The Mother/Daughter PLOT

NARRATIVE, PSYCHOANALYSIS, FEMINISM

3

THE DARKEST PLOTS

NARRATION AND COMPULSORY HETEROSEXUALITY

> The turning-away from her mother is an extremely important step in the course of a little girl's development.
>
> —Sigmund Freud

> Again if one is a woman one is often surprised by a sudden splitting off of consciousness, say in walking down Whitehall, when from being the natural inheritor of that civilization, she becomes, on the contrary, outside of it, alien and critical.
>
> —Virginia Woolf

> I am inclined to believe there is no such thing as repetition.
>
> —Gertrude Stein

Parables of Exclusion

In 1928, at the request of one of the women's colleges at Cambridge, Virginia Woolf gave the talks on women and fiction that later became *A Room of One's Own*, perhaps the most famous essay in feminist literary theory. Woolf's tone in this text is as modest as her argument is tentative: "All I could do was to offer you an opinion upon one minor point—a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction. . . . I have shirked the duty of coming to a conclusion upon these two questions—women and fiction remain . . . unsolved problems."[1] At most, Woolf insists, she can show us how she arrives at her "opinion," thereby offering us not an essay but a narrative about her own involvement in the

question of women's relation to fiction. The subject of that narrative, the speaking "I," moreover, is not Virginia Woolf, but "only a convenient term for somebody who has no real being" (p. 4).

Beginning with a walk through Oxbridge University, her trajectory is full of interruptions and false turns, one of which provides a convenient starting point for my own analysis of gender, writing, and modernism. Near the beginning, totally focused on her thoughts, Woolf finds herself walking across a college lawn. "Instantly," she tells us, "a man's figure rose to intercept me. Nor did I at first understand that the gesticulations of a curious-looking object, in a cut-away coat and evening shirt, were aimed at me. His face expressed horror and indignation. Instinct rather than reason came to my help; he was a Beadle; I was a woman. This was the turf; there was the path. Only the Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me" (p. 6).[2] Woolf's narrator does not complain about her exclusion from the turf here—the only harm done, she remarks ironically, is that the Beadle's intervention caused her to forget her thought. When the exclusion is repeated, however, this time at the door of the library, the narrator reacts more directly—"Never will I ask for hospitality again, I vowed, as I descended the steps in anger" (p. 8). Resolved nevertheless to admire the famous buildings from the outside, the narrator resumes her meditation on her status as a woman writer and scholar, on what it means to tell the story of women's lives *as a woman*. Woolf's parable of interruption, exclusion, and writing—her marginal position in Oxbridge—illuminates the locus of femininity and women's discourse at the particular moment of her narration, the 1920s.

A Room of One's Own, like a number of women's *Künstlerromane* of the twenties, defines the liminal discourse of a female artist who stands both inside and outside of the library, both inside and outside of the structures of tradition, representation, and the symbolic. They do so by means of a particularly female and very private thematics—the mother-daughter relationship. This chapter analyzes this distinctive mapping of a territory through readings of Colette's *Break of Day (La Naissance du jour)*, Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, and Edith Wharton's *The Mother's Recompense*. It interrogates the intersection of the sex-gender system of the woman writer, the narrative strategies she chooses, and the distinctive shift in cultural images of femininity which marks the modernist moment and which can be gleaned from psychoanalytic narratives emerging during the same period.

The difficulties Woolf's narrator encounters in *A Room of One's Own* can serve as parables for understanding the peculiar strategies devised in women's writing of the period. Faced with totally contradictory representations of "woman" in the books of male "experts" and forced to come up with some answers of her own, she oscillates, in her exploration, between the shelves of the British Museum and the dining rooms of a women's college. The same oscillation marks her thinking.[3] On the one hand, Woolf's text insists on a female difference which is and must be inscribed into women's writing: the sentence available is unsuited for a woman's use, she tells us, and must be transformed, adapted to the female body and to women's ways of working, which will always be subject to interruption and to inadequate concentration. On the other hand, she says that "it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex" (p. 108). Criticizing Charlotte Brontë for letting a female anger contaminate her writing, she advocates the androgynous consummation of "some marriage of opposites": "It is fatal to be a man or a woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly" (p. 108).

Critical assessments of these obvious contradictions in Woolf's text have varied. Jane Marcus, for example, asks: "How can she hold both views at once? . . . She is biased in favor of women."[4] Peggy Kamuf, on the other hand, sees Woolf's interruptions as providing her with a means to unravel the sexual opposition which has been the root of women's oppression and exclusion.[5] In contrast to both of these views, I see Woolf's text as offering her a way to address the contradictions of her gendered position within academic and literary convention. I would argue that Woolf's is a strategy of inconclusiveness—embracing rather than denying contradiction, lingering on process rather than rushing toward conclusion, zigzagging around Oxbridge and London rather than directly pursuing a destination—a strategy appropriate to someone who, having been represented as object, strains to define herself as subject. Woolf does so neither by insisting on a separate female culture nor by deconstructing gender dichotomies, but rather by walking both paths simultaneously, by affirming difference and undoing it at the same time.[6] The dialogic form of her essay/lecture, a dialogue not only with the "mothers" of past tradition and the "daughters" at Girton, but also with the fathers, brothers, and sons who, as Adrienne Rich suggests in her reading of the essay, are always eavesdropping, serves as a model of discourse available to the woman who is turned away from the steps of the library.[7] If Woolf's insights into women and writing are valuable, then, it is precisely because they subvert each other and lead, as one recent critic deploringly observes, to "a thicket of self-refutation."[8] This chapter argues that Woolf's oscillations in *A Room* ultimately do become her mark of gendered specificity, characteristic of the circuitous strategies of female modernism.

One of the protagonists of Woolf's narrative in *A Room* is Judith Shakespeare, the imaginary sister of William, and Woolf's emblem for the woman artist. Judith's story reveals a sexual division of labor which has disastrous results for women's artistic aspirations. Shakespeare's sister does not write, of course; her talents remain undeveloped, her hopes unfulfilled. Typically for a woman who is also an artist, she flees an arranged marriage, but ends up committing suicide as a result of an unwanted pregnancy by the man who had offered to aid her in her career. Woolf never suggests that William could have offered Judith access to his masculine creative world; she is less than sanguine about the fraternal

fantasies that marked female family romances in the Victorian period. As Sara Ruddick suggests: "No matter how good a brother Shakespeare might have been, he could not have offered his world to his sister. . . . there would have been no place in his world for a person with a woman's body who wished to practise a man's art" (p. 191).[9] And yet *A Room*, locating itself at a different moment from that in which Judith Shakespeare was thwarted, does propose the solution of androgyny in fraternal terms.

After engaging in painful thoughts about the separate realm of femininity, and after puzzling through Mary Carmichael's revolutionary female sentence and broken sequence, Woolf's narrator finds refuge in the idea of androgyny.[10] When she arrives at her emblematic vision of the young girl and young man getting into the taxicab, she finds the "natural" quality of the image of heterosexuality to be a great relief: "Perhaps to think, as I had been thinking these two days, of one sex as distinct from the other is an effort. It interferes with the unity of the mind. . . . some of these states of mind seem, even if adopted spontaneously, to be less comfortable than others. In order to keep oneself continuing in them one is unconsciously holding something back, and gradually the repression becomes an effort" (pp. 100–101). The idea of androgyny, of the "natural" cooperation of the sexes, emerges for Woolf as one state of mind that requires no effort. And the mind that emerges as most fully androgynous and, at the same time, most clearly exemplary of the dangers of androgyny is the mind of Shakespeare himself. But there is a cost: his very androgyny may be what prevents him from thinking of women, his sister for example. His lack of thoughtfulness, Woolf's narrator maintains, takes on disastrous proportions in the modern era. If Shakespeare's sister is to be born in the twentieth century, she tentatively concludes, it will be not as a result of her brother's help, but instead with that of her sisters and mothers: "she would come if we worked for her" (p. 117). Here Woolf reinforces the female line of literary inheritance she refers to as "thinking back through our mothers": "For masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people, so that the experience of the mass is behind the single voice" (p. 69).

Just like androgyny, however, female assistance has its own grave limitations. When Woolf's narrator compares the modest dinner in the women's college with the elegant and filling meal at Oxbridge, we notice the beginnings of her resentment against the mothers whose nurturing of their daughters leaves much to be desired:[11] "What had our mothers been doing then that they had no wealth to leave us?" (p. 21). Beyond failing to provide the financial inheritance that would foster female education and creativity, however, mothers have actively impeded the daughters' freedom to write. Woolf explains this most clearly with the figure of the angel in the house in her 1931 essay "Professions for Women."[12] The maternal angel is the figure who encourages the woman writer to "be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of your sex. Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own. Above all, be pure" (p. 59), and who must be killed if women are to continue to create. "Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of the woman writer" (p. 60), Woolf insists, in a tone that does not succeed in concealing her rage.

Both solutions—androgyny and male identification, on the one hand, and the act of "thinking back through our mothers," on the other—are frought with contradiction and ambivalence. I would argue that the process of oscillating between them, however, is attractive not only because it is the only course to take but because it suggests the possibility of a different construction of femininity and of narrative. In speaking about the split consciousness Woolf's narrator discovers in herself in the passage that serves as an epigram to this chapter, Mary Jacobus says: "To recognize both the split and the means by which it is constituted, to challenge its terms while necessarily working within them—that is the hidden narrative of the trespass on the grass."[13] This sort of double consciousness has, in fact, become a paradigm for the discussion of women's writing within feminist criticism. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar have spoken of "duplicity" and a palimpsestic structure; Elaine Showalter has discussed strategies of submerged plots within dominant plots which create a "double-voiced discourse."[14] I would like to emphasize that the strategy that *A Room* allows us to define, and which will be evident in the novels discussed in this chapter, is one of contradiction and oscillation rather than submersion. Although the language of darkness and concealment is still used, the fictions themselves bring the "submerged" plots to the surface, thereby creating dual, sometimes multiple plots in which contradictory elements rival one another. DuPlessis's notion of a "female aesthetic" that embraces a "both/and" vision and for which Virginia Woolf is a "locus classicus" ("For the Etruscans," p. 149) seems to me most useful for a reading of modernist texts by women writers. If the strategy of oscillation and contradiction is still applicable beyond the moment of modernism, it is helpful to locate it firmly within what I see as its historical and cultural origins.

A Fictional World Where Boy Never Meets Girl

Woolf wrote *A Room of One's Own* at a moment at which both the shapes of literary plot and the shapes of women's lives were changing quite dramatically, and the questions she asks, the strategies of her argument, both reflect and map some of these changes. Suffrage in Britain and America, increased educational opportunities, women's increased independence as a result of World War I, and innovations in childbirth technology are but a few of the social factors altering women's lives. The changes in male/female relationships resulting from the first World War were drastic and pervasive: "When the guns fired in August 1914," Woolf

asks "did the faces of men and women show so plain in each other's eyes that romance was killed?" (*A Room*, p. 15).[15]

In *Literary Women*, Ellen Moers defines an important shift of emphasis in modern fiction from the heterosexual plot of courtship, marriage, and adultery to the story of what she calls "maternal seduction."[16] For Moers, this movement of the novel "beyond courtship to a fictional world where boy never meets girl" finds its most salient examples in the women writers of the 1920s. Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, Willa Cather, and Colette, Moers points out, all recount the female artist's story in relation not to a father or male lover, but to a powerful, seductive, traditionally female mother-goddess.[17] Woolf and her contemporaries thematize the relation of the process of artistic production to familial configurations and psychological structures. But their family romances differ radically from those that predominate in the Victorian period. Female *Künstlerromane* of the 1920s feature young and middle-aged women who renounce love and marriage in favor of creative work, who renounce connection in favor of self-affirmation. This rebellious choice is intimately bound up in their relationships with their mothers but often is in great conflict with the choices the mothers themselves have made. What emerges in Colette's texts and in Woolf's novels and essays of this period is an intense, passionate, and ambivalent preoccupation with the mother, which oscillates between a longing for connection and a need for disconnection.

