Constructions of women in relation to the politics and ideals of androgyny in some of the works of Virginia Woolf, Doris Lessing, Joan Barfoot and Angela Carter

By

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SUMMARY

This thesis looks at the traditional role of androgyny in regard to sexual politics and the use of the concept in the works of four twentieth century women writers.

Viewed in an historico-political context in Chapter 1 androgyny, like gender, is seen to have worked in favour of the patriarchy with its binary system of male and female, which always operates to the advantage of the male. In fact, a concept of androgyny relies on this dyadic structure to have meaning itself. The compulsory heterosexuality upon which society is based depends upon rigid gender definition, yet must account for a surplus which is inexplicable without a concept of androgyny. Androgyny therefore becomes the repository of all that gender excludes. This inevitable outcome of gender definition is given transcendental status by its seeming wholeness and completion.

Such characteristics, which accorded with the liberal humanist philosophy, are thrown into doubt by Freudian psychoanalytic theory. Both the given nature of the self and sexual difference, crucial considerations in a reading of androgyny, are challenged by Freud's positing of the constructed self. This has been the focus of my reading of Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse in Chapter 2 and The Waves in Chapter 6. Rather than viewing the two novels as Woolf's valorisation of androgyny I believe they represent her exposure of the patriarchal ideology implicit in the concept. I also suggest she indicates a 'new' androgyny based on a recognition and articulation of female sexuality

which bears striking similarity to much current French feminist thought.

The 1960s and 1970s saw a re-emergence of interest in androgyny generated by the feminist movement and the political push for material equality. The most influential work at this time was Carolyn Heilbrun's Towards a Recognition of Androgyny which implied that androgyny was 'natural' to both sexes, and had the potential to resolve gender conflict. In relation to the material conditions of women assuming androgynous roles in society at this time I have discussed Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook and Joan Barfoot's Gaining Ground in Chapter 3. Both raise the assumptions and problems which adhere to such emancipated roles for women, not least their conflict with traditional role models and the guilt associated with their rejection.

In revealing the constructed nature of gender I have discussed Virginia Woolf's Orlando and Angela Carter's The Passion of New Eve in Chapter 4. Though written over 50 years apart the novels are comparable in their exposure of the arbitrary nature of gender and sexuality. Both disrupt historical models, Woolf through her displacement of time and space, Carter through a characteristic intertextuality which forces a re-reading of the canon of patriarchal discourse. Carter's rewriting of phallocentric myths, in order to challenge the roles which women are ascribed historically, is discerned in two novels, Heroes and Villains and Nights at the Circus. Here the Amazon warrior-woman is rewritten from a feminist perspective. This is the

focus of Chapter 5, where I have discussed how the marginalised and alienated figure of the Amazon comes to be centralised and positively determined as a female model in Carter's texts.

I have concluded my thesis with a reading of Virginia Woolf's The Waves and its involvement with identity in Chapter 6. I have placed this novel out of historical order because it is apparent to me that Woolf still has much to say that informs current feminist thinking on the articulation of the female subject and the androgynous ideal. Woolf's insistence that women should write themselves into history is relevant to the *écriture féminine* of theorists such as Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray. She points the way to a new kind of androgyny, freed of patriarchal ideology, where both sexes are articulated in difference, or alterity, and the opportunity to aesthetically transcend such difference becomes possible.

STATEMENT

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other university; nor, to the best of my knowledge and belief, does it contain any material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text or notes.

I consent to the thesis being made available for photocopying and loan, if accepted for the award of the degree.

signed

Hettie Tinsley.

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For my mother, for whom Lacan does not exist.

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ABBREVIATIONS

TL	To the Lighthouse
GN	The Golden Notebook
GG	Gaining Ground
O	Orlando
PNE	The Passion of New Eve
HV	Heroes and Villains
NC	Nights at the Circus
TW	The Waves

INTRODUCTION

My initial interest in the concept of androgyny arose from reading Virginia Woolf's novels. The concept seemed unproblematic, and was very much viewed from the perspective of a liberal humanist tradition which placed androgyny in the role of a transcendental sexual unifier. I thought such a reading would have value in the context of feminism, containing as it did notions of balance, harmony and equality between the sexes. I soon came to regard this as a naive appraisal of the concept in every aspect, not least in establishing a working definition of what I mean by the term.

Defining androgyny here and now is problematic. Its complex, over-determined history as a signifier continues to escape fixed meaning. It is the "impossible referent" according to Francette Pacteau[1]. This is a commonly held view. D.A.Harris, in "Androgyny: the sexist myth in disguise" points out that the concept is "a purely imaginative construct, unusually malleable because it corresponds to nothing we commonly observe in our experience"[2]. This seems a useful start from a feminist perspective. If the myth is able to sustain itself outside patriarchal 'reality' then it may offer a challenge to the ideology under which Woman, also, does not exist. The co-existence of both masculine and feminine attributes within the subject, regardless of sexual orientation, takes on extra meaning in a modern, post-Freudian reading, and the concept has undergone dynamic revision to the point where its

overdetermination renders it almost meaningless. It is extended by some writers to include physical characteristics and proclivities, specifically in relation to sexuality. I intend separating it from such concepts as homosexuality, bisexuality, transexuality and hermaphroditism. These terms, while relevant to some novels under discussion, are not interchangeable with androgyny according to my definition. For my purposes, distinction is drawn between male/ female/ hermaphrodite and masculine/ feminine/ androgyne.

According to my definition androgyny cannot be either gender or value free. It cannot be used to describe a pre-linguistic originary state of undifferentiated sexuality to which many myths refer (though I have quoted from writers who define it thus) because it only has meaning in relation to gender. Neither is it a transcendental, genderless condition to which numerous religions aspire, though it may have the potential to be so. I believe it is a particular aspect of gender politics, culturally constructed within the phallocentric framework of Western ideology to maintain patriarchal supremacy, just as masculine and feminine are.

By androgyny I refer specifically to a psychological subject position which is not bound at a given time by gender constraints. This does not imply a gender-free position, it cannot be, though the potential for such a position will be discussed in the course of this thesis. Rather, it implies all that can be ascribed to the masculine or feminine, without fixed points due to biological determinism or cultural construction, whether this be socially defined as 'normal' or

'abnormal' for the subject. Bound to a compulsory heterosexuality upon which culture is based, androgyny must be as closely implicated in patriarchal ideology as masculine and feminine gender and is therefore never value-free. However, like all binary systems, gender has within it the conditions for its own deconstruction, and I propose that the concept of androgyny indicates this breakdown point.

Other terms I shall use also need clarification. Throughout this thesis I will adhere to the distinctions between 'male' and 'female', 'masculine' and 'feminine' now common in feminist discourse. The former describe a biological differentiation of the species (though I am aware of the current arbitrary nature of such a distinction), the latter a cultural construction of gender whereby the masculine holds a privileged position in relation to the feminine. I have tried to avoid using 'Man' as a value-free generic term but rather have defined it as a patriarchal universalisation which masks woman. I have used 'man' and 'woman' in relation to a binary oppositional structure. It may be assumed these terms include both gender and biological differentiation.

Chapter 1 looks at the concept of androgyny within an historico-political context from archaic Indo-Asian myths to the present day. It is highly selective, and does not reflect a balanced historical view in terms of attention given to specific periods of time. I have chosen those influences which I believe most significant in a reading of androgyny in relation to Western feminism. These include Indo-Asian myths, Greek myths and discourse which established the term

'androgyny', and Judeo-Christian belief. Although androgyny continued to influence discourse I have chosen to look at the liberal humanism of the nineteenth century as the next major influence. The impact of the New Woman and psychoanalytic theory at the beginning of the twentieth century continues to inform the concept, which has now been broadened by the application of structuralist and post-structuralist theory.

There are three broad considerations in the discussion of women writers in relation to androgyny. These are their exploration of gender identity and its construction within culture, the subversive possibilities of androgyny and the aesthetic, transcendental potential of the concept. While the following chapters include elements of all three, generally chapters 2 and 3 focus on the first, 4 and 5 on the second. Chapter 6 contains both but also extends thinking in relation to a 'new' androgynous ideal.

Chapter 2 focusses on the differences between men and women and how these are established in society in Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse. The theory of gender complementarity is explored in the relationship of Mr and Mrs Ramsay. The links between the New Woman, typefied by Lily Briscoe, and androgyny, are discussed in relation to the theory of the androgyne as neuter.

Chapter 3 discusses the concept of an essential female self in relation to women living androgynous lifestyles in Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook and Joan Barfoot's Gaining Ground. It looks at the conflicts and sense of guilt inherent in trying to articulate a 'real' self from a socially

constructed one, and relates this to the conflicts in society at large. It further discusses the need, and search for, a transcendental unifier of the self.

In chapter 4 the 'given' nature of gender is questioned by Virginia Woolf's Orlando and Angela Carter's The Passion of New Eve. The novels explore sexual difference, its cultural manifestation, and how this can be manipulated to challenge patriarchal norms. Related to this is the idea that male sexuality is predominantly visually oriented while female sexuality is tactile.

In chapter 5 Angela Carter reworks the patriarchal myth of the Amazon-warrior woman in Heroes and Villains and Nights at the Circus. In so doing she throws into question the way women have been perceived historically and indicates a positive orientation in rewriting them from a feminist perspective. She indicates that one of the most useful models the myth offers is the establishment of a community of women to challenge patriarchal norms.

Chapter 6 brings together elements of the previous chapters in Virginia Woolf's The Waves. It goes beyond these to offer a way that women can enter discourse and disrupt accepted literary forms so that a female voice is heard. The establishment of an androgynous female aesthetic, which can be compared with much current French feminist theory, is the outcome.

CHAPTER 1

Defining androgyny within an historico-political context.

Androgyny is a concept which erupts in myth and literature throughout recorded history and across a range of cultures. It is linked to both the gods and humanity alongside rigid, polarised gender definition. A notion of wholeness or unity is historically implied by the term 'androgyny' according to Mircea Eliade:

> Androgyny is an archaic and universal formula for the expression of wholeness, the co-existence of the contraries, or coincidentia oppositorum. More than a state of sexual completeness and autarchy, androgyny symbolises the perfection of the primordial, non-conditioned state...androgyny has become a general formula signifying autonomy, strength, wholeness[1].

The term has been invested with both biological and sexual characteristics according to Wendy D.O'Flaherty[2], but I have chosen, like her, to label as 'pseudo-androgynous' figures such as "the eunuch, the transvestite (or sexual masquerader), the figure who undergoes a sex change or exchanges his sex with that of a person of the opposite sex, the pregnant male, the alternating androgyne (male for a period of time, female for a period of time), and twins" (O'Flaherty, 284).

The concept is distinguished in early Indo-Asian myths, though the term 'androgyny' has later, Greek origins. These myths were primarily concerned with creation and the origins of humanity. Myths of origin tend to fall into four broad categories[3]. These consist of the creation of the universe by

an ungendered being, creation by a female, by a male or by an androgynous god. My main interest lies not with the second or third categories, though they have political implications for androgyny. Some authorities suggest that the societies which created the myths of powerful female gods were matriarchal in structure[4].

Religions arising from these myths often underwent changes whereby the god figure comes to take on male rather than female form, settling finally into fixed male gender identity. During this process an androgynous period is often the bridge from a gyno- to phallo-centric religious power base. Heilbrun subscribes to this theory, citing four stages in the transition:

1. The world born of a goddess without consort.
2. The world born of a goddess fecundated by a consort.
3. The world fashioned from the body of a goddess by a male warrior-god.
4. The world created by the unaided power of a male god alone.[5]

This displacement of a female god by a male suggests that religious belief served political ends, whereby matriarchies could be supplanted by patriarchies in early societies. Though Indo-Asian myths are predominantly concerned with spiritual androgyny it is impossible to divorce the concept from a political context even as it arises in these early myths. Androgyny here is used as a bridge from one power base to another, in order to privilege the male.

By way of example, the Hindu myth of creation contains elements of the four types of origin myth cited above, and can be presumed to be a model for some later mythologies. It is worth looking more closely at this in relation to androgyny,

therefore. In Hindu belief Ishavara is the original Being, without qualities and unknowable: a pre-cognitive and pre-linguisic entity. Ishavara explodes into creation, forming the male Siva (the Static Principle) and the female Sakti (the Dynamic Principle). Once the dyadic nature of the god is established dispute and dominance develop. The binary opposition of the split entity engenders a hierarchical power structure which might be said to typify gender relations to this day.

Reunification, initiated by the female element, restores balance and spiritual harmony. It is the reunification rather than the undifferentiated originary god which has come to represent androgyny, arising from the fusing of gendered beings, as its semantics suggest. Androgyny cannot be anterior to gender, therefore, but must be constructed after division into masculine and feminine has taken place.

One of the significant aspects of the androgynous Hindu god is that it is sterile in its non-gendered state, a characteristic still current in some definitions of androgyny. It is the dynamic separation that engenders creativity. The myth provides a spiritual goal for humanity through gender transcendence, or *kamacarin*, to be "liberated while living" (Eliade, 94-5). This involves the sacrifice of a single, fixed identity (which must include gender) through the transcendence of binary structures. Thus, good and evil, light and dark, male and female may hold temporal but not metaphysical reality: dualism loses meaning[6]. This is graphically represented by the Yin/Yang mandala of Taoist belief, which symbolises the perfect balance of opposites in

a dynamic flow and counter-flow[7].

The marriage and sexual union of male and female acted as a temporal metaphor of spiritual gender transcendence in religions based upon this principle, giving rise to an ideal of gender complementarity. This concept, which still adheres to androgyny, implies that one sex is enhanced and completed by the other; that through heterosexual union, particularly within institutionalised marriage, both sexes become a unified, fulfilled whole. This ideal relies on the articulation of two sexes, however, and I shall indicate in the following chapter that no such assumption can be made in relation to male and female alterity in patriarchal ideology. Even if one assumes that two sexes are articulated in patriarchal discourse it can be seen that such a complementary theory implies equal access to power and equivalent value of the sexes. Within a phallic economy such a position is clearly not tenable, I would argue.

In Greek myth also, a spiritual goal of gender transcendency is apparent. As in the concept of *kamacarin,* Plato's perfect human being is also an androgynous one, though the subject is secularised. It is Plato who is generally accepted as constructing the term 'androgyny' though some texts suggest Herodotus as the source. In Greek terms androgyny was synonymous with 'hermaphrodite', the biological manifestation of both male and female sexual organs in a single individual[8]. Though revered in gods like Aphrodite and Dionysus, in reality hermaphrodites were put to death at birth by a society which regarded them as aberrations of nature, a view still current. The ambivalent attitude

displayed towards androgyny was also apparent in relation to gender politics. Perfected spiritual androgyny might be seen as the highest goal of the enlightened man but was co-existent with a belief in the innate inferiority of women. Athenian society believed male dominion over women was the 'natural' order. In quoting from Aristotle's Politics William Blake Tyrrell says "The male is by nature more suited to rule than the female (except where the household has been set up contrary to nature...)"(27).

Athenian women had no political rights and little access to a material means to power, which was invested in men through marriage. Marriage was therefore crucial to the centralising of patriarchy, acting as metaphor of natural order as opposed to chaotic female disorder when women placed themselves outside the system (as they were projected as doing in the Amazon-warrior myth). The role of mother was restricted to 'keeper' of the husband's offspring, both before and after birth. It was believed, and legally reinforced, that the father was sole parent, the mother acting as 'host' or incubator of his seed. In terms of fecundity, therefore, the father was all-powerful, in a direct inversion of biological 'fact'. Parthenogenic gods, like Zeus, who gave birth to Athena, reinforced the belief. In Athenian society the mother role was further undermined by the myth that the male founders of the city had arisen from the soil and were not born of women at all.

In Athenian society, then, it was generally true that androgynous characteristics enhanced and privileged the male while marginalising the female, both within culture and its

myths. There are numerous stories of women who are punished for independent acts regardless of the justice of their cause. Clytemnestra's avenging of her daughter's sacrifice is a clear example of behaviour which would be considered noble in a man viewed as heinous and unnatural in a woman. Yet the Athenian relationship of androgyny to women is not consistent, and is characterised by ambivalence, particularly in regard to its emergence in drama. In Socrates' plays, for example, androgynous female figures may be portrayed as far from villainous. Antigone is a notable example. Ismene, the traditional feminine type, is obviously inferior to Antigone, who transcends role models. Later writers also appear to have been influenced by the idea that a noble, independent nature was not necessarily confined within masculine limits. This suggests an incomplete repression of a plural sexuality in favour of strict gender boundaries, which was able to find expression through the imaginary in Athenian discourse.

In terms of the ideal society Plato suggests a similar viewpoint. Though there is plenty of evidence in his writing to indicate that Plato found the women of his society inferior to men, one must also account for his inclusion of women in the role of Guardians in books V-VII of Republic[9]. Boys and girls of superior intelligence would be given equal education and opportunity so that both might aspire to become Guardians whose leadership role was androgynous. Plato acknowledges biological difference but in other respects the Guardians are equal. This suggests that Plato viewed gender as constructed rather than given, that women's inferiority was not 'natural'

but rather culturally induced by the role ascribed them in Athenian society. The Guardians would remain unmarried, perhaps Plato's recognition that marriage represented a patriarchal power base which would restrict the equal role of female Guardians.

Both Plato and Aristophanes refer in positive terms to androgyny but the concept was to lose ground increasingly to single sexed gods with strong gender identity. These replaced the earlier androgynous figures in what appears to be a strengthening of patriarchal values which were dependent upon heterosexual exclusivity[10]. The negative response to androgynous women extended to androgynous men, clearly gendered gods like Mars and Venus became dominant. This indicates that although the representational unity of the androgynous figure was still an object of desire, the increasing pressures of a society based on clearly defined gender roles came to suppress earlier belief, which was still liable to break out in such areas as drama. The trend continued to suppress gender deviance, however, with increasing power given to male gods until the advent of the single, patriarchal god figure.

The displacement of androgynous god figures takes on new significance in the Judeo-Christian religions. In the Adam and Eve myth there are obvious androgynous parallels with Indo-Asian creation stories and the Greek parthenogenic gods. Mary Daly draws attention to the continuing inversion of reality with regard to progenesis in the later religions in Beyond God the Father[11]. A male god becomes parent to the potential androgyne, which then separates into male and

female. Despite the slippage into the androgynous myth, in all ways the female aspect is inferior. Eve is assembled from part of the male, she is to be his helper but never the initiator of action (for which she is punished), she is cast in the role of villain for her initiative in seeking knowledge. Both literally and metaphorically she comes second. The gender polarisation which follows the splitting androgyne is inevitably followed by a dyadic power structure which privileges the male.

Even the Judeo-Christian ideology encountered problems with suppressing the female, however. Like Mary Daly, Elaine Pagels draws attention to ambivalent references to the female in early creation myths in her article "What became of God the Mother? Conflicting Images of God in Early Christianity"[12]. She cites evidence of deliberate manipulation of archaic belief and practice in terms of the suppression of the female which she believes made Judaism unique in a ruthless adherence to a male god compared with contemporary religions. Yet it seems apparent from the examples quoted above that the process was also actively operating in other contemporary religions, though perhaps not as thoroughly as in Judaism.

The rise of Christianity gave greater political urgency to the need to exclude women from a role in the spiritual life of the community. The teachings of Christ threatened to undermine the patriarchal power base with their insistence on equality regardless of gender, race or class. The Gnostics had myths rich in reference to both male and female god figures; god is both plural and androgynous: "And God said, 'Let us make Mankind in Our image, after Our image and

likeness'...in the image of God he created them: male and female he created them" (Pagels, 112).

In spite of earlier belief, however, an androgynous god was supplanted by the patriarchal figure which has come to dominate Christianity. The temporal power struggle in the establishment of the Christian Church marginalised those women who had contributed to the construction and organisation of it. The Gnostics, with their belief in a pluralist God lost ground to orthodox Christianity. Their secret texts, such as The Gospel of Mary Magdalene, had emphasised the important role of women in establishing the early Church, where women held office and performed religious ceremonies. This was now suppressed. Pagels poses the question

> Is it possible, then, that the recognition of the feminine element in God and the recognition of mankind as a male and female entity bore with it the explosive social possibility of women acting on an equal basis with men in positions of authority and leadership? (115).

In view of the gender politics operating within patriarchal culture the answer must be "yes". Such a system depended on an all-powerful male god if a phallic economy was to be maintained. The singlemost significant factor in the suppression of Gnostic teaching, from a feminist perspective, relates to the equality of the sexes, with its potential subversion of the status quo. Orthodox Christianity, like Graeco-Roman society, accepted male supremacy as the natural, male-God-given order of the universe. It may well be argued that the Christian Church would have been a political failure in Rome had it espoused the radical role for women which Gnosticism offered. Instead,

it adopted an increasingly rigid patriarchal structure. By the end of the second century Gnostic heterodox writings were excluded from the New Testament. When Islam arose patriarchal structures were central to the major Western religions. The on-going success of Judaism, Christianity and Islam may well be based in no small part on their success in maintaining the phallic economy which keeps women 'in their place'.

Such a political situation vis à vis the marginalisation of both women and androgyny continued virtually unchallenged until the twentieth century, with always the eruption into desire for the unified, whole subject which androgyny implied. Men no less than women were confined within rigid gender boundaries which were challenged by a notion of androgyny. In spite of this male god figures continued to dominate increasingly rigid gender roles which facilitated the use of women as objects of exchange in a phallic economy. The marginalised androgyne figure was graphically portrayed as a distortion of nature, a symbol of evil in a confusion of sexuality, biology and gender. Images of Hell were peopled with bisexual figures such as male devils suckling offspring. The cult of the Virgin Mary, which valorised motherhood, countered a perception of Mary as a goddess figure fecundated without consort. 'Gentle Mary, meek and mild' bore none of the threat of a self-sufficient, autonomous woman with the power to impregnate herself.

However, gender fixity continued to be challenged, in particular by that section of society most securely based in the patriarchal order- affluent men. Renaissance man could fight wars, compose songs, dances and poems, dress lavishly

and colourfully, wear make-up, perfume, and explore the natural world through travel and science. Women attempting to understand and manipulate the natural world could be burned as witches.

The development of liberal humanism, most notably through the Romantic Movement, saw the logical extension of the increasingly wide horizons for men in the assumption of the generic term 'Man', and its implication of the subsummation of woman. The 'liberated Man' was free to be androgynous.

At the centre of liberal humanism lay a belief in an essential human nature which could be identified as a bounded, unique individual. Catherine Belsey, in Critical Practice, suggests this discourse largely excluded women, defined as they were in terms of the generic Man[13]. The implication of an essential self fixed the idea of a 'natural' order where woman was always inferior. If the self was given, the order could not be changed:

> The ideology of liberal humanism assumes a world of non-contradictory (and therefore fundamentally unalterable) individuals whose unfettered consciousness is the origin of meaning, knowledge and action. It is in the interest of this ideology above all to suppress the role of language in the construction of the subject, and to present the individual as free, unified, autonomous subjectivity (Belsey, 67).

Thus, the generic term Man comes to represent both men and women in a unified presence which denies the difference of the sexes by suppressing Woman. Unified subjectivity was the central theme of Romantic and post-Romantic poetry, with androgyny a major focus. According to K.K.Ruthven, Samuel Coleridge reintroduced the term to discourse on 1 September 1832 with his statement "A great mind must be androgynous"[14]. Individual autonomy was established through embracing all

that Man could aspire to in a unified whole. The complementarity of attributes meant that the androgynous individual 'lacked' nothing in becoming complete.

In Europe writers eagerly explored androgynes and pseudo-androgynes in fictions where self-exploration and knowledge were paramount. Balzac based Seraphita on Swedenborg's theories of androgynous nature, in a novel which explores the achievement of androgyny through the perfect love of opposite sex partners: the complementarity theory, once again. Later writers were to corrupt such a concept to explore erotic possibility, according to Eliade (101). For Coleridge and the Romantics the term was used specifically in terms of the intellect, a focus which continued to inform liberal humanism well into this century.

But the extension of intellectual possibility which the concept offered Man did not translate to the material conditions of the New Woman who might choose an androgynous lifestyle. Female androgyny continued to be associated with unnatural, failed womanhood and the sterility of the neuter. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg discusses the problems confronting the New Woman at some length in Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America, and it is from this work that the following outline is derived[15].

The group mainly in the United States, representative of the New Woman, were characterised by a desire for greater material freedom, particularly in access to higher education. This was revolutionary. The response of mainly male commentators was to regard their aspirations to educational opportunity, tendency to remain unmarried and

involvement in all-female establishments as unfeminine and sexually deviant, responses with an historical echo. Commentators expanded to include the medical profession, in particular the new practitioners in the psychological sciences. These, adhering to the belief that man could be identified with the mind and woman with the body, were able to popularise a theory that women who subdued their 'natural' biological urge to become mothers for the male world of exercising the mind risked a weakened constitution and mental illness.

Evidence of 'unnatural' behaviour was at first linked to a rejection of the motherhood role but by the twentieth century included a rejection of heterosexuality in favour of lesbianism. This served to alienate the New Woman not only from men but women also. Two key figures were influential in promoting this view of the New Woman. The first was the Viennese neurologist Krafft-Ebing, who described the Mannish Lesbian in terms which repeatedly linked the refusal to conform to gender models with physical abnormality and sexual deviance. The adoption of male dress was an indicator of the lesbian, he believed. Further, women who aspired to masculine roles came to look like men through physiological change.

Havelock Ellis, though initially a supporter of women's rights, came to regard the New Woman as "sexually perverted and socially dangerous" (Smith-Rosenberg, 275). He was happy to defend female sexuality as long as it was strictly heterosexual, and based in biological determinism, being an exponent of the complementarity of the sexes theory. A woman's desire to share equal cultural opportunity with men

was therefore viewed as an attempt to overthrow 'natural' order, a familiar phallocentric viewpoint. Despite the actual situation of women who were achieving success in male-dominated areas without succumbing to either lesbianism or hysterics, these views placed the New Woman and her androgynous aspirations further on the margins of society. The New Woman became a metaphor of social disorder, protest and a diseased society.

