The Intimacy of Influence. Narrative and Theoretical fictions in the works of George Eliot, Virginia Woolf and Jeanette Winterson

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Last Exit From Thebes:
The Maze Makers of *Middlemarch*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *The Passion*

The cities of the interior are vast, do not lie on any map (*The Passion*, 1988: 50).

Introduction: Mazes of the Interior

How do the literary works of this chapter traverse their own Oedipal narratives? Amongst these is Freud's famous theoretical narrative, frequently challenged and re-written by many successors. In this chapter I will engage the novels with a series of revisionary readings of Freud's contested model of human desire and becoming. Specific elements from the theories of Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler and Kaja Silverman will provide maps. They will guide my analysis through the overlapping terrains of Freud's theoretical fictions of the Oedipus Complex, *Middlemarch*, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Passion*. Through each other, these texts form mazes.

The epigraph to this chapter belongs to one of *The Passion*'s two narrators, Villanelle, a Venetian boat-woman who possesses the magical attributes of webbed feet. Featuring two character narrators, Villanelle and the rookie French soldier, Henri, Winterson's third novel studies unrequited love and the gambling of human hearts. The combined narratives produce a maze; the canals of Venice become the metaphor for the labyrinthine experience of desire and becoming. The cities of interior are indeed vast and beyond maps, because they symbolise, in Peirce's symbolic sense, the journey into the unmapped human psyche. But *The Passion* is more than a symbol for the psyche; the novel explores Freud's Oedipus complex, revealing this as both theoretical and narrative. Both these dimensions Winterson's novel aims to re-design.
There are a number of exciting theories to address Freud’s theoretical fiction. Arguably, there is a distinction between the theories of Butler, Kristeva, Silverman on the one hand, and the narrative fictions of Eliot, Woolf and Winterson as narrative objects. Freud’s Oedipus complex I place between the two distinctions, but I will contend that these can be treated as provisional. Ahead of its time, Middlemarch predicts aspects of Freud’s “theory.” Mrs. Dalloway and The Passion fictionally theorise Oedipus complexes of their own formulation. To underline my suggestion that narratives produce theories of their own, I will borrow a metaphor from The Passion. Villanelle tells Henri that the city of Venice is alive and that it undergoes changes under the force of its own impulses. I contend that theoretical maps are also as capable of such change as the narrative terrains they track. Map and topos may transform each other. The narrators of the three novels carving their territory within this chapter, are all maze-makers, all finding their way through labyrinths. The paths they track are as theoretical as they are narrative. As my arguments progress, the binary opposition between the notion of a theoretical “map” and a literary work as “terrain” will be de-stabilised.

In what follows, traversal will be explored as two interconnected trajectories. Firstly, it will be tracked as a re-working of Oedipal narratives, that is, those fictions which tell their story of the Oedipus complex. Middlemarch may predate the invention of psychoanalysis, but I will suggest that it offers a previsionary re-writing of Freud’s model. Eliot’s novel may thus be read as one of many literary precursors to a theoretical paradigm. Secondly, traversal will be analysed as the enmeshings and separations between textual mazes and their makers. These include not just external but character narrators and the discursive slippages between the two. When interactions and overlappings between the linguistic patterns of character and narrator occur, the distinction between these two entities is subverted. Transference as trope, as that mechanism which challenges the construction of imagos, does that challenging through the multifarious meanings of the word “maze.”
According to the *OED*, this word maze boasts more connotations than the garden labyrinths in which visitors can amuse themselves. Apart from meaning a “network of confusing and winding passages” a maze metaphorically defines a state of bewilderment, puzzlement and perplexity. Another meaning is that of “blind alleys” (*OED* Vol. IX: 507-508). Thus a maze is that through which the Oedipally blinded might lose their way to once more find it. Furthermore, the verb “to maze” signifies to craze, to infatuate or to put someone out of their wits. The maze is that place from whence the Sirens can beckon. As Theseus discovered, it may also be the place to face the beast and come of age. Each of the novels figure the maze as a place of danger, of illusion but also as that site through which to pursue a *ritual de passage*.

In *The Passion*, the city of Venice is “the city of mazes. You may set off from the same place to the same place every day and never go by the same route” (1988: 49). Venice also comprises the narrative in which gender and sexuality become surrendered to improbabilities. An important theme and trope in Winterson’s novel is the figure of chance. The city forms a topology and topography which re-shapes under the vagaries of the unexpected. According to Villanelle, the city is an organic “living city” subject to change (113). Moreover, it is the “city of disguises” (56). The traveller’s journey through the “fabulous” metropolis allegorises the lacks and quests of human desire. The labyrinth is also a metaphor for the twists and turns of narrative. Such circumventions re-enact and displace the ideologies which the novel quotes.

*The Passion* involves, to recall Butler’s term, a series of “citations.” Crucial to Butler’s concept of performativity is that of reiteration. In both culture and its texts, norms and prohibitions are repeated. They are acted out again to be reduplicated and reinforced. However, it is through the citational process that anomalous quotes can manifest themselves. These critique the dominant ideologies. Texts reiterate the old narratives and their norms in order to destabilise them (1993: 10). Winterson’s novel conjures phantasmic projections which quote those
projections germane to Freud’s Oedipal narrative. These identifications enter the maze never to leave again in the same shape. The two character-narrators Henri and Villanelle each share a recurring line: “You play, you win. You play, you lose. You play,” refers not just to the compulsion to gamble (66). This line also comprises its own iterations. It symbolises the text’s repetitions of “sexed” identities and sexualities as they lose themselves to find themselves re-located, sometimes without change, often with an important transformation inscribed. Villanelle’s desire for the Queen of Spades represents the fallout from such repetition. She confronts the problem of lack and loss through what she terms passion, a force converging on the sign of the heart. This offers a revision of the power structures which the novel cites and disturbs.

Woolf’s fourth novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, offers the reader a sequence of events which take place during a single day in June in 1923. This sequence comprises what Bal’s terms the fabula (1997: 6). But in terms of the story, many other temporalities explode through the text. The text is narrated through a variety of characters; these include the titular heroine Clarissa Dalloway, a middle-aged and society housewife, a friend from her youth, Peter Walsh, and a war-traumatised young man, Septimus Smith. The novel brings their memories to the fore as a force which shifts the focalizations and narrations of these actors of consciousness. Septimus Smith has just returned from the war but is unable to function. The reader first meets him in Regent’s Park being looked after by his wife Reiza (1998: 27-33). He focalizes hearing birds which speak to him in Greek (31). His actions - most poignantly, his suicide - are the result of traumatic memories. This last exit from the maze of life finds a contrasted but parallel exploration of exits from passion: Clarissa’s interior monologues scrutinise the memory of her desire for a woman, Sally Seton (39-46). This examination encloses but makes available the abject for otherwise repudiated identifications. Silverman lays emphasis on the difficulty of giving an “imaginary luster to bodies” which have become “culturally profoundly devalued” (1996: 81). The dramatisation of the poetic, Arcadian consciousness of a war-
traumatised, unemployed, mentally disturbed young man is but one method by which Mrs. Dalloway carries out this brief. The focalization of a street vagabond is supported by an external narration which breaks every normative assumption. Their combined forces produce a double focalization of lyrical intensity (Woolf 1998: 107-109). This reveals a lining of “tusk and mammoth” about to explode under Regent’s Park Tube. The primeval, the Arcadian and the pagan are textual sites within which transgressions of the culturally valorised take place. Clarissa’s rapturous encounters with women find protection in pastoral tropes. The novel’s opening line: “Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself” marks the floral range of the Arcadian world within the metropolis (3).

Indeed, it is the floral sites that lure readers into pondering those identities culturally despised. The pantheistic sub-structure to London’s stressful, mechanised metropolis of capitalist power emerges in Septimus’ focalization of elm trees.

... they beckoned; leaves were alive; trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement” (28).

The passage produces a puzzle of metaphor and metonymy. The leaves are alive and thus personified. They are therefore imbued with the qualities of actors. Yet personification, which is a sub-category of metaphor, is metonymically untangled. The “millions of fibres” decompose the notion of character with its associations of recognisable features making a single identity. Moreover, the fibres cite their precedent in Middlemarch’s “primary webs or tissues” (Book II, Chapter 15, 177). For Eliot’s external narrator, such structures find their analogy in the act of narration, in its “unravelling of certain human lots” (Chapter 15, 171). Mrs. Dalloway moves this procedure to another cutting edge. The metonymic connections between consciousness, botany and character are made more intimately
political. Like the fibres he focalizes, Septimus is but one fibre in the metropolis which “has swallowed up many millions of young men called Smith” (110). The lustre in Septimus’ focalization of the elm trees indirectly enhances this nameless young war victim with a pantheistic glow which the dominant ideologies of his society deny him.

Going beyond Middlemarch’s web metaphor, the fibre trope of Mrs. Dalloway makes more explicit the connection between the tree structures and language. When “the branch stretched he, too, made a statement” (28). The anaphora is ambivalent. It could refer to either Septimus or the personified tree or to the fibres personified. Each “statement” is part of a greater whole. But the difficulty in identifying the referent protects the comparison from the threats of synecdoche. This trope would prioritise the concerns of the greater whole rather than what this represses. Each smaller statement from the Mr. or Ms. Nobody, otherwise ignored, is a crucial link in the symbolic order. In the passage cited, unsung heroes and the fibres signifying networks between selves, are not associated with the London of Big Ben, but the Arcadias concealed around corners.

It is in these hidden places that Clarissa Dalloway becomes erotically drawn to Sally Seton and this woman’s “way with flowers” (43). Sally is one who experiments to reconstruct. She will “cut off their heads” to float them on water (43). Allegedly, Sally is related to Marie Antoinette. Hence Sally becomes associated with the French revolutionary spirit. The hint is that she topples the old order to make way for new ones. But the non-legitimised sexual encounters which her floral experiments symbolise, will still remain culturally eclipsed. Lucrezia Warren Smith focalizes the Queen in a car. She could not “help looking at the motor car and the tree pattern on the blinds” (19, my emphasis). The last word is a relevant example of displacement. If the tree pattern signifies the symbolic order, then this will certainly not capture the “blinds,” or dark spaces with which it is cast upon and with which it melds. These black holes are part of a heterogeneity to which the socio-symbolic would remain blind. But in Woolf’s novel, the eclipsed, the
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devaluated and the abjected are strewn with flowers. These act as fresh tropological pathways; when these are discovered, a new textual working-through is discovered.

As Miller notes in his reading of Mrs. Dalloway, in spite of the inescapable presence of characters structuring their own worlds of consciousness, there is an (external) narrator with a "state of mind." It "encloses" and "pervades" the minds of the other characters. Thus the external narrator functions in this example of literary modernism more markedly than is usually credited. Gillian Beer acknowledges Woolf's respect for the literary practices of her Victorian predecessors. These she did not repudiate but "re-write" (Beer, 1996: 94). She maintained more of their external narrators than her modernist mode of writing would lead one to suppose.

The binding and all-encompassing "mind" of Mrs. Dalloway finds its precedent in the less oblique, and more characterised, external narrator of Middlemarch. The discourse of Woolf's external narrator blends with that of the character-bound narrators. The illusion that a character is doing all the narrating and focalizing is not maintained. Rather, the movement between the character-bound and external narrator is more fluid. In Middlemarch, the distinction between external narrator and character hinges on figuring the mechanisms which connect together the two. Or to deploy the novel's optical metaphor, Eliot's narrator and character reflect upon each other and also apply the microscope to one other. The different "minds" reflect upon other human subjects as a means of finding answers to nature. The optical metaphor in Eliot's novel is closely aligned to its project of scientific exploration. Gillian Beer has richly explored Middlemarch's discourses of science and evolutionary biology. Sally Shuttleworth heads one of her papers on Middlemarch, "An experiment in time." Like the doctor, Eliot's narrator conducts experiments. His/her subjects are the characters. The threshold between epistemological position and its object is set up and subverted.
If the binary opposition between the object and its means of enquiry is not questioned, what ensues are failures of recognition. Objects under investigation are also figured within the subject who claims the privilege of “objectivity.” Lydgate’s object is science. The very “heart” of his epistemological concerns and those of his personal life are connected, but along lines of displacement which he acts out rather than works through. What concerns me is the conflict and co-operation between the successful narrator and the tragically set-up doctor. This conflict forms an Oedipal maze which contrasts with that authored by Freud. The former is one in which the connecting parts, that is, those passages which link crucial scientific concepts to matters of the *amour*, are metonymies. The latter are not reflected upon explicitly by either external narrator nor Lydgate the character. But their existence functions as a form of ideological critique which many feminist readings of *Middlemarch* have overlooked.

Certain feminist critics have reproached the novel for its treatment of Dorothea. Yet there has been a curious tendency to overlook the possibility of reading Lydgate’s blindness as representative of that which dominates many nineteenth century habits of external narration. Lydgate is the key to understanding how the external narrator and maze maker, perplexed between metaphors, makes a textual traversal in quest of the woman who figures as a solution to the secrets of Nature. It is as this occurs that the prescient re-writing of the pre-empted Freudian paradigm takes place.

In tracing Freud’s version of the Oedipus complex, the concept of gender offers an important guiding light. The important women theorists whom I engage in this chapter all use this concept differently. They do so without repudiating the psychoanalytic model. Judith Butler’s “Phantasmic Identification” discusses the “performativity” of gender norms. She scrutinises how prohibitions on “sexed” identities are inscribed, iterated, but where possible, how their burden can be lifted (1993: 93-120). While approaching the problem differently, Julia Kristeva’s celebrated essay “Women’s Time” also interrogates the possibilities for mitigating what is for female subjec-
tivity, the weight of the "socio-symbolic contract." In *The Acoustic Mirror* (1988), Silverman follows the female subject's progression through language, or the symbolic, as involving the positive aspects of maternal influence, not necessarily as producing affects which must be abjected. The mother, then, can have an important role in gendering her daughter's subjectivity beyond a position of negativity and lack. Furthermore, the theories of Butler and Kristeva offer accounts of how the imbalanced equation between sex and gender can be re-formulated. I will attempt to do so by probing the novel's overlapping labyrinths.