Typically, Colette finds, in her explorations of female identity, that "at no time has the catastrophe of love, in all its phases and consequences, formed a part of the true intimate life of a woman."[18] Beneath the plot of love, adultery, and betrayal, Colette suggests, there are "other important and obscure secrets which she herself does not understand very well" and which, she suggests, explain the characteristically autobiographical nature of women's novels. Even if women write about love, they are still concealing their "darkest plots." Woolf, when calling for new fictional forms in her essay on "Modern Fiction" corroborates this insight in similar language: "the problem before the novelist at present, . . . is to contrive means of being free to set down what he chooses. He has to have the courage to say that what interests him is no longer 'this', but 'that': out of 'that' alone must he construct his work. For the moderns 'that', the point of interest, lies very likely in the dark places of psychology."[19] I would argue that for Woolf and Colette, and for female modernists more generally, those "dark places" contain the hidden narrative of the passionate attachment between mother and daughter. Moreover, modernist writing strategies, characterized by increased room for subjective representations of consciousness, allow this previously hidden narrative to come to the surface of women's fiction.

The conjunction of the refusal of heterosexual love and the romance plot and of a celebration of mothers is a pervasive feature of women's writing in the 1920s. Yet it is important to realize that this interrogation and celebration of maternity is in itself new for women writers and intimately tied to this moment of textual production. For Kate Chopin's Edna, maternity meant the denial of all artistic ambition. Woolf's Judith Shakespeare commits suicide rather than becoming a mother. The fourth Mary, missing from *A Room of One's Own*, is Mary Hamilton, who was tried and executed for infanticide. *A Room* makes clear that motherhood and achievement were utterly incompatible in previous generations; yet Woolf does begin to entertain the conjunction for the present and certainly for the future. I would suggest that interest in maternity, however limited, could emerge only at a time in history when motherhood had become less life-threatening and more of a choice for women. As Susan Gubar points out in her excellent discussion of the female *Künstlerroman*, the invention, improvement, and greater availability of contraception, the radically lower birth rate, and the significant decrease in mother and infant mortality, all of which occurred in the teens and twenties, made it possible for women writers to reimagine the maternal.[20] Significantly, however, they did so not for themselves but for the generation of their mothers, attempting to unite the disparate experiences of two generations separated by a remarkable shift in opportunity for women, to minimize the distance between the emergence of women as artists and the conventional femininity embraced by their mothers. Whereas in Victorian fiction the distance between the heroine and her mother needed to be maintained, here connection has become possible, even necessary. Even while the daughter-artist herself still does not become a mother, the mother's life can be and needs to be known and explored in its details, incorporated into the daughter's vision. Yet these texts about mothers are elegies;[21] they are not composed by the daughters until the mothers are dead. Only then can memory and desire play their roles as instruments of connection, reconstruction, and reparation. In fact, one might say that, in contrast to the Victorian examples, death here enables the mothers to be *present* rather than *absent*.

In Gubar's analysis, Katherine Mansfield's liberation from the fear of maternity and her ability to envision a form of art centered not in autonomy but in connection, not in a bodiless mind, but in a female body, was a direct result of her brother's death in the war. Mansfield is the sister who, freed both from fraternal fantasy and from sisterly subservience, can flourish: "Her brother's death liberates her to celebrate women's capacity to birth as an aspect of the artistry she enacts as a fiction writer," Gubar says ("Birth of the Artist," p. 34). While claiming to bring the dead brother back to life, however, Mansfield, like Woolf and Colette, creates a fictional world in which women and female relationships predominate. But as the rest of this chapter demonstrates, the break from the plot of romantic love and from the fantasy of the "man-who-would-understand" is never total; the mother coexists uneasily with the male figure—brother, father, heterosexual lover—who is always still part of the story and who, in fact, enables the story of mother and daughter to be told, who focuses the experience of

connection and disconnection, passion and renunciation. In this period, then, the mother-daughter narrative tries to displace the narrative of heterosexual romance, tries to find its *own* language and expressive medium, but it cannot do so entirely. Mother-daughter narratives are still subject to what Adrienne Rich has termed the institution of "compulsory heterosexuality."[22] The term "oscillation" may serve here as well, to describe the complicated plots that emerge out of these shifting rivalries and competing affiliations.

Break of Day, *To the Lighthouse*, and *The Mother's Recompense* represent at once experiments with the composition of what Colette speaks of as "a book that isn't about love, adultery, semi-incestuous relations and a final separation" (*Break of Day*, p. 19) and experiments with novelistic forms that will accommodate that new story. Re-mapping the familial configurations which are the bases of literary construction, these novels demonstrate how circuitous women's efforts at writing and "thinking back through their mothers" have to be.

Discovering the Pre-Oedipus

"Ce n'est pas dans la zone illuminée que se trame le pire" ["It is not in the illuminated zone that the darkest plots are woven"] says Colette, using two centrally Freudian images for femininity, weaving and archaeology. Significantly, it is also in the 1920s that Freud, revising his developmental theory, comes to recognize the importance of the pre-oedipal bond between the girl and her mother, a bond that underlies and, in some ways, outweighs the formative power of the Oedipus complex. The archaeological image Freud uses to describe the discovery of the pre-Oedipus highlights its concealed and subversive power—it is, he says, "like the discovery, in another field, of the Minoan-Mycenean civilization behind the civilization of Greece."[23] Here Freud echoes, as well, the important archaeological discoveries and anthropological theories positing a matriarchal pre-history to patriarchy, theories much under discussion in the twenties. One of their prime proponents, Jane Ellen Harrison, makes a brief appearance in *A Room of One's Own* as "a bent figure, formidable yet humble, with her great forehead and her shabby dress—could it be the famous scholar, could it be the great J——— H——— herself?" (p. 17).[24] That name, and presumably the discoveries associated with it, signal for Woolf's narrator a mysterious unease: "All was dim, yet intense too, as if the scarf which the dusk had flung over the garden were torn asunder by star or sword—the flash of some terrible reality leaping, as its way is, out of the heart of the spring" (p. 17). Could the terrible reality be Harrison's discussion of a matriarchal past underlying the patriarchal present—and tearing its surface asunder?[25]

Freud stresses the almost total repression of the pre-oedipal stage of mother-love and the analyst's difficulty in reaching it. The pre-Oedipus, he surmises, has no narrative and no history: it can be reached only retrospectively, after it has already been abandoned, more or less successfully. Lacan's later reformulation clarifies that the pre-oedipal stage coincides with the pre-verbal imaginary stage which has to give way to the symbolic. As Freud envisions the story of female development, the mother-daughter bond must be abandoned in favor of a strong attachment to the father which, in turn, must be superceded by the adult love of another man and the conception of a child, preferably male. Freud's essays on femininity written in the late twenties attempt, in various ways, to motivate this shift away from maternal affiliation, a shift that is obvious for the boy threatened by castration, but not at all obvious for the girl.[26] Yet the girl's shift is utterly crucial for Freud inasmuch as the very idea of heterosexuality and his definition of adult femininity in culture depend on its successful completion; in his words, it demonstrates "how a woman develops out of a child with a bi-sexual disposition" ("Femininity" (1933), vol 21:116).

As Freud sees it, when the girl abandons her mother as libidinal object she transforms her sexuality from an active (masculine) to a passive (feminine) one. She transfers her attachment to the father and represses her love for her mother. And she has to accept the painful and humiliating "fact" of her castration. In view of the discontinuities that distinguish the female developmental course from the straightforwardly linear male one, it does not surprise Freud that this should be such a problematic moment for the girl, often leading to neurosis: "this phase of attachment to the mother is especially intimately related to the aetiology of hysteria, . . . in this dependence on the mother we have the germ of later paranoia in women" ("Female Sexuality," vol. 22:227). Further complexity in the identity of the adult woman derives from what Freud identifies as left-overs—the girl's inability to surmount either the pre-Oedipus or the Oedipus complex adequately, and thus to reach maturity in a smooth manner. Her difficulty may well derive from the fact that, for her, maturity is a passive subordination to male superiority, or what Teresa de Lauretis has called the girl's "consent to femininity," connecting the process and the narrative of that consent with the female Oedipal scenario.[27] Freud insists that the mother remains an important figure in the adult woman's life, often determining the nature and quality of marital relationships. Although teleologically determined, adult femininity, at its best, is the result of a long, conflicted, and discontinuous developmental course, marked by what Elizabeth Abel has termed "a series of costly repressions."[28] In fact, many women fail to complete these successfully, even at the enormous cost they exact, and end up either with "a general revulsion from sexuality," ("Female Sexuality," vol. 21:229) or the victims of a "masculinity complex" which can lead to homosexuality.

Where is the narrative of the repressed "pre-historical," pre-oedipal mother-daughter attachment for Freud and the analysts of the twenties and early thirties? As his argument evolves in the course of the essays he devotes to this topic, Freud himself not only views the female pre-Oedipus

as more and more important, but he also describes it in more detail. However, the particulars he provides in "Femininity" (1933), his fullest account, are remarkably unimaginative. In fact, he seems to read mother-daughter relations from the retrospective point of view of the oedipal, father-daughter phase: "We knew, of course, that there had been a preliminary stage of attachment to the mother, but we did not know that it could be so rich in content and so long-lasting, and could leave behind so many opportunities for fixations and dispositions. . . . Almost everything that we find later in her relation to her father was already present in this earlier attachment and has been transferred subsequently on to the father" (vol. 22:119). Even the fantasy of paternal seduction is only a repetition of an earlier fantasy in which the seducer was the mother, he maintains. In this version of the developmental narrative, the drama of mother and daughter has no distinctive features. As Abel insists, "Prehistory is written from the vantage point of history" (*Virginia Woolf*, Introduction). It is as though the narrative of mother-daughter attachment can only be extrapolated from the later father-daughter bond, even though its impact is at least equally powerful.

