violet.

Immediately after Vita's wedding and out of despair, Violet announced her own engagement to Lord Gerald Wellesley (the future Duke of Wellington), but by March 1914 the engagement was broken off. "At her own sarcastic request" , Violet was one of
the godmothers to Vita's first son (Glendinning 1984: 74). They spent 1918 travelling together. In Polperro (Cornwall) they stayed at Hugh Walpole's house, where they started writing Challenge (1919). They went to London, Paris and by the end of the year they arrived at Monte Carlo, where they stayed until mid-March 1919, when Vita left to join her husband in Paris. Again out of despair, and encouraged by her family, Violet announced immediately a second engagement: this time to Major Denys Trefusis. Violet's condition was that he would never ask her to consummate their marriage, a marriage that was never a success mainly because Violet did not love Denys but Vita:

Mitya, Mitya, I have never told you the whole truth. You shall have it now: I have loved you all my life, a long time without knowing, 5 years knowing it as irrevocably as I know it now, loved you as my ideal...
And the supreme truth is: I can never be happy without you. (Leaska and Phillips 1990: 87)

The marriage did take place and as soon as the Trefusises arrived at the Paris Ritz, Vita went to see Violet. She took her away to a small hotel and according to her own account: "I treated her savagely, I made love to her, I had her, I didn't care, I only wanted to hurt Denys, even though he didn't know of it" (Nicolson 1973: 108). The Trefusises took a house twenty miles from Long Barn and the relationship continued. By October, Vita and Violet had returned to Monte Carlo, although, once again, Vita left Violet to join Harold in Paris (December 18).

By February 1920 the two women decided to elope together: this time forever, or so they thought. They went to Lincoln and Amiens. The fourteenth of February, 1920 was a day of major crisis: Harold and Denys flew to Amiens and took their wives separately to Paris. Despite this and for the following two years Vita and Violet travelled frequently: Avignon, Hyères, San Remo and Venice and on their return to England in the summer of 1921 the families joined forces to separate them:

Denys Trefusis came to an agreement with Mrs Keppel. He would not divorce Violet; Mrs Keppel would subsidize the marriage financially, and they would live abroad. Violet was sent first to Clingendaal, the Keppel property in Holland, in the charge of an old French governess. It was humiliating for a grown woman. (Glendinning 1984: 112)

If the end of the love affair was a traumatic experience for both, it weighed very differently for Trefusis and Sackville-West. Sackville-West suffered less because she
returned to a happy marriage, two sons, and a house that she loved whilst Trefusis had to cope with a marriage that did not work and the fact that she had no place of her own. But although Sackville-West's successful relationship with her husband helped to ease her situation, Trefusis believed that her own doom was Sackville-West's doom and that her defeat was also Sackville-West's:

You who might have been (...) one of the greatest figures of your century - a George Sand, a Catherine of Russia, a Helen of Troy, Sappho!...

(...) Mitya, you'll be a failure - you, who might be among the greatest, the most scintillating and romantic figures of all time, you'll be "Mrs Nicolson who has written some charming verse." (Leaska and Phillips 1990: 116)

For Vita, distance and non-communication seemed to be the best antidote, but Trefusis tried to persuade her constantly:

Don't you see, Mitya, that if you tried for a hundred years to make, say a Fijian, see things from your point of view, you would never succeed. And your trying to make me see is just as futile. I shall go on playing my own solitary games until you will listen to my point of view, which, in reality, is neither selfish nor immoral, but just DIFFERENT. (Leaska and Phillips 1990: 211)

The end of the love affair changed Trefusis's relationship with society. She did negotiate this relationship and she gave no space for her inner self in her so-public life. The title of her first novel, Sortie de Secours [1929] [Emergency Exit], is in this respect highly suggestive. Trefusis's writing works very much in this direction, as an emergency exit after an extremely painful and frustrating experience. She later despised the novel calling it "a mediocre little book, a patchwork affair, aphorisms, maxims, annotations loosely woven into the shape of a novel" (Trefusis 1952: 100). However, the novel served a cathartic purpose: "it was a loophole, an outlet, above all, a piece of blotting paper which absorbed my obsessions" (Trefusis 1952: 100). Her "obsessions" were closely related to the nature of her lesbian identity and the space this identity had within the discourses of her lifetime. She could never support the idea that her lesbianism was caused by a "genetic imperfection" and for this reason Radclyffe Hall's The Well of Loneliness was a book she disliked greatly. Trefusis's point of view was based on difference. She did not see lesbianism as better or worse but simply as a different kind of sexuality. She knew her standards were not the prevailing ones, as she wrote to Vita:
In the Middle Ages, when people did things that the community didn't understand they were instantly burned at the stake for being sorcerers and witches. (Leaska and Phillips 1990: 211)

Lesbianism was not something reprehensible but something unaccepted. After the end of her relationship with Vita she understood how upsetting lesbianism was in the world that surrounded her and she gave up altogether the idea of living openly a lesbian existence. Seeking in a fictional world what the actual one had denied her, Trefusis's narratives are subtle and neat studies of desire.

Vita was anxious at seeing Violet again. Vita's family was anxious about Vita and Violet meeting each other again. When three years after the end of their love-affair (in December 1924) Vita was invited to a party to which Trefusis had also been invited, she received a letter from her husband:

Of course I know that it's all over now, but what I dread is your dear sweet optiness [sic] - just "Oh but it's quite safe - and rather fun" - and then she will mesmerize you and I shall get a telegram to say you are staying on in Paris. (Nicolson 1993: 126)

Thereafter, in each instance that Trefusis's and Sackville-West's lives converged, Sackville-West stood on her guard, which indicates the magnetic power Trefusis had over her. In 1936, for example, when they coincidentally took the same cross-Channel boat, Sackville-West wrote in her diary "Avoid her" (Glendinning 1984: 281). Although Trefusis knew that Vita was of a conventional nature and an upholder of traditional values, she also knew that Vita had an adventurous mind which was in constant strife with the traditional one:

You know we're different - Gypsies in a world of 'landed gentry'. You, my poor Mitya, they've taken you and they've burnt your caravan. They've thrown away your pots and pans and your half-mended wicker chairs. They've pulled down your sleeves and buttoned up your collar! They've forced you to sleep beneath a self-respecting roof with no chinks to let the stars through. (Leaska and Phillips 1990: 93)

However, Trefusis's power of fascination was counteracted by Sackville-West's resolution. The separation was quite final. Vita devoted her energies to her literary career and she felt quite contented with the arrangements of her life. Despite the fact that, as her son Nigel Nicolson has put it: Vita "was born to be a lesbian lover" (Nicolson 1993: 9), she would never compromise her marriage or her reputation for any
woman. Having grown up in the sight of adultery, Vita had learnt to regard it as normal behaviour as long as it fitted with the social canons of society. Sackville-West's resoluteness and her new friendship with Woolf, which started in 1923, kept her away from Trefusis.

Vita's underlying commitment to Violet was one of Woolf's everlasting jealousies, since on more than one occasion, Woolf had asked Sackville-West, unsuccessfully, to take her away. In a letter to Jacques Raverat in January 1925 (where she gave a distorted version of the liaison between Trefusis and Sackville-West) Woolf wrote: "To tell you a secret, I want to incite my lady to elope with me next" (Nicolson 1977: 156).

During the 1920s and 1930s Violet belonged to "Tout Paris" and came to know much of the intellectual, artistic and "mondaine" life of Paris. Her friends included Anna de Noailles, Colette - who called Violet "chère Geranium" (Colette 1985: 89), Paul Valéry, Giraudoux, Paul Morand, Princessse Marthe Bibesco, the Serts, Poulenc, Georges Auric, André Gide, and Jean Cocteau (Max Jacob is said to have proposed marriage). In England, literary friends included the Sitwells, Nancy Mitford, Lord Berners, Raymond Mortimer, Cyril Connolly and Rebecca West, who found Violet's affair with Vita "impossible to believe" (Glendinning 1987: 73).

Even though the factual connection between Woolf and Trefusis was never strong, as biographical records prove, it had, nonetheless, fruitful implications in the literary domain. Woolf first became interested in Trefusis at the time when she became Sackville-West's lover:

Like all lovers, they were curious about each other's history. Soon after Woolf met Sackville-West, she asked for a copy of her recent Knole and the Sackvilles. (...) In conversations, letters and in their novels, they explored (...) each other's past. (DeSalvo 1993: 90-91)

Soon Woolf came to know of Vita's long love relationship with Violet (on one occasion Virginia referred to Violet as "your Violet") and of their traumatic separation. Certainly, the persona of Trefusis, in all her aspects (as the lover of Sackville-West, as a
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writer and as a woman), occupied the thoughts of Woolf during the period in which she was writing Orlando (1928):

Tomorrow I begin the chapter which describes Violet [Trefusis] and you meeting on the ice. The whole thing has to be gone into thoroughly. I am swarming with ideas. Do give me some inkling what sort of quarrels you had. Also, for what particular quality did she first choose you? (Nicolson 1977: 430)

Sasha the Russian Princess was based upon what Woolf learned of Trefusis from Vita. Orlando, as Virginia wrote in her diary: "is based on Vita, Violet Trefusis, Lord Lascelles, Knole &c." (Olivier Bell 1982: 162). Although the style had to be "very clear & plain, so that people will understand every word" she was writing "half in a mock style" and she was being careful to find the right "balance between truth & fantasy" (Olivier Bell 1982: 162). Woolf wrote to Sackville-West:

I think of nothing but you all day long, in different guises, and Violet and the ice and Elizabeth and George the 3rd. (Nicolson 1977: 430)

Thus, life and art blend in the character of Sasha/Violet whilst Orlando fostered further Vita's fantasy of being a man:

the idea of being Orlando in Virginia's book stirred her imagination deeply. Her own fantasies were to be given form, as well as Virginia's. At once, she became 'Orlando' in her secret life with Mary [Campbell]. (Glendinning 1984: 181)

Only a few years later Orlando and Vita had already become synonymous. Christopher St John, an enamoured admirer of Vita's, wrote in a 1932 letter to Vita:

Orlando de-breeched, allow me to tell you that you are as dear to me thus, as breeched. I can never think of your sex, only of your humanity. (Glendinning 1984: 253)

This letter shows how thin the line between fiction and life is for Vita and those surrounding her. They conceived themselves as characters of fiction and they "translated" the events of their lives into novels. Whilst Orlando was perceived to exist and live in the person of Vita, Trefusis considered Vita's relationship with Nicolson to be "fiction" (Leaska and Phillips 1990: 85). There is yet another interesting aspect in Christopher St John's letter and that is the way in which she acknowledges that Vita personified the androgynous ideal. "De-breeched or breeched" appear as immaterial
qualities, for Vita is not a woman acting as a man; for her Vita is a man, and a woman.

Vita/Orlando transcends sexuality:

I could love you in breeches, or in skirts, or in any other garments, or in none. I know you must be a woman - evidence your husband and your sons. But I don't think of you as a woman, or as a man either. Perhaps as someone who is both, the complete human being who transcends both. (Glendinning 1984: 253)

If Violet had inspired and instilled Vita to explore what she perceived as her androgyny, Woolf transformed both women into fiction. Woolf did it superbly for, when Sackville-West writes to Trefusis regarding Sasha's description, she immediately adds: "She is a person of strange penetration" (Jullian and Phillips 1986: 227). When Trefusis read Orlando she felt that Vita had deceived her by informing Virginia of their love in a distorted way, and by presenting Violet as the deceiver instead of being the deceived, as she considered herself to be. In Woolf's fiction, Sasha might seem a secondary character, yet she is fundamental to the text, appearing and disappearing, but never leaving the text altogether. According to the novel, Sasha unmercifully abandons Orlando, and Violet felt this to be a flagrant injustice, particularly as Violet had often written to Vita letters similar to the following: "How gladly would I sacrifice everything to you - family, friends, fortune, EVERYTHING" (Leaska and Phillips 1990: 87). As the letters testify it was Violet who always tried to persuade Vita not to abandon her: as early as 1911 Violet was telling Vita "Follow me! Follow me!" (Leaska and Phillips 1990: 71); by 1918 she was writing "we must once and for all take our courage in both hands, and go away together" (Leaska and Phillips 1990: 84). The letters become increasingly despairing and she asks repeatedly Julian or Mitya to 'take her away':

You could do anything with me - or rather Julian could. I love Julian overwhelmingly, possessively, exorbitantly. (...) He is my ideal. There is nothing he can't do. I am his slave, body and soul. (Nicolson 1973: 143)

Trefusis's two most clear responses to Orlando were Broderie Anglaise (1935) and the words for her epitaph: "'She withdrew', would, I think, be a graceful epitaph" (Trefusis 1952: 234). Despite the fact that the ambivalence of the pronoun is clear, such a choice of epitaph has shocked all her biographers. The third person singular in an epitaph is used by relatives to refer to the deceased. However, in this case, where Trefusis has chosen her own epitaph, the third person singular may instead refer to Vita,
thus marking how important it was for Trefusis (more than forty years later) to make clear that she did not abandon Vita, as the fiction Orlando had suggested, but the fact that Vita had retreated.

Meanwhile, and in between the publication of Orlando and Broderie Anglaise, a collection of poems by Vita Sackville-West entitled King’s Daughter (1929) offers the final angle to the triangle. The title of Sackville-West’s collection of poems, King’s Daughter, is a clear allusion to Trefusis and the clue that links the king’s daughter to Trefusis comes from the knowledge provided by our contemporary perspective and passed unnoticed for most readers at the time of publication. Although the relationship between Alice Keppel, Trefusis’s mother, and King Edward VII had marked Trefusis’s childhood, it had been a well-kept secret. Even in her autobiography Don’t Look Round, written in 1952, the King is hardly ever alluded to. It is in the French version Instant de Mémoires (1992) that Trefusis discloses the big secret of her childhood. Here, the story is told obliquely by means of a fairy tale tone and by using a narrator seemingly different from herself. The breaking of the years-long silence is in a way censured by the memory of the silence itself: "Maman, pourquoi qu’on appelle grand-papa, Majesté? Silence de glace" [Mummy, why do we call grandad Majesty? Dead silence] (Trefusis 1992b: 21, my translation). What had been secret for so long became, during Trefusis’s old age, a well-known fact and she fostered the gossip that she was the daughter of King Edward VII. Jullian and Phillips write that it is untrue that Violet’s father was King Edward VII:

The daughter Mrs. Keppel christened Violet was born on June 6, 1894 - and it was not until 1898 that her mother met the Prince of Wales for the first time. (Jullian and Phillips 1986: 6)

In old age, Trefusis spread the rumour, regarded by Jullian and Phillips in the 1970s as one of "Violet's fantasies" (Jullian and Phillips 1986: 133). Souhami’s biography of Trefusis, written in 1996, affirms that Violet never knew who her father was:

3 Narrating the source of the brief friendship between Peggy Guggenheim and Trefusis, John Phillips comments on the attraction this rumour had for the former: "Peggy had heard all about Violet and Mrs. George Keppel, and she persisted in asking me over and over again, 'Is Violet King Edward's daughter?'" (Phillips 1985: 58)
She did not confront her mother on the subject (...) but she viewed her blood as royal. It became an obsession and a joke. (Souhami 1996: 15)

Souhami toys with the doubt of Violet's paternity: this and the fact that Alice Keppel was great-grandmother of Camilla Parker-Bowles, who "would follow the Keppel trail and choose as her lover (...) another Prince of Wales" (Souhami 1996: 291) helps the marketing of her biography of Mrs Keppel and her daughter. Increasingly, Trefusis is being referred to as the King's daughter. Lee's 1996 biography of Woolf perpetuates the doubt by introducing Violet as "the wild, sexy, sophisticated daughter of Edward VII's mistress" (Lee 1996: 488).

One year after the publication of Orlando, where Sasha/Trefusis, the collection King's Daughter came out. Undoubtedly inspired by Trefusis, the first poem reads:

If I might meet her in the lane,
Riding a raven horse
That trailed his golden halter loose
And snuffed the golden gorse;

If I might see her riding high
In her little golden coat,
Borne on his prancing as the waves
Carry a little boat;
(...)
Or should I see her cross the snow
With a grey wolf at her heels,
On the plain between the black, black firs
When the moon remotely steals
(...)
And should I see her glide away
Into the fir-trees' night,
Then should I know that I had read
Her changeling soul aright.
(Sackville-West 1929: 9-10)

The poem is clearly divided in two parts, the first one written in a pastoral tone (lake, lane, golden, scarlet, enchanted carps, swans, melody). The second part changes briskly into a wintry tone (snow, grey wolf, black firs, moon, ash, pale, ghostly) in order to stress the unpredictability of the beloved. The poet complains of her, the beloved's (Violet's?) "changeling soul" who "glides away" merry with scorn. As Wajsbrot argues, the icy-like landscape recalls the frozen Thames that provides the setting for the first encounter between Sasha and Orlando. Moreover, the image of a woman gliding away
The literature network and fir-trees stretching is said to represent, metaphorically, the vision that Orlando has of the mast of the Russian vessel sliding away with the princess whilst he is left waiting for her ashore:

But the Russian ship was nowhere to be seen. For one moment Orlando thought it must have foundered; but, raising himself in his stirrups and shading his eyes, which had the sight of a hawk's, he could just make out the shape of a ship on the horizon. The black eagles were flying from the mast head. The ship of the Muscovite Embassy was standing out to sea. (Woolf 1993: 45)

By comparing both texts Waisbrot argues that Woolf and Sackville-West shared the opinion that Trefusis had abandoned Vita. If this might be the case in most of the poems, in others Sackville-West does not blame Trefusis, but herself:

She passed with the wind in her hair
(…)
But I stood and watched her go, -
What a fool was I!
(Sackville-West 1929: 19)

References to Trefusis abound in these poems. She is an "enchantress" who "cheats in the game" but Sackville-West does not dare to "tell her name and shame" (Sackville-West 1929: 18): she is simply a pretentious Princess: "Why haste, Princess?"
(Sackville-West 1929: 27).

Waisbrot has rightly pointed out regarding Changeling Soul that the "wolf" appears to be a clear poetic reference to Virginia's surname. In that poem the representations of both Woolf and Trefusis appear:

Violet est toujours l'ombre qui plane sur sa vie [de Vita], même si une autre l'accompagne, Virginia Woolf, le loup gris sur ses talons.
[Violet still overshadows Vita's life, even though someone else is beside her, Virginia Woolf, the grey wolf at her heels.] (Waisbrot 1989: 132, my translation)

But it is Violet who is being chased by a "wolf", ("Or should I see her cross the snow / With a grey wolf at her heels"): if "I" is the voice of Vita, "she" refers undoubtedly to Trefusis. The poem alludes to the way in which Trefusis was affected by Woolf's chasing of her in the fiction Orlando.

Trefusis and Woolf, for obvious reasons of rivalry with regard to their respective relationships with Sackville-West, seemed never to have become fond of each other. In
Violet Trefusis: A Biography, Philippe Jullian, Trefusis's personal friend in later life, commented that on one occasion he had asked Trefusis whether she thought Sackville-West had ever been in love with Woolf, and that Trefusis had refuted the idea dismissively:

"Not for a minute," she replied with a trace of ill-concealed spite. "Virginia ran after her, and she couldn't get rid of her. She found her so sentimental." (Jullian and Philips 1986: 63)

Trefusis's malicious answer might have stemmed from bitterness as well as an old feeling of insecurity. However, as much as she might have resented Woolf as a person, Trefusis greatly admired Woolf's work. Trefusis's work as a whole is permeated by the influence of Woolf's theories on womanhood and on literature and, as this thesis proposes, her work is an exploration of Woolf's androgynous ideal. Woolf, on her part, was never indifferent towards Trefusis's personality, her writing or her influence over Sackville-West. As late as 1941 Vita wrote to Trefusis: "Virginia and I talked about you. She says she thinks of you as being all chestnut and green in colour" (Jullian and Phillips 1986: 227). Although there was never a good opportunity for a profound relationship, both Woolf's and Trefusis's personalities attracted each other's fascination. Woolf's curiosity was satisfied by the conversations she had from time to time with Sackville-West, in which she managed to extract from Vita the most intimate memories; Trefusis's was satisfied mostly through the reading of Woolf's work, acknowledging its importance and profundity. In this sense, it is not surprising that the approach each of them took to the other was an oblique one.

Violet Trefusis and Virginia Woolf met in 1932 when the former visited 52 Tavistock Square. Trefusis had already read Orlando, she had felt persecuted by her description and had written her first, most immediate response: Tandem, which she wanted the Hogarth Press to publish. Her visit took place at a critical moment in the relationship between Vita and Virginia, when the strength of the relationship had faded away and they were seeing each other far less frequently than they used to. As Woolf was missing the visits of Sackville-West, she wrote to Vita: "who d'you think came and talked to me t'other night? Three guesses. All wrong. It was Violet Trefusis - your
Violet" (Nicolson 1979: 121). According to the letter, the meeting was a formal one, calling "each other punctiliously Mrs Trefusis and Mrs Woolf" (Nicolson 1979: 121). Woolf's impressions of Trefusis are prejudiced by her protection of her own relationship with Sackville-West:

Lord what fun! I quite see now why you were so enamoured - then: she's a little too full, now, overblown rather; but what seduction! What a voice - lisping, faltering, what warmth, suppleness, and in her way - its not mine - I'm a good deal more refined - but thats not altogether an advantage - how lovely, like a squirrel among buck hares - a red squirrel among brown nuts. (Nicolson 1979: 121)

Certainly, the tone in Woolf's depiction of Trefusis is mocking and redolent of Woolf's ironic wit, the same ironic wit she apparently employed with Trefusis during their conversation. When Trefusis asked her for a copy of the Common Reader, Woolf said smiling: "By the way, are you an Honourable, too?" to which Trefusis responded "No, no" taking Woolf's point: Woolf had at the same time brought Vita Sackville-West into the conversation whilst ridiculing Violet's pretences of being regal.

Woolf's comments on the visit are not gratuitous. She opens her letter with a complaint about her friend's withdrawal: "Why dont you come and see me?" (Nicolson 1979: 121). Woolf supposed that Sackville-West would want to know more about this visit. In fact, the expected effect of her letter was to bring Sackville-West to her side. She was not mistaken: some days later, on 10th November, Woolf wrote Vita another letter confirming they would meet for lunch: "Then I'll tell you all about Violet" (Nicolson 1979: 123). In comparison to this second letter the first one seems even more secretive and enigmatic: "We glanced and winked through the leaves (...) How I enjoyed myself!" (Nicolson 1979: 121).

Apparently, the conversation had dealt with literary matters, particularly with the publication of Trefusis's latest novel Tandem: "It was her novel that brought her" (Nicolson 1979: 123). As can be deduced from Woolf's comments, it transpires that the relationship Trefusis had sought was that of a publisher (Woolf) with a writer (Trefusis); this made Woolf uncertain of how much could she tell Vita: "Publishers mustn't gossip" (Nicolson 1979: 123).
Woolf, who encouraged so many women to write and who had a keen interest in publishing women writers' work, was unable or unwilling to publish Trefusis's novel, concluding: "I think she's been rather silly about it" (Nicolson 1979: 123). Wajsbrot offers a possible explanation for this attitude in that *Tandem* constituted a potential danger for Woolf and Sackville-West. *Tandem* narrates the relationship of two Greek sisters, Pénélope and Irène, from 1900 until 1962 and Wajsbrot suggests that Woolf and Trefusis are amalgamated in the novel in the character of Pénélope. The strongest reason she provides for her argument is based upon a conversation taking place in the novel in which Pénélope confesses her failure as a woman to her aunt Eugénie who has just praised Pénélope's success as a writer:

"I have no one, but you are young, chérie, and envied and adulated, you are in your prime, a great and successful writer."

"But a failure as a woman!" murmured Pénélope in one of her rare, lucid moments. (Trefusis 1933: 252-253)

In a more speculative than documented manner Wajsbrot affirms: "Violet faisant écho aux angoisses de Virginia Woolf sur l'échec de sa vie de femme" [Violet echoes Virginia Woolf's distress about her own failure of her life as a woman] (Wajsbrot 1989: 163, my translation). The meaning of the statement "to fail as a woman" is left unaccounted for and Wajsbrot plays with a set of coincidences that fails to support her argument. Although Woolf several times expressed such a feeling in her diaries it is hardly conceivable that Trefusis knew about such intimate matters. Furthermore, the same sort of argument could be applied to Trefusis. Like Woolf, she was childless and the fact that she portrayed herself in *Broderie Anglaise* as the mother of two girls indicates, if not a preoccupation, a fear of not being taken as a real woman.

Yet Woolf's remark in her letter ("I think she's been rather silly about it") seems to unfold her anxieties about *Tandem*. The reading of Trefusis's novel might have provided clues that did not pass unnoticed under Woolf's scrutinising eye. There are, in the novel, subtle signals to Woolf: Pénélope, for example, after the success of her first novel, demands from her husband "a room to herself" (Trefusis 1933:194). *Tandem*'s characters and places are elaborated in a Proustian style (Proust is one character in her novel). Much as is the case with Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu*, characters and
places, although drawn from real life, are reconstructed with such a mingling and dissemination of characteristics that it is difficult to distinguish their models. Central to the text, is Pénélope's question: "How can one have genius without love?" (Trefusis 1933: 100). After being portrayed in Orlando as the deceiver, the one who abandons Orlando, Trefusis felt the need to expose her views and to distribute responsibilities for the failure of her relationship with Sackville-West. Later, in 1932, referring to Trefusis, Woolf acknowledged: "Frightfully queer. She wasn't what I expected" (Nicolson 1979: 123). If in this letter Woolf confesses that she may have changed her perception of Trefusis over the years, after a series of disappointments with Sackville-West she even comes as close as to identify herself with Violet, whilst acknowledging her earlier feelings of jealousy. In 1935, after the Christopher "St John complication" (Nicolson 1979: 379) Woolf wrote to Ethel Smyth:

I wouldn't like Vita to hear a word about my feelings except through me. And I'm not by any means clear what I do feel - Its all such a silly mess - I rather think the Trefusis affair was the same sort of smudge too. dear me - I didn't take to Trefusis either, and loves the devil. (Nicolson 1979: 379)

But it was too late, Orlando was in the public domain, for everyone to read, and Trefusis wanted to put it right. Humour, or rather carnivalesque laughter was going to be her tool, and that is the spirit of Tandem. As Lorna Sage has put it:

The pain of realizing that they would not be allowed - by the conventional world at large, by husbands, and (above all) by mothers - to live out the life of Bohemian freedom she'd imagined was what made her so convinced of the saving grace of the comic spirit. (Sage 1985: 86)

In this sense, the novel seems to move towards a moment of "truth" (Violet's "truth") intended to be a revelation of the nature of society, held by Trefusis as being, ultimately, the one to blame. The comic spirit of the novel turns out to be black comedy with a cathartic intention: the dénouement is that Pénélope (Violet) will wait no longer for Ulysses (Vita).

Given this, it seems that the most distinguishable clue the novel provides is that Trefusis was eager to have it published by the Woolfs' press and thus have the same publishers as Sackville-West and Woolf. This was important because, as Sharpe has suggested, Trefusis felt that Sackville-West's abandonment had brought about the
The decline of her artistic talent and her submission to the mundane life (Sharpe 1981: 188). *Tandem* was eventually published in 1933 by William Heinemann.

There had been, however, a previous meeting between Woolf and Trefusis in 1932. The occasion for it was to introduce Trefusis's mother, Alice Keppel to Woolf. Accompanied by a mutual friend of Woolf and Trefusis, Raymond Mortimer, Trefusis and Mrs. Keppel visited Woolf at Tavistock Square. The meeting is recounted by Trefusis in her autobiography *Don't Look Round* (1952):

It would have been difficult to find two people more dissimilar than Virginia Woolf and my mother. Yet, strange as it may seem, they were deeply interested in one another, and longed to meet.

Raymond Mortimer got wind of this, and with typical mercurial mischief offered to sponsor an encounter. He was to bring Mama to tea with Virginia in Tavistock Square. Meanwhile, Virginia had steeped herself in Edwardian memoirs, while my mother struggled manfully with *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. Off we set. Raymond and I had agreed that it would be more tactful, after the first échange de politesses, to eclipse ourselves. (Trefusis 1952: 107)

The fact is that Trefusis was eclipsed by the presence of Mrs Keppel. Woolf recorded the meeting in her diary devoting the entry to Mrs Keppel without even mentioning the fact that Trefusis was there. She does mention instead "Ed. 7th" and her opinion of Mrs Keppel:

I liked her, on the surface. I mean the extensive, jolly, brazen surface of the old courtezan; who has lost all bloom; & acquired a kind of cordiality, humour, directness instead. No sensibilities as far as I could see; nor snobberies: immense superficial knowledge, & going off to Berlin to hear Hitler speak. (Olivier Bell 1983: 81)

The interesting feature of the meeting is Trefusis’s willingness to make this oblique encounter with Woolf central to her life, as the inclusion of the incident in her memoirs proves.

Hence, the two recorded encounters with Woolf have been transformed in the process of writing into more than simple autobiographical accounts, by what Nalbantian has termed "processes of tunnelling and telescoping" (Nalbantian 1994: 59). The meeting between Woolf and Trefusis that involved the refusal of publication of *Tandem* by the Hogarth Press was omitted from Trefusis's autobiography. In the process of writing Trefusis obscured, buried under the earth as in a tunnel, this event, whereas she
magnified the meeting between Woolf and Mrs Keppel. In this respect the explanation Trefusis offers in the Preface to her autobiography *Don't Look Round* (1952) is relevant:

I OWE an apology to those who expect, and are entitled to expect, accuracy, coherence, chronological order (…) Why burden the book with the 'long littleness of life', which the reader would only skip, and which I have skipped for him? (…) I have not lied, I have merely omitted, by-passed the truth, whenever unpalatable. (Trefusis 1952: 9)

That is, *Don't Look Round* provides the reader with sketches of Trefusis's life chosen according to certain criteria. Incidentally, when Violet asked Nancy Mitford for a title, Nancy suggested "Here Lies Mme Trefusis" (Mosley 1994: 364). Several questions come to mind: what criteria did Trefusis use? Who dictated those criteria? Why did she alert the reader to the existence of a different story if she was, apparently, so willing to spare her "the long littleness of life"? For whom is that other truth unpleasant? The omission of the encounter with Woolf when her novel was rejected shows that the criterion chosen in his case is self-protection: Trefusis thus managed to include Woolf in her memoirs, if only obliquely and when it suited her.

The process is even more interesting when translated into fiction. If the meeting with Mrs Keppel is the sole record of contact between Woolf and Trefusis in *Don't Look Round*, a blend of the two encounters form the basis for the fictional meeting between Alexa (Virginia) and Ann (Violet) in Trefusis's *Broderie Anglaise*. Hence, these two events are subtly mystified and suffer a further process of telescoping and tunnelling. In the novel, the conversation between Mrs Keppel and Woolf is transcribed almost literally. Mrs Keppel, however, is displaced by Anne (the character that represents Violet). On the other hand, the meeting when Woolf rejected *Tandem* is magnified into a mythical scene where Anne/Trefusis is so powerful that she transforms Alexa's/Virginia's life. As will be shown in the second section of this chapter, by the end of the novel Anne does not want to defeat Alexa but to help her. The fictional meeting between Alexa and Anne presents a powerful Anne/Trefusis that helps pitiable Alexa/Virginia to become more powerful and more secure in herself:

Alexa (…) thought of the flower whose name must never be mentioned again, because its scent was too powerful. But secretly that scent would always be her own perfume. (Trefusis 1992a: 120)
Trefusis has transformed the actual encounter into a rather pathetic fantasy whereby she can influence Woolf so as to change her life. The mention of the scent, however, is uncannily close to reality. Even though it is doubtful that the scent of the flower is a metaphorical allusion to Trefusis's name, Violet, Woolf did remember Violet's scent. In a letter to Sackville-West in January of 1941 Woolf recollected: "I still remember her [Trefusis], like a fox cub, all scent and seduction" (Nicolson 1980: 462). In a sense, Trefusis was always present in the relationship between Woolf and Sackville-West; and in 1941 Woolf still pondered on Trefusis's power of seduction: "Now why did you love her?" (Nicolson 1980: 462).

The news of Trefusis's visit to Woolf was for Sackville-West "another source of (...) tension" (Glendinning 1984: 253). By 1932 the Nicolson were having some financial difficulties maintaining both Long Barn and Sissinghurst. Sackville-West was emotionally unsettled and saddened by the end of her relationship with Evelyn Irons who had left her for another woman. She had not seen Trefusis for a long time and the idea of Trefusis meeting Woolf was a serious cause for concern, since it awoke in Sackville-West memories of the past that she could hardly manage to conceal from herself.

World War II drew Vita and Violet together again. When Trefusis left France and came to London in June of 1940, she immediately contacted Sackville-West. However, Trefusis declined her invitation to visit Sissinghurst. Whether or not it was a subtle move on Trefusis's part, the fact is that Sackville-West was very disappointed (Glendinning 1984: 306). The possibility of invasion seemed at this time more imminent than ever. There were daily air-battles in the skies over Sissinghurst where Sackville-West was staying. The Nicolson, according to Glendinning, thought that Britain would lose the war. The situation had deeply affected Sackville-West who was at this time "increasingly relying on alcohol to get through the long, frightening evenings" (Glendinning 1984: 306). In this context, Trefusis's refusal alerted her of the dangers which a meeting with her would entail. As Glendinning has put it:
War, and the possibility of death and destruction at any moment, had made Vita vulnerable to Violet as she had not been for decades. (Glendinning 1984: 308)

Sackville-West was aware of this fact and in a letter to Trefusis she wrote:

Curious how war has drawn the strands of our lives together again. (...) One travels far, only to come round to the old starting point. (Jullian and Phillips 1986: 223)

Sackville-West's letters of this period are as much a reminder to herself as they are a refusal to become involved with Trefusis. In an undated letter written around this time Sackville-West described Trefusis as an "unexploded bomb":

You and I cannot be together. I go down country lanes and meet a notice saying "Beware. Unexploded bomb".
So I have to go around another way.
You are the unexploded bomb to me.
I don't want you to explode.
I don't want you to disrupt my life. (Jullian and Phillips 1986: 225)

Trefusis's letters of this time have disappeared but Sackville-West's letters show that Trefusis was "à la recherche du temps perdu": "What are you really doing? (...) I could wish that they contained some reference to your present" (Jullian and Phillips 1986: 231). The distress that affected Sackville-West was no different from that of Trefusis. She had abandoned all her possessions in France. Her medieval tower at Saint Loup de Naud was in the path of the invading forces. Occupied France was a great concern for her and she started to collaborate with Free France organisations. She also broadcast for Radio Free France. In 1941 she published Les Causes Perdues. By this time she was already in England but the novel, published by La Nouvelle Revue Française under German occupation, "suscite le courroux de la censure" [provoked the anger of the censors] (Burrin 1995: 336, my translation). Her escape was not easy at a time when leaving France was difficult for everyone. Her connection with the Spanish ambassador at the time served to help her obtain the documents necessary to cross the Spanish frontier. These documents were never used, for when she met up with her parents they had already arranged the journey by ship to England. After a difficult crossing endangered by enemy planes and submarines, she arrived very distressed in the terrifying London of the air raids. The success of her first contact with Sackville-West undoubtedly unearthed some hopes of renewing the most important attachment of her
life. The memory of their traumatic separation provoked some aggressive and brusque answers by Vita, who, nevertheless always included a counterbalancing sentence or paragraph that could, without doubt, be taken by Trefusis as the "real" meaning of the letter. For instance, after the categorical denial to get involved with the "unexploded bomb" Sackville-West wrote:

This letter will anger you. I do not care if it does, since I know that no anger or irritation will ever destroy the love that exists between us.
And if you really want me, I will come to you, always, anywhere. (Jullian and Phillips 1986: 225)

The fact that they were not indifferent to each other satisfied both women. Although Sackville-West was adamant in her resolution of not getting involved with Trefusis, she brought herself to recognize that she still loved her:

Damn you. You have bitten too deeply into my soul. I love you perennially in the odd way we both realise. That doesn't mean that I trust you - or would ever commit myself to you again. I know better than that now. But I do love you. (Jullian and Phillips 1986: 228)

This cautious declaration seemed to suffice for Trefusis. The relationship of these days drew them, if not physically, emotionally closer than ever to such an extent that Sackville-West felt the need of sharing with Trefusis the death of her beloved Virginia Woolf:

Darling, I've just heard the most terrible news which has put everything else out of my head. Virginia has killed herself (...) You know how absolutely devoted I was to her. (Jullian and Phillips 1986: 230)

In one of her last letters, dated 3 September, 1950 Vita wrote:

What I like about it is that we always come together again however long the gaps in our meetings may have been. Time seems to make no difference. This is a sort of love letter I suppose. Odd that I should be writing you a love letter after all these years - when we have written so many to each other. (...) You said it would last for three months, but our love has lasted for forty years and more. (Jullian and Phillips 1986: 235)

The relationship of Sackville-West with Woolf is seen by Nigel Nicolson as different from that between Vita and Trefusis. He disdains his mother's relationship with Trefusis and instead shows an unashamed interest in recording his mother's relationship with Woolf. "Both women", he writes:
were enriched by it. Vita found in their intimacy an inspiration that she gained from no other person. *Seducers in Ecuador* was one direct result of it (...) written for Virginia, in her allusive style, and published by her, and from Virginia's side came *Orlando*, the longest and most charming love letter in literature. (Nicolson 1993: 9)

Nicolson is right in marking the influence of Woolf over Sackville-West, indeed, DeSalvo affirms that in *Seducers in Ecuador*, Sackville-West "had tried to create a work of art fashioned similarly to Virginia's *Jacob's Room*" (DeSalvo 1993: 86). Woolf, on reading the novel wrote in her diary:

> a story which really interests me rather. I see my own face in it, its true (...) she has shed the old verbiage, & come to terms with some sort of glimmer of art. (Olivier Bell 1981: 313)

Despite seeing her own influence, Woolf admired Sackville-West for her "skill & sensibility" and for being able to deliver twenty thousand words in a fortnight: "I must lack some central vigour, I imagine" (Olivier Bell 1981: 313). They learned from each other, for, as DeSalvo claims, Virginia soon "became more playful in her prose, and could write more quickly and for a far wider audience" (DeSalvo 1993: 88).