The maze makers of the novels pursue a journey, as best they can, towards an "origin." The textual strategies by which *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Passion* approach their origins, reveals much about how the novels function as "modernist" and "postmodernist" works. To help clarify the intimate connections between these two categories of text as reflective of the influences between Woolf's and Winterson's novel, two approaches to definition are useful.

The first approach is offered by Brian McHale's argument that the difference between a modernist as opposed to a postmodernist fiction hinges on the text's handling of epistemological, as opposed to ontological issues (1987: 6-10). As McHale phrases it, questions of epistemology, or knowledge, can be raised in the form of "How can I interpret this world of which I am part?; And what am I in it? ...What is there to be known?; Who knows it?" (9). In *Mrs. Dalloway*, the contrasted focalizations of Peter Walsh, Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith offer different perspectives not just on specific past experiences, but on the human condition of living in or surviving in London. The "violent explosion" from the street causes Clarissa Dalloway to "jump" (1998: 17). By stark contrast, Miss Pym looks out of the window to survey the commotion caused by the cars, "as if those motor cars, those tyres of motor cars, were all her fault" (17). In another item of focalization, Peter Walsh applauds the roar set up by a passing ambulance, thinking it "one of the triumphs of civilisation" (197).
Through their respective focalizations the three characters offer different interpretations and emotional reactions to the elements of their world, that is London, 1928. In their separate ways, Clarissa, Peter and Septimus all wonder at, emotionally intellectualise, narrate and theorise their place in this one world. If Woolf’s novel were entirely postmodern, then they would not be considering their place in a single cosmos but, as McHale argues, they would ask “Which world is this?...Which of my selves is to do it? ... What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ?” (10). Although critics widely and unquestioningly define Mrs. Dalloway as a “modernist” novel, McHale’s definition of the postmodern helps to understand the landscapes and different worlds conjured by the focalizations of Septimus Smith, a female vagrant and the assisting external narrator. Smith focalizes an Arcadian, pantheistic world in which birds speak Greek (31). The vagrant and external narrator conjure the “tusk” and “mammoth” of prehistory” (105). London of 1928 is invaded by faraway temporalities which cause the reader to ponder which world they are in and what splintering identities emerge from characters such as Septimus. McHale’s notion of modernism/postmodernism is helpful because he avoids utilising either term as a taxonomy for a literary period or specific practices such as “stream of consciousness” technique.

The postmodern is breaking its way from the modernism of Woolf’s novel, and the two modalities of fiction-making are intimate with one another within one work.

Furthermore, the intimations of modernism can be traced in the forerunner Middlemarch, which is so often held up as a work of Victorian “realism.” The narrative metaphorised as a biological web in Eliot’s novel is cited again in Woolf’s novel. In the modernist text, significations which were not brought to the fore in the Victorian precursor, come to light again in the inheritor. The deployment of these meanings is different. In Middlemarch there is not open utilisation of modernist techniques, but a hint of the shape of what is to come generations ahead. In Woolf’s novel, textual performance does more than refer to myths. Whereas in Middlemarch, myths
are deployed as techniques for framing the external narrator's task and the characters' journeys, Woolf's text not only refers to, but deploys focalization to conjure improbable, mythical temporalities which operate as alternative worlds which erupt into the novel's fabula. These contrasting worlds which invite the asking of ontological questions find their ur-versions in those very different "worlds" inhabited by Casaubon and Lydgate, for instance. Although strictly speaking, each of these characters inhabits the same world unified by time and place, Casaubon's egotism locks him in his "own" world of myth and worn-out taxonomies. Lydgate is wrapped up in a cosmos of intellectual ambitions which do not protect him from his emotional oversights.

In epistemological terms, both men explore different paths of knowledge which cause them to focalize their one world in startlingly different ways. When each man becomes entrenched in his own "view" of the world, he may be indeed passing into a different cosmos from that shared by the other Middlemarchers. McHale makes clear differences between the epistemological and ontological problematic. I would contend that different epistemological positions can become so extreme that they can become defined as positions rooted in ontological difference. The modernism and postmodernism of one novel may only be hinted at in a predecessor's work, but this lies ready to be analysed with the hindsight of the successor's works.

This brings me to the second approach to qualifying terms such as modernist and postmodernist. In an illuminating overview of the various forms and definitions of postmodernism, Ernst van Alphen suggests that the various discussions produce a "heterotopian space" (1989: 819-38). A critical and fictional terrain of various, different and irregular forms combining together is an apt metaphor for the postmodernist landscape. Van Alphen claims that postmodernism can be best served by being studied from an interdisciplinary perspective (836). What has been attributed as the "modernist desire for pureness" is challenged by a postmodernism which would mix
its elements. Van Alphen claims that monodisciplinary studies cannot accommodate the interdisciplinary forces which constitute the postmodern impulse (836-837). To take the implications of this argument one step further, I would suggest that Mrs. Dalloway is an example of a so-called “modernist” text (in the traditional use of the term) which can be analysed, as I have just done, with postmodern, critical hindsight. Likewise, a postmodern text such as The Passion, can be read as modernist and interdisciplinary between modernist and postmodernist techniques. The novel weaves itself from various embedded narratives. These rely on memories which flow into the characters’ experience of the “present moment.” Henri in prison relives his battles in Napoleon’s army and his love affair with Villanelle. Mythical topoi in Mrs. Dalloway which were a matter of hallucinatory or imaginative focalizations, that is, of epistemological variation, are transformed through The Passion into worlds which follow the ontological logic of fairy-tales, miracles and magic. The battlefields of France full of their quotidian horrors constitute a different ontological space from a Venice in which boatmen, and one woman, possess webbed feet. Fabula events turn fabulous in a narrative cosmos in which Villanelle’s heart is stolen and, as Henri discovers, stored inside a glass jar (120-121). Henri mentions the Holy Grail and “Perceval, the gentle knight” (154). The references to Medieval myth and literature iterate ancestor narratives and their temporalities. The modernist strategies of character-bound narrative and stream-of-consciousness technique are as much a part of The Passion as they are of Mrs. Dalloway. Furthermore, the gender-bending Villanelle has an ancestor in Orlando. The Passion’s deployment of myth and magic invokes ripples from Arcadian worlds. The novel eschews a purity of forms. The Passion sets up epistemologically and ontologically various conditions. Postmodernism and modernism contain each other rather like Russian dolls, one inside the other, though each doll can signify a different literary tradition. Thus I would contend that a reading of the intimacies of influence between Mrs. Dalloway and The Passion make a case for analysing literary modernism as capable of embracing “impurities” of technique
and for analysing postmodernist fiction as not throwing itself into the arms of any interdisciplinarity, but desirous of focusing on its choice of purities, which may reveal themselves through selected metaphors.

Lines of intimacy spin Ariadne-like threads through all three literary works. The webs of *Middlemarch* have a distant, eccentric though fertile connection to Villanelle’s webbed feet. She tells the reader how her web-footed father removed his boots and disappeared (1987: 50). The webs between the toes are signifiers which must remain covered just as Villanelle’s heart which is concealed in the Queen of Spades’ phial, signifies the profoundest and most veiled secrets of the psyche (120-121. In *Middlemarch*, Lydgate would possess the secrets of the “primary web” of nature (1994: 177). This quest emerges from his earlier passion for heart anatomy (173). If in *Middlemarch*, the heart becomes the symbol and index for impossible quests of desire, both personal and professional, in *The Passion*, the heart becomes predominantly symbolic in its function, signifying the Holy Grail and desire as an effect of gambling, or compulsive behaviour.

Behind many Grail quests, be it the adventure to fathom the mysteries of heart anatomy, the web-structure of tissues or games of chance, the figure in the textual maze of each novel can be traced as a displaced signifier for the mother. In each literary work, there is some sign of her. She might be an effect of an origin, an entrance or a potential exit from the novel’s Theban labyrinths. If Woolf’s phrase that “we think back through our mothers” is telling, then it needs to be explored not in the psychological sense, but through mapping into the unexplored tropes, or passageways, through which these novels are bound.

**Back to Thebes**

In a published extract of an interview, Julia Kristeva cites the verb “traverse” and defines it very specifically as occurring when the subject “experiences sexual difference, not as a fixed position (‘man’/‘woman’), but as a process of differentiation.”
To acknowledge the complexity in this assertion, it is important to track back to a forerunner text. Freud produced an early and later model of the Oedipus complex. It is the latter to which I turn (*SE XIX: 3-68*).

By 1923, the theory has incorporated the notion of a "positive" as well as "negative" complex, which can operate for both boys and girls.\(^9\) Freud terms this a "more complete" model (*SE XIX: 33*). According to this theory, the boy's burden is to master longings towards his mother. With a tougher task, the girl has two stages to undergo. Her attachment to the mother constitutes the "negative" phase. Once she has relinquished this first and vital connection she enters the "positive" stage. This involves desire for her father (30-39). In "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex" (1924), Freud argues that once this desire has "dissolved" the girl can be prepared for a future of attachments to those who are not her parents (*SE XIX: 173-179*). Whereas in the prototypical models the contrast between the boy's as opposed to the girl's *rites of passage* were more polarised, the 1923 essay makes these more closely aligned.

The concept of "differentiation" referred to by Kristeva finds its germs in "The Ego and the Id." Boys and girls are capable of mixed repressions and identifications:

Closer study usually discloses the *more complete* Oedipus complex, which is twofold, positive and negative, and is due to the bisexuality originally present in children: that is to say, a boy has not merely an ambivalent attitude towards his father and an affectionate object-choice towards his mother, but at the same time he also behaves like a girl and displays an affectionate feminine attitude towards his father and a corresponding jealousy and hostility towards his mother (33, Freud's emphasis).

Freud does not single out girls as behaving any differently. By omitting to any extensive reference to the fate of girls, the interpreter is left to speculate. One implication might be that female subjectivity follows the obverse rules to its male counterparts. On dissolution of the complex, one gender
identification would become uppermost (34). The repressed left-over becomes a “precipitate in the ego, consisting of these two identifications in some way united with each other” (34, Freud’s emphasis). Which two identifications? The answer implies a hybrid of identifications with both mother and father. Yet at the same time, if the human subject is to settle into heterosexuality, one identification must have the upper hand. This means that this masculine identification utilises the male ego-ideal. Freud is more than aware of the knotty situation in which his male subjects find themselves. Freud spells out the double-bind. The boy “ought to be” like Dad yet “may not do all he [Father] does (34). To be like Dad would also mean slipping back into taking over his prerogative, that is, sex with the mother. Though not openly stated, the argument implies that the same would be so for the girl. The apparently impossible task of resolving the conflict between the demands of identification and the need to palliate the unconscious, raises questions about the relations between super-ego, ego and id.

“The Ego and the Super-Ego” argues for a subversion of the binary opposition between ego and id. Articulated in the dynamic between ego, super-ego and id are fluid possibilities of mutual substitution. An element from the super-ego may once have been in the id. Between the two, further and more refined distinctions can emerge. In the light of Butler’s work, I would underline that the psyche, however ideologically interpellated, may be more sophisticated than to simply map itself onto either the father or mother imago. The “either/or” grammar of identification can be richly deconstructed when the human subject adopts positions between these two imagos. Configurations of the elements male and female identifications can facilitate a melting-down imagos and phantasmic identifications. The product consists of their constituent tropes. Freud’s metaphor of “precipitate” implies that between these combinations, a rich array of male to female parts, of various ratios, can crystallise.

Winterson’s female protagonist with peculiar feet is destined to be both incompletely woman and boatman. Villanelle not only oscillates between winning and losing, but
between taking her pleasures with women and men. Villanelle has exited the Oedipal scenario on the side of paternal, web-footed identification. Amongst the boat people of Venice, it is only the men who have webbed feet. Villanelle is an anomaly. On the other hand, she genders herself female, working as a prostitute in Napoleon’s army. Villanelle moves between differently gendered positions, “male” and “female” through a series of flukes. This oscillation is further played out in the text’s organisation of narrative sequences. The Passion begins with Henri’s narrative in “The Emperor” (3-5). The second section “The Queen of Spades” comprises only Villanelle’s tale of her birth and life of desire (49-76). It is only one third of the way through the third book, “The Zero Winter,” that the two narratives, that of the male and that of the female character, begin to alternate (94). This does not result in one narrative being embedded in another. Rather, in the final book “The Rock” (133-160) the two character-bound narratives inter-cut, as though separate and longer soliloquies were sub-divided then grafted onto each other. Given the discourse each character uses is not strikingly different, one interpretation would be that Villanelle and Henri are the masculine and feminine side of one character. Furthermore, the novel’s first book sign-posts male gender by being entitled “The Emperor.” The second section is headed “The Queen of Spades,” that is, the King’s binary opposite. As the narrative moves between king and queen, male and female, destiny and chance, the gendered identities of the protagonists move even closer together.

Kristeva’s essay cited above might not refer directly to The Ego and the Id, but indirectly reflects upon it. She remarks on the advantages for women of negotiating between the extremes of “phallic” identification and its opposite, an abdication of power. Kristeva suggests that Woolf’s fictional texts produce the effect of an “asymbolic, spastic body” while those of Joyce pose the phallic side of language to “dissect” it (1980: 165-166). She implies that the dissection links and re-configures a terrain between the extremes.
In her influential “Women’s Time” (1979) Kristeva articulates what such a terrain signifies historically and politically. She tracks “two generations” (1987: 193-195). The first consisted of suffragists, followed next by those movements coming to the fore in May 1968. For Kristeva, the first generation bore an important role. These women encouraged a needful identification with male power. This projection stimulated women to claim greater access to strong positions within the symbolic order. The second generation, she claims, went to the opposite extreme. They rejected paternity and identified with the cycles of “archaic” memory, of those women’s experience left out of the historical record. Although she does not use the word traversal in “Women’s Time,” the movement between the two positions she implicitly recommends corresponds to her definition of the word outlined above. Her article predicts the emergence of a third movement. This can enhance the complexities of female subjectivity without risking needless rejection of the precursors’ heritage. The gathering “signifying space” which becomes built through time does, to paraphrase Kristeva, re-configure the maze of past generations. It does so by bringing to attention what otherwise would have remained obscure. Logically, this means that certain pathways exist in “parallel” (her emphasis) and become “interwoven one with the other” (483).