In these later essays, Freud carries on a dialogue with a number of women analysts whose work touches on female development. He concedes, at one point, that female analysts have a clearer access to their patients' pre-oedipal content than he does (vol. 21: 226–227). In fact, the contemporary narratives of Melanie Klein, Karen Horney, and Helene Deutsch do provide a fuller account of the pre-oedipal phase and, in some cases, of mother-daughter attachments. For example, Melanie Klein, and later D. W. Winnicott, move the drama of development back to the first year of life and center it in maternal-child interactions. The breast and feeding are the prime elements of this pre-verbal set of object relations and the child's cognitive efforts are directed almost exclusively toward the mother—dealing with her contradictory influence, processing the anger that her power incites, protecting itself from the fear she elicits, making reparation for the aggressive impulses she unleashes in the child. Although Klein's narrative is not specifically gendered, it revolves, for children of both sexes, around the figure of the mother. The father merely allows the girl to repeat her earlier interaction with her mother and thus to deal with it more effectively. The mother remains an important psychic presence throughout life, motivating even the production of art and culture. What is significant about Klein's work, for my purposes, is that she attempts to arrive at this pre-oedipal story not by way of the father but through observation of children—by means of its indirect expression in play.[29]

For Klein, as for Karen Horney and Ernest Jones, the transfer of affection from mother to father, which had caused Freud so much anxiety, is motivated through a "natural" and innate tendency toward heterosexuality. This hypothesis divorces sexuality from reproduction and grants women a primary sexual impulse. Karen Horney even suggests that Freud's sequence might be reversed, and that this natural heterosexual attraction to the father and not envy of the penis or the rejection of her mother may be primarily responsible for the girl's interest in the penis.[30] Horney, unlike Klein, does not pay a great deal of attention to the mother-child bond or to maternal identification; instead she sees the father as a primary figure of desire and identification in the girl's developmental journey. Yet, that journey is also a conflicted and complicated one, moving to what she calls the "flight from womanhood"—the adoption of a fictitious male role, motivated socially by "the actual disadvantage under which women labor in social life." It is here that Horney's interest in a primary femininity, marked by vaginal sensations, genital anxiety, and reproductive pleasure, emerges, explaining her rejection of the central role penis envy plays in psychoanalytic theory: "At this point I, as a woman, ask in amazement, what about motherhood? And the blissful consciousness of bearing a new life within oneself? And the ineffable happiness of the increasing expectation of the appearance of this new being? And the joy when it finally makes its appearance and one holds it for the first time in one's arms? And the deep and pleasurable feeling of satisfaction in suckling it and the happiness of the whole period when the infant needs her care?" (p. 205). This remarkable passage comes early in Horney's essay, but its subversive message is quickly abandoned in favor of the long discussion of the "flight from womanhood." This ambivalence firmly places Horney in the modernist posture of duplicity and contradiction we encountered in *A Room of One's Own*. She embraces for women a passionate heterosexual orientation and an androgynous male identification. Yet, she affirms the pleasures and dangers of a primary femininity and tells the story of pre-oedipal mother-child attachment from the mother's own perspective. Horney thereby calls into question, albeit indirectly, some of the foundations of contemporaneous psychoanalytic thought and the sequential, teleological narrative of development. She fails, however, to draw out some of the potentially far-reaching implications of her series of open-ended questions.[31]

The language of Helene Deutsch is closest to the terms I have used to describe the conflictual femininity of *A Room*. Deutsch sees female development as a process of "bi-sexual oscillation between mother and father." "Thus the task of adolescence is not only to master the oedipus complex, but also to continue the work begun during prepuberty and early puberty, that is, to give adult forms to the old, much deeper, and much more primitive ties with the mother, and to end all bisexual wavering in favor of a definite heterosexual orientation."[32] Although she firmly upholds the Freudian telos, Deutsch's term "oscillation" adumbrates the forces of female identification and maternal attachment which continually undermine it.

What are the implications of these psychoanalytic debates in the 1920s and early 30s for the structures of narrative? I return here to my discussion of narrative structures in chapter 1. If narrative is indeed based in oedipal

structures, as I argued there, and if the female Oedipus is perceived to take a different, more complicated, circuitous form, then narrative structures adopted by women writers should reflect some of these complications.[33] There are several suggestions of difference that we can glean from Woolf's outline of the sex-gender system typical for the modernist woman writer and from the period's psychoanalytic accounts of female identity. For example, we might conclude that the narrative of female development would not be linear or teleological but would reflect the oscillations between maternal and paternal attachments as well as the multiple repressions of the female developmental course. Pre-oedipal closeness to the mother, oedipal separation and attachment to the father, the subsequent transfer of that attachment to another male love object and the wish for a child, combined with the many forms of resistance against this course—continued female identification, or the "flight from womanhood"—all of these configurations do find their way into the narrative structures exemplified by Woolf, Colette, and their contemporaries. From this perspective the story of mother and daughter needs to be told retrospectively, by way of the father. Melanie Klein's notion of reparation may also suggest why these texts are so pointedly oriented to the mother as addressee. Teresa de Lauretis's direct connection between narrative and psychology, her elaboration of the "duplicity of th(e Oedipal) scenario and the specific contradiction of the female subject in it" (*Alice Doesn't*, p. 157) is helpful here. Her book explores what she calls the "politics of self-representation" of the woman writing in these circumstances. In the oedipal scenario, de Lauretis explains, woman is not the subject but the object of desire; her story, still embedded in male desire, is the cruel tale of her eventual consensual participation in the male plot.[34]

However, it seems to me that Karen Horney's remarkable description of the sensations and feelings associated with reproduction also suggests a narrative pattern different from the dynamically temporal one outlined by Peter Brooks and discussed in chapter 1—"retard, postponement, error and partial revelation" leading to the end, meaning, and truth, that is, to death.[35] Horney's interrogative format in itself points toward the radically pro-spective and openended nature of maternal preoccupation and perhaps of maternal narrative.

The Demeter myth illustrates well the complicated intersections of gender and plot raised by these texts. Narratability itself, the Homeric hymn suggests, demands some form of breech, some space of anxiety and desire into which to inscribe itself. The perpetuation of infantile plenitude cannot offer a model for plot. The story of mother and daughter comes into being only through Hades' rape, through the intervention of the father/husband. The compromise resolution, however, again rests not on "retard, postponement" or "deferral" but on *continued opposition, interruption, and contradiction*. As we follow Persephone's return to her mother for one part of the year and her repeated descent to marriage and the underworld for the rest, it seems to me that we have to revise our very notion of resolution. At the end of the story, Persephone's allegiance is split between mother and husband, her posture is dual. The repeated cycle relies not on reconciliation, but on continued opposition to sustain and perpetuate it. Persephone literally enacts the "bi-sexual oscillation" of the Freudian female plot.

Some feminist critics have wished to substitute a female vision of plenitude, shared knowledge, connection and continuity for male narrative models based on lack and dissatisfaction. The emblematic example of "The Hymn to Demeter" conveys, I believe, that such a simple reversal fails to take into account the particular incongruities and multiplicities of women's affiliative patterns, and the ways in which women—even women who bond and identify with women—are implicated in heterosexual plots.

"An Open and Unending Book": Colette's *Break of Day*

Feminist critics in search of female specificity have privileged the relation between Colette and her mother, described in numerous autobiographical, semi-autobiographical, and fictional works. It seems that Colette's role in women's literary history is to signal an exception from a mother-daughter conflict that we have come to assume as inevitable, to sketch a mother-daughter relationship in which the daughter's "separate self develops within an unbroken stream of primary love."[36] It has become accepted to view Sido and the garden world of Puisaye as the source of Colette's creativity. Both Nancy K. Miller and Germaine Brée have used the example of Colette to expand our conception of the process of literary creation.[37] Revising Michel Beaujour's account of the poetics of the *autoportrait*, Miller asserts: "Thinking back through her mother, Colette's 'I' does not suffer the fate of the 'modern individual' whose 'curse comes from the simple fact of his *birth* rejected from the maternal breast, marked with the sign of the *ego*, condemned to wandering and conquest . . . or else to their obverse, interminable writing.' Unlike the male model of the genre, Colette's self-portrait is comfortably connected to the maternal body" (Eisinger, p. 173). Brée goes even further to suggest that "Writing for her (Colette) is released less by the fear of loss than by this secret knowledge. . . . Thus writing is the opposite of a breech, it is a rite of preservation" (Tétel, 112; my translation).

My reading of *Break of Day* finds such a revised theory—of writing emerging not from lack but from plenitude, not from disconnection but from comfortable connection—not to be borne out by the text. The story of mother-daughter love does allow us to revise our paradigm of what is narratable, does allow us to base it elsewhere than in the "catastrophe" of romantic love or the drama of ambition and possession, but such a revision, this text suggests, has serious limits. If the story of female development, as it is told in the modernist period, does not proceed inevitably

from maternal to paternal/heterosexual attachment, as Freud would have it, neither can it remain immersed in primary love. It needs to situate itself in the liminal space between a passionate maternal eroticism and the anxieties which shape the heterosexual plot.

Break of Day is a story of renunciation. At middle age, "Colette" is faced with the prospect of a young love, Vial, and refusing his advances, affirms her independent life "outside of loving" to use the terms of George Eliot's Maggie Tulliver. This refusal is inscribed into a reading of her mother's letters and a reflection on her similarity to/difference from her mother. Yet the process of "thinking back through her mother," the impulse to "bring my mother close to me again" is far from comfortable. In fact, it is marked by conflict and anxiety. In its oscillation between Vial (love) and the memory of "Sido" (maternal attachment), between the narrator's youthful yearning for passion and the acceptance of middle age, the text pulls disquietingly in two different directions.[38]

The text begins with "Sido's" own famous letter of renunciation. An answer to an invitation to visit her daughter, it is written to Henri de Jouvenel, Colette's second husband. "I'm not going to accept your kind invitation. . . . The reason is that my pink cactus is probably going to flower. It's a very rare plant I've been given, and I'm told that in our climate it flowers only once every four years. Now, I'm already a very old woman, and if I went away when my pink cactus is about to flower, I am certain I shouldn't see it flower again" (p. 5). Triumphantly and lovingly, "Colette" defines her own identity in her lengthy reflection on this refusal: "I am the daughter of the woman who wrote that letter. . . . I am the daughter of a woman who . . ." (pp. 5–6). This mode of self-identification is prompted by a particular anxiety, a need for recognition and affirmation which structures the space of the entire novel: "Now that little by little I am beginning to age, and little by little taking on her likeness in the mirror, I wonder whether, if she were to return, she would recognize me for her daughter, in spite of the resemblance of our features" (p. 6). Throughout the text, "Colette" is eager to establish points of contact with her mother on every level: "Sido" is "my model," "you who are always with me"; "Colette" is "her own image, coarsened and impure" (p. 25). This anxiety is all the more surprising when we realize that "Sido's" initial refusal to see her daughter is Colette's construction. In her biography of Colette, Michelle Sarde quotes the actual letter on which the novel is based, which contains an eager, almost passionate acceptance of the invitation for a reason "I can never resist: seeing my daughter's face and hearing her voice."[39] Why the drastic transformation? Why begin her novel with a constructed separation which results in anxiety and discomfort?

Some critics have resorted to biography, suggesting that Colette transforms the letter because of her own guilt at not having seen enough of her mother shortly before Sido's death (Sido, in fact, never came for that visit).[40] Other more closely textual reasons are possible, however. I would argue that "Sido's" letter presents a model for the renunciation "Colette" herself needs to learn in the course of her non-affair with Vial—initial distance between mother and daughter paradoxically establishes a relationship of imitation. As they tell the story of child development, psychoanalytic theories traditionally cast the mother as the one who desires connection and the child as the one who struggles to separate; however, Colette invents a mother who desires separation, thereby making it easier for her to resolve the conflict between attachment and separation herself.

More importantly, this initial distance fulfills the same function as Hades' rape in the Demeter myth by creating the space that makes plot possible. "Comfortable connection" carries with it the danger of non-meaning, a sinking back into a night of non-differentiation, a night which will never turn into dawn. Colette dramatizes this danger when she outlines a story which, she says, she has always wanted to write, of a "family devoured, bones and all, by its parents" (p. 40). This text would suggest, then, that death and non-meaning, and *not* a different narrative model, emerge from the perpetuation of infantile plenitude. "Sido's" refusal, moreover, is addressed to the husband, who already stands as the disruptive presence between mother and daughter.