It is also true that *Orlando* has become "the longest and most charming love letter in literature" just as, according to Leaska the whole of *Between the Acts* can be considered as a suicide note to Vita, "the longest suicide note in the English language" (DeSalvo 1982: 214). Nicolson's statements, however, whilst true, omit purposefully the importance of Violet Trefusis. His publication of *Portrait of Marriage* - which his own son considers a very romantic version, "a hagiography" (*BBC* radio broadcast March 12, 1995), his publication *Vita and Harold*, and his subsequent biographical writings have the intention of obscuring the presence of Trefusis in Sackville-West's life and of magnifying the presence of Woolf. In the booklet "Vita Sackville-West: a short biography by Nigel Nicolson" (Nicolson 1992) Nicolson writes of the indissoluble bond between Harold and Vita and exalts Vita's friendship to Virginia Woolf as "one of the central experiences of her life" (Nicolson 1992: np). He does not mention Violet Trefusis. Nowadays Nigel Nicolson belittles Trefusis whenever he can, as a summary of Trefusis's character, provided by himself proves: "Her [Vita's] behaviour was reckless and cruel. Violet's was worse. Her humiliation of her husband was an act of cynical
wickedness" (Nicolson 1993: 8). Nowadays he says of her "Trefusis was evil, and I mean that in the full sense of the word" (Nicolson 1995: interviewed by Ana I. Zamorano). Sadly, Nicolson's authority in the publishing world has helped to overshadow Trefusis's literary career, and critics often attach more importance to Trefusis's personal and social position as hostess and entertainer than to her writing.

If it is true that Trefusis did not live on the income from her writing, she struggled to twist language for her own purposes. Literary creation was the centre of her life and to exclude the literary aspect from the friendship between Trefusis and Sackville-West is rather simplistic. Since childhood they shared a love of books. Their letters are full of literary references. Writing and literary aspirations form the basis of their earliest attachment:

> I love you for your wonderful intelligence, for your literary aspirations, (...) I love you, Vita, because I've seen your soul... (Leaska and Phillips 1990: 61)

Trefusis remained for many years a source of inspiration for Sackville-West: *Challenge* and *The Dragon in Shallow Waters* (1921) were dedicated to her. The only explicitly lesbian collection of poems written by Sackville-West, *King's Daughter*, has, as has been discussed above, Trefusis at its core. Moreover, Trefusis is the raison d'être of Sackville-West's autobiographical attempt published by Nicolson in *Portrait of a Marriage* (1973). Even Woolf was distressed by Trefusis's and Sackville-West's literary rapport. On one occasion she wrote to Vita:

> Oh faithless - why has everybody got a book and not I? Didnt I give you Flush and Orlando? Arent I a critic too - arent I a woman? (...) Look here, Vita, (...) do let your last act (...) be to pack a book, called *V. Sackville West Collected Poems* and sign it for me. (Nicolson 1979: 251)

The reason for her jealousies appears a few lines down: "Lord B [Gerald Bernes] is marrying V. Trefusis" and then despisingly "whom you once knew". Trefusis was a

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4 Nicolson has a file in Sissinghurst Castle (through which he kindly let the author of this thesis browse) with cards of the researchers that have browsed through Vita's papers. Some of them have the words "pro-VT" written next to their names.

5 Woolf seems to have forgotten that *Seducers in Ecuador* was an offering to her. Sackville-West wrote it in 1924 and the dedicatory reads: "To Virginia Woolf". She wrote to Virginia: "you asked me to write a story for you on the peaks of mountains and beside green lakes I am writing it for you" (Sackville-West 1987: vi)
published writer at the time of her involvement with Sackville-West (in 1919, in the midst of their love-affair, Violet's poem "Invitation" had been published in Country Life). She was a well regarded author in France where her novels sold very well and Echo was nominated for the Prix Femina. In later life they would read each other's writings (Sackville-West proof-read Don't Look Round) and literary creation was their strongest bond. After Vita's death Harold Nicolson wrote to Violet:

You were her best and oldest friend and she thought much about you and admired your work (...) I am glad indeed that she had so happy a life and you were a large part in it. (Jullian and Phillips 1986: 246)

On Trefusis's death in 1972, François Mitterrand wrote a recollection of Trefusis's last days in which he suggested the existence of a considerable amount of correspondence between Woolf and Trefusis:

There appeared occasionally at L'Ombrellino the signs of ancient storms and torments of half a century ago (...) The masses of letters exchanged, during a brief period by Violet and Virginia Woolf, and during a lifetime by Violet and Vita Sackville-West, furnish for the epoch documents of exceptional richness. (Mitterrand 1985: 93)

As it has been shown, there exists some correspondence between Woolf and Trefusis: firstly, the rather formal and impersonal letter from Woolf refusing publication of Tandem and secondly, Woolf's letter (1933) replying to Trefusis's "vast nodding bunch of lilac" (Nicolson 1979: 148). This can hardly be considered "masses of letters" and as John Phillips, Trefusis's literary executor (and the translator of Mitterrand's text) notes: "There is no evidence of a correspondence between Violet and Virginia Woolf" (Mitterrand 1985: 93). Mitterrand's connection of the lives of Virginia Woolf and Violet Trefusis seems to be founded in Trefusis's own confidences to him. Years later, Mitterrand wrote an "Evocation" of Trefusis to open Wajsbrot's biography Violet Trefusis:

Elle parlait très peu de sa vie personnelle (...) Peu de personnes connaissaient la vérité (...) sur son amitié pour Virginia Woolf et Vita Sackville-West.

[She talked very little about her personal life (...) Very few people knew the truth about her fondness for Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West.] (Wajsbrot 1989: 9, my translation)
Mitterrand reiterated the link between Woolf and Trefusis and added Sackville-West to the network. The acknowledgement of the axis Violet-Vita-Virginia is of great significance from a literary point of view since a momentous literary production blossomed from it.

Gabrielle Annan writes: "Violet Trefusis - like Webster in Gertrude Stein's *Wedding Bouquet* - 'was a name that was spoken'" (Annan 1976: 1102). It was spoken during the famous scandal of her affair with Vita in the 1920s, after Vita's death, after the publication of *Portrait of a Marriage* in 1973, after the publication of her letters to Sackville-West. Violet Trefusis was a name that was spoken (it is spoken today regarding Camilla Parker-Bowles) and written, and soon, it started to appear next to the names of Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West. In a scandalous form, the three of them were first connected when in 1933 Ben told Vita and Virginia that his grandmother, Lady Sackville, had spoken to him: "about M [Vita] getting hold of women and D [Harold] of men - about Violet Keppel, Virginia Woolf, etc". Lady Sackville told Ben that his mother:

"had been determined to desert her husband and two little boys for a 'Circe' (...) how a few years later a second woman entered my mother's life ('That Mrs Woolf, who described in that book how your mother changed her sex!') (Nicolson 1973: 169)"

Ben Nicolson recorded Woolf's reaction in his diary:

"Sunday 28 May 1933 (...) Virginia and Leonard came to lunch (...) She listened to the whole story (...) with her head bowed. Then she said: 'The old woman ought to be shot.'" (Nicolson 1973: 170)

Even though the three women never happened to meet together, they were already a threesome. Ben Nicolson did not hear of the countless relationships of his mother, but only of Violet (a "Circe") and Virginia. Sackville-West acts repeatedly as the nexus that bonds them together, if only in words: "Virginia and I talked about you". Woolf, Sackville-West, and Trefusis were names that were written and re-written, alluded to, "translated", fictionalized. In 1941, fifteen days before Woolf's death, Sackville-West was still considering a new rewriting of their lives, and she requested Trefusis's collaboration:
It was rather startling, your letter saying our story ought to be written. Only half an hour before the postman arrived with your letter, I had been rung up by somebody saying that I simply must write a novel on that subject. I objected the loathsome example of "The Well of Loneliness" - and was told (quite rightly) that I could do it differently. Which is true. I could do it differently!

Could we (you and I) collaborate? (Jullian and Phillips 1986: 228)

Why did she specify "you and I"? Who else could be "we", if not the other person who had already written on that subject, Woolf? The project was never carried out, but Trefusis's *Broderie Anglaise*, Woolf's *Orlando* and Sackville-West's *Challenge* stand as the multi-dimensional embroidery/text (*Texere*: to write, to knit) of their relationship.

"The other night Virginia and I were talking about you"

Kristeva, analysing the work of Mikhail Bakhtin in "Word, Dialogue, and Novel" (1969), suggests that for Bakhtin a "literary structure does not simply exist but is generated in relation to another structure" (Kristeva 1981c: 64-65). As Kristeva explains, Bakhtin's linguistic model, which she calls a "challenge," provides a dynamic dimension to language by looking at the text (the literary structure) in the following way:

As an *intersection of textual surfaces* rather than a *point* (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings: that of the writer, the addressee (or the character), and the contemporary or earlier cultural context. (Kristeva 1981c: 65)

Central to Bakhtin's theory of language as a dynamic process is the concept of *heteroglossia*. It is defined by Bakhtin as "internal differentiation, the stratification characteristic of any national language" (Bakhtin 1981: 67). In this sense, the meaning of a literary structure is mediated as much by the linguistic system in which it is produced as by the socio-historical context that informs the writer's conscious and unconscious cultural awareness. Bakhtin argues that the view of poetic language as a "unitary structure" capable of providing fixed meaning:

constitutes the theoretical expression of the historical processes of linguistic unification and centralization, an expression of the centripetal forces of language. (Bakhtin 1981: 270)
The centrifugal forces of language (heteroglossia) should also be accounted for, in order to explain thoroughly the dynamics of language:

this active participation of every utterance in living heteroglossia determines the linguistic profile and style of the utterance to no less a degree than its inclusion in any normative-centralizing system of a unitary language. (Bakhtin 1981: 272)

Bakhtin claims that this field of forces should be considered whenever analysing the meaning of a literary utterance, for it adds a new dimension to the text: it alters the postulate that language is a unitarian and fixed system. Heteroglossia implies that history and society are seen as texts that the writer reads and rewrites, thus inserting herself/himself into these texts. Because history and society are re-written by the writer, diachrony and synchrony overlap and, as Kristeva argues, "linear history appears as an abstraction" (Kristeva 1981c: 65). The traditional codes and logic structures (as they appear in linguistics) are, as was discussed in Chapter One, aligned with linear time. Under a Bakhtinian perspective sequences such as subject-verb-object prove insufficient and the need to search for different logic structures when approaching literary texts becomes evident. This "new" logic, the logic behind Woolf's argument for the need for breaking the sentence and behind Kristeva's notion of poetic language, was traced by Bakhtin in his writings on carnivalesque discourse.

Kristeva sees the carnivalesque discourse not only as a disruption of traditional official linguistic codes but also as an effective social and political protest since, as she argues: "there is no equivalence, but rather, identity between challenging official linguistic codes and challenging official law" (Kristeva 1981c: 65). Paradoxically, however, the challenging potential of carnival is constrained by its own temporalization. As Jackson has pointed out: "Carnival was a temporary condition, a ritualized suspension of everyday law and order" (Jackson 1981:16). It is this "permitted" temporalisation of carnival that has drawn some critics to question its emancipatory potential because carnival's apparently inherent revolutionary characteristic is invalidated by the fact that it is allowed, self-contained and finite. For instance, Eagleton has argued that: "Carnival, after all, is a licensed affair in every sense, a permissible rupture of hegemony" (Eagleton 1981: 148). Whilst acknowledging this criticism, and
adding others by historians and anthropologists, Stallybrass and White reveal the way in which the revolutionary aspect of the carnival can be effective. As they argue: "the politics of carnival cannot be resolved outside of a close historical examination of particular conjectures" (Stallybrass and White 1986: 16).

As a result of the introduction of new forces in the textual field the textual space must also change. Bakhtin's model of language as a dynamic process in which heteroglossia is always present introduces another key concept: dialogism. For Bakhtin, language is not static but is, by its own nature, in a continual process of renewal. A word (a text) undergoes dialogization when it becomes "relativized, de-privileged, aware of competing definitions for the same things" (Bakhtin 1981: 427). For Bakhtin, a text is not an isolated figure of speech, a hermetic and self-sufficient entity, but a patchwork of texts working in dialogical relationship. This is so because, as Kristeva has explained, the three dimensions of the dialogical textual space are: "writing subject, addressee [character], and exterior texts" (Kristeva 1981c: 66). Two axes define this space in which the word status is produced: one horizontal (subject-addresssee) and another vertical (text-context). These axes (called by Bakhtin dialogue and ambivalence) coincide since the addressee exists only as a discourse intimately related to the discursive world of the book. Therefore, and as Moi has suggested, Kristeva interprets this axial concurrence (left unexplained by Bakhtin) as an "open-ended play between the text of the subject and the text of the addressee" (Moi 1986: 34).

Perhaps a good, if extreme, example of the unsettling aspect carnival has for the "official law" is the prohibition of the carnival in mainland Spain during the forty years of Franco's dictatorial régime. The régime repressively and brutally imposed a centralisation of power which aimed at the homogenisation of Spain. The Catholic church, in exchange for power and wealth, provided an ideological legitimisation to Franco's coup d'état starting with a pastoral letter of 30 September 1936 in which the bishop of Salamanca, Pla y Deniel, contemplated the Spanish Civil War as a crusade and laid the foundations for the so called nacional-catolicismo, thus providing an illusion of unification in an otherwise severed Spain. The suppression of carnival (of pagan origin) was carried out on the grounds that it was heretical and sinful. The political connotations the abasement of carnival had for the victors cannot pass unnoticed. As Biescas and Tuñón de Lara argue the successful imposition of Franco's totalitarian state was possible through the enforcement of non-communication so that "mensajes van en sentido únicò; exigen o piden receptividad, pero rechazan interacción y diálogo [messages go one-way only; receptivity was exacted or asked, but dialogue and interaction were refused]" (Biescas and Tuñón de Lara 1987: 458, my translation). Intrinsic to carnival is interaction among the participants, an interaction that obviously presupposed a threat to the dominant dictatorship. The erradication of the carnival in a totalitarian régime such as Franco's points out the potential rebellious force contained in carnivalesque discourse.
importance of the axial coincidence because it presupposes that the literary text "is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Kristeva 1981c: 66). Bakhtin's notion of a text built up through a dialogical interaction of texts leads Kristeva to establish her notion of intertextuality which, as she argues, "replaces [the notion] of intersubjectivity" (Kristeva 1981c: 66). Kristeva's intertextuality does not refer to the hypothetical literary influences of a particular writer that can be traced in a text. Rather, intertextuality is the result of competing oppositional but nonexclusive interaction of texts implying that "poetic language is at least double, not in the sense of the signifier / signified dyad, but rather, in terms of one and other" (Kristeva 1981c: 69).

This "power of the continuum" (Kristeva 1981c: 70), specific to poetic language, is only possible because poetic language responds to the logic of carnivalesque discourse and, therefore, is able to escape "the linguistic, psychic, and social 'prohibition' (...) (God, Law, Definition)" (Kristeva 1981c: 70) inherent in a monological system based on exclusive opposites (true / false). However, from this it does not follow that poetic language is not regulated by a law. In fact, as Kristeva notices, the transgression of linguistic rules and social morality effected by poetic language is only possible "because it accepts another law" (Kristeva 1981c: 71). Dialogical imperatives imply "a categorical tearing from the norm and a relationship of nonexclusive opposites" (Kristeva 1981c: 71). Poetic language participates then in the carnivalesque discourse that, paradoxically, destroys one law to impose another. The "cynicism" of the carnivalesque scene, Kristeva suggests, "calls to mind Nietzsche's Dionysianism" (Kristeva 1981c: 78). Poetic writing is thus constructed "through a process of destructive genesis" (Kristeva 1981c: 77, my emphasis) since it maintains a competing dialogue with other writings as well as with itself, so that it is constantly renewed. In the light of the dialogical imperative, Kristeva argues that carnival is qualified by dramatic aspect in that it is: "murderous, cynical, and revolutionary in the sense of dialectical transformation" (Kristeva 1981c: 80). Taking into account this "other" law, "narrative" becomes too vague a term for the different genres it supposedly encompasses. For this reason a distinction between monological discourse (which includes the epic and
historical and scientific discourses) and dialogical discourse (which includes carnivalesque and Menippean discourses and the polyphonic novel - a novel that embodies carnivalesque structure) is made. In the domain of textual analysis, the dialogical discourse implies that gaps, silences, hesitations, corrections, contradictions and all graphic elements (that traditionally have not been subjected to analysis) form as much part of the text as the word and the actually said.

Looking at Kristeva's theoretical framework as a whole, her emphasis in the "specificity of dialogue as transgression giving itself a law" (Kristeva 1981c: 71) seems to look for a discourse (dialogical discourse) that, whilst responding to a law, may operate outside the imposed phallocentric patriarchal Law. From a feminist perspective, a dialogic realm that implies the existence of non-exclusive opposites provides the possibility of listening to those women's voices repressed and silenced by the patriarchal dominant discourse. Bauer, exploring the efficacy of Bakhtin's theory in gender-focused textual practices, has argued that contradictory voices in a novel, as well as its silences, can unveil power structures and potential resistance to those structures (Bauer 1991).

Within a framework of gender analysis, the androgynous ideal (understood in its hermaphroditic dimension, as discussed in the Chapter One) participates in the discourse of the carnival since the dialogical relationship of full masculine forces and full feminine forces it conveys serves to relativize and, therefore, to deconstruct traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. If a process of "dialogism" is behind the destructive genesis that creates the hermaphroditic Hermaphroditus, Ovid's tale is a carnivalesque scene. Indeed, once the "monster" (Hermaphroditus) is discursively "alive", the law ruling the metamorphoses implies that the destructive invasion of Dionysian forces (Ovid 1955: 113-114) must follow. It is not surprising, then, that Kristeva includes the Metamorphoses among her examples of literary works that operate within the Menippean discourse.

Within this theoretical framework of the carnival as a discourse that obeys the laws of dialogism, this chapter explores three literary works that mark the fictional encounter between Vita Sackville-West, Virginia Woolf and Violet Trefusis: Challenge (1919), Orlando, A Biography (1928), and Broderie Anglaise (1935). The argument is
that these texts embark on an intertextual enterprise (a literary embroidery) that effects a challenge to patriarchal dominant discourse. These three literary works maintain a dialogue specific to themselves (but not unique to them) particularly in those passages where the writing intersects with actual events (exposed in the first section of this Chapter). For this reason the distinction between writer and addressee blurs, and the writer of one text becomes the addressee of another in an act of destructive genesis.

The Rebellion

Sackville-West withdrew the publication of Challenge in Britain. She was influenced both by Trefusis's and her own families (who strongly opposed the publication) and by the fears of scandal expressed by friends. When the decision was taken, the novel was in the last stages of publication and had already been advertised as forthcoming by its publishers: Sackville-West having to compensate Collins with £150. Publication in the United States was postponed until 1924, when it was first published by George H. Doran. Publication in Great Britain waited until 1974 when Nigel Nicolson gave permission to Collins. As a roman à clef, Challenge is much more than an anecdotal novel where the relationship between the actual people and the characters is heavily coded. Despite the fears that lead to the withdrawal of publication, for the vast majority of possible readers, the novel would have been no more than a romantic love story set in the Greek islands (proved by its publication in the United States where it failed to provoke the expected scandal). As for those elite readers who would have traced the connection between characters and real people, most critics believe that the novel would have added very little to what was already known. Nicolson comments in the Introduction to the British publication of the novel: "the book's publication would add nothing to the gossip with which London already hummed" (Nicolson 1974: 8). According to Nicolson, the characters' lives run parallel to the actual lives of the writer and her lover:

7 Vita Sackville-West first called her novel Rebellion, and then finally settled on Challenge (Nicolson 1974: 8).
While Vita was writing it, she was living her life on two levels, the actual and the fictional, and as her love for Violet intensified, so did that between Julian and Eve in the novel, with incidents, conversations and letters lifted into the book from reality. (Nicolson 1973: 140)

In appearance, the novel's plot is simple and serves to fulfil Sackville-West's fantasies of herself as a member of the landed gentry with an ancestry of conquerors. Julian Davenant (Sackville-West), a young English aristocrat who belongs to the richest family of the Greek republic of Herakleion, becomes the leader of a revolution emerging on an off-shore island called Aphros. Meanwhile, he starts a passionate love affair with Eve (Trefusis), his cousin. The dramatic climax towards which the story inevitably moves begins when Eve, who had initially helped Julian in the revolution by going with him to Aphros, betrays him: she is jealous of Julian's commitment to the island and its people. On his part, Julian betrays Eve by proposing to her a vengeful marriage. Indeed, the story moves from initial exuberance to final tragedy: Julian returns defeated to Herakleion and Eve commits suicide.

Raitt argues that Julian and Eve are representations of "strong and conventional ideas about men's and women's roles" (Raitt 1993: 95). However, Julian and Eve also provide the means to relativize and renew these ideas, a motif that is found at the core of the novel. Nicolson also suggests that Trefusis made substantial contributions to the novel "suggesting extra touches to the drama and her own portrait, and adding from time to time huge chunks of her own invention" (Nicolson 1973: 140). Raitt has confirmed his view by arguing: "Much of the erratic and declarative style of Challenge's prose is Trefusis's rather than Sackville-West's" (Raitt 1993: 93). However, the published novel does not acknowledge Trefusis's collaboration. Nonetheless, Trefusis does participate in the process of writing Challenge, albeit in a more subtle way. Trefusis's collaboration can be better observed when approaching the novel as a discursive universe where all the participants interact as discursive practices.

Taking Trefusis as a discursive practice, as a text read by Sackville-West, it can be concluded that she did collaborate in the creation of the novel. To understand the

8 The author of this thesis could not find any actual evidence of Trefusis's collaboration during a visit to Sissinghurst, where she had the opportunity to see the manuscript.
kind of discourse in which the Trefusis-text is inscribed it is important to look at the adverse reaction she inspired in people who knew her in different periods of her life. As shown in the previous section of this Chapter, Nicolson refers to her when a young woman as "evil", admitting that she changed in later life. Yet, Nancy Mitford who knew Trefusis for most of her adult life comes, at the end of their friendship, to think of Trefusis as "wicked" (Mosley 1994: 566). Moreover, even her close friend Philippe Jullian "tacitly admits that in her old age Violet Trefusis was something of a monstre sacré, with the accent on the monstre" (Annan 1976: 1102). There seems to be a common pattern behind people's perception of Trefusis which, arguably, has its roots in her avowal of difference, in her different set of values. In this sense, Trefusis as a word (text) is perceived as a discourse that responds to "another law" - to the abhorrent law of the evil, the wicked, the monstrous. In Challenge, Trefusis-text is incarnated in the character of Eve. Yet, Eve is not the Trefusis-text exclusively, Eve is made by a variety of texts, Trefusis-text being but one. In the first place Eve, in its biblical reference, recalls the Judeo-Christian tradition which sees her as the cause for the punishment of human beings by God. The Eve of Challenge carries with her Eve's original disobedience of the Law: "Nothing was sacred to her" (Sackville-West 1974: 105). The Eve of Challenge is, however, unashamedly proud of the tempting seductiveness that characterizes both her and the biblical Eve before the Fall. She seems to be in possession of a knowledge beyond the mundane set of values held by the other characters: "She lives in a world of her own, with its own code of morals and values" (Sackville-West 1974: 136). With this secret knowledge she laughs, like Cixous's Medusa, and "she is laughing at us all" (Sackville-West 1974: 136) with the serious, murderous and parodic laughter of the carnival (Kristeva 1981c: 80). However, the "cynical, selfish, unscrupulous" Eve is wearing frivolity as a mask, for really she is at heart "a rebel and an idealist" (Sackville-West 1974: 136), an honest person inhabiting the world of the carnival and whom patriarchal Judeo-Christian tradition has tried to subdue.

Another text that Eve recalls and embodies is that of Eve's predecessor, the apocryphal Lilith, who also refused the imposition of the Law and God. Punished by
daring to be active in satisfying her desires rather than being a passive object of desire, Lilith manifests herself in the text in the character of Eve; her presence is emphasised by the marked contrast between her and the rather conventional and repressed Julie Lafarge:

Julie Lafarge, who was always given to understand that one day she would marry the insolent Alexander, was too efficiently repressed to be jealous of the Danish Excellency. Under the mischievous influence of her friend, Eve Davenant, she would occasionally make an attempt to attract the young man. (Sackville-West 1974: 24)

Eve, as did Lilith, understands the pursuit of love as an active search that contrasts with the passive attitude of Julie. Eve influences Julie to perform an act of volition, and this influence is described as "mischievous", indicating that Julie's conduct is normative. Eve's "mischievous influence" introduces a dangerous and challenging element into the established social code that regulates women's behaviour and, hence, traditional understanding of gender roles. Trefusis-text (evil, Eve, wicked, mischievous) is thus inscribed in carnivalesque discourse where:

The word has no fear of incriminating itself. It becomes free from presupposed "values"; without distinguishing between virtue and vice, and without distinguishing itself from them, the word considers them its private domain, and one of its creations. (Kristeva 1981c: 82)

Trefusis-text, inasmuch as it responds to "other" law, belongs to the dialogical discourse.

Taking Sackville-West as a discursive practice, as a word (text), Sackville-West-text appears to belong to the monological discourse. To understand the kind of discourse in which Sackville-West-text is inscribed, one has to look at the values Sackville-West upheld: her personality is marked by a strong conservatism and such a fierce support of traditional and aristocratic values that some critics refer to her as "profoundly, and publicly, reactionary" (Raitt 1993: 41). Her values caused her to find her acknowledged lesbianism a problem. The Roman origin of the name she bears in the novel, Julian, alludes to the Rome of the Caesars: Julian is destined to conquer and to lead the people of the Islands: "You are very young, Mr Davenant, and you are not very often in Herakleion, but your future, when you have done with Oxford and with England (...) lies
in the Islands" (Sackville-West 1974: 32). The historical context of Julian, in reference to his right (being the élite of Herakleion's society), "to drive for an hour in the ilex avenue" (Sackville-West 1974: 15), was later mockingly exploited by Woolf in *Orlando*. In Woolf's text, Orlando also claims a Roman ascendance and tells Sasha about the right his family had to walk down the Corso:

> Orlando (…) had given her the whole history of his family (…) how they had come from Rome with the Caesars and had the right to walk down the Corso (which is the chief street in Rome) under a tasselled palanquin, which he said is a privilege reserved only for those of imperial blood. (Woolf 1993: 33)

Whilst Eve participates in the discourse prior to the Fall, Julian's discourse is inserted in the Christian tradition after the Fall. He is a messianic hero, the prophet awaited to "be the saviour of an oppressed people" (Sackville-West 1974: 125). Up to this point it seems that Sackville-West-text is particularly preoccupied with inscribing itself within epic, historical and scientific discourses. It is, however, by means of the difficulty Sackville-West finds in reconciling her traditional moral values with her lesbianism that her discursive practice becomes more complex and opens up to dialogical possibilities.

Sackville-West-text unfolds as well in the character of Julie Lafarge. Julie's and Julian's similar names and their unconventional attraction to Eve draws them together. Julie's attraction towards Eve is made evident in the picnic scene, where the unpacking of the parcels serves to disclose her desire for Eve: "they nudged and whispered to one another, and their fingers became entangled under the cover of the paper wrappings" (Sackville-West 1974: 131). The act of unpacking, "that is half the fun of the picnic" (Sackville-West 1974: 131), is charged with sexual connotations: Julie "never took her adoring eyes off Eve" (Sackville-West 1974: 132). Julie's gaze can be read as a lesbian gaze but her attraction towards Eve, forbidden, is kept in secrecy. Similarly, the familial bond between Julian and Eve also forbids the cousins from becoming lovers, inducing in them feelings of guilt at what Julian perceives as an incestuous relationship:

> He had noted with an irritable shame the softness of her throat in the evening dress she had worn when first he had seen her. He banished violently the recollection of her in that brief moment when in his anger he had lifted her out of her bed and had carried her across the room in his arms, He banished it with a
shudder and a revulsion, as he might have banished a suggestion of incest. (Sackville-West 1974: 130)

Julian's tempestuous character as a man of action is balanced by Julie's passivity: the similarities between Julie's and Julian's names and their common affection for Eve point to the fact that Julie and Julian respond to the discursive practice that has its roots in Sackville-West's own perception of herself as androgynous. Whilst capable of loving Eve/Trefusis as a woman, Sackville-West is only able to interact with her as a man. It is for this reason that she engages in a process where her perceived split personality is totally severed, enhancing the man in her in detriment of the woman so that Julie, even if she is a key character for a dialogical interpretation of the novel, remains an innocuous and obscure character.

If with Violet, Vita felt like "a person translated" (Nicolson 1973: 103), Julie and Julian are the immediate outcome of this discovery. They are both an impersonation of Sackville-West translated into a text. After writing Challenge, Vita was able to speak of herself in these terms, without need of fictional characters:

cases of dual personality do exist, in which the feminine and the masculine elements alternately preponderate (...) I am qualified to speak with the intimacy a professional scientist could acquire only after years of study and indirect information, because I have the object of study always at hand, in my own heart, and can gauge the exact truthfulness of what my own experience tells me. However frank, people would always keep back something. I can't keep back anything from myself. (Nicolson 1973: 102)

In life, and in fiction, the two personalities defy one another and can never be put together. A house, a garden, a marriage, a family, represent the conventions of society. Wilderness, a fighter, heroism, outcasts from society, represent a lesbian self.

As a result, Challenge, a novel which would have followed epic monologism (where the logic of morality and reason would have been projected onto the self-sacrificial hero's aristocratic sense of duty), becomes a carnivalesque scene. In view of this dialogism, when the dutiful Julian asks Eve "Is life to be one long carnival?" the positive answer provided by Eve comes unsurprisingly: "And one long honesty." (Sackville-West 1974: 238). These words (presented as a challenge, as a rebellious force tacitly implied in the title) make explicit the presence of carnival in the novel and give
the key to the textual dynamics of the narrative which will be exposed in the following argument.

In Challenge, Eve embodies the Dionysian forces of the carnival. Her presence makes relative the standard of the prevailing values:

Was she to blame for her cruelty, her selfishness, her disregard for truth? was she, not evil, but only alien? to be forgiven all for the sake of the rarer, more distant flame? Was the standard of cardinal virtues set by the world the true, the ultimate standard? (Sackville-West 1974: 243)

In her monstrosity, Eve is presented as reckless, capricious, selfish, cruel and remorseless. The destructive carnivalesque forces embedded in her destroy a god to impose a dialogical rule. It is for this reason that she is involved in the death of Paul. As his "tutor and preceptor", the priest Paul teaches Julian about "the Islands and their problems both human and political" (Sackville-West 1974: 98-99). Eve attempts to liberate Julian from the grip of his [Pauline] law, which obstructs their access to carnivalesque gaiety. She metamorphoses into the biblical Eve and in the form of temptation draws Paul to his death. Paul's death, then, serves to emphasize Eve's role as that of transgressor of the law of God:

[He] suffered so much that, a priest, he preferred the supreme sin to such suffering. Suffered so much that, a man, he preferred death to such suffering! All his natural desire for life was conquered. That irresistible instinct, that primal law (...) was conquered. (Sackville-West 1974: 171)

Paul's death awakes Julian to Eve's world where a "rarer and more distant flame" can exist. Although at first repelled, when he hears of Eve's behaviour he is illuminated into an entirely different reality: "That you, who are so shallow, should be so deep!" (Sackville-West 1974: 173). Thus, Julian's duty is intrinsically linked to his understanding of Eve and what Eve represents:

Was it for Eve supremely, and to a certain extent for all women and artists - the visionaries, the lovely, the graceful, the irresponsible, the useless! - was it reserved for them to show the beginning of the road? (Sackville-West 1974: 245)

As Julian understands, echoing Austen's Sense and Sensibility, Eve's inner life is very different from her external appearance: "The normal mood to her was the mood of a sensitive person caught at the highest pitch of sensibility" (Sackville-West 1974: 243).
Eve is said to be a citizen of an extraordinary world: "of such perfection that this world's measures and ideals [are] left behind and meaningless" (Sackville-West 1974: 243-244). Julian's set of values and morals fails him when he tries to analyse their situation "I tried to judge our position by ordinary codes" (Sackville-West 1974: 246). It is only when he transgresses these values and allows himself to be taken in a journey of discovery that he glimpses a reality beyond superficialities:

He felt himself transported, by her medium, beyond the matter-of-fact veils that shroud the limit of human vision. He felt illuminated, on the verge of a new truth; as though (...) he might (...) handle the very substance of a thought. (Sackville-West 1974: 242)

In the novel, Julian understands that the connection between Eve and Aphros is fundamental for his revolution:

to love Eve and Aphros! when those two slipped from him he would return sobered to the path designated by the sign-posts and milestones of man, hoping no more than to keep as a gleam within him the light glowing in the sky above that unattainable but remembered city. (Sackville-West 1974: 245)

The real revolution (the challenge of the novel) occurs when Julian understands the intrinsic connection between Eve and the island: "For some reason which he did not analyse, he identified her [Eve] with Aphros" (Sackville-West 1974: 83). For a comparatively short period of time the "mythological Julian" (Sackville-West 1974: 85) allows himself to listen to the siren-Eve (Sackville-West 1974: 85). During this brief climatic period he is inhabiting Eve's world. Aphros in itself is not different from any other place. It is only in the convergence of Aphros and Eve that the island acquires the potential to be a revolutionary space. Eve confronts Julian with a different reality, ruled by laws different from those existing on the mainland. For Eve, love is ultimately an aesthetic prerogative; it must be accomplished as "a fine art" (Sackville-West 1974: 235), and Eve "is an artist" (Sackville-West 1974: 136). The link between artistic creation and love provides the mythical dimension to female subjectivity. Eve is offering Julian an experience capable of breaking down his subjection to patriarchal law. Julian, through Eve's eyes perceives what he calls "the drunken moments (...) moments of danger, moments of inspiration, moments of self-sacrifice, moments of perceiving beauty, moments of love, all the drunken moments!" (Sackville-West 1974: 243). Those
moments correspond to what Woolf called "moments of being" wherein, as Schulkind has argued in her introduction to Woolf's memoirs:

the self that inhabits the finite world of physical and social existence (...) is transcended and the individual consciousness becomes an undifferentiated part of a greater whole. (Schulkind 1989: 18)

Such moments provide a recognition of the double nature of Eve's world: being and not being. The immersion into Eve's world presupposes a submersion into an ambiguous realm directly linked to creativity since the drunken moments are "apprehended by poet or artist (...) in moments when sobriety left them and they passed beyond" (Sackville-West 1974: 243). This moment of the novel is climatic and here Julian's revolution is clearly directed towards the emancipation of a carnivalesque discourse that permits the production of poetic language.

Yet, these moments are extremely fragile and unstable. In the novel, the tension of the discourse Eve-Julian-Aphros is possible only when the protagonists are outlaws. The magic circle that surrounds the mythical threesome (Eve-Julian-Aphros) of female subjectivity has its borders and definition in the foam that surrounds the island: "The very foam which broke around its rocks served to define, by its lacy fringe of white, the compass of the magic circle" (Sackville-West 1974: 234). This image provides once more the ambivalent nature of Eve's world. Whilst the white circle encloses, at the same time it is a blurring boundary, easy to transgress: the foam is an edge open to those who wish to breach it. Furthermore, the image of the foam produced by the waves produces a feeling of eternal re-enactment; as long as there are waves there will be foam, thus implying eternity. Eve's world provides thus a space retrieved from history, a Kristevan woman's space marked by what Kristeva has called woman's time: cyclical in that it recurs and eternal within the white foamed magic circle that encompasses it.