Kristeva’s reflections on time illuminate the question of gender and sexual identity anchored in Freud’s theory of the Oedipus complex. She underscores the importance of challenging the notion “male”/“female” identity as rival entities. This is most particularly so because the concept of identity is itself problematic (483). She adds that the term “bisexuality” would be to pose an idealised totality which avoids the challenge of encountering difference. For me, however, this latter and most vital of terms is closely aligned to the concept of “differentiation.” It defines the varied possibilities of imbalanced, colliding yet mutually supportive brigades of subjectivities. I should recall here the intimacy model. Intimacy does not presuppose some idealised system of equality. Whilst
this ideal can, for temporary periods, be achieved, intimacy often occurs between parties as a result of inequalities. These disparities become cited and contested again. Here is Kristeva’s recommendation for achieving difference:

This process could be summarised as an *intérieurization of the founding separation of the socio-symbolic contract*, as an introduction of its cutting edge into the very interior of every identity whether subjective, sexual, ideological, or so forth (484).

What exactly this involves for each subject lies at the horizon of Kristeva’s article. To explore the possibilities beyond it, I turn to the passage in *Mrs. Dalloway* when Peter Walsh, then the external narrator, focalizes the goings-on of a female vagrant. The text emerges into a free indirect discourse between the tramp and the external narrator, both of which are thereby given access to cyclical temporality.

Through all ages - when the pavement was grass, when it was swamp, through the age of tusk and mammoth, through the age of silent sunrise - the battered woman - for she wore a skirt - with her right hand exposed, her left hand clutching her side, stood singing of love - love which has lasted a millions years (1998: 105-106).

Leena Kore Schröder suggests that the pre-history here represented “de-stabilises the constructions of nationalism and Empire that comprise Our Island Story.” (1995: 331). *Mrs. Dalloway*, she continues, contains references to cyclical and apocalyptic time. The second level narration focalized through the tramp carries these two temporalities. The apocalyptic promise finds itself figured when the tramp’s exultation of “ee um fah um so” (1998: 105; 107) is described as an “ancient song” which in its “bubbling” and “burbling” breaks through the pavements around Regent’s Park Tube, flooding its way down Marylebone Road (106). The “bone” in this road name is appropriate. It signifies the mythical detritus reincarnated into an archaic and anarchic temporality threatening the civilised and imperialist.
The following quote is not Schröder's; it does though support her point. Around Regent's Park tube station, the pre-historical erupts from under the pavement. Revealed are not the proceeds of an archaeological dig, but forces which gather into a transgressive momentum of "skeletons and treasure." These "streamed away in rivulets over the pavement and all along the Marylebone Road, and down towards Euston, fertilising, leaving a damp stain" (1998: 106). If linked to the momentous kiss between Sally and Clarissa, this last line can be interpreted as a sexual innuendo (45). Hence the "treasure" which erupts through the pavements lies contiguously to the kiss' product, that is, a "diamond" (46). Metonymically, then, the kiss delivers a precious stone which is also a sharp, cutting instrument. Thus, even though it has emerged from cyclical time, it can hardly be deemed a signifier of Kristeva's "semiotic." A diamond is itself built upon an intricate architecture. The instabilities between worlds prehistoric and civilised, the forging of one into another thus produces a crystalline structure which is not only precious, but would logically be formed from a molecular code. Thus from the transgressive, lesbian kiss which has conjured it, the diamond could signify a re-cut, re-crystallised formation within the symbolic order.

In other words, Kristeva's claim that those temporalities are constituted on a repudiation of paternity requires questioning. Admittedly, the diamond from Mrs. Dalloway, propelled from the terrains of cyclical temporality, manifests itself from the collisions of linear and cyclical times. Yet the primeval terrains of Woolf's novel are not without their own laws. Septimus Smith's interior monologue stipulates that "Men must not cut down trees. There is a God ... Change the World" (31). This Green Peace campaigner before his time develops his own set of prohibitions. These are structured through re-articulations of old codes. The belief in God may be Christian or pagan or a cross-fertilisation of the two. If the latter, ideologies are repeated so as to de-stabilise the dominance of any one theology. Septimus Smith is a man on the edge of "women's
time.” He maps out the newly forming codes which Kristeva insists can only be produced from a refusal to identify with the extremes of either paternity or the pre-Oedipal mother. Yet Septimus refuses to identify himself with the war-mongering, imperialist armies of his culture. He makes no uneasy compromises between conflicting identifications. Rather - and this is where I propose an emendation to Kristeva’s model - Septimus Smith errs on the side of a cyclical temporality which is not bereft of structure. Woolf’s novel does not comprise two different novels enunciated in two different discourses. Thus I would argue that so-called cyclical temporalities and the site they define are more explicitly coded than Kristeva would maintain.

Thus her notion that to traverse the “masculine” and “feminine” requires discovering the points in-between, requires qualification. Freud’s later version of the Oedipus complex, read in the light of Judith Butler’s theories on phantasmic identification, suggests that “movements between” involve layers of already transferred selves, precipitated through different temporalities which need to be peeled away. What is for Kristeva the traversal of gender will likewise have consequences for the iterative structuring of temporal domains. In textual terms, as a narrative undergoes traversal which does more than move around a repetitive loop, narrative identities will undergo transformation of gender and temporality. The theme of time and its relation to gendered subjectivity and transgressive acts of desire may be more emphasised in *The Passion* and *Mrs. Dalloway* than they are in *Middlemarch*. However, as the following section will explore, temporal dimensions in Eliot’s novel are foregrounded spatially. Drawing rooms and theatres footnote the Thebes of Sophocles’ Oedipus and pre-empt the Freud’s Oedipus to come.

**Webs, Hearts and Dirty Books**

Sophocles’ Oedipus and Eliot’s Lydgate, different as they are, share talents and myopias in common. Both are healers. Prior to the beginning of the play, the protagonist to *Oedipus the King* has won the appellation “tyrannos” by solving the Sphinxes’
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riddle. Through the drama his powers of discovery will be further tested. The scientist-king failed to make the crucial connection between knowledge of oracles, of nature and that other pursuit, the identification of a woman, his mother. Whereas Oedipus is already great before his downfall, Lydgate aspires to greatness without achieving it. His ambition is to make a great scientific discovery, as did his heroes Heschel and Jenner. Like Oedipus, Lydgate’s tragedy is caused by an unfortunate marriage. Rosamund Vincy lacks sympathy for his vocational ambitions. The financial demands of marriage distract him from the Grail of scientific discovery. His gift of “intellectual ardour” does not “penetrate his feeling and judgement about furniture, or women” (179). George Eliot suggests that it is in the “complexion of his prejudices” that Lydgate carries his “spots of commonness” (179). Intellectually gifted though blind to the riddle of woman, failure in the latter will have consequences for the former.

Lydgate’s double task of confronting knowledge of Nature and apprehension of female Otherness finds its analogue in Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex. As Bernard Knox notes, the Greek tragedy is a “play full of equations” (1998: 149). Some are true, some false. Yet more are incomplete. The latter beckon to their hero to be solved. Knox points out that there is more than one Oedipus. The first is the tyrannos, the king, powerful man and possessor of knowledge. He is the solver of riddles. The second Oedipus is the object of what is sought (to zetoumenon) (149). As Knox explains, one Oedipus investigates the other, attempting to suss out the equation between the two kings. Answers can be found in the protagonist’s name. This includes associated linguistic roots. “Oida” is the tyrannos’ “knowledge” lexically joined to the “pous,” or swollen foot (149). One side of the nominal unit has repressed the other. That which has been repudiated will name the man.

“Lydgate,” both by name and nature, carries a paradox comparable to his predecessor’s. The first syllable of the doctor’s surname is phonetically suggestive of the verb to lead. The second half “gate” implies a gateway, but one which may
be closed or open. Lydgate would be great. He would lead. But to step from being the local general practitioner to a scientist of international acclaim requires finding a hidden threshold. Lydgate never discovers it. Moreover, *Middlemarch*’s chapter 15 gives a clue to the knowledge which equates both the terrain of research with that of passion, emotional and sexual. What precipitates Lydgate’s intellectual longings is the anatomy of the human heart and their *valvae*, or doors. (chapter 15, 173). Although they do not form a gate, doors do connote the image of a threshold. The difficulty for this provincial Oedipus is to link knowledge of physiology with that of the beloved. For Sophocles’ Oedipus, solving the final riddle leads to exile. Lydgate ultimately leaves Middlemarch with the Bulstrode scandal behind him. As I will explain below, the doctor solves his riddle only at a moment of bitter-sweet recognition. This does not alleviate his domestic troubles but keeps him complicit with them. The domestic Thebes of his creation will remain replete with plague. That he should die prematurely from an infection is thus appropriate to the logic of his narrative destiny.

Eliot’s Lydgate can be read as the inheritor of Sophocles’ hero and as the precursor to Freud’s Oedipus. In *Middlemarch*, the pathway the doctor pursues and renounces becomes both indexical and iconic of the Oedipal narrative traversed. By this I mean that the tropological web of Lydgate’s story “re-writes” both the basic feature of the Sophoclean tragedy and the Freudian narrative which it pre-dates. Judith Butler has stressed that when power structures are cited, their grip is reinforced. She considers how these structures can be reiterated in order to “expose the heterosexual matrix and to displace the effect of its necessity” (15). As regards the Greek myth, Freud’s Oedipus complex is specifically a citation. It is one which re-enforces compulsory heterosexuality.

Particularly in the earlier version of his Oedipal narrative, Freud lines up the female sex by gendering her on one side of the mother. The girl is positioned to identify with her mother rather than desiring her. Yet Freud’s later accounts begin to expose the very power structures these texts would
represent. It would be preposterous to think of Eliot's Oedipal narrative as a citation of what comes after them. Within Butler's system this would not be possible. So what I am arguing, to qualify Butler's ideas, is that earlier power structures can undergo a more radical citation than their later repetitions. The aim of this section is to examine Eliot's prescient re-citation of Freud's Oedipal tale.

The idea of preposterous citation qualifies early feminist criticism of the novel. As John Peck remarks, much "overtly feminist criticism" of the 1970s criticised Middlemarch for not living up to the task of "celebrating positive presentations of women." Dorothea Brooke's calling will be subsumed to that of her husband-to-be, Will Ladislaw. Various critics have not tired of underlining how the narrative leaves Dorothea hidebound. In contrast, George Eliot triumphed. As Woolf states in eulogy, Eliot the novelist was unafraid to "pluck for herself the strange bright fruits of art and knowledge. Clasping them as few women have ever clasped them" (1979: 160).

Hence what certain feminist readings have laid accusingly at George Eliot's feet, Middlemarch confronts. As I have already explored in my chapter 1, the novel's external narrator is often gendered male but will adopt a female identification. The masquerade slips. In the ironic gap between gendered positions, between the external narrator's and the characters', the normative is not spared. The tragic narrative of Lydgate's vocation renounced unravels, unsentimentally, the strands of the corrupt ideologies which interpellate Middlemarch's dwellers. Thus the analogue of the Theban plague in Middlemarch is the web-like grasp of normative theories and narratives. As Woolf remarked, Eliot would not "mitigate the truth because it was a stern one" (1979: 160).

It is not just the novel's female protagonist who will be polluted by norms which have lain without needful dissection. Lydgate's quest for knowledge cannot escape being ultimately unravelled by his complicity with convention. He is enmeshed in his fictions of female identity and desire. For one who
suffers so under the yoke of domestic tyranny, the good doctor shares many of his wife’s prejudices. The external narrator drops the requisite acid remark: “Lydgate hated ugly crockery” (Book IV, chapter 34, 387).

In the novel’s crucial fifteenth chapter Eliot’s narrator notes: “We are not afraid of telling over and over again how a man comes to fall in love with a woman and be wedded to her” (173). Using the universal “we,” the external narrator identifies with the male audience. This all-inclusive fraternity tend to become embroiled in “troubadour tales.” The cause is an excess of “poetry” or “stupidity” (173). Women have a “makdom and fairnesse.” There is an objective correlative to these female attributes. It is vocation. Passion for this requires “patient renunciation.” Eliot’s narrator thus draws an analogy between failed vocation and failed marriage. Just as the “ardour of youthful loves” wanes, so too can the husband find himself “shapen after the average and fit to be packed by the gross” (174). The man who has failed his vocation might find an “earlier self” moves like a ghost in the “old” home full of new furniture. This is focalized as “ghastly” (174). Although Lydgate “did not mean to be” one to fail in his vocation, the tropic warnings emerge. Through a double focalization, the narrator warns that Lydgate’s blindspots comprise women and furniture. Through the prescient passage about ghosts, old homes and new interior design, the female sex and interior decor are woven into metonymic proximity.