The anxiety that creates the impulse for this narrative is primarily sexual, implicating mother-daughter connection in the institution of compulsory heterosexuality. As Nancy K. Miller has shown, this novel is part of a group of women's novels which inscribe a maternal intratext of sexual renunciation.[41] Although "Colette," like her mother, is awake at break of day, she wears not a blue apron with pockets full of grain for the fowls, but is "half-naked in a fluttering wrap hastily slipped on, standing at my door which had admitted a nightly visitor" (p. 7). Throughout Colette's work, this male figure intervenes between "Sido" and "Colette." Whether it turns out to be Willy, Chéri, or Vial, the attachment to this figure creates the distinction between pure and impure, it separates her from the garden world of her childhood "of which I am no longer worthy." The story of "Colette" and "Sido" is inextricably connected to men. The husband is the addressee of the initial letter, while the young lover occasions the reading of the mother's letters and the complex process of identification between mother and daughter. As Colette places the mother/daughter plot within the tale of heterosexual love, it becomes clear that the story of renunciation can be realized on the level of represented experience, but not fully on the level of narrative, nor, for that matter, on the level of "reality."[42]

Nevertheless, the male presence in the text constitutes no more than an instrument which allows the story of mother-daughter love to be represented. While the scenes with Vial have been criticized as unconvincing, the mother/daughter plot contains the great passion and interest in this book. As she says no to Vial, "Colette" revises the conventional love story which leaves woman depleted, emptied of resources and creativity,

addicted to giving with neurotic compulsion. Love thwarts development, limiting the woman who has lived for a single man to "the shrivelled innocence of an old maid" (p. 19). In her new-found freedom from this danger, "Colette" attempts to achieve the serenity she has seen in her mother and to copy "Sido's" calm self-enrichment that has taken the place of compulsive giving. This transformation and revision is aesthetic as well as experiential. Vial (or love) is not only dangerous; he has become boring; what is missing between them is desire, "that supreme intruder." Vial represents the "déjà-lu," a story that has been told too many times.

In Colette's text, "Sido" is at once absent (she said she would not come, she is dead) and present (in the text of her letters). Neither absence (loss) nor presence (fulfillment) are total—Colette alters the letters: "Sido" is gone but also is part of "Colette." What structures the narrative, then, is not an initial loss and the desire for restitution, not an insatiable appetite seeking gratification, but the paradox and contradiction emerging from the simultaneity of loss and gain, separation and closeness, difference and similarity. Applauding her distance from the time in her life "when I inclined only in one direction, like those allegorical figures at the source of rivers, cradled and drawn along by their watery tresses" (p. 31), Colette suggests a multiple narrative model based on substitution, alternation, and contradiction.

Taking "Sido" instead of Vial as the object and the model for love alters "Colette's" conception of loving altogether. She discovers, in her mother's letters, a life full of passionate attachments, but the passion "Sido" stands for is never single-minded, never oriented toward possession. From Sido, Colette learns to love through abstaining, to refrain from directly touching the butterfly's beautiful wing. The built-in distance and abstention seem to provide the possibility of a relation that would devour neither subject nor object but would still create the space necessary for narrative.

Sido's last letter makes this message clear in its very opaqueness.[43] The letter is the avant-garde text par excellence. The message "Colette" receives is that her mother no longer feels the obligation to use our language. The two sheets of the letter contain signs that seem joyous, arrows, small rays surrounding a word, two "yes yes" and a short "she danced." At the bottom, Colette finds the address "mon amour." In the process of reading this text and of transmitting it (because it no longer uses our language, it cannot be copied like the other letters but must be described, translated, interpreted, recreated in the medium of language), "Colette" must assume both the roles of receiver and sender; she must project herself into the very text of the letter. For "Colette," the letter conceals not a story but an image that she would rather not face, the image of the dying mother. The letter itself cannot be read for a clear significance—its message lies in its very resistance to interpretation, a resistance which Colette simply accepts. Instead of a "confused delirium," Colette finds in it "a new alphabet, . . . one of those haunted landscapes where, to puzzle you, a face lies hidden among the leaves, an arm in the fork of a tree, a body under the cluster of a rock" (p. 142). As she vacillates between figure and ground, Colette reassembles the maternal body which has been fragmented, dispersed, and transfigured, merging with the landscape. "Sido's" almost other-worldly maternal discourse is perpetually poised at the edge of non-meaning, only to be wrested from a submersion in the permanent darkness into which "Sido" herself has disappeared by "Colette's" own investment.

The end of the novel again finds "Colette" at break of day, suspended at the moment of differentiation, dawn barely "wrested from the night." Yet, as she lies there, she is no more comfortable than she was at the beginning. As Vial figures in her thoughts, she is impatient, eager, hungry. She knows that what is needed is a process of transformation, through which love would retain its formal properties but would abdicate its male object in favor of a cosmic content: "But I only have to help him and lo! he will turn into a quickset hedge, spindrift, meteors, an open and unending book, a cluster of grapes, a ship, an oasis. . . ." (p. 143). By imagining and announcing, in the future tense, the conflation of the male lover with the pink cactus, her mother's own object of passionate attachment, Colette finds a way to live with the contradictions in her life and in her text, to embrace the logic of "both/and." As we have seen, *Break of Day* is very much tied to love and to narrative as we conventionally know it. Sido's last letter may present a model for a different narrative, one about which "Colette" can fantasize at break of day, but Colette herself cannot write in the absence of some vestiges of conventional plot, vestiges she would like to and, to a degree, does transform into the elements of a new story, "an open and unending book."

The modernist form of her text participates in the duple logic she embraces at the end of the novel. It is multiple, containing the voices of "Sido" and "Colette," signaled by a mixture of italic and roman print. All roles get reversed when "Sido" is presented as a lover—"*Can it be then that, in my way, I am a great lover? That's a discovery that would much have astonished my two husbands*" (p. 23)—and a writer—"Between us two which one is the better writer, she or I?" (p. 141). Cause and effect, origin and consequence are frequently reversed, as "Sido's" letters move from being pretexts for the narrative to the central position as text. The novel hovers indefinably between fiction and autobiography: "You have sensed that in this novel the novel does not exist," writes Colette to a critic.[44] It announces a renunciation of love, just as Colette herself is about to marry for the third time. It is perhaps the most passionate story of mother/daughter attachment in literary history, yet that story is still inscribed in a conventional tale of heterosexual seduction. In the novel, the love plot, proceeding forward chronologically, rivals the mother/daughter plot, which proceeds associatively and retrospectively. These indeterminacies demand of the reader an acceptance and an acting out of contradiction, an oscillating reading similar to the one "Colette" herself demonstrates as she reads "Sido's" last

letter. They chart the plot of mother-daughter love within the heterosexual institution of narrative which both silences and articulates it.

Dreadful Passages: Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*

At one point in *Break of Day*, "Colette" discusses what it took for her to acquire, "both legally and familiarly, as well as in my books, . . . only one name, which is my own" (p. 19). She associates that acquisition, of which she seems both proud and horrified, with the fate of those women who devote their entire lives to one man. Whether for her that one man is writing, the love plot to which her writing is so attached, or her father whose name she did indeed take, remains ambiguous. In her earlier book *My Mother's House*, however, "Colette" does identify her own writing with her father's failed attempt to write. Colonel Colette, it seems, left a series of empty notebooks on the top shelf of his bookcase and left his daughter as a kind of disciple who might fill those books with words and stories. "You represent what he would so much have liked to be when he was on earth. You are exactly what he longed to be. But he himself was never able."[45] Colette's adoption of writing as a career and an identity is thus as much tied to her relationship with her father as to her bond with her mother. In fact, it occurs in a typically triangular relationship, for the father's empty notebooks in which, figuratively, Colette writes, have only one full page: the dedication, "To Sido."

For Virginia Woolf, as well, writing involved a dual origin and a dual destination, both paternal and maternal. As Jane Marcus points out, however, Woolf's father did not leave her a series of empty notebooks; he left the text of patriarchal tradition itself.[46] It was he who initiated her into reading and writing, he who gave her books to read, and he who inspired her description of herself as "an educated man's daughter." Woolf first saw *To the Lighthouse* as a book about her father; only later does she clearly identify it with the memory of her mother. In a 1925 diary entry Woolf writes: "This is going to be fairly short, to have father's character done complete in it; and mother's; St. Ives; and childhood; and all the usual things I try to put in—life, death, etc. But in the centre is father's character, sitting in a boat, reciting, we perished, each alone, while he crushes a dying mackerel."[47] But when she writes about *To the Lighthouse* in retrospect, in "A Sketch of the Past," it is the figure of her mother which stands at the center of the entire project: "Until I was in the forties . . . the presence of my mother obsessed me. I could hear her voice, see her, imagine what she would do or say as I went about my day's doings."[48] It is *To the Lighthouse* that frees Woolf from this obsession: "I wrote the book very quickly; and when it was written, I ceased to be obsessed by my mother. I no longer hear her voice; I do not see her. I suppose that I did for myself what psycho-analysts do for their patients. I expressed some very long and deeply felt emotion. And in expressing it I explained it and then laid it to rest" (*Moments of Being*, p. 81). In the complicated genesis of this novel, then, the story of the mother displaces a projected story featuring the father. Later in "A Sketch of the Past," Woolf reevaluates yet again her father's role in relation to her mother and finds it to be more central than she had been willing to admit earlier: "Just as I rubbed out a great deal of the force of my mother's memory by writing about her in *To the Lighthouse*, so I rubbed out much of his memory there too. Yet he too obsessed me for years. Until I wrote it out, I would find my lips moving; I would be arguing with him; raging against him; saying to myself all that I had never said to him. How deep they drove themselves into me, the things it was impossible to say aloud. . . . But in me . . . rage alternated with love. It was only the other day when I read Freud for the first time, that I discovered that this violently disturbing conflict between love and hate is a common feeling; and is called ambivalence" (*Moments of Being*, p. 108). Woolf's novel acts out this alternation and ambivalence, this dual allegiance to mother and father, in its very structure and form. It thereby creates a distinctively modernist version of the female family romance. Although father, mother, brothers, and sisters all play archetypal roles, this family romance is capacious enough to include the mother in a position of centrality, to focus on her presence as well as her absence. Like *Break of Day*, it offers feminist critics a central text through which to explore the representation of mother-daughter relationships.[49]

To the Lighthouse is propelled by a desire for understanding, by a series of questions which fit Peter Brooks's schema of the novel as explanatory narrative. The novel begins with Mrs. Ramsay's answer to James's implied question about the trip to the lighthouse: "Yes, of course, if it's fine . . ."Other questions, posed by different characters at different moments structure the novel's progression: "What was there behind . . . (Mrs. Ramsay's) beauty and splendor?" (p. 46); "But after Q? What comes next?" (p. 53); "What did it all mean?" (p. 159); "Would they go to the Lighthouse tomorrow?" (p. 173); "What does it mean then, what can it all mean?" (p. 217); "What's the use of going now?" (p. 218); "D'you remember?" (p. 254); "What does it mean, how do you explain it all?" (p. 266). The primary enigma in the novel is the figure of the mother—the beautiful and mysterious Mrs. Ramsay. Repeated, rephrased, reformulated throughout the text, the questions about Mrs. Ramsay, her life, and the lives of those who surround her are not answered but are confronted with a series of oppositions. Male and female, father and mother, life and death, light and darkness, affirmation and destruction, enclosure and separation, lighthouse and window—all appear to find in the text a third term of resolution. At the end of the novel, a form of closure and discovery seems to redeem the pervasive destruction of the novel's second part, "Time Passes." Critics often focus their analyses on Woolf's strategies for resolving opposites, for finding that "razor-edge of balance between two opposite forces," for

creating in Lily the figure of the artist who is "woman-manly and man-womanly." They discuss the novel in terms of "equilibrium" (Corsa), "balance of forms" (Proudfit), the triumph of art over the "powers of darkness, dissolution and chaos" (Love); the process of maturation which depends on the integration of a male principle which will resist the engulfment that the maternal will commands (di Battista).[50]

Loss and longing mark the novel's very substance. We cannot deny that the trip happens too late, that nothing can compensate for the loss of Mrs. Ramsay, that the annihilation wrought by the war is impossible to redeem. Yet the economy of loss and recovery still operates in much of the novel, as the reader is repeatedly seduced by moments of harmonious resolution, moments which are implicit in the text's oppositional structure. Brooks emphasizes the necessity for delays and false turns on the road to healing and culmination, and it is precisely such a pattern that the novel at first seems to enact.