The tragic denouement occurs when the "magic circle" is broken. People come into the island to remind Julian of his worldly duty to the islanders. In this precise moment the communion among Aphros, Julian and Eve dissolves, for Julian separates Eve from Aphros, and himself from her: "Julian felt a slight shame that he had neglected the Islands for Eve" (Sackville-West 1974: 249). If Julian's understanding of Eve
provided full meaning to the revolution by giving him access to female subjectivity, his rejection of Eve presupposes the repression of the carnival and the establishment of patriarchal rule.

The tragic outcome of Julian's betrayal of Eve and female subjectivity precipitates the acknowledgement of his defeat and the surrender of Aphros to Herakleion whilst Eve commits suicide by drowning in the sea. Eve's death (paradoxically anticipated by Paul's death) entraps Julian once more in the linearity of historical time: "You cannot think how final death is - so final, so simple" (Sackville-West 1974: 171).

Started in 1918 (immediately after Vita and Violet returned from Polperro), continued in Monte Carlo (where the two women were together), and finished in November 1919, Challenge was intended as a tribute to their love. The novel achieves its purpose in those climatic moments when Julian, Eve and Aphros are in almost-mystical communication. The story, however, refuses to focus its attention on celebration and instead (as a soothsayer foretelling the destiny of the lovers) continually turns the reader's attention back to betrayal, defeat and death. Although a straightforward reading of the novel may suggest that Sackville-West had not much to fear, her uneasiness with the novel (so strong as to compel her to pay a large sum in order to have it withdrawn) cannot be disregarded. This is because for her, the (dialogical) connections and relationships that constituted the text were extremely obvious. She knew that what she perceived as a "case of dual personality" (to which she never referred publicly) had originated the duality Julie/Julian. She felt that her compelling, though unacceptable, love for another woman, represented in the novel in the form of "forbidden" incestual or explicitly lesbian relationships, could be easily decodified. Above all she understood that the novel was a penetrating deliverance of her inner feelings: she was going to subjugate their lesbian bliss to the conventions of society.

It may be that Sackville-West withdrew the novel because it anticipated Trefusis's doom, which Vita herself would deliver. If not in actual handwriting, this is Trefusis's collaboration in the writing of Challenge. She was capable of eliciting from
Sackville-West a story so closely intersected with life that Vita only realized it when reading the final version ready for publication. By the end of the love affair, in 1921, Sackville-West acknowledged that Trefusis had foreseen this end:

The injustice and misfortune of the whole thing oppresses me hourly; it gives me an awful sense of doom - Violet's doom, which she herself has consistently predicted. (Nicolson 1973: 124)

Violet's doom, represented by Julian's abandonment of Eve and Eve's subsequent suicide, was foretold in Challenge.

A love letter

Woolf's Orlando seems to be embedded in the carnivalesque honesty proposed by Eve. It is in this sense that Woolf's apparently contradictory comment that the book: "should be truthful; but fantastic" (Oliver Bell 1982: 157) must be understood. Woolf read Challenge in June 1927, only four months before she started writing Orlando. Yet, studies on the literary influences on Woolf's Orlando, such as Schlack's Continuing Presences: Virginia Woolf's Use of Literary Allusion (1979), have failed to point out the importance of Challenge in the production of Orlando. Although Woolf claims that the conception of this new book was a sudden idea, the process of the construction of this idea was a long one. Orlando is the last metamorphosis of a Sapphic tale that Woolf conceived in March 1927 entitled The Jessamy Brides. Orlando maintains the link existent in The Jessamy Brides between lesbianism and satire: "Sapphism is to be suggested. Satire is to be the main note - satire & wildness" (Oliver Bell 1982: 131). Yet the spirit of parody, parody as a challenge, is precisely the key-note of the novel-biography. Woolf's understanding of Challenge seemed to appreciate the importance of the carnivalesque world as a revolutionary force. In a letter to Sackville-West, Woolf, referring to Eve, commented: "She is very desirable I agree: very. (Eve)" (Nicolson 1977: 391). The contribution of Challenge in the production of Orlando is intimately linked to Woolf's desire to inhabit Eve's world: she believed that this movement would bring Sackville-West back to her side now that the relationship between her and Vita was not as close as it had been.
In Challenge the moment of maximum ambivalence takes place when the two lovers are living in Aphros. There, the character of Julian moderates the exaggerated masculine traits he had shown in Herakleion whilst Eve moderates her exaggerated feminine traits. Julian lets himself be carried into Eve's universe where "the small moralities and tenderness of mankind contained no meaning (...) They were burnt away by the devastating flame of her own ideals." Liberated from the [Pauline] rule that had informed the basis of his previous knowledge, Julian allows himself to be "taught the value of her reserve" without questioning the original secret of Eve's reserve: "They both tacitly esteemed the veil of some slight mystery to soften the harshness of their self-revelation" (Sackville-West 1974: 235). In the Island of Aphros, Eve denounces marriage as an officially sanctioned market where, she affirms, real love cannot exist because love is replaced by propriety. Instead she throws a challenge to this world of propriety: "I'll own you before the world - and court its disapproval" (Sackville-West 1974: 238). If, as Raitt argues, Challenge "may seem to us now to be an evasion" (Raitt 1993: 94), looking at the ideology of the historical context where it was produced, the climatic section of the novel where Julian and Eve are in Aphros meant for Vita and Violet at the time an extremely liberating fantasy.

Orlando's point of departure is precisely this moment of ambiguity. The opening lines of Woolf's novel, whilst pretending to reassure the reader of gender certainties, hint, already, at the gender ambivalence present in the text: "He - for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it - was in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor" (Woolf 1993: 11). In this sentence Woolf includes the key themes of the novel: sex, ambiguity, clothes and time. It is in these words also where the gender ambiguity represented by the alterity of Julie/Julian in Challenge is incorporated into one single character: the androgynous Orlando.

The Sasha of Woolf's Orlando is, similarly, as much indebted to the real Trefusis as to Challenge's Eve. For instance, the fact that Sasha is presented as a Russian princess emerges both from gossip and from fiction. As shown in the previous section, Sasha "the princess" is a literary strategy that addresses the gossip that surrounded Violet (as the daughter of King Edward VII and Alice Keppel). On the other hand, the
fact that the princess is of Russian origin has its source in Sackville-West's novel, where Eve introduces her cousin, Prince Ardalion Miloradovitch, to Julian as her fiancé (Sackville-West 1974: 106). More interesting is perhaps Orlando's biographer's exasperation at the fact that the princess always talks in French and the insinuation that the oblique manners of the princess cannot be expressed in English:

she talked so enchantingly, so wittily, so wisely (but unfortunately always in French, which notoriously loses its flavour in translation) (...) English was too frank, too candid, too honeyed a speech for Sasha. For in all she said, however open she seemed and voluptuous, there was something hidden. (Woolf 1993: 32)

The whole description is elicited from a single moment in Challenge when, in the midst of an argument, an exasperated Julian exclaims: "Talk English, Eve, and be less cynical" (Sackville-West 1974: 145).

If in Challenge the carnivalesque quality of Eve's world is curtailed by Sackville-West's own discourse, in Orlando the ambivalence implicit in the carnival is set free. Because Sasha is embedded in Eve's discourse (in a space of maximum ambiguity) the transformation of Eve into Sasha requires a blurring of the gender of the character. When Orlando sees Sasha for the first time he is unsure of her sex: "a figure, which, whether boy's or woman's, for the loose tunic and trousers of the Russian fashion served to disguise the sex, filled him with the highest curiosity" (Woolf 1993: 26). Whilst the introduction of Eve/Sasha in the text liberates her from the constrictions of gender she still maintains a "seductiveness which issued from the whole person" (Woolf 1993: 26). The play with fashion as an enhancement of sexual ambiguity serves to make relative the biologism inherent to the social ideas of the inter-war period whilst simultaneously introducing one of the archetypal elements of the carnival: "One of the indispensable elements of the folk festival was travesty, that is, the renewal of clothes and of the social image" (Bakhtin 1968: 81).

Orlando meets Sasha skating on the frozen Thames of the Jacobean period and falls in love with her immediately. Sasha is an irresistible creature, beautiful, and unusual. Her description culminates in the narration of her glamorous mysterious origins: "the Muscovite Ambassador, who was her uncle perhaps, or perhaps her father (...) Very little was known of the Muscovites" (Woolf 1993: 27). Orlando, even though
he is unsure of the sex of the figure, does not restrain his imagination and allows himself
to be led by Sasha's power of seduction. Orlando's sudden attraction to Sasha occurs
before there is division of gender, yet his mind, working in the world of appearances,
transforms her into a woman: "he did not know whether he had heard her, tasted her,
seen her, or all three together" (Woolf 1993: 26). The tension in the narration lies in the
constant play with the (un)certainties of sex. Orlando despairs when, for a moment, he
thinks that Sasha is a man: "no woman could skate with such speed and vigour" and his
apprehension towards his desires recalls Julian's apprehensions in Challenge: "all
embraces were out of the question" (Woolf 1993: 26). Significantly, the encounter
between Orlando and Sasha takes place in the carnival. It is a time portrayed as a
suspension of time, specifically described by Woolf as a "carnival" and symbolized by
the frozen Thames:

London enjoyed a carnival of the utmost brilliancy (...) But it was at night
that the carnival was at its merriest. For the frost continued unbroken. (Woolf
1993: 24, 26)

According to Bakhtin, the carnival provides a "chance to have a new outlook on
the world, to realize the relative nature of all that exists, and to enter a completely new
order of things" (Bakhtin 1968: 34). Sasha urges Orlando (as Eve in Challenge urged
Julian) to abandon the claustrophobic, petrified atmosphere of the Court, where their
love is seen as scandalous (Woolf 1993: 29), and to follow her to the other side, where
the actual carnival is taking place. A silken rope separates the world of the Court from
that of the "common people." According to Bakhtin such a trespassing is significant
inasmuch as the revolutionary nature of the carnival provides a world that is constantly
becoming itself, denying fixed categories and hierarchy:

freed from the oppression of such gloomy categories as "eternal,"
"immovable," "absolute," "unchangeable" and instead (...) exposed to the gay
and free laughing aspect of the world, with its unfinished and open character,
with the joy of change and renewal. (Bakhtin 1968: 83)

In this sense, the carnivalesque world threatens the dominant ideology because it
threatens the very social order that sustains it. Indeed, in the novel, members of the
Court (the law and dominant ideology) are outraged:
But what most outraged the Court, and stung it in its tenderest part, which is its vanity, was that the couple was often seen to slip under the silken rope, which railed off the Royal enclosure from the public part of the river and to disappear among the crowd of common people. (Woolf 1993: 30)

The end of the "official" carnivalesque period in the text is marked by a moment of intense drama. Orlando and Sasha have agreed to elope together. Although Orlando awaits for hours at the agreed place, Sasha does not appear. When Orlando is waiting for Sasha and she fails to come, the stasis of the atmosphere that has surrounded the lovers is broken: "The dry frost had lasted so long that it took him a minute to realise that these were raindrops falling" (Woolf 1993: 42). The rain marks, in its biblical reference to the flood, the end of the festivity and the start of the counting of time. The chaotic ending of the "Great Frost" ends the carnivalesque period as well as prompting Sasha's betrayal:

Where, for three months and more, there had been solid ice of such thickness that it seemed permanent as stone, and a whole gay city had been stood on its pavement, was now a race of turbulent yellow waters. (Woolf 1993: 44)

The strength of the river and its devastating consequences bring to the surface the intensity concealed within the apparent stillness of the carnival. During this period Orlando has been in a "moment of drunkenness." The interruption of this moment is tragic. Time re-commences when the "moment of being" of the carnival ends abruptly as the Thames defrosts. The subsequent panic and chaos of the waters is a metaphor for Orlando's internal chaos at having been abandoned. He feels betrayed and, in the breaking dawn, Orlando sees the Russian ships far away, understanding only then that his beloved is gone:

The ship of the Muscovite Embassy was standing out to sea (...) Faithless, mutable, fickle, he called her; devil, adulteress, deceiver; and the swirling waters took his words, and tossed at his feet a broken pot and a little straw. (Woolf 1993: 45-46)

Yet the ending of this period and the carnivalesque atmosphere that inhabits Orlando will become apparent again when Orlando transforms into a woman. This "truthful but fantastic" transformation implies that Orlando's body is, in fact, the Bakhtinian carnivalesque body in that it is "a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body" (Bakhtin 1968: 317). Orlando's biographer assures the reader that "Orlando was a
man till the age of thirty; when he became a woman and has remained so ever since" (Woolf 1993: 98). This certainty proves once more to be deceptive for a few pages later Orlando's sex is questioned:

For it was this mixture in her of man and woman, one being uppermost and then the other, that often gave her conduct an unexpected turn (...). Whether, then, Orlando was most man or woman, it is difficult to say and cannot now be decided. (Woolf 1993: 133)

The revolutionary aspect of the carnival in Orlando resides in the view that a carnival opens the possibility of transvestism, transsexualism, and ultimately of expressing lesbian desire. Awakening into a woman, Orlando finds it utterly reasonable to be in love with another woman, and these feelings contrast with those Orlando had felt for Sasha at the beginning of the narrative:

though she herself was a woman, it was still a woman she loved; and if the consciousness of being of the same sex had any effect at all, it was to quicken and deepen those feelings which she had had as a man. (Woolf 1993: 115)

The contrast between this transgressive narrative and other contemporary novels such as The Well of Loneliness stresses the revolutionary and disruptive capacity of the carnival. Whereas The Well of Loneliness was finally banned from publication in England, Orlando was a major success. If the scandal provoked by the called-off trial and subsequent ban on Hall's novel can be seen as an outcry for lesbianism, its being banned presupposed that this outcry was in fact silenced by the dominant discourse. Woolf's playful gaiety, whilst apparently relatively tamed, proved more effective in that Orlando gives voice to lesbian desire and simultaneously it succeeds in fulfilling the criteria for a dominant discourse, establishing thus an emergent discourse. Stephen Gordon is described as "grotesque and splendid, like some primitive thing conceived in a turbulent age of transition" (Hall 1982: 49). Orlando's hermaphroditic body is no less grotesque and equally conceived in a turbulent age of transition. The difference resides in the fact that whereas Gordon's body is posited and exposed to the scrutiny of the scientific discourse, Orlando's transformation takes place through despising that very discourse, through a text which is a fantastic parody of the discourse on sexuality of the...
time. The ironical joke is that whereas Hall's text was presented as "fiction" Woolf subtitled hers "A biography."

With Sasha, Orlando is able to trespass social boundaries and starts a journey of discovery that culminates in a revelation: "At last, she cried, she knew Sasha as she was" (Woolf 1993: 115). Moreover, through this transgression Orlando is able to gain access to the world of Sasha, who is perceived at the beginning of the text as the "other." Orlando's revelation is that, as Cixous argues, there should be:

a recognition of each other, and this grateful acknowledgement would come about thanks to the intense and passionate work of knowing. Finally, each would take the risk of other, of difference. (Cixous 1986: 78)

This knowledge, a knowledge based on a difference that escapes biologism, finds expression when Orlando says to her husband: "'You're a woman, Shell!'" (Woolf 1993: 174); to which her husband replies: "'You're a man, Orlando!'" (Woolf 1993: 175). This ambiguity remains their truth. Even though the official law pronounces her unquestionably female: "'My sex (...) is pronounced indisputably, and beyond the shadow of a doubt (...) female'" (Woolf 1993: 176), the doubt about Orlando's gender does not vanish: "'Are you positive you aren't a man?' he would ask anxiously, and she would echo, 'Can it be possible you're not a woman?'" (Woolf 1993: 178-179). Orlando's knowledge of his/her ambiguity makes him/her finally able to finish his/her poem and makes him/her wonder about the nature of poetic expression: "Was not writing poetry a secret transaction, a voice answering a voice?" (Woolf 1993: 225).

The piece of embroidery

The voice "answering" Orlando and Challenge is to be found in Trefusis's *Broderie Anglaise* (1935). Although one of Trefusis's biographers, Sharpe, claims that: "Violet's reaction [to Orlando] is unrecorded" (Sharpe 1981: 93), this section proposes that *Broderie Anglaise* is the most explicit record of Trefusis's reaction to Orlando. Just as Sackville-West and Woolf had fictionalized Vita's and Violet's relationship, Trefusis sets out to write her own fictionalisation. The novelty in *Broderie Anglaise* is that Woolf, the writer, becomes another character (addressee) in this carnivalesque scene.
Furthermore, this extraordinary example of intertextuality establishes an actual relation between addressee and writer in so far as the addressee in earlier texts (Trefusis/Eve/Sasha) becomes "the writer" of a new text (Broderie Anglaise) which, in turn, participates in the discourse of two previous exterior texts (Orlando and Challenge).

The novel belongs to a discourse whose origin, precisely because of its recurrence, is difficult to establish. In this masquerade that Broderie Anglaise is, Trefusis disguises herself as a middle-aged woman, Anne Lindell, happily married and mother of one child. As happened in Challenge the writer enters the textual space not only as writer but also as addressee. If Eve and Sasha had been sublimated as muses of artistic creation, Trefusis's greatest attempt in Broderie Anglaise is at destroying this myth: "She had acquired the prestige of a myth. But (...) she exists (...) She's lazy and human, and would never climb as high as the gods" (Trefusis 1992a: 119). Having destroyed the myth of "muse" Trefusis (Anne) mystifies herself as a writer and, in the novel, Anne's writing is acclaimed: "out of the ordinary, (...) fame (...) well deserved" (Trefusis 1992a:103).

Not surprisingly, the physical appearance of the character that represents Sackville-West is not different from previous descriptions, particularly regarding her attire. In Broderie Anglaise, she is portrayed as a young, aristocratic Englishman, John Shorne. Just as Orlando is "a character spanning three centuries", John's face is described as:

a type since 1500. Youth could not alter its everlasting structure. Twenty years hence, thirty, it would still appear in all its latent pride, a hereditary face which had come, eternally bored, through five centuries. (Trefusis 1992a: 27)

John Shorne has a passionate love-affair with "his cousin" Anne Lindell. The fact that Anne and John are cousins echoes the familial bond between Julian and Eve in Challenge. Although the relationship between Anne and John has none of the sense of guilt and incestuous remorse that troubled Julian in Challenge, external familiar pressures impede, also in this case, the fulfilment of their love. Lady Shorne, John's Italian mother, influences her son and ultimately makes impossible the success of John's
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and Anne's relationship. The character of Lady Shorne and John's relationship with her seem inspired by Vita's mother and Vita's relationship with her. Owner of a great mansion, Otterways, Lady Shorne is devoted to it, but because she is a woman, she can never inherit it. When John is born, Lady Shorne receives his birth with both pleasure and fear:

A pleasure because she could bring him up according to the sacred principles of her antique dealer's heart. A threat because one day he would usurp the power she would never willingly yield. Her abdication would be deadly. (Trefusis 1992a: 62)

Lady Shorne knows that in the event of John's marriage she would have to leave the house to her son and his new wife. Anne, coming from the same social position and being of the same age as John, is very likely to marry him. Jealousy appears to be the reason for Lady Shorne's unfavourable regard of their relationship. John and Anne decide to elope together. However, unable to set himself free from the grip of his mother, Lord Shorne fails to appear on the day they are to elope. Anne takes here the narrative voice:

"My cases were packed, we were to leave the next day for Italy (...) An hour went by, two hours. Finally the bell rang in the hall. John's chauffeur stood there on the doorstep. No sign of John." (Trefusis 1992a: 95)

In clear reference to Orlando, Trefusis is reinstating her own perception of the end of her relationship with Sackville-West. Moreover, she is attempting to transform Woolf's novel: Trefusis is saying that Sasha did not abandon Orlando. The episode in Orlando is thus reversed: Sasha (the deceiver) becomes Anne the deceived one, and her narrative voice inculpates John (Orlando).

John Shorne starts a new relationship, this time with the well-regarded and respected writer Alexa Harrowby Quince:

He loved the Alexa of her books. He was proud of her talent and her ever-growing fame. It flattered his vanity to be the lover of one of the most distinguished women in England. Although Alexa was awkward as a mistress and incomplete as a woman, intellectually she was entirely satisfactory. (Trefusis 1992a: 6-7)
Alexa, the famous writer, is older than John, and fascinated by John's aristocratic manner. Alexa's fascination with ancestry is mocked in *Broderie Anglaise* where, by the end, Trefusis forces Alexa to come to the realisation that "they do not belong together":

Alexa, like Alice, had been the victim of her own imagination, encompassed by little creatures become unnaturally large and grotesque and threatening, but who would really fit into the palm of her hand. Like Alice, she had wanted to be the same size as they were, and so had nibbled at the magic mushroom which could make her grow larger or smaller as required. (Trefusis 1992a: 108)

With the aid of John, Alexa has written and published a book about Anne:

She had written a book about Anne as conceived of by a woman like Alexa herself (...) The general public, with its taste for the romantic, loved the book. It also won enthusiastic praise from the critics, astonished to see Alexa depart from her usual austerity. (Trefusis 1992a: 28)

The production of *Broderie Anglaise* is prompted by Trefusis's anger at what she perceived as Sackville-West's betrayal: Vita had supplied (what Violet believed to be misleading) information to Woolf for her novel. Trefusis is not only questioning the veracity of the portraits of Violet as Sasha and Vita as Orlando, she is also accusing Vita of betrayal:

Up to a point, John had collaborated with her in the writing of the novel, supplying her with telling details about "the other woman". (Trefusis 1992a: 28)

Trefusis, in her fiction, "punishes" Vita, creating situations where John's and Alexa's relationship is threatened by Anne's ghostly presence between them. *Broderie Anglaise* is Trefusis's fantasy in which she sees the relationship between Sackville-West and Woolf constantly haunted by her presence and by her own relationship with Sackville-West. Yet, and probably despite Trefusis's own will, the process of creation of this novel betrays the fact that Trefusis herself was being haunted by Sackville-West's and Woolf's relationship and it stands as an eager effort at inscribing herself between them:

The only thing was that, looking back after three years, one's impressions became blurred and distorted. You add a flower here, a piece of lace there.... Why? To add interest or colour.... (Trefusis 1992a: 28)

This last paragraph provides meaning to the title (*Broderie Anglaise*) and to Trefusis's novel. *Broderie anglaise* is a distinctive embroidery practice in which the
needle work is applied to the circumference of a hole: really, an adornment for encircling "air". The needle work displaces the emptiness of the hole creating an illusion of beauty. By entitling her novel *Broderie Anglaise*, Trefusis may be saying that her novel is but an adornment to her previous silence. This marks the importance of the novel as a speech act that aims to embellish an existent discursive universe by adding "a flower here, a piece of lace there." Intertwining her own threat with the other threats that form this broderie anglaise, Trefusis is attempting to patch the hole, to fill in the empty space that her own silence had created. In this sense, the novel tells that Alexa regrets having written a novel about Anne without consulting her:

If only she had been able to consult Anne Lindell and learn to know John through her, as she had learned to know her through him! (Trefusis 1992a: 7)

The telephone rings and Trefusis grants Alexa her wish: Anne is going to visit her. Alexa reacts to the news expectantly: "Left alone, Alexa threw back her head in a gesture of defiance mingled with exultation. At last she was going to know!" (Trefusis 1992a: 11). Anne is visiting Alexa with the intention of restoring her image. Trefusis's depiction of Anne at this point is a blended caricature of Trefusis's physical appearance with the androgynous, mysterious enchanting females of *Challenge* and *Orlando*:

The door opened. A woman appeared. She was of medium height, wearing a tight-fitting, very simple tailored suit that followed the lines of her graceful but plumpish form.

If she wasn't so well proportionated her head would look too big, Alexa noted with a beating heart.

Her features were irregular; her nose turned up, her mouth was too big and her lips were too thick. The upper lip was arched and protruded slightly over the other. The eyes, shaded by a hat with a turned-down brim, were laughing, but small. (Trefusis 1992a: 76-77)

Trefusis's depiction of herself responds directly to the fear she felt in her real encounter with Woolf (a fear of not "looking like" Sasha and Eve and thus disappointing Woolf). This fear is acknowledged in Anne's description in the form of a destructive genesis: the exaggeration of Anne's physical features aims at introducing a grotesque element in the text. This distorted Anne ("too big", "too thick", "plumpish", "protruding") helps Alexa to relax. Alexa's immediate thought is that far from being "the
'vamp' she had expected" (Trefusis 1992a: 82) Anne "wasn't even pretty. Alexa, relieved, held out her hand" (Trefusis 1992a: 77).

However, the androgynous, mysterious enchanting figure (of Orlando and Challenge) hidden in Anne comes out of her grotesque appearance. The first words between Alexa and Anne (who are introduced to each other by Jeremy Curtiss) establish the ambience of gender indeterminacy and sexual ambiguity that characterizes both Orlando and Challenge. Alexa compares Anne ("deep, almost masculine") with Jeremy "dilettante, essayist, connoisseur of pathological 'cases,' Freud enthusiast of indeterminate sex" (Trefusis 1992a: 77). The seductive Eve hidden in Anne is in waiting and when the two women are left alone, Anne takes off her hat and then: "a mass of thick springy hair, curly as vine tendrils, stood up like a trodden-down bramble" (Trefusis 1992a: 82). The image of Anne's wild hair as "vine tendrils" brings to the text the Dionysian imperative of the carnival, already hinted at in Anne's laughing eyes.

As a result of this confrontation with the "the other woman" Alexa learns that John has provided misleading information "out of conceit and vainglory" (Trefusis 1992a: 82): "She [Alexa] was vexed at having written such an inept book about Anne, based on false information from John" (Trefusis 1992a: 103). Uncannily, Woolf after meeting Trefusis regretted not having met Trefusis before she wrote Orlando, as she wrote to Vita in 1932: "I see now, in a flash, a chapter in your past I never saw (...) She wasn't what I expected" (Nicolson 1979: 123). In her conversation with Anne, Alexa has an illuminating revelation, she has to change:

For once she would be true to herself, true to her own type, emerging triumphantly from the subterfuges forced on her by the desire to belong to a "school" not her own. (Trefusis 1992a: 109)

By the end of their meeting Alexa is wiser. Yet the knowledge she has acquired is of a different nature from the one she had expected. The myth (born in Challenge) of Eve as provider of knowledge has been perpetuated in the character of Anne. Alexa knows Anne as one on the side of "everything that grows, sways in the wind, bites and hides" (Trefusis 1992a: 104). That the knowledge Anne is to offer belongs to the forbidden is symbolized in Anne's unconventional behaviour - like reaching for a piece
of bread and butter long after Anne has finished her tea: "Alexa was sure this slice of bread and butter tasted much better than all the others to Anne because it was illegitimate and forbidden" (Trefusis 1992a: 89). This knowledge allows Alexa to see the real beauty behind the caricature:

"Where have I seen those eyes before? and the answer was, "In a fox cub." They both had the same look, gold and suspicious. And her hair? Like frizzy little red ferns. Her mouth was a sulky strawberry, her chin a peach with a peach-like cleft. (Trefusis 1992a: 104-105)

After Anne leaves, her task "completed" (Trefusis 1992a: 105), Alexa returns to the drawing room and is "struck by its look of devastation" (Trefusis 1992a: 107) which makes apparent the destructive quality of Dionysian forces at work.

In her inner turmoil Alexa wonders about her love for John: "Was that ashes too?" Ashes and death are intrinsically linked in the text through Anne's words: "When I'm dead we'll always be together. My ashes will be scattered around the world."

(Trefusis 1992a: 70). These words, emanating from Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights, provide significance to Alexa's answer to her own question: "It would be reborn" (Trefusis 1992a: 107, my emphasis). The patriarchal Judeo-Christian tradition that the Eve of Challenge started to defy is also confronted in Broderie Anglaise in that ashes are related to death in Christianism. In this context, Alexa appropriates Jesus's words: "Who loves me follows me!" (Trefusis 1992a: 109) only to renew them: "But now the battle was going to continue on another terrain: her own" (Trefusis 1992a: 109).

Broderie Anglaise is structured around the unexpected announcement that Anne is going to visit Alexa. The lapse of time in Broderie Anglaise, as in Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway, is one day, during which Alexa prepares herself for the evening visit. Although the narrative time covers one day, recollections of the past provide the novel with a shifting quality. The linear temporal narrative structure breaks as the past shifts forwards into the present. The authoritative narrative voice of Orlando's biographer (which Trefusis seems to equate literally to Woolf's own voice), is challenged in Broderie Anglaise: this story is introduced through direct speech, thus reducing to the minimum a single narrative voice. This change also indicates the impossibility of speaking from a single source. The minimal role played by the single narrative voice in
The discursive world of *Broderie Anglaise* evidences that this is a text where subjects, addressees and texts blend together: all participants are actors as well as spectators of the story.

The three characters (Anne, John, Alexa) categorically participate in previous discourses. There are several items that hint at the incorporation into *Broderie Anglaise* of *Challenge* and *Orlando*. For instance, when Anne takes off her hat, her hair is said to resemble "little snakes" (Trefusis 1992a: 82). This image acts as a metaphor that brings to the text *Challenge*’s biblical Eve. Similarly to *Orlando*, the ambiguity of John Shorne’s gender is questioned by means of Alexa’s comment about John’s hands: "You have very strange hands (...) Almost like a woman’s" (Trefusis 1992a: 34).

The main process in the novel is one of creating and destroying myths. The mythical Julian and the mythical Orlando are demystified in the character of John Shorne. This process is stressed by the choice of John’s surname. "Shorne" is, at least phonologically, reminiscent of a creature who is "shorn" of a covering, suggesting, thus, that by leaving Anne, John has had an important part of his identity removed. Trefusis implies that it is the daring part in him that has been taken away. Indeed, it is noticeable that far from being at the centre of the action (as Julian and Orlando are in previous texts) John is decentralized in this text being, for the most part, a character talked about and alluded to: "His cause was being pleaded in a language he did not understand" (Trefusis 1992a: 118). Anne, the "truth" provider has helped Alexa to "see" and John realizes "how far she had travelled, how much she had liberated herself" (Trefusis 1992a: 120). After Anne’s visit Alexa realizes that John is a "creation" (Trefusis 1992a: 99), an invention of her imagination: "She realised the present John was an artificial character" (Trefusis 1992a: 109). Thus the demystification of Julian/Orlando is finally achieved: "He felt stupid and helpless, like someone on the ground staring up at a pilot’s daring acrobatics" (Trefusis 1992a: 120), and the mystification of Anne has been improved. In this manner Trefusis has delivered her "unexploded bomb."

These processes of mystification and demystification presuppose an interconnection between fiction and reality. *Broderie Anglaise* is produced as much by the actual events that surrounded Trefusis’s life as by the fictional depiction of such
events. In this sense, intertextuality works at dissolving the matter that separates fact from fiction. As Barthes explains in *The Pleasure of the Text*:

> [This] is what the inter-text is: the impossibility of living outside the infinite text: (...) the book creates the meaning, the meaning creates life. (Barthes 1990: 36)

The dialogical discursive practice resulting from these three texts was produced unconsciously, unknowingly and unwillingly. This does not mean that each writer did not mean to amend the traces of the previous one, but Sackville-West, Woolf and Trefusis were not moved by a spirit of co-operation and they were very much oblivious to their doing so. Yet, simultaneous attention to the three texts provides a view that none of the three writers individually intended to provide. Each of these works seeks to supplant the original, not knowing that later readers, who might see these three texts as one whole, would read them as supplementary to each other. Thus, each of these texts' original function has been altered. Because there is dialogue within each novel, and between each novel and the preceding one(s), these texts intermix and blend. They can be seen as different speech-acts within the same utterance. This utterance is still producing "responses" nowadays, the most evident being perhaps Nicolson's *Portrait of a Marriage* (1973), Potter's film version of *Orlando* (1992), or the cover of the latest edition of *Broderie Anglaise* which shows a still from the BBC serialisation (1989) of *Portrait of a Marriage*. 
CHAPTER FOUR
The Subject On The Stage Of Poetic Language

In the previous chapter Kristeva's concept of poetic language was explored from the point of view of discourse theory. Grounding her argument in Bakhtin's concept of dialogism she suggests that poetic language is at least double and that, as a consequence, the poetic word is ambivalent. This is so because poetic discourse is not univocal but is made up of a combination of contemporary or earlier texts whose interaction is ruled by dialogism. The polyphony of poetic discourse allows Kristeva to postulate her notion of intertextuality, which propounds that a literary text is a competitive combination of texts. Intertextuality implies that the meaning of a literary utterance is never fixed but constantly renewed through the infinite dialogical combinations that can take place in the text. Dialogism is read by Kristeva as "another law" (of non-exclusive opposites) that in poetic language replaces the monological code governing patriarchal Western discourse. In view of language's capacity to transgress the establishment, Kristeva proposes a revolutionary aspect in poetic language.

This chapter explores Kristeva's psychoanalytical approach to poetic language in order to create a theoretical framework useful for interpreting Trefusis's Echo (1931) and Woolf's Between the Acts (1941). It shall be argued that these otherwise very dissimilar texts share a common preoccupation: to disclose the difficulties encountered by the artist in achieving the ideal state of mind to produce art (Woolf's androgynous state)\(^1\). While the techniques and the manner in which these two novels challenge patriarchal discourse are different, they share a common ground in that both denote the writer's wish to search for a poetic language that may articulate a different subject position in the symbolic. In a sense, more than a connection the relationship between these two novels is one of correlation. If Echo posits the dangers of acquiring such a

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\(^1\) As has been discussed in Chapter One, Kristeva's psychoanalytical theory provides the means to explain the dynamics behind Woolf's formulation of the androgynous ideal.
language, *Between the Acts* goes a step further and presents, through poetic language, the precariousness of the position of the subject in process of poetic language.

From a psychoanalytical point of view, poetic language retains its revolutionary potential. As Kristeva argues in "From One Identity to Another" literature is "the very place where social code is destroyed and renewed" (Kristeva 1981c: 132). In order to explain literature's revolutionary aspect as well as Kristeva's notion of poetic language itself, it is important to bear in mind Kristeva's theoretical conceptualisation of language as a "signifying process" and the semiotic as a "signifying disposition" (Kristeva 1981c: 133) operating within this process. Depending on the extent to which a semiotic disposition can be observed in a particular utterance, Kristeva distinguishes different types of signifying practices (Kristeva 1981c: 134). At either extreme she places scientific language and poetic language. Scientific language is a language that prioritizes the symbolic and where the semiotic component is minimized. Poetic language is that where the signifying process is informed by the semiotic as well as the symbolic, giving preference to the semiotic. As Kristeva puts it:

> The signifying economy of poetic language is specific in that the semiotic is not only a constraint as is the symbolic, but it tends to gain the upper hand at the expense of the thetic and predicative constraints of the ego's judging consciousness. (Kristeva 1981c: 134)

The semiotic is a "heterogeneous" flow of pulsions whose effect in the meaning and signification of poetic language displaces the notion of language as unified, univocal and fixed in meaning. The presence of semiotic pulsions provides a "distinctiveness" to poetic language since it produces in this language not only 'musical' but also nonsense effects that destroy not only accepted beliefs and significations (...) but, in radical experiments, syntax itself, that guarantee of thetic consciousness. (Kristeva 1981c: 133)

Although the idea of semiotic pulsions disrupting symbolic linearity appears to imply that the semiotic is an unruled signifying disposition Kristeva argues that semiotic heterogeneity is "articulate, precise, organized, and complying with constraints and rules" (Kristeva 1981c: 133). Observable in the first echolalias of infants the semiotic can be later detected in rhythms and intonations regulated by the rule of repetition that makes a particular rhythm different from others. As Kristeva explicitly points out the
rhythm and intonation provided by the semiotic "has nothing to do with classic poeticness" (Kristeva 1981c: 141). This is because classic poetic conventions such as rhythm, metre, rhetoric figures, and literary codes are embedded within a symbolic appreciation of the signifying process as sign, predication, and signified object operated through the consciousness of a transcendental ego. The rhythmic intonation provided by semiotic activity "is, from a synchronic point of view, a mark of the workings of the drives (...) and, from a diachronic point of view, stems from the archaisms of the semiotic body" (Kristeva 1981c: 136). Therefore, the semiotic is maternally connoted since "the semiotic body prior to the "mirror stage" is totally dependant on and indiscriminate from the mother. The novelty of Kristeva's argument resides precisely in her insistence on the presence of semiotic processes within symbolic language which imply the "reinstatement of maternal territory into the very economy of language" (Kristeva 1981c: 137). It is important to note that, as was argued in Chapter One of this thesis, this "maternal territory," seen as a feminine space from a symbolic point of view, is, from a semiotic perspective, an androgynous realm. This point is of paramount importance for it allows one to make a connection between Kristeva's notion of poetic language and Woolf's androgynous ideal as a state of mind in which the writer would be unconscious of her/his gender.