The greatest challenge to the 'natural' order and wholeness ideology of liberal humanism came with the development of psychoanalysis, in particular the work of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and Jacques Lacan. They dismantled the theory of the unified self in suggesting that the subject was not a harmonious, complete individual but rather "continuously in the process of construction" (Belsey, 66). Identity was a dynamic articulation within culture rather than a fixed, given subject position. The undifferentiated, pre-linguistic state of the subject, according to Lacan, was split by the mirror-stage (or misrecognition) which marks entry to the Symbolic and language. Thus the subject must perceive itself as separate, as the object of its own discourse, as 'I'. Both Lacan's Imaginary and the Symbolic come into being at the point of entry into a linguistic system which, by construction, is patriarchal. The Imaginary, locus of pre-linguistic signifiers, operates upon the Symbolic to cause conflict and disruption of the phallocentric subject.

The addition of a psychological dimension to the structure of the self has enormous implications for the concept of

androgyny. Not only does the notion of the individual as a 'bundle of drives' cut across wholeness theory, but the constructed nature of the self undermines a view of an essential, 'natural' subject position. Identity and the unified self become arbitrary, while gender is perceived as a cultural rather than given dyadic structure. As Pacteau says, "Freudian theory disengages psychic masculinity and femininity from physiological maleness and femaleness" (64). She places androgyny in the Freudian realm of the Unconscious, describing it as a desire for an imaginary, originary unification: "Androgyny can be said to belong to the domain of the imaginary, where desire is unobstructed; gender identity to that of the symbolic, the Law" (63). In Pacteau's terms desire is "an unconscious wish, indissolubly attached to memory traces, evoked through certain stimuli and associations,...born out of the first loss of the mother's breast- " (63).

Whilst accepting Pacteau's psychological view of androgyny, it must be pointed out that androgyny as a concept has been shown to be not exclusive to the domain of the Unconscious. It is articulated in the power systems of the symbolic and subject to gender politics therein no less than masculine and feminine. The political ends to which it has been put historically attest to this. I believe the concept can be seen to operate in both the imaginary and the symbolic simultaneously, in a repressed desire for a transcendental unifier and also as a means of subsuming the female within a patriarchal power structure. For feminists wishing to engage with a new discourse of androgyny the concept must be

separated from its latter role, and this is discussed at length in relation to Virginia Woolf's aesthetic ideal.

The psychological dimension of the concept continues to inform discourse on androgyny but it was its application to the material conditions of women , particularly in regard to access to the workforce, that emerged as a major focus of interest in the 1960s and 1970s. Part of a popular movement away from stereotyped roles for the sexes, the term 'genderbending' was used to describe the overlapping of customs and characteristics of the sexes that ranged from hair length to job opportunities. Carolyn Heilbrun's Towards a Recognition of Androgyny acted as a catalyst for an unprecedented proliferation of articles and debate on the topic. As one would expect, a range of viewpoints were revealed in the ways the concept was variously defined. Barbara Gelpi, in "The Politics of Androgyny" refers to "a psychic unity, either potential or actual, conceived as existing in all individuals"[16]. This liberal humanist definition points out the on-going problem of a phallocentric view of androgyny and its links with a bounded, unified self. Similarly the definition offered by June Singer as "the rhythmic interplay of Masculine and Feminine within the psyche of one individual" (266) is problematic because it relies on the gender division of symbolic discourse. That she also locates androgyny in the imaginary (though she does not make the distinction herself) is evidenced by a further definition which states that "Androgyny is the outcome of a dynamism based on the application of energy in an organic system that is open-ended and that interfaces with an open-

ended universe" (276). The notion of an open-ended, decentred androgyny, which will inform discussion in relation to Julia Kristeva's structure of the semiotic, is also indicated in Eliade's positing of "a new, unpolarised consciousness" (100). Such a position is an indicator of much current feminist debate regarding the arbitrary, plural nature of not only gender but also constructions of 'man' and 'woman', 'male' and 'female'. If feminism has come to question (as Simone de Beauvoir does) whether Woman has ever been articulated other than as Man's reflection, can such a concept as androgyny be meaningful in any regard? If, as Luce Irigaray suggests, there is no discourse of sexual difference between men and women, as yet, can androgyny be said to have ever existed for either sex?

What seems clear in looking at androgyny in an historico-political framework is that the concept has been universalised both in myth and cultural practice. It erupts into discourse alongside rigid gender roles as both a repressed desire for unification of the subject and a political means to power of patriarchy. Historically, it has had little to offer women in terms of either escape from gender roles or equality in difference within society. Nevertheless, its challenge to patriarchal gender models, even though this has worked in favour of men, may be used as a starting place to articulate Woman other than in the roles historically ascribed to her. I believe the four women writers under study have attempted to do this.

CHAPTER 2

Complementary gender and sexual difference, the neuter, and possibility in Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse.

When Virginia Woolf wrote To the Lighthouse[1] in 1927 she had access to three major sources of influence on her work in terms of formulating an aesthetics of androgyny. These, outlined in the preceding chapter, were the liberal humanist ideology which had reintroduced the concept of androgyny into discourse, knowledge of the New Woman and her material achievements within patriarchal social structures, and Freud's work- which included theories of the constructed self. Hogarth Press, run by Leonard and Virginia Woolf, published Freud's translated works and they had met him in London. One might assume from this, and occasional reference to Freud's work in Woolf's non-fiction, that she had closely read his work. She was also an active participant in both debate and lifestyle related to androgynous practice within the Bloomsbury Group.

It is logical that Woolf's concerns with women's issues in the early twentieth century should lead her to explore, and question, the liberal humanist acceptance of a unified, fixed gender position and the complementarity of the sexes. This posited as 'natural' a binary hierarchy which privileged men at the expense of women. Freud's alternative model of gender as structured within culture, constructed rather than given, had possibilities for dismantling stereotypic models of

femininity which limited women's self-realisation. It could also be used to challenge the doctrine of deviant sexuality which adhered to the image of the New Woman.

Woolf believed, like Coleridge, that the intellect should not be confined within gendered modes of thinking if the subject was to explore the range of human thought- a belief central to her aesthetic of the artist. But just how far did she accept sexuality and gender as constructed? Did she believe in originary sexual difference? Could she conceptualise an aesthetic of androgyny which was free of the patriarchal ideological "trappings" it had brought into the twentieth century, even if she recognised that these existed? These questions still adhere to Woolf's discourse, and in fact are relative to questions asked in the wider discourse of feminist politics today. I intend reading Woolf's androgyny in relation to current debate, focussing most specifically on the articulation of sexual difference and culture as the determinant of gender.

Although post-Freudian and -Lacanian discourse generally accepts the belief in the cultural origins of gender, the origins of sexuality are more problematic. Even the notion of the biological body as determining sex has been challenged. Nothing relating to biological determinism, sexuality and gender can, it seems, be taken as 'natural'. Feminism has its political factions which believe women's best interests are served by an essentialist theory of sexuality, which therefore implies originary sexual difference which is biologically determined. Others believe women's interests are best served by the opposite- no originary difference

between the sexes. If the category 'sex' comes into meaning with Freud's theory of the initiation of the Oedipus complex or Lacan's theory of the split subject and entry into the Symbolic (commonly held beliefs), one asks how can it refer back to a pre-linguistic, undifferentiated state of 'being'? Can sexuality exist before the subject is constituted? These are political questions in that strategies for dismantling the present power relations invested in sex (as theorists like Foucault articulate) are presumed to be predicated on the answers. Whether answers are possible or desirable (and this is a highly suspect reductionist pursuit in relation to patriarchal discourse), whether they would in fact lead to effective strategies, remains open to conjecture. Some of the current modalities of thought regarding a primary sexuality are briefly outlined below[2].

I have identified three general modes of thinking which seem to operate in relation to originary sexuality (whilst recognising the reductionist nature of this simplification). First, there is the theory that no sexuality can exist prior to entry into language (and thereby culture). Secondly, the theory of an undifferentiated sexuality which becomes 'sexed' on entry into language, and thirdly a pre-linguistic, 'sexed' sexuality, essentially linked to the biological body. The latter two may be altered on entry into language in a range of ways, from being repressed in the case of the female, to being universalised in the case of the male. Even these categories are not stable or discrete. Many theorists seem to espouse them paradoxically or combine them in ways that are problematic for the reader. Irigaray may be described as

"essentialist"[3] by some critics, like Toril Moi, and 'non-essentialist' by others, such as Elizabeth Grosz. Michel Foucault, for example, seems to espouse both the first and second categories. Like Derrida, he argues that sexuality is an effect of the same law which institutes gender identification and heterosexuality. Constructed within the Symbolic, it cannot exist prior to it (Butler, 65). Yet he also suggests a primary sexual multiplicity which can be released by deconstructing the political category 'sex' (Butler, 96). There is wide support for this latter idea, based on Freud's notion of a pre-gendered polymorphous sexuality which would include, to a limited extent, theorists like Gayle Rubin, Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray (any further definition of the concept would indicate wide divergence in their thinking)[4]. For others, like Monique Wittig, sex is gender, and only the lesbian can transcend it (Butler, 112-3). What emerges as consistent, however, is that entry into language changes our perception and construction of sexuality. Whatever the pre-linguistic origins of sexuality, it enters language as a political power system which operates to the advantage of patriarchal ideology.

What are the characteristics of the articulation of sexuality? Once again, there is a multiplicity of discourses. I shall only refer to those that have bearing on my reading of Virginia Woolf's androgyny, however.

Irigaray's concept of "sexual indifference"[5] claims that only one sex is articulated, which is male, and this economy "*underlies the truth of any science, the logic of every discourse*" (118). Her belief is that Freud (representing

patriarchal ideology) recognises only the male sex in both the imaginary and the symbolic. This means that woman can only occupy a mimetic space as man's reflected other because a female model does not yet exist: "Mimetic appropriation by women is still the most terrible thing of all because it is practised without any feminine ideality or model" (110). From this one can theorise that the gender options available are masculine (male model), feminine (reflected male other) and androgyny (the subsuming of the other by the male model). This I believe to be the structure as it arises in patriarchal discourse, a structure which obviously has no value in relation to female sexuality and androgyny, apart from the concept's destabilising implications. Even a patriarchal androgyny challenges the fixity of gender, as has already been indicated.

Simone de Beauvoir and Monique Wittig would seem to take an opposing view to Irigaray- there is only one sex, and that is "marked" as female, where male is universalised [6] and woman is Other, in order to maintain the "heterosexual contract" upon which patriarchy relies. Either political position, however, acknowledges the suppression of an economy of female sexuality.

Both Kristeva and Irigaray seem to suggest that the Law of the Father is ineffective in completely suppressing the articulation of female sexuality in the symbolic. For Irigaray the female breaks through as a surplus, or residue, while Kristeva posits the entry of the imaginary into the symbolic through the *chora*[7]. I believe Woolf's writing style is illustrative of this disruption, a point to which I shall

return in discussing _The Waves_.

How do post-structuralist theories of essentialism, sexual difference and gender effect a reading of Woolf's position on androgyny? One can look at a much-quoted passage regarding her ideal for clues. In _A Room of One's Own_ she says:

In each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man's brain, the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman's brain, the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating. If one is a man, still the woman part must have effect; and a woman must have intercourse with the man in her...It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilised and uses all its faculties[8].

This statement of belief is striking in a number of ways, and whilst acknowledging that Woolf is generally assumed to be speaking metaphorically in regard to male and female parts of the brain, I intend a more literal reading of her statement. Firstly, Woolf positions a bisexuality firmly in the biological domain of the organ brain, and in relation to biological sex. This argues for the originary potential of the brain to be either, or both, male and female. Secondly, she switches to "man" and "woman" in deciding which shall dominate, or gain power, over the other, though power relations are potentially present from the outset. While the brain holds the potential for both male and female parts to become operational, if one is sexually designated "man", he will dominate, if "woman", she will dominate. Does one take this to mean that for Woolf the terms "male" and "female", "man" and "woman" are interchangeable? Or does she distinguish between biological sex and cultural sexuality? I

would argue the latter, based on the readings of both this text and The Waves, in which case she seems to prefigure much modern thinking.

Power relations are articulated when one "is" a "man" or "woman", though they have been implicit from the start. In some ways this coincides with Foucault's seeming paradox of originary sexuality being subject to the power relations of gendered sexuality. The implication in Woolf is that in order to take up a sexed position, one gendered subject must dominate by the suppression of the other. A sexed position is by definition a power position, as Foucault suggests. And this is true for both sexes in Woolf's terms. Even on entry into the symbolic, the potential for equality (in difference) exists. Normality (which can only be defined within an ideological framework), when biological sex 'matches' cultural sexuality, confers a feeling of ease within cultural codes of being when the subject 'obeys the rules' of alignment.

Much has been made of Woolf's use of sexual metaphor to describe the androgynous contract that takes place in the brain, with the suggestion that it ascribes to "woman" the subservient role. The opposite is in fact true. The second part of the quotation is structured so that the woman is the active subject in both cases, the male passive in the first instance and subsumed by the female in the second. This is consistent with Woolf's logical belief that the woman in her is dominant; she would therefore describe the fusion from a female subject position.

Finally, a third condition is articulated. After the

fusion has occurred, thereby putting in place a medium of potential creativity ("fully fertilized"), the "mind" comes into being. Once again, the distinction between the biological and cultural is apparent. Perhaps most telling in terms of an aesthetic of androgyny, is the notion that the mind is genderless when it comes into creative being ("uses all its faculties"- my emphasis)[9]. The *jouissance* created by this fusion is therefore potentially unlimited.

Summing up, although it seems that Woolf did not consider that our recognition of the corporeal body itself might be constructed in the symbolic (as some current theories suggest) her acceptance of sexuality as a cultural construct informs her articulation of androgyny. This is important in looking at how she reveals the cultural posing as 'natural', not just in relation to masculine and feminine but androgyny as well. And in the gap between sexuality and gender- where culture acts upon sexuality to construct models of femininity and masculinity- also lies Woolf's exploration of the material conditions of androgyny.

Eileen Sypher, in referring to The Waves, claims that Woolf "inadvertently implies a pre-experiential or at least pre-adolescent imprinting of "male" and "female" traits"[10] to her characters, as though the two stages might be interchangeable. It is obvious from my reading that the difference is crucial. It is between the "pre-experiential" (by which I assume Sypher means pre-symbolic) and entry into language that Woolf locates the establishment of gendered sexuality. This is by no means "inadvertent" in her formulation of gendered characters but crucial. When Sypher

says this means "androgyny has limited value for all people and particularly women" (204) she is presuming a universal model of androgyny which is in fact patriarchal, and failing to see the potential of an articulation of sexual difference in rewriting the concept.

The commonly held belief that Woolf's ideal of androgyny was unproblematic for the author at a conscious level breaks down in relation to her exploration of some of its implicit assumptions when operating in the material sphere. A simplistic view of Woolf's relation to androgyny fails to distinguish between an aesthetic ideal and Woolf's discourse on the material conditions of men and women inscribed within cultural ideology, particularly in regard to the complementarity myth. Woolf's articulation of androgyny is always in process, and revelationary in terms of how patriarchal discourse presents androgyny as equality. As Irigaray suggests, equality is a suspect term when one is working within patriarchal ideology, and this applies to androgyny, too. What can one be equal to, except patriarchal structures, when men are the sole reference point? In both the material and the aesthetic women's options are therefore the mimetic role of other or double mimetic role of other-becoming-men as equals. There is no differentiated female model. No wonder that Irigaray asks "*Is a women's politics possible within that order?*" (128). But she suggests it is by her model of the "residue" of female sexuality: "One sex is never entirely consummated or consumed by another. There is always a *residue*" (172). The "residue" is the place not appropriated by patriarchy where women can begin to

articulate their difference. For Woolf, also, the emphasis falls on difference rather than a myth of equality in feminist politics.

She was acutely aware of a "residue" of female sexuality, that "dark wedge" in Mrs Ramsay which could erupt in ecstasy. Her attempts to articulate difference, through the Ramsays' relationship, are fundamental to establishing an enabling structure, or dismantling a disabling structure, which allows the crossing of culturally imposed boundaries upon the free will of the subject to a new androgyny.

Woolf's exploration of how men and women are constructed in society is a dominant theme in To the Lighthouse. She draws attention to the political implications of such constructs and the outcomes when gender balance is dis-placed to centralise patriarchy. Joanne Blum says, "Woolf held consistently to a perception of masculinity and femininity as essentially distinct, and to varying degrees, opposed"[11]. Post-Victorian England served to maintain both distinction and opposition, despite the challenge of the New Woman.

The married relationship of Mr and Mrs Ramsay (who are given no first names, so that the reader is forced to define them in relation to each other) was based on that of Woolf's own parents. Woolf acknowledges this in A Writer's Diary[12] where she records her sister Nessa's response to the novel: "Nessa enthusiastic- a sublime, almost upsetting spectacle. She says it is an amazing portrait of mother; a supreme portrait painter; has lived in it; found the rising of the dead almost painful".

The Ramsays appear to conform to gender stereotypes,

complementing each other in their roles as Victorian parents. Mr Ramsay is the traditional patriarch, exacting and egotistical, around whom the family revolves. He is the breadwinner and controller of the economy- Mrs Ramsay cannot pluck up courage to ask him for fifty pounds to repair the greenhouse. His personality conforms to the historical links between the male and the creative force which engenders culture. His thinking is linear and analytical, emphasised by metaphors of a kitchen table and progression through the alphabet in relation to his intellect. He lives by immutable, fixed laws: "He was incapable of untruth; never tampered with a fact...facts uncompromising" (TL,10).

Mrs Ramsay is typically feminine[13]. She is an admirable wife and mother, beautiful despite, and because of, her eight children. She represents the valorised Mother figure historically linked to nature and nurture. She visits the sick, is painstaking over the *Boeuf en Daube* (which she uses, metaphorically, to seduce William Bankes) and upholds the ideology of patriarchy. She urges single women to marry: "there could be no disputing this...an unmarried woman had missed the best of life" (TL,49).

Regardless of her actual ability (she is an excellent organiser) she encourages the belief of both her husband and Charles Tansley that women have butterfly minds. She has a "habit of exaggeration" (TL,11) and oblique viewpoint (defined in phallocentric terms) which exasperates her husband: "The extraordinary irrationality of her remark, the folly of women's minds enraged him...now she flew in the face of facts, made his children hope what was utterly out of the

question, in effect, told lies" (TL,35).

Ironically, this is one of the devices Mrs Ramsay uses to protect the male ego, for she assumes the role of guardian of the infallible male image: "Indeed, she had the whole of the other sex under her protection" (TL,11). This function of femininity, disparaged by feminist politics, was also the subject of comment by Woolf in A Room of One's Own: "Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size"[14].

Mrs Ramsay's behaviour, then, serves to support rather than complement male models, at the expense of her own subject position. When she is 'herself' it disconcerts the centrality of the male. On her walk with Charles Tansley, for example, he comes to "see himself and everything he had ever known gone crooked a little" (TL,18).

The unifying presence of Mrs Ramsay is lost at her death and "Time Passes" expresses the polarised sexuality which passes to the next generation. The children, already classified as "Cam the Wicked, James the Ruthless, Andrew the Just, Prue the Fair" (TL,25-6) will take up the gendered positions culture dictates. The sacrifice, or loss, of potential androgyny through gender fixity is symbolised by Prue dying in childbirth and Andrew in battle.

It would seem that the Ramsay family conforms to gender roles with all the rigidity that patriarchal ideology requires but this is not so. Role models are not sustained between husband and wife though they try to maintain them. The shifting viewpoint of their relationship from themselves

to their friends and children reveals slippage into positions other than their ascribed roles[15]. In significant ways Mr Ramsay displays characteristics of dependence and insecurity not commonly ascribed to men. Despite his exasperation with the way women's minds work, he is in fact reassured by it. For he constantly doubts his own ability, regarding his intellectual status as a defensive position from which he must fight off competing, younger men. It is he, rather than his wife, who fears the world at large and seeks reassurance in the home. This fear erupts in the quotations of war poetry which he recites under stress- a stress usually linked to his mental activity. Here Woolf ironically inverts the common belief that women cannot take excessive mental strain, that it makes them ill, in what seems a counter move against criticism of the New Woman.

Mr Ramsay causes unease to both himself and others (usually women) by excesses of emotion and dependency which do not conform to his image as hero of his own discourse. His irrational response to mundane events, such as Mr Carmichael's request for more soup, is contrasted with his wife's good sense. She is a clear, direct thinker, though not an intellectual: "Her simplicity fathomed what other people falsified. Her singleness of mind made her drop plumb like a stone , alight exact as a bird, gave her, naturally, this swoop and fall of the spirit upon truth..." (TL,31).

She does not see herself as the world sees her, though she encourages its traditional feminine image. In fact she is dissatisfied and power-seeking, like the Fisherman's Wife in the story she tells her son. This is an aspect of her

personality she seeks to suppress or deny: "Wishing to dominate, wishing to interfere, making people do what she wished- that was the charge against her, and she thought it most unjust" (TL,56). A basic honesty and self-knowledge forces her to articulate her mismatch with the feminine model, as when she manipulates Minta and Paul:

"And here she was, she reflected, feeling life rather sinister again, making Minta marry Paul Rayley...she was driven on, too quickly she knew, almost as if it were an escape for her too, to say people must marry; people must have children" (TL,58).

The panic behind Mrs Ramsay's insistence on the feminine model indicates her repressed desire for more than femininity allows. Her dissatisfaction emerges in relation to her marriage, too: "she did in her own heart infinitely prefer boobies to clever men who wrote dissertations" (TL,54).

What Woolf is indicating here is the tension set up between the individual and the role society ascribes them. Neither Mr nor Mrs Ramsay can sustain the model without slippage into aspects of themselves that the model excludes. They are more and other than their gender. In order to maintain the status quo, the compulsory heterosexuality, a pact of seeming complementarity is set up within their marriage which serves to represent a unified, stable whole. In this way the marriage acts as metaphor of patriarchal androgyny, a sexual completion whereby the female is subsumed as other. The power relations that dictate Mrs Ramsay should take the supportive role means that unification can never represent equality in a material sense.

Cora Kaplan says Woolf saw androgyny as "that aesthetic chamber where masculine and feminine minds meet and marry"[16]. While one may disagree with her statement (and I do) this is an apt metaphor in terms of the images of sexual union and fertility in which Woolf couches her androgynous ideal. Did Woolf therefore envisage a pseudo-androgyny present within marriage, through sexual complementarity, which might be used as a model for the aesthetic?

The term 'androgynous' has been closely associated with this aspect of marriage historically (*androgyno* remains the Greek term for a married couple) and Woolf seems to suggest a transcendence of gender is possible in communion between husband and wife. In A Writer's Diary she states

> Arnold Bennett says that the horror of marriage lies in its "dailiness". All acuteness of relationship is rubbed away by this. The truth is more like this: life- say 4 days out of 7- becomes automatic; but on the 5th day a bead of sensation (between husband and wife) forms which is all the fuller and more sensitive because of the automatic customary unconscious days on either side. That is to say the year is marked by moments of great intensity. Hardy's "moments of vision". How can a relationship endure for any length of time except under these conditions? (101).

Mr and Mrs Ramsay are such a couple. The days of estrangement which form a pattern in their relationship are followed by a symbolic coming together in the garden where, arms entwined, they form an iconoclastic image of androgyny.

Can this be used as an androgynous model? Woolf indicates not, for complementarity actually fixes the dyadic structure of gender more rigidly while seeming to dismantle it. A theory of complementarity in marriage must rely on well-defined gender roles in patriarchal ideology, for how can 'lack' be

met if it is unarticulated? The Ramsay's marriage in fact reveals the limits and inherent inbalance in complementarity. While Mrs Ramsay has experienced "the pure joy, of the two notes sounding together" (TL,41) Lily Briscoe comes to question whether this represents unity. She locates the seeming wholeness rather in Mrs Ramsay's efforts to meet the 'lack' in her husband than complementarity. A power structure is in operation whereby the woman (Mrs Ramsay) must be a source of plenitude to the man (Mr Ramsay) so that an image of wholeness is presented to the world. While he is renewed by his wife, she is drained by him: "so boasting of her capacity to surround and protect, there was scarcely a shell of herself left for her to know herself by; all was so lavished and spent" (TL,39). The relationship, rather than symbolising equality in difference, masks the centrality of the male, the fixed power base to which Mrs Ramsay refers and defers as reflected other. Thus, when Elaine Showalter says "at some level, Woolf is aware that androgyny is another form of repression"[17] one can agree, with the proviso that "some level" was for Woolf a conscious awareness of the limits of such an androgynous model, rather than the reluctant admission Showalter implies.

This is powerfully evoked by Mrs Ramsay in pointing out a view to Charles Tansley. The landscape acts as metaphor of the Ramsays' marriage and is quoted fully because of its implications:

For the great plateful of blue water was before her; the hoary Lighthouse, distant, austere, in the midst; and on the right, as far as the eye could see, fading and falling, in soft low pleats, the green sand dunes with the wild flowing grasses on

them, which always seemed to be running away into some moon country, uninhabited of men.
That was the view, she said, stopping, growing greyer-eyed, that her husband loved (TL,17).

This is a crucial statement of Woolf's interpretation of gendered relationships that are seen to be successful in culture. Significantly, Mrs Ramsay can only articulate her husband's desire, not her own. He is represented by the centralised, fixed, phallic lighthouse. The fluid, fertile female symbolised by the diffuse grasses is located on the margin of the landscape, self-effacing ("fading and falling") but seeming limitless ("as far as the eye could see"). The female element is mysterious (belonging to the "moon country" associated with the female), object of unattainable desire ("running away"), and protecting of the centre by reason of its marginalised position. The image is also a representation of coitus where the lighthouse represents the erect, penetrating penis.

What is Woolf saying here about male sexuality? Firstly, it takes up the centralised subject position which places the female at the margin. Male desire is constructed on 'seeing' the female as alien and unattainable- the tantalising other of the voyeur. Aroused by a fear of the mysterious other, it nevertheless requires the protection of the female, who therefore plays a double role that we can relate back to the Mother, who both threatens castration and protects against it.

Woolf specifically defines this sexuality as male, thereby indicating its difference from a female sexuality, a distinction lost on some of her critics. The inevitable

question then becomes how does Woolf define female sexuality? I believe she concurs with Irigaray's position that this has not yet been articulated, but suggests, like Kristeva, that patriarchal discourse can be used to articulate a female subject position. Once again, the symbol of the lighthouse can be used to illustrate this.

