In the Name of (no) Other: The Key to the Symbolic “within” Daniel Deronda, The Waves and Gut Symmetries

... for all meanings, we know, depend on the key of interpretation (Daniel Deronda, Book 1, Chapter 6: 88).

Introduction: Changing Keys
To add to the celebrated line from Eliot’s last and most daring novel, I will start with Henry James’ piece of elegant troping that the “house of fiction has ... not one window, but a million.” Within are myriad interiors, or “interpretations.” He does not claim that “anything goes.” The rooms within are not arbitrary building heaps. These spaces are carefully configured. The locks are difficult to pick.

Before letting you inside, I must make a confession. It highlights what is at stake in the process of passing once more through the loop of crossed transferences. The first draft of this chapter was entitled “In the Name of the Mother.” My initial task had been to question Lacan’s concept of “Nom-du-Père.” Briefly, this concept and the structure of it comprises an important key to Lacan’s notion of the symbolic order. To belong here means submitting to this “Name-of-the-Father.” The novels of this chapter challenge the monopoly of the Lacanian concept. What emerged in the engagement between literary works and theory was another type of “third term.” I duly baptised this the “mother’s name.” This maternal counterpart was an attempt to find a concept which could compete with Lacan’s Name-of-the-Father, but could be carried by the mother. As Silverman argues (1988: 121-126) and as my last chapter’s examination of the female subject’s traversal of the Oedipus complex suggests, symbolic castration initiates desire for the mother. Therefore the symbolic order (or a specific aspect of it) can act as the third term. The mother may indeed carry, enforce and install the symbolic function, but whether this enables her to be defined as a “symbolic mother” is at issue. After re-reading both my first draft and Daniel Deronda, The Waves and Gut Symmetries, I will now propose a “third term” which can trans-
form itself into one of many keys. It is a protean device. The concept does not disavow the existence of keys which, in symbolic terms, are associated with either the father or the mother. Rather, the notion of a key is itself flexible. I contend that there is no “master key” in the English sense of this idiom. Instead, a variety of keys are implied. Each will open one of the various windowed entrances into the house of fiction. The transference which at first inhibited their discovery, that is, the finding of myriad meanings, did so when one or two windows only were focused upon. This concentration on only one or two entrances describes metaphorically Freud’s assertion that when the patient projects paternal and maternal imagos onto the analyst, these will repress the flow of free associations (1958: 100-101). Yet these projections can, however arduously, lead to what Chase (1987) has termed transference as “tropes,” or that ineluctable task of working-through to reach new meanings against the grain of the dominating imagos.

Instead of remaining confined to my initial enthusiastic transference, then, I will explore how the literary works under question traverse between paternal and maternal imagos within the text, liberating the significations between. The task is not to discover how specific characters deal with their fathers or mothers. Instead, my aim is to examine how what constitutes a series of imagos in a particular text become less dominant in the course of its unfolding. Furthermore, in and between Daniel Deronda, The Waves and Gut Symmetries, keys will be found from one novel which can open up unexpected entrances into another.

Thematically, and as regards characters, Daniel Deronda and Gut Symmetries may seem to be the two more closely related works. The titular protagonist comes to the realisation that he is adopted (Book II, Chapter 16). His journey takes him to the discovery of his Jewish identity. His mentor along the path is Mordecai, a character who does more than impart his knowledge of Jewish mysticism and tradition. Together with one aspect of the novel’s external narration, Mordecai’s habits of mind and speech question the validity of conventional assumptions about the nature of history and time. Gut Symmetries also features a Jewish mystic, described only as “Papa.” He is the twentieth century and logical extension of Mordecai. Papa believes in the soul, forging his mystical theories from studies of the Kabbalah and quantum mechanics. Like Mordecai, Papa casts doubt on the concept that time keeps itself to
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a linear dimension. Winterson’s novel explores the relationships between mysticism and science, religion and epistemology, origins and destiny through three principal narrators. Alice is a physicist who is also interested in alchemy. Her erotic and triangular relationship with the novel’s other two narrators - Jove, the physicist and his wife Stella (a name evocative of stellar matter) is but one sub-plot. Like Daniel Deronda, Gut Symmetries is a novel preoccupied with parenting. Deronda seeks out his biological mother Alchirisi, only to be rejected by her (Book VII, Chapter 3). Mordecai provides part of the maternal substitute the young man lacks. Though not lacking mothers, Alice and Stella both lose fathers whose influence is key to their lives. In Eliot’s novel, the wilful Gwendolen Harleth, in quest of her own splendour, lacks not so much a specific type of parenting as a force which could intervene between herself and her self-destructive egotism. Quests for identity in both Daniel Deronda and Gut Symmetries begin with parents but end with another type of mentorship.