These proximities forge the paths Lydgate blindly follows. He submits to Rosamund’s materialist demands. Financial pressure decoys him from his vocation. The correlation between her materialism and his prejudices are wittily foregrounded by the narrator’s remark that in “warming himself at French social theories he had brought away no smell of scorching.” Such short-sightedness becomes entangled with the conviction that Rosamund will be submissive and attentive towards his life-work. Relevantly, Lydgate constructs her ideal “feminine” co-operation using a frame from zoology. His theories of “psychological difference” between genders relies on biological fictions representing the “innate submissiveness
of the goose as beautifully corresponding to the strength of the
gander” (Book IV, Chapter 62, 391). Lydgate’s tragedy is that it
will be the goose who rules. This possibility he has not
foreseen. He blinds himself through his own focalizations. His
instruments are metaphors. These tools as metaphors create
pleasing theoretical fictions. They amplify his fictional theories
about Rosamund. Ironically, support from a large hearted
woman comes too acutely and too late. Mortified by the
Bulstrode affair, Dorothea Brooke reminds him of his aspira­
tions, of her (not his) conviction that he “may still win great
fame” (Book VIII, Chapter 76, 821). Lydgate could take
advantage of an equation between that activity termed cherchez
la femme with that which might be coined, cherchez la science.

The external narrator’s ingenuity follows maze-like con­
tiguities through lovers’ discourse and the language of episte­
mology. The narrative of Lydgate’s scrape with a French femme
fatale begins with the doctor at his “galvanic experiments”
(Book II, Chapter 15, 180). Various frogs and rabbits are at the
receiving end of a “mysterious dispensation of unexplained
shocks” (180). In frustration, Lydgate puts them aside. He
jousts with unexplained “facts” (180). Off he goes to the
theatre. There he will himself be the repository of shocks.
These are his infatuation with Laure, a French actress. Alleg­
edly, she accidentally kills her co-actor and husband. This turns
out to be a deception. Lydgate remains hoodwinked. Laure’s
manipulation of her performance to enact calculated murder
emerges as the hidden fact. Gutted, Lydgate learns his lesson,
or so he thinks. He believes himself free from the power of
illusion. Like Oedipus, the doctor assumes confidence in his
maturity and powers. The quest for greatness requires single-
mindedness. Not that Lydgate lacks this. Gillian Beer argues
that in his approach to science Lydgate excels. For Beer,
Lydgate is “imaginative in relation to science” but “utterly
untrained” in the “analytical seriousness” of life’s “emotional
business” (1986: 171). I will be arguing quite the opposite.

The metonymic and metaphoric logic of the famous
“web” and of the novel’s numerous optical figures suggests that
the doctor's imaginative and scientific capacities are precisely what confound his analysis of emotions. Beer has drawn magnificent attention to the external narrator's determination in the "Finale" to question the authority of dominant metaphors. The novel's "writing," she asserts, actually "repudiates the favourite image of spun fabric" (1985: 166). Furthermore, she continues, "the fragment of life, however typical, is not the sample of an even web: promises may not be kept, and an ardent outset may be followed by declension" (1994: 890). Beer's punch-line is that the web is a metaphor for conflicts and contradictions such as "necessary sequence" versus "incongruity" (1985: 167). Yet having said this, she maintains the web trope as the chief metaphor. It can carry on its back a "strain and conflict" of significations as well as those related to interconnection (167). In other words, Beer unwittingly privileges metaphor and to a degree, raises it to the status of synecdoche.

Similarly, Sally Shuttleworth tracks the novel's tropes of organic unity. She too emphasises the role played by the "play of metaphor" (1984: 170). Despite privileging this one trope over others, she does trace the conflict between the representations of "moral vision of organic interdependence" and that of "harmful, destructive effects of social integration" (173). The external narrator's quest to deploy narrative as a form of scientific exploration relies decidedly on this organic metaphor. Yet that same narrator would undermine it. This battle and complicity of tropes cannot be explained away as an example of aporia. Eliot's external narrator and the text which "it" traverses, go much further than either Beer or Shuttleworth would allow.

To understand how the novel proceeds across its own gate requires tackling more than the notion of a "web." For to assume this would uphold the primariness of the "central" metaphor's epistemological grip. This tactic is avoided splendidly in J.Hillis Miller's exploration of how the novels' optical metaphors tussle with those of the web (1992: 79). Middlemarch's narrator, he explains, pulls no punches about the seductions of metaphor. By drawing attention to the strategy by
which the novel’s complementary tropes collide, Miller discourages the reading of one mode of metaphorical interpretation over another. I wish to add more to Miller’s arguments. Rather than analysing other passages where “semiotic” and “optic” metaphors vie with each other, I will examine how intermediary tropes such as metonymy play their role. This figure offers a key to understanding how Lydgate confuses his science and his women. This will, in turn, reveal more about the transfersences and workings-through performed by the external narrator. His/her strategies can be better interrogated through following Lydgate’s focalizations. For a number of these merge with those of the external narrator.

Metonymy as a trope, argues Mieke Bal, has the potential to reveal the underlying strategies of a narrative process. In *Double Exposures*, she suggests that when analysed in isolation, metaphor “encourages universalism and escapism” (1996: 90). This will be the case, she continues, if the “motivation” behind the “implied similarity” between vehicle and tenor is “forgotten” (95). Using the example of Rothko’s paintings, Bal suggests that the curators of the artist’s estate made sure a particular selection were shown in many museums (1996: 75). The various exhibitions thus offered a version of what his oeuvre stood for. Through the various iterations of the version in question, Rothko’s collection could form an “omnipresence” (75). This process became metaphorical because it summed up what his “art” is all about. Repetition without difference, concludes Bal, causes the metaphoric mode of representation to dominate (75).

Synecdoche, metonymy and metaphor can come into action as modes of reading, one or more predominating over another. (In the text itself, all these tropes are mixed by definition). Bal argues that synecdoche as a mode of reading has its disadvantages (95). When a particular part is made representative of a whole, this choice of one, vital element will become necessarily arbitrary (95). The cure for the drawbacks of prioritising either trope is the intervention of metonymic readings. These can do so by pointing towards a something else which
challenges the fixational power of any one trope. As Bal states "metonymy is even unreadable without awareness of its substituted other" (95). It does not "promote the repression of what disappears" (95). To translate this insight into psychoanalytic terms, I would argue that metonymy is a great tool for finding out how human psyches are given shape in textual strategies. But just as metonymy is required to dispel the illusions of metaphor, the former requires the interventions of other tropes. The super-ego in action, once metonymically revealed, can be exposed as closely attached to the unconscious forces it would otherwise merely legislate.

Lydgate imagines he can conquer his tendency to be illuded by women. The narrator's anecdote about his scrape with the French actress, Laure, is exemplary (chapter 15). Take the letter "a" out of her name, then remaining is part of the verb to "lure." Laure is a siren for the unsuspecting. In the important chapter 15, the external narrator uncovers a vital catalyst to Lydgate's first call to science. The intellectual ambition to which the doctor would ultimately dedicate himself is not what first charges his youthful curiosities. The man's lofty aims are to follow in the footsteps of Bichat. He will seek out the "primary webs or tissues" which form the underlying structures of life (177). The boy's moment of calling finds its source in a "Cyclopedia" (177). Under the heading of "Anatomy" the young Lydgate discovers the "valves of the heart" (173).

He was not acquainted with valves of any sort, but he knew that valves were folding doors, and through this crevice came a sudden light startling him with his first vivid notion of finely adjusted mechanism in the human frame. A liberal education had of course left him free to read the indecent passages in the school classics, but beyond a general sense of secrecy and obscenity in connection with his internal structure, had left his imagination quite unbiased, so that for anything he knew his brains lay in small bags at his temples...the moment of vocation had come...the world was made new to him by presentiment of endless processes filling the vast spaces planked out of his sight by that wordy
The narrator's focalization moves to that of the second level so as to trace Lydgate's memories more intimately. Heart anatomy will not be Lydgate's passion, yet a page on this subject has been the spur. The heart has become, then, the exciting metaphor, or "the sudden light" for leading him away to an entirely different subject - the webs of living matter. Valvae are doors which fold. Doors connect spaces which logically are contiguously linked. While Lydgate will not track through these connecting spaces between his own displacements, the external narrator opens up these metonymies for the reader.

In the course of chapter 15, Lydgate's biography, the story of how he acquired his calling, the relation of the episode of his unfortunate infatuation with a French actress will all come to light. As these details emerge, metonymy will be the lamp to reveal hidden areas of Lydgate's psychical map and its blindspots of commonness. These link Lydgate not just to actresses, but also to women and to furniture. The first two send electrical shocks through the "human heart" and galvanise it into passion. Folding doors can be found in that site (pun appropriate) of domestic bliss or murder. These can be staged in the living room or its theatrical version. The moment of intellectual firing is a displacement from the passion for a woman, who is not figured in the text except as absence. Lydgate is described as an "orphan" who had a military father. No mother is mentioned (171-172). As a figure she constitutes the missing figure in the drawing room. The folding doors are an important "cross" point in the text's system of displacements. They are the site from which Lydgate can neither exit nor can he re-design them. This is so because he cannot disentangle the missing female imago as a figure which inscribes a blank in the field of his scientific/amorous gaze.

Lacking the crucial, maternal figure, Sophocles' Oedipus does everything to avoid marrying her; Lydgate never expects to ever get himself into a scrape with a woman, but pursues a
path straight back to her through the folding doors of intellectual passion. From this lighted opening emerges a trail of metonymic clues. In the passage quoted above, following on from the first sentence is a second - "A liberal education had of course left him free to read the indecent passages in the school classics" - which comprises a striking non-sequitur. One wonders what Lydgate's more pornographic reading habits have to do with heart anatomy.

The hilariously odd contiguity is telling. The heart, signifier of both passion and knowledge, links back not just to "primitive webs" but to primary processes and dirty books. He has a sense of "secrecy" and "obscenity" in connection with his "internal structure." It was Freud in The Uncanny who pointed out a close alignment between sexual organs and eye-balls. If the figures of vision relevant to Lydgate's journey symbolise pudendae, then these very figures cast light on the doctor's own peculiarities of gender. As my close reading progresses, the female signifier within him will be revealed. But suffice it to note here that lost eyesight and blindness of senses leads to a diminution in the capacity to make epistemological sense.

Before Freud's crucial essays on his theory of the Oedipus complex, Eliot's narrator constructs a Victorian Oedipus, a doctor and a man blind to the chain of signifiers along which his libidinous urges can be tracked back to source. Yet he is called to pursue the displaced path. He has the opportunity to figure knowledge as woman through "vast spaces planked out of his sight." Once again, planks suggest the armature of interior decorating. If Tertius Lydgate were to track the chain of displacements, if he could cherchez les metonyms instead of the bourgeois femme fatale, his fate might be different.

Importantly, what contributes to the blinding procedure is fixation both on his wife and on one dominating metaphor for knowledge. Lydgate searches for the underlying "web" of tissues, with that particular figure taking a principal role. Likewise, he will become equally fixated in his need to have Rosamund's tender support, even if it remains financially shackled. Chapter 58 dramatises a painful interchange in which Lydgate begs Rosamund to make a list of what they can sell.
Lydgate will lose his battle. He attempts to tackle the pain by remembering that there is still science. In the free indirect discourse of his thoughts, the following is confessed: "He must give a tug still - all the stronger because other satisfactions were going" (643). Tugging implies a rope or a fabric which can be pulled. Once again the web texture is at work. Yet at this moment of wanting to tug and displace a poignant moment in the drama occurs. The "door opened" (643). It is a decisive moment and recalls the valvae of the heart. Rosamund emerges carrying her amethysts and other jewels in various boxes. Logically, the amethysts would send out a certain light. This stone recalls the light emerging from behind folding doors, or what was for the boy, the moment of vocation.

That crucial moment has led instead to a materialist, Theban drawing room with a missing mother turned petty bourgeois Queen, bearing her jewels with the "perfect propriety" of a great performance. She manipulates Lydgate into surrender. It is worth noting that when Sophocles' Oedipus blinds himself it is with Jocasta's broaches. The tragedy for Lydgate is that his wife's jewels, brought before his eyes, bring to his "view" the weight of his servitude and the futility of his escape from a Theban, domestic hell. He cannot evince his happiness as being separate from hers. One could imagine re-writing this plot, finding a series of narrative moves in which Lydgate might divorce Rosamund. But this is not in the webbed structure of his psyche. From Lydgate's Thebes, there is no exit.

Lydgate is not just a psychological agency but an aspect of the external narrator's maze-making. The novel has a great knack for setting up double focalizations. The net effect is to force readers back on their own assumptions. In other words, they are psychically drawn into working-through for themselves what it would not be in the text's interests to announce too boldly.

The Lydgate/narrator team which produces double and often contradictory focalizations of Dorothea Brooke, is a case in point. As a character she is the foil to Rosamund. Unlike the
spoilt wife, Dorothea credits Lydgate with the talent to fulfil his dreams (826). He qualifies Dorothea as possessing a heart “large enough for the Virgin Mary” (826). His “gloom” is broken in apprehension of the “child-like grave-eyed earnestness with which Dorothea said all this was irresistible - blent into an adorable whole with her ready understanding of high experience” (822). The external narrator does not indulge a focalization which raises the object into the idealised status of a Madonna. “Of lower experience such as plays a great part in the world” is the narrator’s cutting remark, “poor Mrs. Casaubon had a very blurred short-sighted knowledge.” Indeed, certain members of the audience might have acted out the fantasy of the all-nourishing mother along with Lydgate. The external narrator has deployed bathos to puncture the reader’s transference. Like Lydgate, Dorothea has her blind spots. It is not that Lydgate’s focalization is any more true or false. More than one focalizor has been offered and the reader is rattled out of his or her particular fixations. Perhaps this is also the case with the external narrator. In other words, no focalization may be final; nor is any narration.

Likewise, no trope may be final. Lydgate’s quest for a basic building block to all tissues involves seeking that which is icon, symbol and index of the whole. In other words, Lydgate is a man in search of the ultimate synecdoche. As Miller’s quote emphasises, the external narrator constructs mazes out of competing metaphors. This is done so that no one trope can be recommended. Subverting a focalization of Dorothea Brooke’s “high experience” empties Lydgate’s gaze as it over-magnifies Dorothea in her role as Virgin Mary. Following Merleau Ponty, Lacan defines the gaze as that which “makes us beings who are looked at” (1986: 75). Thus the “child-like gaze” which Lydgate finds in Dorothea finds him catching himself out.