It was crucial to Woolf's androgynous ideal that the symbol of male sexuality should also be representative of the female, despite their difference. The lighthouse represents the patriarchal Rule of the Father from which the Law excludes James until he becomes heir to it. But it serves also to reveal Mrs Ramsay's sexual difference from her husband. For her, the lighthouse is characterised by lack of fixity through its beam. Instead of the concrete goal to be reached by day, it becomes the tactile, searching beam which comes to her by night, moving in an outward, circling motion from its centre. Rather than drawing in, it moves out into indefinite space, diffusing itself with the otherness of the heavens. It expresses Mrs Ramsay's desire for an opening out in plenitude, *jouissance*, in a sexuality which is tactile rather than optic. Her sexuality- a "wedge-shaped core of darkness" (TL,60)- is repressed, yet can find expression in *jouissance* when she is alone, freed of her roles as wife, mother, hostess: "Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep...her horizon seemed to her limitless" (TL,60)[18].

This is predicated upon the unshackling of identity: "Losing personality one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir; and there rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph

over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity" (TL,60) which leaves her open to her sexuality, "the long, steady stroke" of the Lighthouse. Her capacity for ecstasy is linked to the rhythms she invokes from the dinner conversation and poems she reads, inscribing her sexuality into their text so that words "began washing from side to side of her mind rhythmically, and as they washed, words, like little shaded lights, one red, one blue, one yellow, lit up in the dark of her mind" (TL, 109). This breaking through of rhythm into language evokes Kristeva's projection of the *chora* and its capacity to break into the symbolic and affect discourse. Woolf seems to suggest something similar, which acts as an enabling structure for the articulation of female sexuality. This notion would have possibilities for considering how female sexuality can be articulated within patriarchal discourse. Woolf posits a realisable female sexuality, repressed in the imaginary, but expressed in the symbolic as rhythm, fluidity and *jouissance*. It is achieved through the casting aside of cultural identity, a diffusion of self.

Does Woolf suggest that for her this can only be a female model of sexuality, which facilitates gender transcendence, or would the same be true of a male sexuality? This is problematic to say the least. There is a strong case to be put for Woolf's belief that male sexuality is based in centralising the self and subsuming the female. If female sexuality is realised by diffusing the self will transcendence rely on diffusion of the self for both men and women, or only women? If it is the former does this mean only

women can achieve Woolf's androgyny, or can men change their sexuality?

A possible clue in hypothesing lies in what Gillian Beer refers to as "the irridescent play of communal selves" (104) 19, a concept I shall explore more fully in relation to The Waves, where it is an important motif. The dinner guests whom Mrs Ramsay brings together are able to set identity aside for a brief time as they share the rhythms of song and poetry. It is as though they have made a spiritual place of union through discourse which allows the imaginary to participate. Perhaps this is the place of Woolf's aesthetic ideal, a place unrealisable in the sexual domain, with its power structures, but realisable through displacement into discourse.

The gendered position of Woman illustrated by Mrs Ramsay is not the only female model which Woolf establishes in the novel, however. The feminine model to which Mrs Ramsay adheres in her efforts to maintain the status quo is juxtaposed with the alternative of a seemingly neutered role for women who choose not to conform to gender stereotypes. Lily Briscoe is representative of the New Woman, whose refusal to take up her prescribed gender position is symbolised by the rejection of marriage and motherhood: "she need not marry, thank Heaven: she need not undergo that degradation" (TL,95). This serves to 'double' marginalise her,both as woman and un-womanly, a point Woolf emphasises by reference to Lily's alien quality: "With her little Chinese eyes and her puckered-up face she would never marry" (TL,21). Her refusal to become a 'real woman' is perceived as lack, and she is cast in a neuter role- for the ideology does not permit

a sexuality where the male is displaced. It is a role which implies sterility, and, as previously mentioned, is frequently linked to the androgyne historically. Lily lacks the mysterious fecundity which Mrs Ramsay typifies, and which gives women a power base within the patriarchal order, where motherhood is privileged. Lily's inability to play the feminine role of support for Mr Ramsay's ego "reduced their relationship to something neutral, without that element of sex in it which made his manner to Minta so gallant, almost gay"(TL,158-9).

In fact, Lily's rejection of motherhood in no way implies a sterile, neutered state, according to Woolf (and one can conjecture how closely Woolf was arguing her own point here). Lily locates her creative, productive impulse in her painting, seeking fecundity through culture rather than nature. The imagery used to describe her creative process reflects gestation and birth, as when she battles to complete a painting, which "made this passage from conception to work as dreadful as any down a dark passage for a child" (TL,23).

Her creative vision is an androgynous one, consistent with Woolf's articulation of the coming into being of the androgynous mind:

> Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathery and evanescent, one colour melting into another like the colours on a butterfly's wing; but beneath the fabric must be clamped together with bolts of iron (TL,159).

Yet Lily is subject to a patriarchal ideology that refuses women access to the cultural domain. This is articulated by Charles Tansley, with his repetitive "Women can't paint,

women can't write". Lily must overcome, even in herself, the idea that culture is the 'natural' domain of men and realise its constructed origins:

> and she heard some voice saying she couldn't paint, saying she couldn't create, as if she was caught up in one of those habitual currents which after a certain time forms experience in the mind, so that one repeats words without being aware any longer who originally spoke them (TL,148-9).

Here Woolf specifically locates the prohibition on women's access to culture within historical discourse, which is phallogocentric. Lily's painting is dismissed, it is destined to be hung in the servant's quarters or rolled up under a bed. This is in sharp contrast to Augustus Carmichael's creation of a slim volume of poems which brings him cultural acclaim.

How can Lily as New Woman gain access to the cultural domain? Woolf suggests strongly in her writing and practice that this must be established through a female tradition, a philosophy she outlines in A Room of One's Own. Yet women, as well as men, have upheld the status quo which excludes them from culture. Mrs Ramsay dismisses Lily's aspirations with "one could not take her painting very seriously" (TL,21), cutting off Lily's access to a female model. Access to these models is crucial in both Woolf's discourse and that of modern feminists. Lily seeks to identify with an ideal Mother, which she invests in Mrs Ramsay: "Could loving, as people called it, make her and Mrs Ramsay one? For it was not knowledge but unity that she desired" (TL,50-51). But the price to be paid lies in conforming to gender. Mrs Ramsay has reached for her own "unlimited resources" by setting up a power base within

patriarchal discourse. Lily's positioning of herself outside this discourse entails a split from the Mother, the very means of access to the aesthetic model, according to Irigaray. The desire to identify with the Mother, who acts as the guardian of patriarchy is problematic for women. Like Woolf, Irigaray believes it is crucial that a genealogy of women be established whereby they are written into the silences of history. Irigaray says this must also acknowledge the first, homosexual love of the mother, an articulation which is a prerequisite to establishing sexual difference and accessing the means to transcend it. This implicitly opposes Lacan's model of the rejection of the Maternal body in order to take up a subject position within the Symbolic; a model which enables men to construct an 'ideal' but leaves woman as lack (Butler, 68). Irigaray says that women, too, must establish a 'divine' model: "The maternal should have a spiritual and divine dimension" (The Irigaray Reader, 159) which enables them to transcend gender, just as men use the male God figure: "Each sex (sexe) should be considered in relation to its corresponding ideal, its transcendental" (106). Undifferentiated sexuality (where only the male is articulated) denies women transcendence through "the artistic, iconic, religious(?) mediation" of an ideal female. It is the lack of this model Lily feels so keenly in the reverberating "women can't paint, women can't write."

However, one has to be wary of valorising the Mother, per se, in view of how the concept has been constructed within patriarchy to reduce women to a reproductive function. Unlike Kristeva, who appears to reify motherhood in articles like

"The Maternal Body*"[20], Irigaray explains that the Mother model need not include becoming a mother in actuality, a position Woolf would surely endorse. Rather it relates to the creative drive in women, examples of which one could locate in Lily Briscoe and Woolf herself.

Irigaray suggests that the repression of primary mother-love breaks the genealogy of women, so that each succeeding generation must start afresh to construct a female aesthetic. Woolf symbolises a similar view to this by the loss of Minta's brooch, inherited from her grandmother. This occurs on the day of her engagement to Paul. She must give up the Mother to be 'placed' within patriarchal discourse. Even more telling is the isolation of Cam when she accompanies her father and James to the Lighthouse. There is an unbroken transfer of power-in-culture from father to son when the transcendent symbol is reached but there is no Mother through whom Cam can gain access. Pre-empting Irigaray's belief that there is no divine figure for women, Cam thinks "'There is no God'"(TL,191). Mrs Ramsay, in upholding patriarchal ideology, has denied her daughter's access to the divine female model.

Can women transcend gender, in Woolf's discourse, without access to the divine female model? There is certainly the desire for transcendence in Lily, who recognises and identifies with the goal of diffusion into the other, "subduing all her impressions as a woman to something much more general " (TL,52). She reaches for it through the aesthetic medium of her art; she can communicate with the fellow artist, Augustus Carmichael, for example, in a way

which was denied Mrs Ramsay: "The lawn was the world; they were up here together, on this exalted station, she thought, looking at old Mr Carmichael, who seemed...to share her thoughts" (TL,179). The communion of the two symbolises Woolf's aesthetic ideal- artist and poet able to cast off the disabling yoke of gender through the creativity of the androgynous mind.

Did Woolf come to believe, however, that even this androgynous realisation was always established within a patriarchal framework which did not permit female sexuality to be articulated? Did she, like Irigaray, believe that "What is indispensible is elaborating a culture of the sexual which does not yet exist, whilst respecting both genres" (The Irigaray Reader, 32)[21].

In seeking to articulate sexual difference in To the Lighthouse I believe Woolf is laying the groundwork for a discourse which gives women a voice which she acknowledges is not yet heard. Acceptance of this difference does not imply the reductionist dichotomy which adheres to gender and patriarchal androgyny. The not-yet-realised (as opposed to unrealisable) utopian ideal of an androgyny which recognises, and diffuses, both *genres* (to use Irigaray's term) can be initiated through the articulation of difference. Having explored this in her novel, Woolf proceeded to challenge the most fundamental barrier to a new articulation of androgyny- the centralising of the subject in discourse- in The Waves. That she came to see the bounded self as crucial to patriarchal ideology, and prohibitive of a discourse of female sexuality which is located without

boundaries, is discussed in relation to the later novel.

CHAPTER 3

Female essence, the fragmented self and the quest for a unifier in Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook and Joan Barfoot's Gaining Ground.

Virginia Woolf was a relatively affluent middle class cultural icon during her lifetime, though it may be argued that she was also marginalised according to liberal humanist tradition both by being, and consciously writing as, a woman. Unlike Woolf, Doris Lessing and Joan Barfoot share an ex-colonial heritage, coming respectively from Zimbabwe and Canada. For them, this might be assumed to displace them further from the English literary tradition established through patriarchal ideology. Written more than 40 years after Woolf's To the Lighthouse, their novels contribute a very different perspective on the themes that engaged the earlier writer in respect to androgyny, though some parallels can also be drawn. Radically different is the implication of an essential, holistic androgynous nature, owing much to Jungian and Laingian psychoanalytic theory, which the later novels espouse. Like Woolf, the authors acknowledge and explore constructed gender and how this operates to suppress female sexuality. Also like Woolf, they articulate a binary system of gender which operates politically to the disadvantage of women in order to maintain a phallic economy. As discussed in relation to androgyny in To the Lighthouse a polarised system of differentiation privileges one signifier over the other in Western ideology. The power base

of patriarchy fosters such a hierarchical system, not just in relation to gender.

The two novels under study are concerned also with revealing how gender has come to mask an originary, undifferentiated state of being which has been fragmented on entry to the symbolic and the subject's taking up of a gendered position. This suggests an involvement with the idea of an essential self which is very different from Woolf's focus, where the writers explore strategies for returning to this ideal, primary state. The material conditions of women breaking out of gender roles and attempting to live according to androgynous models is a major focus for Lessing and Barfoot. Woolf's exploration of the same themes, in A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas, was of necessity more theoretical than the later writers, who articulate the material conditions of women in a far more egalitarian society than hers. Yet the 1970s' novels reveal the superficial nature of the changes to women's conditions and expose androgynous equality as a patriarchal myth.

In positing an essential, ungendered state which can be articulated as androgynous Lessing and Barfoot reflect much contemporary thinking in the 1960s and 1970s. Carolyn Heilbrun's influential Towards a Recognition of Androgyny, espousing a similar view, was first published in 1964, with a reprint in 1973, the year Lessing published The Golden Notebook[1]. Barfoot's Gaining Ground[2] followed in 1978. An essentialist theory of androgyny owes much to the work regarding the archetypes of the Unconscious which Carl Jung constructed. Very briefly, and solely in relation to

androgyny, Jung puts forward the idea of the archetypes of the complementary *anima* and *animus* located in the psyche of each individual. They have fixed, gendered attributes, which has been one reason why such a notion has lost favour with many feminists. Julia Kristeva is disparaging in terms of Jung's theory of the semiotic, for example, talking of "Jung's dead end with its archetypal configurations of libidinal substance taken out of the realm of sexuality and placed in bondage to the archaic mother"[3]. According to Jung both sexes must acknowledge and incorporate their 'opposite' in order to achieve a 'whole' self, the *anima* within the male psyche acting as a female principle, the *animus* of the female psyche acting as a male principle. As Daniel A. Harris points out, however, Jung's attempts to posit a unifying androgyny in the psyche merely reinforces gender stereotypes, and reveals the differences between female and male androgyny: "his treatment of the androgynous psyches of men and women reveals a fundamental disparity"(179). He further goes on to say that this works in favour of men, in very much the same manner that patriarchy was shown to masquerade as equality in the historico- political perspective which was outlined in Chapter 1: "Jung's vision of androgyny reveals with utmost clarity how insidiously the myth can be manipulated to maintain male dominance" (180-1). The fact that Lessing mocks the psychoanalyst Mrs Marks (Mother Sugar) in The Golden Notebook and moved away from Jungian psychoanalytic theory in later work suggests that for her, too, Jung's theories were not entirely satisfactory in terms of a discourse of female androgyny.

R.D.Laing's work is also influential in regard to 'wholeness' theory and the search for a unifier[4]. Simply put, he located interaction within society as the place where psychosis was initiated, rather than contemporary beliefs about its origins in the mother/child relationship. Accepting that a person is constructed through their relationships with other people, he nevertheless posits an originary self which comes into conflict with the socially constructed self. This causes division and schizophrenia within the subject, according to Juliet Mitchell's interpretation: "a psychotic-schizophrenic is someone trying to preserve his 'self'(inner or unconscious) separate from his experience in the objective world- how others perceive him" (238). It will be shown how such a dilemma for the individual is confronted by both Abra and Anna in the two novels under discussion. Laing suggests the means of countering the "appalling state of alienation called normality" (Mitchell,234) lies in loss of self through breakdown into psychosis, which, rather than engendering disease, initiates the healing process. His belief that society and the individual cannot be separated finds expression in The Golden Notebook where individuals create, mirror and recreate each other according to social models which are marked by conflict and fragmentation. Society itself is "split into inner and outer with the inner bereft of substance and the outer of meaning" (Mitchell,239).

Lessing's novel reveals the fragmented self as it is constructed in society through Anna Wulf's use of five separate notebooks where different aspects of her life are

explored and recorded. In Gaining Ground Barfoot strips away cultural models of the feminine which conflict with Abra's desired self by relocating the heroine, as far as possible, outside society. Both Anna and Abra undertake personal journeys of self-discovery in a quest for a unified, originary self. Anna confronts her fragmentary self through an inward journey into mental breakdown while Abra moves literally to the margins of society and relocates her self not within culture but nature, in the Canadian wilderness.

The journeys which the authors articulate are subversive of the patriarchal order in several respects. Firstly, the quest which entails a journey into the unknown is traditionally reserved for the male hero figure. Women in literature tend to undertake a quest for social validation, usually through marriage, if they are active at all. Both Anna and Abra have discarded marriage partners and the institution itself as inhibiting their quest for self-unification. In rejecting marriage they move away from patriarchal ideology and stereotypes of femininity. Such roles are paradoxically divisive of the self even while they seemingly integrate it, for both women are aware of a self other than that which is offered, co-existent with guilt and discomfort regarding the roles they do adopt in order to conform. In deliberately evoking the aspects of the self which the model represses, the women take on androgynous lifestyles.

In choosing to show self-realisation through discarding the social self in mental breakdown on the part of Anna and escape to nature on the part of Abra both authors subvert commonly held beliefs regarding women. They convert the

disparaging patriarchal images of women as hysterics and basely linked to the corporeal into positive terms. For both women, these strategies enable them to articulate the female outside patriarchal norms and begin to reconstruct the self on androgynous models. Because they take on the material conditions of androgynous women, their androgyny might seem inevitable. But just as it was noted in Chapter 2 that the imaginary and the symbolic cannot be separated, that one must challenge the other, so both women continue to confront guilt, role conflict and self-doubt as they attempt to redefine themselves from a female perspective within the phallocentric order of the symbolic. The stereotype of the non-conforming woman in society already has a defined place within patriarchal discourse, so that Anna and Abra's revolutionary attempts to articulate themselves always balance on the edge of degenerating into an ideological, pre-given model. As Penny Boumelha notes, "To stand outside categories is not to be free"[5]. By pre-empting the 'labels' which adhere to the hysteric and the woman-in-nature, they can effectively counter the stereotypes to put forward a female discourse, however.

The opening section of The Golden Notebook is ironically entitled "Free Women", for in both novels this is a contradiction in terms. Both Anna and Abra could be materially described as women who have 'everything' compared with previous generations, though their lifestyles are very different. Anna is independent, earns a living, and makes decisions in the material world. She is free to enjoy sexual relationships with numerous men whilst having intimate

friendships with women. Like Abra, she is also a mother, an important aspect of her self-image which will be discussed further.

Abra has a more traditional role in society. She is a good wife and mother (read 'good' as self-sacrificing) in an affluent, stable family situation. She is encouraged to be attractive, ornamental and socially adept; a material asset for her husband's career. It is the home which defines the boundaries of her world; it is neat, orderly and proscribed, a 'gilded cage'.

For both Anna and Abra freedom is largely a myth. Societal expectations and censure limit their opportunities and attempts to know themselves as unique individuals. The reductionist pressure of the stereotype dominates their models of the self, despite the desire to be more than this allows. Abra feels society's criticism in "The eyes on her, the judgements overwhelmed her" (GG, 72). The women are tacit upholders of the very ideology against which they rebel through internalised patterns of belief in, and dependence on, patriarchal systems. Anna/Ella is an 'emancipated' woman yet she believes she cannot cope with life without a man's protection: "she was unable, weakened as she was as an independent being, to enjoy sitting at a table publicly without a man's protection" (GN,308). Nevertheless, the undefined malaise which finds expression as general anxiety for both Anna and Abra- "a vague uneasiness was growing" (GG,29)- indicates the mismatch between the socially constructed self and the essential self: "I am always having...to cancel myself out" (GN,312). The initial

attempts of both women to escape imposed roles are characterised by a need to sleep. One might see this as a means of escaping the male-dominated symbolic to seek refuge in the Unconscious.

In attempting to free themselves of phallocentric models of Woman Anna and Molly must confront their own feelings of sexual inadequacy. Sexual freedom was a common metaphor of a generalised gender freedom in the literature and 'pop' culture of the seventies. It is used by Lessing in particular to show the limits of such freedom for women. For the women in her novel the failure of sexual relationships is generalised so that they feel their lives are failures. They come to realise that sexual equality can only operate when both sexes discard gender stereotypes: "'Free,' says Julia. 'Free! What's the use of us being free if they aren't? I swear to God that everyone of them, even the best of them, have the old idea of good women, bad women'" (GN,446). Women, Lessing suggests, invest far more in personal relationships than men. As Anna/Ella says, "I ought to be more like a man, caring more for my work than for people" (GN,312). Her access to the sexual freedom which men have traditionally enjoyed is countered by conditioning to a monogamous role, which Lessing suggests may also be essentially female: "My deep emotions, my real ones, are to do with my relationship with a man. One man. But I don't live that kind of life, and I know few women who do"(GN,312). So, material freedom for women amounts to the freedom to behave like a man. Lessing suggests this is one of the reasons for breakdown in women, where the essential female self continues to be repressed despite material freedom.

The significant advantage Anna and Abra have over many women in preceding generations is in access to independence through financial security. Both are able to earn a living, though Abra's escape is symbolically facilitated through a legacy from her grandmother (GG,93). But in spite of the material gains of their generation they have limits imposed by the dominant power system which continues to punish women who cross gender boundaries. An additional burden of guilt is the consequence, for they owe allegiance both to past models and new ones, which are irreconcilable. Because of this conflict many women do not make a break with past models, despite the conditions to do so and frustration with circumscribed social roles. Anna's work with the Communist Party leads her to canvas "five lonely women going mad quietly by themselves, in spite of husband and children or rather because of them" (GN,175). She recognises the social blackmail that prevents their exploration of their essential self: "The quality they all had: self-doubt. A guilt because they were not happy" (GN,175-6). And so, a generation of women, aware of new avenues open to them, are held back by the dominant ideology which keeps them in the home: "...the resentment, the anger, is impersonal. It is the disease of women in our time. I can see it in women's faces, their voices, every day...The woman's emotion: resentment against injustice, an impersonal poison" (GN,45).

When Abra does make the break, leaving her husband and children, she recognises not only the guilt but the loss of power this entails. Motherhood is one legitimate means to power for women in a phallic economy, though the price is loss

of power outside the home. There is a male reverence for the mystery of motherhood which has traditionally rewarded women for their lack of access to cultural power: "Stephen deferred to me, convinced of the mystique of mother and child" (GG,45). This myth of motherhood effectively labels a female non-mothering role as unnatural, so that a woman's sexuality is thrown into question by her rejection of the mothering role, just as Woolf illustrated in To the Lighthouse. When Abra's daughter, Katie, finds her mother's wilderness home Abra is forced to justify her desertion and to redefine the mother-daughter relationship in a second refusal to accept the traditional role. This is a harder decision than the first, responding as she now does to Katie both as literal daughter and symbol of the inherited struggle for female autonomy. The paradox lies in the fact that women are forced to reject each other as accomplices in the ruling ideology in order to free themselves from past models. Yet, as noted in relation to Irigaray's philosophy, they also need a female heritage on which to construct an articulation of Womanhood. Lessing, like Woolf, recognises the need for a female tradition as essential to establishing a female discourse. As the analyst, Mother Sugar, says to Anna, "I tell you, there are (sic) a great line of women stretching out behind you in the past, and you have to seek them out and find them in yourself and be conscious of them" (GN, 459).

Both Anna and Abra are engaged in uncovering a 'true' female self when they reject patriarchal models. This primary self might be inferred as located in the repressed imaginary, therefore. Lessing's use of mental breakdown as an enabling

structure for the imaginary to disrupt the symbolic is a strategy employed by other female writers historically, examples being the Brontes, Woolf and Fay Weldon. Anna's breakdown is not under her control; her attempt to hold together through writing the notebooks is marked by increasing disintegration until she can acknowledge the breakdown process in the Golden Notebook.

Her violent breaking apart is expressed in the metaphor of global disintegration that one might associate with an atomic bomb:

> The slowly turning world was slowly dissolving, disintegrating and flying off into fragments, all through space, so that all around me were weightless fragments drifting about, bouncing into each other and drifting away. The world had gone, and there was chaos (GN,298).

Madness for Anna, and Saul (her symbolic *animus*), is not the disease society would label it, however. Anna tells Mrs Marks "I'm going to make the obvious point that perhaps the word neurotic means the condition of being highly conscious and developed. The essence of neurosis is conflict. But the essence of living now, fully, not blocking off to what goes on, is conflict" (GN,456). It is the initiating place for a new construction of the self once the false unity of a sick, self-deluding society has been stripped away to reveal its reductionist principle: "People stay sane by blocking off, by limiting themselves" (GN,456). Anna/Ella writes the story of Anna and Saul, "A man and a woman- yes. Both at the end of their tether. Both cracking up because of a deliberate attempt to transcend their own limits. And out of the chaos a new kind of strength" (GN,454). The increasing intrusion of dreams into social reality shows how the boundaries between

the imaginary and the symbolic break down. Anna sees this as essential to reconstructing her self. She says "I meet people, and it seems to me the fact that they are cracked across, they're split, means they are keeping themselves open for something" (GN,460). The madness which facilitates the operation of the imaginary upon the symbolic allows Anna to articulate her radical, female self within patriarchal discourse.

For Abra there is a deliberate dismantling of those structures which force her to see herself as reflection, both literally and symbolically. She comes to see that the individual labelled 'Abra' only exists within a sociological context: "What I had assumed about my life had turned out to be a mask and a charade, a play in which I performed...without truth" (GG,91). Her recognition of this construction marks the split in her personality which she identifies with the female dilemma; Katie also must undergo the same process: "she seemed to recognise instinctively the schizophrenia of her position as a child...presenting a false face where she felt it necessary" (GG,64). Abra distances her awareness of an essential self from the cultural model, where its "labels came from outside" (GG,111). Initially this leads her to Laing's "loss of self" in society, she believes she does not exist: "I was the unreal and without substance" (GG,24); and so she clings to patriarchal models of legitimacy by seeing herself through others' eyes: "When they were not there, I was empty. I felt as if I did not exist. I had no power, no way to be known" (GG,69). She consciously sets about replacing the constructed social self, however, by identification with the

wilderness landscape, traditionally a female place. But it is a radically alternative model to the archaic woman=nature of phallocentric discourse, centralising the female positively within an harmonious, cyclic environment. She turns to the natural rhythms and seasonal changes of the landscape to which her own bodily rhythms become attuned. She comes to identify herself with the process of growth, decay and rejuvenation, symbolised in her interaction with the garden. The essential Abra emerges as a result of discarding the social means of self authentication, stripping away all known selves to be "reduced to the core of person that does not think or know" (GG,86). She symbolically strips the furniture of its paint, just as she throws away make-up (GG,113), creating a physical world to match the psychic one. Her body's changing shape reflects her androgynous lifestyle rather than the feminine model: "When I look down at my belly and legs I can see that they are tight and muscular" (GG,76). Like the pre-linguistic subject she learns to know her self through sensory experience. She consciously destroys all images of herself as Abra, as a feminine model: "the life I had disintegrated" (GG,13). She banishes mirrors and clocks, representations of the constraints which have fixed her in patriarchal ideology: "Two things I have been without here: mirrors and clocks. At first it was so hard. It was an instinct to want to know how I looked; or perhaps I wanted to be able to catch glimpses of myself, just in passing, to reassure myself that I existed...now I prove my existence by what I do" (GG,22).