At first glance, The Waves might seem not to fit comfortably into the genealogies I have suggested between Eliot’s and Winterson’s novel. The Waves is prose poetry played through six narrators - Bernard, Louis, Neville, Susan, Rhoda and Jinny; they narrate their lives from childhood through to maturity and death. Important amongst them is Bernard, whose character trait is that he is a phrase maker. Many of his phrases, like so many of the novel’s narrations, are inspired by the main object of love and connection between the six - Percival. He is a prized and beloved figure who meets his death in a horse-riding accident in India (128-129). The chasm which he leaves in his friends’ lives acts as an inspiration to the narrative energy which propels the six narrations through their vicissitudes and epiphanies. Amongst the novel’s concerns, parenting may not strike the reader as immediately important. Yet there is one actor in the text who acts as an intriguing alternative for a parental imago. Within the novel’s first thirteen pages the young Bernard and Susan take an adventure over the walls of a garden at Elvedon. It is here that Bernard first glimpses a “lady” who “sits between the two long windows” (13). Neither a “mother” nor a mentor, the lady is a figure with whom Bernard will exchange neither glance nor word, but who becomes a key which unlocks areas of the novel’s intersecting narratives. As a figure, I will read the lady of Elvedon as an intermediary link
between the keys which feature prominently in *Daniel Deronda* and *Gut Symmetries*.

The intimacy model can be better applied to those works in which lines of inheritance through the parent model become de-stabilised. In the world of fiction, as in life, there are myriad others. To relate to these *not* as fixed points of identity, but to find their names in (no) Other, may liberate a potentially vast number of meanings. Not by obliterating the parental model in my analysis, but by loosening its grip to give more space to the intimacy model, I aim to open up interpretations which are unexpected. My reading of the homosexual *as* lesbian desire between Deronda and Mordecai is but one example. From the first draft of this chapter to the second, then, a traversal to rooms and “windows” was found in unexpected places.

George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* is replete with the hidden and the startling. A “key” opens a panel and reveals a carved face which freezes Gwendolen Harleth in terror (Book I, Chapter 5, 91-93). Keys open the door to shocking focalizations. Beyond them lies terror or the garden path to an undiscovered country. Keys allow access out as well as in. What is more, they are replete with connotations. “Keys” define several systems of musical notes, all different, all provoking distinct effects. To change the key alters the musical composition. Amongst its rich cast of characters, *Daniel Deronda* features the troubled heroine Gwendolen, who is also a hack singer. Deronda’s mother Alchirisi is a retired professional. Gwendolen meets the maestro musician Klesmer. Not only would he knock some musical sense into her, he would rob her of her illusions. Gillian Beer argues that in Eliot’s novel the importance of finding one’s “voice” is an important theme (1986: 200—229). Voice can also be a synonym for literary style. “Key” also defines a choice mode of painting or literary practice (*OED*, Vol. VIII: 404-408). Eliot’s novel contains within it a modernist work emerging from that of Victorian realism. The novel, then, is in the process of changing modes. Moreover, it is a work refusing to be opened by one paradigm, theoretical model or concept alone. Should this occur, the key itself will be re-shaped. It may then split into different copies, where no one is identical to another.