By stressing the implications of the presence in language of the semiotic function, Kristeva does not subtract importance from the symbolic function of language. On the contrary, Kristeva argues, it is only in the symbolic, that is, in "language as nomination, sign, and syntax" (Kristeva 1981c: 136) where meaning and signification can be possible. In order for the symbolic to constitute itself the semiotic has to be subdued. Therefore, the semiotic function of language "always remains subordinate - subjacent to the principal function of naming-predicating" (Kristeva 1981c: 136).

Since poetic language is the signifying practice with the strongest presence of semiotic function, the speaking subject that produces poetic discourse can no longer be defined solely by means of what Kristeva calls, following Husserl, "transcendental ego" (Kristeva 1981c: 130). In order to register the heterogeneous pulses of the semiotic, the speaking subject uttering a poetic discourse "must be (...) a questionable subject-in-
process" (Kristeva 1981c: 135). The formulation of this subjectivity is indebted, as Kristeva acknowledges, to Freud's theory of the unconscious. Instead of separating the unconscious from the consciousness of what she calls the symbolic, Kristeva inscribes the unconscious into the signifying process: "Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis did allow (...) for heterogeneity, which, known as the unconscious, shapes the signifying function" (Kristeva 1981c: 135). According to Kristeva, this position is very dangerous for it can lead to psychosis or fetishism (Kristeva 1981c:139). This is so because if symbolic language is founded upon the repression of the instinctual maternal semiotic the subject that articulates poetic discourse constitutes itself "at the cost of reactivating this repressed instinctual, maternal element" (Kristeva 1981c: 136). Therefore, the subject position of the "questionable subject-in-process" is unsettled and needs to redefine itself constantly.

The dynamics that constitute the "subject-in-process" of poetic language are discussed in "The Ethics of Linguistics." In this essay Kristeva explains her concept of "subject-in-process" and poetic language borrowing her language from Mayakovsky's interpretation of poetic creativity. In reference to Mayakovsky's explanation of poetic rhythm as repetition that can be visualized in the rotation of earth and the repetition it implies, Kristeva suggests that poetic language is only possible in the constant "struggle between the poet and the sun" (Kristeva 1981c: 29). By "the poet" she refers to the speaking subject that is compelled to inscribe rhythm within symbolic language and who, therefore, is a "subject-in-process" in contact with the mother and the primeval drives. The image of "the sun" is "a paternal image that is coveted but also feared, murderous, and sentenced to die, a legislative seat which must be usurped" (Kristeva 1981c: 29). Hence, the quest of the poet is to maintain the maternally connoted rhythmic

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2 Kristeva often aligns poetic language and psychotic discourse in the works dealing with the subject. It is difficult to establish whether the step from poetic language to psychosis is a question of quantity, quality, both at the same time, or none of the former. She seems to imply that poetic discourse does not lose sight of the symbolic whereas psychotic discourse does. However, it also appears that her argument assumes that there is a point where the presence of the semiotic function in the symbolic is so extensive that language loses meaning and signification becoming a psychotic discourse. Yet the distinction between these two discourses remains an speculative matter for in none of her writings does she explicitly discuss this issue.
pulses of the semiotic that are threatened by the ruling presence of the sun. In doing this the poet risks losing sight of the paternal image and falling into a dark space (to follow Kristeva's analogy) where rhythm "incapable of formulation, would flow forth, growling, and in the end would dig itself in" (Kristeva 1981c: 29). Therefore, in order to posit the "uncertain and indeterminate articulation" (Kristeva 1981c: 133) of the semiotic within symbolic language, the speaking subject (the poet) places her/him self at the threshold between the maternal realm and the paternal space. This position implies that the subject of poetic discourse, in apparent paradox, defies the paternal prohibition of incest by attempting to remain in contact with the semiotic mother while, at the same time, s/he accepts the paternal Law thus acquiring the (necessary) symbolic language. "Inasmuch as the 'I' is poetic" writes Kristeva, "inasmuch as it wants to enunciate rhythm, to socialize it, to channel it into linguistic structure if only to break the structure, this 'I' is bound to the sun" (Kristeva 1981c: 29). When the writer is able to adopt this subject position, the poetic language uttered "in its most disruptive form (unreadable for meaning, dangerous for the subject), shows the constraints of a civilization dominated by transcendental rationality. Consequently, it is a means of overriding this constraint" (Kristeva 1981c: 140). Once the speaking subject is the focus of the linguistic analysis, language becomes a complex signifying process rather than a monolithic system:

The fragmentation of language in a text calls into question the very posture of this mastery. The writing that we have been discussing confronts this phallic position (...) to traverse it (...) The word "traverse" implies that the subject experiences sexual difference, not as a fixed opposition ("man"/"woman"), but as a process of differentiation. (Kristeva 1981a: 165)

Whereas the maternal space that shapes the semiotic disposition of language is an androgynous one (see Chapter One), Kristeva argues that "it is probably necessary to be a woman (ultimate guarantee of sociality beyond the wreckage of the paternal symbolic function, as well as the inexhaustible generator of its renewal, of its expansion)" (Kristeva 1981c: 146) to be able to place the self in the unsettling and uncomfortable position of the questionable subject in process of poetic language. Certainly it seems that women can gain a great deal from a discursive practice that
threatens to unsettle a dominant patriarchal discourse. Within the psychoanalytical theoretical framework that shapes Kristeva's thought, as shown in Chapter One, a feminine subject position implies that the presence of the mother is never fully discharged. This, regarding femininity in particular, might mean that a woman writer is in an advantageous position to achieve the positionality of the subject-in-process of poetic language. Yet, because her ego never transcends the mother completely, the possibility of falling into a psychotic state is also greater. The fear of madness that a woman writer might feel trying to achieve the subject position of poetic discourse is as big an impediment as the transgression of the paternal law.

**Explorer on an unknown terrain**

Reduced to its basic elements, Trefusis's *Echo* unfolds as follows. Sauge, a young married and sophisticated Parisian woman, journeys to the remote Scottish castle of her aunt. There, she encounters her twin cousins, Malcolm and Jean. Although at first both resent her intrusion, she manages to seduce them and they start a tragic relationship that ends with Jean's death and Sauge's return to Paris and her husband, Alan. Some critics, such as Wajsbrot, read *Echo* as a roman-à-clef, whereby Sauge is the fictional representation of Violet Trefusis and the twins representations of Trefusis's mother Alice Keppel and her uncle Archibald (Wajsbrot 1989: 158-159). Interesting as Wajsbrot's perspective is, this Chapter proposes to look at the text from the psychoanalytical perspective provided by Kristeva's theory. The main reason for proceeding with a psychoanalytical reading is that a close approach to the novel reveals that many of the characters share common features. *Echo* is an attempt at showing a decentralized, disperse, multisexual, multiform and polyphonic speaking subject. The presence of such a subject-in-process intends, ultimately, to voice metaphorically the fragmented and heterogeneous nature of language. Characteristics of Trefusis's persona and personal iconography are scattered among the characters of the novel. According to those who knew her, one of Trefusis's most impressive features was her voice, very low and attractive. Sauge's voice is presented as such: "'It's true, she [Sauge] does have the strangest voice' (...) 'it's a... mysterious, a clandestine kind of voice'" (Trefusis 1988: 29).
Up to this point Wajsbrot's affirmation that the elegant and sophisticated French Sauge is Trefusis's fictional representation seems accurate. Yet, other characters in the novel possess this peculiar voice. Peggy, a secondary character who will, nevertheless, perform a decisive role in the development of the narrative, is said to possess a voice "indeed so taking that one forgot everything else" (Trefusis 1988: 65). Although the presence of a pair of identical opposite-sex twins introduces in the novel a fantastic element (they can only exist in fiction, for their formation is genetically impossible) it could also have direct links with Trefusis's persona (due to the singularity of the events they evoke). According to Heilbrun, the representation of the Zodiac sign of Gemini as opposite-sex twins is rarely found. One of the few places where this representation can be found is the thirteenth-century cathedral of Amiens:

The Zodiac sign of the Gemini is pictured almost always as two male, identical twins. But the iconography apparently does allow for opposite-sex twins: on the thirteenth-century cathedral of Amiens, where the signs of the Zodiac are sculptured in relief, "Les Gémeaux" are clearly a man and a woman, equal in height, holding hands and gazing at one another. (Heilbrun 1973: 44)

Amiens was the place Vita and Violet eloped to and where the events that led to the rupture of their relationship took place. Although there is no actual recording that Trefusis visited the cathedral, being one of the main attractions of this city and one of the finest examples of medieval architecture in France, it is highly plausible to venture that she did visit it. Herself a Gemini, Trefusis would have most probably looked for the peculiarity in the cathedral. Thus Echo's opposite-sex twins may also refer to Trefusis's. Finally, the character of Lady Balquidder, Sauge's aunt, is related to Trefusis in that she is described as a fox: "When she [Lady Balquidder] was young, she must have looked very much like a fox" (Trefusis 1988: 42). As Phillips and Jullian acknowledge, Trefusis sometimes:

admitted this cunning side to her personality. She even used to wear a brooch in the shape of a fox's head, given to her during the last war by a friend who called her 'Foxy'. (Jullian and Phillips 1986: 62)

Although at first the novel appears as a merely witty, quite banal and uncomplicated romantic story, a close analysis of textual strategies uncovers an undercurrent that tackles the difficult question of subject positionality and poetic
The subject on the stage

expression. In this sense, what might seem as eagerness to connect Trefusis's persona to different characters in the novel has the objective of showing that Trefusis evidences in this text a perception of her self as split. This perceived split subjectivity compels Trefusis to exercise in the textual realm a practice that in real life can be highly dangerous since it may lead to madness. Aware that the unified and fixed subject position offered by patriarchal symbolic does not fulfil the perception of her self as multiple, heterogeneous and not easy to determine, the writer disseminates her subjectivity scattering it in different characters as a first attempt to discover her subject position. The confusion provided by the realisation that many of the characters appearing in the novel are, in fact, one single person, call her Violet Trefusis, "Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or by any other name you please," aims to defy the unity of the symbolic subject. In the novel, the depiction of the characters is attuned to the writer's perception of herself as fragmented and unfixed. Relating to this, characters' descriptions are always partial and provided from many different points of view. For instance, Sauge's perception of the twins is not absolute, for she never describes them as whole bodies, but only in parts, just as she perceives them: "'All I had seen of Malcolm throughout dinner was his cheek and a bit of ear'" (Trefusis 1988: 45). Another example is the depiction of Sauge provided by the twins: "'But you can't have failed to notice the colour of her eyes (...) They're black' (...) 'Don't be silly, they're blue!'" (Trefusis 1988: 49). Double bodies (Sauge and Peggy) are not enough and the androgynous union represented by the twins, Malcolm and Jean, also proves insufficient. Instead, the characters move towards an "open" notion of the self that would reject duality and pairs of opposites to embrace a variety of different matters: animal (the "fox") or vegetable (Sauge/sage) they would all conform to a non-patriarchal "semiotic" conception of the body. Echo dissolves identity, not only sexual identity, but even human species identity: its characters are the paradigm of a subject-in-process.

Echo is about Trefusis's personal struggle between the poet and the sun; the author quest is transposed to the text and its characters in an experimental attempt to find a subject position that, uncomfortable and disturbing as it might be, permits the production of poetic discourse. This struggle is suggested in the very title of the novel,
Echo, that seems to acknowledge a desire to intercept symbolic language with semiotic rhythm. The title of the novel with its Ovidian reference to the story of Echo and Narcissus immediately posits the problem of finding a poetic language that breaks the silence imposed upon Echo. The text seems to imply that this can only be achieved if the Law imposed by the father that permits the acquisition of symbolic language is disrupted. For this reason, the role of a meaningful linear plot is minimized and thethetic subject (whilst not totally abandoned) is rejected.

A kind of language that is not univocal and monolithical is needed in order to locate and articulate a heterogeneous subjectivity. For this reason, Trefusis embarks with Sauge in an exploratory journey of an unknown terrain where she might be able to find this language, Kristeva's poetic language, that will help to articulate her differently perceived self(s). Woolf's androgynous ideal seem to be the only signpost of this mysterious and unpredictable journey. A clear and specific reference to Woolf is made by Sauge when, obviously referring to Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, she asks her husband to be patient and to listen to her story:

So let me float with you on the fragile raft of these letters; I shan't attempt to hide the fact that we are completely adrift on an unknown sea, but be patient and listen to the tale of your own Ancient Mariner. (Trefusis 1988: 39)

In A Room of One's Own, Woolf brings Coleridge into the text precisely at the moment when the narrator identifies the androgyne as the ideal state of mind for artistic creation:

The normal and comfortable state of being is (...) when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating (...) Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. (...) He meant, perhaps, that the androgynous mind is resonant and porous; that it transmits emotion without impediment; that it is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided. (Woolf 1977: 106)

Linear time is transgressed through the incorporation of letters, dreams, fairy tales, popular songs and personal thoughts that permit jumps in time and space. History and myth become synonymous. Thus the first notion of unity, that of the text, is already invalidated. Furthermore, from a psychoanalytical perspective the sequence of time in the narrative is regressive instead of progressive since, as will be discussed, Sauge's
journey to Scotland is a metaphorical journey to a pre-symbolic space where she would be able to find her androgynous self. Following such analysis it can be argued that the purpose of Sauge's journey to Scotland is to place the self as close as possible to the maternal space (the space that favours heterogeneity). The journey is a metaphor for an (im)possible return to the union of the newly born with the mother, before the acquisition of language, which requires acknowledgement of the self as an "independent" body. In the transition from the pre-Oedipal to the Oedipal, the semiotic is rejected in favour of the symbolic in order to enable the subject to acquire language. The symbolic entails separation, individualisation, language and logic; the semiotic entails union, communion, absence of language and fluidity. The semiotic is related to the moment of birth and, in as much as it is unspeakable and it is a state towards which the subject is attracted, it reminds us of death. *Echo* narrates Sauge's journey to a maternal realm where the subject can free herself from the rigid gender boundaries imposed by society. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the novel is placed in Scotland, a country where cross-dressing in men is not perceived as undermining their masculinity. In this land, whose air dates "from the beginning of time" (Trefusis 1988: 40), Sauge finds out that there is no clear differentiation between the sexes: "In this strange place, thought Sauge, women rarely look like women; they're all half-boy, half-girl" (Trefusis 1988: 65). Scotland constitutes the site of pre-history closely related to the mother. The existence of this pre-history that existed before socialisation is a recurrent motif in *Between the Acts*, discussed later in this Chapter.

Close to the maternal space, socially constructed gender boundaries blur and traditional gender roles are reversed. In *Echo* it is a woman who becomes the explorer of the unknown terrain. The journey provides Sauge with the possibility of acquiring knowledge through direct experience and the disentanglement of the mystery of what she terms "unknown sea." Sauge is not a passive witness but an active path-finder. Accordingly, Sauge stops being the passive object of male scrutiny and she becomes instead the active explorer in her own quest.

The space that constitutes this unknown terrain corresponds to what Kristeva has termed the maternal space of the semiotic: nourishing, warm, anterior to the time, a
most incomprehensible space. There, the mother represents the fluid motility of the semiotic pulses, which are simultaneously dichotomous and heterogeneous. Immersed in Parisian society, Sauge yearns for change and she looks forward to travelling to Scotland. There she meets, for the first time, her twin cousins. The motif of the twins is not uncommon in literature and myth. The mythological Apollo and Artemis come to mind and literary works such as, for instance, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Calderon's *Devotion to the Cross*, Sarah Grant's *Heavenly Twins*, among many others too numerous to be accounted for here, present this figure. The introduction of a pair of identical opposite-sex twins in a text brings about, more often than not, confusion and through twins awkward and unconventional situations are created. In *Echo* the twins seem to stand for the deconstruction of the duality masculine/feminine by being the two sides of the same coin: "the voice of youth in harmony" (Trefusis 1988: 33). More interesting is perhaps Trefusis comment in *Don't Look Round* that these twins posit in the text "a sublimated incest motif" (Trefusis 1952: 100), for it implies that her twins in *Echo* stand as an explicit challenge to the prohibition of incest3. That the twins are somehow related to taboo is hinted by Sauge, who refers to the Scottish clan to which they belong as if it were taboo, therefore considering her cousins also taboo, outside the Law of the father:

MacFinnish. What a shocking mouthful of a name, leaping hideously like a jack-in-the-box into this elegant French conversation. MacFinnish! MacFinnish! she repeated with relish, as if the name were taboo. She suddenly wished she need never sit in this delightful, civilized room again. (Trefusis 1988: 31)

It is interesting to contrast the words she uses to reject "the delightful, civilized room" when she is awaiting the forthcoming encounter with the owners of that "hideous mouthful" of a family name. Their family name emphasizes the contrast further: "MacFinnish" is a sexually connoted name in that the pronunciation of this word is close

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3 This prohibition was no less sublimated by Freud who saw it as a victory of the race over the individual:

Since the penis (...) owes its extraordinarily high narcissistic cathexis to its organic significance for the propagation of the species, the catastrophe to the Oedipus complex (the abandonment of incest and the institution of conscience and morality) may be regarded as a victory of the race over the individual. (Freud 1991g: 341)
to that of "fish" a reminder of the female sexual organs. Similarly, Sauge contrasts Paris with Scotland and the latest ghostly and wild landscapes are expected to be "the country of her dreams, the refuge, the sanctuary in which she would find peace and security" (Trefusis 1988: 32). Going to Scotland, Sauge starts a journey to the maternal space that necessarily involves the transgression of the paternal prohibition of incest if the intonational rhythm offered by the mother is to be apprehended.

Culture and nature are respectively represented by the civilized Sauge and her uncivilized cousins. The twins are metaphorical representations of the being inhabiting the maternal space. Dressing similarly, and thus devoid of cultural sexual identification, it is impossible to distinguish between them. Their life-style ignores gender differentiation. Described as "equal" throughout the text, their sexual difference is finally disclosed, when the symbolic perspective is given a voice: "Poor twins, what an inexperienced heart was theirs. Theirs? (...) After all, Jean was a woman" (Trefusis 1988: 83). When undifferenciated, the twins inspire tenderness (as they inspire in Lady Balquidder). However, the symbolic perspective remarks their different sex, and from the moment they are sexually differentiated, the sight of the twins provokes repulsion. In this instant the god-like twins become suddenly "as repulsive as any other freak of nature" (Trefusis 1988: 84). These inhabitants of the semiotic realm are said to possess a different language, "a private language utterly devoid of consonants" (Trefusis 1988: 14). The twins themselves are described as "wild", "cannibals", "untamed": in other words, outsiders to civilisation, whereas Sauge sees herself as the carrier of culture and civilisation. When she sets off towards Scotland she writes to her husband that she is taking with her the most valuable equipment, the power of patriarchal language:

I wonder what kind of unknown terrain I am entering and, like every explorer worth his salt, I've brought lots of ammunition with me (...) I'm carrying with me precious little stories from home. (Trefusis 1988: 36)

Despite Scotland being qualified as "unknown terrain", Sauge intuitively perceives that this country is not totally alien to her: "She knew every other country except this, which in a manner of speaking was her own" (Trefusis 1988: 33). Scotland's beauty is outside walls, in nature: "We don't lack creature comforts, thought Lady
Balquidder, not without humour, the trouble is, they are all outdoors" (Trefusis 1988: 36). When Sauge arrives, she is impressed by the beauty of its landscape. The Scottish landscape does not possess, however, a languid, weak, piteous beauty; on the contrary, is powerful and tragic:

So I creep stealthily along, stopping to pick up a jay's feather, blue as the skin of mackerel. Further on I find a tuft of bloodstained fur, large white feathers mingled with it - testimony to some nocturnal struggle, of owls I imagine. (Trefusis 1988: 52)

The outside world, as dangerous as it appears, is never frightening. On the contrary, Sauge and the twins feel themselves perfectly safe outside: "As long as I am outside, she thought, I shall be all right" (Trefusis 1988: 60). Scotland, with its gender-undifferentiated inhabitants and its lake surfaces that have "never "reflected a human face" (Trefusis 1988: 40), represents the realm of the pre-symbolic.

By comparison, descriptions of enclosures such as the castle belong to the Gothic: "We passed as in aquarium, through tunnels of the darkest green, until finally the castle itself appeared, looking lonely and forbidding" (Trefusis 1988: 40). The depiction of the castle in comparison with the freedom of the outer space might have its root in the fact that part of the MacFinnishes' castle was built in the Middle Ages, a time when these buildings were symbols of the power of the feudal master, the ruler who imparted and imposed law and order. In this respect the castle might represent the Law of the Father. As much as Sauge tries to colonize her room, she cannot succeed, and in her dreams:

the walls of her room seemed as high as cliffs... (...) Not a single crack for fingers to cling to, not a trace of colour to blur the outline of the body. (Trefusis 1988: 59)

Gradually, and directly related with her incursion into the pre-symbolic, Sauge, meaningfully enough, loses her skills in language. Once she has been accepted by the twins, her well-structured stories are forgotten and she tells others just improvised: "It's a good thing my audience does not possess a highly developed critical sense because I say anything that comes into my head" (Trefusis 1988: 73).

Her letter-writing skills "deteriorate" in a similar way. Her first letter is well structured. Formally, it presents date and place headings. Slowly, the structure and form
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of her letters grow more undisciplined and for an interval, she even stops writing at all: "Yes, you're right. I have been very lazy about writing lately. But (...) I don't know how to convey to you the beauty of my situation here now!" (Trefusis 1988: 72). Her final letters contrast extraordinarily with Alan's letters for whilst she mainly writes about herself, subjectively trying to analyse "a thousand impressions" (Trefusis 1988: 46). without attempting rational judgement, Alan's letters attempt to emulate contemporary patriarchal scientific discourse. Trefusis is extremely ironic in her strategy of portraying a man claiming to be an objective observant of reality, when his so-called impartial eye is undoubtedly a man's eye. Alan is observing through "an impartial eye (my own, of course)" (Trefusis 1988: 54). His scrutiny results in Jean, the female twin, turning into a monster. By Alan's "impartial" standards Jean "sounds horrible (...), like a giant" (Trefusis 1988: 54). Meanwhile, Sauge always describes Jean in positive terms "even" when referring to her "masculine" features: "One wondered how, by what miracle, her magnificent shoulders were restrained from bursting out of the narrow garment's constraints; on her it seemed like some form of prison garb which she wore with dignity" (Trefusis 1988: 44).

The more Sauge mingles herself with the twins, the wilder her letters and her behaviour become. Once she has re-encountered her androgynous self, Sauge realizes that she must re-enter the Symbolic order, since the pre-symbolic stage confines her to what is perceived as madness (Trefusis 1988: 59-60). It is not by chance that Sauge refers to her encounter with Peggy as occurring at "the exact psychological moment" for, in my opinion, Peggy is the reflection of Sauge in the mirror:

She knew that Peggy had guessed correctly. She also knew that Peggy knew she knew! Sauge suddenly felt as if she were in a room full of mirrors, one on top of the other, all reflecting the same single image. It was the same fright that Peggy had experienced, imagining a population of clones earlier on. With effort, she wrenched herself away from this train of thought. (Trefusis 1988: 85-86)

Sauge's entry into the symbolic, precipitates the destruction of the twins. Eventually, tragedy strikes in the novel when Jean, the female twin, dies. Jean's doom is Sauge's acceptance of the paternal law, represented by her husband, and her return to
Paris in obedience to Alan's request. In their struggles over a shawl that they are to bring to Sauge, the shawl is torn and the male twin violently attacks the female:

"I forbid you!"

"Who are you? Old Slowcoach! Old Brainless! And you want to pinch the reward from somebody more intelligent? Not likely, not this time!"

(...) Jean rushed towards the door. In a bound, her brother reached it before her. Brutally he ripped the shawl. (Trefusis 1988: 93-94)

The confrontation with the symbolic, brought into their lives by Sauge and validated by Sauge's eventual acceptance of the law, destroys the twins. Malcolm embraces the role of the ruler and the identical twins harmony is split up when Malcolm reveals the nature of Jean as a woman:

"And what do you expect, you poor girl? You're jealous, not only of your cousin, because she's a real woman and you're just a tomboy but you're jealous of your brother, too!"

With a barely human cry, Jean flung herself on her brother, for he it was who had just revealed the reason for her own unhappiness. (Trefusis 1988: 94)

As a result of Jean's attack Malcom hits his head and loses his conscience. Thinking his brother dead, Jean "ran towards the drawing-room, towards light and the world of reason" (Trefusis 1988: 95). This incident changes the attitude of Sauge and Malcom, but not of Jean: "The fact was that, of the three, she alone remained unchanged" (Trefusis 1988: 95). The violence of this scene might be explained as a metaphorical representation of the violence involved in the repression of the mother and the entrance in the symbolic. Jean, having been now identified as the feminine part of the polymorphous body existent in the maternal realm is threateningly overtaken by the symbolic and the fear of falling into a psychotic stage demands that she be destroyed. In the novel, Jean's death is preceded by a moment of intense drama in which Sauge, alone in the wilderness looking for Jean, hears a voice crying: "These empty cries had been heard before, but where?" (Trefusis 1988: 106). The voice is the voice of Scotland, the maternal space, signifying "frustrated love, hopeless separation" (Trefusis 1988: 105). "Anxious to know" (Trefusis 1988: 106) Sauge ventures herself into the moors and there she feels an actor in a play eternally performed since the beginning of time. With the mountains as spectators "comfortably seated and waiting for the curtain to rise" (Trefusis 1988: 106) she is intuitively aware that "unknowingly" she is "already on
stage" (Trefusis 1988: 106). This awareness makes her "feel somehow amputated" (Trefusis 1988: 107). The stillness that has surrounded her in the wilderness, "there was not even a wind" (Trefusis 1988: 106), is the same stillness that she encounters when at her return to the castle she finds out that Jean is dead: "Here it was that she saw Malcom, bent over the lifeless body of his sister and holding her still in his arms" (Trefusis 1988: 107)\(^4\). Her death marks the extreme instability and precariousness of the poetic subject. Commanded by Malcom to go Sauge abandons the castle gathering "all her silent, fleeting thoughts" (Trefusis 1988: 108).

The death of Jean occurs in the novel on a day that is "suspended between two ordinary days" (Trefusis 1988: 106). This sentence indicates the stasis of the present moment, a stasis that is portrayed in the novel by the fact that the strong wind that had characterized Sauge's days in Scotland, for once, stands still. This stasis might be understood as the refusal of society to change. Society, understood in Kristevan terms as "stability of the unchanging present" or as "daily existence" (Kristeva 1981c: 31), becomes a murderous entity for the poet: "The poet is put to death because he wants to turn rhythm into a dominant element" (Kristeva 1981c: 31). Jean, unable to undertake the role of "those awful doubles that actors use when they're ill" (Trefusis 1988: 100) and unable to accept the stability society is offering to her, has drowned herself.

Sauge's presence in the maternal space is meant to bring "civilisation" to the twins, and it turns out that hers is a tragic offering. Lorna Sage suggests that Sauge "sets out to win their [the twins] hearts and 'civilize' them" (Sage 1985: 80). She is safe "in the knowledge that (...) she'll return to Paris" (Sage 1985: 80). Sauge submits to her husband's desires and is about to depart for Paris, yet, as her name suggests, she has become wiser. In fact, the influential relationship is, in the end, a symbiotic one. The journey to Scotland has left on her an imprint shown by her open-ended finale that indicates that rhythm, the archaic song of the mother, has not been completely destroyed:

\(^4\) The "premonition" (Trefusis 1988: 106) that haunts Sauge in the moors recalls Emily Dickinson's poem "Presentiment is that long shadow on the lawn." Sauge's premonition is Jean's death in the same way as Dickinson's presentiment is "That darkness [is] about to pass" (Dickinson 1956: 367)
Sauge retreated, feeling her way along the walls, and out. Around the twins, silence fell, broken only by a small sound, discreet and monotonous in its regularity. Lady Balquidder sobbed... (Trefusis 1988: 109)

Despite accepting the law ("Sauge retreated"), the fact that she "feels her way along the walls" hints that these still look "as high as cliffs." Sauge is still looking for a "crack for fingers to cling to" and she finds the relief in a quiet, regular, discreet, monotonous and meaningless sound that disturbs patriarchal language ("Lady Balquidder sobbed..."). The previous disrupting quality of the twins (now silenced) lives on in the rhythmic sobbing.

*Echo* is the narration of a subject compelled to use poetic language as a means to find a position in the symbolic. The exploration of Woolf's androgynous ideal, the search in the unknown terrain that is the maternal space, proves that this subject position, the questionable subject-in-process, is a very unstable, uncomfortable, and uncertain one. From the perspective provided in this chapter, Trefusis's text interacts with patriarchal discourse in that it:

assume[s] a different discourse; neither imaginary discourse of the self, nor discourse of transcendental knowledge, but a permanent go-between from one to the other, a pulsation of sign and rhythm, of consciousness and instinctual drive. (Kristeva 1981c: 139)

In this discursive practice, Trefusis escapes from the biologic determinism, the essentialism and the belief in strong, fixed gender boundaries that were endemic in her lifetime. Moreover, she deconstructs the binary opposition between feminine and masculine. An awareness of the dangers encountered in the apprehension of an androgynous state of mind and the possibility of losing one self in a psychotic state, marks the presence in the text of the symbolic disposition, a fundamental disposition if the artist wants to be understood. In *Echo*, the need to re-enter culture suggests that Trefusis was intuitively aware of Kristeva's warning: "never one without the other" (Kristeva 1981c: 29). *Echo* is a textual realm that shows the difficulties of confronting patriarchy with the questionable subject-in-process of poetic language.
The practice of creating emotions

Trefusis's deadly pessimism, as the tragic death of the female twin in Echo illustrates, is also present in Woolf's *Between the Acts* (1942). Woolf's pessimism is informed and intensified by the outbreak of World War II. Woolf's *Three Guineas* presents as its central, most revolutionary declaration, the idea that the despotism of the patriarchal establishment operates in the same way as European Fascism. Therefore war is the extreme expression of patriarchal society: "For though many instincts are held more or less in common by both sexes, to fight has always been the man's habit, not the woman's" (Woolf 1991: 9). The figure of the dictator is seen in the essay as that of a fiend created not outside patriarchal society but as a consequence of it: the dictator epitomizes the ideal of patriarchal masculinity. In the figure of the dictator the hidden and subtle repressive rule that sustains patriarchy surfaces:

It is the figure of a man; some say, others deny, that he is Man himself, the quintessence of virility, the perfect type of which all the others are imperfect adumbrations. He is a man certainly. His eyes are glazed; his eyes glare. His body, which is braced in an unnatural position, is tightly cased in a uniform. Upon the breast of that uniform are sewn several medals and other mystic symbols. His hand is upon a sword. He is called in German and Italian Führer or Duce; in our own language Tyrant or Dictator. And behind him lie ruined houses and dead bodies - men, women and children. (Woolf 1991: 162)

In spite of the fact that the passage seems to imply the phenomenon occurs in countries where, unlike Britain, freedom and democracy are not well established, the figure of the dictator is engrained in patriarchy itself and can occur everywhere: it is just that "abroad the monster has come more openly to the surface" (Woolf 1991: 118). The patriarchal state, by imposing the way women should lead their lives is, for Woolf, a form of dictatorship:

Dictator (...) [is the one] who believes that he has the right whether given by God, Nature, sex or race is immaterial, to dictate to other human beings how they shall live; what they shall do (...) And he is here among us (...) in the heart of England. (Woolf 1991: 61-62)

Fascism merely brings to the surface, widening its scope, the repressive operation that has been executed for centuries under patriarchal order. Woolf establishes a link between the pacifist movement of her time and the struggle of the women's movement:
They [women] were fighting the same enemy that you are fighting and for the same reasons. They were fighting the tyranny of the patriarchal state as you are fighting the tyranny of the Fascist state. (Woolf 1991: 118)

According to Woolf, even though the struggle is similar, women should not integrate their discourse within the pacifist one but they should try to provide a new perspective through an avowal of their difference:

Different we are, as facts have proved, both in sex and in education. And it is from that difference, as we have already said, that our help can come, if help we can, to protect liberty, to prevent war. (Woolf 1991: 119)

Furthermore, since literature is the only profession that "has never been shut to the daughters of educated men" (Woolf 1991: 103) it is "simply by reading and writing their own tongue" (Woolf 1991: 103) that women can effect a change. Woolf is implying a revolutionary force in literary texts that finds its echo in Kristeva's theory of poetic discourse.

 BETWEEN THE ACTS was written in the turmoil of the outbreak of World War II. It is a text that, although motivated by the extreme and imposing patriarchal law that gives way to war situations, attempts to challenge patriarchal discourse. The narrative of BETWEEN THE ACTS is set a few weeks before War started: on a June afternoon of 1939. References to the gloomy, imminent future run parallel to the evocation of the past. On this day in June, whilst waiting for the pageant to be performed by the villagers, the hosts at Pointz Hall and their two guests sit after lunch to have coffee with a wall at their backs and the view in front of them. The unfinished wall reminds one of past generations' attempts at expansion. The enterprise failed and later generations planted fruit trees to cover it: "fruit trees, which in time had spread their arms widely across the red-orange weathered brick" (Woolf 1992a: 33). Both past and future constrain the present time of the narrative. Despite the fact that the ritual of having coffee outside takes place every day of every summer, the unexpected visit of Mrs Manresa and her companion William Dodge provides a means to make this occasion special. Because of their presence the company behaves in a distinctive way, thus breaking the monotony of their summer days: "When they were alone, they said nothing" (Woolf 1992a: 34). This change in daily routine anticipates a more frightening change: the devastation of war.
Mrs. Swithin voices her awareness of the transformations of the landscape through her reading of natural history:

"Once there was no sea," said Mrs. Swithin. "No sea at all between us and the continent. I was reading that in a book this morning. There were rhododendrons in the Strand; and mammoths in Piccadilly." (Woolf 1992a: 20)

Even though the processes of evolution and transformation of the landscape evokes destruction, the transcendental immobility of the view in front of them is also a reminder of their own mortality: "It'll be there (...) when we're not" (Woolf 1992a: 34). The fear of death creates this illusion of continuity. Fear also induces their efforts to maintain the complacent routine of daily life even though, as Mrs. Swithin's nephew Giles knows too well: "The whole of Europe - over there - was bristling (...) with guns, poised with planes" (Woolf 1992a: 34). "Over there" seems to indicate the menacing proximity of the war, stressed by the presence of the planes. In her essay "The island and the aeroplane: the case of Virginia Woolf" Gillian Beer argues that the appearance of the aeroplane served to demystify the notion of the island as an isolated realm surrounded by sea and of difficult access. It brought about "the new awareness of island-dwellers that their safe fortress is violable" (Beer 1996: 159). Used already in the First World War as a gun machine in aerial battles, the aeroplane became in the Spanish Civil War and more intensely in War World II a machine of massive destruction. Its capacity for transporting substantial amounts of troops made of the aeroplane such an invader force that the islanders "look up, instead of out to sea, for enemies" (Beer 1996: 159). In 1940, as Woolf was writing Between the Acts, she recorded in her diary entry for 15th May her discussion with Leonard Woolf about their intention of killing themselves if the German parachutes invaded Britain: "this morning we discussed suicide if Hitler lands. Jews beaten up. What point in waiting? Better shut the garage doors" (Olivier Bell 1985: 284). As Beer has rightly pointed out, the concept of the island is intrinsically linked to the sea. Hence, the disappearance of the concept of the sea as isolation implies the dissolution of the boundaries of the island which appears, then, as a prolongation of the mainland (Beer 1996: 154). The sea ceases to be a natural defence against invasion, and therefore what is happening "over there" in Europe is about to happen in Britain.
Beer suggests that the treatment of the aeroplane in *Between the Acts* is different from Woolf's earlier novels. For instance, she argues that whereas in *Mrs. Dalloway* "the dallying light aircraft represented the reassuring triviality of peace after the war" in *Between the Acts* the aeroplane "presage[s] the future; a future that may not exist" (Beer 1996: 172).