However seductive this sort of reading might be, it is my contention that the economy of loss and recovery and the aesthetic conceptions that accompany it are actually revised in the course of *To the Lighthouse*. I do not mean that the apparent resolution is simply ironic, but that it is left behind in favor of a different economy. My argument centers on the figure of Lily and on the relation between her work on her painting and her connection with Mrs. Ramsay.[51] In my reading, Lily's strategy is not the adoption of an androgynous artistic identity, but of a dual, perhaps duplicitous posture which, instead of resolving the differences between opposite forces, embraces contradiction as the only stance which allows the woman artist to produce.[52]

In the first section of the novel, Lily is unable to finish her painting or even to work on it productively. She is hindered both by Mrs. Ramsay's injunction that she should marry and by Charles Tansley's repeated judgement that "Women can't paint, women can't write . . ." In this period, painting is a very personal act for Lily: she describes it as a birth process in which the "passage from conception to work [is] as dreadful as any down a dark passage for a child" (p. 32). In this analogy, painting is both a way out of what she experienced as the wish for childhood fusion—during the dinner she can protect herself from the lure of the "we" by thinking about the picture and moving the salt-cellar on the tablecloth—and a way back into it, but differently, a way to know Mrs. Ramsay, to "spell out" the secret she locks up inside her, like "treasures in the tombs of kings, bearing sacred inscriptions." Sitting in the bedroom with Mrs. Ramsay, putting her head on Mrs. Ramsay's knee, Lily wonders how she can get closer, how she can know more about Mrs. Ramsay: "What art was there, known to love or cunning, by which one pressed into those secret chambers? What device for becoming, like waters poured into one jar, inextricably the same, one with the object one adored? . . . Could loving, as people called it, make her and Mrs. Ramsay one? for it was not knowledge but unity that she desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge . . ."(p. 79).[53] Critics have read this passage as an indication of Lily's immature and self-annihilating desire for fusion with the mother, a desire she must outgrow, resolve, and reframe so as to separate from Mrs. Ramsay and finish the painting. Freudian telos would, indeed, emphasize the necessity for separation as a measure of maturity and would present Mrs. Ramsay's death as the essential rupture which occasions the mourning that allows Lily to grow.

The novel itself supports such a sense of progression. The moments between Lily and Mrs. Ramsay move gradually outward from the bedroom to the dining room and finally to the beach, which occasions a return to the steps and Lily's vision. Yet this spatial progression is not clearly mirrored in Lily's thoughts and feelings. In fact, she describes the process of painting not as an externalization but as a progressive movement inward, back into the past, back beyond the "illuminated zone" into the earliest feelings of longing and desire: "She went on tunneling her way into her picture, into the past" (p. 258); "She was not inventing; she was only trying to smooth out something she had been given years ago folded up; something she had seen" (p. 295). Lily's movement into (or out of) the picture, Lily's process of painting it, is a complicated one and cannot be encompassed by either a linear or a dialectical image. In fact, it does not conform to the conceptions and images of art and the artistic process on which the other characters agree. This may well be the source of Lily's problem, that in telling or painting the story of Mrs. Ramsay, the scene of mother and child, she must redefine the forms and the expectations of art: "for it was not knowledge but unity that she desired, not inscriptions on tablets, *nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge . . .*" (my italics). If we read "men" not for its generic but for its specific meaning, we see that Lily searches for a different language, one that will not oppose knowledge and intimacy, but will allow for what we might call their tautological interrelation. In so doing, she refines the notion of modernist art, struggling painfully and against her own sense of culture and tradition, to introduce a mark of female difference.

Art, the characters agree, must last, a requirement which is distinguished from momentary enjoyment. Art must create order and understanding through its form. Like the sonnet it must be "beautiful and reasonable, clear and complete, the essence sucked out of life and held rounded here" (p. 181); "If only she could put them together, she felt, write them out in some sentence, then she would have got at the truth of things" (p. 219). More than anything, perhaps, art creates unity and harmony where before there was chaos, fragmentation, hostility and destruction. This could be the key to the success of Mr. Carmichael's poetry during the war. It is also the key to Mrs. Ramsay's very particular artistic creation: "That woman . . . made out of that miserable silliness and spite . . .

something . . . which survived . . . like a work of art. . . . In the midst of chaos there was shape; this eternal passing and flowing . . . was struck into stability" (pp. 239–41). As Lily sees and remembers it, Mrs. Ramsay creates harmony, Mrs. Ramsay brings people together and forms a communion which will survive her. This is what art must do, Lily thinks, recognizing Mrs. Ramsay as an artist, even though her media are food and community.[54]

When Lily works on her own painting, then, she too aspires to the criteria of permanence, harmony, and aesthetic balance as the measure of success. "It was a question . . . how to connect this mass on the right hand with that on the left" (pp. 82–83); "the question was of some relation between those masses" (p. 221). She feels that her painting must achieve a particularly difficult kind of artistic equilibrium: "the light of a butterfly's wing lying upon the arches of a cathedral" (p. 75). Where are her models for such a task? Lily does not work within a tradition; she does not benefit from the discussion about art and philosophy shared by Mr. Ramsay and Charles Tansley. Her talks with Mr. Bankes demonstrate how little encouragement she actually receives: he shakes his head with incomprehension at her irreverent interpretation of the mother and child theme. And Mr. Carmichael offers no more than a silent presence. Surrounded by a community of scholars and artists, Lily acutely experiences her distance from their exchanges.

Unlike "Sido," who does offer a model of both creativity and self-possession to "Colette," Mrs. Ramsay's stance as artist is, for women, a dangerous one to live up to because her aesthetic perfection is bought at the expense of her life. Her success at establishing harmony, permanence, and order, at resolving opposite forces, causes in Mrs. Ramsay a strain she cannot survive, precisely because her medium is interpersonal and not aesthetic. Her art of matchmaking, knitting, storytelling, cooking, and community building is a form of plotting not unlike Emma's; her plots are as ingenious and her solutions as creative. Yet while Woolf's novel validates the activity more than Austen's, it also clearly measures its costs. During the dinner and at the beach, the guests only come together because Mrs. Ramsay wills them to, because she can hide from them, and from herself, the irredeemable areas of contradiction and disconnection. She can do so, however, only by absorbing that discord, just as she absorbs the disagreements between herself and her husband.[55] Only later do we find out how provisional and fragile, how momentary and how costly the community and the marriage she creates really are. Mrs. Ramsay literally spends herself in order to sustain husband, children, and guests: "There was scarcely a shell of herself left for her to know herself by; all was so lavished and spent" (p. 60). "She often felt she was nothing but a sponge sopped full of human emotions" (p. 51). Even in the moments when she is alone and sees herself as a "wedge-shaped core of darkness" relating only to the beam of the lighthouse, we realize that the archetypal mother, presiding over the archetypal family, can claim for herself only silence, emptiness, and darkness, not presence and plenitude.[56] Mrs. Ramsay exists to reflect Mr. Ramsay's sterility, her son's anger, her daughters' desire, the existence of inanimate things. Her only moment of triumph is her ability *not* to speak—*not* to say to Mr. Ramsay that she loves him.

In substituting Lily's art for Mrs. Ramsay's, Woolf is not only substituting a woman's independent unmarried life for Mrs. Ramsay's compulsive and fatal life of "giving, giving, giving," but she is also calling into question the traditional standards of female artistic achievement represented by Mrs. Ramsay, those that are dependent on sacrifice and subordination, on a cruel "consent to femininity." Woolf speaks of this lack of full cooperation in *A Room of One's Own*, remarking on the anger of the gentlemen who are used to seeing themselves reflected in the female looking-glass at twice their natural size. Lily's refusal of marriage is her refusal of this role and a refusal, as well, of the economic and emotional dependence fostered by the institution of marriage. Yet her rejection of the course Mrs. Ramsay has taken cannot be total; against her will, Lily finds herself being nice to Charles and comforting Mr. Ramsay.

I see Lily's solution to what art should be and her completion of the painting as being made possible by yet another partial, modulated refusal. Presenting only a very provisional form of closure, one that can be read from within the pattern of Sido and Colette or of Demeter and Persephone, the painting itself ultimately refuses a notion of artistic permanence. In fact, in a clear reversal of the myth, Lily envisions the dead Mrs. Ramsay and Prue, the married women, walking through fields of flowers, just as Persephone does *before* her rape and marriage. For Lily, this repeated and dream-like vision gives rise to another vision—the apparition of an approving Mrs. Ramsay on the steps. The timeless vision of Mrs. Ramsay and Prue is a vision of death. Both married, mother and daughter are both dead. The married mother cannot offer a refuge from the underworld of marriage and the triangular structure of the nuclear family, represented in the vision by the third mysterious figure that accompanies them. Death, the novel implies, might result if Lily's desire for unity and intimacy could be fulfilled or, conversely, if she were willing to participate in Mr. Ramsay's and Mr. Tansley's male plot. Although there is no third option for Lily, she chooses neither of the two debilitating ones, or both.

The contradiction between the two options is not resolved in the novel, but its two sides are maintained in a state of perpetual tension. Thus the parallel plot of Part III, the male oedipal story of the trip to the lighthouse, offsets the threat of female dissolution, just as the female plot of mother-daughter reunification offsets the threat of marriage and appropriation. Gayatri Spivak has argued that Lily uses the men in the novel as instruments, to further her work—Charles Tansley's nasty comments are actually productive, and Mr. Ramsay's trip enables her to see Mrs. Ramsay. Charles Tansley is in fact the "brother" who, in *this* text, has become a

useful antagonist: in the scene on the beach, for example, Lily and Charles act like a brother and a sister whose relationship is mediated and controlled by a tolerant and maternal Mrs. Ramsay. Again, as we have seen in *A Room* and *Break of Day*, male presence provides a mediating space which clarifies the liminal position of women's discourse and of female relationships in the realm of the father, thereby making possible the representation of mother-daughter love.

Significantly, the novel does not end triumphantly with the vision of Mrs. Ramsay come back to life. After the vision on the steps, Lily and the narrator turn to Mr. Ramsay's landing at the lighthouse and to Mr. Carmichael. Only then does Lily go back to the painting, only then can she think about how to complete it: "There it was—her picture. . . . It would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be destroyed. But what did that matter? she asked herself, taking up her brush again. She looked at the steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision" (pp. 309–310).