In The Threshold of the Visible World, Silverman argues that the imaginary function, in which the gaze plays a crucial part, contributes to the ongoing process of the symbolic order. Imagination and vision play a key role in structuring knowledge and the ideologies they engender. Child-like eyes played their look in young Lydgate’s apperception of light.
through *valvae*. With Dorothea Brooke, the good doctor is returning to his/external narrator’s (not Freud’s) Oedipal drawing room.

On the return journey, that is, the traversal around the school boy’s first narrative, a shift in trope does indeed take place. In chapter 15, behind the folding doors the chief image was visual, that is, a “sudden light.” As I have explained, the blinding image of the missing mother displaces onto Laure the actress and Rosamund the wife. In yet another domestic battle, Lydgate’s embedded narrative plays with unpleasant equations. He considers that Rosamund might be another Laure. Worse still, the two females might symbolise “all women” (Chapter 58, 638). The doctor’s synecdochic impulses which have motivated his scientific longings, have not mellowed. It is here that the shift occurs. He thinks of Dorothea Brooke. He recalls “dreamily, in what is termed a ‘reverie,’ Dorothea’s patient and selfless concern for Casaubon.

The first sentence of the ensuing paragraph figures this experience precisely as “That voice of deep-souled womanhood” which “had remained within him as the enkindling conceptions of dead and sceptred genius had remained within him” (638). For the first time, Lydgate has gendered his genius female. Given the complicity between “him” and the external narrator, the latter’s talents become likewise gendered female. Furthermore, Lydgate the male character/external narrator, both gendered female, become imbricated in desire for another woman, Dorothea. This fleeting moment of lesbian desire is also a moment of more than one recognition. It includes character, narrator and reader. What has been gendered male exits the Oedipal drawing room “productively” listening, (to adapt Silverman’s notion of the “productive look”) to a “voice” to which the external narrator’s text has given insufficient ideological support.

Recalling Judith Butler’s notion of “phantasmic identification” reveals the complexities and the richness of both Lydgate’s and the external narrator’s predicament. A Victorian man has spent much of his aspirations identifying with a range
of famous men scientists. He also preens his masculine desires for women through paradigms of natural history and selection, such as that of gooses and ganders. This turns out to have been an unfortunate fantasy. Having sided on a series of conventionally gendered phantasmic identifications, what has been repressed is a crucial identification between genius and female “voice.” An old narrative about an actress is returned to, interrogated again until Lydgate confronts a fresh and shattering realisation about that which he has lost and shall never recover. Genius is a woman’s voice. In Lacan’s terms, once the objet a is relinquished, and particularly that which invites the visual projection, finds itself cast away, a traversal can take place.

When this occurs, desire, that is lack, gives way to a rapture. But for Lydgate, this Erlebnis will bring the knowledge of a new lack. For Lydgate, a female voice becomes the truth which sets him free of synecdoche. Yet this relinquishing brings him the fresh pain of having to feel “nobly.” In reaching this new pathway, Lydgate does even more than find within himself a “female voice.” This instance of heteropathic identification opens up in him, female as well as male gendering. In Kristeva’s terms, between the poles of masculine and feminine, the doctor’s identity has momentarily traversed. And by close proximity, so has that of the external narrator. He/she is the one weaving the narrative web and is, in part, indexical with it. Thus, when he/she undergoes a complex movement where I typed the slash (/), so does the text.

This brings me back to the hypothesis which headed this section. I claimed that Lydgate’s journey inscribed an Oedipal narrative predating and differing from Freud’s fable. I posited too that this precursor text, embedded within Eliot’s novel, made a pre-figured citation of Freud’s theoretical fiction. By so doing Middlemarch offers a rare glimpse of lesbian desire which would have otherwise remained entirely abjected. Recalling the model of the positive/negative Oedipus complex, the confrontation of Lydgate/external narrator with Dorothea’s voice locates him at the positive/negative cross-roads. “The Ego and the Super-Ego” emphasises the provisional status of
gendered identities. It underscores how one can give way to another. Lydgate’s mother, the lacuna in the text, finds displacement in an ensemble of metonyms and metaphors. She is both the desired object, the “heart,” and that with which Lydgate will identify - the “voice” of genius.

His determination to uncover the basic formula for the web becomes a quest for a fetish. The external narrator will not become enmeshed in making choices between tropes, be that optic or semiotic. For as no single focalization nor narration is final, neither is a single trope. In the passage which refers to Lydgate’s heteropathic identification with “that deep-souled voice of womanhood” that voice connects into a dense maze of metonyms, including both the web and the heart. Thus the voice is an index of Dorothea Brooke the character. It is an index which performs a metonymical role. And it is a profound citation and unravelling of an ideological imperative. In confronting Dorothea Brooke’s voice, Lydgate’s moment of identification and desire bends and distorts what Butler has termed the “heterosexual matrix.” I would draw this to the attention of those feminist readings which judge Eliot’s novel to have sold out on “women’s voices.” Middlemarch does not, as Woolf so eloquently noted, “tamper” with grim facts. More cleverly, it elicits readers’ conventional idealisations. As they are conjured, so can they be gently, gradually and surreptitiously re-coded.

The World Turned Upside Down

Then came the most exquisite moment of her whole life passing a stone urn with flowers in it. Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips. The whole world might have turned upside down! (Mrs. Dalloway: 45)

I have explored in Middlemarch the Lydgate/external narrator’s fable as an unwitting revision of Oedipal myth and a revisionary precursor to the psychoanalytic paradigm. As Gillian Beer remarks, myths can be considered as “religious and proto-scientific perceptions of differing cultures” (1985: 175).
She notes that Casaubon treats myth as a series of “dry collations” (175). Eliot’s narrator, in contrast, deploys myth in a manner which challenges taxonomies and exposes their “protean” nature. The shape of myths to come can be foretold in the configurations of a preceding culture. The ones which belong to bygone days can be awoken again. Once they have, they contribute differently to the uneasy negotiation between their colliding, merging and ill-fitting tropes.

As there is no dominating trope underlying the web, there may be no dominating myth. Thebes may not be the only site. *Middlemarch* produces a landscape rich with mythologies. Yet equally well, this terrain can expose the uses and abuses to which myth can be put. *Middlemarch* does not lend itself to being read as revolutionary either politically or in terms of narrative experiment. In close communion with Lydgate, the narrator will not topple the status quo nor the narrative conventions of realism. If *Middlemarch* does not rally myth as a bold, albeit revolutionary critique of dominant ideologies, then *Mrs. Dalloway* does. Woolf’s novel discovers in the city of London, unnameable and dangerous mythical sites. These disturb those aspects of the social and psychological web which have atrophied into conventionality.

In the citation heading this section, lesbian desire turns the world upside down. The “her” is Clarissa Dalloway. The incident is passion between two women. It is not isolated. It has been prepared for. And what is more, it occurs in a garden. As I shall shortly explain, flowers, vegetation and rustic terrains become the indexes and symbols which defy the bourgeois, the materialist, the upper-class, and the regimented. These strictures find iconic dwelling in Big Ben’s remorseless chimes. Clock time is Parliament time. Government is men’s business. Linear temporality, rulership and men are bound in solidarity together. Clarissa’s interior monologues indulge no coyness about another bond, “this falling in love with women.” Sally Seton’s kiss turns, for its elapse, the world of Clarissa upside down (1998: 41). The aftermath leaves Clarissa in possession of a “diamond...infinitely precious.” Radiating from it are metonymies, based in contiguities such as “radiance,”
“revelation” and “religious feeling” (46). The erotic and the sublime become each other’s metonyms. Between the two women’s rapture Walsh intervenes, a third party. His intervention strikes Clarissa as “shocking” and “horrible” (46). The effect for her is “like running one’s face against a granite wall in the darkness!” (46). He provokes loss of vision. He plunges Clarissa into darkness. As in Middlemarch for Lydgate, “castration” is both loss of pleasure and loss of sight.

To trace the routes the female subject might take from this Oedipal impasse requires turning to chapter 3 of *The Ego and the Id* (SE XIX: 28-39) and the lecture on “Femininity” (1933; SE XXII: 113-135). Between these two works is an odd twist of interpretative manoeuvring. In the former, Freud uses the boy as his main example. He emphasises that the human condition is a “bisexual” one. In “Femininity,” however, Freud claims that his own task, aided by his “women colleagues,” has altered. It is now to understand how “a woman develops out of a child with a bisexual disposition” (115-116). From the 1923 work onwards, the stress has shifted from a fascination with the ineluctable bisexuality of the boy to that of the girl. This shift is of consequence.

For despite the more complex, “complete” and doubly-structured Oedipal scenario of “The Ego and the Super-Ego” Freud places more weight on evaluating the boy’s feelings for his mother, rather than father. In Freud’s earlier study on the girl’s Oedipal predicaments, her attachment to the father was prioritised. In the pre-Oedipal phase, father is the girl’s rival for the mother as love-object. In the “Ego and the Super-Ego,” when the girl submits to the castration phase, she enters the positive Oedipus complex. In “Femininity” somewhat different terms are used. “Transferred” defines the displacing of attachment from mother to father (119). Freud does not underestimate the wrench involved. “We did not know;” he states, that the girl’s attachment to the mother would be “so rich in content and so long lasting, and could leave behind so many opportunities for fixations and dispositions” (SE XIX:
“Femininity” gives the narrative of the girl’s attachment to her mother, pride of place.

Connecting this insight back to the crucial passages of “The Ego and the Super-Ego” is even more revealing. Though not stated explicitly, the following inference can be made. The positive complex for girls is an attachment to the father supported by an identification with the mother. Yet following the logic of “Femininity,” such a desire would be profoundly complicated by what is claimed to be a rich, difficult to repress attachment to the mother. Judith Butler argues that “to identify is not to oppose desire” (1993: 99). In other words, a girl may perform a complex balancing act in which identifying with one aspect of her mother can be juggled with desiring yet another element in her mother’s character. Identification and desire need not cancel each other out.

According to Silverman, to make the gift of love active requires idealisation not to become idiopathic identification. This theory argues that cultural texts can be received in a manner which facilitates their capacity to illuminate the ideologically undervalued. Under the rubric of this cultural practice, lesbian desire can be constructed as both a life and an artistic activity in which identification and desire are not at odds. This idea can be brought into dialogue with Freud’s “The Ego and the Super-ego.” He argues here that once the girl relinquishes her attachment to her father, she could remain in a state of masculine identification (SE XIX: 32-35). The girl’s identification with her mother need not occur. The expected displacement of desire from the father to another man is anchored in the very identification which might otherwise inhibit heterosexual desires. Logically, though, if she has given up father by virtue of identifying with him, then the next object of desire could be the mother. Moreover, implicit in Freud’s account, this desire for the mother and other female object choices to which it could displace, would have moved over the line of being either symbiotic or narcissistic. In other words, Silverman’s model draws out from Freud’s essay interpretations which have been overlooked.
The inferences to be made have staggering consequences for a theory of what constitutes either bisexual or lesbian desire. For having exited the Oedipus complex, a girl could return to attachment to the mother or, for that matter, "beyond" the positive phase. Admittedly, this "return" as a forward movement may indeed be fraught with the risks of regression. The problem with labyrinths is that however much the adventurer thinks she has noticed old impasses, they may still lure. The toil and trouble of the negative Oedipus complex lurks around the corner. In the gaps between works of Freud in which a period of ten years has elapsed, a theoretical repetition and working-through has taken place. Just as he did in "The Ego and the Super-Ego," the lecture "Femininity" raises the topic of bisexuality. In the former, the star of the more complex Oedipal model is man. By "Femininity," woman has entered centre stage. The two studies, that from 1923 and 1933 are not enough, though, to make between the two, a traversal in theory.

Supporting that of Silverman my own intervention offers a third term mapping out a portion of the labyrinth which would otherwise remain incognito. Put alternatively, the female subject could track along a brave, new path which, paradoxically, is both towards and away from the mother. This would lead her to an Other who can be desired without becoming an object of idiopathic identification. This m/Other is the gateway to further displacements towards other female or male objects of desire. But this gateway is not, as I shall explore in Woolf's novel, an exit out of the Oedipal predicament. It is a moving loop which re-structures the very foundations from which its subjects would exit and enter.

The paradoxical movement "back to" and "away from" finds its corollary in Kristeva's use of the verb "to traverse," a movement taking place between symbolic and a-symbolic positions. In Mrs. Dalloway, one passage in particular traces perplexing routes to female lovers. Clarissa experiences what she "lacked" (40). This is neither "mind" nor "beauty." Instead, it is "something central which permeated; something warm..."
which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman, or of women together” (my emphasis, 40). The comma before “or” creates the opportunity of reading the sentence at two different levels. Both interpretations can be applied and both analyses can be brought into a productive tension with each other. Two equally possible syntactical states apply equally. According to grammatical rules, a comma before “or” makes this connector into a synonym for “in other words.”

This would make the desire between the women equivalent to that between men and women. The rules, though, are not iron-cast. The “or” can act as a linker of contrast. So the “or” could underscore the difference between heterosexual and lesbian desire. It could also indicate that in terms of the “something central” which disturbs the “cold contact,” the heterosexual and the lesbian are mutually substitutable. Both interpretations pertain equally. And because they do, the structure of whatever it is that Clarissa lacks becomes more complex.

Lacan insisted that the phallus was the signifier of lack for both sexes (Rose 1982: 74-85). A superficial reading of the line from Mrs. Dalloway might indicate a similar interpretation of the lack which motivates desire. But the problematic use of the comma before “or” in fact suggests that the “something central” which Clarissa feels she misses, could be different depending on the sexuality involved.