Whilst it is true that the plane brings to the surface the uncertainties of the future in a narrative where the repetition of rituals of society seems almost obsessive, it can still be argued that Woolf retained the liberating capacity that the image of the aeroplane had provided before. The presence of the aeroplane, by nullifying the presence of the sea, provides the narrative with the prehistoric time Mrs Swithin mentions: the time when "there was no sea." Moreover, the image of the aeroplane suggests the possibility of a seeing from a different point of view: from an aeroplane the perception of the world changes its perspective. Indeed, when a formation of planes interrupts the words of the priest at the end of the pageant, the imagery serves not only as a reminder of the dark future ahead, but also of the prehistoric past. Interestingly, the narration at this point moves its focus from the priest to the idiot and from there to nature:

> It was an awkward moment (...) Every sound in nature was painfully audible; the swish of the trees; the gulp of a cow; even the skim of the swallows over the grass could be heard. But no one spoke. (Woolf 1992a: 115)

The intervention of Albert, the idiot of the village, in the pageant is most significant for in actual fact he is not acting. In the pageant he is as much the buffoon of the Elizabethan court as he is the jester of the village. His appearance on the stage provokes laughter:

> What were they laughing at?
> At Albert, the village idiot, apparently. There was no need to dress him up. There he came, acting his part to perfection. He came ambling across the grass, mopping and mowing.
> *I know where the tit nests*, he began
> *In the hedgerow. I know, I know -
What don't I know?*
> *All your secrets, ladies,
And yours, too, gentlemen...* (Woolf 1992a: 53)

Because he is not acting, he is perhaps the most truthful character in the text. To prove his honesty he provides a plain and simple statement: "I know where the tit nests,
The subject on the stage

in the hedgerow." The nervous laughter he provokes in the audience betrays the first symptom of the seriousness of his statement: "I know (...) all your secrets, ladies, and yours, too, gentlemen." In fact, because he knows, he is feared by the community:

'Albert having the time of his life,' Bartholomew muttered.
'Hope he don't have a fit,' Lucy murmured.
'I know... I know...,' Albert tittered, skipping round the soap box.
'The village idiot,' whispered a stout black lady (...) It wasn't nice. Suppose he suddenly did something dreadful? (...) She half covered her eyes, in case he did do - something dreadful. (Woolf 1992a: 54)

The uneasiness that Albert arouses in the spectators which first prompts laughter and soon murmurs and whispers seems to suggest that Albert's acting (both in and out his role in the play) has created an emotion. Once he has created his climatic tension he retreats to a meaningless discourse:

Hoppety, jiggety, Albert resumed,
In at the window, out at the door,
What does the little bird hear? (...) And see! There's a mouse...
(...)
Now the clock strikes!
(...) One, two, three, four...
And off he skipped, as if his turn was over. (Woolf 1992a: 54)

Albert's performance is, in a sense, the first glimpse of the real nature of the pageant. Miss La Trobe is, like Albert, an outsider to the community. She is, as Isa understands once she is bored with trying to extract some meaning from the play, only interested in eliciting some kind of emotion from her audience: "Did the plot matter? She shifted and looked over her right shoulder. The plot was only there to beget emotion" (Woolf 1992a: 56). This might be a reason to leave Albert's intervention in the play open-ended "as if his turn was over." The use of the conditional "as if" seems to indicate that Albert's role is a continuum not only in the artificial world created in the play but in life itself.

The presence of the cows, on the other hand, stands as a metaphor for a maternal space. There is a crucial moment in the novel when Miss La Trobe panics because she thinks that the emotion she has been trying to create and maintain is about to be lost because the audience is unable to hear the words that are being said on the stage. The
almost faded emotion is recaptured by the cows' bellowing in the distance (one of them has lost her calf). This communal motherly call is seen in the text as a "yearning" for "the primeval voice" which "sounding loud in the ear of the present moment" (Woolf 1992a: 85) saves Miss La Trobe and her play from the imminent fate she has foreseen as on the verge of the collapse of emotion:

The cows annihilated the gap; bridged the distance; filled the emptiness and continued the emotion.
Miss La Trobe waved her hand ecstatically at the cows. (Woolf 1992a: 85)

The text's imagery moves from the planes that interrupt the discourse of the priest (the church being one of the pillars of the patriarchal establishment, as Woolf claimed in Three Guineas), through Albert "the idiot" to end with the cows. This swaying seems to suggest that the imagery of the plane still retains some of the allusions to freedom of previous novels. Although their strict formation in the air reminds people of the dark future ahead, the new perspective they provide serves to undermine patriarchal reasoning and to create new hopes. These hopes lie in humankind's capacity to remember prehistory, a fact linked to the image of the mother, repressed and silenced by patriarchy. The end of the novel emphasizes this view by blurring the distinction between present day and primeval time:

The house had lost its shelter. It was night before roads were made, or houses. It was the night that dwellers in caves had watched from some high place among rocks.
Then the curtain rose. They spoke. (Woolf 1992a: 129-130)

As in Trefusis's Echo the house is seen in Between the Acts as the symbol of patriarchal imposition:

It was a pity that the man who had built Pointz Hall had pitched the house in a hollow, when beyond the flower garden and the vegetables there was this stretch of high ground. Nature had provided a site for a house; man had built his house in a hollow. (Woolf 1992a: 9)

Unlike the image of the omnipresent phallic castle in Trefusis's novel, this house bears witness to the struggle between life and death. As far as Mrs Swithin is concerned, every winter nature seems to win this struggle: the adversity of rigorous weather conditions is not conquered by man: "So every year, when winter came, Mrs. Swithin
The subject on the stage 151

The contest between life and death symbolized by the house is sustained throughout the novel and represents Woolf's refusal to admit the immutability of facts as they are offered by history. The heart of the house has still some reminiscences of its prehistoric past:

The room was a shell, singing of what was before time was; a vase stood in the heart of the house, alabaster, smooth, cold, holding the still, distilled essence of emptiness, silence. (Woolf 1992a: 24)

"The room was a shell, singing of what was before time was" appears as an incongruous statement, yet it is from the challenge that each word poses to the rest that the purpose of the sentence and its importance within the narrative can be elucidated. The metaphor of the room as a shell brings about an image of which the referent in Western culture has its roots in the birth of Aphrodite. The oceanic imagery invoked by the word "shell" is furthered by the gerund "singing," recalling in this manner the singing of the sirens: the voice that sounded "before time was." The suppression of the singing pervades the second part of this paragraph permeated by images of death, represented by the alabaster vase standing at the heart of the house and recalling ancient burial rituals5. The oceanic imagery appears almost obsessively in the text represented by the fish. The fish are also involved in the struggle between life and death. This conflict takes several forms. The most obvious one is the contrast between the sole that Isa has ordered for lunch and the living fish of the pond. Perhaps more interesting is the connection between the death of the lady "who had drowned herself for love" (Woolf 1992a: 29) and the fish:

Under the thick plate of green water, glazed in their self-centred world, fish swam (...) It was in that deep centre, in that black heart, that the lady had drowned herself. (Woolf 1992a: 28-29)

As in Trefusis's Echo the struggle in the novel is directly related to a quest displayed in the narrative concerning the problem of ego formation and its relation to

5 Woolf's alabaster vase at the center of the house brings to mind the Greek marble urn immortalized by Keats in his 1819 "Ode on a Grecian Urn" a poem that shares a similar theme as the one being discussed. Some verses of this Ode seem to inspire Miss La Trobe's exaltation of meaningless words:

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
(Keats 1956: 295)
artistic creativity. The feminine is, in the novel, always linked to death, silence, and emptiness. The feminine is also tied to the heart of darkness, the place that has never seen the sun, identified by Kristeva with the ruling patriarchal law. Under the patriarchal symbolic, the feminine is silenced as it is illustrated in the novel by the two pictures hanging in the dining-room. One is the picture of a lady and the other is the picture of an ancestor, a man "holding his horse by the rein" (Woolf 1992a: 24). Whereas the man "was a talk producer" the lady is a picture bought by Bartholomew because he liked it:

In her yellow robe, leaning, with a pillar to support her, a silver arrow in her hand, and a feather in her hair, she led the eye up, down, from the curve to the straight, through glades of greenery and shades of silver, dun and rose into silence. (Woolf 1992a: 24)

The apparent innocuousness of the silence that surrounds the picture is counterbalanced by its capacity to produce an emotion in Bartholomew, who had to buy it. This emotion is beyond the limits of symbolic language. It is, in Kristeva's words, a "nonsemanticized instinctual drive that precedes and exceeds meaning" (Kristeva 1981c: 142). It carries with it the rhythm of semiotic pulses: "Empty, empty, empty; silent, silent, silent" (Woolf 1992a: 24); yet, the rhythm needs to be mastered by the sun so that it does not disappear in an endless repetition. In the novel the picture "drew them down the paths of silence" (Woolf 1992a: 29). How to break this silence and produce emotion within the symbolic order becomes the main preoccupation of Miss La Trobe in her pageant and of Woolf in Between the Acts.

For this reason, as the text makes the reader aware: "If it was painful, it was essential. There must be society" (Woolf 1992a: 25). In order to produce poetic language, the "I" without losing sight of the thetic subject must be able to allow to the surface of language the rhythmic pulse of the semiotic. The identity being reformulated in the novel is the heterogeneous identity of the questionable subject-in-process of poetic language. For this purpose language in the novel is pushed as far as possible to the limits between symbolic and semiotic realms. The texture of the text becomes a patchwork of different genres, half-remembered poems and children's games, abandoning a canonical form and thus challenging the legislative imposition of literary practice. This patchwork provides an aerial aspect to the text where the "narrative is no
longer held within the determining contours of a land-space" but the limitless place
where the contest between the poet and the sun takes place.

The journey backwards towards the maternal space enacted by Sauge in *Echo*
seems to be carried out in *Between the Acts* through the immersion in different stories.
The narrative is made up of stories within stories that form a whirlpool that draws the
self towards the "heart" of a space existing "before time was." In Miss La Trobe's
pageant there is a refusal of any effusion or glorification of the patriarchal symbolic past
in spite of the fact that the pageant is about the history of England. She betrays common
sense expectations such as for instance that of the Colonel's wife: "Unless of course she
was going to end with a Grand Ensemble, Army; Navy; Union Jack; and behind them
perhaps (...) the Church" (Woolf 1992a: 106). Instead, the audience is provided with a
moment of high tension very different from the tension of patriotic sublimation: "The
present time. Ourselves" (Woolf 1992a: 106). The text recaptures in a single page all the
rhythms that have been scattered throughout the narrative:

Anyhow the rhythm kicked, reared, snapped short. What a jangle and a
jingle! (...) What a cackle, a cacophony! Nothing ended. So abrupt. And corrupt.
Such an outrage; such an insult; And not plain. Very up to date, all the same.
What is her game? To disrupt? Jog and trot? Jerk and smirk? Put the finger to

The actors are on the stage confronting the audience waving mirrors that reflect
"Ourselves." There is great confusion and chaos not only among the audience but also
on stage where the actors are declaiming simultaneously some of their parts. In the
midst of this chaos Mrs Manresa alone "preserved unashamed her identity" (Woolf
1992a: 110). This sentence suggests that there has been a change in the rest of the
characters of the novel. When some people from the audience are outraged and unable
to stand the situation (significantly, Colonel Mayhew is among them) a megaphonic
voice takes control and speaks:

...a voice asserted itself. Whose voice it was no one knew. It came from
the bushes - a megaphonic, anonymous, loud-speaking affirmation. The voice
said:

(...) *Let's break the rhythm and forget the rhyme.* (Woolf 1992a: 111)
Beer suggests in her notes to the text that "the megaphone suggests both tyranny and mass communication" (Woolf 1992a: 143). Hence, although through this megaphonic voice the Law of the father is imposed, there is still a choice. Either the subject enters into the eternal confrontation between the sun and the poet defying the tyranny of the paternal law, or the subject succumbs to his dictatorship: "All you can see of yourselves is scraps, orts and fragments? Well then listen to the gramophone affirming..." (Woolf 1992a: 112).

With her play Miss La Trobe seem to have successfully broken the silence that surrounded the picture and at the same time she has been able to produce emotions. The meaning of the emotion is irrelevant; it is the emotion that counts. The emotion is still there when the company is parting for in people's banal farewell conversations some conclusions are attempted. All this time the chime of a bell marks the rhythm:

Take the idiot. Did she mean, so to speak, something hidden, the unconscious as they call it? (...) I like to feel sure if I go to the theatre, that I've grasped the meaning... Or was that, perhaps what she meant?... Ding dong. Ding... that if we don't jump to conclusions, if you think, and I think, perhaps one day, thinking differently, we shall think the same? (Woolf 1992a: 118)

Yet Miss La Trobe is unaware of her success and thinking of the next play she feels that words charged with meaning have failed her purpose. Drunk and alone she imagines: "Words without meaning - wonderful words" (Woolf 1992a: 125). In the haze of the smoky atmosphere that surrounds her and that preserves her identity as an "outcast" (Woolf 1992a: 125) she imagines the new play:

There was the high ground at midnight; there the rock; and two scarcely perceptible figures. Suddenly the tree was pelted with starlings. She set down her glass. She heard the first words. (Woolf 1992a: 125-126)

The setting of the play is very similar to the setting of the play that Giles and Isa are about to perform at the end of the novel when the curtains rose: "It was the night that dwellers in caves had watched from some high place among rocks" (Woolf 1992a: 130).

Immersed in the intensified patriarchal discourse of which the extreme expression is war, Woolf envisioned that the only way to achieve peace was to hear the voices of the poets. As she wrote in Three Guineas:
Even here, even now, your letter tempts us to shut our ears to these little facts, these trivial details, to listen not to the bark of the guns and the bray of the gramophones but to the voices of the poets (...) to discuss with you the capacity of the human spirit to overflow boundaries and make unity out of multiplicity (...) But that would be to dream (...) the dream of peace, the dream of freedom. But, with the sound of the guns in your ears you have not asked us to dream. (Woof 1991: 163)

This dream apparently impossible to make true in the "real" world is effected within the discursive practice of these two literary texts. They are cathartic experiences in that they free the speaking subject from the repression of the "univocal, increasingly pure signifier" (Kristeva 1981c: 143) that constitutes patriarchal discourse.
CHAPTER FIVE

Objects, Pirates, And Other Outsiders

Tales of the Creation

"I first saw the light of day towards the end of the year 1759" (Trefusis 1960: 7).
Thus opens Trefusis's Memoirs of an Armchair, a novel she published, together with the French painter Philippe Jullian, in 1960. This seemingly uncomplicated and straightforward statement constitutes, nonetheless, a semantic conundrum, for these words are uttered by an armchair which, as the title of the novel indicates, is about to narrate the story of its life. Although syntactically correct the semantic impossibility of this sentence resides in the fact that the speaking-subject, in so far as it is a piece of furniture, is not a subject but an object. Through this device the reader is transported to a world of fantasy where, as in Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, objects do talk. Yet, a resistance in the narrative to enter a world of fantasy may be observed; the text is posited in the margin between what is perceived as real life and the realm of the fantastic. In this sense, two stories are interwoven. The story of this armchair, as narrated by the armchair itself, is linked so closely to "History" that it is difficult to establish a clear borderline between the chair's own story and the historical events the armchair has witnessed during its long existence.

The story, narrated in the first person by an armchair that has experienced two hundred years of European history, is set within an atmosphere that is very close to the realm of dreams where an armchair can be both endowed with human qualities and be perceived as belonging to a historically evidenced world. Nevertheless, the chair's human qualities constitute a counterpart with the most "real" of all real lives, the lives of those who have been pre-eminent in traditional European history and whose lives are documented. The story takes the reader to a realm that is perceived simultaneously as strange (objects should not talk) and at the same time familiar through the incorporation into the story of such historical figures as Louis XV of France, Voltaire, Balzac, Lord Byron, and Lady Hamilton. The strangely familiar world that the novel offers is closely
related to Freud's Uncanny since the blurring of the qualities of the fantastic with the real was defined by Freud as one of the elements that produced uncanny feelings; the writing of the uncanny was defined by Freud in the following way:

The writer creates a kind of uncertainty in us in the beginning by not letting us know, no doubt purposely, whether he is taking us into the real world or into a purely fantastic one of his own creation. (Freud 1990: 351)

In Chapter Six the uncanny shall be related to the fear produced by the hermaphrodite and its connection with repetition, the feminine and death. However, for the purpose of this Chapter, it is important to point out that since the uncanny is related to that which has been repressed, there is an association between the latter and the unconscious:

Uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression. (Freud 1990: 241)

_Memoirs of an Armchair_ is about bringing to the surface those unconscious processes that were described by Freud as "timeless; i.e., they are not ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time; they have no reference to time at all" (Freud 1991i: 191). That is, they are processes unaffected by history since history is chronologically ordered and is defined by the passing of time. This apparent paradox is a necessary device that allows Trefusis to describe and to inscribe within the telling of the story a timelessness that knows no narrative. In this sense, what is being achieved in the novel is a levelling of history and prehistory. In other words, there is a refusal in the text to accommodate the unidimensionality that chronology assumes.

Within the world created in the narrative, human beings are unable to listen to objects, regarded by the human characters just as such, with no characteristics outside their inanimate condition. It is, therefore, the reader's subjectivity, with her/his capacity to listen to the story of the armchair, that trespasses the borderline between fantasy and reality. However, if for most of the text the dividing line between human and non-human capacities is kept undisturbed, there is an instance in the text where this line is blurred. In this sense, the encounter of the armchair with Freud is a most relevant passage as it actually makes explicit what has been implicit throughout the story,
namely, that the armchair is not a simple piece of furniture, but has an identity. At the
time of this encounter the armchair belongs to the Baroness Solomon de Rothschild
who, as told by the armchair itself, "One day in 1910 (...) decided to invite Professor
Freud" (Trefusis 1960: 93). In the course of the visit, the Baroness inquires of Freud
whether "'dreams can reveal our secret desires"' (Trefusis 1960: 93) making frivolous
the question by adding: "'When the Baron dreams of a horse that means he wants to win
the Derby?'" (Trefusis 1960: 93). Freud's answer, in keeping with the tone of the
question, is not devoid of secrecy and ambiguity: "Things are a little more complex than
that, Baroness" (Trefusis 1960: 93). The reader is left to decide where the complication
stands. The matter is further pursued by the Baroness who asks: "'And would you say
that works of art can reveal the sentimental secrets of artists?'" (Trefusis 1960: 93). To
this question Freud provides a straightforward answer, "'Undoubtedly, Baroness'"
(Trefusis 1960: 93). When the fictional Freud is driving the conversation to sexual
matters in his analysis of a painting described by the Baroness as perfectly innocent, the
Baroness, in an attempt to save the situation and come back onto the safe ground of
good manners, questions Freud about furniture which she considers completely
functional and therefore neutral and devoid of any artistic influence. Freud's answer has
an important impact as it affects the future of the armchair:

"Do not be deceived, Baroness. In that way this armchair with its curves
and flourishes reflects not only the dissolute libido of its time, but also the lines,
which are flexible, point to a pre-natal nostalgia." (Trefusis 1960: 93)

Freud's analysis imposes upon the armchair a desire charged with sexual
connotations. Freud's explanation scandalizes the Baroness who, suddenly shocked by
the sexuality of the armchair, now looks at it "with a certain mistrust" and unable to
dismiss Freud's remark turns her affection towards "furniture of more chaste design"
(Trefusis 1960: 94). These words are followed by a silence marked in the text by a blank
filled with asterisks in the clear intention of sharply separating this episode from the rest
of the story. In spite of the raillery and humorous tone in which the conversation is
delivered, the fact that this is the sole instance in the entire novel in which the narrative
is so abruptly interrupted cannot pass unremarked. This episode is of paramount
importance precisely because it provides the point of convergence, within the narrative, of the fantastic and real worlds of the novel. Indeed, when the Baroness is giving the armchair away she declares: "Since it was analysed by Freud, I don't care to sit on it" (Trefusis 1960: 95). The semantic riddle created by the fact that Freud, a scientist of the mind, has analysed an "it" is thus unravelled by the Baroness. If it is true that Freud dedicated several essays to works of art, compiled in the Penguin Freud Library in Volume XIV under the general title of "Art and Literature," the objects of his analyses were not the objects *per se* but the minds behind those objects. Therefore, the misinterpretation of Freud's words by the Baroness serves to complete the personification of the armchair. A concurrence between the reader, the armchair and the human characters of the novel has taken place. The desire to change radically the course of the narration seems to indicate that there has been an unsettling point of endorsement between the armchair-narrator and the writer of the novel. The concurrence of the armchair-narrator and the writer hints at the question of identity that permeates not only this novel but the entire oeuvre of Violet Trefusis.

As does Woolf's *Orlando*, *Memoirs of an Armchair* presents a character that seems to transcend history by surviving it. As Beer has argued about *Orlando*, both texts recreate a fantasy of a "self surviving history" (Beer 1996: 7). However, the fantastic quality of each of these texts, implicit in Beer's words "self surviving history", lies in different elements. In *Orlando* the fantastic resides in the impossibility of immortality; it operates precisely through the improbability of the self transgressing linear time. In the case of an armchair, immortality appears as plausible. Since it is an inanimate object it is "immortal" (indeed, the "immortality" of a piece of furniture offers a *raison d'être* to antiquarians and collectors). The fantastic element in *Memoirs of an Armchair* rests upon the assumption that the armchair is a speaking-subject, that it is a self. Both fantasies, *Orlando* and *Memoirs of an Armchair*, respond to the desire to liberate the self from the constraints of patriarchal history. It is worth noting that the inspiration underlying the creation of Orlando is to be found in the "immortal" portraits of the different generations of Sackvilles that hang on the walls at Knole. Trefusis herself pointed out the resemblance between these pictures and the person of Vita Sackville-
West when she first visited Knole and it re-surfaced in her description of John in *Broderie Anglaise*: "a hereditary face which had come, eternally bored, through five centuries" (Trefusis 1992a: 27). Woolf went to Knole to collect material for her novel-biography in 1927 and she also pointed out the resemblance that served as inspiration for Orlando:

All the centuries seemed lit up, the past expressive, articulate; not dumb & forgotten; but a crowd of people stood behind, not dead at all. (Olivier Bell 1982: 125)

In this sense, Orlando could be seen as a metaphor whose referent is simultaneously a person and an object. Inasmuch as Orlando is a portrait subsuming all previous portraits, he is an object. Hence, the fantastic element in both narratives comes about through the process of transubstantiation of a self into an object.

The fact that these objectified selves remain outside history might be explained by the socio-linguistic construct of womanhood. In both cases, the self that is being objectified is that of a woman. *Orlando* is a novel about Vita Sackville-West. In the case of *Memoirs of an Armchair* it is possible to establish a link between the armchair-narrator and Trefusis. Evidence for some of the episodes narrated by the armchair are to be found in Trefusis's numerous autobiographical writings. For instance, the description the armchair provides of Jean Cocteau is a facsimile of Trefusis's description of him in *Prelude to Misadventure* (1942). In *Memoirs of an Armchair* the armchair describes him as follows:

Jean Cocteau is endowed with the prescience of a medium, the sensitiveness of an insect. Indeed, he has much in common with an insect, its appearance, iridescence, fragility. He is winged, he has a sting. Moth-like, he makes for every (lighted) candle. Termite-like, his depredations are secret and devastating. He has the industry of the ant, the grace of the dragon fly. It is difficult to credit so aerial a being with the sapience of the sphinx, the gusts of telepathy that visit the soothsayer, the unswerving gift of divination we know children to possess... (Trefusis 1960: 98-99)

In the chapter entitled "Some Friends" of *Prelude to Misadventure*, Trefusis writes of Cocteau:

[He] is endowed with the prescience of a medium, the sensitiveness of an insect; indeed, he has much in common with an insect, its lightness, iridescence, fragility. He is winged, he has a sting. Moth-like, he makes straight for every
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(lighted) candle. Termite-like, his depredations are secret and devastating. He has the industry of the ant, the grace of the dragon fly...

In spite of all this, his appearance is misleading (that conical head, that brittle body), it is difficult to credit so aerial a being with the sapience of the Sphinx, the gusts of telepathy that visit the soothsayer, the unswerving gift of divination we know children to possess. (Trefusis 1942: 151)

By transposing her self to an object Trefusis posits this self within a dream-like narration where, as she argues in Prelude to Misadventure, "You are completely emancipated from the laws of gravity, you can change your sex, your shape, your genus with the greatest possible ease" (Trefusis 1942: 153). This desire to be liberated from the laws of gravity and the limits that shape the body can be read as a desire to relax the constraints imposed by the symbolic order, Lacan's Law of the Father. Through this bodily transmutation the self enters, the other side of the mirror where the "I" becomes the "eye" that "first saw the light of day towards the end of the year 1759". In psychoanalytic theory the formation of the ego's identity is intrinsically connected to corporeality (Gross 1990: 81-85). In Lacan, the Mirror stage provides the child with an image of a unified body that is otherwise perceived as fragmented by the senses. As Gross has pointed out, for Lacan "the development of the infant's ego is dependent on its ability to identify with an image of its corporeal unity" (Gross 1990: 83). This identification is an imaginary one that must be lived by the subject as real in order to acquire a stable and coherent speaking position. Nonetheless, it is important to stress that this anatomical perception of the subject's body is an imaginary one and has, therefore, nothing to do with the actual body. Hence, theoretically, it can be reinterpreted. It is worth noting here that within a psychoanalytical framework (certainly within Lacan's psychoanalytical theory) the spatial boundaries provided by the body are necessary for the formation of the psychic reality of the ego. As Freud argued, "The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego" (Freud 1991j: 364). One of the most interesting aspects in Lacan's account in relation to the body's role in the psychic development are his anthropological insights. As he argues, "the imaginary anatomy referred to here varies with ideas (clear or confused) about bodily functions which are prevalent in a given culture" (Lacan 1953: 13). In this sense, the cultural meaning given to the body
(more specifically the meaning given to the sexual organs within patriarchal culture) will affect the subject position in the symbolic. As Gross argues:

The body's sexual specificity - or rather, the social meaning of its sexual organs - will position the subject either as having (for men) or being (for women) the phallus, and through its relation to the phallic signifier, positions it as a subject or object in the symbolic. (Gross 1990: 85)

Therefore, Trefusis's reshaping of the body into the form of an armchair can be read as an attempt to relocate her subject position within the symbolic. This reshaping of the body implies a plasticity of its boundaries that could be unbearable for the subject since it affects the ego and could lead her to madness. However, the reshaping of the body can be achieved through a dream-like narrative. Moreover, the narcissistic positioning of the self in the terms of an armchair can be related to what Kristeva has termed abjection since it involves the recognition of the instability of boundaries. In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Kristeva argues that all societies constitute themselves through this exclusion process. This exclusion required by culture implies an emphasis on the demarcation of the bodily boundaries. Such demarcation is attained by expelling (abjecting) that which is considered improper or abominable:

A massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in an opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. (Kristeva 1982: 2)

Formulated upon anthropologist Mary Douglas's conceptualisation of the marginal as a power that threatens the closeness of the social body by being neither firmly inside it nor firmly outside it (Douglas 1984: 95-6), Kristeva argues that the body recognizes its abject as both the part of the self which has been expelled and that part of the self which inspires horror. In other words, one "abjects" and "is abject." The process by which the self that has constituted itself through abjection comes to experience itself as abject has been called by Kristeva "passivization":

The abjection of self would be the culminating form of that experience of the subject to which it is revealed that all its objects are based merely on the inaugural *loss* that laid the foundations of its own being. (Kristeva 1982: 5)

This process is, for Kristeva, the basis of masochism (Kristeva 1982: 5) and it presupposes a splitting process taking place in the self. On the one hand there is the self
that abjects (active) and on the other there is the self perceived as abject (passive);
dealing with the loathing of an item of food as improper/unclean, Kristeva writes:

But since the food is not an "other" for "me", who am only in their desire,
I expel myself, I spit myself out, I abject myself within the same motion through
which "I" claim to establish myself. (Kristeva 1982: 3)

The latter, "the one by whom the abject exists" is called by Kristeva the "deject"
(Kristeva 1982: 8). Neither a subject nor an object, the deject casts off the question
"Who am I?" substituting it for the question "Where am I?" (Kristeva 1982: 8). The
deject is, therefore, a spatial construct. Since abjection offers a release from the
constrictions of boundaries, the self experienced as abject becomes a wanderer, since the
deject can never know where 'he' stands. The deject is:

A deisher [sic] of territories, languages, works, the deject never stops
demarcating his universe whose fluid confines (...) constantly question his
solidity and impel him to start afresh. A tireless builder, the deject is in short a
stray. He is on a journey, during the night, the end of which keeps receding.
(Kristeva 1982: 8)

Kristeva argues that the relaxation of boundaries offered by abjection is
experienced as a "sublime alienation": "The time of abjection is double: a time of
oblivion and thunder, of veiled infinity and the moment when revelation burst forth"
(Kristeva 1982: 9). Nevertheless, it is also perceived as horror since it implies the
menacing possibility of the dissolution of the self in its fluid "lack" of demarcation.
Abjection is seen by Kristeva as a simultaneously terrifying and attractive "land of
oblivion that is constantly remembered" (Kristeva 1982: 8)). As Gross has pointed out,
this abyss "is the locus of the subject's generation and the place of its potential
obliteration" (Gross 1990: 89). The end of Memoirs of an Armchair is most interesting
from this point of view for it represents the epitome of abjection. In the form of an
Epilogue, the text presents a newspaper article about a robbery in the yacht where the
armchair has been kept. The burglars' target is the armchair. When the alarm is raised,
"terrified, one of the criminals let it fall overboard into the sea" (Trefusis 1960: 151).
This sea is that "land of oblivion that is constantly remembered", an abyss from where
any recovery of the armchair is impossible:
Soundings having been taken, it is feared that the depth of the sea is too great to allow of an attempt by divers to recover this priceless piece of furniture. (Trefusis 1960: 151)

The choice of words such as "terrified" or "feared" as well as the sea imagery seem to attest to Trefusis's horror of and attraction to the abject. In Trefusis's textual imagery the sea implies both origins and "death on approval":

You sink down, down into a bottomless sea, full of unguessed reefs and nameless fish. In your ears, as in a shell, resound the waves of oblivion. Soft arms, wound round your neck, drag you down, deeper, deeper still. Here ripples the Medusa of Omen. Here lurks the forbidden Being. (Trefusis 1942: 153)

The shell, a metaphorical image of the goddess Aphrodite (who came of a shell from the sea) as well as the sound of "waves of oblivion," stands as Trefusis's distrusting view of the recorded account of war, politics and empire provided by the official history of mankind and her awareness of the unrecorded history of generations of marginal groups, among them women, who have been condemned to oblivion by being unrecorded. It is in these terms that the actual importance of abjection resides in so far as abjection is linked to a primeval time. As Kristeva argues:

Abjection preserves what existed in the arcaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be - maintaining that night in which the outline of the signified thing vanishes and where only the imponderable affect is carried out. (Kristeva 1982: 10)

Kristeva's words recall the myth of the androgyne with its allusions to the immemorial beings violently severed by Zeus1. In this sense, the androgynous ideal is a sublimation of the officially forgotten memory of a primeval existence where sexual difference was non-existent. Looking at the hermaphrodite (the body form of the androgynous) as abject might explain the attraction and repulsion it provokes in literature and in society. The hermaphrodite has provoked a taboo so strong that whenever a baby is born hermaphrodite a surgical operation is undertaken so as to decide the sex of the child (more often than not eliminating the female organs on the grounds that the male is the visible and therefore more "sure" sex).

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1 It is important to point out here that Kristeva sees abjection in the horror of sexual differentiation epitomised in the cultural taboo of incest and the horror of menstrual blood.
If, as Gross points out, abjection "derives from a stage preceding binary opposition and distinct categories, before language and naming" (Gross 1990: 93), the abject implies "the non-distinctiveness of inside and outside":

And yet, there would be witnesses to the perviousness of the limit, artisans after a fashion who would try to tap that pre-verbal "beginning" within a word that is flush with pleasure and pain. They are primitive man (...) and the poet. (Kristeva 1982: 61)

By naming, thus by introducing language, the permeability of this borderline is erased; therefore language "founds the separation inside/outside" (Kristeva 1982: 61). Naming is nonetheless necessary for the acquisition of identity which enables the subject to speak. In this sense, Oedipalization implies the repression of abjection. Indeed, Kristeva claims that abjection is the real "object" of primal repression.

By descending into the sea, the armchair becomes the fallen self in what Kristeva proposes as the ultimate image of the abject: the corpse (Kristeva 1982: 4). The process of passivization allows the self-reduced-to-object status to recuperate its subjectivity. However, this is achieved only by internalising abjection. The sublimation of abjection works as an attempt to bring to the text that which escapes registration - the archaic memory displayed by the abject. Trefusis's interest in bringing to the text the non-narrative space of prehistory responds to a precarious sense of self and a fear of effacement. This fear compels her to be one of those who: "would be witnesses of the perviousness of the limit, (...) primitive man, a poet". After the 'drowning' of the armchair there is a significant transformation in the narrative of Memoirs of an Armchair. Whereas the armchair-narrator is a mere witness of the events that have surrounded it, the abjected armchair accomplishes entering history: the robbery and drowning of the armchair is accounted for in a newspaper, the modern form of recorded chronicle. Thus, the forbidden Being that lies at the bottom of the sea from immemorial times is brought to the surface and its story recorded.

In "Virginia Woolf and Prehistory" Beer argues that, in Woolf's writing, "the escape from registration was an ideal, a necessarily unachievable ideal" (Beer 1996: 13). These words could be applied to the writing of Trefusis who, by sublimating the abject, performs "an attempt to symbolize the 'beginning', an attempt to name the other facet of
taboo: pleasure, pain" (Kristeva 1982: 61-62). The necessarily impossible ideal of recording what cannot be symbolized is ingrained in the androgynous ideal and its related myth of 'beginnings'.

Trefusis's fascination with and scepticism towards official recorded history is founded in a feeling of "outsiderness", a feeling that has both its physical and its psychical roots in a feminine identity perceived as marginal. Her "original" marginality was intensified by her lesbianism since this caused, ultimately, her physical exile (after the scandalous ending of her relationship with Sackville-West). If in Woolf's writing outsiderness takes the political tone of denunciation of patriarchal oppression, a sense of outsiderness can also be perceived in Sackville-West's writing (probably very much despite herself).

Some feminist critics such as Showalter (1988) have seen outsiderness from a positivist humanistic point of view for, she claims, in as much as it is the status of women, it is worthy of celebration. However, the idea of the foreigner is not devoid of controversy and it is paradoxical in that, by acknowledging a status of alien, an uncomfortable sense of not belonging immediately arises. Not less important is the fact that, even if it is from outside, the apprehension of a foreign identity implies an avowal of the existence of boundaries. Even if, as Woolf famously noted in A Room of One's Own with reference to the exclusion of women from the universities (Woolf 1977: 12), the mode of exclusion depends on the perspective from where this exclusion is observed, the foreigner brings with her an uncomfortable and distressing identity by being locked (regardless of whether she is locked in or out). In the following section the notion of the foreigner, the need for an identity and the possibility of crossing boundaries will be discussed within the framework of Kristeva's theorisation of the foreigner and with particular reference to Trefusis' Pirates at Play (1952), a text which seems to reverberate with this debate.
The wanderer's quest

In *Powers of Horror* Kristeva omits to address the question of whether women experience abjection differently from men. This is an important question since the female body, with its flows and apertures, is identified by Kristeva with the image of those leaking boundaries that threaten the solidity of the self. Kristeva starts *Powers of Horror* with the first person pronoun "I" when talking of the subject who abjects and is abjected. The first person pronoun soon changes into the third person masculine pronoun "he" which remains for the rest of her text. Similarly, she devotes her analysis of modern abject literature exclusively to male authors; extensively to Céline and more briefly to Proust, Dostoyevsky, Borges, Artaud and Joyce. A significant number of feminist critics blame the Lacanian framework that forms the basis of Kristeva's theoretical argument for the exclusion of women in Kristeva's theories. For instance, Labanyi has argued that it is within the definition of the abject that in order to abject there must be a self that abjects. Since, she argues, within a Lacanian psychological framework the feminine is defined by lack in the symbolic, a feminine self appears as an impossibility - hence, she concludes, Kristeva's usage of the masculine pronoun (Labanyi 1996: 89). However, this seems a rather simplistic explanation. Following the same argument, since the speaking subject is for Kristeva masculine, it would be of no importance whether this speaking subject were biologically male or female2. It should be taken into account that, as she did with her concepts of the maternal chora and the semiotic, Kristeva places the abject on the side of the feminine. Gross argues that this association places the abject in opposition to "the paternal, rule-governed symbolic order" (Gross 1990: 93). These feminine elements (abject, maternal chora, the semiotic) cannot be expressed directly and must be channelled and articulated through the symbolic. By choosing male authors Kristeva is, strategically, interpolating an abject

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2 Having said this, there seems to be an recurrence that many French feminist theorists keep strictly to what is considered as "patriarchal symbolic language". The extreme incident occurred at a conference delivered by Luce Irigaray (Barcelona, 1995). To the surprise, and annoyance, of the large audience who attended the conference, Irigaray refused to utter a single word and had her own paper delivered by a man. In Kristeva's case, the widely criticised insistence on choosing male authors for her exploratory theoretical arguments, might have a similar sort of political agenda.
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discourse (thus a feminine discourse), within the patriarchal symbolic language. In fact, the presence of the abject (of a feminine discourse), in the writing of male authors blurs the borderline that sustains the opposition between the abject and the symbolic, making of the latter, therefore, a porous realm.