What does the painting, what does this line look like and what does it mean? Critics have assumed that the line is the textual equivalent of the lighthouse which connects the two disparate parts of the painting, but that assumption needs to be reexamined. Is the line horizontal, we might ask, connecting the masses on the right and left? Is it vertical, suggesting not unity but separation? Or does it radiate in different directions like the rays of the lighthouse? I would argue that the novel chooses not to interpret this crucial moment, but rather supports contradictory readings of it. This very undecidability makes it a rejection, or at least a revision of the aesthetic requirements to which modernist art still adheres and to which Lily has been trying to live up throughout the novel. Here is an acknowledgment that the masses on the right and left can neither be connected nor remain disconnected, but must be both. This reading is only possible, of course, because we have a verbal description of a visual image—it would not be possible were the image represented for us. This explains Woolf's choice of a visual rather than a verbal artist for the protagonist of this novel. The line is drawn in the space where Lily can be productive—between mother and father, between feminine and masculine; not meant as a connection, it marks the perpetual boundary of Lily's difference.[57] In this sense, Lily's solution—the line at the center—could be read as the equivalent of Mrs. Ramsay's shawl, instead of as a repetition of the lighthouse. When Cam is afraid of the skull on the wall and unable to go to sleep, whereas James refuses to go to sleep if the skull is removed, Mrs. Ramsay decides, brilliantly I think, to cover the skull with her shawl so that it can be present for James and absent for Cam. Similarly, the line can mean presence and absence, connection and disconnection for Lily, and the bodily gesture of painting it can both connect and separate her from the model of Mrs. Ramsay. Unlike Cam, who continues to deal with the father's demand for sympathy, hating him, admiring him, relying on him to save her from drowning, and who continues to subordinate her own feelings to those of her brother James, Lily succeeds in breaking her own silence in the novel. The possibility of expression comes with her decisive drawing of the line, her acceptance of contradiction and of the boundary.

Woolf's modernist style, with its violent interruptions and alternations demonstrates the implications of such an aesthetic choice. The culmination of Part I—the dinner party, the silent expression of love between the Ramsays—is followed by the violent and devastating intervention of Part II—the destruction of the war, the dissolution of the house, the breaking of the mirror, the devastating effects of maternal death. This "Time Passes" section is itself full of shocking stylistic breaks and cuts, not the least of which is the parenthetical mention of the deaths of Mrs. Ramsay herself, of Prue in childbirth, and of Andrew in the war. This experiment with an impersonal representation of loss and mourning itself illustrates the aesthetic of "both/and": there is no writing without loss, and writing cannot quite constitute recovery. Loss is the pretext for a fictional attempt at recovery. Similarly, Lily's longing cry for "Mrs. Ramsay, Mrs. Ramsay," which eventually results in the vision, is immediately followed not by that vision but by the brief and bracketed chapter about fishing: "(Macalister's boy took one of the fish and cut a square out of its side to bait his hook with. The mutilated body (it was alive still) was thrown back into the sea.)" (p. 268). The reader, like Lily, must learn to adjust to such shocking cuts, to recognize and maintain contradictions rather than trying to subsume them into a false synthesis. At the end of Part III, Mr. Ramsay compliments James, they land at the lighthouse, Lily completes her painting. Yet the double plot does not merge and oppositions remain. Mrs. Ramsay remains potentially present (she did appear on the steps for a moment), but now the steps are empty. Cam, as Elizabeth Abel has pointed out, remains the silent victim of paternal filiation who can only "gesture toward a story she cannot tell."[58] Lily herself has learned to relinquish her demand for unity and permanence. Her "It would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be destroyed," echoes Woolf's own predictions of the reception of *A Room of One's Own:* "I am afraid it will not be taken seriously. . . . I doubt that I mind very much. . . . It is a trifle, I shall say; so it is; but I wrote it with ardour and conviction."[59] Similarly Lily feels, "I have had my vision." The process of writing, the ardour put into it, and not the product or the response are the bases of Lily's and of Woolf's own aesthetic.

As she strolls through Oxbridge, Woolf muses about Milton's *Lycidas*, an elegy like *To the Lighthouse*, rethinking it as a work which is not venerable and whole like a religious object but the result of a process of creation and alteration. Such is Lily's painting: it need not last like Mr. Carmichael's poetry; she is content to see it "clear for a second," content to accept that "the vision must be perpetually remade" (p. 270). She is content to have

had her vision, because it is the concrete and *bodily* process of having it that is important, and not the vision itself. In this conception of her art, Lily is not far removed from Mrs. Ramsay whose creative act is the "boeuf en daube," quickly consumed yet remembered by those who were present. In her new borderline language unknown to men, but in which men are also involved, intimacy redefines knowledge and constitutes art: not possession, it becomes a form of momentary contact, continually in need of being remade.[60]

Plots and Modernisms

For Peter Brooks, literary modernism is marked by a despairing feeling of belatedness and secondariness. There are no longer any primary narratives—stories have to be retold, repeated endlessly, like Mr. Ramsay's repeated "we perished, each alone." The modernist author—Conrad or Faulkner—is no more than a belated follower in the track of another, intent on recapturing a sense of primacy and fulfillment that has been lost. These are not descriptions of artistic production that apply either to "Colette" or to Lily. As Gilbert and Gubar describe it: "The son of many fathers, today's male writer feels hopelessly belated; the daughter of too few mothers, today's female writer feels she is helping to create a viable tradition which is at last definitively emerging."[61]

For Lily it is not a question of recovering a past she has lost—she is only a surrogate daughter and was never symbiotically fused with Mrs. Ramsay. Unlike Brooks's modernist protagonists, Lily is not destined to repeat interminably a story that has already been told. She ultimately understands that she is not in a relation of secondariness to Mrs. Ramsay, as she had thought in the first part of the novel. For "Colette," "Sido" does provide a positive and at times enviable model of passion and strength, yet it is not a model she aims simply to emulate. Much of her anxiety in *Break of Day* comes precisely from the difficulty of distinguishing identification from separation. Since "Sido" also writes, the sense of primacy and secondariness disappears as the daughter learns to see the mother as an artist like herself. For these daughters, it is rather a question of rewriting the past, of reframing the stories of "Sido" and Mrs. Ramsay, of refusing to repeat them, even while acknowledging the importance of maternal inheritance. Lily's story, "Colette's" story, the story of their generation of women, is located between *repetition* of past female plots and the possibility of *transformation*.

Unlike their Victorian predecessors, these protagonists do not begin their stories by affirming that their lives will be utterly different from their mothers'. Consequently, they allow themselves to know the mothers' stories and can, through knowledge and intimacy, transform them—they can both repeat and not repeat. In the Victorian novels I discussed, maternal inheritance was lacking—the jewels came down through fathers and husbands, never were they directly bequeathed by mothers. In *To the Lighthouse*, the brooch Minta loses when she agrees to marry Paul was her grandmother's; the novel she forgets is *Middlemarch*. Maternal inheritance is valuable here, but it is always in danger of being replaced by paternal heritage. Paul cannot replace the brooch, marriage cannot substitute for the all-female treasures of the pre-oedipal. Through her painting, Lily wants to keep, change, and incorporate all that Minta had to sacrifice. Mrs. Ramsay does allow her daughters to pick out jewels for her, yet Prue, who does, dies because she simply repeats Mrs. Ramsay's choices. Lily, on the other hand, does not simply lose herself in the space of Mrs. Ramsay's buried treasures; she reframes them on the canvas of her picture. Similarly, "Colette" needs to transform the pink cactus into a "book." Lily and "Colette" need both to accept and to reject the inheritance of a maternal tradition.

What visions of modernism and what kind of plot models can we glean from this reading of Woolf's novel and of Colette's? Glancing back to the text with which I began may provide some suggestions. I am interested in *A Room of One's Own* not for its points about women and fiction, but for its progression, through digression and contradiction, toward something that does not resemble a conclusion. Repetition, for Brooks, is more than a description of the modernist writer's relation to the writers of the past. As "a movement from passivity to mastery," repetition is basic to and "initiatory of narrative" itself. It relates to what Todorov speaks of as the basic constitution of plot out of the tension between two formal categories: difference and resemblance, or the "same-but-different." In Brooks's redefinition, based on a reading of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and the notion of repetition compulsion, the static and formalist model of the "same-but-different" is transformed into a dynamic model moving from beginning through middle to end. "Narrative always makes the implicit claim to be in a state of repetition, as a going over again of a ground already covered: a *sjuzet* repeating a *fabula*, as the detective retraces the tracks of the criminal" (Brooks, p. 97). In narrative we go "back over the same ground"; "an event gains meaning by its repetition . . . the concept of repetition hovers ambiguously between the idea of reproduction and that of change, forward and backward movement" (p. 100). For Brooks, repetition *binds* the plot, but the process of *binding*—postponement and delay—is painful and tense, urging us toward the end, an end which cannot, however, be reached too quickly and which, when reached, is a return to a "transcendent home" (p. 111).

Woolf suggests that repetition itself does not work for women writers of her age; its connotations are just too debilitating. Repetition is going into the library for research and finding no help in the texts of men. Repetition is the *déjà-lu*, the story that has been told too many times. Repetition, in the female plot, is the noise of the children which makes the air full of vibrations and prevents us from hearing clearly (p. 295). Repetition is the

Victorian mother/daughter plot, the daughter repeating a maternal story that is unspeakable.

Woolf and Colette, it seems to me, suggest *contradiction* and *oscillation* as alternate strategies to repetition, as ways to relate to the writing of the past, to "think back through their mothers." They provide ways not to *bind* the plot in order to make it progress, but to *bond* with it. Whereas binding connotes constraint, bonding is a looser and more voluntary form of connection. "In a question like this," Woolf says, "truth is only to be had by laying together many varieties of error" (*A Room*, p. 109). But writing through contradiction instead of repetition, bonding instead of binding, will have the effect Woolf finds in her own reading of women writers of the 1920s. Mary Carmichael's first novel, for example, is upsetting to read. "Mary is tampering with the expected sequence. First she broke the sentence; now she has broken the sequence . . . the expected order. Perhaps she had done this unconsciously, merely giving things their natural order, as a woman would if she wrote like a woman. But the effect was somewhat baffling; one could not see a wave heaping itself, a crisis coming round the next corner" (*A Room*, pp. 85, 95). This sense of discomfort and irresolution does mark the plots I am discussing, in which the oscillation between opposites, the shifting allegiances, the duplicitous posturing are not resolved into comfortable or harmonious ordering. No clearcut sense of closure ensues and the narrative remains prospective and proleptic, poised at break of day, or focused on the process rather than the product of vision. Contradiction itself is not, of course, a total rejection of repetition; it is merely one pole of it. If at one pole we have binding and the "same-but-different," at the other, we have a refusal to return, a looking forward, a bonding, which is implied in the idea of maternity and the experience of reproduction.

From Daughter to Mother? Wharton's *The Mother's Recompense*

Break of Day and *To the Lighthouse* remain the narratives of daughters. The discourse of the dead mother is mediated through the voice of the daughter-artist. The mother herself does not speak as subject and the woman artist writes or paints as a daughter and not as a mother. This is true even for Colette, who was a mother in life, although only rarely in her work. Are there, in this period, more plural texts that are capable of including both voices and perspectives, the mother's and the daughter's, thereby transcending the elegiac structure of *To the Lighthouse* and *Break of Day*? To what extent does the mother-daughter narrative depend on irredeemable loss, on initial separation, and on male intervention?

One contemporaneous novel which does inscribe a maternal voice and perspective, Edith Wharton's *The Mother's Recompense* (1925), seems to offer a contrasting, perhaps inverse model.[62] Kate Clephane, the mother, is the center of consciousness in this novel; Anne, her adult daughter, is seen only from the mother's perspective. Here, the initial separation, which predates the start of the novel by nearly twenty years, was the result of maternal and not daughterly abandonment. Desperately unhappy in her marriage, Kate left husband and child to run off with another man. In this reversal of the Demeter plot, the mother is abducted and, twenty years later, the daughter acts as the agent of their reunification. The blissful reunion of mother and daughter, their physical closeness, intuitive understanding, and uninterrupted happiness form the narrative of the novel's first part, marred only by Kate's anxiety about her past infraction. Here too everything seems reversed. Perfect, mysterious, and idealized by her mother, Anne is the Sido or Mrs. Ramsay figure. "It was from Anne's presence, her smile, her voice, the mystery of her eyes even, that the healing flowed. If Kate had an apprehension left, it was her awe—almost—of that completeness of Anne's" (p. 59). Anne takes care of her mother, nurtures and feeds her, supports her financially, and even tries to bequeathe to her the family jewels, her ancestral home, and her money. In fact, neither daughter nor mother want the material signs of conventional marriage and family life, inherited from the father. They try to give them to each other and to remain outside the weighty structures of tradition which Kate once fled. Living together in perfect happiness in this first section of the novel, they actually manage to stand outside of these potentially debilitating conventions. Anne paints, Kate watches, nurtures, and supports her daughter's artistic ambitions and achievements. As they get closer, Kate believes she has repaired the breech caused by her terrible abandonment. "But now, for the first time, love and security dwelt together in her in a kind of millenial quiet" (p. 119).