To form a concept of the term “key,” I begin with Lacan’s notion the “Name-of-the-Father” (1977: 180-225). It is but one example of the third terms this chapter will explore. According to Lacan, for the
young child to successfully separate from its symbiotic relationship with
the mother, a signifier which is borne by the father comes to break up
the mother-child dyad (215-221). To paraphrase a complex argument,
the father’s name, together with the Other (mother) reproduces the
triad of mother, father, child. If the father’s name is “foreclosed”
(Verwerfung), which means completely repressed to the unconscious, a
“hole” will open up in the “signified.” According to Lacan, this pre-
dicament is what causes psychosis, hallucinations and delusions. In a
nutshell, when this “hole” occurs, it “sets off the cascade of reshapings
of the signifier, from which the increasing disaster of the imaginary
proceeds, to the point at which the signifier and signified are stabilised
in the delusional metaphor” (217). Put more simply, Lacan claims that
if the Name-of-the-Father is absent or dysfunctional, the imaginary
dominates the subject’s experience. Metaphors become delusional if
they are taken too literally. The symbolic order cannot be brought to
function in the human subject’s daily experience. He or she confronts
images which take over his or her psyche.

As Bruce Fink puts it, in such a case, “the symbolic fails to
overwrite the symbolic” (1997: 86-94). One of the questions which this
chapter will explore is to what extent the third term is “paternal,” or
whether this depends upon the character or narrative agent bringing
this structure into play. If this term is the Name-of-the-Father and has
complete control, then the human subject will have little room to
release affect and hence undergo traversal. To return to Henry James’
theoretical fiction, if in finding an entrance into the narrative text,
there is but one, dominating key to interpretation, the manifold rooms
in the mansion will not be traversed. Should this be the case, meanings
in great abundance would be left undiscovered.

According to Bruce Fink’s reading of Lacan’s “father’s name,”
this term needs to be shifted from its dominant position if any traversal
is to take place at all (1995: 64-68). For Freud, the patient is no longer
overwhelmed by an imago when she can submit this powerful structure
to working-through. According to Fink’s reading of Lacan, the subject
can signify the meaning of her desires by releasing the dominance of the
paternal function. My contention is that though a third term is requisite
to prevent the subject from being overwhelmed by the imaginary, this
term need not be paternal. It may be maternal, but not necessarily so. It
can be a key (connected to yet more) which operates in the name of an Other neither specifically maternal nor paternal.

The three literary works to be investigated here feature characters and narrators subverting the paternal third term. They do so first by replacing this term with a maternal counterpart which acts as a “third,” allowing traversal to take place without the text being lost to an unmediated imaginary. In other words, the narratives of all three works allow the Lacanian father’s name an analytical space, but encourage the search for other types of keys and the seeking of interpretative entrances into the symbolic order’s other “rooms,” or other theoretical fictions which open up under-represented narratives and which shift the accepted boundaries on theoretical practice. For these spaces of unusual theoretical fictions may indeed have been locked up because of their taboo elements. My reading of homoerotic as lesbian desire in *Daniel Deronda* will open up rooms in the novel which critics have left padlocked. The architectural metaphor suggests that the symbolic order itself consists of different imaginary spaces. Fiction is a suitable space through which the symbolic can be dismantled and re-built.

The external narrator of *Daniel Deronda* cleaves in twain. “She/he” (for both pertain) enacts a struggle to displace and replace symbolic paternity. The sojourns of the leading lady and man, Gwendolen and Deronda, both reflect and perform this conflict. Woolf’s most daring exercise in literary modernism, *The Waves*, enshrines at its heart a personification of a maternal third term. Not that the paternal function has been obliterated. Woolf’s novel sets the symbolic mother inside a garden, first introduced as “a lady” who writes sitting between two “long windows” (1972: 13-14). The two windows and the lady inscribe a triangle. This lady can be regarded as a double of Bernard the phrase-maker. Between them another third term emerges, the garden and house as metaphors for aesthetic structure. Bernard’s narration traverses precisely these points. To this should be added Gillian Beer’s remark that the lady never looks out of her window (1996: 68). She is “perceived” through the eyes of the actors. She does not return their gaze. I should add to Beer’s note that the lady does not offer herself objet a in Lacan’s sense. Thus she does not elicit or carry the children’s or the readers’ projections. These would inhibit Bernard’s and the reader’s further deepening and “writing into” his embedded narrative
Jeanette Winterson's most recent foray into the twilight zone between physics and poetic narrative, *Gut Symmetries*, offers not women writing but mothers in the traditional roles of nourishing and child-rearing. It is the fathers who are given the space to be unconventional. Rather than supporting the Name-of-the-Father, however, they unsettle this term. Identifications thus go awry. *Daniel Deronda* enacts two halves. The Victorian half bearing the father's name is pitted against the maternal signifier in that of the Jewish part. As the two textually interlink with each other, they draw out otherwise camouflaged meanings. In *Daniel Deronda*, opposing worlds in collision between modernism and realism become a metaphor for the struggle between what Chase has termed the two types of transference. In *The Waves*, temporal and spatial worlds are contained within each other. Traversal means path-breaking between domains. *Gut Symmetries* contains doorways to parallel universes. To discover these requires cutting quantum keys which refuse to inscribe either father's or mother's name.