With regard to the third person masculine pronoun, its selection might be founded in Kristeva's own foreign identity. Surprisingly, neither her critics nor her translators have addressed Kristeva's own relationship with French, a language that she seems to dominate but is not her mother tongue. It is normative in French, as it is in many Romance languages, to use the masculine form when speaking in terms that involve men and women alike. If her use of 'he' in her writing does speak of her own alien relationship with French, it denotes a problematic relationship that prevents her from challenging the norm in this respect. Arguably, such a "humane weakness" in a woman who challenged the psychological establishment with her doctoral thesis is debatable. Yet, her work Strangers to Ourselves shows that Kristeva is sensitive to the problems of adopting a language other than one's native one. If a challenge to a theoretical concept can be sustained and argued, the foreigner's irksome relationship with a language that has been learned (as opposed to acquired) provides a source of insecurity. As she points out:

You improve your ability with another instrument, as one expresses oneself with algebra or the violin. You can become a virtuoso with this new device that moreover gives you a new body (...) You have the feeling that the new language is a resurrection: new skin, new sex. But the illusion bursts when you hear, upon listening to a recording, for instance, that the melody of your voice comes back to you as a peculiar sound, out of nowhere (..) Your awkwardness has its charm, they say, it is even erotic, according to womanizers, not to be outdone. No one points out your mistakes, so as not to hurt your feelings, and then there are so many, and after all they don't give a damn. One nevertheless lets you know that it is irritating just the same. (Kristeva 1991: 15)

This quotation is deliberately extensive so as to give an idea of Kristeva's awareness of the problems encountered by the non-native. The problem is resumed in the opening line of the section entitled "The Silence of Polyglots": "Not speaking one's mother tongue" (Kristeva 1991: 15). Although the suggestion that Kristeva is constrained by her own alien relationship with the French language is debatable, the
importance of her awareness must not pass unnoticed. Not talking one's mother tongue, being in a foreign land, is allied in Kristeva with the feminine since the "awkwardness" in the language of the foreigner is made erotic by "womanizers." Hence, it seems plausible to propound a woman as the referent of the second person pronoun "you" used in the extract quoted above. Indeed, the first foreigners in Western culture, Kristeva has suggested, were women3.

The Danaïdes were the fifty daughters of Danaüs. Aegyptus, Danaüs's brother, had fifty sons whom he wanted to marry to his nieces so as to gain royal rights over Libya. Attempting to escape this forced marriage, the Danaïdes murdered their cousins on their wedding night and exiled themselves from Argos following a route from Egypt to Greece. Kristeva points out that "the Danaïdes were foreigners for two reasons: they came from Egypt and were refractory to marriage" (Kristeva 1991: 44). In ancient Greece 'foreignerness' was problematic only when the stranger refused to become amenable to Greek customs and regulations. These women became "suppliants" who had to promise obedience to their father and had to show restraint. The fact that the Danaïdes married the winners of a race4, is read by Kristeva as the turning point where an endogamous society became exogamous (Kristeva 1991: 45 and 1993: 17-18): that is, the point when the marriage contract was made between strangers. The foreign status bestowed by the Danaïdes upon all women puts them in a privileged position: they can accomplish an, as yet, utopian society made up of a "polyvalent community" which should "respect the strangeness of each person within a lay community" (Kristeva 1993: 35). In Kristeva's view:

3 According to the myth, recollected by Aeschylus in The Suppliants (493-490 b.c.), these women, the Danaïdes, were the descendants of Io, the priestess of Hera (the first wanderer in the history of this civilisation). Because Zeus had fallen in love with Io, the jealous Hera transformed her into a heifer. In order to continue his love affair Zeus transformed himself into a bull. The enraged Hera then punished the heifer by sending a gadfly that drove Io to wander, in a state of frenzy, from Europe to Asia, finally reaching Egypt where Zeus liberated her from her metamorphosis. Io was the mother of Epaphus, considered the ancestor of the Egyptian kings. It would be the fourth generation of women, the Danaïdes, who would bear, according to Kristeva, the mark of violence and anguish indirectly infringed upon Io by Zeus.

4 This is recorded in Pindar's version of the legend.
Women have the luck and the responsibility of being boundary-subjects: body and thought, biology and language, personal identity and dissemination during childhood, origin and judgement, nation and world - more dramatically so than men are. (Kristeva 1993: 35)

Kristeva's alignment of women with the foreigner is not entirely new. As shown in earlier chapters, scientific literature of the nineteenth century is full of metaphors linking the scientific research on women's bodies to the exploration of an unknown territory. Freud's description of the feminine as "a dark continent" can be read in this line as could be his connection of women and "strangeness" in his essay "The Uncanny" (Freud 1990: 368).

Women's "foreignness" is the basis of the research done by the anthropologists Shirley and Edwin Ardener in the 1970s. They suggested the existence of a zone outside patriarchal culture that appears to be exclusive to women's culture. Edwin Ardener in his two essays "Belief and the Problem of Women" (1973) and "The 'Problem' Revisited" (1975) argued that society was structured in two main groups: the muted group and the dominant group. Women are located in the muted group. The term 'muted' refers equally to language and to power, since the articulation of consciousness is controlled by the dominant group. The interest of this theoretical model here is that it proposes an asymmetrical juxtaposition of these groups. In the displacement, a zone appears as specific to each group. Because women have to articulate their belief within the channels available in the dominant group, they have access to the zone that is specific to this group. The dominant group, however, does not have access to the muted group's area. This area is called the "wild zone" and it is marginalized because it is not surrogated to the dominant group. In "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" Showalter has stressed the importance of the wild zone for the woman writer who, by placing her utterance in this zone, challenges the confines of patriarchal space.

Even though these utopian visions of women as "outsiders", as "wild", or as "unknown" are welcomed, Kristeva and Showalter are well aware that the foreigness of women, their borderline identity, is not devoid of danger. As Showalter argues:

We must also understand that there can be no writing or criticism totally outside of the dominant structure; no publication is fully independent from the economic and political pressures of the male-dominated society. The concept of a woman's text in the wild zone is a playful abstraction. (Showalter 1986: 263)
Interestingly, Kristeva has isolated the dangers not outside women, as does Showalter, but within each woman. The outsideness of women can lead them, according to Kristeva, to radicalism by crossing the line too far on either side:

It is not easy to avoid the snares of that condition, which could condemn us exclusively, through regression or flight from the superego, to one side or the other (nationalist or world-oriented militants). (Kristeva 1993: 35)

This idea of women as outsiders and of the "danger within" was explored by Woolf. In *Three Guineas* she suggests that women are outsiders from patriarchal society and culture. From this position of marginality, as has been discussed in Chapter Four, Woolf argues that otherness, taken as the enemy (Fascism) by the dominant discourse, was in fact ingrained within the accepted notion of Englishness. Since the idea of Englishness was based upon the enforcement of patriarchal culture, Englishness was actually a culture of repression. In this context, Woolf’s argument goes beyond a theory of sexual difference to become a political statement. For Woolf, Fascism is patriarchy in its extreme manifestation. The very arguments that had led Woolf to claim that women are outsiders suggests not an endorsement of this outsideness, but an uneasiness with it.

It is important to remember that in *Three Guineas*, as indeed in *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf is denouncing the abasement of women in patriarchal history, culture and society. As much as she argues for the formation of a society of women, her "Outsiders' Society" (Woolf 1991: 122) is not an end in itself, but an argumentative position. The dynamics in Woolf’s discursive practice are complex and not devoid of paradox. On the one hand, by being able to posit within patriarchal discourse that which is taken by this discourse as foreign, she is avowing the possibility of a discourse that includes "otherness" within itself. At the same time, precisely by means of the recognition that "the enemy" is not outside but within, she alienates women from that discourse. When Woolf argues that, as outsiders, women "have no country" (Woolf 1991: 125), she betrays a fear of losing ground and immediately suggests that as a woman "my country is the whole world" (Woolf 1991: 125).

These words seem to suggest that Woolf encounters what Kristeva terms the "snares" of the foreigner woman by becoming a world-oriented militant. Indeed, these
words proclaim a discomfiting position outside that which, for Woolf, was imposed upon women by patriarchal ideology. The rejection of women by patriarchal culture leads Woolf to proclaim that women, as outsiders, should maintain "an attitude of complete indifference" (Woolf 1991: 123). However, as Kristeva argues, "indifference" is a "shield" that protects the foreigner from "attacks and rejections" (Kristeva 1991: 7). Indifference prevents the stranger's "thought and speech" from coming "down to chaos" (Kristeva 1991: 9). It can be said that in Woolf's indifference there exists a "pride in holding a truth that is perhaps simply a certainty - the ability to reveal the crudest aspects of human relationships" (Kristeva 1991: 7). Therefore, indifference creates a discourse where the fruitfulness of the condition of outsider can be useful. After accomplishing the identification of patriarchal English culture with the foreign, Woolf opens a crack in the frontier that separates outside from inside. A discursive practice of aloofness on the part of the outsider is a powerful tool that could make that boundary tumble and bring about "the capacity of the human spirit to overflow boundaries and make unity out of multiplicity" (Woolf 1991: 163).

Within the idea of the foreigner, an interesting and challenging interplay of forces is at work. Following Freud, who, in "Totem and Taboo" and "Civilisation and its Discontents" argues that sacrifice and expulsion of pre-Oedipal polymorphous pleasures and incestual affections form the basis of civilisation, Kristeva argues that in the formation of an identity there is always an otherness that is constituted by what was repressed in the first place in order to form such identity. As Gross points out, the novelty in Kristeva's psychoanalytical framework is that "what must be expelled from the subject's corporeal functioning can never be fully obliterated but hovers at the border of the subject's identity" (Gross 1990: 87). In Three Guineas Woolf challenges patriarchal assumptions of identity assurance precisely by confronting this identity with its abject (with that repressed in the first instance and viewed as alien). In the process, Woolf embraces the identity of the foreigner. This identity is formed similarly by a process of exclusion for, as Kristeva argues: "the domination / exclusion fantasy [is] characteristic of everyone" (Kristeva 1991: 24). Refusing to join a male society for the sake of peace on the grounds that "by doing so we should merge our identity in yours",
Woolf shows her awareness that her proposal for women to form a society of outsiders might coincide with that which patriarchy expects from women. Thus, whether from a chosen position or an imposed one, being outside (of history, legislation, society, economy, science, culture, etc.) has been the traditional role awarded to women in patriarchal society. Bringing to the text the myth of Antigone (Woolf 1991: 157) Woolf acknowledges the danger of being walled in through patriarchal blindness to the conflict she is trying to provoke. This blindness, she is aware, might jeopardize her attempt to convulse patriarchy.

In spite of its plausible danger, the idea of women as foreigners is very productive. By opening up the boundaries of national identity, women ally themselves with the figure that Kristeva associates with that of the cosmopolitan: "[s]he is from nowhere, from everywhere, citizen of the world, cosmopolitan" (Kristeva 1991: 30). The cosmopolitan's identity is based upon the native's recognition of that which is taken as "strange" and encompasses the images of "the hatred and of the other" (Kristeva 1991: 1). In this sense, the cosmopolitan, by questioning the unity and self-assurance of the native's identity, confronts the native with his/her "other" hatred. Likewise, the native is constantly questioning the cosmopolitan's identity since, as Kristeva argues, "there is otherness for all others" (Kristeva 1993: 31). Only through this questioning can the dissension of what is taken for granted be effective. As Kristeva points out:

The ear is receptive to conflicts only if the body looses its footing. A certain imbalance is necessary, a swaying over some abyss, for a conflict to be heard. (Kristeva 1991: 17)

Adrift on unknown waters

In Kristeva's view, cosmopolitanism is a position chosen by a speaking subject who: "against origins and starting from them, [chooses] a transnational or international position situated at the crossing of boundaries" (Kristeva 1993: 16). Violet Trefusis chose this positionality both in her writing and in her personal life\(^5\). *Triptych* (1943) is a

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\(^5\) As a child, the death of Edward VII was the cause of her early travelling. In November 1910 she left with her parents and sister for Ceylon. Three months later together with her sister she was sent back to Europe to "complete" their education. During the one year of 1911, for example, when she was seventeen
short piece of poetic prose where Trefusis describes, without actually naming them, the three countries she knew best: England, France and Italy. The piece is rightly entitled *Triptych* because the narrative is almost pictorial and each section needs the other two. The short passages on each country open with the words "The land of..." (Trefusis 1943: 349) and after a string of qualifiers closes with the words "The land where..." (Trefusis 1943: 349) in which Trefusis elucidates on the qualities of the people of each country. In all of them she places herself as a "foreigner" living in that country and she gives "advice" as to who is likely to enjoy living in it. If *I (England)* is the land of the "hundred per cent He-men and the hundred per cent He-women", *II (France)* is the land of "matriarchs and mistresses" and where it is "most enjoyable to be a woman". Finally, *III (Italy)* speaks of the land of "Emperor and pimp, priest and impresario, individual bravery and collective cowardice" and where it is least enjoyable to be a "a blue-stockings, old, or a bird" (Treftisis 1943: 351). However, this is not the only narrative where Treftisis explores countries, national qualities, and the adaptability of the foreigner. Her own condition of foreigner drives Treftisis to explore similarities and differences between countries in her entire oeuvre. Her fictional writing is peopled with characters whose foreignness appears as paramount to the development of the narrative. For instance, in *Echo*, Sauge's cosmopolitanism unsettles the self-contained and previously unquestioned world inhabited by the twins. In a similar manner, Anne's visit from France disturbs the contented and peacefully domesticated relationship between Alexa and Lord Shorne in *Broderie Anglaise*. Of all her novels, it is perhaps in one of her latest, *Pirates at Play* (1952), where the exploration of the dialectics of foreignness is at its best.

A pirate, as *The New Shorter Oxford Dictionary* defines it in the first instance, is: "A person who robs and plunders on or from the sea". Jo Stanley in *Bold in Her Years old, her letters were headed Dambatene (Ceylon), San Remo, Munich, Heidelberg, Paris, Córdoba (Spain). Then, she suffered a second forceful exile at the end of her love affair with Vita Sackville-West when her mother imposed a stay in Clingendaal in Holland. Her honeymoon took her to Paris and the south of France and when twice she tried to elope with Vita, her destination was Paris. Finally, she chose to live in Paris and later on in her life, she would live between Paris and Florence. The only long period she spent in England was during World War II.
Breeches: Women Pirates Across the Ages renders this definition as incomplete and provides her own interpretation of the word:

broadly speaking, pirates are individuals who take goods from a ship or take a whole ship while it is on 'the high seas', that is, sea that does not belong to any country. They do this for their own personal gain, unlike navies which make such attacks for the supposed benefit of the country that employs them. Robbery in coastal waters is not strictly speaking piracy because only that coastal state (...) has the right to apprehend the pirates. (Stanley 1995: 18)

This definition, as Stanley herself acknowledges, is influenced by contemporary notions such as the concept of coastal waters contained in international maritime laws. Nonetheless, Stanley's insistence that acts of piracy are those undertaken on "the high seas" implies that a pirate's identity is based upon his operating within international waters. Her definition seems to endorse the mythological image of the pirate as an inhabitant of the seven seas. Pirates belong to a world outside the boundaries that define any given nation and, therefore, foreignness is embedded within the notion of piracy. However, and paradoxically, the history of piracy, dating back "for at least 5,000 years" (Stanley 1995: 22), is interwoven with the development of the nations of the world. This is so because, as it is convincingly argued in Stanley's book, piracy, far from being a random and isolated activity has always been "systematic and political" (Stanley 1995: 21). The golden moments of piracy have coincided, more often than not, with politically intense periods and international power struggles. The concept of pirate depends, as does that of foreigner, upon an other identity. As Stanley has argued: "Piracy is often in the eye of the beholder" (Stanley 1995: 20). For instance, as she points out, whereas Francis Drake is, from a Spanish perspective, a villain, he is, from an English viewpoint, a hero. This translates into Francis Drake's being considered as "pirate" by the Spaniards and as a warrior, a privateer, a mercenary at the service of the crown, by the English. Moreover, "the sea on which they worked also stood as a foreign, unknowable area where unusual things happened and unusual creatures existed" (Stanley 1995: 11). In this sense, the title of Trefsis's novel, Pirates at Play, seems to suggest the "swaying over some abyss" that Kristeva sees as necessary if a conflict is to be heard.

Pirates have traditionally inspired both fear and admiration in the minds of the population: fear because they act violently and unscrupulously in their attacks, and
admiration because they represent the suppressed rebellious and daring aspect within every individual. As Stanley argues:

> They epitomise physicality, as well as the power and freedom that can be attained through the violent suppression of others (...) [they] shed light on the denied desires of those who set themselves up as respectable. They are symbols of unusual daring and transgression. (Stanley 1995: 12-13)

Yet, in relation to gender, the transgression epitomized by the pirate is limited, piracy being characteristically a male-dominated world. Hence, piracy's transgression is self-contained within patriarchal parameters since piracy is the utmost embodiment of the patriarchal exclusion of women. Whereas piracy transgresses what appears to be one of the sacred laws of patriarchy, private property, in effect it perpetuates the objectification of women since women are seen merely as part of the booty or as objects of sexual desire. A pirate's society is founded (in exactly the same manner as the patriarchal societies he flees from) upon the total exclusion of women. If pirates are taken as the figure of the other in the eyes of the mainstream rightful citizen, women are put in a position where they are foreigners amongst foreigners and thus doubly silenced.

Whilst outlining the dangers involved in a romanticized generalisation of the idea of the outsider as a transgressing figure, the pirates at play in Trefusis's novel are most interesting, for the novel takes on board women pirates as commanders of its textual vessel. The figure of the woman pirate is a very unsettling one for the patriarchal social system since not only does she intrude in a male-dominated world but she also breaks the patterns of passive femininity taken as normative. In the same way as male pirates, women pirates are greedy sea-robbers capable of extreme violence in the pursuit of their booty. As active seekers these women abandon the symbolic position of passive objects of desire. They are perceived with greater fear and contempt than their male counterparts because "women pirates are social outrages - and the embodiment of women's terrifying power" (Stanley 1995: 6). Hence, women pirates enter a mythological world of evil femininity that bears witness to archetypes such as Lilith, the alluring siren or the dangerous _femme fatale_.

Cross-dressing has been a common practice amongst women pirates. Apart from being more suitable garments in which to undertake the particulars of their job,
disguises in male attire have allowed women to enter the male dominated world of piracy. Due to their transvestite practices Stanley points out that: "the woman pirate figure denies the female/male split by taking on both roles" (Stanley 1995: 10). An analogy can be drawn between the figure of the woman pirate and the hermaphroditic body resulting from Salmacis's appropriation of Hermaphroditus's body in the story by Ovid. The metaphorical and literal overtaking of a wandering male body aims, in both cases, to achieve pleasure through the fulfilment of a desire that cannot be otherwise obtained by undertaking the role assigned to women. The hermaphroditic metamorphosis of the woman pirate figure transforms passivity into active plunder in order to gain what she desires, be it wealth, power, excitement or sexual pleasure. The secret femaleness they disguise behind an outwardly masculine figure presents the possibility of exploring alterity within identity. In *Pirates at Play* self and other co-exist extrapolated, as shall be shown, in the interplay of the native and the foreign.

In the novel, the element of strangeness is represented, in the first instance, by the mother of the Papagalli family, Artemisia. In Western culture, the most immediate reference Artemisia brings to mind is the mythological goddess of the hunt Artemis/Diana. There is also a historical reference to the name: Artemisia is the name of the first woman pirate recorded in history. As narrated by Herodotus in *The Histories* Artemisia, Queen of Halicarnassus, was involved in the Persian Wars, providing the army of King Xerxes with five ships and herself commanding one of these ships. In Book Seven of his history an astonished Herodotus writes of Artemisia:

> Of the rest of the officers I make no mention by the way (since I am not bound to do so), but only of Artemisia, at whom I marvel most that she joined the expedition against Hellas, being a woman; for after her husband died, she holding the power herself, although she had a son who was a young man, went on the expedition impelled by high spirit and manly courage, no necessity being laid upon her. (Herodotus 1914: 164)

Artemisia participated in the crucial Battle of Salamis in 480 B.C. which marked the beginning of the end of the Persian Wars, after Xerxes and his fleet were defeated by the Athenian army. In the wreckage and the chaos that surrounded the battle Artemisia managed to fool both her enemies and her allies when, followed by an Athenian ship, she overturned a ship of her own fleet in an attempt to save her life. In seeing this, her
enemy, thinking that she was on his side, abandoned the chase. Artemisia's manoeuvring was taken by her allies as a courageous one for they thought the ship that she had sunk belonged to the enemy army. In addition to her being a sea-commander, Artemisia is portrayed by Herodotus as a wisewoman whose advice was sought by Xerxes. Her pragmatism, intelligence and leadership skills provoked envy and jealousy among some of her fellow male leaders who, according to Herodotus, felt great rivalry towards her because "she had been honoured above all the allies" (Herodotus 1914: 260). In fact, Herodotus comments that there had been a serious confrontation between Artemisia and Damasithymos, the captain of the wrecked ship, just before the battle: "now, even though it be true that she had had some strife with him before [the battle] (...) I am not able to say whether she did this by intention" (Herodotus 1914: 267). This episode illustrates that Artemisia would have agreed with Woolf in that the enemy is within as much as he can be without. In undertaking this action Artemisia showed a disregard for any loyalties other than to herself.

Observing the battle from the distance, Xerxes's comment on what he was led to believe was a heroic act, is said to have been: "'My men have become women, and my women men'" (Herodotus 1914: 267). It is difficult to establish the reasons that compelled Herodotus to write about Artemisia in a history where, as historian K.H. Waters comments, "It is noticeable that a number of women who are prominent in minor episodes remain anonymous" (Waters 1985: 128). A reason might be found in Herodotus Halicarnassian origin. Herodotus, born between 480 and 490 B.C., would have been a subject of Artemisia during his childhood and early youth and he might have been favourably impressed by his Queen's abilities. Yet it seems that Herodotus, in tune with the patriarchal system existent in his life-time, can entertain Artemisia's powerful and intelligent personality only through a process of masculinisation. This process is soon reversed when, after the battle, Xerxes entrusts his children to Artemisia. However, the transition from the figure of the unscrupulous fighter to her latter "mother role" can be plausible only by aligning her to a eunuch. After the battle, Artemisia is sent to Ephesos, a city famous for its market of eunuchs, in the company of Hermotimos, himself an eunuch.
Artemisia's qualities as a counsellor and as a warrior lead critics such as Waters to see her as a virago (Waters 1985: 146) and as an Amazonian (Waters 1985: 129) woman. It is the ruthlessness and heartlessness of Artemisia's personality as well as her wisdom that attracted Trefusis (characters of Trefusis's novels such as Caroline in *Hunt the Slipper* or Sauge in *Echo* are a clear examples of Trefusis's interest in wise, indomitable women). In *Pirates at Play* Artemisia serves as a reminder of women's powerful inheritance that has been silenced and forgotten in the official account of History. In Trefusis's novel, Artemisia is the daughter of an Irish woman and a Neapolitan business man who managed to accumulate a fortune through the fraudulent commerce of selling forged antiques as authentic ones. In spite of her disgraceful family background, Artemisia finds her way in society. She marries a dentist who eventually becomes the Papal dentist who is subsequently granted a title for his services. Several aspects of Artemisia's personality point to links with her Greek predecessor. She is a woman of independent, strong ideas, as is exemplified by her refusal to accompany her husband to Rome. She finds Rome "impersonal, prejudiced, standoffish" (Trefusis 1950: 12) and instead she installs herself in Florence, which she finds "exclusive yet cosmopolitan" (Trefusis 1950: 12), and where she is a complete stranger. Her social gatherings reflect her taste for cosmopolitanism, being peopled by natives as well as foreigners. In the social meetings she delights herself singing "something fragrant with 'memories,' for at least one man present" (Trefusis 1950: 15). If, during her youth, Artemisia was a soprano who sang minor parts in the Grand Opera, now her sweet voice merely aims at enchanting one of the men of her audience (suggested by the use of the word "fragrant" which might be seen as a metaphorical representation of the mermaids' singing and their tantalising effect on men). The ceiling of her personal sitting room is populated by cherubs to which "she had always been partial" (Trefusis 1950: 13). These cherubs might be seen as a reminder of the young eunuchs in Herodotus' narrative for, as it is said later on in the novel, "archangels are not exactly men" (Trefusis 1950: 99). The succinct sea imagery, the cherubs, Artemisia's foreign ancestry on her mother's part and, above all, her name, are clues that connect her to the historical Artemisia. Yet the focus of the novel slides from Artemisia onto her children. It is to her sons and especially to
her daughter that Artemisia's treasure is bequeathed, an inheritance that acquires full meaning through the presence of the Greek pirate Artemisia in the background.

Although Vica, Artemisia's daughter, and her brothers are said to be "self-contained, self-sufficient, self-satisfied", unaware that "there were worlds to be conquered, victims predestined to become the prey of the Papagalli..." (Trefusis 1950: 15), she appears to be conscious of her inheritance when she bursts into one of her mother's social gatherings to proclaim: "We might be a band of pirates" (Trefusis 1950: 16). Certainly they are seen as such in the eye of the beholder: "That is exactly what you are, a band of pirates and you [Vica] are the ringleader" (Trefusis 1950: 16). Vica is physically beautiful and extremely intelligent, "the perfected specimen escorted by the rough copies" (Trefusis 1950: 9). The "rough copies" are her brothers, with the exception of Amerigo (nicknamed Rigo) who "had just escaped being a dwarf, if not a hunchback" (Trefusis 1950: 9).

Aware of the dangers involved in such an enterprise Trefusis, herself in exile for most of her life, writes a novel where the characters, and through them the reader, are constantly confronted with the foreigner. The question of alterity is presented in the text right from the beginning in the titles of the first two chapters that introduce the families involved in the narrative. The first chapter is entitled "La Famiglia" and the second "The Other Family." The idea of otherness provided by the title of the second chapter is contrasted through several devices. The idiom used in the title of the first chapter is foreign to the text itself, since the novel is written in English. Furthermore, the name of the Italian family, the Papagalli, provides an interesting game of self and other, for the word "Papagalli" translates into English as "parrots." A constant element within the imagery of piracy, parrots are able to talk but not to produce language. In other words, parrots can reproduce and echo what someone has previously said but they are ignorant as to the significance of the words they utter. In this sense they can be seen, metaphorically speaking, as an allusion to the mythological Echo, a figure that epitomizes the absolute other. Therefore, those a priori introduced as an identity, "La Famiglia" ("The Family"), become, through a playful twisting of language, "the other" family. If the Echo of "Echo and Narcissus" is alluded to implicitly in the imagery of the
parrot, the mythological figure is explicitly alluded to in the novel when Vica echoes the last words that Elizabeth (the daughter in "the other family") is uttering: "'Narcissus,' echoed a deep voice, 'who is being called names?' Vica, unnoticed, had entered the room" (Trefusis 1950: 109).

The confusion between identity and alterity is also reflected in the manner in which the actual presentation of the two families is carried out. La Famiglia is introduced mainly through the transcription of the thoughts of the governess, the only foreigner within that identity that, at this time, remains still self-contained. "The Other Family", by contrast, opens up with a dialogue between Lord and Lady Canterdown. They are discussing their daughter Elizabeth’s projected trip to Florence to stay with the Papagalli family in order to learn Italian. In their discussion, the borderline between "we" (the English) and "they" (the foreigners) is emphasized through the words of Lord Canterdown, the patriarch of the English family. When his wife points out that the Italian family "sound very well" Lord Canterdown retorts: "We seem to have got on pretty well, in spite of being bad linguists. I don't hold with Englishmen who are good linguists" (Trefusis 1950: 18). Lord Canterdown’s self assurance in the universality of his Englishness is humorously and wittingly subsequently mocked when Elizabeth, in her journey towards Italy, takes a train from Victoria to Dover called "The Simplon Express". The word "Simplon" is closely similar to the word "simpleton" especially from a phonological perspective and with this word the text suggests that there is foolishness in supporting the identity of the stereotypical British. This idea is made evident in the following lines of the same paragraph when the crossing boat is said to be: "A floating résumé of everything the British tourist would pine for, when abroad: tea, continuous and unstinted; chintzes (in the cabins); good manners; an optimistic outlook" (Trefusis 1950: 36). In comparison to the foreigners who are also making the crossing, these British-proud people see themselves as belonging to a superior race: "It was evident from the word 'go,' that we belonged to a superior race" (Trefusis 1950: 36). Ironically, despite how self-assured and superior British may feel, once they arrive at Calais they appear strange and incongruent. In a direct allusion to Book I of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), very critical towards the attitudes and pomposity of his
contemporaries, the British families "towered over the douaniers like Gulliver over the Lilliputians" (Trefusis 1950: 37). Another literary reference that serves to destabilize the apparent "universality" of the Canterdown family is that their name recalls that of an outsider, Oscar Wilde's *The Canterville Ghost*.

However critical the text is towards assuming an identity based on unquestioned stereotypes, it also signals the pitfalls of giving up a notion of identity altogether. The text emphasizes that an identity is needed in order not to be silenced. This is the case of "the Girl," an unnamed ghost-like figure who lives in Canterdown. Perhaps even more eloquent is the case of a character who "was never referred to as anything but 'my Friend'" (Trefusis 1950: 92). Deprived of the means to acquire an identity, the "Friend" appears to be a dispossessed character, with no chance to fight back. She is portrayed as nothingness: "There was never any need to explain her, she was so nebulous and needy, poor little creature!" (Trefusis 1950: 92). Lacking subjectivity, "the friend" never speaks, being a mere recipient and she seems unable to produce language. Valka's conversations with "her friend" are monologues only interrupted by almost inaudible monosyllables. She is a victim who inspires pity and pity is shown to be the ultimate expression of powerlessness, a point where any fight seems worthless:

> Take stock of your enemy, see how strong, how beautiful he is... Then go for his heel of Achilles. Be funny, not grim, turn him into ridicule if you can, a *little*, not too much, for then he might excite pity... (Trefusis 1950: 144)

The friend cannot fight back because she has no name, no identity. Therefore, the necessity of an identity if one is not to be silenced is evidenced. However, this very need for identity highlights the dilemma of being imprisoned in a stereotypical one. As Oliver points out:

> How can we use language in order to change notions of identity and difference when it is language or representation through which stereotypical notions of identity and difference are perpetuated? (Oliver 1993: 154)

*Pirates at Play's* main preoccupation is precisely the exploration of how to escape stereotypical representations in language. For this purpose several devices are used in the narrative. The use of humour, as shown above, intends to demolish the stereotype of the comfortable assurance of the native. The assurance of the native is
likewise challenged by the numerous tongues displayed within a narrative written mainly in English. There is also Spanish, French, Italian and a reference to Russian in the explanation of the name Valka that connects the Italian pronunciation of the name with its possible Russian root:

'Prijivalka' is the Russian term for that ambiguous creature, half lady companion, half poor relation, who figures in every Russian novel. The Italian pronunciation of Walker is, of course, Valka. (Trefusis 1950: 59-60)

The use of these different idioms is disturbing because they act as a reminder of that which is foreign. They impel the reader to make an effort in order to understand what appears as a riddle in a different tongue. Within the world of the text, characters are given a similar task, since they are dispossessed, in most cases, of their mother tongue. The numerous characters of the novel, who interact with each other without any apparent relationship between them, are almost without exception placed in a situation where they become foreigners. Few characters in the novel speak their own language. The character's struggle with the new idiom is displayed through mistakes and misunderstandings that sometimes lead to comical situations. For instance, in Canterdown, the French governess's mispronunciation of English brings about some embarrassing situations, such as calling Elizabeth "eunuch" when she really means that she is "unique" (Trefusis 1950: 26). This example provides another distorting quality to the text in its mixture of oral and written language. The episode of the French governess calling Elizabeth "eunuch" is amusing only if oral language is taken into account.

In other instances, the particularities of a character's accent and pronunciation are fully described: "The tortured syllables, stunted and distorted, struggled to escape from Mrs. Quince's mutilating lips. It was horrible what she did to the English language" (Trefusis 1950: 115). Trefusis includes in her text footnotes that determine how a given word should be pronounced. An illustration of this case is provided by the name of the Italian Princess, Luz, which, as it reads in the footnote, "should be pronounced LOOTH" (Trefusis 1950: 74). These techniques, while endorsing the written nature of the text, enhances it with the peculiarities of the oral language. In this manner the printed text is demystified, giving thus pre-eminence to the oral tradition. An important source of
knowledge (particularly in the history of women's lives), the oral tradition is viewed with suspicion by the historical canon, since what it recounts is difficult to authenticate with documentation. Patriarchal culture prioritizes printed over oral history. By giving oral language a pre-eminent role within her written, printed text, Trefusis is introducing "the other" within canonical, linear History.

The arrival of Elizabeth into the Papagalli household opens up the boundaries that had previously confined the family members. This is so because as Kristeva argues: "Living with the other, with the foreigner, confronts us with the possibility or not of being an other" (Kristeva 1991: 13). Vica, more than any other member of the family, is willing to take up the challenge posed by Elizabeth's presence. In pursuit of the knowledge existent beyond the limits that have isolated her, Vica willingly abandons her mother tongue and in her conversations with Elizabeth she adopts the language of the other: "Moreover, she [Vica] spoke English, now I come to think of it, rather peculiar English, but English, nevertheless" (Trefusis 1950: 42). The characters of Vica and Elizabeth are both endowed with heavenly, if different, beauties, yet whereas Vica's voice is enchanting (Trefusis 1950: 14), in Elizabeth's voice "there was nothing celestial (...); it had a rousing, astringent quality that revived the victim and brought him to his senses" (Trefusis 1950: 21). Vica, venturing to speak Elizabeth's language, empowers herself. This first predatory act serves Vica and her brothers as first contact with the other worlds existing in the text. Through Elizabeth they know the world of the Palazzo Arrivamale. Elizabeth meets, through Vica, Gian Galeazzo. Gian, despite being in love with Vica, chooses Elizabeth as his fiancée (due to her aristocratic background):

[Gian] may love whom he likes and where he likes, but twenty generations of Arrivamales compel him to choose his wife and the mother of his children in a certain restricted sphere - how boring this sounds, but marriage is boring! (Trefusis 1950: 83)

Elizabeth, coming from an English aristocratic family, finds no difficulty in adapting to Italy. This is explained in the text as follows: "Aristocracy is international, Elizabeth and Gian Galeazzo, in spite of belonging to different nationalities, speak the same language" (Trefusis 1950: 84). Another type of language is thus introduced, not a language that has to do with geographical or political borders but a language that
delimits class. Such a politically dangerous statement must be seen, as everything else in
the novel, in the light of its own alterity, for co-existing with the "language" and the
world of the aristocracy there is another international language and world: that of the
pariah. Vica's brother, Rigo, a dwarf and a freak, unexpectedly fits perfectly into the
world of Arrivamale. The real Rigo, a poet and outcast within his beautiful family, is
paradoxically international too: "The privilege of the freak. Freaks are international,
emancipated, irresponsible, like gipsies [sic]" (Trefusis 1950: 81-82). In the text,
aristocracy and social outcasts are levelled: "They [the Princess and Rigo] were much
the same height, though the Princess, of course, wore high heels" (Trefusis 1950: 76).
The obvious coquetry of the Princess is a metaphor that questions a social system based
on class. Confronted with the freak the Princess's artifice is made patent. It is not the
"class" but a pair of high heels that lift her to a higher position. Eventually, whereas the
international and cosmopolitan qualities of the freak are not examined, the mutual
understanding, based on their internationality, between Gian Galeazzo and Elizabeth,
proves to be false. In his declaration of love Gian Galeazzo brings to the text the
consciousness that he is speaking a foreign language: "'Yours, yours, everything in it is
yours, Elizabeth, including myself.' (Oh dear, he sighed inwardly, how much better this
would sound in Italian)" (Trefusis 1950: 131).