By operating upon her environment, by initiating action

femininity as a natural. female subject position. Her active role is unfeminine, while she also subverts the image of the completed, unified individual. This not only threatens implicit beliefs about the individual but calls into question the structure of society itself as being a 'natural' order of seeming unity. Not only Abra but all members of society, Barfoot suggests, act as a reflection of a false model: "No one was what I saw; perhaps they responded to what I saw, but no one really was that" (GG, 177).

Lessing explores this social falseness and disunity from a very different perspective. Like T.S.Eliot in The Wasteland she is concerned with bringing together a total mood or feeling for her time. Anna's world represents a microcosm of what is happening in Western society at large. Lessing points out how patriarchal power systems operate in all binary oppositions, not just gender. The Black and Red Notebooks show this by their focus on the struggles of the black majority in wartime Rhodesia, and issues of equality relating to Communism and the British working class in the fifties. For Lessing gender is not the most important aspect of such struggles. Her preface to the novel states that the novel took on many important issues of which female self-realisation was only one: "Why should the sex war be offered as a serious substitute for class struggle?" (GN,13)[6].

This is a time of social fragmentation, a process central to the novel, and which Margaret Drabble recognises in describing Lessing as "Cassandra in a world under seige" (Showalter, 307). Fragmentation is a specific characteristic

of modern society, replacing an archaic unified communalism which Anna identifies in her art lectures: "Art during the Middle Ages was communal, unindividual; it came out of a group consciousness" (GN,344). This indicates a similar view to that of both Jung's collective unconscious and the transcendence of self through community which Mrs Ramsay's dinner guests achieve in To the Lighthouse. But Anna's lack of access to such a model is related specifically to the times in which she lives. These times, characterised by a patriarchal ideology which fosters division and polarisation make her failure to 'hold together' inevitable: "Human beings are so divided, are becoming more and more divided, and more subdivided in themselves, reflecting the world" (GN,79).

Fragmentation within the self and society are inextricably bound together through repetition and overlap so that "Nothing is personal in the sense that it is uniquely one's own" (GN,13). One cannot look at what Lessing says about Anna, therefore, without relating it to the communal, to what is happening on a global scale. Society for Anna comes to represent the projected self and is projected onto her self. She observes that "The Communist Party structure contains a self-dividing principle" (GN,85) which is also caused, paradoxically, by the focus on a false central unity, just as the self is. It is the reason for its downfall: "In our case, the inner logic of "centralism" made the process of disintegration inevitable" (GN,85). The principle operates in terms of all binary systems which posit a unifying principle, such as race relations, economics, sexual partnerships and Anna's own split self. The disintegration of

her self image reflects and relates to the breakdown of Marxism, racial disharmony, working class suppression and women's equality. Anna merges with her outer world, materially bringing it into the personal domain through the newspaper cuttings that line her walls. She vainly attempts to objectively "name" the global disasters overtaking society in an effort to contain and control events within a linguistic framework. In a similar way Abra has sought to "name" herself, and the discarding of such a need becomes her starting place for a new self which rejects Symbolic representation. She recognises the reductionist fixity of naming: "the naming of things lost its importance here, with no one to hear them named" (GG,1).

There is a particular problem for the female writer, as mentioned in relation to Woolf, who is compelled to use the seemingly unified meaning of words in order to throw such a completion of meaning into doubt. Anna recognises the duplicity of every text: "It seems to me this fact is another expression of the fragmentation of everything, the painful disintegration of something that is linked with what I feel to be true about language, the thinning of language against the density of our experience" (GN, 301). Anna's writer's block is a response to the reductionism of experience that language engenders in its quest for a completed, unified meaning of the text. It serves to mask the impossibility of completion of meaning; "The novel has become a function of the fragmented society, the fragmented consciousness" (GN,79) in its false representation of holistic meaning and closure. Anna becomes sterile as a writer, though she can imagine a new aesthetic

order: "We will return to an art which will express not man's self-divisions and separateness from his fellows but his responsibility for his fellows and brotherhood" (GN,344). Like Woolf, Anna articulates art and life as being inseparable. This is the kind of book Anna wants to write but her social self works against it, she is a product of her times: "I am incapable of writing the only novel which interests me: a book powered with an intellectual or moral passion strong enough to create order, to create a new way of looking at life" (GN,80). This is her articulation of the desire for a transcendental unifier, the inevitable goal of a disintegrating society, according to Laing's theories.

Until Freud exploded the myth of the unified self liberal humanism had met the human desire for a unification ideology both within the cosmos and the individual subject. Writers like Woolf and Lessing accepted however, that the "bundle of drives" which in fact constituted the subject assumed pseudo-unification through symbolic language, but this could no longer be accepted as given. In The Four-Gated City Lessing writes "...the separate parts of herself went on working individually, by themselves, not joining: that was the condition of being "normal" as we understand it"[7]. This is also true of Anna, where personality is constituted by the dynamic interaction of her drives within society, so that the self is never fixed: "What I remember was chosen by Anna, of twenty years ago. I don't know what this Anna of now would choose" (GN,148). This leads to identity crisis, and Showalter suggests both Woolf and Lessing are flawed in that they dismiss, by such a reading of the self, a fundamental

need for a unifier: "both have in different ways rejected the fundamental need for the individual to adopt a unified, integrated self-identity"[8]. She is wrong, however, in suggesting the rejection of a unifier on the part of the writers. In both To the Lighthouse, as previously discussed, and The Golden Notebook, the quest for a transcendental unifier is a central theme. What the writers did reject, as Toril Moi acknowledges, was the phallocentric myth of unification which served patriarchal ideology: "Both Woolf and Lessing radically undermine the notion of the unitary self, the central concept of Western male humanism and one crucial to Showalter's feminism" (Moi,7). Showalter, in fact, is attempting to maintain the status quo which marginalises the female whilst espousing a politics of feminism, though one accepts this paradoxical stance is unintentional. The need for a unifier not expressed in phallocentric terms is met by an androgynous ideal in Woolf and Lessing, though one might still ask why a female aesthetic should continue to seek a unifier. One possible rationale comes from Juliet Mitchell and her discussion of Laing's philosophy; it has significance for Woolf, Lessing and Barfoot's novels. She suggests that wholeness ideology counters the fear of fragmentation in Western society, that recognition of a non-unified self, mirrored in the divisive societies people develop, triggers the articulation of a desire for unity (Mitchell,xviii). In Barfoot and Lessing the need for a unifier further relates to the idea that an originary unification has been ruptured by the establishment of a bounded self which later transpires to be mythical

anyway. The liberal humanist solution is rejected because it cannot sustain itself unproblematically, it is bound to deconstruct its own ideology, as Anna says:

He thinks and says: "The idea of humanism will change like everything else." I say: "Then it will become something else. But humanism stands for the whole person, the whole individual, striving to become as conscious and responsible as possible about everything in the universe. But...as a humanist you say that due to the complexity of scientific achievement the human being must never expect to be whole, he must always be fragmented (GN,353-4).

The radical ways in which Anna and Abra seek a female-oriented unifier show their rejection of patriarchal models but not the rejection of the need itself. In Lessing's writing in particular the search leads her to explore a range of ideologies. As she comments on Marxism: "I think it is possible that Marxism was the first attempt, for our time, outside formal religions, at a world-mind, a world-ethic" (Introduction to GN,15). Her interest in Jung's collective unconscious, the involvement with Communism and later the Sufi religion all point to an on-going quest for a cultural unifier. In the novel, Anna also explores a variety of possible unifiers, even formal religion in her visit to the Russian Orthodox church (GN,427).

For Barfoot the unifier is less problematic. Abra locates it in the natural world and its rhythms: "each season corresponds exactly with some rhythmic need of my own" (GG,15) which one might relate to the semiotic, pre-linguistic state. Her isolation and self-reliance have this as their goal: "I wanted an answer, a completion, not a preparation" (GG,66). Society, even that of her daughter, intercedes to split the completion through integration with

nature. Abra can only be fulfilled when there is no cultural mirror. The rejection of domination by the symbolic enables Abra to achieve the undifferentiated, primary unity with her environment that she seeks: "I cannot say I lost right away the sense of distinguishing myself from what was around me" (GG,13). Though this is an enabling structure in which Abra achieves wholeness: "I've taken what was broken down and put it back together" (GG, 198), can it operate as a feminist model for an androgynous unifier? I think not. Its limits are shown in the threat to Abra's self unity which her daughter's arrival engenders: "I am breaking down in her favour" (GG,32). Abra's unified self is a personal success story which cannot be universalised- indeed it depends on cutting all cultural links, opting out of any symbolic engagement. Whilst she escapes gendered roles, Abra fixes herself outside the possibility of a new communal, female aesthetic. This is far removed from Lessing's positing of a 'world ethic' which has more in common with Woolf's position. Like Woolf, Lessing posits an androgynous aesthetic which must break down and reconstruct images of women within culture, and not outside it. By implication it must be applicable to men also in an articulation of sexual difference before new ways of relating can be established.

For Anna and Abra the androgynous articulation of the self relies on displacing patriarchal models of femininity through deliberately centring the female in a subversive reworking of woman as hysteric and woman as nature. This acts to dislodge the fixity of the feminine, and by implication the masculine, structures which limit the potential self and

cause the subject to fragment. Inevitably, gender models have worked against equality between the sexes but the writers suggest a new model of the articulated female will dismantle the power systems which both men and women employ: "It was necessary to put away fancy human urges to capture or control" (GG,117). Barfoot suggests that by moving out of cultural constructions of the self one also moves out of its power systems: "Eventually that part that interrupted and judged died a natural death" (GG,103). The women literally rewrite themselves through the notebooks each keeps but this has different meaning for the two, underscoring Abra's development outside culture and Anna's within it. For Abra freedom lies in escape from culture- her notebooks record the emerging natural self for herself. No one else has access to her discourse. For Anna the notebooks are a confrontation with culture; they are read and form the basis of an on-going dialogue with cultural values.

Both women, however, are concerned with articulating an essential self which culture has suppressed. Abra sees herself as part of an undifferentiated universe: "It did not occur to me that I was infinity, that beside my life everything else was pale, and that my life was pale beside everything else. It never occurred to me that it was all the same" (GG, 76). Anna also articulates this essential female vision: "That's how women see things. Everything in a sort of continuous creative stream- well, isn't it natural that we should?" (GN,268). Both positions, with their implication of androgyny through loss of self into a pluralistic alterity bear close comparison with Woolf's shared androgynous ideal

in To the Lighthouse.

The three novels discussed thus far share a utopian androgynous goal. But the concept can also be used in a deconstructive manner to challenge binary gender structures which operate within patriarchal ideology regardless of the potential for a female aesthetic. This political strategy, operating to subvert patriarchal values, is the general focus of the following two chapters.

CHAPTER 4

Specular misrecognition and the politics of cross-dressing in Virginia Woolf's Orlando and Angela Carter's The Passion of New Eve.

Both Virginia Woolf's Orlando (1928)[1] and Angela Carter's The Passion of New Eve (1977)[2] have been described as novels about androgyny. Although this is true in the broadest sense there are areas of major difference in the construction and function of androgyny in the two novels, which will be indicated in the course of discussion. In addition, there is confusion among some commentators on the novels as to what actually constitutes androgyny, which they tend to leave undefined; some are in fact describing 'transsexuality', 'transvestitism' or 'hermaphroditism' (rather than androgyny), as they were defined in Chapter 1 of this thesis. These terms, which are not interchangeable with 'androgyny' given my definition (though they may be co-existent with it), I would label pseudo-androgynous to distinguish them from my use of the term. It will become necessary to further define my own meaning in using 'transsexual', 'transvestite' and 'hermaphrodite' in relation to the Object of the Gaze in the course of discussing both novels.

The confusion engendered by the androgynous (or otherwise) content of the novels in some measure endorses what both writers set out to do- namely, to reveal and disrupt the arbitrary nature of gender as it arises in patriarchal discourse. Woolf and Carter recognise the basic inequality in

constructions of masculinity and femininity whereby men hold privileged status. An androgynous subject position transgresses and therefore threatens patriarchal structures that limit identity in terms of gender by implying at least sexual dualism in the subject. In revealing this, both writers also employ strategies which draw particular attention to the ideology's dependence on a specular construction of gender, which serves a reductionist function. I believe Woolf and Carter acknowledge the patriarchal basis of such a viewpoint in creating an overdetermined, yet bounded, image of Woman and therefore use the strategy of a literary 'distorting mirror' to dismantle accepted gender beliefs that operate in this way. Because of this both writers throw into question the nature of 'reality' as it is represented by visual imagery in order to challenge how patriarchy constructs gender. The juxtaposing of conflicting and fluctuating gender positions in the two novels reveals how easily these patriarchal models are vulnerable to deconstruction.

This chapter,therefore, explores the writers' subversive strategies in relation to the use of the mirror as reality, reflection and projection, and examines the place of voyeurism and narcissism in relation to how Woman is constructed in Western culture. I intend suggesting why male sexuality is dependent on visual representation by reference to Freudian theories concerning the Oedipus complex and fear of castration.

Castration is central to Carter's novel, where one male character is actually castrated and two others are dominated

by their fear of it. My argument will be that Zero responds to the castration fear by attempts to fix the feminine in non-threatening stasis. Tristessa responds with transvestitism in an attempt to retain the pre-Oedipal phallic mother.

Woolf's novel, on the other hand, is not concerned with male sexuality and its relation to castration. Both male and female transvestites in Orlando serve a different purpose from Carter's. This is linked more directly to Woolf's exploration of what constitutes a female-based sexuality where the subject is not limited by gender constraints.

Related to this is a discussion of the role of costume and cross-dressing in challenging the specular point-of-view which separates subject and object. The strategies of cross-dressing and disguise serve to question the 'truth' of visual representation and its relation to gendered sexuality based on biological determinism. Both Woolf and Carter suggest that experience, rather than anatomy, is destiny in terms of gender. This gives the opportunity for choice in developing a female sexuality not based on historical models which assume a 'natural', biologically determined sexuality. Woolf and Carter's orientation to touch rather than the specular in relation to female sexuality corresponds closely to Luce Irigaray's ideas of the primacy of the tactile and is discussed with reference to her work.

In both novels the strategy of throwing visual representations of Woman into doubt has the goal of releasing women from images which limit and distort their subject position; in fact most frequently these images relegate them to Object of the Gaze. This is an area of involvement for

French feminist writers also, and I shall refer in particular to the work of Luce Irigaray in respect to both woman as object and the "symbolic suppression of woman's subjectivity, body and desire in the logocentrism of western knowledge"[3]. By unmasking the image as constructed rather than 'natural' Woolf and Carter indicate that women do not 'own' their self-image but, rather, it is imposed upon them within patriarchal discourse. Even the biologically determined 'truth' of the naked female body, I would suggest, is reduced to a symbolic icon of the other which serves to misrepresent women through a projected patriarchal 'reality'. Language writes the body, as Irigaray forcefully articulates, so there is no biological 'truth' which can be separated from the constructed Woman. The visual body is itself mediated through the patriarchal screen of how a symbolic woman should look, therefore : "sexual differences cannot be reduced to biology because woman's body is constituted through phallic symbolization" (Dallery, 54).

The outcomes of deconstructing gender as it is represented in the specular have different implications for the two writers. For Woolf a positive, utopian vision of androgyny for the individual subject is suggested, which provides a fertile basis for change in gender relations and construction of the subject. Carter, on the other hand, gives a bleak, dystopic future in which patriarchy is forcibly dismantled. The sensitising experience of being both male and female leads not to gender transcendence but a pseudo-androgynous no-gender-land. This, in turn, acts as the precursor to escape from the tyranny of the all-powerful phallus and the

fear of castration which dominates male, and by implication female, sexuality.

The use of mirrors in both novels throws reality into question and mocks the Freudian notion of anatomy as destiny. Both Orlando and the new Eve gaze at their naked bodies in a mirror after their transformation from male to female. Logically, it is at this point that the androgynous subject is forced to identify itself biologically in one of three ways: as male, female or hermaphrodite (displaying both male and female genitalia). This seems straightforward; as Pacteau suggests in "The Impossible Referent": "What sets the androgyne and the hermaphrodite apart dwells in one gesture: uncovering the body" (74). For Eve there seems to be no doubt- she has been surgically constructed by the phallic Mother as the 'perfect' woman. Yet this 'fact' is thrown into question by the reader's knowledge that the gaze of the observer in the mirror is still male- Eve perceives her body through his experience of the male subject position. Made in Man's image of Woman, therefore, can the reader accept Eve as a woman? Carter implies otherwise in Eve's own alienated response to being 'made'female: "But when I looked in the mirror, I saw Eve; I did not see myself" (PNE,74). And because Eve still views the world from a dominant, male perspective being made a woman is a punishment, demotion to the inferior sex; it is a subject position that will "relegate me always to the shadowed half being of reflected light" (PNE,72) This is very different from Orlando's response to transformation. At first reading Orlando also would seem to be female: "Orlando had become a woman-there is no denying it" (O,86-7).But Woolf

is ambiguous, as if to encourage denial: "His form combined in one the strength of a man and a woman's grace" (O,86). Already there is the implication that Orlando can enjoy the best of both worlds, a point reinforced as the novel progresses. Is the image that Orlando sees that of an hermaphrodite, then? Has the body taken on the appearance of the psychologically androgynous self? This remains deliberately unresolved in the novel, as it has been from the opening line "He-for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it-" (O,9).

Woolf and Carter's consciously worked confusion of the visual as reality is of key interest here, rather than debate on Orlando or Eve's biological makeup, which remains conjectural in the earlier novel at least. Despite the clarion call of "The Truth!" (O,86) before Orlando looks in the mirror, Woolf refuses to identify the naked androgyne as reduced to either male or female in order to open up rather than limit the subject Orlando, for, as Pacteau says in relation to gender identification: "to be assigned one or the other sex entails a loss"(66). Traditionally, the androgyne as symbol can only function when clothed. This assumes that 'truth' is invested in the visual naked body, as it is in patriarchal ideology. Woolf is disavowing this position through the deliberate ambiguity which continues to mark the subject.

Despite being perceived as female neither Orlando nor Eve recognise themselves as fundamentally a woman. Orlando feels unchanged, for her/his androgynous subject position is able to accommodate a male or female body. Eve experiences a

disoriented non-reality of a man's psyche in a woman's body: "All of New Eve's experience came through two channels of sensation,her own fleshly ones and his mental ones" (PNE,77-8). Both responses underscore the writers' belief in gender being constructed from experience rather than biologically determined: "it takes more than identifying with Raphael's Madonna to make a real woman" (PNE,80). Experience constructs gendered sexuality for Carter, though Woolf seems to go beyond this in distinguishing between the experience which constructs gender and an anterior sexuality which remains unchanged. Orlando has an originary self: "Yet through all these changes she had remained...fundamentally the same" (O,148). For both writers, however, the visual image paradoxically masks rather than reveals the sexual identity of the subject.

In Orlando and The Passion of New Eve the male gaze directed at women as objects of desire has a reductionist function, impelling them to act out feminine roles at the expense of their androgyny. For example, it is only when Orlando is made aware that she is being perceived as a woman that she begins to act like one: the sea captain's manner at the dinner table, the sailor who nearly falls from the rigging on seeing her ankle, cause Orlando to adopt a feminine stance of "the sacred responsibilities of womanhood" (O,98). The implication is that femininity is a role women adopt rather than natural to them. Carter makes the same point when Eve acts as a woman: "but, then, many women born spend their whole lives in just such imitations" (PNE, 101).

The male gaze serves to project a false image of gender

complementarity which, it has already been suggested, masks hierarchical dominance of masculine over feminine. The male desire to project the self onto the other is a point to which Dallery draws attention in saying that male desire "posits a dualism, an opposition of self and other, and then seeks to reduce the other to sameness or complement" (Dallery,56). By doing this, the actual woman becomes irrelevant except as an icon of male desire. What, in fact, the voyeur gets back is himself as other, the repressed feminine. Evelyn, the man from whom Eve is made, projects himself onto Leilah: "I chose Leilah, for she was the nearest thing to myself I had ever met" (PNE,37). Leilah is thereby robbed of her own meaning, and can only 'see' herself through Evelyn's projected image: "she, too, seemed to abandon herself in the mirror, to abandon herself to the mirror, and allowed herself to function only as a fiction of the erotic dream into which the mirror cast me" (PNE,30).

What I am saying here is that through the use of the mirror image Carter questions the veracity of the look in recognising gender. Further, she suggests the gaze must always misrecognise woman, whatever her subject position, as she is constructed according to phallic models; she never sees her self but his reflected self. It is the projection of the repressed feminine in men onto the object of desire which prevents women 'seeing' themselves other than according to patriarchal models. Female sexuality is thereby disallowed as autonomous, becoming merely the product of male projection. As has already been noted in regard to Woolf's To the Lighthouse, this is a viewpoint which Irigaray

endorses.

Carter graphically illustrates the projection of the male desire onto the other in the character of Tristessa, celluloid sex object par excellence, whose image Eve is forced to watch: "this is what you've made of women!" (PNE,71). Once again, the construction is one of overdetermined femininity: "every kitsch excess of the mode of femininity" (PNE,71) which causes both Orlando and Leilah to act according to male expectation. Evelyn, the novel's central character, and Zero, the epitome of patriarchal repression, are obsessed by Tristessa, though for different reasons. For Evelyn she symbolises the ultimate Object of Desire, the "recipe for perennial dissatisfaction" (PNE,6).

Tristessa is the archetypal suffering woman, Our Lady of the Sorrows, reminiscent of Irigaray's reading of Pallas Athene- the veiled wound- in Women Writers Talking[4]. It is an image which can also represent the castrated male.

The three male characters in The Passion of New Eve are linked by a fear of castration, which is one of the central themes of the novel, reinforced by images such as the broken column in the desert and Zero's loss of both an eye and a leg. Evelyn "dreamed continually of women with knives" (PNE,68) and for him the threat is realised in actuality. For Tristessa and Zero the threat and outcome (death) are the same, it is only in their strategies to counter the threat of castration by the female that they differ.

Zero's relationship to Tristessa is based on the fear of impotence and castration; he projects his fear onto the one

who 'lacks' the penis, the one with the 'veiled wound', symbolic Woman: "I donate to you for free the elixium vitae distilled by my immaculate testicles. Alas! it won't print out any new Zeros until the Witch, the Bitch, the Dyke is dead!" (PNE,92). This indicates that anterior to the perception of woman as 'lack', the one fixed by patriarchal ideology, is the pre-Oedipal memory of the all-powerful phallic Mother, the one who has the power to castrate. (Ironically, Zero's fears are justified. Tristessa does have a penis, and Mother does castrate Evelyn). Zero cannot control and 'fix' Tristessa within the bounds of femininity he has successfully imposed upon his harem, where "he demanded absolute subservience from his women" (PNE,95), a group which operates metonymically for the historical place of women under patriarchy. Tristessa must therefore be labelled homosexual, a threat to the phallus as all-powerful, a castrator. Zero sets off each day to search for Tristessa, the projected source of his impotence after her screen image inverted the gaze he bestowed upon her. His intention is to *fix* her, in all senses of the word, as he intends to murder her in order to regain the potency he lacks. For men, Carter is suggesting, Woman is the castrator unless controlled and debased. Zero's two controlling devices, rape and violence, reflect Carter's interest in how women have been suppressed historically when they refuse to conform to patriarchal models, themes which form the basis of The Sadeian Woman.

The fear of castration may well give some insight into the significance of the specular in male sexuality- it is Tristessa's 'look' which robs Zero of potency. Is the male

voyeur seeking visual reassurance that the other has not appropriated the phallus? It would seem so. Fixing gender so that women have no choice but 'lack' would therefore act to keep the phallus safe, from a phallocentric viewpoint. One can see that the androgyne therefore poses the threat of castration by the very refusal of fixity: "The *fixing* of the look is contrary to the androgyne who can only ever be the object of a *searching* look" (Pacteau, 77). Zero searches for the phallus he symbolically lacks through his impotence in his daily quests for Tristessa.

In contrast to the threat posed by the androgyne for Zero, Tristessa confronts the castration fear by acting out an androgynous role as transvestite. Pacteau suggests the belief in the phallic mother can operate as a defence against castration: "In its function it is a protection against castration" (74). Tristessa attempts to overcome the castration fear by refusing to give up the phallic mother, in a denial of the recognition of castration as it is visibly evidenced in the 'lack' of women. He dresses as a woman yet retains the penis in a mimetic representation of the pre-Oedipal (and therefore pre-castration) phallic mother. By denying that the mother lacks a penis Tristessa denies the existence of castration. For Eve Tristessa is, in fact, the woman with a penis, which Eve now lacks. Tristessa becomes the actual manifestation of the phallic mother for Eve, just as Mother is the symbolic representation.

In the transvestite's use of cross-dressing Carter is saying far more,however, than its relation to the castration fear, and castration is not even relevant to Woolf's use of

cross-dressing. Women also cross-dress and there are clear political implications of this radical act, whereby the male gaze is forced to question its own veracity. Orlando in particular explores the deconstructive possibilities of costume as disguise, while Tristessa's wardrobe is described as a "room devoted to disguises" (PNE,131), both novels implying that gender is as easy to change as a suit of clothes. As the narrator says in Orlando, clothes "change our view of the world and the world's view of us"(O,117). Sex and gender are signalled by appearance. Male obsession with appearance therefore renders clothing a powerful weapon for writers wishing to confuse gender in order to subvert it, as both Woolf and Carter do.

Cross-dressing in its crudest form may be expressed as putting on the clothes of the opposite sex. Someone who disguises their actual biological sex in this way is a transvestite. Transsexuals, those who undergo a sexual transformation to move between gender positions either alternately or simultaneously, may or may not be transvestite. According to this definition, Orlando is both transsexual and transvestite (while Eve is transsexual and Tristessa transvestite). As a woman Orlando finds it "convenient" to dress as a man when her desire is to take up a male subject position: "Clothes are but a symbol of something hid deep beneath" (O,117). This act of duplicity, of itself, threatens the patriarchal structure which holds gender fixed in binary opposition.

Eve can be said to be the ultimate representation of cross-dressing. She is forcibly clothed in the body of a woman

by Mother, just as Mother has reconstructed her own self, but along more ambiguous lines. Unable to be discarded, Eve's body nevertheless disguises her subject position as male, indicating that Carter believes the visual body represents the 'reality' of sexuality no more than the clothes we put upon it. It is through experience that Eve will become a woman, not through the masking cover of a female body[5]. Rather than given, sexual identity is a continuous process within culture for both men and women: "'To be a *man* is not a given condition but a continuous effort'" (PNE,63). Once again, Carter points out the misrecognition implicit in the 'truth' of visual representation.