I return to Lacan's notion of *Nom-du-Père.* Lacan says little about cultural heterogeneity and how this might produce different terrains within the dominant framework. Put simply, Lacan's paternal term does not suggest that different forms of the imaginary might cause different mouldings of the symbolic order. Kaja Silverman's notion of a "cultural screen" containing shadowed, under-idealised parts which need to be submitted to a productive look, comes close to the idea that those sections of the symbolic which do not support dominant ideologies should be brought into prominence (1996: 80-81). My model, however, is more topological. It follows Henry James' mansion metaphor. Here, rooms open onto outdoor landscapes. Each spatial shift, the movement from drawing room to desert, enacts an imaginative leap. These terrains are not different symbolic orders, but distinct formations of the imaginary within. To pass from one to another, the Name-of-the-Father may be an inadequate key.

For Lacan, without the father's name the subject would be dangerously marginalised within the murky, if not psychotic corners of the symbolic. And despite the insistence that this "Nom" is not the flesh and blood father, but a metaphor borne in name only, little in his work suggests that the third term can be carried by a female subject.
insists that when the father’s name is “foreclosed,” the child will not successfully separate from the mother. This is where psychosis ensues. If the subject’s relation to the paternal term is problematic, an experience of profound ambiguity, anxiety or narcissism may also result. 10

The literary texts are propelled by narrative subjects who, as characters and narrators, certainly do need third terms. Without them, the textual disturbances which threaten in the interstices of the text might jeopardise the entire structure of the novel and its facility to narrate, to thematise, to theorise and maintain an aesthetic logic. Yet I depart from the Lacanian paradigm as follows. This chapter will argue that to have more than one third term does not cause the imaginary to take over, but lifts the burden of the restrictive paternal term, which may or may not be the focus of the mother’s desire. What will be henceforth theorised is the “symbolic,” containing more than one homogenous terrain, or dominating space. In Daniel Deronda, such territories offer alternative landscapes of ethnic and gender identity. They do so against the grain of the Gentile, Victorian and heterosexual Republic which the novel effectively subverts. In The Waves, a maternal third term opens up a pathway to other temporalities, other sites of emotional life. In Gut Symmetries, the hidden domains are the worlds of science and magic. Winterson’s novel allows unexpected spaces to warp and re-structure its symbolic order through the interventions of miracles. These follow the “laws” of the more cutting edge versions of late, twentieth century physics.

Traversal takes place when the influence of a dominating third term is released, allowing the narrative subject to reach another destination within signifying practice. So that the narrative subject of a literary work avoids becoming, in textual terms, overly fixated by a precursor, this subject will detach itself by deploying one or two different works to act as third terms, ones which in turn can be re-placed by those which do allow the text a greater capacity for working-through. When this occurs, both characters, narrators and readers have access to more than one key.

“Which Things are Parables”
The definition of parable with which I will explore not only Daniel Deronda but its successor works, will be a specific type of theoretical
fiction. The notion of a “parable” will be derived, in part, from Eliot's use of the word. The title to this section is a phrase whose variations are found scattered throughout her *oeuvre*. Phrases echoing “Which things are parables” are often deployed as the punch-line to a narrative sequence. In this section I will use Eliot’s gnomic catch-phrase as a key to unlock what might be meant by the term parable.