Out of revenge, Vica chooses Charles, Elizabeth's brother, whom she eventually
marries. After their marriage, they go to live in England. This journey brings to the
surface the stranger within Vica. In England she embodies the foreigner. Her
expectations of England prove to be illusory. She had hoped she would be able to adapt
to the different practices and customs but instead she becomes silent: "No one could
look more secretive, more cloistered than Vica" (Trefusis 1950: 186). The personal
profit that impels these pirates to prey is the acquisition of an identity which will allow
them to achieve their own pleasure. The identity they are searching for is not easily
obtained since it is based on a paradox. As has been argued above, Kristeva suggests
that identity is formed through a process of exclusion and she proposes that a society's
or nation's rejection of the foreigner is paradigmatic of the repression of the unconscious
in every individual's subjectivity. Yet, as pirates, this identity needs to be formed upon
the recognition of whatever is repressed and strange to it, the other within the self. In this sense it is an identity which has its abject in view. It is not surprising that Mary Red, one of the best-known women pirates, is reported to have said that: "The Life of a Pyrate was what she has always abhor'd, and went into it only upon Compulsion" (quoted in Stanley 1995: 152). The compulsion to take on board that which is perceived as abhorrent is abject. This identity dangerously threatens the stability of the self in that it implies the dissipation of the boundaries that reassure the ego. In the novel this danger is made apparent when Vica, whilst staying in England, falls ill with pneumonia; in a semi-conscious state produced by a fever, her mind travels in a "flooded landscape" (Trefusis 1950: 199). In this journey she sees herself adrift on unknown waters where "There was no boundary, no limit, she might go drifting on for ever" (Trefusis 1950: 200). When her brother Guido, who is visiting Canterdown, enters her room and approaches her in Italian: "A tremor shook her narrow frame" and feeling "rescued, safe" (Trefusis 1950: 201) she comes back from a state of madness that is marked in the text by a rhythmic but apparently uncommunicative sequence of words: "Purl, plain, purl, plain, wax, wane, wax, wane..." (Trefusis 1950: 200).

For Kristeva, the seclusion of the foreigner is imposed on him/her both from outside and from inside. Seclusion strengthens the foreigner who believes him/herself to be "beyond the reach of attacks and rejections" (Kristeva 1991: 7). However, as Kristeva acknowledges, the foreigner's mask of aloofness and self-confidence evolves towards an annihilation of the self that at last makes him/her doubt his/her own reality, since by "being constantly other" and by "acting to others' wishes and to circumstances", the foreigner may finally ask "does "me" exist?" (Kristeva 1991: 8). Vica's delirious illness hints at the dangers of remaining as the absolute other. By contrast, her brother Guido sojourns trapped in the question "does me exist?":

'Unlike most people who say they cannot speak a foreign language, but that they understand every word, Guido can speak English, after a fashion, but he seldom if ever understands the answer (...) Some Italians would look all right, but not my Guido, he has too much of what the English have too little of, and vice versa.' (...) 'Yet,' sighed Guido, 'I look so British in Florence. Pipple were always asking me the way in English.' (Trefusis 1950: 203)
In England, Vica discovers an unknown aspect of her personality and her perception of the relationship to the social contract and culture changes. Back in Italy she realises that she is a stranger among those whom she had taken as her own. She has now acquired an identity that has brought to view the stranger within herself. This comes as a revelation: "Until yesterday I was only half a woman" (Trefusis 1950: 224). From this point she is able to search for her own jouissance and for this purpose and defying convention she abandons her husband, understanding that: "It is about time I thought of my self, of my own pleasure" (Trefusis 1950: 212).

Disruption through humour and a display of different languages (French, Italian, English, class languages, visual language, oral language, mad-language) are techniques Trefusis uses to include alterity within the apparent unity of language and narrative. For similar purposes the novel includes within its main text other literary and non-literary genres such as poetry, songs, sketches, fairy-tales, or letters. These other "texts", whilst interrupting the linearity of the narrative, endorse it with a web-like texture. One of the best examples of how the texture of Pirates at Play is made up of visually impacting disruptions is to be found in the description of a dinner, when the narration is abruptly interrupted by an insertion: "In order to give a collective impression of the dinner, a specimen of each individual dialogue must, as accurately as possible, be submitted" (Trefusis 1950: 116). A diagram of the dinner table follows this statement and, after that, the conversation of the participants is preceded, as in a play, by the name of the speaker. This is further complicated when after a few lines of dialogue, the narrator decides to change the tactic with the promise of being as accurate "as possible." Ironically, in order to be accurate and to give the impression of the multiple conversations that are taking place at the dinner table, individual names have to be omitted. Soon, the various conversations dissolve in the main narrative. Faithful to the promise of accuracy the narrator assures the reader that instead of agreeing on a common tongue, some of the present speak "each other's idiom with equal authority and determination" (Trefusis 1950: 119-120).

Pirates at Play is a cosmopolitan text that tells us about difference and about otherness. It proposes that if the self is able to recognise its other, it will be able to
understand its relation to others. Its arguably utopian vision is not far removed from Kristeva's when she argues that individuals, and hence; nations and societies, by recognising the foreigner, the other, within themselves can learn to live with otherness, neither excluding what is different nor trying to absorb it, living the difference:

> A paradoxical community is emerging, made up of foreigners who are reconciled with themselves to the extent that they recognize themselves as foreigners. The multinational society would thus be the consequence of an extreme individualism, but conscious of its discontents and limits, knowing only indomitable people ready-to-help-themselves in their weakness, a weakness whose other name is our radical strangeness. (Kristeva 1991: 195)

Ultimately, the confrontation between identity and alterity is embodied by Elizabeth and Vica. They are said to be the reversed image of each other; "The two girls, so different, yet completed each other" (Trefusis 1950: 43). When the Princess sees them together she is astonished at the mythological perfection of these two creatures. Their mythological perfection is born out of their difference, of their refusal to assimilate each other: "The one, so shadowy, so mysterious, with grape-like curls, recalling one of Leonardo's androgynous drawings, the other, all light, all candour. Dusk and Dawn" (Trefusis 1950: 43). The fantastic encounter between "dusk and dawn" provokes a question in the mind of the Princess: "an allegory representing what?" (Trefusis 1950: 72). The answer to this question might be found in the fable of Thlaspi and Egusa:

> There is a red flower called Thlaspi and another white one called Egusa. The two grow far apart, but their roots find each other and intertwine deep in the blind earth. Their leaves are different, but every seven years the same flower grows in both. (Trefusis 1950: 217)

Trefusis's *Pirates at Play* is a very disturbing and uncomfortable text in that it constantly questions identity and alterity. Its game is to favour the stranger within us to blossom.

Two texts by Trefusis have been analysed in this Chapter. Despite its closeness to our understanding of biography and its claims to narrate "history", *Memoirs of an Armchair* is a text that presents qualities of the literature of the fantastic. Through the use of an unusual narrative voice (an armchair-narrator), Trefusis posits problems with regards to notions of time, history, subject-formation and subject-position. An
armchair's time is non-existent, and this is further complicated by the notion of history itself which is, as Woolf wrote, "a mirage":

To give a truthful account (...) is beyond the powers of the biographer or the historian (...), the truth does not exist. Nothing exists. The whole thing is a miasma - a mirage. (Woolf 1993: 135)

In a satirical way, Woolf displaces the power to "create" history to "those who have little need of the truth, and no respect for it - the poets and the novelists" (Woolf 1993: 135). What Woolf explicitly states, is implicit in Trefusis: her "novelist" is a prototype of disrespect for truth: physically incapacitated to write, to create, indeed to even "exist". Whether the emphasis is placed on "memoirs" or on "armchair", the narrative is "impossible": *Memoirs of an Armchair* is a mirage.

The transubstantiation of a self into an object (illustrated with Orlando, with the armchair) has been read here as an attempt to relocate the position of the subject within the symbolic. This transubstiation is caused by the same drive that creates an interest in the androgyne and its hermaphroditic body: if the boundaries of the body are re-defined, so will women's alienation from the symbolic. In Kristeva's definition of the abject there are implicit references to a primeval androgyne and she points out that the horror of sexual differentiation is "abject". The notions of abject and displacement, the preoccupation with time and history and, above all, an interest in borders and what they limit, manifest in *Memoirs of an Armchair*, are further explored in the second text analysed in this Chapter: *Pirates at Play*.

This Chapter has shown that the concept of women's piracy is intimately related to notions of foreignness and sexual roles. A discussion where Kristeva's theories on "foreignness" are contrasted with Woolf's, allows us to conclude that both from a social and from a psychoanalytical point of view, foreignness and women are entwined notions. Outsiderness is not only culturally imposed on women by patriarchy but often fostered by women themselves. The allure of a society of outsiders and the dangers that politically forming such a society posits for women is illustrated with the figure of the woman pirate. A citizen of the world, the woman pirate confronts society with its hatred (its other): she defies notions of private property, of women as booties in patriarchal
society, of women's domesticity and she crosses the border into the mythology of the "evil" woman who brings chaos to man's ordered life (as Eve or Lilith did). This figure's challenging contribution is further complicated by her threat to assigned sexual roles: her transvestism establishing a further link between what she represents (a disturbing, playful challenge to established patterns) and what the hermaphroditic body represents (a disturbing exploration of alterity within identity).

_Pirates at Play_ is a novel that explores precisely this alterity within identity. This is achieved by different means. The plot of the novel makes its characters confront foreignness. They are all outsiders, confronted with strangeness in one way or another: by being placed in another culture, through a disability, a change in class status... The inclusion of a stranger within themselves plays a fundamental role in this attempt to redefine identity. Similarly, Trefusis's literary techniques have this disestablishing purpose: comical situations and satirical humour stand as linguistic vehicles for traversing concepts of identity and unity. However, it is her play with language in its various possibilities that makes the novel subvert totality by including diversity. Textually, the novel attempts to enlarge, break and redesign the limits of language. Trefusis's _Pirates at Play_ brings to discussion firstly, the question of social and linguistic marginality and secondly, the question of "difference": it is a narrative of which the aim is an androgynous writing (in its hermaphroditic dimension).
Kristeva's theory on abjection is informed by Freud's formulation of the death drive. Because the death drive is one of Freud's most controversial concepts, it is worth exploring it briefly before returning to Kristeva's abjection and its relation to death. In Freud's time his theory of the death drive was dismissed as unscientific and speculative. This perception of the drive has been perpetuated in psychoanalytical circles which, while stressing the importance of the drives prior to the formulation of the death drive, have tended to ignore Freud's later reconception.

Freud first distinguished between ego drives and sexual drives. These two drives worked, in a Darwinian fashion, towards the preservation of the self and of the species respectively. His postulation provided a positivistic and humanistic view of psychological outcomes that were directed outwards towards an Other. Yet, Freud observed that there were instances in psychic reality where the subject's experiences were directed inwards onto the self without the need of an external other. For instance, narcissistic desire, as accounted for in Freud's paper "On Narcissism: An Introduction" (1914), posed a problem to the conceptualization of the drives: namely, narcissism provided a model of sexual desire whose object was not outside the subject but desire came back to the subject in self-love. Furthermore, narcissism, at any rate during primary narcissism, presented the problem of a non-existent distinction between ego drives and sexual drives: "Finally, as regards the differentiation of psychical energies, we are led to the conclusion that (...), during the state of narcissism, they exist together" (Freud 1991c: 68). This led him to discuss the usefulness of the distinction between these two drives and to conclude that such a distinction was substantiated more by biology than by psychology. Upon this basis the individual, with the promise of pleasure that would satisfy the ego drives, is: "the mortal vehicle of a (possibly) immortal substance" (Freud 1991c: 71). The inclusion of the bracketed word "possibly" indicates that Freud, already in 1914 was rethinking the importance of death in the individual's
psychical reality. Indeed, the immortal substance Freud is referring to in this paragraph is the germ-plasm of Weismann's theory, a theory he would largely discuss in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920) the essay that introduces the death drive (Freud 1991b: 269-338).

More important is perhaps his observation, during and after World War I, of a predisposition in many patients affected by war neurosis to repeat their painful and disturbing experiences. The puzzling aspect was that such compulsive mechanism of repetition did not lead to therapeutic healing but that on the contrary, the patients were showing an active resistance to cure through the working and re-working of their experiences. There was also the riddle of masochism, a practice that runs in opposition to his position on both the ego and sexual drives, since it leads to a final abasement of the self. Finally, Freud discusses in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" the child's 'fort-da' game. According to Freud, the game played by the child in the loss and recovery of a cotton-reel, is informed by the child's need to come to terms with the loss of the absent mother. The game apparently accentuated the moment of loss over the moment of recovery. In short, as Laplanche (1976) points out, the formulation of the death drive brought about a discussion of negative features in the psyche such as aggression, destruction, masochism, hatred, etc., thus abandoning a positivism in psychoanalysis until then taken for granted.

As postulated by Freud, the death drive is an entropic force that responds to an instinctual urge originated in a framework of involutive tendencies:

It seems, then, that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces. (Freud 1991b: 308)

Death for Freud, at this point, is universal because it affects all living substance. As he argues rather abruptly in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" after a well documented and long discussion on the question of immortality based on experiments with protista:

it becomes a matter of complete indifference to us whether natural death can be shown to occur in protozoa or not (...). The instinctual forces which seek to conduct life into death may also be operating in protozoa from the first, and yet their effects may be so completely concealed by the life-preserving forces
that it may be very hard to find any direct evidence of their presence. (Freud 1991b: 321-322)

Or, as he wrote in "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death" (1915): "Everyone owes nature a death and must expect to pay the debt" (Freud 1991d: 77). Yet, as he stated in this essay: "Our unconscious is just as inaccessible to the idea of our own death, just as murderously inclined towards strangers (...) as was primeval man" (Freud 1991d: 88). The attributes of death, such as annihilation, fragmentation, extinction, emptiness, cessation and loss, are frightening. Moreover, its finality and irreversibility makes death threatening to, and incomprehensible for, the human psyche.

In seemingly contradictory fashion with the abreaction of death by the unconscious, Freud sees the death drive as a quintessential drive. It is a force in the psychic apparatus that, as the title of his essay indicates, is prior to, and autonomous of ("beyond"), the dominating pleasure principle. Indeed, as Freud establishes towards the end of his essay: "The pleasure principle seems actually to serve the death instincts" (Freud 1991b: 338). The death drive, Thanatos, is a self-destructive force that responds to an instinct within the individual's psyche that strives for death. Death is understood as a discharge of the tension embedded in life due to stimuli. In this sense, the death drive responds, as Freud states employing Barbara Low's term, to the "Nirvana principle" by which: "The dominating tendency of mental life (...) is the effort to reduce, to keep constant or to remove internal tension due to stimuli" (Freud 1991b: 329). This tendency is in accordance with the "pleasure principle" which is founded on a system where the increase of tension is equated to unpleasure and the lowering of tensions with pleasure. Freud posits the reduction of tension to zero (Nirvana) in inorganic substance from where all living substance departed and thus asserts "the most universal endeavour of all living substance [is] to return to the quiescence of the inorganic world" (Freud 1991b: 336). One of the most outstanding ideas that runs through Freud's formulation of the death drive is that of death within life.

The question arises as to why any organism should take the trouble of taking a long path just to return to the point of departure, indeed, why there should exist living organisms at all. At this point, the death drive brings about the question of the function of the self-preservative instincts, called Eros or the life drives. The function of the life
drive strives to assure that any given living organism follows its own path to its own death because "the organism wishes to die only in its own fashion" (Freud 1991b: 312). Furthermore, Eros participates in the positivistic view in accordance with the ideology of evolution and progress that permeated the earlier formulation of the drives. Eros is not only a force endeavouring to make unities more complex (biological, psychical and social) but also, as Laplanche notes, Eros is "the gatherer" (Laplanche 1976: 108) whose aim is to bring together those parts resulting from the division of coming to life. As Freud put it:

Living substance, at the time of its coming to life was torn apart into small particles, which have ever since endeavoured to reunite through the sexual instincts. (Freud 1991b: 332)

Significantly, Freud is referring here to Aristophanes' tale in the Symposium. Freud suggests that the individual (whilst longing for a state of sexual wholeness) is driven towards a death that promises to reduce the tensions to zero. A priori Eros appears as opposed to Thanatos. Yet, Freud implies that Eros, in actual fact, works in association with Thanatos in psychic reality. It is worthwhile here bearing in mind the question of return. As has been discussed above, the death drive responds to a wish in the psychical life of the individual to return to a state of stasis. The life drive, because it aims to achieve an earlier state of wholeness, also attempts to return to a state of bliss. Both forces, as Laplanche argues, are internal forces that struggle between them and the struggle occurs in the individual. If Eros and Thanatos are primarily internal forces governed by a desire to return, then their distinctive function becomes ambiguous. This ambiguity makes it difficult to explain Eros in separation from Thanatos and vice versa. Both Laplanche (1976: 112) and Brennan (1992), arrive at this conclusion. Brennan argues that: "the difference between Eros and the death drive is one of direction" (Brennan 1992: 207) assuming that Eros works outwardly towards an object and Thanatos works inwardly towards the self. However, as she soon notes, Eros may work inwards (as in narcissism) and the death drive may work outwards (aggressiveness

1 Freud seems to have arrived at the same paradox he pointed out in "The Uncanny" (1919) when he argued the apparent disintegration of the oppositional meaning of unheimlich and heimlich.
directed towards an other). Laplanche also observes ambiguity in the formulation of the death drive and its connection to masochism (where the notions of pleasure and unpleasure intermix):

From an economic point of view the major contradiction consists in attributing to a single "drive" the tendency towards the radical elimination of all tension, the supreme form of the pleasure principle, and the masochistic search for unpleasure, which, in all logic, can only be interpreted as an increase of tension. (Laplanche 1976: 108)

The idea of return produces an ambiguity at the core of the death drive which seems to be informing Freud's formulation of the drive at all levels.

Up to this point the death drive transgresses previous notions in three ways. In the first place, it posits death within life and not outside life, as had been the common belief in human societies. Secondly, the pleasure principle (which seems to be dominated by the death drive) is replaced by the reality principle derived from the self-preservation forces of Eros. The reality principle, without abandoning the purpose of obtaining pleasure, prescribes to the ego:

the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure. (Freud 1991b: 278) ²

The reality principle imposes in the mental life of the individual a repression of jouissance that comes to the surface in the form of the compulsion to repeat, which as Freud wrote in his 1920 essay: "put us on the track of the death instincts" (Freud 1991b: 329). Thirdly, the ambiguity in the idea of return implies that the human psyche is at the same time fearful of and attracted to death. This ambiguity bridges the theory of the death drive to Freud's companion essay "The Uncanny." Indeed, as Cixous has argued in her reading of Freud's essay: "The strange power of death moves in the realm of life as the Unheimliche in the Heimliche" (Cixous 1976: 543).

In "The Uncanny" Freud interprets the mechanisms that trigger the metaphysical shiver of dread and pleasure provoked by an event perceived as strangely familiar. Using

² For a discussion of Freud's ambivalent use of "pleasure" and "satisfaction" see Laplanche 1976: 105-106.
Schelling's explanation of *Unheimlich* as that which "ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light" (Freud 1990: 345) Freud transforms his semantic analysis into psychoanalytical theory. By analogy, the uncanny is what in psychical reality ought to have stayed unconscious and repressed but has come to (pre-)conscious perception producing a feeling of fright. Freud asserts that the uncanny is the return of an earlier state of mind that should have been repressed (by which he refers to the infantile complexes). The uncanny also responds to a collective archaic mind, a primitive animism, that should have been surmounted in the course of the evolution of human civilization.

Freud actually relates the death drive with the uncanny when he states "whatever reminds us of this inner 'compulsion to repeat' is perceived as uncanny" (Freud 1990: 361). Death and the uncanny are also related in the figure of the double. The double was, in the earlier stages of psychological development, an "insurance against the destruction of the ego" (Freud 1990: 356) as in primary narcissism. Yet, this stage surmounted, the double reminds one of the death that is in waiting: "From having been an assurance of immortality, it [the double] becomes the uncanny harbinger of death" (Freud 1990: 357). Another instance of an uncanny feeling that evidences the death drive at work is the fantasy of being buried alive which, according to Freud, is explained in psychological terms as "a transformation of (...) the phantasy (...) of intra-uterine existence" (Freud 1990: 367). Freud explains the uncanny feeling in neurotic men in relation to female genitalia in *unheimliche/heimliche* terms. This *unheimlich* frightening place is, in actual fact, "the entrance to the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning" (Freud 1990: 368). In this confluence of *heimliche* and *unheimliche* the prefix "*un*" [un-] acts, according to Freud, as a mark or "token of repression" (Freud 1990: 368).

The interesting aspect of these two last examples is the connection established between the uncanny and the female body. Yet, as Tood argues, "the central figure of woman in many of his examples" is not only neglected but "regularly pushed aside" by Freud (Tood 1986: 521). Adding to her criticism the undervalued importance of the female gaze in Freud's interpretation of Hoffmann's *The Sandman*, Tood infers that
Freud's alignment of the woman's body with the uncanny rests in the perception of the woman's body as a horrifying threat of castration. In Todd's view, Freud's own castration anxiety impeded him in arriving at this conclusion: "Freud did not draw this conclusion (...) because the simplicity, the coherence of the conclusion, is blinding" (Todd 1986:527). Todd finally concludes that Freud's essay is "a story about men's fear of women and the social consequences of that fear" (Todd 1986: 528). Furthermore, Freud's unacknowledged fear of women's bodies is not circumscribed to "The Uncanny" but is implicitly evident in subsequent essays such us "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" (1925) and "Fetishism" (1927).

In "Fiction and Its Fantoms: A Reading of Freud's Das Unheimliche" (1976) Cixous explores Freud's "The Uncanny" together with his postulation of the death drive. She suggests that the uncanny is to be found in the animation of the doll, "Olympia is not inanimate" (Cixous 1976: 543). The realisation that the doll is alive produces fear because the confusion between life and death uncannily subverts the separation between life and death (a separation that sustains reality): "Hence the horror: you could be dead while living, you can be in a dubious state" (Cixous 1976: 545). If death is inscribed in life as that which cannot be directly represented and death is what life is not (its repressed Other) it is also, and at the same time, the latent condition of life: "What is an absolute secret, something absolutely new and which should remain hidden, because it has shown itself to me, is the fact that I am dead" (Cixous 1976: 543). Referring to the myth of the androgyne used by Freud in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" Cixous argues that the confluence of Heimliche and Unheimliche brings to the text a sexual motif that finds expression through this myth:

It is only at the end that the sexual threat emerges. But it had always been there latently, in the coupling itself and in the proliferation of the Heimliche and of the Unheimliche; when one makes contact with the other, it closes again and closes the history of meaning upon itself, delineating through this gesture the figure of the androgyne. (Cixous 1976: 530)

Freud's connection of the uncanny with female genitalia either as an entrance (exit) or as the actual space where human life originated is, as Cixous argues, informed by the death drive. It is a sexual "threat" in so far as Freud links uncanny feelings with
the repressed androgynous space of the hermaphroditic pre-Oedipal mother. Far from implying a closure in meaning, the androgyne, from this perspective, murderously threatens to collapse reason and signification encompassed in the closure, and hence fixity, of meaning.

It is not surprising to find the androgyne in both Freud's and Cixous's theoretical texts since it is the bearer of ambiguity (rooted in the androgyne's carnivalesque quality). From a Freudian perspective, the double body of the hermaphrodite acts as an uncanny memory of an original androgynous maternal space. The fear that the hermaphrodite provokes is precisely the confrontation with the fragile fantasy of the formation of subjectivity as unified and fixed.

As was shown in Chapter Five, the horror that the hermaphrodite arouses rests in its being an abject embodiment. It acts as a reminder of the possibility of not knowing the boundaries between "me" and "not-me." In her formulation of the abject Kristeva notes that the abject and the uncanny are different: "Essentially different from 'uncanniness,' more violent, too, abjection is elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin; nothing is familiar, not even the shadow of a memory" (Kristeva 1982: 5). Their difference relies on the difference between "repression" and "expulsion" so that an uncanny feeling remains inside the individual whereas abjection implies the blurring between inside and outside. Yet both the abject and the uncanny have a common link within the death drive. Abjection is necessary for achieving a relatively stable enunciative position in the symbolic order whilst at the same time it threatens to destroy that position. It is, in this sense, both generator and potential exterminator of subjectivity. As Gross argues, the abject is "an insistence on the subject's necessary relation to death, to animality, and to materiality, being the subject's recognition and refusal of its corporeality" (Gross 1990: 89).

Kristeva maintains that the abject can never be obliterated although it is repressed at the moment of acquisition of a symbolic position. Therefore it presupposes a constant threat for the speaking subject and the social. Rituals and certain religious practices have the social function of maintaining the abject under control. Yet, Kristeva argues that the abject can be sublimated and, in spite of the perils involved, through this
sublimation it is both kept under control and transformed into a challenging energy that provides a jouissance that is beyond the subject and the object. Writing processes and art are forms of expression where the abject can be sublimated. It is through the promised jouissance and through sublimation that literary works may serve cathartic purposes. Connected to the semiotic mother, one of the strategies by which the abject finds expression in symbolic language is through repetition (Kristeva 1982: 15). This is so because the abject's abyss is "the locus of (...) the death drive" (Gross 1990: 89). The question is how does this repetition work. Bronfen has argued that there can be no exact repetition:

The repeated event, action or term always contradicts its predecessor because, though similar, it is never identical, and though recalling the unique, singular and original quality of the former event, it emphasises that it is "more than one", a multiple duplicate, occurring at more than one site. (Bronfen 1992: 324)

Yet, repetition can work in emphasising difference or in emphasising sameness. A repetition that succeeds perfectly is destructive since it is "an occlusion of approximation and distance" (Bronfen 1992: 325). On the contrary, when repetition appears as a mechanism that serves the pleasure principle, when it is "used to transform a passive into an active position which results in a mastery over a disturbing, wounding event" (Bronfen 1992: 325), it is a strategy that emphasizes difference. As Kristeva argues in Tales of Love, asserting difference is in the "interest of both sexes (...), in the quest of each one - and of women, after all - for an appropriate fulfilment" (Kristeva 1986c: 261). For this reason, as Kristeva argues in talking about Borges's writing, it is necessary to handle and cultivate repetition so that instead of being a bearer of death "it releases, beyond its eternal return, its sublime destiny of being a struggle with death" (Kristeva 1982: 24).

Kristeva argues that the confrontation of the subject with death, brings about the most extreme form of abjection:

The corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death infecting life. Abject. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us. (Kristeva 1982: 4)
If in Freud the connection between death and femininity was implicit, it becomes explicit in Kristeva (since the abject is situated on the side of the feminine). This alignment is not new for as Bronfen has extensively proved in Over Her Dead Body: Death Femininity and the Aesthetic, death and femininity have "serve[d] as western culture's privileged topoi and tropes for what is superlatively enigmatic" (Bronfen 1992: xiii). On the other hand, the psychological process that leads to a feminine position in the symbolic implies that the child in abjecting the maternal body risks abjecting herself. Unable to mourn the loss of the mother, the feminine symbolic position and feminine sexuality is characterized as melancholic. This means that women live with death. As Oliver points out, in order to allow her psyche to live she "must find a way to turn the maternal body into desire without killing herself" (Oliver 1993: 63). If for male authors such as Céline, Dostoievski, Joyce, Proust or Borges, naming and speaking the abject presupposes that "they can maintain an imperilled hold on the symbolic and a stable speaking position" (Gross 1990: 93), for women writers the articulation of the abject in poetic language is a way of turning the melancholic relationship with the semiotic mother into an object of desire. Hence, women have to constantly negotiate their relationship with death as a way to achieve a feminine jouissance which implies, in this light, both pleasure and pain:

Poetic language would then be, contrary to murder and the univocity of verbal message, a reconciliation with what murder as well as names were separated from. It would be an attempt to symbolize the "beginning", an attempt to name the other facet of taboo: pleasure, pain. (Kristeva 1982: 61-62)

Kristeva proposes that abjection is experienced by an "Other who precedes and possesses me, and through such possession causes me to be" (Kristeva 1982: 10). The reading of the texts analysed in this Chapter, Trefusis's Hunt the Slipper (1937) and Sackville-West's All Passion Spent (1931), assumes that their female protagonists are bearers of abjection which is "a resurrection that has gone through death (of the ego). It is an alchemy that transforms death drive into a start of life, of new signifiance" (Kristeva 1982: 15). The narrative tool that transforms the death drive into a start of life is repetition. Through repetition the female protagonists find a different pleasure ingrained in the feminine experience of jouissance.
"Veiled infinity and the moment when revelation burst forth"

*All Passion Spent*'s main protagonist is eighty-eight year old Lady Slane, retired to a house in Hampstead. There, in flashback, she recollects her life and her marriage with the late Lord Slane and ponders about all she has gained and lost in her marriage. Her main regret is that, at eighteen, she had to sacrifice her real and secret passion, becoming a painter, in order to marry Lord Slane. By the end of the novel, she is visited by her great-granddaughter who announces her determination to pursue her own artistic ambition, not as a painter but as a musician. To this end, the young woman has broken her engagement and has left home:

> Her engagement, she said, was a mistake; she had drifted into it to please her grandfather (...) [who] had ambitions for her, she said; he liked the idea of her being, some day, a duchess; but what was that, she said, compared with what she herself wanted to be, a musician? (Sackville-West 1983: 283-284)

The encounter stimulates Lady Slane's imagination. She is taken into a vortex of memories where she re-lives the days of her youth, before becoming a married woman and the mother of six children: "Was it an echo that she heard? or had some miracle wiped out the years? were the years being played over again, with a difference?" (Sackville-West 1983: 281). The young woman, named Deborah as is Lady Slane herself, is talking "as she herself would have talked" (Sackville-West 1983: 284) had she had the courage to defy convention. The repetition implicit in the story through a means of a circular structure and the doubling of characters is a mechanism that appears, recalling Bronfen's words, not as an occlusion of time or identity, but as a transformation of a disturbing, wounding event into a restorative one. The years are being played over again, but not exactly, as Lady Slane says: "played over again, with a difference". The young Deborah, despite bearing the same name as the old Lady Slane, has not exactly the same artistic interest and that difference in her identity suffices to mark the process of repetition and doubling as not being identical and occlusive but positive and regenerating.
The Deborah of Lady Slane's youth was repressed from the moment that a misunderstanding trapped her in the life of a conventional wife and mother. When Lord Slane proposes to her, he asks her to follow him into the sphere where he belongs:

The sphere where people marry, beget and bear children, bring them up, give orders to servants, pay income-tax, understand about dividends, speak mysteriously in the presence of the young, take decisions for themselves, eat what they like, and go to bed at the hour which pleases them. Mr. Holland [Lord Slane] was asking her to accompany him into that sphere. He was asking her to be his wife. (Sackville-West 1983: 143)

Although Deborah had it very clear in her mind that she should refuse the proposal, the thought of what could become of her if she were to accept makes her raise her eyes. This gesture is interpreted by Henry Holland as a positive answer: "the glance of a startled fawn. Instantly interpreting that glance according to his desires, Mr. Holland had clasped her in his arms and had kissed her with ardour but with restraint upon the lips" (Sackville-West 1983: 144). This misunderstanding, caused by being spoken for instead of being allowed to speak, creates so many expectations in the people surrounding the young Deborah that she feels paralysed and unable to escape the fatal consequences of Mr. Holland's embrace. As Raitt puts it: "Sackville-West's account of this misunderstanding (...) shows her awareness that women, if they are not careful, do not speak but rather are spoken for" (Raitt 1993: 109). Her silence, eloquent for Mr. Holland, transforms Deborah into Lady Slane and her ambition as an artist remains concealed until seventy years later, when she receives the visit of Deborah, her musician great-granddaughter.

A warning against the dangers of silence is conveyed, in the passage that narrates the visit, through an obsessive repetition of the verb "to say." When Deborah is explaining to Lady Slane her desire to become a musician, the repetition of this verb assures the reader that the young Deborah has "a say" and demands to be heard about what she expects from her own life. This contrasts with Lady Slane's experience for, throughout her married years, she had tried unsuccessfully to break the silence imposed on her, yet silence always came about through Lord Slane's inability or unwillingness to confer meaning to Lady Slane's utterances: "Often she had pressed a tentative switch, and Henry's mind had failed to light up. She had accepted this at last (...) She regretted it
now: there were so many things she would have liked to discuss with Henry" (Sackville-West 1983: 82). In this manner she had learned to conceal her thoughts and to listen silently: "Lady Slane habitually was reserved in speech, withholding her opinion, concealing even the expression on her face" (Sackville-West 1983: 69).

The long years of Lady Slane's silence are textually conveyed in the novel by a firm silencing of her as a character. The silencing of this character's voice is superbly achieved in that, despite being silent for so long (she speaks for the first time on page forty-nine), it would pass unnoticed were it not because the reader experiences it as claustrophobic. It is made to appear normal, though, that in the atmosphere provided by the novel, Lady Slane's future is entirely in the hands of her sons and daughters. Lady Slane has performed to perfection the role of mother and wife expected of her by society and therefore her sons and daughters assume that she will conform to their decisions:

Mother had no will of her own; all her life long, gracious and gentle, she had been wholly submissive - an appendage. It was assumed that she had not enough brain to be self-assertive. "Thank goodness," Herbert sometimes remarked, "Mother is not one of those clever women." That she might have ideas which she kept to herself never entered into their estimate. They anticipated no trouble with their mother. (Sackville-West 1983: 24-25)

Furthermore, the sequence of silences seems, menacingly, to pass from one generation to the next so that the new Lady Slane, Mabel, is forced into silence, by being continually commanded to be quiet by Herbert, her husband and Lady Slane's eldest son:

"Be quiet, Mabel," said Herbert. He was seldom known to address any other phrase to his wife, nor did Mabel often succeed in getting beyond her four or five opening words. (Sackville-West 1983: 35)

However, and as Sackville-West makes obvious in the novel, the strategies that the patriarchal organisation uses to keep women quiet are not exclusive to the code of matrimony. Edith, the unmarried youngest daughter of the old Lady Slane, feels always to have been obliged to avoid expressing her opinions:

Edith could have told them that all her life she had been trying to say what she meant, and had never yet succeeded. Only too often, she said something precisely the opposite of what she wanted to say. Her terror was that she should one day use an indecent word by mistake. (Sackville-West 1983: 21)
Her fear of one day uttering an indecency is an extreme example of the anxiety created in her by keeping at bay her thoughts and opinions - which, according to the code of behaviour of the characters, is what a true lady should do. Edith's oppressing terror, which actually makes her say the opposite of what she intends, is reinforced by the attitude of her brothers and sister who terrify her even more by continually remarking on the inappropriateness of her comments:

They were gratified now to see that she blushed, and that her hands went up nervously to fiddle with the grey strands of her hair; the gesture implied that she had not spoken. Having reduced her to this confusion, they returned to their conversation. (Sackville-West 1983: 21)

However, and unsuspected by her sons and daughters, a transformation is taking place in the old Lady Slane when she is in the presence of the corpse of her late husband. Lady Slane's position when she is confronted with the reality of the death of her husband is a double bind. On the one hand, she reverences the power of death to negate life, whilst at the same time she recognizes in death the very reason for enjoying life. Death is inevitably linked to life:

And Henry, who and what was he? A physical presence, threatened by time and death, and therefore the dearer for that factual menace? (Sackville-West 1983: 174)

On the other hand, precisely through her perceiving death as negativity and destruction, she is capable of resisting it. With this purpose, she counteracts the seemingly omnipotent destruction of death by transforming that very concept into a force of revelation, a meaningful, positive and constructive understanding: "for all its dignity, death brought a revelation" (Sackville-West 1983: 18). The death of her husband brings about Lady Slane's realisation that her life had been a sort of death, that she had been "killed" very young, at the very same moment that she became Henry Holland's fiancée. At that very moment she became "The Angel in the House"3, an idea made obvious by the expectancies and opinions that Lady Slane's sons and daughters have of her. As Carrie, the eldest daughter points out, the mother has "been the life of

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3 The figure of "The Angel in the House" was popularised by Patmore with the publication of a series of poems under that title between 1854 and 1861. A tribute to marital love, the poems celebrate women's unselfish dedication to their husbands.
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others" (Sackville-West 1983: 60). For Woolf, the figure of the Angel in the House is a recognisable, frightening one. As she argues in "Professions for Women" (1931), it is a deadly phantom. By "deadly" Woolf is implying that this figure can cause women's death, whilst emphasising the extent to which this figure is unpleasant and undesirable.

The Angel in the House is powerful because it threatens the life of women by negating them volition. According to Woolf, the Angel in the House dictates that women "must charm, they must conciliate, they must - to put it bluntly - tell lies if they are to succeed" (Woolf 1979a: 60). Lady Slane was possessed by this phantom to the point of becoming, as Herbert observes, "an appendage." Yet, the paradox that makes it difficult to deal with this figure is that because the Angel in the House is a phantom it is materially impossible to kill it, a phantom being already dead. For this reason, the transformative power of repetition becomes paramount in the novel.