The second part of the novel reintroduces the breech, however, and in a form that proves to be irreparable. From the pre-oedipal plot of mother-daughter symbiosis, the novel moves to a prototypically and unalterably oedipal plot, which, contrary to the initial appearance, reinscribes the novel into the oedipal/pre-oedipal plot patterns we saw earlier in this chapter. Mother and daughter are separated again, and again as a result of male intrusion. The man is Chris Fenno, a young man with whom Kate had had a secret affair before the war. The only man she had ever loved, Chris was the agent of her sexual awakening. When Chris enters the story now it is to love and to marry Anne. Kate knows that if she is to retain the precious love of Anne, her own transgressive affair with Chris must remain a secret; but she also knows that as long as it does remain a secret, she will lose Anne to Chris in marriage. It becomes clear that, with Chris's appearance in the story, mother-daughter closeness is irredeemably lost, never to be regained.

Kate's choice is terrible: losing Anne by telling her or losing Anne by not telling her. What this novel makes utterly and starkly clear is that mother and daughter cannot coexist together as adult *sexual* women. The secret

that forever divides them is the secret of maternal sexuality. Kate cannot imagine saying to her daughter about Chris: "Yes, I loved once—and the man I loved was not your father" (p. 105). Kate knows that, in her world, to be a "real" mother is to renounce her sexuality and her memory of Chris, to be content to recede into the background, perhaps to marry old Fred Landers and to become, as Demeter does, an old woman when her daughter reaches maturity. If mother and daughter are both sexual, what Anne calls their "experiment" to live together as "perfect pals" becomes revoltingly incestuous. When Anne cries out, repeatedly, "I want you both," she is uttering a plea for triangularity and bi-sexual oscillation; but so long as Kate insists on remaining sexual, Anne cannot have her wish.[63]

What separates mother and daughter in this second part is silence—the result of male interruption and intrusion in the oedipal plot. Sexuality is shrouded by secrecy. Anne's choice of Chris over her mother is her entry into the oedipal plot, and her development takes the predictable form. Kate's attempt to stop her is an illusory effort to remain in the realm of pre-oedipal mother-daughter bliss, a bliss that, because of her initial transgression, is already illusory. Mother and daughter have to live in the house and the world of the father, ruled by his property and transformed by his war, which, the characters emphasize, has socialized Chris into the man Anne wants to marry.

The novel's third part contains a resolution of sorts, one which is based on the model of oscillation this chapter has outlined. I would argue that, although *The Mother's Recompense* seems to offer a different maternal plot, it is as deeply implicated in oedipal heterosexual structures and models as the other texts discussed in this chapter. Separated from her daughter by her own self-affirmation, Kate herself invents a solution which, ironically, she describes as renunciation. She frees herself from the temptation of marrying Fred Landers and turning into the dull Enid Drover, her matronly sister-in-law, by confessing her sin to Fred, who cannot live with her and the knowledge. She leaves New York, goes back to the Riviera where she was at the beginning, and lives by letters—letters from Anne whom she will never see again, and weekly letters from Fred, repeating a marriage proposal he knows she will never accept. This repeated renunciation keeps Kate alive, lends her all of her self-esteem, her pride, her sense of self. "Nothing on earth would ever again help her—help to blot out the old horrors and the new loneliness—as much as the fact of being able to take her stand on that resolve, of being able to say to herself, whenever she began to drift toward new uncertainties and fresh concessions, that once at least she had stood fast, shutting away in a little space of peace and light the best thing that had ever happened to her" (p. 272). What she shuts away is both her preoedipal moment with Anne—a moment that can be preserved only by renouncing a continuing relationship which would wear away at what makes it best—and her affair with Chris. She can only have Anne by renouncing her. She can only be a mother, "what she was destined to be," by redefining the institution of motherhood, which traditionally demands an even more devastating renunciation of sexuality and selfhood.

If Kate's is a maternal story, it fails to redefine the terms of the daughterly and elegiac qualities of Colette's and Woolf's texts. Like them, *The Mother's Recompense* underscores the compulsory heterosexuality and triangularity to which women's narrative in the 1920s continued to subscribe.

of self and the casual valuing of human life" in this novel; they are figured as "dangerous and anarchic" and the novel itself cannot quite make space for their disruptive stories.

21. Rose argues in *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* that the novel constructs the reader as spectator and the woman as spectacle, as object of intense and ceaseless scrutiny and investigation.

22. As Terry Eagleton says, "Realism, as Eliot conceives of it, involves the tactful unravelling of interlaced processes, the equitable distribution of authorial sympathies, the holding of competing values in precarious equipoise," in *Criticism and Ideology: A Study of Marxist Literary Theory* (London: New Left Books 1976), p. 114. From this point of view, Daniel is the epitome of Eliot's realist narrator, and Eliot herself, I would argue, privileges him while shortchanging Gwedolen.

23. George Levine, in "George Eliot's Hypothesis of Reality," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 35, 1(1980): 1–28, argues that, in Eliot's vision, an openness and receptiveness to the vast and inextricable relations in external reality necessitates an erasure of self and personality. In this view, Daniel is much better prepared for Eliot's ideal vision than Gwendolen.

24. In Rosenman's reading Mirah's own self-lessness is the other side of the Princess's self-assertion.

25. Carol Gilligan, *In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 128–150.

26. See Joseph Boone, *Tradition Counter Tradition: Love and the Form of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 174–193.

27. The novel's imbalance has by now become a critical commonplace, especially since F. R. Leavis suggested that Daniel's half of the novel could easily be eliminated. See F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (London: Chato & Windus, 1948), pp. 79–125. See also Patricia McKee, *Heroic Commitment in Richardson, Eliot and James* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 208–269, for a discussion of the novel's "uneasy relations." It is my attempt to account for the imbalances and uneasy relations that mark this novel's structure by looking at the gender differences it seems on the surface to repress.

28. For a discussion of the wedding night as a motif in women's fiction, including this novel, see Nancy K. Miller, "Writing (from) the Feminine: George Sand and the Novel of Female Pastoral," in *The Representation of Women in Fiction* ed. Carolyn G. Heilbrun and Margaret R. Higonnet (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), esp. p. 134.

29. On anger in Eliot's fiction, see Carol Christ, "Aggression and Providential Death in George Eliot's Fiction," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 9, 2(Winter 1976): 130–140.

30. Jacqueline Rose, in *Sexuality*, pp. 105–107, compares the tableau scene to the moment of Gwendolen's arrival in the Venice harbor: two horror scenes in which the spectacle of the crazed woman is presented to the male spectator—Klesmer and Daniel.

31. See Joseph Boone's analysis of the novel's overturning of conventional expectations of the marriage plot (see n. 26 above).

32. See Margaret Homans on the male usurpation of reproduction in the fiction of this period, especially her analysis of *Frankenstein* in Homans, *Bearing the Word*.

33. See Cynthia Chase, "The Decomposition of the Elephants: Double-Reading Daniel Deronda," in *Decomposing Figures: Rhetorical Readings in the Romantic Tradition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 167, for an interpretation of this moment not as reproductive generation but as verbal creation. In her terms, Daniel's Jewish identity is the "product of a coercive speech act." That verbal power is reserved for males in Eliot's fiction. In *The Realistic Imagination*, George Levine distinguishes between two kinds of dream in Eliot's realist fiction, the "gossamer

dreaming of an inexperienced, egoistic Gwendolen and creative dreaming based in 'the stored up accumulation of previous experiences' " that characterize Mordecai's "visionary and creative wisdom," p. 24.

34. Cynthia Chase, *Decomposing*, brilliantly describes the deconstruction of causality in the novel.

35. Gillian Beer poses this and similar questions in *Darwin's Plots;* see esp. pp. 184–207.

36. Edward W. Said views the novel's Zionist plot as an integral part of imperial expansion. See his analysis of Zionism and homelessness in Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage, 1980), pp. 60–68.

37. Charlotte Brontë's Lucy Snowe is a notable exception, but unlike Grandcourt's death, Monsieur Paul's has not been definitively established.

38. Carol Christ sees providential death as the means by which Eliot both protects her characters from actual guilt, and induces in them a psychological guilt which furthers their moral education. For Gwendolen, Grandcourt's providential death not only liberates her from guilt, but it opens for her an uncharted future, enabling her not to find in death the only solution to her plot.

39. See U. C. Knoepflmacher, "Unveiling Men: Power and Masculinity in George Eliot's Fiction," *Women and Literature*, 2(1981): 130–146.

40. How are we to read Eliot's own participation in this gender asymmetry? Jacqueline Rose eloquently suggests that Eliot's position can best be described in terms of "masquerade," rather than as either complicity or transcendent judgment (*Sexuality*, p. 120).

3. The Darkest Plots

1. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1929), p. 4.

2. In *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), Teresa de Lauretis uses Woolf's distinction between *instinct* and *reason* to develop an extremely useful way of theorizing female *experience*. See esp. pp. 158–160, 182–186.

3. *Oscillation* is a term also used by Rachel Blau DuPlessis in relation to Woolf and other modernist writers. See her *Writing beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985) and "For the Etruscans: Sexual Difference and Artistic Production—The Debate Over a Female Aesthetic," in *The Future of Difference*, ed. Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1980).

4. Jane Marcus, *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 184.

5. Peggy Kamuf, "Penelope at Work: Interruptions in *A Room of One's Own*," *Novel* 16, 1(Fall 1982): 5–18; see also Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Methuen, 1985) for a deconstructive reading of Woolf and a strong argument in favor of the exclusive validity of such readings.

6. See Naomi Schor's "Reading Double: Sand's Difference," in *The Poetics of Gender*, ed. Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), for a suggestive exposition of this feminist strategy.

7. Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," in *On Lies, Secrets and Silence* (New York: Norton, 1979), p. 37.

8. John Burt, "Irreconcilable Habits of Thought in *A Room of One's Own* and *To the Lighthouse*," *English Literary History* 49(1982): 893.

9. On brothers and sisters in Woolf see Sara Ruddick, "Private Brother, Public World," in *New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Jane Marcus (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981). In *The Years* and *The Pargiters*, Woolf does a more

devastating critique of the gender arrangements which train brothers for war and sisters for domestic life.

10. For readings of androgyny in Woolf, see Carolyn Heilbrun, *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* (New York: Norton, 1964) and Nancy Topping Bazin, *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1973). I disagree here with Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), who describes Woolf's stance as a "flight" into androgyny. Rather than a flight, I prefer to see it as a momentary solution, not granted any ultimate validity. See also Jane Marcus's discussion of this moment in *A Room*, in her *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy*, pp. 159–162.

11. See Elizabeth Abel's brilliant analysis of hunger and food in *A Room*, in her *Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

12. Reprinted in Michèle Barrett, ed., *Women and Writing* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979).

13. Mary Jacobus, *Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 39.

14. See Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), chap. 1, and Elaine Showalter, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," in *The New Feminist Criticism* (New York: Pantheon, 1985).