From a patriarchal perspective the female cross-dresser may be viewed as manifesting Freud's 'masculinity complex'(the refusal by the woman to give up her phallic self image), penis envy, or the attempt to acquire the power of the dominant ideology through mimesis (as many of the New Women were accused of doing). It is true that the act of dressing as a man has been for many women a defiant gesture in political terms, a challenge to the power invested in male institutions. But,in fact, historically it has served to further marginalise women by reason of both their sex and deviance from the norm, as the attacks on cross-dressers like Gertrude Stein illustrate. Mimesis is too simplistic an answer to the phenomenon of cross-dressing in women given that it has been causal in further alienation from the power structures operating in Western society. There are other characteristics of cross-dressing, however, which I consider more closely match the intentions of Woolf and Carter. The

links between the visual manifestation of androgyny and narcissism is one aspect of this.

Narcissism is generally viewed with suspicion in terms of the morality of Western ideology. At best it is construed as self-centred indulgence, at worst a psychotic condition requiring therapy. Historically it is associated more with women than men. Pacteau believes one aspect of androgyny is narcissism, a position which she says serves to annihilate the difference of self, rather than draw attention to it: "The androgynous fantasy is a narcissistic 'caress' in which the subject annihilates itself"(82). A rather different view is put forward by Julia Kristeva, drawing on Freudian theory. She suggests that narcissism serves to mask the emptiness of the subject position during the process of establishing the Ego and object. Rather than annihilating the subject it may facilitate it by acting as a barrier between self and other[6]. If, as Showalter has suggested in "Virginia Woolf and the Flight into Androgyny", Woolf uses androgyny to flee her own sexuality, to 'annihilate' herself as a sexed subject, then Pacteau's reading of narcissism would be consistent with this argument. Loss of self in androgyny would be a defensive act. However, narcissism may also be read in a positive way, based on Kristeva's model, and I believe Woolf suggests a positive interpretaion in _Orlando_, where narcissism admits _all_ possible selves _to_ the subject in a pluralist pre-condition of subjectivity. Béla Grunberger, in _New Essays on Narcissism_ suggests just such a reading of narcissism as a source of feelings of:"completeness, omnipotence, an awareness of his (sic) own special worth, the exultant

tendency to expansion, serenity, the feeling of freedom and autonomy, absolute independence, invulnerability, infinity and purity"[7]. It is neither non-gendered nor asexual self-love, but able to enjoy the plenitude of *diffèrance*: "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. For now a thousand hints and mysteries became plain to her that were then dark" (O,100-1). Coincidentally, Grunberger's Narcissus is also a perfect description of Orlando. Unmistakably, Orlando takes great pleasure in dressing as both man and woman according to his/her sexual orientation at any given moment. It is the outward expression of freedom to take up any gender position that accords with a psychological subject position, and points to a sense of completion and fulfilment in the subject: "It was a change in Orlando herself that dictated her choice of a woman's dress and of a woman's sex" (O,117-8). This is very different from the transvestitism manifest by Tristessa, who "had made himself a shrine of his own desires" (PNE,128), free as it is for Orlando from the castration fear. Pleasure and plenitude are the outcome: "she reaped a twofold harvest by this device; the pleasures of life were increased and its experiences multiplied" (O,138). For Woolf androgyny includes this positive narcissism which is linked to the plural subject, and stimulates *jouissance*. It is diametrically opposed to the subsuming narcissism of the male gaze, illustrated in Evelyn, which can recognise woman only as its own reflection. Not surprisingly, then, when Carter articulates this same female plenitude from a male perspective it becomes both negative

and threatening: "She was unnatural, she was irresponsible. Duplicity gleamed in her eyes and her self seemed to come and go in her body, fretful, wilful, she a visitor in her own flesh" (PNE,27).

One of the most common assertions by feminist writers in regard to male sexuality is its dependence upon seeing woman as object of desire. Typically, male desire is linked to voyeurism, as Evelyn's relationship with Leilah confirms. This is borne out by the fact of the proliferation of images of women as sex objects throughout recorded history, a genre which Tristessa's sex object role illustrates in the temporary "baleful vogue for romanticism" (PNE,7).

A tendency towards voyeurism as a dominant aspect of sexuality is nowadays extending to women as well as men, as the increasing market in male strip shows, male centrefolds and body contests will affirm. The 'mirroring' of voyeurism by women seems more of a parody of male sexuality, an affirmation of political equality, than intrinsic to a female sexuality, however. Using Irigaray's ideas I intend giving an alternative 'touchstone' of female sexuality in Orlando and New Eve. This is not limited by the specular, but consists of an autoeroticism which is "plural, based on the primacy of *touch*" (Dallery, 55) and involves the writers' use of costume and disguise.

Inherent in a dependence on the visual is recognition of spatial distance; subject and object must be separate in order to facilitate a viewer and a viewed. Male sexuality is based upon this non-threatening space, the gap wherein the object of desire can be fantasised, and "fragmented into

erogenous zones" (Dallery,55). An alternative model of female sexuality, where this gap is closed, is possible in a reading of cross-dressing in relation to touch in the novels. In cross-dressing a sensuality based upon the intimacy of tactile sensation can be inferred and this amounts to a radical shift from the visual as a sexual stimulant. When Orlando becomes a woman, for example, one of her first actions is to take the poems which have lain on the desk, and henceforth carry them next to her bosom in a sensuous intimacy with the text (O,87). In cross-dressing, unlike voyeurism, the female body may be said to come into direct contact with the desired other which is represented by male clothing. Rather than projection onto the other this suggests a symbolic merging with the other in female sexuality through the dismantling of the gap between subject and object.

Luce Irigaray draws attention to the importance of touch and its links to *jouissance* in relation to female sexuality in her representation of an *écriture féminine* in such works as "This Sex Which is not One"[8]. The removal of the distance between subject and object is a key aspect of the shift: "In constructing the radical otherness of female autoeroticism, *écriture féminine* displaces the male economy of desire, the gap between desire and its object, the nexus of need, absence, and representation, for the feminine economy of pleasure or *jouissance*" (Dallery, 56).

The dismantling of distance, linked to Irigaray's "attempts to recover pre-Oedipal sources of unity"(Serrano,232) accords with the androgyny posited in earlier chapters, that which arises in the imaginary rather

than the symbolic. However, Irigaray rightly distrusts the "nihilistic politics" of an androgyny which ignores the binary structure set up in the symbolic, and seeks a "neuter" subject position (Serrano,241). Like Woolf, she recognises sexual difference and puts forward an androgynous concept (though she distrusts the term 'androgyny') where the subject can move freely and simultaneously, "a meeting place which would recast this opposition" (Serrano,242) of masculine and feminine, acknowledging "sexual difference without hierarchy" (Serrano,236). In Orlando Woolf pre-empts Irigaray's point: "Different though the sexes are, they intermix. In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place" (118) and this is a vacillation within the subject which is joyfully free of hierarchy. Cross-dressing for Woolf is not only an affirmation of androgyny but also centralises touch while confusing the visual. In undermining the male specular construction of sexuality the erotic possibilities of touch also offer a basis for articulating female sexuality. In The Passion of New Eve Zero instinctively recognises this in his suppression of the tactile intimacy of his harem: "If he had...surprised me fingering any of his girls, he would have shot me" (PNE,101).

The transsexual transvestite, like Orlando, combines both the visual and the tactile. She/he disrupts fixity and separation in being both the subject and object of cross-dressing, overtly juxtaposing both the allowed and repressed sexuality of the subject. It is simultaneously the outward gaze of voyeurism and the inverted gaze of narcissism without distance. So Orlando can perceive Sasha as an object of

desire and identify with her as such an object.

But in discussing cross-dressing I am also implying that it serves a different function in the two novels. Carter and Woolf are saying different things about the man who dresses as a woman and the woman who dresses as a man. I believe that basic to this difference is the threat of castration in the later novel. For Tristessa cross-dressing retains the phallic mother, there need be no acknowledgement of loss, and the castration fear is repressed. With no fear of castration motivating the female cross-dresser it must therefore serve a different purpose in terms of sexuality. This theory accords in some measure with what Pacteau suggests regarding female sexuality: "I am proposing for the woman a fantasy which, in its fluidity and lack of focus, resembles infantile sexuality- a fantasy which is not fixed in an image by the trauma of the castration" (82).

In Woolf's novel this distinction between the male and female cross-dresser is not apparent. Both the Archduchess Harriet and Shelmerdine move as freely in and out of transsexuality and transvestitism as Orlando. Woolf implies that the role of cross-dressing in freeing the androgynous individual is the same for male and female. For Carter, the male transvestite refuses to accept the loss of the phallic mother and the castration this implies. The female transvestite, with no threat of castration hanging over her (Eve has already been castrated), is used to subvert the patriarchal ideology that distances the object of desire and confines female sexuality within voyeuristic patriarchal models.

Carter clearly contrasts the specular sexuality of men in her novel with a female sexuality which is tactile. In The Passion of New Eve Zero's women use touch to develop sisterhood and shared sexual gratification with each other when they are left unfulfilled by the dominant phallocentric sexuality which is all he permits: "the noises excited some of the poor girls with such erotic envy their hands would creep helplessly to their slits and sometimes to one another's" (PNE,106). This is given a greater and more positive significance in the later novel, Nights at the Circus, where the imprisoned women initiate their freedom through touching each other.

In conclusion, in challenging the fixity of hierarchical structures, which includes that of gender, Woolf and Carter indicate that no subject position is 'natural'. The subject is constructed in and by a society which privileges the male and marginalises the female as object. This structure can be revealed as a construct rather than a given, and as such, admits change. Change can be effected in terms of gender by refusing to be limited by a scopic fixed gender position. Movement is freedom. Orlando enjoys a *jouissance* which relies neither on the role of wife nor mother to sustain it but rather the will to change. Such an opening out of the subject, Woolf implies, is possible for women if they refuse to be limited by the imposition of feminine constructs or the tyranny of biological determinism. Such a utopia, derived through the fantasy of unreality, underscores her belief that no immutable reality exists anyway. As Irigaray suggests, the 'reality' of the symbolic exists only insofar as it has become

the dominant Law of the imaginary, marginalising all other aspects of the imaginary. This throws open the possibilities of new ways of constructing gender, where other imaginary positions may assume dominance. For Woolf the preferred option lies in the fluid sexuality one could describe as arising in a pre-Oedipal ungendered androgynous state of being. This is not the "non-desiring, asexual being" (Pacteau, 70) which is frequently associated with the androgyne- rather its opposite. It releases female sexuality to the plenitude of *jouissance*, not in a flight from sexuality (as Showalter suggests) but a full realisation of it. Orlando can change selves 'as quickly as she drove- there was a new one at every corner' (O,193) in an outpouring and diffusion of sexuality she labels 'ecstasy'.

For Carter the necessary dismantling of gender in order to subvert the patriarchal power base such a construct fosters, leads to death for Tristessa, chaos and a crisis of identity for Eve: "Chaos... embraces all opposing forms in a state of undifferentiated dissolution" (PNE,14). The outcome is initially gender confusion rather than the diffusion it is for Woolf. If Woolf's androgyny offers the "plenitude of the pre-Oedipal" (Pacteau, 71) then Carter shows the negative outcomes of entry into the symbolic. For men the sexually crippling castration fear causes not only an inability to fully explore their own sexuality but the repression of female sexuality, too. Eve escapes the overdetermined, artificial fecundity of Mother, while the phallocentric sexuality of Zero is impotent. The sexual poles are places of sterility. It is in the coupling of Eve and Tristessa, who

have crossed the gender boundaries through experience of the other, that fertility lies. As the patriarchal strongholds of North America crash under revolution the impregnated androgyne sets out from the fixed land base of patriarchy on the fluid waters of the female.

Carter's landscape is a bleak, dystopic vision of a future world, an inevitable rite of passage in dismantling patriarchy. It suggests that men in particular must give up the very basis upon which their sexuality is erected: the phallus, which holds them in bondage by the fear of castration. The apocalyptic process of sexual rebirth offers hope of a new sexuality for both men and women where gender is no longer linked to fixity and domination.

CHAPTER 5

Rewriting the Amazon-warrior myth in Angela Carter's Heroes and Villains and Nights at the Circus.

Angela Carter is a contemporary writer who has had access to post-structuralist theory in formulating an intertextual style which effectively deconstructs traditional literary practice[1]. She uses this to challenge the phallologocentrism which adheres to discourse. Pauline Palmer, in "From Coded Mannequin to Birdwoman: Angela Carter's Magic Flight"[2] suggests that Carter's novels are chiefly concerned with gender and its construction, the cultural production of femininity, male power under patriarchy, and the myths and institutions which serve to maintain it" (180). Whilst I agree with this view, and intend to explore how Carter sets about it in the following chapter, I would go further. I believe Carter also gives a utopian model for a different approach to gender and human relationships as they are currently constructed in society, and that this is based on androgyny. The model is one which bears comparison with much of Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous' writing, and I shall refer to their work where appropriate. Both writers and Carter view women as placed in an inferior position to men historically, particularly in regard to free expression of sexuality, and this is borne out by the brief historical review of Chapter 1. Their work suggests that men as well as women are limited by the refusal of patriarchy to allow women control and exploration of their own sexuality. Sexuality is therefore

linked to and limited by the phallus, with its implications of specular centrality and closure. Opposed to this is the androgynous notion of *jouissance* with its characteristic opening out of a tactile, pluralist sexuality . While the writers link this to the female, and see women as the initiators of a new sexuality, it does not exclude men. In fact both Carter and Cixous urge an androgynous subject position, free of hierarchy, for both men and women. It can only occur when old models are revealed not as 'natural' but constructed, when models of what women should be are replaced by what they actually are. This is what Carter sets out to do in the two novels under study.

Angela Carter's novels are a rich intertextual tapestry, often in Gothic mode, of reworked myths of women, myths being "those extraordinary lies designed to make people unfree"[3] as she describes them. The demythologising of the pervading image of Eve, and its stereotyping of female as inferior to male, is one of Carter's motifs, as she explored in The Passion of New Eve. She is not confined to reworking images of women in Judeo-Christian mythology, however. The characteristic of challenge to the patriarchal order which Eve (wo)manifests is also apparent in Carter's use of the Athenian myth of Amazons which arose alongside the establishment of rigid heterosexual social structures which centralised formal marriage. Eve/Amazon in her novels represents the disobedient daughter, the one who rejects the Rule of the Father, and as such constitutes a challenge to the power base of patriarchy. Like Cixous, Carter illustrates this challenge through "a pervasive play with, and subversion

of, linguistic signifiers"[4], what she herself describes as putting "new wine in old bottles" (Notes from the Front Line, 69). By reworking familiar images from a feminist perspective Carter throws their accepted signification into doubt, challenging the idea of fixed meaning, and setting in motion the free play of the signifier, a position entirely in keeping with an androgynous rather than fixed gender viewpoint.

Two of Carter's novels offer scope to challenge the accepted Amazon image of woman, the early Heroes and Villains (1969)[5] and the more recent Nights at the Circus (1984)[6]. The striking development of Carter's style, particularly in regard to her use of ironic humour and the finesse with which patriarchal myths are deconstructed is highlighted by comparing the Amazon heroes of the two novels, as I shall do to some extent.

William Blake Tyrrell's Amazons: A Study in Athenian Myth-Making[7] gives a detailed account of the functions of the Amazon myth in the social and political life of ancient Athens where it had its genesis. The society depended upon clear gender distinction in terms of marriage and the parenting role. Marriage was fundamental to the patriarchal society because the son could then identify the father. This ensured the male succession of power and property, according to Tyrrell (31). Men became warriors, women the mothers of sons. The foundation myth of Amazons revealed the conflict inherent in such rigid subject positions, however, and the overcoming of warrior women by the agents of the status quo helped allay those anxieties caused by such rigidity by "supporting the sexual dichotomy institutionalised in

Athenian marriage" (Tyrrell,113). The myth in fact acted as a cautionary tale for daughters who went against tradition and chose not to marry, and as Tyrrell says: "the essential motif remains the daughter in marginality" (93), for unmarried daughters are displaced from the central order of society. The institution of marriage, metaphor of order and culture, acted as a bulwark against what Athenians viewed as essentially the chaotic nature of the female. Women had to marry in order to be 'contained' within the society, a view which has gone virtually unchallenged until this century.

Left to her own devices a woman would act for her "own pleasure and purposes", an obvious indication that female sexuality was perceived as posing a threat to the patriarchy. This threat to men was countered by the civilising process of marriage upon women, according to Tyrrell's reading of Athenian belief: "Marriage is the institution that tames and civilises female bestiality. Once it is broken down, women outside its control revert to their bestial nature. They become the animals they once were" (102). Tyrrell further suggests that the development of the feminine construct, as opposed to basic female nature, in such a society acted as a mediator between conflicting male and female, "a means of restoring order" (Introduction, xvi).

The Amazon is bound to be androgynous, therefore, if one accepts Tyrrell's interpretation of gender roles, as any point of departure from the proscribed, submissive feminine (such as a desire for autonomy and independence on the part of women) was bound to be an invasion of the masculine subject area. In Athenian terms a woman who refused to marry, thereby

retaining independence, was androgynous: representative of chaotic, savage nature allowed to go unchecked. The Amazon myth made the fear of such chaos manifest, the nightmare real, and therefore possible to conquer.

According to Tyrrell and popular belief Amazons, looking like women and behaving with the aggression of men, are characterised by their independence from men both physically and politically, posing a double threat because they also "share in the strengths of both sexes and so are stronger than either" (Tyrrell, 89). They are represented as alien and aggressive, marginalised from ordered society, at which their violence is directed (despite some romanticised images occurring from time to time). Typically they inhabit rugged, inaccessible terrain where nature resists control. It is an image little changed since its origin in Athens, erupting periodically as a challenge to ordered society even today, where even the attractive aspects of the Amazon image operate by the titillation of fear:

> **"Women-only tribe hunted**
>
> Jakarta: Indonesian authorities plan to investigate rumors of a women-only tribe living near an isolated lake in the easternmost province of Irian Jaya, the Atara news agency said yesterday. It is said that the amazons capture men from other tribes to beget babies before killing them. The male babies are killed." (The Advertiser, 8 March 1991)

This is hardly surprising. The need, in phallocentric terms, for a warning to women who step outside the compulsory heterosexuality which dictates they marry and produce sons is still valid. The patriarchal hierarchical system continues to be threatened by androgynous women (those who refuse to be confined within feminine roles) despite the continuing suppression through the major Western religions. And Western society still operates within a phallic economy, where, for many men, a working wife has replaced the dowry system.

Traditionally the Amazon's aggression towards men can be contained in only two ways, according to Tyrrell: through rape and death in battle, revealing a fundamental link between sex and violence in patriarchal society, a link which several of Carter's novels explore. It is also central to her work The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History[8]. While acting to control women through their marginalisation and the efficacy of violent retribution, the myth in fact reveals the problems inherent in a polarised society where one sex dominates the other. The controlling power must always fear the weaker, and expect rebellion, a condition which operates in other structures, like race, where one group is privileged over another.

Ironically,the myth can also be said to act as a blueprint for women who wish to become independent. It inadvertently shows how sisterhood can promote access to power if women are prepared to move outside patriarchal society, a slippage which Carter exploits in her reworking of the myth from a feminist perspective. The uneasy truce between the sexes,

misrepresented as gender complementarity in patriarchal society, is shown to be a fragile accord, liable to erupt in conflict and destabilise society. So, in using Amazons to act as a warning to daughters, Athenian society inadvertently also held out a promise.

Angela Carter makes full use of these characteristics in the two novels discussed. Both Marianne, in Heroes and Villains and Fevvers in Nights at the Circus are heroes (rather than responsive heroines) of their own discourse who live by their own rules. In the opening chapter of The Female Hero in American and British Literature [9] Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope point out that the assumption of the hero as male has limited "Our understanding of the basic spiritual and psychological archetype of human life" (4), thereby narrowly ascribing only masculine characteristics to the hero figure. In advocating that women "refuse to see themselves as the guilty or inadequate Other" (7) Pearson and Pope could also be describing the stance taken by Marianne and Fevvers as heroes on their own journey to selfhood. It is a journey which takes them away from the fixity of a feminine role and challenges patriarchal assumptions about the subject position of women. This is a radical departure from the usual role of women in the plot, who respond to, rather than initiate its action as Marianne and Fevvers do. As Andrea Dworkin states in Our Blood, "Women are never confirmed as heroic or courageous agents because the capacity for courageous action inheres in maleness itself- it is identifiable and affirmable only as a male capacity"[10]. Carter's depiction of her two heroes therefore constitutes a

direct challenge to the way women have been written in the text historically, and questions the feminine as 'natural' to women.

Marianne and Fevvers are parentless and homeless, choosing to live on the margins of society and reject the various roles society ascribes them. This gives them opportunity to change and develop as individuals rather than "atrophy in a protected environment"(Pearson and Pope, 8) under the protection (read domination) of men. Yet the battle for independence takes very different forms for the two women, reflecting Carter's own changing attitudes to what women want and are capable of achieving. While both encounter Pearl White-style adventures on their progression through the novels there is a sense of freedom and *jouissance* in the later novel lacking in the earlier. Marianne has a grimly determined will to survive on her own terms. Fevvers, no less under seige, is confident of her ability to refashion the world, not least through her manipulation of the French clock to alter time (metaphor of history) itself. She has the seduction and power of an avenging angel(an ambivalent position to say the least) rather than Marianne's image as a witch. Her battle is on behalf of the oppressed generally, rather than the effort to maintain personal integrity which almost destroys Marianne. This shows a significant shift in Carter's location of the feminist battleground and what women are now trying to achieve, which I shall develop further in relation to sisterhood.

Marianne's world has been altered by an unspecified apocalypse which has led to society being stratified into the

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Professor class, the Barbarians and mutant Out People. All are subject to bouts of madness and disease caused by the disaster. In this way all groups have been marginalised from the pre-existing norm, a condition which implies social change is possible, and perhaps even probable if one accepts Derrida's belief in the inherent destabilising effect of all binary systems. Marianne rejects the relative safety of the rational, walled city of the Professors, summed up by her childhood response: "'I'm not playing'" (HV,2). Despite her nurse's warning, or perhaps because of it, "'If you're not a good little girl the Barbarians will eat you'", Marianne escapes with the Barbarian, Jewel, to pursue a nomadic lifestyle in the landscape which is returning to chaotic nature, traditionally an environment associated with the female. She thinks that by so doing she has gained control of her own destiny but this is not achieved as easily as chopping off her hair, symbol of femininity, rather as Abra does when she also enters the wilderness in Gaining Ground. Marianne is feared by Jewel and the tribe to which he is attached both as member and escapee from the world of the Professors. Jewel employs the time-honoured methods of bringing her androgynous aspirations under control despite the idyllic pastoral of their first night together, where "Twined in this fortuitous embrace, Jewel and Marianne lay among the curling ferns" (p22) like a pre-Fall Adam and Eve. Once again, Marianne will "not play" her role as Other, she wants to write her own self text; as Brooks Landon notes, "In Carter's garden...Eve declines all initiatives not her own"[11]. Jewel first rapes and then marries her, Carter once more

underscoring the historical link of sex and violence under patriarchy. She must either conform to the feminine model or be branded a witch: "'it's marry or burn'" (HV,63). Marianne recognises that marriage constitutes the greatest threat to her new and brief independence: "'There's no choice in being a wife'" (HV,114), a viewpoint which Carter puts forward in other novels such as The Magic Toyshop, The Passion of New Eve and Nights at the Circus. Marianne loses her romantic notions of sexuality, symbolised by the snake bite which almost kills her, when confronted by reality, the knowledge that "*in fact* men own the sex act" according to Dworkin (12), a view which Carter will challenge in the later novel. Marianne says of Jewel,"'You're nothing but the furious invention of my virgin nights'"(137) but she does not 'own' the invention any more than the act. It is part of a patriarchal construct of masculinity which has been imposed upon her, as well as upon Jewel. Dworkin suggests that women in general have no 'ownership' of any aspect of sexuality: "Men have written the scenario for any sexual fantasy you have ever had or any sexual act you have ever engaged in" (12). Carter, while accepting the fact of this view in the rape of Marianne's sexuality, also indicates a means of challenging it. In fact, the brutal reality of rape frees Marianne from a romantic slippage into the feminine role both societies she inhabits would ascribe her. She learns the Rule of the Father operates just as ruthlessly among the Barbarians as the Professors, despite the seeming freedom of the nomadic women who dress in soldiers' garb as the tribe moves on. Carter suggests the female domain of Nature is just as much constructed by the

patriarchy as its own cultural centre, the fortified city. Women cannot escape into the Other while it continues to be defined according to patriarchal ideology, a point which has already been discussed in relation to Irigaray's belief that the female has not yet been articulated.

Patriarchal law is embodied in the shaman Donally, the Doctor. When Jewel cannot subdue Marianne's independence through control of her sexuality the Doctor resorts to attempts to kill her by poison, which shows Carter's reworking of the rape/death solution to the problem of recalcitrant women. Donally recognises that he and Marianne are at war for control of the tribe, not the masculine embodiment of Jewel, and that Marianne's strength lies in the very difference society rejects: "'Necessity suggests we adopt a standard pattern...we abhor variations...though it may be a short-sighted measure if we are to adapt to survive" (HV,110).

Carter indicates this difference gives Marianne a position of power within the tribe not enjoyed by other women. Although constantly under threat ("strong women are deviant and should be punished"-Pearson and Pope, 10), she nevertheless has autonomy and freedom from the rules which govern the lives of the tribeswomen. Masculine and feminine models are revealed as merely puppets of a far more fundamental battle between patriarchy and a threatening matriarchy. The effective positions of power are held by the Doctor and Marianne, androgynous figures who refuse the limitations of gender.

Further, and significantly, the androgynous space

Marianne creates for herself offers the opportunity for Jewel to redefine his own rigid role within the tribe. Marianne ascribes Jewel an androgynous image; she sees him as "'a phallic and diabolical version of female beauties of former periods'"(137). In other words, he is a reflection of her own projected feminine self, the object of her voyeurism since she first watched him kill her brother, in an ironic inversion of accepted sexual orientation. He is gawdily dressed, adorned to attract the eye of the beholder. As in The Passion of New Eve and Nights at the Circus Carter reverses sex role stereotyping to subvert accepted beliefs about gender definition. The position of women as objects of male voyeurism can be dismantled; can be reversed in fact, as the increasing popularity of male strippers in Western culture would serve to illustrate.