During the long hours that Lady Slane spends alone contemplating the lifeless features of her husband's body she realizes that, devoid of its charming quality, good manners and appearance, his body has transformed from "agreeable" to "beautiful" (Sackville-West 1983: 19). Death comes as a revelation to Lady Slane: she is aware now that she can also die. Moreover, it could be said that with her husband a part of her has died. Metaphorically speaking, the corpse that is lying in front of her is the corpse of the maker of the "proper wife and mother", her private Angel in the House:

The face which had been so noble in life lost a trifle of its nobility in death; the lips which had been too humorous to be unpleasantly sardonic now betrayed their thinness; the carefully concealed ambition now revealed itself fully in the proud curve of the nostril. The hardness which had disguised itself under the charming manner now remained alone, robbed of the protection of a smile. He was beautiful, but he was less agreeable. Alone in the room his widow contemplated him, filled with thoughts that would greatly have surprised her children, could they but have read her mind. (Sackville-West 1983: 18-19)

Death implies her own death, and it becomes a familiar figure that will live with her for as long as she lives. Certainly, her husband's death confronts her with her own mortality, for: "Henry Lyulph Holland, first Earl of Slane, had existed for so long that the public had begun to regard him as immortal" (Sackville-West 1983: 13). His immortality implied her own immortality in that by feeling his "appendage" she thought she would live through eternity with him. Indeed, that Lady Slane thought her husband
immortal is shown in the fact that Lady Slane needs repeatedly to remind herself that Lord Slane is gone: "He was gone indeed, very finally and irretrievably gone. So thought his widow, looking down at him as he lay on his bed in Elm Park Gardens" (Sackville-West 1983: 17). Lady Slane is confronted by a very unsettling and traumatic experience, so traumatic that it seems incomprehensible how it can have led to her emancipation: "How Henry's death had brought about this sudden emancipation she could not conceive" (Sackville-West 1983: 80). At the core this emancipation is an abject rebellious force.

The thoughts that "would have greatly surprised her children" are in fact her decision to start a "new" life alone and away from Elm Park Gardens. When her eldest son, trying to conceal an already-made decision (transformed into a suggestion), explains to her the arrangements they have devised for her future, Lady Slane refuses to play the game: "But you have decided it already for me, Herbert, haven't you?" (Sackville-West 1983: 59). After allowing her family to illustrate her future lifestyle as Lord Slane's widow, Lady Slane deceives her relatives by bluntly refusing to accept their proposal: "I don't agree" (Sackville-West 1983: 63). Their plans imply that once again she is being told what she should do. However, this time she is determined to impede her own annihilation: "I am going to live by myself" (Sackville-West 1983: 63). Her determination is absolute and at the age of eighty-eight she finds the strength and articulation necessary to impose her own view, to the astonishment of the gathering: "Such a hint of independence was an outrage, almost a manifesto" (Sackville-West 1983: 64).

Lady Slane's new life is informed by the death drive. She anticipates her own death by bestowing in life the jewels that should have been inherited by her descendants after her death. Significantly, this action emphasizes the jewels' actual symbolic signification since, given to her by Lord Slane, they represent: "tokens of affection, certainly, but no less tokens of the embellishments proper to the hands of Lord Slane's wife" (Sackville-West 1983: 73-74). Lady Slane's volitional act of giving the jewels away echoes her revelation regarding the existence of the Angel in the House. The jewels are thus passed from the old Lady Slane to the new one, Mabel, who receives
them through the intercession of the new Lord Slane, the new patriarch of the family. By being passed on in life instead of after death, the jewels acquire a new meaning. Their symbolic meaning is that of the oppression of all Lady Slanes, and thus, they are passed on together with a piece of advice:

"My dear Mabel," said Lady Slane, "I had better lend you a portmanteau." Loot. The eyes of William and Lavinia glittered. (Sackville-West 1983: 77)

The ambiguously luxurious and deadly present that the jewels signify, is implied by the word "loot." The word stands on its own, its meaning thrashing out of the words surrounding it. For William and Lavinia, who are always concerned with money matters, the jewels are "loot" since they convey opulence. Yet, "loot" is preceded by the sentence where Lady Slane offers Mabel a "portmanteau." "Portmanteau" carries with it a double meaning that directly affects the meaning of "loot." According to the Oxford English Dictionary, as a noun a "portmanteau" is a large travelling case which opens out into two equal compartments normally used for carrying clothing. The idea of such a suitcase is that clothes hang to prevent them from creasing. Indeed, the convenience of such a trunk to carry jewels is, at the very least, arguable. At a first glance, the offer implies that there is such a large amount of jewelry that Mabel might need a container to carry it all. Yet, "portmanteau" compounds the meaning of "loot." It works as a warning of the possibility that "loot" might be a "portmanteau word." It might disclose meanings other than the straightforward one implying that the jewels, as old Lady Slane discovered, can become a dangerous gift in that through the embellishment they offer, can seal the self off. Herbert encourages Mabel to try on the pearls for he thinks "they will be most becoming" (Sackville-West 1983: 77). However, the jewels on Mabel have in fact a very distressing effect. Failing to accomplish the expected adornment of Mabel's person, the jewels betray the ugliness that they are meant to conceal:

Becoming they were not, to Mabel's faded little face, for Mabel who had once been pretty had now faded, according to the penalty of fair people, so that her skin appeared to be darker than her hair, and her hair without lustre, the colour of dust. The pearls (...) now hung in a dispirited way round Mabel's scraggy neck. (Sackville-West 1983: 77-78)
The image conveyed is nearer to that of a corpse than of a living entity. Mabel is denied even flesh. She is skin and bones, as her "scraggy neck" suggests, in a decaying process of becoming "dust" as is borne out by the dull colour of her hair. Raitt suggests that the jewels bring out "the dreariness of a woman who has never quite found her own identity or voice" because "Mabel, silenced and downtrodden, has no self to express; and she is too ill-defined to accept the self her mother-in-law is offering her" (Raitt 1993: 112). Raitt implies that the self offered through this gift is a symbol "of adult femininity" (Raitt 1993: 112), yet she fails to point out the implications of the mother-in-law's gift. The self Lady Slane is offering is far from the self symbolized in the jewels. It is a self that desires to be liberated from the grip represented by the jewels. The deadly image of Mabel, even without any agency on Mabel's part, indicates that Lady Slane's warning has an effect. The jewels, as "loot," hold a deadly message that is unmasked through Mabel's still and lifeless figure. Later on in the novel, the message is clearly expressed: "Men do kill women" (Sackville-West 1983: 221). Women's dedication to men and their motherly dedication to children imply that: "All meaning goes out of life, and life becomes existence" (Sackville-West 1983: 220).

However, as Lavinia points out, the jewels have never betrayed decay when the mother-in-law wore them: "I never noticed that before, when your mother wore them" (Sackville-West 1983: 78). This is due in part to the new meaning the jewels have acquired through Lady Slane's recognition of the Angel in the House's phantom. Furthermore, the actual significance of the difference between Mabel and Lady Slane is contained in this remark. In contrast to Mabel's innocuous personality, Lady Slane has always preserved an inner life of her own. The passage describing the importance that her own thoughts have had for Lady Slane is one of the most lyrical instances in the novel. Travelling on a desert road in Persia, Lady Slane contemplates the cloud of white and yellow butterflies that accompanies the Slanes and she reflects on the apparent aimless movement of the butterflies in comparison with the convoy's undisturbed and "monotonous progression that trailed after the sun from dawn to dusk" (Sackville-West 1983: 137). This image serves to disclose her inner thoughts by comparing them with
the butterflies, whereas outwardly she appears as direct and straightforward as the movement of the carts:

She remembered thinking that this was something like her own life, following Henry Holland like the sun, but every now and then moving into a cloud of butterflies which were her own irreverent, irrelevant thoughts, darting and dancing. (Sackville-West 1983: 138)

These thoughts that "perversely ( ... ) had always remained more important" (Sackville-West 1983: 138) than her outward performance in life are related to Lady Slane's frustrated vocation as an artist. They bring to the text the image of Judith Shakespeare, re-created by Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*. Through Lady Slane's memories of the girl that she once was, the reader knows that her burning desire had been to become a painter (Sackville-West 1983: 149). In 1860, her only chances to fulfil her desire were in "escape and disguise" (Sackville-West 1983: 148). She would have had to change her name, disguise herself as a man and escape to a foreign city where, freed from social constraints, she could devote herself to her art: "a changed name, a travestied sex, and freedom in some foreign city" (Sackville-West 1983: 148). The contemplation of her fallow artistic life and the subsequent defeat in her submission to marriage bear close similitude to the story of Judith Shakespeare. Lady Slane, as Judith Shakespeare, was betrothed against her will at the age of seventeen. Lady Slane, as Shakespeare's sister, was never given the opportunities in education and knowledge of the world that her brother enjoyed. Whilst her eldest brother is sent into the world having "left home, as young men do" (Sackville-West 1983: 153), her parents expected of her to be "the wife of a good man" (Sackville-West 1983: 153). A product of Woolf's imagination, Shakespeare's sister never existed, although Woolf tells us that she "killed herself one winter's night and lies buried at some cross-roads" (Woolf 1977: 54) The presence of a frustrated artistic figure in Sackville-West's novel, in the fact that Lady Slane has never produced a painting, has been seen by critics such as Glendinning as one of the drawbacks of the novel. But as Woolf argued, even though Judith Shakespeare never wrote a word, she still lives "in you and in me" (Woolf 1977: 122) as a presence who still needs "the opportunity to walk among us in the flesh" (Woolf 1977: 122). Implied in Woolf's words is the fact that Judith Shakespeare does not need to
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Achieve tangible success as long as her presence is still alive. In *All Passion Spent* this spirit is made clear:

Achievement was good, but the spirit was better. To reckon by achievements was to make a concession to the prevailing system of the world. (Sackville-West 1983: 289)

It is a need to know "what, precisely, had been herself?" (Sackville-West 1983: 145) that informs Lady Slane's new life. She foresees death as "a luminous eternity" (Sackville-West 1983: 196). Death, "the supreme adventure for which all other adventures were but a preparation" (Sackville-West 1983: 196), is, through a process of repetition, her abject (presented as Lady Slane's willingness to re-enact the past). The house she inhabits as a widow is a house she saw thirty years ago. The owner of the house, Mr. Bucktrout, is the same proprietor who was renting the house out at the time she first saw it:

The thought struck her that the Mr. Bucktrout whose name she had noted thirty years ago might well have been replaced by some efficient young son, and great was her relief when, peeping over the banisters, she saw (...) a safely [sic] old gentleman standing in the hall. (Sackville-West 1983: 93)

The house, "her house" (Sackville-West 1983: 87), seems to have been waiting for her all those years. Mr Bucktrout points out that the house seemed destined for her:

"Otherwise, why should you have remembered the house for thirty years (...) and why should I have turned away so many tenants?" (Sackville-West 1983: 97). Apart from Mr Bucktrout, who becomes a regular visitor, the only "new" acquaintance Lady Slane indulges, Mr FitzGeorge, is a man she knew when she was Vicereine in India. Although she does not recognize him, Mr. FitzGeorge's visit comes "as an unexpected revival (...) awaking some echo whose melody she could not quite recapture" (Sackville-West 1983: 201-202). Furthermore, Mr. FitzGeorge visits her to resume a conversation that should have taken place fifty years ago: "This conversation is only a sequel to the conversation we didn't have then" (Sackville-West 1983: 221). Lady Slane recognizes in Mr. FitzGeorge "someone [who] by a look had discovered the way into a chamber she kept hidden even from herself" (Sackville-West 1983: 215). The self that Mr. FitzGeorge was able to see and that she had put aside at the time when she was Vicereine is her artistic soul:
"...you were defrauded of the one thing that mattered. Nothing matters to an artist except the fulfilment of his gift (...) Your children, your husband, your splendour, were nothing but obstacles that kept you from yourself." (Sackville-West 1983: 220)

Her encounters with these two gentlemen and her own memories of the past fill up Lady Slane's life. These repetitions assume that the "great adventure" has started. Her quest to find an identity of her own is linked to a feeling of supreme joy: "the last, supreme luxury; a luxury she had waited all her life to indulge" (Sackville-West 1983: 145). Lady Slane recollects the moments when she had felt "the heights of rapture" (Sackville-West 1983: 174) with her husband and concludes: "The statement of her love and the recollection of its more subtle demands failed, to satisfy her" (Sackville-West 1983: 174). There is another kind of pleasure which, in the text, is linked to Lady Slane's repressed artistic self. This pleasure is beyond words. It is a pleasure that escapes concessions and it is, in the novel, related to an ecstatic experience:

Only in a wordless trance did any true apprehension [of the self] become possible, a wordless trance of sheer feeling, an extra-physical state, in which nothing but the tingling of the finger-tips recalled the existence of the body, and a series of images floated across the mind, un-named, unrelated to language. (Sackville-West 1983: 175)

This jouissance which involves both the woman and the artist in her is actually achieved at the moment of her death. The contact with a woman who bears her name and her artistic ambition and the realisation that Deborah will pursue her artistic career brings about a moment of illumination whose only contact to the body is through the hand that Lady Slane rests on the hair of her great grand-daughter: "She allowed her fingers to ruffle Deborah's hair" (Sackville-West 1983: 281). Unable to distinguish between her identity and that of the young Deborah, she imagines that the words the latter is uttering are actually her own:

In the deepening twilight of her life (...) she returned to the fluctuations of adolescence (...) she, so near to death, imagined that all the perils again awaited her, but this time she would face them more bravely, she would allow no concessions, she would be firm and certain. This child, this Deborah, this self, this other self, this projection of herself, was firm and certain. (Sackville-West 1983: 283)
This transfer of identity gives full meaning to the butterflies that constituted her thoughts. In Deborah she finds a person to whom "she could betray her thoughts" (Sackville-West 1983: 281). Lady Slane having been a caterpillar, Deborah becomes the embodiment of the butterflies that constituted her thoughts. Death is not the end of the good things of life. Rather, death is seen from a different perspective similar to life: "Death, after all," says Deborah "is an incident. Life is an incident too. The thing I mean lies outside both" (Sackville-West 1983: 288). The transformation from worm to butterfly is charged with an erotic joy that abases reason:

This enjoyment was especially private now, though not very sharp; it was hazy rather than sharp, her perceptions intensified and yet blurred, so that she could feel intensely without being able or obliged to reason. (Sackville-West 1983: 283)

This ultimate erotic pleasure belonging to a sphere that has nothing to do with Henry Holland modifies the meaning of the title of the novel. All Passion Spent suggests an unnecessary expenditure of passion which has been wasted in the observance of convention, yet "spend" was the word Victorians used in reference to the moment of orgasm. Since Lady Slane is a Victorian woman, the spending of passion is an orgasmic exercise. In this sense, the title refers to this moment in which Lady Slane feels her jouissance as passion spent all at once. This moment is also shared by Deborah:

This hour of union with the old woman soothed her like music, like chords lightly touched in the evening with the shadows closing and the moths bruising beyond an open window. She leaned against the old woman's knee as a support, a prop, drowned, enfolded, in warmth, dimness, and soft harmonious sounds. (Sackville-West 1983: 290)

This paragraph suggests that the young Deborah is participating in the transfer of identity. Images of death such as "the shadows closing" appear interwoven with the lively image of the moths. The moths embody the presence of life as death in the passage. Moths are associated in Western tradition with images of death and are "iconographically read as a figure of death and immortality" (Bronfen 1992: 9). This iconography is particularly important in the text because the moths are nocturnal butterflies. In this sense, the presence of the moths recollects the butterflies that informed Lady Slane's thoughts. The similes and metaphors used to explain the union
between the two women are not devoid of erotic connotations evoked by the warm, soft
dimness in which Deborah feels enfolded and drowned. Seemingly tempered by the
insistence that the woman she is leaning on is old, this image recalls Kristeva's maternal
space where Kristeva locates feminine jouissance. The difference in age and their next
of kin relationship seem to suggest that we are in the realm of perverse love related to
the abject (Kristeva 1982: 15). This love defies the Law of the Father and it certainly
threatens the social code as portrayed in Deborah's rupture of her engagement and Lady
Slane's supportive attitude as a "prop." What has taken place in the text through
repetition is a "rebirth with and against abjection" (Kristeva 1982: 31).

After this encounter Deborah departs thinking that her great-grandmother is
asleep when, as the text implies, Lady Slane is dead:

But she must not tire her great-grandmother, thought Deborah, suddenly
realising that the old voice had ceased its maunderings (...) Her great-
grandmother was asleep. Her chin had fallen forward on to the laces at her
breast. Her lovely hands were limp in their repose. (Sackville-West 1983: 291-
292)

With her death Lady Slane finally buries the Angel in the House and,
simultaneously, unburies Judith Shakespeare. The metamorphoses from caterpillar to
butterfly, from the old Deborah to the young Deborah, provide a feminine perspective to
Freud's suggestion that "the aim of all life is death" by adding the counterpart paradox
"the aim of all death is life." As Linda Ruth Williams has argued in her critical approach
to J. Sheridan Le Fanu's Carmilla "the aim of all feminine life is 'undeath'" (Williams
1995: 163), an aim which in All Passion Spent seems to be informed by Woolf's dictum:
"we think back through our mothers if we are women" (Woolf 1977: 83). Embracing a
jouissance beyond words, Deborah wonders "whether she c[an] afterwards recapture the
incantation of this hour sufficiently to render it into terms of music" (Sackville-West
1983: 291). These words seem to suggest that "the dead poet who was Shakespeare's
sister [has] put on the body which she has so often laid down (...) she [has been] born"
(Woolf 1977: 123), if only in the text.
The endless journey of a stray

Trefusis's *Hunt the Slipper* is an exploration of how to achieve Williams's suggestion that "the aim of all feminine life is undeath." *Hunt the Slipper* is a novel about desire and sexual pleasure. The text is not so much concerned with actual death but with the struggle between death and life. It is a search for that truth that appears to be for Trefusis "violent and irresistible and inevitable to the artist" (Jullian and Phillips 1986: 174). The struggle represents a desire for an object that seems impossible to the subject because, once the object of desire is reached, the subject ceases. Freud reads the 'fort-da' game as a change from a victimized passive position into a position of active mastery: "At the outset he was in a passive situation - he was overpowered by the experience; but, by repeating it, unpleasurable though it was, as a game, he took on an active part" (Freud 1991b: 285). He interprets the child's accomplishment as "the child's great cultural achievement - the instinctual renunciation" (Freud 1991b: 285). The problem that Freud's interpretation poses is directly linked to the different roles imposed on men and women within patriarchal culture, for the child Freud is talking about is male. Freud does not acknowledge a gender inscription in his reading of the game. Nevertheless, as he argues, children's games are: "influenced by a wish that dominates them the whole time - the wish to be grown-up and to be able to do what grown-up people do" (Freud 1991b: 286). In this sense, the boy is obviously mastering a culturally sanctioned activity over a passive one. The 'fort-da' game played by a girl must respond to a different economy. Freud provides no argument in this respect but it must have puzzled him because in his essay "Female Sexuality" (1931) he recollects the tale of the child who, exposed to a doctor's examination, will perform the same surveillance in a game with playmates where the child takes the active role of the doctor. In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," explaining this episode, he wrote:

As the child passes over from the passivity of the experience to the activity of the game, he hands on the disagreeable experience to one of his playmates and in this way revenges himself on a substitute. (Freud 1991b: 286)

The tale brings about a paradox in Freud's account for as he states in "Female Sexuality" "the relation of activity to passivity is especially interesting" (Freud 1991e:
383) in the case of girls. In the playing of these games Freud read "an unmistakable revolt against passivity and a preference for the active role" (Freud 1991e: 384). The paradox resides in the fact that if boys and girls alike are to repeat in play-form an unpleasant passive experience in order to achieve an active mastering of that experience, the account of the pleasure taken by women out of passivity seems at odds with this postulate. He resolves the paradox by asserting that the revolt against passivity has different strengths in each child. Allocating passivity to the feminine and activity to the masculine he concludes: "A child's behaviour in this respect may enable us to draw conclusions as to the relative strength of the masculinity and femininity that it will exhibit in its sexuality" (Freud 1991e: 384). Freud so resolves the apparent contradiction between the force behind the 'fort-da' game and the effects that the withdrawal from the mother have for girls:

The turning-away from her mother is an extremely important step in the course of a little girl's development (...) there is to be observed a marked lowering of the active sexual impulses and a rise of the passive ones. (Freud 1991e: 387)

However, passivity, as Cixous writes, "promises death" (Cixous 1986: 77). Passivity, aligned with the feminine, urges women, as passive recipients of experiences, to repeat those experiences in order to take pleasure in the active mastery of them. This seems to be the tenet of Trefusis's novel. In the title itself the concurrence between a children's game, pleasure, femininity, and death drive can be observed. *Hunt the Slipper* refers to a Victorian game of loss and recovery. This game is in the text linked with love and the possibility of achieving pleasure: "Love passed from one to the other, furtive, unseizable, like the slipper in 'Hunt the Slipper'" (Trefusis 1983: 61). This suggestive title links the game to the complex and problematic construction of femininity in the Freudian connotations of the word "slipper". As was discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, Freud suggests a slippery path in the development to a normal female subjectivity: "she slips - along the line of a symbolic equation, one might say - from the penis to a baby" (Freud: 1991f: 321). Furthermore, the title evokes traditional images of sexual desire which have associated it with the hunt. These images relate desire to the hunter, the man who takes an active part in capturing a prey. The prey, the woman,
becomes a passive object of desire symbolized (in the word "slipper") by her genitalia as a sexual organ that allows a penis to enter. In the inter-war period, this idea of activity/passivity, related to the binary opposition man/woman (hunter/prey), was reinforced by scientific studies carried out by sexologists and psychologists. The title, then, conveys both the idea of a game and the idea of female sexual desire. Moreover, a hunt implicitly acknowledges the death drive. Even if the successful hunter appears as victorious in the battle of life over death, the corpse of the prey acts as a reminder of the debt that living organisms must pay to life. A hunt, in a broader sense, is a search, so that Hunt the Slipper becomes a call for the search of the feminine jouissance.

Caroline, the female protagonist, is unscrupulous, intransigent and above all passionate. The game Caroline plays in the text consists of subverting the concept of activity/passivity (male/female) implicit in language and culture in an attempt to find her jouissance. Caroline is searching for a form of pleasure that "causes the abject to exist as such." Unknown jouissance comes "Violently and painfully. A passion" (Kristeva 1982: 9). Precisely for this reason Caroline does not conform to conventional forms of love. She is a searcher, "a stray (...) on a journey, during the night, the end of which keeps receding" (Kristeva 1982: 8). Repetition of the game is the necessary end of Caroline's journey.

Anthony, Caroline's husband, considers her a decorative object acquired in the marriage market: "Caroline (...) looked extremely well at the head of his dining-room table" (Trefusis 1983: 120). In Anthony's view, Caroline is a piece of profitable merchandise, a narcissistic projection of himself, an appendage: "Caroline, the daughter of a neighbouring potentate, a most desirable alliance and a charming pendant to himself" (Trefusis 1983: 12). Trying to embellish his possession he decorates her with the family jewels: "He never tired of dressing her up in the family jewels" (Trefusis 1983: 12). He is sure that as time passes Caroline will learn to be his faithful and unselfish companion:

He hoped that in time she would realise that she was not nearly so important as he, and that, like the ballerina when the premier danseur does a pas seul, she would learn to stand aside when he took his bow in the storm of applause that was his due. (Trefusis 1983: 12)
Caroline, in turn, finds herself trapped in the role of wife and mother. In this role she discovers, as Lady Slane in *All Passion Spent*, that her compliance with patriarchy, her unconditional acceptance of her conventional marriage, might kill her:

The family pearls were a dead-weight on her neck, a heirloom that reminded her that she was but a link in the long chain of Lady Cromes stretching from the seventeenth century. She would not suffer herself to be detained by the garrulous and importunate Past. (Trefusis 1983: 136)

Refusing to conform to her fate, she embarks on a love-affair with Melo, a fashionable Chilean man. This love affair, however, entraps her in another image, imposed upon her by her lover. Melo sees Caroline as a "mannequin," a "puppy," that suits his fashionable life-style:

Caroline certainly had all the makings of a typically "modern" woman. Her dancing was intuitively right, she drove a car beautifully, she could be flippant, rude. She must learn to be heartless. (Trefusis 1983: 37)

Melo's image of Caroline responds to a canon of womanhood that, even if unconventional, is still framed within the boundaries of patriarchy. Her being "typical" implies that she fulfils a stereotype. Melo, as Anthony, tries to construct a Caroline out of his own image: he wants a "heartless," implacable woman. Thus Caroline will become a self-without-heart, a corpse.

Caroline's relationship with Nigel provides her with a glimpse of a *jouissance*. Nigel, nevertheless tries to domesticate their relationship by failing to sacrifice his possessions and his conventional life to their love. Again, he places Caroline in another socially constructed definition of womanhood. As Caroline writes to him:

*The three men in my life have always tried to influence me, to turn me into something that I was not. A.[anthony] wanted me to be a lady; Melo wanted me to be a vamp; you wanted me to be a mistress, tout court.* (Trefusis 1983: 178)

Escaping stereotyping images of womanhood, Caroline plays a game that is informed by a sense of absence. This absence draws her into a search for *jouissance*, which is situated, according to Kristeva, in the semiotic realm. Thus, *jouissance* can never be articulated since it exceeds the laws of language:
A space of fundamental unrepresentability toward which all glances nonetheless converge; a primal scene where genitality dissolves sexual identification beyond their given difference. (Kristeva 1981c: 249)

In the text, the 'fort-da' game is doubly inscribed. If there is mastery over the loss and absence of the mother in characters such as Caroline's husband, Anthony or Molly (Nigel's sister), the text also enacts an absence of mastery in Caroline and Nigel that implies repetition. Anthony and Molly epitomize the rigid gender division and, subsequently, they are both sexually neutralized. Molly, the Angel in the House, has sacrificed her own self to become a mother for Nigel:

In her selfless devotion to her brother the maternal element, of course, dominated. If Molly had never married it was because there was no one to look after him. (Trefusis 1983: 5)

In turn, Anthony, the perfect gentleman, lacks sexual drive:

...intellectually, Anthony was a credit to his family, and though he loathed hunting, he was an excellent shot, and no one could accuse him of being effeminate. Though Sir Michael would utter, 'Sexless poseur', beneath his breath, he would recoil before Anthony's chilly irony and thinly disguised allusions to his erotic propensities. (Trefusis 1983: 13)

Anthony's only forbidden relationship with "the wife of an Oxford don" (Trefusis 1983: 14) is counterbalanced by the domesticity of the affair and its total lack of passion. It finishes, on Anthony's part at least, as it started, without leaving any imprint: "After this had lasted about three years, Anthony decided it was time to think of matrimony, and gracefully parted with her" (Trefusis 1983: 14). His marriage to Caroline is not founded on love but on a sense of duty: "Long before he met Caroline he decided to marry her" (Trefusis 1983: 12). Anthony would never allow himself any strong feelings because they are improper in a man of his position and social status. Not only is love but also jealousy, for him, "a vulgar sentiment" (Trefusis 1983: 30).

Nigel and Caroline, on the other hand, both share characteristics of the two sexes. Nigel "was feminine, but he was not effeminate" (Trefusis 1983: 6). He takes after his French grandmother and he is longing for a different relationship: "How many times had he played Pygmalion, and tired of his creation!" (Trefusis 1983: 62). Caroline, on her part, has some male physical characteristics: she is tall, and has "broad muscular shoulders" (Trefusis 1983: 30). Her behaviour is "so abrupt (...) so unfeminine"
Feminine jouissance and death

(Trefusis 1983: 103). Caroline also refuses to play the role of the helpless female: "He [Nigel] was to discover that she was an amazingly competent person. Everything she did, she did well. Here was no artifice, no pretence of feminine 'helplessness'" (Trefusis 1983: 109). Caroline and Nigel, in whose personalities gender boundaries dissolve, are, accordingly, sexually invested. In the climax of the novel, Caroline and Nigel are able to position themselves very close to the borderline between the Symbolic sexual differentiation and semiotic undifferenciation. In her search for feminine jouissance, Caroline searches for this realm metaphorically in the text. Intuitively aware of the impossibility of representing this jouissance in the Symbolic language, Trefusis maps out places in the novel that could be seen, metaphorically speaking, as places representing the stages of psychological development. Thus, Crichley (Anthony's home) is the realm of the Symbolic order where the Law of the Father has been established and where language is structured: "it was well-bred, unhurried, and gave the impression of never having heard a voice raised in anger" (Trefusis 1983: 11). The contrast between Crichley (Anthony's home) and Random (where Caroline comes from) is already made explicit in the opening pages of the novel: "I once went over to Random, long before you were grown-up. What a contrast to Crichley, like another planet!" (Trefusis 1983: 18). Random, as its name suggests, is the pre-symbolic locus, a semiotic realm where the Law has not been imposed. Random is, as a matter of fact, an anarchic place that resists rules and norms:

...untidiness prevailed. Two or more of Lady Random's excessively floral hats littered the drawing-room; there were parcels in various stages of being done up, vases in process of being arranged (nothing was ever completed at Random), vitrines full of chipped ornaments, dusty cushions of violently exotic design. (Trefusis 1983: 131-132)

In the in-between of the two places stands Ambush, (Nigel's house), the hidden place, the no-man's-land. In many ways, Ambush is very similar to Random:

Ambush, with its incoherencies and secretiveness, appealed to the child in Caroline. She discovered that what she 'recognised' was its spiritual affinity with Random. They had the same asymmetrical charm, the glamour of the many-mooded." (Trefusis 1983: 114)
However, Ambush is not entirely like Random. Random is chaotic and it lacks the means of articulation, it is the realm of the non-language. Eventually, one must find a place in language so that one is not silenced. This place is Ambush, the twilight zone, which is "Random rectified, expurgated" (Trefusis 1983: 115). Caroline's relationship with these places is also clear. She intensely dislikes the rational Crichley and knows that, hard as she might try, she could never conquer this place. She is an outsider at Crichley. Crichley is not for her; she will never settle down in Crichley: "It was pleasant of Anthony, she considered, not to dramatize her palpable loathing of Crichley" (Trefusis 1983: 82). In contrast, her love for Ambush is an instant love: "Caroline, illogically enough, did like Ambush. More curious still, it was a case of love at first sight" (Trefusis 1983: 113).

Within the Symbolic, represented by the social meeting that takes place at Crichley, Caroline "both looked and felt an intruder" (Trefusis 1983: 17). However, Nigel and Caroline understand each other. Nigel, the inhabitant of Ambush, understands that Caroline speaks a different language, a powerful, feminine speech:

'In ten years, Caroline,' said Nigel sententiously, 'you'll have the tongue of a virago.'
'No doubt I shall, but it's so lovely to be able to say whatever comes into one's head. Just think, I've never been able to! Anthony would have had a fit, and Melo (the skunk!) had no sense of humour. You're my one and only friend.' (Trefusis 1983: 45)

Caroline's language is metaphorically close to the maternal semiotic. Her love for Ambush and the qualification of her language as that of a virago point out that Caroline is in the space of the polymorphus pleasures of the semiotic mother. After meeting Caroline, Nigel changes: "All the evening he babbled about Caroline to Molly" (Trefusis 1983: 48). The fact that he is "babbling" about Caroline suggests that now he is closer to Caroline's position in language. Their language is no longer fixed. This is why Nigel knows that a letter sent by Caroline has to be reinterpreted, as it contains a meaning far beyond the actual meaning of the words:

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4 A reference to the primeval is found in the word "virago." According to the OED "virago" is one of the names by which Adam addressed to Eve.
He knew, however, that this letter must be misconstrued into something vaguely promising, that sustenance must be wrung from the jejune sentences. (Trefusis 1983: 66)

This paragraph is most intriguing. The word "misconstrued" is used here in a positive rather than the negative sense its literal sense insinuates. By reading the letter from another point of view, Nigel is not interpreting it wrongly; on the contrary, he extracts a new meaning. As Barthes, reading Freud, points out, "the New is bliss" (Barthes 1990: 41). This pleasure, jouissance, is not easily extracted. It is pointless; it has no beginning and no end. Because it is unspeakable it can only be obtained by reading in between the lines. The word "sustenance" indicates that Nigel feels a need to be nurtured by the text. This bodily expression is what makes it possible, according to Barthes, to obtain pleasure: "The pleasure of the text is that moment when my body pursues its own ideas - for my body does not have the same ideas I do" (Barthes 1990: 17). From a "jejune" text, an apparently boring and unsophisticated text, Nigel obtains pleasure.

The end of the novel is, in this sense, highly significant for it shows Caroline's rebellion and persistence in her search for jouissance. Nigel, by feeling a sort of comradeship with Anthony, loses his ability to understand Caroline:

Why had she prolonged her stay in London? (No doubt Anthony, forty miles away, was asking himself the same question.) To further the education of Tom Henley? Nigel couldn't repress a shrug. The collective shrug of Man at the idiosyncrasies of Woman. (Trefusis 1983: 163)

When Anthony visits Nigel in Ambush to tell him that Caroline wants the divorce in order to remarry, Nigel is unable to understand the real meaning of her words in the way she had hoped he would: "Now I see why she made me promise to tell you", Anthony said slowly. 'She said you'd help to make it clear" (Trefusis 1983: 170). Nigel at this moment is entering the Symbolic by seeing himself in Anthony: "Anthony was a mirror, in which he saw his own misery reflected" (Trefusis 1983: 175). He has lost his capacity to misconstrue Caroline's words and, wrongly, he presumes that the message (secretly addressed to him) says exactly what the letter says: "The letter contained a replica with perhaps more circumlocutions of what she had said to Anthony on the telephone" (Trefusis 1983: 171). When he eventually opens the letter it is too late. He
has not understood the "other" meaning of Caroline's words, he has not "misconstrued" her. He has rejected being in Ambush, that borderline between the semiotic and the Symbolic and, therefore, he has lost the capacity to listen to Caroline differently.

"I've taken the law into my own hands, I can't go back" (Trefusis 1983: 179) says Caroline in the letter that closes the novel. These words imply Caroline's social death. With this ending Trefusis frees her female protagonist from the ties of a definition of love that in Western patriarchal culture, as Bronfen notes, makes women phantoms: "symptom[s] of [men's] fantasies" (Bronfen 1992: 414). In her eagerness to escape a socially constructed definition of womanhood Caroline plays a Freudian 'fort-da' game of activity over passivity. She loses social status, she recovers her life. Even though Trefusis's masculine and feminine characters are involved in the game suggested by the title of the novel, Nigel abandons the "hunt" while Caroline, in an attempt to become "undead" actively persists. Hunt the Slipper defies the assumption that anatomy is destiny by portraying a rather unscrupulous, but nevertheless powerful, woman who, as abject, cannot deter herself from searching for her feminine jouissance. She has to look for it in a place other than the socially-defined code of behaviour allows.
CONCLUSION
AN OPEN-ENDED FINALE

Within the understanding of androgyny as an enhancement of difference, androgyny, for Trefusis, Woolf, and Sackville-West, was a liberating fantasy as well as a dangerous exercise. The novels studied in this work are sites of resistance to a dominant patriarchal discourse. This resistance is undertaken through the constant questioning of assumptions about identity and about language especially with regard to patriarchal "norms" concerning sex, gender and sexuality. In promoting an androgynous perspective, the writing of Sackville-West, Woolf, and Trefusis enters a carnivalesque discourse governed by a dialogical rule of doubt, fluidity, and confusion thus challenging the rigid separations of a rational masculine discourse. This fluidity implies a crisis of the perception of the self as fixed and permits the dialectics between self and other within the individual through the recognition that the other is within the self. Trefusis's work in particular seeks to unveil the evil operation of language operating under the surface of her texts. As a foreigner she recognizes her abject and transforms it in her writing through a process of repetition that allows her to envision her own feminine jouissance.

The triangular relationship between the work of these three women writers aims at exposing the possibility of looking at literary texts as open bodies subject to transformation. It is a recognition of the possibilities that Kristeva's notion of intertextuality has for fiction written by women. The study of women writers' networks in relation to their literary production will prove an illuminating enterprise, not necessarily in order to show a spirit of co-operation, but one which we can hope will find some echo in future research. The particular connection established in this work might throw some new light on criticism dealing with these writers. Furthermore, whilst this thesis does not want to start a crusade for the recognition of Violet Trefusis's viewpoint in this particular literary triangle, providing a forum of debate where her
voice can be heard is long overdue. Critical attention on Trefusis could become another area for further research.

This research has not intended to provide a static picture of Violet Trefusis, but rather is intended as an attempt to show the uncharted "sea that had no shores" of her poetic writing. Multiple and heterogeneous critical approaches to Trefusis's texts allow for the possibility of an infinite number of readings of her work. In the light of this, the conclusion of this thesis can be no other than an open-ended finale.

It is not in the interest of this thesis to take sides in the subtle argument apparently ongoing between Trefusis's literary executor and Sackville-West's son (see Chapter Three). The disagreement between Nigel Nicolson and Jullian Philips might have had a detrimental effect in the contemporary appreciation of these two authors.
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