15. That she sees literature as changing in similar ways is obvious from her celebrated essay on modern fiction, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (1924) in which she asserts, prophetically, that "on or about December 1910 human character changed." *Collected Essays*, vol. 1 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967), p. 320.

16. Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (New York: Anchor, 1977), p. 354.

17. On the female artist novel during this period, see DuPlessis, *Writing beyond the Ending*, and Susan Gubar, "The Birth of the Artist as Heroine: (Re)production, the *Künstlerroman* Tradition, and the Fiction of Katherine Mansfield," in *The Representation of Women in Fiction*, ed. Carolyn G. Heilbrun and Margaret R. Higonnet (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983). On Cather, Woolf, and Colette, see Jane Lilienfeld, "Re-entering Paradise: Cather, Colette, Woolf and Their Mothers," in *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters*, ed. Cathy N. Davidson and E. M. Broner (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1980).

18. Colette, *Break of Day*, trans. Enid McLeod (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1961), p. 62.

19. Virginia Woolf, *The Common Reader*, 1st series, 1923.

20. Susan Gubar, "The Birth of the Artist as Heroine." See also Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1978) and Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (New York: Penguin, 1977).

21. In her notebooks, Woolf uses the term elegy to describe *To the Lighthouse*. For a feminist analysis of the elegy, see Celeste M. Schenck, "Feminism and Deconstruction: Re-Constructing the Elegy," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 5, 1(Spring 1986): 13–27.

22. Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5, 4(Summer 1980): 631–660.

23. Sigmund Freud, "Female Sexuality" (1931), *Standard Edition*, vol. 21, p. 226; Rachel Blau DuPlessis's use of the image of the Etruscans is similar.

24. See Robert Briffault, *The Mothers: A Study of the Origins of Sentiments and Institutions* (New York: Macmillan, 1927); J. J. Bachofen, *Myth, Religion and Mother-Right*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967); Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Bollingen, 1955). For contemporary feminist analyses of these theories and of their impact on the novel, see Evelyn Reed, *Women's Evolution* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975) and esp. Elizabeth Abel, *Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis* as well as Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *No Man's Land* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

25. See Sandra M. Gilbert's discussion of male modernism in relation to matriarchy theories, esp. in "Potent Griselda: 'The Ladybird' and the Great Mother," in *D. H. Lawrence: A Centenary Consideration*, ed. Peter Balbert and Phillip L. Marcus (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).

26. In chapter 5, I return to this moment in Freud and examine the motivations Freud posits to explain this shift in the girl's developmental journey, in particular, the motivation of anger.

27. De Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't*, esp. chapter 5, "Desire in Narrative."

28. Elizabeth Abel, "Narrative Structure(s) and Female Development: The Case of *Mrs. Dalloway*," in *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*, ed. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1983), p. 171.

29. See Melanie Klein, *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works, 1921–1945* (New York: Dell, 1975) and Phyllis Grosskurth, *Melanie Klein: Her World and Her Work* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986). For a much fuller account of Melanie Klein's work in relation to modernist narrative see Elizabeth Abel's *Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis*.

30. See Karen Horney, "The Flight from Womanhood: The Masculinity Complex in Women as Viewed by Men and by Women" (1926) in Jean Strouse, *Women and Analysis* (New York: Dell, 1974).

31. Luce Irigaray pushes insights such as these much further, wondering why Freud fails to posit just such a primary femininity, characterized by vulval, vaginal or uterine stages, in addition to phallic ones. This failure renders Freud guilty of the "blind spot of an old dream of symmetry," she claims. See Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian G. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 29, 59, 60. On Irigaray's "impertinent questions" to Freud and Lacan, see Jane Gallop's *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 80–91.

32. Helene Deutsch, *The Psychology Of Women*, vol. 1 (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1944), p. 116. See also Nancy Chodorow's excellent analysis of all these issues in reference to mother-daughter relationships in her *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978).

33. Abel's "Narrative Structures and Female Development" is based on similar assumptions.

34. On contradiction and duplicity as elements of the feminine unconscious, see Michèle Montrelay, *L'ombre et le nom: sur la féminité* (Paris: Minuit, 1977), esp. the section entitled "Recherches sur la féminité." Translated as "Inquiry into Femininity," *m/f* 1(1978).

35. Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), p. 92.

36. Marilyn Yalom, *Maternity, Mortality and the Literature of Madness* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985).

37. Nancy K. Miller, "Women's Autobiography in France: For a Dialectic of Identification," in *Women and Language in Literature and Society*, ed. Sally McConnell-Ginet, Ruth Borker, and Nelly Furman (New York: Praeger, 1980) and in *Colette: The Woman, The Writer*, ed. Erica Eisinger and Mari McCarty (Pittsburgh: Pennsylvania

State University Press, 1981); Germaine Brée, "Le Mythe des origines et l'autoportrait chez George Sand et Colette," in *Symbolism in Modern Literature: Studies in Honor of Wallace Fowlie*, ed. Marcel Tétel (Durham: Duke University Press, 1978). See also Elaine Marks, *Colette* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1960); Jane Lilienfeld, "The Magic Spinning Wheel: Straw to Gold—Colette, Willy, and Sido," in *Mothering the Mind: Twelve Studies of Writers and Their Silent Partners*, ed. Ruth Perry and Martine Watson Brownley (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1984); and Susan D. Fraiman, "Shadow in the Garden: The Double Aspect of Motherhood in Colette," *Perspectives on Contemporary Literature*, 11(1985): 46–53.

38. These textual incongruities might explain why it apparently was so difficult for Colette to complete. Motivated by financial difficulties she repeatedly had to force herself to sit down to write, only to report, time after time, that she had to break off without having finished. "My novel fights me like a demon," she wrote to a friend. See Letter to Léopold Marchand, Sept. 27, 1927, cited by Claude Pichois in the Preface to *La Naissance du jour* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1969), p. 22 (my translation).

39. Michelle Sarde, *Colette*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: William Morrow, 1980), p. 286. See also *Sido: Lettres à sa fille* (Paris: des femmes, 1984).

40. See the preface to *Sido: Lettres à sa fille* by Jeannie Malige, p. x.

41. Nancy K. Miller, "D'une solitude à l'autre: vers un intertexte féminin," *French Review* 54, 6(May 1981): 797–803.

42. Just as she was writing about renouncing the love of Vial, Colette was herself in the process of marrying for the third time.

43. Such a letter is not included in the des femmes edition; it is obviously Colette's textual construction.

44. Cited by Pichois, *La Naissance*, p. 23.

45. Colette, *My Mother's House and Sido*, trans. Una Vicenzo Troubridge and Enid McLeod (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1953), p. 194.

46. Jane Marcus, *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy*, p. 8.

47. *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 3, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), May 14, 1925.

48. Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being*, 2d edition, ed. Jeanne Schulkind (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), p. 80.

49. To write about *To the Lighthouse* as a mother-daughter text is to situate oneself within a ten-year tradition of feminist readings which have featured this novel as the central mother-daughter text in women's writing and have featured the mother-daughter thematics as central to any understanding of the text. Among these readings, see esp. Sara Ruddick, "Learning to Live with the Angel in the House," *Women's Studies*, 4 (1977): 181–200; Jane Lilienfeld, "The Deceptiveness of Beauty: Mother Love and Mother Hate in *To the Lighthouse*," *Twentieth-Century Literature* 23(1977): 345–376; Elizabeth Abel's chapters on *To the Lighthouse* in *Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis*; Ellen Bayuk Rosenman, *The Invisible Presence: Virginia Woolf and the Mother-Daughter Relationship* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986); Joan Lidoff, "Virginia Woolf's Feminine Sentence: The Mother-Daughter World of *To the Lighthouse*," *Literature and Psychology* 32, 3(1986): 43–59; Claire Kahane, "The Nuptials of Metaphor: Self and Other in Virginia Woolf," *Literature and Psychology* 30, 2(1980): 72–82; Susan Squier, "Mirroring and Mothering: Reflections on the Mirror Encounter Metaphor in Virginia Woolf's Works," *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 27, 3(Fall 1981): 272–288; Gayatri Spivak, "Making and Unmaking in *To the Lighthouse*," in *Women and Language in Literature and Society*, ed. Sally McConnell-Ginet, Ruth Borker, and Nelly Furman (New York: Praeger, 1980); Carolyn Williams, "Virginia Woolf's Rhetoric of Enclosure," *Denver Quarterly* 18, 4(Winter 1984): 43–61; Carolyn Heilbrun, "Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*," paper delivered at the 1986 MLA Convention.

50. Helen Storm Corsa, "*To the Lighthouse:* Death, Mourning and Transfiguration," *Literature and Psychology* 21, 3(1971): 115–132; Sharon Wood Proudfit, "Lily Briscoe's Painting: A Key to Personal Relationships in *To the Lighthouse*," *Criticism* 13, 1(1971): 26–38; Jean O. Love, *Virginia Woolf: Sources of Madness and Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); Maria di Battista, *Virginia Woolf's Major Novels: The Fables of Anon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

51. Jane Lilienfeld aptly points out that Lily is the figure of the Victorian orphan reframed as surrogate daughter, passionately attached to the mother. See "Deceptiveness."

52. In his study of Lily's painting in relation to contemporary artistic conventions, Thomas Matro also argues against the achievement of balance in the novel; see his "Only Relations: Vision and Achievement in *To the Lighthouse*," *PMLA* 99, 2(March 1984): 212–224.

53. In *Moments of Being*, Woolf describes her parents' bedroom: "the bedroom—the double bedded bedroom on the first floor was the sexual centre; the birth centre, the death centre of the house" (p. 118).

54. See Lilienfeld's analysis of food and ritual in the novel in "Deceptiveness."

55. On the novel's critique of the Victorian ideology of marriage, see Joseph A. Boone, *Tradition Counter Tradition: Love and the Form of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 201–214.

56. In "Making and Unmaking," Gayatri Spivak argues that Mrs. Ramsay is in the position of predicate rather than subject; she sees Lily's creation as a form of uterine plenitude developing a thematics of womb-envy in the novel, but one in which Mrs. Ramsay cannot participate.

57. This is what Spivak calls the copula, identified in her argument with the "Time Passes" section, which, like the line, occupies the space in the center. She reads "Time Passes" as the discourse of madness, war, and undecidability. See also Matro's focus in "Only Relations" on effort rather than achievement and his emphasis on the "to" in the novel's title.

58. Abel's reading of Cam's silence diverges radically from Homans's. For Homans, Cam is not the silent sister and paternal daughter, but the representative of a different, non-figurative, mother-daughter language of presence. See the last chapter in Margaret Homans, *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

59. 1929 *Diary*, cited in *Women and Writing*, ed. Michèle Barrett, p. 3.

60. Spivak defines the novel as "an attempt to articulate, by using man as an instrument, a woman's vision of a woman" ("Making and Unmaking," p. 326).

61. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, p. 50. See also Gilbert and Gubar's much more detailed discussion of male modernism in relation to the emergence of female writing and to the anxiety about female precursors in the first volume of *No Man's Land*, esp. chap. 3, "Tradition and the Female Talent: Modernism and Masculinism."

62. Edith Wharton, *The Mother's Recompense* (New York: Scribners, 1925).

63. Interestingly, society and Anne were willing to forgive Kate the first lover with whom she ran away, even though he caused her to abandon her child; the unforgivable breech was the sexual pleasure she experienced with Chris.

4. Feminist Family Romances

1. *College English, XXXIV*, 1 (October 1972): 18–25, rpt. in *Adrienne Rich's Poetry*, ed. Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi and Albert Gelpi (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), pp. 90–98. Page numbers will refer to this latter reprinting.