Following the arguments of The Ego and the Id, once the female psyche has submitted to the castration complex and given up her father, she can still identify as male. In other words, even from a position of lack she can identify with Dad. This apparently impossible predicament is captured in the ambiguous use of the connector “or.” According to one grammatical structure, the female subject reaches a cross-roads which is “either” into the negative Oedipus complex and the repudiation of castration “or” away from both. The ambivalent grammar of Woolf’s text challenges desire framed as either/or. There need be no double-bind. Rather, between “either” and “or” is another path which the female subject can hack out for herself. She will make her own, idiosyncratic way between her psyche’s positive and negative tracks. Furthermore, the libido
which "permeates" and "ripples" would forge new roads by cutting back through the loop of the old ones. It involves, through constant return, re-structuring their direction and constitution. In other words, the unstable distinction between either/or is itself a bridge towards a more complex network of lacks and hence desires.

Here are some examples of the different interpolations of desire. For Clarissa, desire can begin with male identification. "She did undoubtedly then feel what men felt" (40). She cannot resist "sometimes yielding to the charm of a woman, not a girl, of a woman confessing, as to her they often did, some scrape, some folly" (40). Women, not girls, can be more readily associated with the double-role of mother and/or female lover. Scrapes and follies locate these women as eccentric to socio-symbolic codes. However much she feels drawn towards them, Clarissa's desire for them lasts "Only for a moment" (41). The extended metaphor consists of a vehicle signifying the rapture which forms filaments to the floral terrains permeating the text. This desire moving towards fulfilment is

a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush which one tried to check and then, as it spread, one yielded to its expansion, and rushed to the farthest verge and there quivered and felt the world come closer, swollen with some astonishing significance, some pressure of rapture, which split its thick skin and gushed and poured with an extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sores. Then, for a moment, she had seen an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed. But the close withdrew; the hard softened. It was over - the moment (41).

The reference to buds about to break their skin would suggest the metaphor's tenor to be an orgasmic rush. Through metonymic displacements, this rush connects to the cyclical movements of time. Whilst Clarississa may have entered this terrain from a place of male identification, what she
experiences could be framed as a fast entrance into the negative Oedipus complex.

This interpretation leads to further development. Associated with the buds is the crocus. Its moment of illumination could be framed as metaphor and metonym for what Kristeva defines in “Women’s Time” as the “chora.” Derived in part from Plato, this defines a dimension which is spatial rather than temporal. It is a “matrix space, nourishing, unnameable, anterior to the One” (1992: 472). Kristeva theorises the chora as a zone which lies beyond the interventions of castration, of language and, of linear temporality. The chora cannot represent itself directly. It is as a force of fracture and disruption.

In Revolution in Poetic Language (1984: 40), Kristeva links the chora to the “semiotic” (le sémiotique). This is articulated by “facilitation, energy transfers, the cutting up of the corporeal and social continuum as well as that of the signifying material.” The semiotic has its roots in Freud’s notion of primary processes. Kristeva links these to the anterior and maternal space which, by definition, is pre-Oedipal. In “Women’s Time” she argues that female subjectivity can provide a “specific measure” of temporalities associated with “gestation” and “the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm.” What is more, this “imposes a temporality whose stereotyping may shock” (1992: 473). Flowers and their blossoming are a product of cycles of death and gestation. In Clarissa’s rapturous reverie, the gushing, splitting and pouring of revelation could be interpreted as flowing from an unseen chora. The alleviation over “cracks and sores” might indicate the impulse to heal over the fissures which are the legacy of submission to the symbolic order. In sum, one framing of Clarissa’s path suggests that it is, negatively, back towards the mother.

On the other hand, an entirely different framing can be arranged. The language of the “hard softened,” of what “gushed” and “poured,” of what is “swollen,” finds its release from being “hard.” The metaphor implies a vehicle of male erection and ejaculation. Clarissa’s interior monologue implies something more than the cyclical returns of choric rhythm. Shakespeare, whom Woolf read and cited copiously, wrote a
sonnet whose poetic speaker describes male orgasm as “the expense of spirit in a waste of shame / Is shame in action and 'till action lust.”21 The emphasis is laid on emptiness and of having nothing left over. In other words, the resolution is implied to offer less in the way of cyclical return. For Clarissa too there is the post-coital moment of “being over.” After all, for a moment at least, Clarissa has come. The pun is intended. Following this particular though not exclusive framing, Clarissa can be read to have peeled apart her subjectivity only to heal it en route of male identification.22

No exit leads entirely beyond the network of desires. Every longing has a precursor. If there is satisfaction, it is temporary. It implicitly promises further amorous and temporal explorations. Clarissa’s purple interior monologue comes to rest, temporarily, in “bed” with Baron Marbot’s memoirs (40). She reads them by the “candle half-burnt” (41). The implications here are twofold. First, the moment of rapture is followed by a return to memory. I use the word “return” because the erotic prose was stimulated by some “accident ... like a faint scent or a violin next door” (41). Second, the half-burnt candle is both extinguished yet has enough length remaining for further illuminations. The image of the burning wick connects metonymically to the match within the crocus. Rapture’s wick is far from burned out. The epiphanic moment repeated presages a future. The ecstasy has been incomplete. Clarissa’s free indirect discourse phrases “a meaning almost expressed.” Should everything be signified, then potential, future pathways would also be jeopardised. If all possible facilitations are saturated, the cycle of remembering, repeating and working-through will be ended.23

This forestalling of completion, the meaning never to be entirely expressed, is the condition for what occurs not between characters, but between narrative layers of the text. In turn, this microcosm with its treasures and damp stains burgeons into the city of London, into the heart of Clarissa’s large-scale party with all its society dignitaries. In the microcosm of Clarissa’s consciousness an Arcadian cosmos has
re-built Thebes. As is often the case when wandering through a maze, old paths will perplex in new guises. As a consequence, Clarissa Dalloway can be found to be approaching the desired female other without falling into a symbiosis with her. There is no entrance to an experiential site which is not also an exit. Yet likewise, exits enable a circumvention which brings the narrative subject and narratee to a point of entry unlike that first encountered.

Furthermore, just as Lydgate and the external narrator merge with each other or separate, to act as each other's analogies, a comparable duet brings together Woolf's narrator and Clarissa. Thus when the character releases rapture by treading the constantly shifting edges between positive and negative Oedipal narratives, so does the external narrator. Mrs. Dalloway traverses Middlemarch in the following respect. Despite the collaboration between Middlemarch's external narrator and Lydgate the focalizor/narrator, the external narrator does not connect with the doctor in such a way that Lydgate's working-through of his destiny enables him to be liberated from it. The possibility of rapturous and redemptive interaction between external narrator and character is left as potential not to be realised. The realisation takes place in Mrs. Dalloway. With the subtle support of the external narrator, Clarissa's character-bound narration takes her through the entrances and exits of Thebes so as to transform her and liberate her rapture. To turn around Bloom's ratio of *apophrades*, that is the inheritor work's capacity to bring back the dead to defuse them, I would suggest that Mrs. Dalloway does not exorcise the ancestor's narrative strategies. In fact, Woolf's novel pays homage to the precursor Middlemarch for initiating a close and intriguing bond between external narrator and character. The intimacy between the two figures and re-figures the Oedipal journey taken by both. When textual ghosts are traversed, they reincarnate back to textual life.

To sum up, Clarissa pursues a wide-ranging trajectory with the co-operation of the external narrator; their combined forces or "mind" is what makes a maze of free indirect discourse re-draw the Oedipal map. Between the three inter-
pretative frames I have set side by side, a tension has been resolved to enhance the number of connections between the analyses. Firstly, Kristeva’s work on the *chora* and female subjectivity maps out Clarissa’s journey towards a pre-Oedipal mother. Secondly, a re-working of Freud’s model finds Woolf’s heroine cutting her way towards the mother on the side of male identification. But she does so without repudiating the paternal imago or the symbolic order. This point would contradict Kristeva’s oft stated conviction that any form of lesbian desire necessarily repudiates the paternal function. Add to this my third interpretation that castrated subjectivity involves a loss of vision rather than necessarily carrying the punishment of the lost phallus. The blinded subject wanders through the maze finding exits and entrances through a much greater degree of improvisation than if she were to recognise signposts. Taken together, all these interpretative frames traverse each other, enabling an interpretation to evolve *between them*. The achievement of this collaboration provides the preparation for exploring the unpredictable terrains of *The Passion*.

**Chance Exits**

The wild card. The unpredictable wild card that never comes when it should. Had it fallen earlier; years earlier, what would have happened to me? I looked at my palms trying to see the other life, the parallel life. The point at which my selves broke away and one married a fat man and the other stayed here, in this elegant house to eat dinner night after night from an oval table. (*The Passion*, 144).

The house of the oval table is that of the Queen of Spades. She is Villanelle’s *grand amour*. The chance event is metaphorised as a playing card which causes the player to take one of two routes. Never convinced that the Queen will be hers, Villanelle goes for the less palatable but easy choice of the “fat man.” To frame this passage Oedipally, the fat man is the undesirable, heterosexual choice whereas the Queen is the object prohibited. As Judith Butler suggests, if a position has been
“saturated with injury” then the strategy will be one of “disidentification” (1993: 100). Human desire, she insists, is as much propelled by such injuries as by the quest for lost objects. In “Phantasmic Identification,” Butler critiques Lacan’s “tautological” notion that the symbolic exists prior to the subjects who enter it. She criticises the idea that there are “subject positions” (1993: 114). With Winterson, I would add to this an important caveat. Lacan’s tautology risks giving the role of destiny pride of place. For if positions are already prescribed, and males and females line up on either side of the phallus, then what happens to the role of chance? Butler does not enter into this question. But in this section, I will examine how *The Passion* re-writes the Oedipal narrative by challenging the traditional binary opposition of “chance” versus “destiny.”

Butler argues that certain kinds of “enunciation” actually “dismantle” the “subject positions” they would inscribe (1993: 114). Taking up such positions without challenging them would mean selling out to the *status quo*. Having a “coherent” heterosexual identity requires the violence of prohibitions (115). But through the logic of what is implied by assuming one identification, a coherent lesbian or gay identity would also require incurring prohibitions. Nevertheless, Butler disclaims the idea that “identity is to be denied” (117). Instead, she pleads for “tracing the ways in which identification is implicated in what it excludes, and to follow the lines of that implication for the map of future community that it might yield” (119). The summons is intriguing. It requires uncovering what is involved by the “it” of identification. For this function involves much more than simply mapping one’s own subjectivity onto that of someone else, be that carried out heteropathically or otherwise.

Chapter V of the *Ego and the Id* offers clues. Freud claims a precursor for the super-ego. Its task was “fulfilled in earlier days by the father and later by Providence and Destiny” (400). Freud refers to the atavistic belief that each human life-map is already prescribed. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1900), he argues that we deal with the unexpected intervention of death by attributing its event to “Necessity,” a force closely associated with destiny (*SE XVIII*: 45). This occurs only after
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The fact of chance. If calamities occur their legacy is anxiety. This state produces the response deemed missing from the scenario in which the accident occurs. Anxiety results from "expecting the danger or preparing for it" (12). From this I surmise that the human habit of blaming destiny fends off the anxiety that anything can befall anyone at any moment. For surrendering to the possibility that all is chaos might make existence unbearable. Blaming or praying to a cosmic force constitutes a speech act. Perhaps the deities can be commanded on all levels. As well as being persuaded into protecting humans from anxiety-provoking events, the gods have jurisdiction over matters of the heart.

The Passion explores the relation between anxiety and desire through dramatising the vicissitudes wrought between chance and destiny. "Somewhere between fear and sex" notes Villanelle "passion is" (62). And driving the journey into this "between" is a game of cards where the win is a woman. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle, a different though related game takes place. Freud's grandson Ernst plays with a bobbin to try and win another woman, his mother. Freud makes a crucial link between the desire to master traumatic neuroses and child's play (SE XVIII: 281-287). Children want to control painful chance events such as periods of separation from the mother. Freud narrates the miniature tale of how his grandson Ernst plays with his cotton-reel and bobbin. Freud employs words for the contrasting positions in which his grandson places the bobbin: "fort" is used to mean "gone" and "da" means "there" (SE XVIII: 12-17). His grandson's "great cultural achievement" is "instinctual renunciation" (15). Ernst gains mastery over absence by staging its loss. He achieves the unpleasure of loss and the pleasure of return.

In a similar though not identical process, subjects of trauma stage their agonies. They do so to summon the affect which, if only (they suspect) it had been there before, might have prevented the calamity (24-34). The reiterated process is an attempt to achieve some degree of catharsis. If binding of affect is achieved, so is representation. From the chaos of
chance, a narrative reflecting upon that which is beyond its control may be achieved. In this respect, the act of narration constitutes an attempt to construct a role for the already-given. As Villanelle says of the Queen of Spades, “she was my destiny” (1988: 144). But more than this, the compulsion to keep telling the tale of this ineluctable love is also a strategy for protesting too much the inevitability of the destined experience. Thus the narrative act becomes a tautological act which would protest too much. Behind its protestations a signifier is being veiled, escaping the grip of representation yet producing it. Along with the ego, the structure which is responsible for keeping in the id in tow, is the super-ego.

For Freud, the super-ego stands in for destiny. In his work on the primal father and the murderous brothers, Freud equates the super-ego with the role of paternity, or what Lacan has termed the “Name-of-the-Father.”25 In Butler’s terms, it is the paternal super-ego which installs compulsory heterosexuality. The super-ego abjects the id. The heterosexual abjects the lesbian. To posit a belief in destiny refuses the notion that much of life is left to chance. Yet according to Freud, the super-ego is structured by precisely the id it has repudiated. He stated that “the super-ego is always close to the id and can act as its representative vs-à-vis the ego. It reaches deep down into the id and for that reason is farther away from consciousness than the ego is” (SE XIX: 49). Ego and id are intimately connected. Not only does compulsory heterosexuality trace the lines of abjected sexualities, but destiny carries the markings of chance. In Winterson’s novel, each of the levels just described are interrelated. Thus what is represented as abject, as non-heterosexual or lesbian, is linked to that which is unpredictable and uncertain.