Jewel does not succeed in escaping the role ascribed him, however. His attempt to join the Professors would fix him as "'an icon of otherness'", Marianne tells him (123). Unable to come to terms with the "firing squad" (120) of Marianne's refusal to be the object of his gaze (as Cixous says: "woman, for man, is death"[12]) Jewel plays out his warrior role and is killed in battle, ultimate symbol of the masculinity which traditionally has trapped men in "codes of aggression and competition" (Palmer, 188). Carter suggests the New Man is not yet able to respond to the New Woman and establish a radical redefinition of sexual relationships.

Although Marianne achieves a personal, androgynous freedom it does not translate to the rest of the group. The 'divide and rule' strategy of patriarchy which has

traditionally separated women leads Marianne to reject both her nurse and Mrs Green as allies, and they her. The nurse murders Marianne's father (thereby releasing her from the Rule of the Father) and Mrs Green is prepared to stand by while Jewel's brothers rape Marianne: "she would be distressed but also, perhaps, absurdly satisfied at what would certainly take place" (HV,49). In a related way Mrs Ramsay, in To the Lighthouse, displays ambivalence towards her sex when she urges young women to marry despite her own knowledge of the loss of freedom this entails. Carter, like Woolf, recognises the patriarchal support role women have taken in subduing their own sex and failing to challenge gender constraints. Marianne is therefore hated and feared by both men and women who ascribe to her the archaic attributes of the witch, for she is "the element of unpredictability its rituals and roles cannot assimilate" (Landon, 68). Similarly, Carter implies through Donally that patriarchal structures can only be maintained or destroyed, they lack the flexibility to change. In terms of power this fear of difference works in Marianne's favour- the unknown is revered, and she will displace Donally and Jewel as the leader of the tribe. God is banished from the Garden when she exiles Donally but her Adam cannot take the next step with her. The only promise for future change lies in her unborn child and the possibilities of Donally's lunatic son, whom she has seduced.

Carter's ending implies that strong, independent women can achieve autonomy but each has to fight the battle anew, there is no concerted movement which relates to women as a whole.

There are a number of parallels between Marianne's and Fevvers'journeys towards selfhood and its inevitable androgyny. The later novel is more complex and convoluted, however; it is an "interrogative text", to use Catherine Belsey's terminology[13]. The personal struggle is neither as simplistic nor specific for Fevvers as for Marianne, suggesting Carter's own feminist stance has become more complex over time. Marianne never questions her own value system, whereas it is an intriguing paradox of the later novel that in deconstructing patriarchal value systems Carter leads the reader to suspect Fevvers has deconstructed, or at least thrown into question, her own. The subversive laugh that opens and closes the novel is directed as much against herself as the structures she mocks, and echoes the closing paragraph of Cixous' "Castration or Decapitation?" where woman breaks out in laughter at patriarchal structures and her place within them. The image also invites reference to Hélène Cixous' "Laugh of the Medusa"[14] in relation to the novel. Carter, like Cixous in rewriting Medusa, constructs a subject "to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the "truth" with laughter" (Laugh of the Medusa, 888). Laughter, then, is a weapon of subversion for women, a non-violent act of revolution which refuses to take patriarchal institutions seriously.

Unlike Marianne, who cuts off her hair in an unconscious attempt to free herself from the physical sign of femininity (thereby creating an androgynous appearance), Fevvers is constructed on generously androgynous lines by nature. She

stands over six feet tall, has a loud, deep voice and pops the cork of a champagne bottle "between her teeth" (NC,8). Despite the corsetting within an Iron Maiden that adds idealised curves to her shape, Walser, the American journalist, wonders "Is she really a man?" (NC,35). The unnatural physical appearance of Fevvers, quite apart from the fact that she has wings, is linked to the notion that she has been manufactured, "hatched" (NC,7) for a specific purpose. Like Eve, she has no navel, and therefore no mother. She is the manifestation of the shaman's dream:

an anthropomorphic figure designed to travel easily between the two zones; this figure was human...with nothing about it to hint at whether it was supposed to be male or female, and of impressive size. In order to facilitate its journeyings, the shaman painted wings on the figure, big wings, outspread wings... (NC,266).

Fevvers' powerful body is reflected in her spirit of *jouissance* and unlimited potential: "I only knew my body was the abode of limitless freedom" (NC, 41). Carter expresses a similar view in relation to herself in "Notes from the Front Line" where she describes herself with more than a passing resemblance to Fevvers:

The sense of limitless freedom that I, as a woman, sometimes feel *is* that of a new kind of being. Because I simply could not have existed, as I am, in any other preceding time or place, I am the pure product of an advanced, industrialised, post-imperialist country in decline (73).

For Carter this freedom has come about through technological as well as cultural changes which have opened up women's opportunities. The major change lies in the opportunity to be sexually active through efficient contraception, however. Motherhood is not an inevitable

consequence of female sexuality. Significantly, Marianne is impregnated but Fevvers is not. If she has a child, it will be through her own free choice.

Fevvers takes the new freedom as a birthright : "if I have wings, then I must fly!" (NC, 27). Cixous also strongly identifies flight with female freedom in "The Laugh of the Medusa", both as metaphor of escape and subversion, using the French double play on the verb *voler*: "Flying is woman's gesture-flying in language and making it fly. We have all learned the art of flying and its numerous techniques; for centuries we've been able to possess anything only by flying" (887). Similarly, Carter employs the double meaning in relation to Fevvers. It represents her escape from fixed gender roles, as in the flight from Madame Schreck but also her transcendence to the symbolic New Woman.

Fevvers is the antithesis of the demure Angel in the House that the Victorian age equated with a model of femininity. Rather, she comes in the category of Fallen Angel, identified with whores, and object of desire in a sexually repressed society, but here a symbol of freedom from patriarchal models. This is only one aspect of woman as object in patriarchal structures that Carter illustrates and redefines in the novel. Both Ma Nelson's brothel and Madame Schreck's House of Horrors give Carter the opportunity to examine women as objects of desire in men's eyes. For those, like Fevvers, who have a freakish appearance, voyeurism is often the means to sexual gratification for the men who pay to see them displayed. They are a sign, "the object of the eye of the beholder" (NC,23), and it is the need to fix the sign's

meaning which most frequently characterises the desire of the customers. The women take part in set tableaux where reality has no threatening place: "intended for show and not for use, like beauty in some women, sir" (NC,34). The Sleeping Beauty (an image Cixous also uses in "La Jeune Née") is the ultimate desire of the voyeur, "the robotic state to which human beings are reduced by a process of psychic repression" (Palmer, 180). Her real life symbolically ends when she reaches sexual maturity: "the very day her menses started, she never wakened..." (NC, 63). The horror of her position is that she dreams another life, perhaps that of the New Age, while she is fixed for men's gaze as an icon of reflection. Carter implies that in trying to reflect what men desire to see women internalise who they really are, setting up conflict between the image and the real. Sleeping Beauty's inner reality, her dream, becomes increasingly strong, suggesting that women have a growing desire to remove the mask and be 'themselves'. Cixous also refers to the struggle for the inner, stultified female self to break through: "The little girls and their "ill-mannered" bodies immured.... But are they ever seething underneath!" (Laugh of the Medusa,877).

When Mignon dares to step out of her ascribed role and become actively involved in her own sexuality she becomes the object of male aggression. She is denied the right of a subject position by the Ape-Man who beat her "as though she were a carpet" (NC,115) and Samson, who recognises her only as "the cause of discord between men" (NC,150).

Women are also the object of fear in the novel, and this is directly related to the oppression which keeps them in stasis

in the brothels. Paradoxically, Fevvers, like Marianne, inspires profound desire because she also inspires great fear, the fascination of the Other, a characteristic both Carter and Cixous link to men's sexuality. When Fevvers smiles Walser notes "her white teeth are big and carnivorous as those of Red Riding Hood's grandmother" (NC,18). Her mouth symbolises the deeper fear of being swallowed by female sexuality which Mr Rosencreutz articulates: "the female part, or absence, or atrocious hole, or dreadful chasm, the Abyss, Down Below, the vortex that sucks everything dreadfully down, down, down where Terror rules..." (NC,77). This terror is the stimulus of sexual desire: "they need femininity to be associated with death; it's the jitters that gives them a hard on!" (Laugh of the Medusa,885). Mr Rosencreutz must wear his phallic pendant to ward off the evil eye of that gaping void that he believes would prevent the transcendence of his own humanity. Carter suggests that for men female sexuality both attracts and repels, it is linked to what is base in human nature, identifies them as animals rather than the god-like beings men would wish to be. To rob women of the hold this gives them over men, power is invested in the phallus, the signifier of women's lack in a patriarchal society, and the promise of transcendence for men.

Fevvers takes on the patriarchy and its minions with evangelical zeal; she is the "virgin with a weapon" (NC,38), the threat posed by ambivalent sexuality. She literally swoops on the villainous Madame Schreck who profits by keeping women in static roles. Through Fevvers, Carter can

also subvert those institutions to which women have traditionally been given access for 'good' behaviour. Fevvers mocks virginity as an object of men's desire (it is a "scrap of cartilege" NC,80) whilst making good use of it to secure her own financial power base. She manipulates the mystic power of virginity (unlike Marianne, who is speedily robbed of that power by Jewel) to gain pecuniary ends, and is quite prepared to give it up at the right price. Virginity is a weapon only inasmuch as it has value in men's eyes, not women's: "We don't fawn around the supreme hole" (Laugh of the Medusa,884). That Fevvers finally implies the virginity she has literally traded on is a myth is one example of the ironic humour which informs the novel, creating and revealing illusion, giving so much of its plot the impression of a *trompe d'oeil*.

Fevvers' response to romantic love and marriage is no less practical than her response to virginity. Like Marianne she recognises the threat implicit in heterosexual commitment but can skilfully avoid it: "a kiss would seal me up in my *appearance* for ever" (NC,39), an ironic reversal of the Sleeping Beauty myth which promises awakening through the masculine kiss. Sexual involvement means "girls needs must jump to attention and behave like women" (NC,40). In denying independence marriage is "prostitution to one man instead of many" (NC, 21) according to Lizzie, Fevvers' confidante and surrogate mother. Fevvers does not contemplate marriage to Walser: "My being, my me-ness, is unique and indivisible" (NC, 280) despite Lizzie's mocking reminder that "True lovers' reunions always end in marriage".

Similarly, Fevvers rejects motherhood, the fearful loss of "me-ness" which Marianne is forced to contemplate. Lizzie warns her of "the tableau of a woman in bondage to her reproductive system, a woman tied hand and foot to that Nature which your physiology denies" (NC, 283). Fevvers is the living proof that women do not have to identify with the stereotypes that link them with Nature, there is choice. Carter shows that the institutions to which women have traditionally been linked- the cults of the virgin, wife, homemaker and mother- rather than identifying woman have served to mask who she really is. They are not natural to women at all but constructed to limit access to male domains of freedom and power. In accepting the roles ascribed them women have subdued their actual, androgynous natures, robbed themselves of choice.

It is the right to choose on which Fevvers' independence is based. She fights her own battles as a woman, and on behalf of women. She needs no protector, as she tells the leader of the outlaws: "'I do think, myself,' I added, 'that a girl should shoot her own rapists'" (NC, 231). The battle takes her into patriarchal strongholds where, like the "Angel of Death" (NC,70) she sets about destroying the power base. She signals the death of patriarchal ideology in its role of subjugating women by using its own weapons against it.

One line of attack lies in rewriting recorded history: "What we have to contend with here, my boy, is the long shadow of the *past historic*" (p 240). As in the shaman's tribe so with patriarchy, reality is a shared dream of those with the power to write it, a "closed system" which Fevvers throws into

doubt, not least by her and Lizzie's power to manipulate time. The implication is that the past can be rewritten, by placing women in the text as subject rather than object, as Cixous also suggests: "Woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into history-by her own movement" (The Laugh of the Medusa, 875).

Fevvers also undermines the power of place. The cultural stronghold of patriarchy, symbolised by turn-of-the-century industrial London, is identified with the female warrior: "the city which, for want of any other, I needs must call my natural mother". It is represented as the androgynous Amazon model, successfully placed inside the fortified patriarchal citadel: 'London, with the one breast, the Amazon queen'" (NC,36). Her identification is nevertheless tinged with irony as she witnesses the lot of its poor women: "'Oh, my lovely London!'...'The shining city! The new Jerusalem!'" (NC,89). She refuses to identify with Nature and fears the open country. St Petersburg, "this Sleeping Beauty of a city" (NC,97), is the gateway to the chaotic landscape of Siberia, metaphorical place of the outcast and women. This is the place where Fevvers will be forced to confront herself as woman. The "vague, imaginary face of desire" (NC,204) which marks her entry into female sexuality also precipitates the explosion of the phallic train, release from the implied closure of the masculine sexual model. Recognition of a female sexuality functions to "blow up the law" of the patriarchy. Loss of the phallus as transcendental signifier sees the end of the Colonel's closed patriarchal world but the beginning of a new society of the marginalised.

The most significant development from the androgynous self which Marianne constructs is Fevvers' achievement of an androgynous subject position from the power base of a sisterhood; an indication that Carter herself has come to place the role of a women's movement more centrally to the individual woman's struggle for autonomy. Fevvers has transcended the female distrust which has operated to preserve the patriarchy, which has historically led women "to hate women, to be their own enemies, to mobilize their immense strength against themselves" (The Laugh of the Medusa,878). Fevvers is born into a female society of Edwardian prostitutes which shapes her life in terms of her ability to identify with a women's tradition rather than a male one. Hers is therefore not an isolated battle for independence, like Marianne's, but part of a concerted movement to dismantle patriarchal structures by subversion and revolution on the part of women. This is the implicit promise of the Athenian Amazon myth which Carter takes up in the later novel, whereby sisterhood engenders power. Once women stand outside the patriarchy and identify with each other, a female discourse becomes possible.

Lizzie is Fevvers' mentor; sharing a history they respond to each other with the "Pause of a single heartbeat" (NC, 33). They work from within to undermine the system, both on class and gender fronts. There are frequent hints between the two of a secret network plotting to overthrow ordered society, particularly in regard to the "friends" in Russia. They are engaged in organised revolution, using Walser, symbol of Western ideology, as their dupe. It is he who carries the

documents of dissent to the "friends"- he who will inscribe women's history, for: "It is time for women to start scoring their feats in written and oral language" (The Laugh of the Medusa, 880).

The idyll of sisterhood strengthens as the plot moves further from the cultural centre of the city. The women prisoners of Siberia, fixed in time and space like Madame Schreck's tableaux, learn that power comes from reaching out to each other. They are a manifestation of Cixous' unchained women: "They have wandered around in circles, confined to the narrow room in which they've been given a deadly brainwashing. You can incacerate them, slow them down, get away with the old apartheid routine, but for a time only" (The Laugh of the Medusa,877). They do not need men to find sexual and spiritual gratification: " 'But, wherever we go, we'll need no more fathers" (NC, 221). Mignon is the voice of the New Women, evoking Cixous' image: "first music from the first voice of love which is alive in every woman" (The Laugh of the Medusa, 881). She tames the tigers of repression in a promise for the new century: "All of revivication, all of renewal was promised by that voice" (NC,268). Through the union of Mignon and the Princess, which frees them from gender constraint, a freedom and possibility of a new way for human beings to relate to each other is implied: "music that sealed the pact of tranquillity between humankind and their wild brethren, their wild sistren, yet left them free" (NC, 275). The "female Utopia in the taiga" (NC,240) mockingly parodies the Amazon myth, however, as the women collect frozen sperm from the escaped convict in the train's ice bucket, prompting Lizzie's

"'What'll they do with the boy babies? Feed 'em to the polar bears?'" (NC,240). It is a warning that all-female societies may be no more utopian in practice than the systems they replace. There is no doubt, however, that for Carter, like Cixous, women are now identifying with each other with increasing conviction and assurance. They suggest a reaching back beyond the Symbolic to a pre-linguistic, women's 'voice' located in the Semiotic as a starting place for a new society. Yet Carter refuses to give way to evangelical zeal. Through the character of Lizzie both Fevvers and the implied reader/writer are forced to question the new value systems by her use of mocking humour. She suggests that the women's movement risks locking itself into fixed structures and ways of thinking if it cannot question and adapt, if it believes there is only one path to autonomy.

With the strengthening of sisterhood comes the demise of the Rule of the Father in the disintegration of Buffo and the *danse macabre* of the brotherhood of clowns, symbols of the inherent violence in male dominated culture. Buffo represents the phallic centre, the power base of patriarchy that cannot maintain stasis;

"Things fall apart at the very shiver of his tread on the ground. He is himself the centre that does not hold" (NC,117). Patriarchy is blown away by the chaos of the elements: "they danced the deadly dance of the *past* perfect which fixes everything so fast it can't move again; they danced the dance of Old Adam who destroys the world because we believe he lives forever" (NC,243).

Fevvers and Lizzie plan the Golden Age of the oppressed

coming with the arrival of the twentieth century, with Fevvers as its herald and promise of the freedom all women will enjoy. It is her destiny. Ma Nelson describes her as: "the pure child of the new century that just now is waiting in the wings, the New Age in which no women will be bound down to the ground" (25), and Walser sees her as a self-styled "democratically elected divinity of the imminent century of the Common Man" (12). Her heroic quest is "a world in which the inner desire and the outward circumstance coincide"[15]. Northrop Frye sees this as the central myth of art, "the vision of the end of social effort, the innocent world of fulfilled desires, the free human society" (108-9). As a sign for the archetypical hero-god Fevvers more than fulfils the terms of reference: "such characters , who are conceived in human likeness and yet have more power over nature, gradually build up a vision of an omnipotent personal community beyond an indifferent nature" (Frye, 109). She has "a commitment to a truth beyond that recognised by social convention" (Pearson and Pope,9), like all heroes.

Is this self-delusion and aggrandisement on Fevvers' part? Does she fall victim to the hero's vice of hubris which she recognises as a necessary part of her life? Certainly her dependence on such devices as the peroxide bottle for her blond halo suggests the angel has feet of clay. In the mocking humour which typifies Fevvers' and Lizzie's response to her image Carter implies she is always on the brink of being the dupe of her own self construction. This is increasingly revealed as she moves further into the margins of the alien and outcast and away from the wealth and power she has enjoyed

through manipulating the status quo of patriarchy. As her physical appearance begins to reflect who she really is as a woman her female voice becomes stronger, however, and she takes over the narrative directly rather than through the mediation of Walser or the implied author. Yet from this position of strength through self knowledge Fevvers consciously chooses to retain the aspects of her previous self she continues to value. She is no more bound by matriarchy than its opposite pole of patriarchy, a stance which Carter also took in the earlier novel. The physical self Fevvers works to reconstruct is also the one that men desire, albeit she chooses the role rather than having it imposed upon her. Lizzie recognises that Fevvers, unlike the women prisoners, has no wish to discard the masculine sexual partner. Carter might be speaking through Cixous when the latter says: "isn't it evident that the penis gets around in my texts, that I give it a place and appeal? Of course I do. I want all. I want all of me with all of him. Why should I deprive myself of a part of us? I want all of us" (The Laugh of the Medusa,891). Walser is as necessary to Fevvers in reflecting her self image as women have historically been to men, in an ironic inversion of the norm. But her role is to be the "symbolic woman" (NC, 161) rather than a powerless anomaly. She is "intoxicated with vision" (NC, 286) of what the New Woman can achieve through her own self construction as the "female paradigm", (what Cixous calls "a universal woman subject",The Laugh of the Medusa, 875) though Lizzie cautions "'It's going to be more complicated than that" (NC,286).

Fevvers' androgynous spirit renders it inevitable that

she will drag the New Man, symbolised by Walser, into the twentieth century with her: "I'll make him into the New Man, in fact, fitting mate for the New Woman, and onward we'll march hand in hand into the New Century-'" (NC, 281). It is a vision of the New Woman shared with Cixous: "she will bring about a mutation in human relations" (The Laugh of the Medusa, 882). There is a role for Walser in the new order; he will rewrite history, acting as conduit for the voices previously silent: "Think of him as the amaneusis of all those whose tales we've yet to tell him, the histories of those women who would otherwise go down nameless and forgotten, erased from history as if they had never been" (NC,285). Losing his own history and subject position in the train crash: "He is a sentient being, still, but no longer a rational one" (NC, 236), Walser is freed to explore his own androgyny. Like Evelyn in The Passion of New Eve his knowledge of who he is has been reconstructed by the experience of being the object of the gaze. Like Jewel, he takes on the appearance of the adorned; he wears skirts and gawdy trappings: "he was become a wild, wild woman" (NC, 250). Both the shaman and Fevvers give his sexuality the dimension of taking the feminine role. This frees him from a fixed subject position; he is relieved of his phallus (and hence castration fear) to use Cixous' terminology, and returned to "an erogenous field and a libido that isn't stupidly organised around that monument, but appears shifting, diffused, taking on all the others of oneself" (Castration or Decapitation?,51). Having been released from the inhibiting phallus Carter shows Walser also can enter the new century as androgyne, with "a *congruence* of

feeling and erotic interest" (Dworkin, 13). By the deconstruction of his masculinity he becomes capable of *jouissance*. His previous roles- war correspondent, clown, hero, cock and mystic- erupt into his consciousness at random, ensuring the impossibility of fixity. Fevvers will guide his access to the "vatic bisexuality which doesn't annul differences but stirs them up, pursues them, increases their number" (Cixous, 884).

There is a strong message in the novel that both men and women are sexually restricted by the power invested in the phallus and Carter offers an androgynous alternative for both once this power base is dismantled. Sexual freedom is the key to choice in constructing the self for both sexes, as Irigaray also suggests. The articulation of female sexuality means that men will benefit from the impact of a radically different sexuality rather than their own reflected sexuality based on phallocentrism and the fear of castration.

Carter uses the Amazon myth as an emblem of what women, and potentially men, can achieve in terms of self construction when rigid gender definition is dismantled and replaced by an androgynous subject position where roles are open to change. It leads to "A 'new kind of being', unburdened with a past" (Notes from the Front Line, 74). What begins as a personal struggle for independence from patriarchal gender limits in the earlier novel is generalised to a movement in the later. Nights at the Circus is a more positive, mature argument for androgyny, based on a sisterhood of ideals and sustained feminist perspective where, like Carter, Cixous believes "History's task would be to make woman, to produce her"

(Castration or Decapitation?,50). This does not imply the fixity of a radical feminism, however. When Marianne's father warns her that "'chaos is the opposite pole of boredom'" (HV, 11) Carter is implying that the freedom to continually rewrite the self depends upon fluidity of subject position, not going from one fixed pole to the other. One is "alive because of transformation" (The Laugh of the Medusa, 889) including that of gender, though for Fevvers, as for humanity, mental vertigo is one of its inevitable effects:"'Am I a fact? Or am I a fiction? Am I what I know I am? Or am I what he thinks I am?" (NC, 290). To be engaged in the deferred meaning of the subject of desire rather than its fixed object liberates female sexuality: "I am for you what you want me to be at the moment you look at me in a way you've never seen me before: at every instant" (The Laugh of the Medusa, 893).

By implication the model of androgyny which both Carter and Cixous posit, with its lack of fixity (and therefore hierarchy), can be used to deconstruct other power institutions, such as that of class oppression which is seen to operate alongside sexual exploitation in the brothels. By rewriting the Amazon myth from a female androgynous perspective Carter gives women a model to replace the feminine and a starting place from which to construct themselves as subjects within the framework of what it is to be a woman: "You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. Sheś beautiful and she's laughing" (The Laugh of the Medusa,885). This, in turn, offers the opportunity to re-construct what it means to be a

man. The solitary battle of Marianne in Heroes and Villains has become a crusade for Fevvers and her "friends" in Nights at the Circus. As Palmer suggests: "the kingdom can be transformed only when others join the hero in her quest" (15). Carter's quest is a rewriting of gender to give a new, androgynous beginning to human relationships with its starting place in liberated sexuality.

CHAPTER 6

The Lady Writing: identity, discourse and the androgynous dialectic of The Waves.

In writing The Waves[1] Virginia Woolf set out to develop a new style which in many ways challenged the mainstream formal structure of the novel. Her refusal to adhere to the narrative, realist form is apparent in innovative use of rhythm, repetition, disjunction of time and space. The radical, disruptive writing style cannot be divorced from a political motivation; art and life were inseparable for the writer. Her style constitutes a political challenge to patriarchal discourse and the manner of its articulation. Woolf recognised the power invested in language and its function as a repressive mechanism in terms of women.

In examining how Woolf's style forces a female voice into patriarchal discourse, parallels with Julia Kristeva's model of the interaction between the semiotic and symbolic can be drawn. Indeed, this has been recognised by various writers, and explored in some detail by Makiko Minow-Pinkney in Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject[2]. Woolf's chief focus in the novel is upon how individuals construct their identity within a cultural framework. Here, too, Kristeva's model is useful. It is not coincidental that the point which marks the emergent subject of Lacan's mirror-stage also marks entry into symbolic language. Identity is constituted through language, the subject taking on unitary signification and differentiation through the articulation

of the separate self, the "I" position.

I therefore intend discussing the construction of identity in The Waves with reference to Kristeva's model. Further, I suggest Woolf recognised that if patriarchal discourse could be disrupted in order that a female voice could insert itself, the same could be true of identity. By changing language structures, the way identity was constructed according to patriarchal ideology might also be changed. This I believe to be Woolf's ultimate goal- to break through the monologistic structure and set up a dialectic whereby an androgynous aesthetic is possible. Until both sexes are articulated in difference, she suggests, artists can never transcend their own identity and create the aesthetic ideal.

The idea of The Waves (initially entitled The Moths) had occurred to Woolf before she finished the final draft of To the Lighthouse in 1926. Despite the intervention of other works (The Waves was not completed until 1931) there is a clear progression of thought from the earlier novel to the later. In relation to this thesis the links of most significance include the inhibiting function of gender, the construction of identity and the continuing exploration of an androgynous ideal.