The story of how Villanelle came to be not entirely woman or boatman dramatically explores the tension between ideologically repressed desires and carefully planned, pre-existing systems of behaviour going accidentally and badly wrong. Villanelle explains how it is that the Venetian boatmen, not the women, have webbed feet. Villanelle’s father breaks a time-honoured taboo by showing his toes to a tourist. The
unfortunate traveller ends up in a mental asylum. Villanelle’s father disappears altogether (50). The cause behind all this remains veiled. Pregnant with Villanelle, her mother follows the strict birthing ritual. But amongst the many mishaps, an owl from nowhere swoops over the mother’s shoulder. This botched ceremony results in the birth of a sexed anomaly - baby “female” Villanelle bearing a boat-“man’s” webbed feet. The tale of the apparently disastrous ritual and birthing is not one about a female subject who fails to assume her “position.” That which has been destined, through a perverse performance of two elements in the reiterative sequence going wrong, changes the configuration of what was destined. In terms of the Venetian heritage, Villanelle’s mother enacted the pre-ordained to unwittingly change it.

This embedded narrative could be read as an allegory for how the power of an accident or an imaginative leap inspired by the allegedly abject, can transform the symbolic order. For unexpected configurations go on to produce another set of pre-ordained rulings. Once in place, these can comprise a new pattern of destiny. The midwife who births Villanelle attempts to cut away the uncanny webs from between the infant’s toes. But they will not give. Symbolically speaking, the castrating action is prohibited. That this new sexed configuration constitutes a form of destiny is attested to by the mid-wife’s conclusion that the Virgin has “willed” the matter (52). Another prohibition has been set in place. But it is not paternal law. Rather, these are the prescriptions of Mary, mother of God. However anti-normative this terrain of the symbolic may be, it does have its systems of acknowledgement and denial. Thus Butler’s notion that even contested identities, once formed, set up their own game-plan for what is to be abjected, does apply.

However, the task of working-through the lacunae in Butler’s argument is best addressed by more closely scrutinising Villanelle’s differently engendered identifications. If the Virgin’s “will” prescribes other routes through the maze rather than those mapped out by compulsory heterosexuality, these
pathways are themselves structured into perplexing twists and imponderable layers. Villanelle’s performance of either a male or female identity is never clear cut. The masquerade comprises that which Butler only alludes to. This is a form of identification which purposefully poses itself as a problem of arbitrariness. In the second book, the “Queen of Spades,” Villanelle confesses that she dresses as a boy “because that is what the visitors liked to see. It was part of the game, trying to decide which sex was hidden behind tight breeches and extravagant face-paste” (54). The point is that the audience in the casino and the narratees are lured into playing guessing games. To guess is not just to gamble. Certain calculations can be made. The casino audience would test out Villanelle’s appearance against the usual gender codes. Some readers may win. The rest may lose. Thus the construction of Villanelle’s gender is reliant not entirely on her own construction or that of the audience. Both these procedures rely on contexts, power structures, the symbolic order. Equally well, chance will play its role. And the unpredictable event, as I mentioned above, is linked to the id, the abject, the ideologically unacceptable. Thus the re-writing of the crucial passages in the Oedipal narrative and the identifications it prescribes, would require allowing them to yield to chance interventions.

The question now is how the unexpected can play its part in bending and shifting narratives which require questioning. As Kaja Silverman puts it, “desire is in effect nothing more than a series of metaphors and metonymies, displacements away from an unconscious point of origin in which one term replaces another which it either resembles or adjoins, before being subjected to a similar fate” (my emphasis, 115). Silverman’s use of the word “fate” is revealing. Terms cannot escape the destiny of being substituted for or actually doing the replacing. Yet equally well, metaphors and metonymies co-operate together to form even more complex networks. Logically, this means that more is at stake than substitution. When similar terms team up and play as an ensemble, desire has a route of various terms along which to be displaced. And which are taken cannot always be predicted.
Bal’s recognition of the advantages of metonymic logic which I set up in my analysis of *Middlemarch*, has here further import in re-visiting Freud’s Oedipus complex. In a nutshell, the idea that “woman,” or for that matter “man,” each take their prescribed path around and through the complex is questionable. Reading the metonymies in the text reveals not prescribed and limited paths, but mazes of multitudinous options. Certain unexpected events in a child’s destiny will cause unexpected choices of movement. Henri and Villanelle, the provisional “man” and “woman” of the novel are its only two narrators. Their discourses are highly similar, one often borrowing the syntactical patterns and phrases of the other. The third book, “The Zero Winter,” though narrated by Henri, contains the embedded narrative of Villanelle’s account of the Queen of Spades. Because of the similar discursive patterns, it is feasible to assume that Henri might repeat certain aspects of Villanelle’s narrative. But he might have heavily edited her work. He could also have surreptitiously woven into her text, embedded narratives of his own.

Hence it is possible to speculate that the two character-narrators are a masquerade. Behind each is one external narrator, splitting itself in two, yet metonymically linked by their shared patterns of discourse. With reference to the Oedipal framing, the following interpretation of this narrative situation might be developed. The male and female narrator and their texts can be read as personifications of the positive and negative identifications of the Oedipus complex. Both the narrators and their narratives are intimately and metonymically connected. Thus one set of identifications from the positive side could be displacements from the negative, and vice versa. One example is Villanelle’s confession that Henri does not send her heart “shattering through her body” (147). Rather, she loves him in a “brotherly incestuous way” (146). Villanelle, a woman whose sex is problematic by virtue of her feet, projects herself as a man who loves a brother homosexually. Thus the lesbian and the heterosexual positions are destabilised. Simultaneously, a prohibited sexual desire is conjured. At the
same time, this desire is not located as an all-consuming passion. As the fabula progresses, the narrative embeddings repeating different elements of already recounted stories. In the third book “The Rock,” the alternation between the narrations of Villanelle occurs three times. The net effect is that Villanelle’s narrative could be deemed as embedded within Henri’s which, in turn, returns to an embedding within hers. Thus the maze-makings of Villanelle and Henri come to be even more closely entwined. Paradoxically, this movement runs counter to their separation as lovers.

Yet another issue persists in any consideration of the Oedipal narrative, which I explored in my reading of Lydgate. If the pathways through the positive Oedipus complex lead the female subject away from the mother, even if a radical rewriting displaces this desire towards another woman, the question remains as to what is the object of lack and the index of prohibition which installs desire. According to Freud, boys fear the punishment of castration. Girls already feel punished. In accounts of the positive/negative Oedipus complex, the male organ is not at issue. The mother or the father as “love-object” is indeed what is at stake (SE XIX: 28-39). In Kaja Silverman’s account of symbolic castration, relevant in my reading of Middlemarch, the mother’s voice is credited as a vital element in the process of separating the female child from her mother. This voice becomes the focus of lack and what is sought out again. In The Passion, the metonym and metaphor for lack is the heart. In its doubly figurative function, the heart offers an insight into what constitutes the raw material of the symbolic order.

This insight can be followed in Villanelle’s apparently incidental and intriguing remark that Venice’s churches were “built from the heart. Improbable hearts that I had never understood before. Hearts so full of longing that these old stones still cry out” (63). A church implies a strong structure, difficult to topple and capable of surviving the ages. Yet oddly, its building blocks are “improbable;” by implication, these stones came together on the vagaries of chance. The paradox here is that strong structure is based on the essential stones of
something not pre-arranged. Thus the construction has been wrought inexplicably or almost as a miracle. The final book “The Rock” implies Saint Peter’s rock, or the Church.

There is a well-known hymn which would have been part of Winterson’s religious upbringing and therefore I think it intertextually relevant: “Rock of Ages/Cleft for me/Let me Hide my Light in Thee.” Hymns are sung and the hearts that built the churches created stones which cry out. When a lover wins the game of gambling, she would be able to entrust her heart to the safe-keeping of the beloved, without him or her being an appropriator, like the Queen of Spades. The hymn, “let me hide my light in thee” expresses a longing to take one’s best self and the expression of it, to house it in a safe place, inside the Church. Light also connotes energy, illumination and rapture. Yet the word “hide” also signifies vulnerability. I am not going to make a simplistic equation between the experience of vulnerability and that of Lacanian lack. The verb “hide” is too rich in connotations to allow such reduction. What I will suggest, though, is that the combination of illumination and self-expression woven into the line from the hymn, is wedded to a sense of humanness which eschews grandiosity.

The loss of such self-elevation suggests separation from illusions and parental imagos. The “rock of ages” is not a parent but a symbol of home-coming after many trials and tribulations. Though incarcerated, by the novel’s final book, Henri attests to the fruits of his long journey. His achievement is to have loved “someone else enough to forget about” himself. To do this “even for one moment is to be free” (154). To reach this attainment is to touch what cannot be won by force, and that is the “Holy Grail” (154). This is not about being “powerful” or “rich.” Nor is it about following any of the super-egos that conventional ideologies may enforce. While the novel is set in the seventeenth century, it was written and published in the Thatcherite era of the eighties. This was the period of market speculations and of astronomic gains and losses on the stock-exchange. Such gamblings were valorised by the political climate. Thus Winterson’s novel offers an
indirect critique of the society into which it was being received. Henri’s secluded state in the mental asylum is thus a particular challenge to what the novel ideologically cites.

In *The Passion*, the Church offers the metonymic metaphor for the possibility of finding a self outside the contemporary Theban pollutions of fixations on mother, father and the quests for power these obsessions can provoke. Yet this Church has not abandoned the father’s “name.” Peter, or Petra (Rock) is a Church “father.” But the church which Villanelle refers to has been built on chances and their repositories of improbable desires. The father’s prohibitions have been, figuratively speaking, mitigated. *The Passion*’s church stones symbolise, to echo Kristeva, the weight of the symbolic, lifted.

The geometry of Freud’s Oedipus complex lies in leftover inscriptions. From the Thebes of Venice’s maze, there is no escape. Traversing the Oedipal narrative allows no exit for either Villanelle, determined to again gamble her heart, nor for Henri’s renunciation of the chance to escape prison. But Villanelle will not lose again to the Queen of Spades. Furthermore, Villanelle pledges herself to a life of ceaseless becoming. “Where I will be,” she states “will not be where I am” (150). Yet where there is the intercession of chance, there are Church stones. The opportunity to re-construct, piece by piece, the treacherous canals into home, remains a hope at the narrative’s threshold. Villanelle will continue to explore the rock’s “ages.” This is the meeting point of temporalities which configure the canals. Yet equally well, the parental model inherent in the Oedipus narrative may not be entirely jettisoned from Winterson’s novel. As Villanelle explains:

> Our ancestors. Our belonging. The future is foretold from the past and the future is only possible because of the past. Without past and future, the present is partial. All time is eternally present so all time is ours (62).

The past and its structures cannot be escaped. But its sedimentation of chances, of improbabilities accrued retro-
spectively into a pattern of destinies will be one being constantly dismantled and re-built. The novel's symbolic order has re-configured what it would repress. This is the oxymoronic process of destined chance functioning as repudiated sexualities.

Conclusion: No Exit from Innovation

The question which opened this chapter asked how the novels in question traverse Oedipal narratives. Each of the literary works prefigured or re-figured their Oedipal mazes in idiosyncratic ways. *Middlemarch*’s external narrator follows the tragic tale of the doctor who will never free himself of the quest to satisfy the impossible mother and its corollary, the longing to discover the dominating metaphor for nature’s mysteries. Lydgate’s traversal of his own Oedipal narrative comes too late. The external narrator has sacrificed the character to achieve the very sacrifices of illusion which become the demise of her scientist-protagonist. To recall Freud’s “The Ego and the Super-Ego,” I should add that the contract between external narrator and Lydgate has its parallel in the capacity for mutual substitutions between the id and the super-ego. The external narrator works-through any fixations on one, controlling set of metaphors. But in surrendering to the dominating Queen of Thebes, Lydgate surrenders to his id, a force which can inhibit the psyche from working-through another site to dwell. Traversal could not take place without a constant battle between super-ego and id, confronting each other in continually different tussles and encountering varied compromises. Thus the confrontation between external narrator and Lydgate, the one who “knows better” and the one who fails, the narrator who will succeed and the character whose success is sacrificed comprises one method by which *Middlemarch* traverses the Oedipal narrative it prefigures.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, a comparable battle takes place between the twentieth century metropolis and the Arcadian sites within. Clarissa Dalloway’s interior monologues negotiate between these sites, enabling her to work through an uneasy
but nonetheless, partial compromise between legitimised and unconventional erotic desires. The novel cites and repeats a pastoral landscape to bring to the fore otherwise repressed lesbian desires. Once reiterated, they find dwelling in the newly forming Thebes, a city which is created through cyclical temporalities breaking through into those of civilisation and its linear time.

Unlike *Middlemarch*, *Mrs. Dalloway* dares to tamper with conventions. Abject desires are given space to find representation. The external narrator, the all-pervading “mind” of Woolf’s novel allows Clarissa Dalloway to have a measure of success in working-through, even if Septimus Smith is sacrificed. In other words, if narrative levels in *Middlemarch* can be interpreted by the triumph of the super-ego over the id, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the id has been allowed to impact upon, to represent and to re-draw the boundaries of Thebes. Septimus Smith is the only character who exits. In a sense, his act is not tragic. Clarissa admires his action and its affect she absorbs into her own interior monologue (1998: 241). The Arcadian experiences repudiated, temporalities forsworn, the radical refusal of war and acts of subversive eros are reiterated throughout the novel, absorbed into its prose poetry and given the nourishment of epiphany. In its act of traversal, the novel turns around its own worlds in collision, working-through the abjected and transforming it into the lyrical. This had not occurred in *Middlemarch*. The mythical Oedipus of Eliot’s novel is allowed to be female in Woolf’s work. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa as an Oedipa tracking the positive and negative routes and those in between, is an ambassador for the external narrator.