In A Writer's Diary Woolf stated her intention in writing the novel was to explore both the essence of life- "one sees a fin passing far out" (WD,104) and a single, lived life- "a mind thinking" (WD,141). Her dual purpose creates a tension in the text which she amplifies by its dyadic structure. This consists of six first person monologues, which Woolf calls a

"series of dramatic soliloquies" (WD,157) separated by narrative description of the passage of a single day on a deserted beach. These "interludes", as Woolf describes them, are intended to "bridge and also to give a background- the sea; insensitive nature" (WD,151) against which individual lives develop. The innovative style- "a completely new attempt I think" (WD,133) enabled Woolf to move away from the reductionist, realist form of the novel which she described as "this appalling narrative business of the realist...it is false, unreal, merely conventional" (WD,138). Instead she represents transitory, individual lives simultaneously with the timelessness of life itself, symbolised by the rhythmic, unceasing movement of the waves: "Could one not get the waves to be heard all through?" (WD,143). The passing day is analogous to the human life span, so that the sun's position indicates a stage of life for the six characters. In this, a development from the "Time Passes" interlude of To the Lighthouse, Woolf conveys the inexorable linear movement towards death in human terms against impersonal, cyclic natural time.

She confronted the dilemma of trying to maintain the "abstract mystical eyeless book" (WD,138) through the detachment which she considered necessary in her attempt to reach beyond the personal. This posed a problem of self-identification for the author which would be even greater if the narrator was female, as Woolf had originally planned: "But who is she? I am very anxious that she should have no name" (WD,142). She sought to distance the author from the mind thinking: "Who thinks it? And am I outside the thinker?"

(WD,145). In the final version of the novel Woolf achieves detachment by placing herself as author outside the male narrator, Bernard.

The change from female to male narrator has led to some feminist criticism. The detachment that Woolf sought has led Showalter to claim that she tried to "get away from personal identity"[3] in an implied retreat. Yet this was a stated aim in terms of Woolf's artistic integrity; she believed a writer limited aesthetic potential by writing themselves into the text as man or woman, as she says in A Room of One's Own: "It is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex.It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple"[4].

In telling the story of one life, Woolf in fact must tell the story of six; they are friends who grow and affect each other within shared cultural experiences that also serve to separate them. They are linked by their articulated desire to establish self-identity, the driving force behind the "effort" Woolf associates with the human condition: "the theme effort, effort, dominates" (WD,159-60), for "To let oneself be carried on passively is unthinkable" (TW,162). She indicates their developing individuality through their comments on shared experience in a process of juxtaposition which both separates and interweaves them in a collective history. In a way their meaning as individuals is derived similarly to that of words within the structure of language, using the Saussurian model. They are articulated through difference from each other, just as words derive meaning through a process of difference. Without each other as referents they have no identity, or meaning.

Woolf was surprised by reviews which acknowledged the individuality of the six: "Odd that they (*The Times*) should praise my characters when I meant to have none" (WD,171) for the friends also act as symbols representative of aspects of human nature, like the Ramsay children in the earlier novel. The six perspectives on a shared experience, the first person voices, give a sense of intimacy with each of the characters individually despite their interrelatedness.

The three men and women culminate in a single speaking voice, where Bernard articulates their indivisibility: "For this is not one life; nor do I always know if I am man or woman, Bernard or Neville, Louis, Susan, Jinny or Rhoda- so strange is the contact of one with another" (TW,190). Yet the individuals do not become more like each other as experience shapes them; rather they "harden" into types that increase personal isolation through their efforts to become separate entities, as Louis suggests: "We have tried to accentuate differences. from the desire to be separate we have laid stress upon our faults, and what is particular to us" (TW,92). Woolf's image of "islands of light- islands in the stream that I am trying to convey; life itself going on" (WD,141) reinforces the singleness of each. But the reality of the life the characters share has always multiple meanings which work against seeing them as unified entities even whilst it establishes identity, almost in spite of Woolf's intention to strip them to "caricature" (WD, 154). This paradox is indicative of Woolf's belief that all that comprises the individual's experience of life is inextricably linked to other lives, and becomes the enabling structure to transcend

it. Her novel explores the reality of the moments of intensity for the six, wherein they can cross the barriers of the self: "that is my achievement... a saturated, unchopped completeness; changes of scene, of mind, of person, done without spilling a drop" (WD,161).

The balancing voices of three men and three women are crucial to Woolf's exploration of how identity is constructed within gendered culture. Each voice has access to the subject position so that the reader might assume each has equal access to a discourse of identity. This is very different from the characters in To the Lighthouse, where identity is established through a shifting viewpoint that refuses the centrality of the subject. Identity in process, rather than its gendered characteristics, is the focus in The Waves. And the process reveals unequal access to discourse: the very device of monologues forces the recognition of difference in access to language and construction of identity within it. Men and women construct identity differently from each other through a language which articulates patriarchal ideology and represses an alternative female model.

Several critics, notably Makiko Minow-Pinkney, have seen the potential in applying Julia Kristeva's theories on the relationship of the semiotic and the symbolic to Woolf's writing practice[5]. Such a reading gives a linguistic framework in which to place Woolf's construction of identity and androgynous ideal, and permits a different point of view of an androgynous model which has been linked in an over-determined and distorting manner to Woolf's exploration of sexuality.

Briefly, Kristeva accepts the Lacanian model whereby the repression of the maternal is a pre-requisite of entry into the symbolic and its language structure. The phallic economy of the symbolic is characterised linguistically by grammar, logic, syntax and the unitary "I" which allow a seemingly unified subject position. Kristeva proposes a semiotic which operates simultaneously with the symbolic, though repressed by it. This is a pre-symbolic language which arises in the libidinal multiplicity of the primary relationship to the maternal body. The semiotic, made up of drives, inserts itself in language which Kristeva identifies with the poetic, characterised by multiplicity and non-closure. It fractures and multiplies meanings that are seemingly non-problematic in the symbolic. The linguistic manifestation of the semiotic is located in the *chora*, or rhythmic pulsations, which Kristeva defines as: "a non-expressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated" (Kristeva Reader, 93). The *chora* is articulated as rhythm, assonance, intonation, sound play, repetition. It could be described as the original mother tongue, for Kristeva argues this poetic language always signals a return to the maternal. In so doing, it acts to subvert the paternal, the language of the symbolic. Because the binary opposition set up by the mirror-stage which gives rise to the symbolic institutes the subject, the semiotic precedes the acquisition of a stable subjectivity and identity. One can see, therefore, that a balancing act between the semiotic and the symbolic is necessary if one is to avoid a crisis of non-identity on the one hand and a rigid,

unitary subject on the other. This meeting place is the thetic- "a threshold between two heterogeneous realms: the semiotic and symbolic" (Kristeva Reader, 102). All enunciation is thetic, which marks a break with the signifying process and establishes identification. The thetic constitutes the subject in language, in an interactive dialectic where the symbolic is dominant, though always under challenge by the semiotic. If the thetic is disrupted by the semiotic, Kristeva suggests psychosis, the breakdown of identity, is the outcome. Poetic language, which Kristeva identifies with both displaced maternal dependency and libidinal homosexuality, always verges on psychosis, therefore. Because language is crucial to the establishment of identity, it can be seen from this model that although the incursion of the semiotic into the symbolic gives women a 'voice' it also puts them at risk. They risk the pre-symbolic, undifferentiated state-before-self, according to Kristeva, a psychosis which has a clear application to the character of Rhoda, in The Waves, and to which I will return.

How can this model be applied to The Waves both in relation to the establishment of identity and its implications for androgyny?

Firstly, we can look for stylistic evidence of the semiotic in Woolf's writing practice. Secondly, we can read the constructed identity of the individuals in the novel in terms of Kristeva's model. Reference has already been made to Woolf's intention to move away from the realist form of the novel and develop a new style. This accords closely with Irigaray's political goal for female writers. Irigaray says

that women should analyse the formal structures of discourse and then work to create a new style (Irigaray Reader, 14), in other words disrupt patriarchal discourse. In relation to Kristeva's model we might read this as an articulation of the semiotic in the symbolic. This is what Woolf attempts in her novels, and nowhere more radically than in The Waves, where she aimed for the "abstract poetic"(WD,128). Her style serves Irigaray's purpose of "jamming the theoretical machinery" (Irigaray Reader, 126) so that a female discourse can be heard.

Makiko Minow-Pinkney has detailed links between Woolf's stylistics and Kristeva's model which supports the notion of the semiotic as essentially a female discourse, and Woolf's commitment to such a discourse[6]. It does not need to be detailed here, though I will touch on some points briefly.

The rhythmic motif of the waves which is the undercurrent of the novel can be compared with the *chora* as it operates upon the symbolic discourse of the lives in process of aculturization. This is amplified by the rhythmic effect of repetition of words and phrases which extend this pulsation into the monologues of the characters, so that syntax becomes subordinate to it. This can be illustrated by Woolf's use of repeating and balancing phrases which pass from voice to voice and link experience: "'I am this, I am that'" (Louis), "'It is hate, it is love' said Susan... ","'It is love," said Jinny, 'it is hate, such as Susan feels for me because I kissed Louis once in the garden'" (TW,92). Repetitious links between characters, where one takes up the idea or phrase of another,

also serve to subvert the separate identities they struggle to establish. This subversive repetition, it can be argued, is one of the means whereby identity comes under challenge from Woolf, yet, ironically, repetition is one of the chief means of establishing identity. Butler recognises the power of a challenge from within structural practice rather than a location outside it, in order to effectively disrupt it: "to affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity and, therefore, present the immanent possibility of contesting them" (147). Woolf's ability to do just this perhaps owes much to her 'playful' disruption of identity in Orlando, and the lessons learned thereby.

The role of repetition in disrupting linear time also emphasises time's cyclic aspect, and is a key aspect of Woolf's challenge to a traditional narrative structure: "This scepticism towards progressive time and Woolf's rejection of realist narrative are two aspects of the same anti-symbolic stance" (Minow-Pinkney, 166). There is a distinct difference between the way the male and female characters relate to time in the novel. The emphasis on linear time for the men is found in references to clocks, timetables and routines, which give a sense of security: "There is the sound like the knocking of railway trucks in a siding. That is the happy concatenation of one event following another in our lives. Knock, knock, knock. Must, must, must" (TW,158) says Bernard.

For the women time is linked to cyclic, seasonal events or

a dispersal of repressive measurement, as Susan sees: "Then my freedom will unfurl, and all these restrictions that wrinkle and shrivel- hours and order and discipline, and being here and there exactly at the right moment- will crack asunder" (TW,36). Jinny also equates freedom with the dismantling of man-made time:"I long that the week should be all one day without divisions" (TW,37).

Woolf also disrupts the location of the subject in spatial terms. While the characters are concerned with marking out a bounded subject space this is under constant seige through their perception of the infinite space which surrounds them, threatening to engulf them. At times this leads to almost physical vertigo as they work to establish a fixed place of identity, bounded by measured time and space. Bernard articulates this loss of equilibrium when he tries to set history in the context of infinity: "But how strange it seems to set against the whirling abysses of infinite space a little figure with a golden teapot on his head" (TW,153). Rhoda, more than the others, feels the pull of infinite space: "I shall fall alone through this thin sheet into gulfs of fire" (TW,151). For Rhoda, the temptation to fall into infinite space becomes an overwhelming compulsion, a death-drive, that culminates in suicide: "Everything falls in a tremendous shower, dissolving me" (TW,139).

The disruption of both time and space is a key aspect of subversion to which Irigaray alludes in an *écriture fèminine*, and which was seen to operate in both Woolf's and Carter's novels, previously discussed. She equates both structures with a god-given model which leaves no place for woman to

exist except as location of man's other. By having no place within the phallic order, identity thus becomes problematic for women. Woolf's disruption of time and space, therefore, challenges the restrictions on female identity which such an order imposes.

By applying Kristeva's model to the way Woolf's characters construct identity one can delineate a parallel between the structure of discourse and the structure of identity. If the symbolic is representative of the exclusively masculine and the semiotic the exclusively feminine then the thetic becomes the point where the two create a relationship of male and repressed other. In terms of identity this structure prevents psychosis on the one hand and megolomania on the other (which is not to give it privileged status outside of the phallocentric order).

The initial fluidity and diffusion with the natural world which the children inhabit must be given up in order for them to take up their place within culture. This constitutes giving up the libidinal multiplicity associated with the Mother and coming under the unitary Law of the Father. But the necessary differentiation from the surrounding world leads the children to recognise the fragmentary nature of the self rather than its projected wholeness. They articulate the knowledge, and fear, of the actual conditions of the self in the "effort" which Woolf identifies with the lived human life, directed towards constructing the ideal, unified self: "We saw for a moment laid out among us the body of the complete human being whom we have failed to be, but at the same time, cannot forget" (TW,187). Significantly, the words are

Bernard's, for the quest for a transcendental unifier is most articulated in his discourse.

For all six, language is the facilitating structure of the unified self, though this is most fully achieved in the men, who enter the phallic domain which centralises their subject position, while it will operate to repress the women.

Louis seeks to bring together his disparate selves in 'naming' himself, rather as Anna Wulf does in Lessing's The Golden Notebook. Security for Louis, who sees himself as a cultural outsider, lies in the bounded, unified self: "'I have signed my name,' said Louis,'already twenty times. I, and again I, and again I. Clear, firm, unequivocal, there it stands, my name. Clear-cut and unequivocal am I too" (TW,112).

Neville, similarly, seeks unity through the logic of discourse with its seeming completion of meaning through structure: "'Each tense,' said Neville, 'means differently. There is an order in this world; there are distinctions, there are differences in this world, upon whose verge I step" (TW,14). He is fearful of integration with the others through the communion of shared experience: "yet how painful to be recalled, to be mitigated, to have one's self adulterated, mixed up, become part of another" (TW,56). The seemingly bound and separate space that logocentrism offers enables Neville to establish his separate identity. He comes to despise women for their lack of access to culture, rather like Charles Tansley in To the Lighthouse. They are reduced to "distracting voices", "pert shop girls" and "heavy-laden old women" (TW,58), while he takes up his place in culture "like a

lord to his halls appointed"(TW,21).

Like Louis and Neville, Bernard is obsessed by his own identity, though his goal is not to be fixed in a discourse of exclusive masculinity as is theirs. Nevertheless, power is invested in the Word which symbolises completion of meaning, the wholeness of the self; Bernard's identity is dependent upon his role as the ultimate manipulator of words. Ironically, it is not the articulation of a gender-free subject but the centring of the male in patriarchal discourse, which Bernard's androgyny will illustrate. Bernard's "I" extends into androgyny- indeed, it is the logical extension of phallocentrism, with its desire for the other: "I wish to add to my collection of valuable observations on the true nature of human life...I have an unquenchable thirst" (TW,46). Bernard seeks to widen the boundaries of the self but not dismantle them, for he is ego-driven: "Very few of you who are now discussing me have the double capacity to feel, to reason" (TW,52). The limits of a gendered, patriarchal construction of androgyny are clear here; the movement is inward, centralising rather than opening out. This is not the diffuse, creative *jouissance* of Woolf's aesthetic ideal. Rather it is a subsummation of the characteristics of the six friends, a centralised self which has absorbed them all: "I am not one and simple, but complex and many" (TW,51).

The word "I" recurs like an incantation against fragmentation in all three monologues. Gillian Beer refers to this as the phallic"I" (89) which represents the assumption of a unified self in discourse[7]. Butler also makes the point

that not only does "I" presuppose the totality of language but "the unity of being" (Butler, 117).

For Woolf, this liberal humanist structure of the unified self is identified with patriarchal ideology. It inevitably serves to maintain the patriarchal power base and is therefore liable to challenge from feminist politics. Yet Eileen Sypher claims that females lose ground to males in The Waves precisely because they display no similar strong sense of identity[8]. She says the males are "highly conscious of being a separate and active identity" (197) and implies this is desirable, despite recognising they are also "masculine, phallic, aggressive." She disparages the females' lack of a "separate, whole, active self" (198) without recognising her own phallocentric bias in such a position. Moi makes a similar point in regard to Showalter's reading of Woolf, where the critic fails to acknowledge that Woolf "rejected the fundamental need for the individual to adopt a unified, integrated self-identity"[9].

In view of Woolf's rejection of the phallocentric base of the unified self it would be unlikely that she would propose such a model for women. The strongly identified self, the phallic "I," is predictably muted in the discourse of the three women, although they also must take on identity through aculturisation within patriarchal ideology.

For Susan and Jinny identity is linked to impersonal, natural forces rather than culture. Susan relates to the seasonal, cyclic rhythms of nature: "I shall lie like a field bearing crops in rotation;" (TW,88) This is a privileged female position within patriarchal ideology: "I shall be

lifted higher than any of you on the backs of the seasons" (TW,89). By taking up the symbolic Maternal role, Susan establishes her unified identity: "I cannot be divided or kept apart" (TW,66).

Jinny identifies herself with spatial movement and fluidity: "There is nothing staid, nothing settled, in this universe. All is rippling, all is dancing; all is quickness and triumph" (TW, 31). She is the tantalising Other.
Rhoda has no sense of a unified self; recognising the falseness of such a position, her terror is nevertheless caused by the lack of unification: "I am broken into separate pieces; I am no longer one" (TW,72). She cannot distinguish a distinct self from her environment, all is diffused: "Month by month things are losing their hardness; even my body now lets the light through" (TW,31). Significantly, Rhoda "has no father" (TW,13), she cannot gain access to the symbolic.

It would seem that Woolf subscribes to the nature/culture dichotomy of the sexes by this reading. Yet she does not suggest that this is a natural identity for the women. They have been culturally identified with such forces, just as the men are identified within the cultural domain of the symbolic, where the female is repressed. Both positions have a political basis in that their function is to maintain the patriarchal power base.

Why, then, is there this crucial divergence in the way men and women learn to identify themselves? Woolf suggests it lies in the loss of the Mother and transfer to the Law of the Father, a position which is reminiscent of the scene strikingly illustrated in To the Lighthouse when Cam and

James reach the lighthouse with their father. In The Waves Woolf provides the three men with access to a male role model in her positing of Percival as a central, unifying figure. One of the key strategies in developing identity for the men is the adoption of this model self to which they aspire. Percival, who represents the transcendental masculine, typifies the ideal patriarchal figure to which the males gain access on entry into the symbolic. But while the men have this transcendental model, the women do not have an equivalent. They have had to give up the Mother in order to gain entry to the symbolic. Woolf indicates this marks a crucial difference in the way identity is constructed.

This would seem, initially, to indicate a freedom and choice of subject position for the women which the men are denied. But with maturity the fluidity and diffusion which the girls display in childhood is replaced by models which are imposed by patriarchal culture, rather than self-chosen, in the case of Jinny and Susan, or the psychosis of non-identification, as with Rhoda. For Jinny and Susan, the model self is derived from the projected male other which they attempt to 'own' as subjects, constructing their identities according to feminine models available to them from within patriarchy. Susan is the Earth Mother, symbol of fecundity and nurturance. It is logical that the patriarchal model which Percival represents should therefore find its other in Susan. Percival loves Susan. Jinny is the negative aspect of woman, the sexually insatiable whore, capable of *jouissance*, who both threatens and tempts man, her Eve aspect. Rhoda cannot reflect a patriarchal model: "I have no face" (TW,29).

For Rhoda, aculturisation is loss of identity rather than the reduction of possibility, in contrast to the other five characters. This indicates her continuing identification with the Maternal model, so that access to the symbolic is denied. She illustrates Kristeva's psychotic woman, unable to take up the thetic position which facilitates identity.

Both Jinny and Susan come to question the restrictions their roles confer, for though they assume their roles are self-chosen, dissatisfaction and unease adhere to them as they become increasingly aware of their loss of choice; "'Still I gape,' said Susan,'like a young bird, unsatisfied, for something that has escaped me'" (TW,157). This is reminiscent of the way Mrs Ramsay, too, comes to question her feminine role and its consequent reduction of her potential self. This sense of loss is true for the men, also. All witness the shrinking, limiting nature of unified gendered positions, a position Bernard attempts to counter by androgynous subsummation of the other.

For both men and women the gendered model is achieved, identity established, through a series of repetitious acts. In the character of Rhoda Woolf draws attention to the constructed, arbitrary nature of this signifying practice which establishes identity. Rhoda is unable to internalise this practice so that it can become 'natural' to her: "I have to look first and do what other people do when they have done it" (TW,29). She cannot act her part in the symbolic but remains in an undifferentiated, vertiginous relationship with her environment. But for all six, with age the effort of

maintaining restricting roles becomes increasingly burdensome. The characters regret all that they might have been, and their enforced repression of the Maternal in the effort to establish identity. Neville expresses this: "we only wish to rejoin the body of our mother from whom we have been severed" (TW,157). The process of unification is revealed as always on the point of disintegration unless effort is maintained: "A man without a self, I said. A heavy body leaning on a gate. A dead man" (TW,192). Without the repetitious enactment of a model identity, reality is nothingness for Bernard, as for Rhoda.

The fact that the articulation and construction of identity is gender specific in The Waves has been the focus of much feminist debate regarding Woolf's 'accessibility' in terms of feminine models. A lot of criticism has taken its lead from Elaine Showalter who suggests Woolf attempted to evade, and escape from, identification with female sexuality in her espousal of androgyny. I have drawn attention before to the phallocentric bias of such arguments in relation to Woolf's work. While such observations are accurate in terms of the differences Woolf highlights between the constructions of male and female identity, such readings do not recognise that Woolf is deliberately exposing how identity is constructed differently for men and women within a political context. It is assumed that Woolf is positing an ideal rather than deconstructing the given nature of identity. Just as Andrew and Prue, the personifications of gender polarity in To the Lighthouse, were doomed to die, so Percival and Rhoda, who share a similar polarised role in The

Waves, are victims of the gender roles culture ascribes them.

In both novels the loss of the Mother is the inhibitor of Woolf's ideal of androgyny, just as it marks women's problematic self-identity. Without the articulation of both sexes within culture there is no possibility of a meeting place of the sexes which can initiate transcendence. A reading of the construction of identity in The Waves in view of Woolf's recognition of sexual difference shows that for both men and women gendered identity limits the potential of the subject and works against the achievement of sexual transcendence.

Some critics have located Rhoda's 'opposite pole' in Louis or Percival but in fact Woolf structures the relationships so that any pair can be viewed in binary opposition through some aspect of personality. I intend setting Bernard and Rhoda in opposition in terms of an androgynous model to illustrate my point above. Both have been cited as examples of Woolf's ideal androgyne. In fact, neither is. Bernard's androgyny may be read as illustrative of the failure of the patriarchal androgynous model, with its reductionist function of absorbing its self as other. It has been suggested that Rhoda's loss of self is analogous to Woolf's androgynous ideal, yet Rhoda's model of diffusion is as sterile as Bernard's subsuming of the other. She moves to the feminine pole of nihilism and negation of subject. Self-effacing, she also has no means of access to a transcendental model of androgyny. The only thing she trusts is "solitude and the violence of death" (TW,156). Loss of self is not a

privileged position for Woolf, as Showalter suggests it is by "Woolf's vision of womanhood is as deadly as it is disembodied. The ultimate room of one's own is the grave" (Showalter, 297). Woolf is describing how woman is constructed within patriarchy, not an ideal woman. Her portrayal of Rhoda's nihilism reveals implicit assumptions within culture about women's identity but she also indicates different representations may be possible.

How can these representations, with the possibility of a new androgyny, be articulated? If neither the unified, phallic self of the symbolic nor the complete diffusion of the imaginary self can be androgynous, if the subsuming patriarchal androgynous model cannot articulate the female, but only man's other, does Woolf indicate that the concept is unrealisable? Or does she indicate in her writing the direction for a new androgyny?

I believe she indicates the possibility of androgyny in the figure of the lady writing in The Waves, a figure to whom Sypher disparagingly refers as a "decoy". I suggest that if Woolf was engaged in the unlikely construction of decoy figures, the androgynous decoy is, in fact, Bernard. The lady writer is crucial to a reading of Woolf's androgyny.

It is in Woolf's style, rather than her characterisation, that the androgynous model is located; it is an aesthetic rather than a sexual model. In the absence of the transcendental Mother, which Irigaray indicates is crucial for female articulation, Woolf suggests women can establish a model of a female aesthetic. This involves bringing into patriarchal language that which has been repressed,

establishing continuity with the 'mother tongue', as Kristeva suggests: "I think that in the imaginary, maternal continuity is what guarantees identity" (Kristeva Reader, 14). Woolf suggests it is this which can enable women to transcend identity and achieve androgyny. Woolf's writing practice shows how patriarchal discourse can be disrupted and decentred in ways which allow a repressed female voice to break through. The androgynous model, therefore, lies in the lady writing- the impossible dialectic. Forcing a female discourse into the symbolic, it disrupts the thetic and exposes the repressive nature of the symbolic. The risk of psychosis is real- Woolf did suffer the fate of Rhoda- but she also believed that the female heritage which was established by the disruption of patriarchal discourse would establish a female discourse within culture, which other women could access. The model of the lady author, confronting risk, is one of future promise. In her own writing practice Woolf kept personal psychosis at bay. As Lucio P.Ruotolo points out in The Interrupted Moment, it was only when Woolf stopped writing, became non-creative, that her own psychosis took hold[10]. Viewed from this new perspective the relationship between author and narrator takes on radical new meaning in Woolf's text.

Criticism of the role of Bernard, with the charge that the male narrator points to the failure of female androgyny can be reread. Sypher interprets Woolf's strategy as "Depicting the androgynous spirit as male allows Woolf to displace onto the male her own strong writer self and to assume the more comfortable posture of anonymity" (191-192). If this is in

fact what Woolf intends, why does she place the female author in the text at all? (a strategy not used in her other novels). By so doing she invites comparison between a narrator who centralises himself in the text and an author deliberately at its margin. Sypher's suggestion that "the lady writing" (TW,12) is merely a "decoy figure" to appease the "censors in the reader" (195), has already been dismissed as inadequate and she in fact offers no supporting evidence. Rather, the androgynous tension which Woolf sets up between author and narrator works against Sypher's claim that "Only by fortune will some few people be androgynous and writers, and these will, it seems, be male (the females' perceptual frameworks prevent writing)" (204-5). The female writer who enters the text is ignored in this reading. Rather than discarding androgyny, Woolf's refusal to merge her own voice with that of the narrator sets up a dyadic relationship which works against fixity and the single viewpoint, and this is illustrative of her androgynous philosophy. As Gillian Beer says of this author/narrator relationship: "Words and thoughts in this work move freely between people; sexual images are not reserved in mind to men or women only. Bernard is the man writing women's writing written by the woman writer" (111). If Bernard is all the voices in the text, even more so is Woolf. She inserts herself into the text both literally and stylistically. Capable of representing the multiplicitous dynamic of identity, she aesthetically transcends it in her writing practice.

In The Waves Woolf set out on a radical project which followed her exploration of the gender specificity of

identity in To the Lighthouse. The crucial difference in the way men and women construct identity was related to their access to a model within patriarchal discourse. Because women have no transcendental model of the female, they must construct models of the feminine which patriarchal ideology puts in place, or risk psychosis. Despite access to transcendent male models patriarchal androgyny fails precisely because there is no articulation of another sex. Men can only subsume their own other in androgynous desire. In order to make androgyny possible for both sexes women must seek transcendent models through a female aesthetic which forces into discourse what the symbolic has repressed. This aesthetic is established by the entry of the 'mother tongue' of the semiotic into patriarchal discourse. The linguistic model can also serve as an androgynous model when both men and women have articulated their difference. A new androgyny, accessible to both men and women, then becomes possible. It does not matter whether it is a male or female voice which articulates androgyny, for at the moment of articulation it will become genderless, Woolf suggests:"Our ring here hints at some other order, and better, which makes a reason everlasting" (TW, 27).

There is a striking chord struck here between Kristeva's articulation of a new order and Woolf's, where nothing that is personal is lost through the transcendence of self, and where both sexes have a voice. It indicates a workable model for a new androgyny for which women's discourse will be the catalyst:

In order to bring out- along with the *singularity* of each person and, even more, along with the multiplicity of every person's possible identifications (with atoms, e.g.,stretching from the family to the stars)- the *relativity of his/her symbolic as well as biological existence,* according to the variation in his/her specific symbolic capacities. And in order to emphasize the *responsibility* which all will immediately face of putting this fluidity into play against the threats of death which are unavoidable whenever an inside and an outside, a self and an other, one group and another, are constituted. At this level of interiorization with its social as well as individual stakes, what I have called 'aesthetic practices' are undoubtedly nothing other than the modern reply to the eternal question of morality (Kristeva Reader, 210).

CHAPTER 7

Feminism, alterity and androgyny.

Does feminism need a theory of androgyny? It might be argued that Freud's first questioning of the immutability of the given self rendered the concept unnecessary. When gender can be considered liable to change by virtue of its cultural construction, then the subject is opened up to endless possibility and potential. The self can only be limited by the boundaries which society imposes through its political manipulation of the patriarchal symbolic.

And this limitation is precisely why I believe a theory of androgyny is still relevant, despite its history of association with constructed gender to maintain patriarchal values. Without the subversive challenge a theory of androgyny offers to gender, the dyadic structure which privileges male over female would continue to operate under the latest guise of complementarity. The compulsory heterosexuality which continues to dominate sexual relations establishes plausibility by presenting itself as 'natural' to the human condition. By the articulation of 'unnatural' androgyny, the 'residue' of human sexuality which gender cannot accommodate is revealed. If a single-sex gender role cannot be portrayed as completion of the sexual self, then gender itself is thrown into question as 'natural' to the subject.

Gendered roles still operate to restrict and disadvantage women, and will continue to do so until there is an

articulation of female sexuality which is not defined in terms of a phallic economy. Only the terminology, the evidence, changes, but in spite of the growing dissent from feminist groups, patriarchal ideology continues to devise strategies for marginalising women who refuse to accept traditional gender roles. The uses to which much current scientific and technological research is put is illustrative of this, such as the 'facts' of the mental stress placed upon working mothers (similarly to 'research' on the health of the New Woman). Some writers, like Bettina Arndt in her article "Scare Tactics: the Undeclared War on Feminism"[1], have drawn attention to this.

The material conditions of women in the workplace, achieving 'equality', is practical evidence which shows how only one sex is actually articulated. The division of units of working time, the distribution and design of working space, all reflect the domination of male modes of operation and ways of organising the physical world. A woman achieving success in such a situation is in fact behaving as a pseudo-man, adapting to phallocentric norms, rather than androgynous, as Lessing and Barfoot recognise. A new theory of androgyny can help dismantle the fixity of binary opposition, with its inherent hierarchical structure. But it cannot be based on old concepts of harmony, complementarity and completion, which are simply masks for the phallocentric subsummation of the other. It cannot, either, use the sign "androgyny" to represent the new ideal, overdetermined as this has become historically within patriarchal discourse. A new word is needed for the new concept.

A new theory of androgyny must begin, in turn, from an articulation of alterity, a symbolic representation of female sexuality which is not dependant upon male models of what Woman is. This will involve the decentralising of the phallus and allow options other than compulsory heterosexuality as norm. An articulation of female sexuality, based on the works studied in this thesis, will be characterised by the following.

It will not be dominated by the phallus, with its implications of privilege, centralisation and closure. The threat of castration which is a key aspect of male voyeuristic sexuality would become irrelevant. Women would no longer need to see themselves reflected as other but could explore sexuality in a wider sense, which would include the tactile rather than the visual. A female articulation of sexuality would, in fact, release men from the castration fear, by giving them an alternative model from the emasculated other which woman currently represents. Without such a fear on the part of men, it might be argued that women's fear of the articulation of their sexual difference would also lessen. Cixous's options of castration or decapitation would become irrelevant if men lost their fear of female sexuality. Sex and violence would no longer be inevitably linked.

Female sexuality would be identified by its lack of closure, opening out into multiplicity, *jouissance*, from which both sexes could benefit. Like Orlando, men and women could take up sexual positions in relation to each other which are not limited by biological determinism.

The aesthetic ideal of androgyny only becomes possible

when both sexes are articulated in difference. This articulation must enter symbolic discourse, and change the patriarchal structures which currently operate, from within. Kristeva's model of the semiotic's intrusion into the symbolic domain shows a structure which might facilitate this, while Woolf illustrates one way this might be articulated stylistically. It is crucial, as Irigaray, Carter and others point out, that a tradition of women's discourse and creativity serves as a model to which other women can aspire. By the creation of a transcendental, divine model of the female both men and women are given the opportunity to transcend gender. For there can be no androgynous realisation of an aesthetic self beyond gender while only men have a transcendental model of a god-figure. In Hindu mythology the achievement of such an androgynous fusion, as defined in Chapter 1, was termed *kamacarin*. Perhaps this comes closer than 'androgyny' in describing the aesthetic ideal with which this thesis has been concerned.

CONCLUSION

In chapter 1 it was suggested that a discourse of androgyny, or the refusal to accept gender limits, is an inevitable outcome of compulsory heterosexuality, the structure upon which patriarchy is based. Androgyny is the repository of all that does not fit gender models, the "impossible referent", as Pacteau suggests. It was stated that like gender, androgyny is neither originary nor value free. Constructed within phallocentric discourse, along with masculine and feminine, it depends on a dyadic structure which privileges male over female. The ideal of harmony and balance which liberal humanism ascribes to the concept is therefore illusory.

Yet the power system which puts compulsory heterosexuality in place is never content with the limits it sets itself and is bound to desire the other, that which it excludes by the reductionism of gender. As Derrida suggests, all binary systems carry within them the means of their own deconstruction. Androgyny is that point of breakdown between constructed masculine and feminine. Even though it operates to subsume the other, in the ultimate power drive of a phallic economy, it is also the place of disruption of the very system it operates to maintain. As such, it can be used by feminists to challenge the idea of gender as fixed and immutable, a position which has served to marginalise and subordinate women.

Historically, then, androgyny has held a paradoxical position; serving both to maintain gender through its

depiction of an alternative alien, marginalised androgynous subject but also promising a transcendence of gender, a return to imaginary wholeness. In a phallocentric culture the subsuming of the other which wholeness ideology implies further serves to privilege male over female, rather than dismantle political disparity.

This is borne out by Virginia Woolf's exploration of androgynous complementarity in chapter 2. The seeming balance and harmony within marriage, traditionally a metaphor of androgyny, is revealed as a masking of the real power relations of men and women. Mrs Ramsay strives to reflect the 'lack' in her husband, so that the female is not in fact articulated, only his reflected other. Gender roles for women, Woolf suggests, are bound to a phallic economy, not female articulation. The only alternative model for women is that of androgynous neuter. Where sexuality is only defined in terms of patriarchal norms a woman rejecting these norms is seen as asexual. Creativity for women is invested in motherhood, rather than the cultural domain which enables men to transcend the self. But Woolf suggests the articulation of a female aesthetic is possible once a tradition of women theorists is established. Loss of self within a 'community of selves' indicates that for Woolf the inhibiting desire for a unified self, which she identifies with patriarchy, can be aesthetically transcended.

Similar themes are explored in Chapter 3, where Barfoot and Lessing recognise the constructed nature of gender and its role in subjugating women. Here, women pursuing androgynous lifestyles confront the disparity between their

culturally ascribed roles and individual needs to articulate an originary self. The outcome is a recognition of the reductionist nature of the bounded self and inevitable fragmentation of the subject within a fragmented society once gender limits are transgressed. Although this is true for both men and women the writers suggest women carry an extra burden of guilt because they reject the roles ascribed them as guardians of society. As homemakers and nurturers women who reject gender roles threaten the stability of patriarchal society and its reliance on the family unit. Both writers suggest that a female revolution against traditional roles must take place if women are to overcome the self-destructive models of femininity society offers and achieve an integrated wholeness through recognition of and identification with an originary, androgynous self.

In chapter 4 Woolf and Carter also expose the arbitrary nature of gender difference through fantasies of sexual and gender disorientation. Visual representation of the sexes is shown to be a phallocentric means of discrimination rather than an articulation of 'reality', which is liable to subversion and misrecognition. Sexual orientation is learned rather than given, they suggest, according to specular models which serve to represent the male and his other but leave no space for a representation of female sexuality. Both writers indicate that female sexuality is oriented to a tactile rather than visual articulation and posit an alternative model whereby the role of reflected other is dismantled. For Woolf this frees the subject to enjoy a pluralist sexual *jouissance* where gender becomes

meaningless. In Carter's novel gender is revealed as sexual sterility, with its basis in the male fear of castration. Androgyny, on the other hand, is potentially fertile, though the novel ends with social dissolution. Both writers suggest the opposite, therefore, of the traditional neuter role of the androgyne. Sterility is located in a patriarchal model of sexuality which articulates only the male and relegates female to other, within rigid gender limits.

Patriarchal models of the female are further challenged by Carter in an intertextual writing strategy which subverts traditional ways of seeing women. In chapter 5 Carter reworks the androgynous Amazon-warrior myth to reveal the phallocentric viewpoint which adheres to women who reject feminine role models. Rather than the patriarchal 'divide and rule' strategy which has traditionally set women against each other Carter sees the androgynous myth as indicating the power for articulating female sexuality when women work in community with each other. She gives the myth a positive, female perspective which indicates a strategy for reworking historical representations of women to displace the centrality of patriarchal norms.

The focus on writing as a woman is developed in the sixth chapter. Here Woolf reiterates the roles women have traditionally been ascribed within patriarchal discourse and shows, through her style and the model of the lady writing, how women should inscribe themselves in the text. She locates the centralised self within a phallic economy and indicates that the only subject position left to women, other than reflection, is negation of self. Neither men nor women are

able to transcend such gender positions. By forcing a female voice, which we can equate with the pre-linguistic semiotic, into the male province of symbolic language, an androgynous aesthetic is possible. Such a discourse is an enabling structure for both men and women to transcend the limits of imposed gender.

At present androgyny only serves phallocentric ends because, as Irigaray suggests, only one sex is articulated, and that is male. If both sexes are articulated a new androgyny can be proposed which disrupts gender fixity to the advantage of both sexes.

Lacan's models of the Semiotic and Symbolic can be used as enabling structures by which to propose how language can articulate sexual difference. Kristeva's structure of the relationship between the two indicates how this might be achieved.

"If subversion is possible, it will be a subversion from within the terms of the law, through the possibilities that emerge when the law turns against itself and spawns unexpected permutations of itself" (Butler, 93). This is precisely what androgyny does in respect to gender, though Butler is describing the Maternal body here. Androgyny currently works from its own position as an effect of the Law to open up possibilities for men. When the female has also been articulated, it can do the same for women. For men, subsummation of the other is the only option available outside gender boundaries at present, dominated as their sexuality is by the castration fear. When women can articulate a multiplicity, a *jouissance*, which is not the

nihilism of the unspoken other (their only current choice outside gender roles) then men, too, will have the opportunity to participate in an authentic dialogue of sexual difference which does not give them back only themselves as other. Through such dialogue gender may lose meaning and relevance, for the first time in history androgyny as an articulation of sexuality beyond gender may be possible.

ENDNOTES

Introduction

1. Francette Pacteau, "The Impossible Referent: representations of the androgyne" in Formations of Fantasy, eds. Victor Burgin. James Donald, Cora Kaplan (London: Methuen, 1986). All further references are to this work.

2. Daniel A. Harris, "Androgyny: the sexist myth in disguise" in Women's Studies (1974, 2) 171-84. All further references are to this work.

Chapter 1

1. Mircea Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Harvill, 1960) 174-5. All further references are to this work.

2. Wendy D.O'Flaherty, Women, Androgynes and Other Mythical Beasts (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1980). All further references are to this work.

3. I have used two main sources of information on Indo-Asian and early Greek myths. These are Mircea Eliade's Mephistopheles and the Androgyne, trans. J.M.Cohen (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965) and Wendy D.O'Flahertyś Women,

Androgynes and Other Mythical Beasts, previously cited.

4. A detailed discussion can be found in Johann Jacob Bachofen's Das Mutterecht (The Mother Right) published in 1861. This text is often cited by feminist writers. See Kate Millet's Sexual Politics (New York: Doubleday, 1969) and Carolyn Heilbrun's Towards a Recognition of Androgyny (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973). All further references are to these works.

William Blake Tyrrell disagrees with the assumptions regarding matriarchies to some extent in Amazons: A Study in Athenian Myth-Making (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1984) 25, a text to which I shall return in Chapter 5. He suggests societies such as that of the early Greeks may, in fact, have been matrilinear, where power was still invested in the patriarchy through uncles, brothers and other male relatives.
All further references are to this work.

5. Heilbrun is referring to the structure discussed in the five volume study of mythology by Joseph Campbell, The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology (New York: Viking, 1970) 160.

6. Dyadic opposition as the human condition which must be transcended is central to the paradox of existence in Indo-Asian religions, where the individual can exist both in and out of time and place by accessing metaphysical 'knowledge'. Western writers in the liberal humanist tradition also explored this idea, most notably E.M.Forster and Virginia

Woolf in the early part of this century.

7. June Singer compares this androgynous state to a T'ai chi ritual performance with its "natural shift of balance that is constantly occurring, the one always becoming the other" in Androgyny: Towards a New Theory of Sexuality (New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1976) 212-3. All further references are to this work.

8. Surprisingly, a current Concise Oxford Dictionary still defines androgyny in the same terms, despite insights into the concept afforded by both psychoanalysis and current feminist theory. Androgyny is defined as "hermaphroditism-combining characteristics of both sexes". No distinction is made between psychology and biology.

9. For further discussion of the female Guardians read Gregory Vlastos, "Was Plato a Feminist?" in Times Literary Supplement (March 17-23, 1989) 276, 288-9.

10. Refer to Heilbrun's Towards a Recognition of Androgyny, 15-16. She cites Plato's Symposium, where he describes the concept of androgyny as degenerating into a term of reproach in his society.

11. Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father (London: Women's Press, 1986). All further references are to this work.

12. Elaine H.Pagels, "Whatever became of God the Mother?

Conflicting Images of God in Early Christianity" in Womanspirit Rising; a Feminist Reader in Religion, eds. Carol P.Christ and Judith Plaskow (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979) 106-19. All further references are to this work.

13. Catherine Belsey, Critical Practice (London: Routledge, 1980) 66. All further references are to this work.

14. K.K.Ruthven, Feminist Literary Studies: an Introduction (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984) 105.

15. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America (New York: Alfred A.Knopf, 1985). Of particular relevance to the topic under discussion is the chapter entitled "The New Woman as Androgyne: Social Disorder and Gender Crisis, 1870-1936", 245-96. All further references are to this work.

16. Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi, "The Politics of Androgyny" in Women's Studies (1974, 2) 151. She is, in fact, paraphrasing Heilbrun here.

Chapter 2

1. Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse (London: Triad Grafton, 1977, rpt.1986). All further references are to this work as TL.

2. I owe much of this outline to Judith Butler's critique in Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (New York: Routledge, 1990). Refer in particular to "VI. Language, Power, and the Strategies of Displacement", 25-34. All further references are to this work.

3. By 'essentialist' I mean a belief in sexuality as inseparably linked to one's corporeal body, or biological sexual determination, existing prior to gender identity.

4. I have used several texts to make this simplistic link. For Rubin, refer to Butler, 79-84. For Irigaray refer to Butler, 103, and Elizabeth Grosz's Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989). All further references are to this work.

5. Luce Irigaray, The Irigaray Reader, ed. Margaret Whitford (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991). All further references are to this work.

6. See Butler, 9-13.

7. Kristeva's use of the concept of the *chora* has been outlined at some length in Chapter 6. Refer also to Grosz, 44-9.

8. Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1929) 102. All further references are to this

work as ROO.

9. It is interesting to compare Woolf's view with Judith Butler's comments on originary bisexuality in Gender Trouble. Butler says

The coexistence of the binary is assumed, and then repression and exclusion intercede to craft discretely gendered "identities" out of this binary, with the result that identity is always already inherent in a bisexual disposition that is, through repression, severed into its component parts" (54).

This matches Woolf's view surprisingly closely, and leads one to speculate that Woolf still has much to inform discourse on current feminist theory.

10. Eileen B.Sypher, "The Waves: A Utopia of Androgyny?" in Virginia Woolf: Centennial Essays, eds. Elaine K.Ginsberg and Laura Moss Gottlieb (New York: Whitston, 1983). All further references are to this work.

11. Joanne Danielle Blum, "Defying the Constraints of Gender: The Male/Female Double of Women's Fiction". Ph.D. thesis (Ohio State University, 1986) 57.

12. Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary (London: Triad Grafton,1953, rpt.1978) 110. All further references are to this work as WD.

13. An outline of feminine attributes is found in Nancy Topping Bazin and Alma Freeman's "The Androgynous Vision" in Women's Studies (1974, 2) 187. It corresponds to the perception of Mrs Ramsay as "passive, intuitive, receptive,

subjective, eternal, instinctive, innocent, emotional and nurturing".

14. Quoted in Naomi Segal's "Echo and Narcissus" in Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis, ed. Teresa Brennan (London: Routledge, 1989) 171. All further references are to this work.

15. Annis Pratt has written a thorough exploration of the Ramsays' relationship in Archetypal Models in Women's Fiction (Sussex: Harvester, 1982) 143-53, where she shows how the gender stereotypes break down.

16. Cora Kaplan, "Pandora's box: subjectivity, class and sexuality in socialist feminist criticism" in Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism, eds. Gayle Greene and Coppelia Kahn (London: Methuen, 1985) 171.

17. Elaine Showalter, "Virginia Woolf and the Flight into Androgyny" in A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing (London: Virago, 1978, rpt.1984) 288. All further references are to this work.

18. Irigaray metaphorically (some critics say essentially-see Butler, 28-30) links this capacity to the female body and its lack of closure: "*form is never complete in her*" (The Irigaray Reader, 55). This facilitates a sexual multiplicity and fluidity which distinguishes it from the climactic phallocentric, a topic explored in This Sex Which is not One

(New York: Cornell UP, 1985). It constitutes an "indefinite overflowing" of *jouissance* (*The Irigaray Reader*, 55).

19. Gillian Beer, "The Body of the People in Virginia Woolf" in *Women Reading Women Writing*, ed. Sue Roe (Brighton: Harvester, 1987). All further references are to this work.

20. Julia Kristeva, "The Maternal Body", trans. Claire Pajaczkowska, in *m/f* (1981, 5,6).

21. Irigaray's definition of *genre* is found in *The Irigaray Reader*, 17. I have generally equated it with 'kind', as in 'womankind'. Butler suggests Irigaray means that womankind should have its own specificity.

Chapter 3

1. Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* (London: Grafton, 1973, rpt.1986). All further references are to this work as GN.

2. Joan Barfoot, *Gaining Ground* (London: Women's Press, 1980, rpt.1987). All further references are to this work as GG.

3. Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to*

Literature and Art, ed. Leon S.Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S.Roudiez (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981, rpt.1984) 276.

4. See R.D.Laing's The Divided Self (London: Tavistock Publications, 1960). I have made use of Juliet Mitchell's excellent sections on Laing in her work Psychoanalysis and Feminism (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975) 227-92. All further references are to this work.

5. Penny Boumelha, "The Rattling of her Discourse and the Flapping of her Dress" (Paper delivered at Adelaide University on 27 April 1990, in relation to Meredith's Diana of the Crossways).

6. Despite Lessing's statement, the novel was viewed as a feminist tract by many critics. In Critical Practice Catherine Belsey's comments in relation to Brecht are relevant. She says "Polyphony does not guarantee that readers will recognise the plurality of voices" (129). In fact, readers look for messages in the text which have relevance to their own experience, with a tendency to "select and privilege one of the voices of the text, one of its discourses". The Golden Notebook coincided with a time of intense focus on the material conditions of women in Western society, so it is not surprising that this issue dominated much response to the novel. Despite reservations about how much emphasis one can place on this aspect of the work,

Lessing's exposure of society's fragmentation is clearly linked to phallocentric norms. This allows new readings of Western ideology, a crucial aspect of which is gender construction.

7. Doris Lessing, The Four-Gated City (London: Grafton, 1972) 74.

8. Toril Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory (London: Methuen, 1985, rpt.1986) 7. All further references are to this work.

Chapter 4

1. Virginia Woolf, Orlando: a Biography (London: Panther, 1977, rpt.1984). All further references are to this work as O.

2. Angela Carter, The Passion of New Eve (London: Virago, 1982, rpt.1987). All further references are to this work as PNE.

3. Arleen B.Dallery, "The Politics of Writing (the) Body: Écriture Féminine", 61.

4. Lucienne Serrano and Elaine Hoffman Baruch, "Luce

Irigaray" in Women Writers Talking, ed.Janet Todd (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1983) 239. All further references are to this work.

5. This theme has been touched upon in recent documentary films (like that screened by SBS in May, 1991, entitled Metamorphosis) regarding the non-identity of some transsexuals with their biological body. Despite the experience of being constructed as male both biologically and culturally Gary/Gabby, in the film cited, 'saw' her/himself as female.

6. Julia Kristeva, The Kristeva Reader, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986, rpt.1990) 161-3, 240-3.

7. Béla Grunberger, New Essays on Narcissism, trans. David Macey (London: Free Association, 1990) quoted in TLS, February 23-March 1, 1990, 194.

8. Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which is not One (New York: Cornell UP, 1985).

Chapter 5

1. I an using the term 'intertextual' in the Kristevan sense of a "permutation of texts". She says "in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralise each other", in "The Bounded Text" in Desire in

Language, 36, previously cited.

2. Pauline Palmer, "From Coded Mannequin to Bird Woman: Angela Carter's Magic Flight" in Women Reading Women Writing, ed. Sue Roe (Brighton: Harvester, 1987). All further references are to this work.

3. Angela Carter, "Notes from the Front Line" in On Gender and Writing, ed. Micheline Wandor (London: Pandora, 1983) 71. All further references are to this work.

4. Annette Kuhn, "Introduction to Hélène Cixous's 'Castration or Decapitation?'" in Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 7, 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1981) 36.

5. Angela Carter, Heroes and Villains (London: Penguin, 1969). All further references are to this work as HV.

6. Angela Carter, Nights at the Circus (London: Picador, 1985). All further references are to this work as NC.

7. William Blake Tyrrell, cited in "Introduction".

8. Angela Carter, The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History (London: Virago, 1979, rpt.1987). All further references are to this work.

9. Carol Pearson and Katherine Pope, The Female Hero in

American and British Literature (New York: Bowker, 1981).

10. Andrea Dworkin, Our Blood: the Sexual Politics of Fear and Courage (London: Women's Press, 1976) 53. All further references are to this work.

11. Brooks Landon, "Eve at the End of the World: Sexuality and the Reversal of Expectations in Novels by Joanna Russ, Angela Carter and Thomas Berger" in Erotic Unoverse: Sexuality and Fantastic Literature, ed.Donald Palumbo (New York: Greenwood, 1986) 61-74.

12. Hélène Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation?", trans. Annette Kuhn in Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 7, 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1981) 41-55. All further references are to this work.

13. "the interrogative text refuses a single point of view, however complex and comprehensive, but brings points of view into unresolved collision or contradiction" in Belsey's Critical Practice, 92, already cited.

14. Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa", trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen in Signs: Journal of Women and Culture in Society, 1, 4 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1976) 888. All further references are to this work.

15. Northrop Frye, "My Credo" in Kenyon Review, 13 (1951) 107. He is referring to the archetype of the heroic quest. All

further references are to this work.

Chapter 6

1. Virgina Woolf, The Waves (London: Grafton, 1977, rpt.1987). All further references are to this work as TW.

2. Makiko Minow-Pinkney, Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject (Brighton: Harvester, 1987). Refer in particular to "Chapter 6, *The Waves*", 152-86. All further references are to this work.

3. Elaine Showalter's "Flight into Androgyny", 290, previously cited.

4. Cited in Showalter, 288. Showalter's implication is that Woolf excluded herself entirely from her novels. Woolf does use personal experience in this novel (as in others), and some of Rhoda's memories are based on Woolf's own. In A Writer's Diary, where she first contemplates the novel which will become The Waves, she relates a childhood incident where she was afraid to cross a puddle (WD,104). This memory becomes Rhoda's experience (TW,43). Neville also recounts a suicide incident which is based on a fact from Woolf's childhood.

5. I have used a number of sources for this simplistic outline of Kristeva's highly complex theories. Refer in particular to Kristeva's Desire in Language, The Kristeva Reader, Section

I, 23-89, Grosz's Sexual Subversions, Sections 2 and 3, 39-99, and Butler's Gender Trouble, 79-93. All works were previously cited.

6. Minow-Pinkney, 178-86.

7. Beer's "The Body of the People...", 85-116, previously cited.

8. Sypher's "*The Waves*: A Utopia of Androgyny?", 7, previously cited.

9. Moi's Sexual/Textual Politics, 7, previously cited.

10. Lucio P.Ruotolo, The Interrupted Moment: a view of Virginia Woolf's novels (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1986). Refer in particular to "Chapter 7: In Praise of Nothingness", 142-4.

Chapter 7

1. Bettina Arndt, "Scare Tactics: The Undeclared War on Feminism" in The Weekend Australian (Jan 11-12, 1992) 27.

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1972. 86-91.

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