The three novels which have forged their structures through each other in this chapter have produced a domain which will never build an “outside” to Thebes. With their theoretical intimates, the novels have gradually formed and re-shaped themselves with each textual encounter. Traditional and diachronic separations between “realism,” “modernism” and “postmodernism” do not help in understanding the non-linear traversals taking place between this chapter’s three narrative
fictions. *Mrs. Dalloway’s* unifying “mind,” to recall J. Hillis Miller, demonstrates the influence of the Victorian, supposedly “realist” novel. Equally well, the archaic strata exploding through the narrative of Woolf’s alienating London bring the colliding ontologies of postmodernism into a “modernism” which experiments with limited external and expanded character-bound narration. As several critics have pointed out, modernism can be analysed as a reaction to the encroaching materialism and industrialisation of the early twentieth century. But the strategy of critiquing capitalism through intertextual references to precursor narratives is equally well at work in *Middlemarch*. Lydgate is the Oedipus amorously entrapped in his wife’s capitalism. *The Passion* continues the modernist critique of materiality by cleverly associating the gambling games of the heart with those of monetary risk. In a sense, *The Passion* is a touch more modernist than its more postmodern ancestor *Mrs. Dalloway*. Winterson’s novel is more set on exploring the different and uniting focalizations of Henri and Villanelle than it is in bringing together hugely disparate temporalities such as *Mrs. Dalloway’s* combination of pre-historical and industrial London. The temporal dimensions in all the novels can be brought into helpful convergence through Freud’s Oedipus complex as theory, his theoretical fiction and narrative experiment. Freud’s model has been part of the complex structure of historically changing forms. The maze-makers of the theoretical and literary Thebes do not dismantle simply for the sake of re-building. Their dwelling is built from the ever-changing stones of gender as these re-mould human hearts and identities.

**Notes**

1 It is important to make a distinction between narratives which feature Oedipus the mythical Greek character, as dramatised in Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King* (Greene: 1954) and narratives which explore or re-write Freud’s model of the Oedipus complex. These I will term “Oedipal narratives,” that is, fictions which also theorises the Oedipus complex, giving Freud’s model a different twist or
Another example of a narrative about Oedipus which is not specifically a theoretical fiction, is Pier Paolo Pasolini’s film of the Oedipus myth, *Edipo Re* (1967). Yet given the fact that this film was made in a cultural discourse in which psychoanalysis predominates, aspects of the film could be read as footnoting or re-formulating elements of Freud’s model. In Pasolini’s film, the opening sequence focuses on the jealousy of the father for the son. As a result, the father has the youngster sent away with a guide, who is supposed to leave the child to die. In Pasolini’s film, no initial prophecy intervenes as is the case in Sophocles’ story. Rather, it is the father’s jealousy which is the activating event for the fabula which follows. Pasolini’s film could be read as a comment on Freud’s theory of the Oedipus complex. Thus narratives about Oedipus could include Oedipal narratives. But not necessarily. I do not go as far as Teresa de Lauretis (1984) who argues that “any imagistic identification and any reading of the image, including its rhetoric, are inflected or overlaid by the Oedipal logic of narrativity; they are implicated with it through the inscription of desire in the very movement of narrative” (79). This approach makes visual narrative entirely reflective of one key-stone of the psychoanalytic paradigm rather than allowing narrative the opportunity to question theory. Furthermore, de Lauretis’ remark implicitly makes the Oedipal myth the “master” narrative of all stories. Though I concur with her that this myth and the narratives inspired by it are important, I would not go as far as implying it to be the root of all narratives. In “Does Oedipus Have His Complex,” Verhoeff (1984: 261-283) draws important lines between analysing such plays as *Hamlet* using Freud’s notion of the Oedipus complex and keeping Sophocles’ hero at a distance from an examination which could only become tautological. Verhoeff uses an apt phrase when he suggests that there is an “Oedipus complex outside Oedipus” (1984: 274).

Bal (199: 5-7; 114-131) makes a distinction between characters and “actors.” Characters “resemble” human beings in a way actors do not (114). Actors are instruments in moving the fabula, and by extension, the story. Actors act and produce events (5) but characters possess qualities which go beyond the actions performed. Conflicts between the status of being the character as opposed to the actor can prove interesting for the manner in which the fabula comes to be narrated (129). I use the term “actors of consciousness” to produce a further refined distinction.
Dalloway’s main function as an actor is to arrange a party. But her developing characteristics emerge through growing details about the mechanisms of her consciousness. She thus produces actions of another type - actions which shift sensation, focalization and beliefs.

In “Mrs. Dalloway: Repetition as Raising of the Dead,” J. Hillis Miller (1993:45-56) opens his article by reminding the reader that despite the emphasis which has been laid on Woolf’s techniques of modernism, her deployment of “stream-of-conscious” technique, her strategy of dissolving the traditional frameworks of plot, Mrs. Dalloway is what Miller considers an “extension” of the novelistic conventions of Austen, George Eliot, Trollope and Thackeray (45). Miller’s reference to a “mind” which embraces, includes and interpolates its various characters, underlines how the modernist technique takes its point of departure from the so-called “omniscient” narration of the Victorian novel.

In her influential Darwin’s Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth Century Fiction (1985) one of Beer’s essays on Middlemarch, “The Web of Affinities” (167-180) has influenced my own thinking about the patterns of influence as being aptly figured by the notion of a web. Beer draws attention to what I would term the intimate influencing at work between the scientific and fictional concerns of Middlemarch. Eliot is a novelist, remarks Beer, who helps to “create a reader alert equally to the scientific potential of everyday language and to the everyday potential of scientific terminology” (155).

In “Women’s Time” (1987: 187-213), Julia Kristeva examines not only three generations of movements in women’s symbolic and imaginative development, but sets out an “ethics” for countering sexism in the future (210-211). I hesitated to use a phrase like “three generations of the Women’s Movement” as Kristeva is sceptical about the role of political movements which aspire to be militant. She suggests that the feminist agenda can run the risk of producing a counter-order to the dominant symbolic order (and one which is as oppressive) or escaping from the demands of the symbolic by a refusal of history (193-205). For Kristeva, “the interiorization of the founding separation of the socio-symbolic contract” allows each subject to debunk the notion that the symbolic order is truly unifying. Such an interiorization
also protects the symbolic order from being rejected outright (210).

Though a radically different articulation from my explorations of
traversal, Kristeva's plea to decode the unifying aspects of symbolic
code has affinities with my concept that intimacy takes the precurs-
or's code to discover within it, multiplicities of meaning which
were hitherto repressed.

For an excellent definition of "stream-of-consciousness"
made contradistinct from "interior monologue" see Dorrit Cohn,
Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction
(1978). In my study I use the term "character-bound" narrator (Bal
1997: 22; 24) not as a synonym for "interior monologue" but as a
means of describing the act of narration handed over to the
character. While terms such as stream-of-consciousness or free
indirect discourse are identified as properties of modernism, they
may also be found in Victorian fiction. Thus their status as criteria
of modernist fiction is highly problematic.

The intimacy model I am developing, the very notion that
modernist strategies have already been set up in embryonic form in
the precursor's text, does challenge the establishing of provisionally
useful categories such as Victorian "realism" or literary modernism.
My argument that modernism emerges through the traversal of
precursor novelist forms finds its corollary in Frederic Jameson's
definition of what constitutes "realism" in relation to its ancestor
forms (The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act
1989: 152). For Jameson, realism itself is a social sign of political
upheavals and transformations. Realism comes about when secular
consciousness starts to take over from religious modes of being.
The commodity system affords the realist novel much of its
resources of reference, space and description. The prime example
of a character damned to a secular hell of disenchanted objects
robbing him of his brave and anti-materialistic ideals is Dr. Lydgate
who, must daily contend with the bills and the actions he must take
to pay them.

In her interview with Xaviere Gauthier (Courtivron 1981:
165-167) entitled "Oscillations between power and denial" in Tel
Quel, Summer 1974, Julia Kristeva restricts herself to the use of the
verb "to traverse" rather than the noun "traversal." To traverse
defines developments of meaning which take place as a result of
shifts between the poles of masculinity and femininity. I will be
using her term "to traverse" as a fine-tuning instrument for my
The notion of both “positive” and “negative” formations of the Oedipus Complex came about when Freud tackled the complexities of accounting for the young girl’s more complex trajectory, from attachment to her mother to that of her father and beyond. Whilst the terms “negative” and “positive” appear for the first time in “The Ego and the Id,” see also, “The Changing of the Oedipus Complex” (1924) (SE: XIX: 171-179). See also Jane Gallop, The Daughter’s Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis (1982: chapters 5 and 8).

For a rhetorical analysis of Kristeva’s work on pre-Oedipal drives and language, the abject and the mother, see Cynthia Chase, “Primary Narcissism and the Giving of Figure, Kristeva with Hertz and de Man” (Fletcher and Benjamin 1990: 124-138).

In Revolution in Poetic Language (1984: 25-30), Kristeva sets out her own definition of what is meant by “semiotic.” In French this equates with le sémiotique and should not be confused with la sémiotique, which defines semiotics as the science of signs. The semiotic (le sémiotique) she begins to formulate from its Greek sense which denotes “trace” and “index” and “distinctive mark” (25). Semiotic drives are more than the symbolically unmediated drives which emerge from the unconscious. Semiotic dispositions are related to the “chora,” a matrix space closely associated with the mother’s body. This terrain is pre-symbolic and anterior to the law. Thus in Lacanian terms, the chora’s energies send out their ripples through the traces and marks which emerge from the semiotic disposition. Semiotic dispositions mark themselves in language through rhythm, sonorous effects and repetitions (28-39). See also Desire in Language (124-147).

Sir William Heschel (1738-1822) was the astronomer who discovered Uranus (1994: 901). In mythology, Uranus is associated with rebellion. This signification of revolt and challenge may be further associated with Lydgate’s pioneering desires. To be on the cutting edge means taking the risk to rebel or move away from conventional practices. Edward Jenner (1749-1823) discovered vaccination.

Francois Bichat (1771-1802) was a pioneer in anatomical pathology. See notes section to Middlemarch (1994) 901.


For in-depth analyses of the “gaze” and the “look” see chapter 4 and 5 of The Threshold of the Visible World (1996).

The quote comes from Mrs. Dalloway 1998: 45. It is also the title of Christopher Hill’s book on revolution in seventeenth century England - The World Turned Upside Down (1972). The idea of a world in which rules have been reversed finds itself explored in Bakhtin’s notion of “carnival.” See chapter 3 (196-277) of Rabelais and His World (1968). Furthermore, in Winterson’s Sexing the Cherry, the character of Dog Woman has a direct precursor in Rabelais’ giant. A direct reference is made to Rabelais when one of Dog Woman’s twentieth century incarnations recounts her experience of becoming so large that she breaks through her parent’s house. The punch-line to this story implies that her physical expansion was a response to the fact that there is no longer a “Rabelaisian dimension for rage” (124).


Having said that somewhat more textual space is given to the structure of the boy’s attachment to his mother, the crucial chapter of The Ego and the Id does, unlike Freud’s previous and prodigious work on the complex, allow that erotic drives towards parents can work in both directions, towards father as well as mother.

H. W. Fowler, Fowler’s Modern English Usage (1983: 422). Fowler’s point 1 gives examples of “or” used as a substitute for “nor,” where both act as non-enumerative connectors. One example has no comma before the “or” and another example uses the comma. These examples draw attention to the fact that the use of the comma, despite the rules, can rely on context and taste.

William Shakespeare, The Complete Works (870). The Sonnet is number 129:

Th’expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action; and till action, lust
Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust...

In “Masculinity,” the last chapter of Francis Bacon and the Loss of Self (1992: 164-190), Ernst van Alphen finds in Bacon’s preoccupation with masculinity a talent for a “resistance to the ob-
jectifying transformations of stereotypical discourse, especially the discourse of masculinity (190). Alphen emphasises how Bacon’s paintings of wrestling undermine the notion of control over the body (186). Male bodies become fragmented bodies. Male self is lost through a subversive method of representation. Clarissa Dalloway’s “orgasm” undergoes a textual representation which subverts the conventional representations of female desire come to peak, as after the “little death” Clarissa can find the route of a masculine identity. Orgasm is thus performed as an instability between the normatively gendered positions of masculine/feminine.

23 Teresa de Lauretis, *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (1994: 257-297). In her analysis of the “crocus” passage (236-239), de Lauretis draws attention to a line of Woolf’s passage in which the “match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed” takes on symbolic import. de Lauretis underlines the “almost” as a symptom of Woolf’s passage coming near to, but missing a successful representation of desire. de Lauretis uses the phrase “representational impossibility” to highlight the point that lesbian desire is inscribed as a lack and as that which cannot be represented. My argument is quite different. Although I concur that desire is founded on lack, and I do so following Lacan, I am suggesting that the lesbian desire in Woolf’s passage is given more than one representation.


25 The “Name-of-the-Father” is dealt with in Jacques Lacan’s *Écrits: A Selection* (1977). See “On a Question Preliminary to any Possible Treatment of Psychosis.” The Name-of-the-Father is not the real father but what he carries, namely, “his” effect as symbol, as that which separates the child from the mother and its imaginary fusion therein. Should this paternal term be repudiated, then according to Lacan, psychosis can be the result. For a fuller account see my chapter 4.

26 For theories of condensation and displacement see Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* (SE IV: 280-285; 318; V: 660) and also Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (1983: 89-101).

27 *Hymns, Ancient and Modern: For Use in the Services of the Church*
The entire stanza of the hymn is as follows:

Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide my light in Thee

28 Winterson’s line echoes a line quoted by Lacan which he alleges to be Freud’s, though Lacan fails to give a source. The German is “Wo es war, soll Ich werden” (Lacan 1983: 44).