In a letter to Rabbi Deutsch, written at the time of writing *Daniel Deronda*, George Eliot the letter-writer recalls the story of Mary Wollstonecraft flinging herself into the river (Haight 1985: 389-390). This suicide attempt ended in failure. Eliot notes that Wollstonecraft not only survived, but her life was re-vitalised. More remarkably, suggests Eliot, Wollstonecraft died before her new-found happiness could be spoiled. Then comes the Eliotesque line: “Which things are parables.” A piece of raw biography is appropriated as a moral lesson. The story of Wollstonecraft has been utilised to develop a point about the early life of Mary Anne Evans, or Eliot the author. She too, in her youth, was prone to fits of despair. She too was suicidal. Thus the narrator of the letter deploys the Wollstonecraft story as a key to unlock the life of the author. In turn, this could be used by readers to reflect upon their own lives. The readers are thus implicitly encouraged to deploy one narrative as an embedded version in their own, one which can help unlock hidden concerns to be confronted afresh. In a parallel manner, my reading of *Deronda* will argue that the character-journey of Gwendolen and Deronda reflects on that of the external narrator as she/he transforms or, to borrow a Kristevan notion, becomes a narrative “in process.”

Eliot’s novels deploy parables with Christ’s methods in mind. Most Gentile, Victorian readers knew next to nothing about the religious and cultural life of Jews in Britain. The process of bringing to light the culturally invalidated sides of life, is also at work in *The Waves* and *Gut Symmetries*. During much of Woolf’s writing career women did not have the vote. Fewer women than men succeeded in publishing books. Thus the parable of a lady writing which is laid within the heart of the text can be read as serving a political function.

In contrast to *The Waves*’ radical deployment of staging a woman who produces text, the representation of women’s roles in *Gut Symmetries*, particularly the maternal ones, might be read as reactionary. Alice may be a scientist, but apart from being Jove’s wife, Stella is very much
the wife and lover pursuing the complexity of her personal relationships; it is her husband who pursues the career of adventuring into high energy physics. Alice’s mother is given little representation beyond her status as a housewife. Alice comments that her mother believed “a man must have his work” (67). Stella’s Catholic, German mother Uta, marrying an exiled German Jew and ultimately revealed to have had an affair with Alice’s father George, offers more intriguing features. Uta’s hunger for diamonds while she is pregnant with Stella, connects the novel’s scientific fascination with light, with wave theory and modern physics into the womb’s pre-Oedipal space. In other words, _Gut Symmetries_ has spaces in its fictional terrain in which a pre-symbolic space can contain and mould diamonds. These are a metaphor for the illuminating and crystalline symbolic order which is not exterior to, but can be part of, the pre-symbolic womb. Yet for the most part, the fathers of Winterson’s novel are more fully realised as characters than the mothers. Stella’s Papa is a Kabbalahist fascinated by magic and quantum mechanics. An entire chapter of the novel recounts Alice mourning her deceased father (143-164). Importantly, though, these fathers turn out to be unconventional in their paternal function. They can be found carrying “keys” which would not conform to the concept of Lacan’s symbolic father. These fathers are characters who bear luminous qualities as a means of guiding their daughters into unexpected journeys of traversal.

All three novels, then, in their ubiquitous ways, produce parables which have a political function. Silverman’s theory (1996) that idealisation can be conferred on cultural identities which have suffered cultural and social under-valuation, describes well the strategies employed by each novel. _Daniel Deronda_ challenges Victorian prejudices about the cultural life of Jews. _The Waves_ offers as a parable the _mise en abyme_ of the woman writer being, as I shall explain shortly, “self-reflective” of the activity of textual production which is not powered by narcissism. _Gut Symmetries_ brings to the fore non-normative representations of paternal identity, which act as keys, opening within the house of fiction terrains which provide a radical reflexion on the relationship between text and the symbolic order. By virtue of focusing on undervalued cultures, characters, and experiences, each novel intimately supports the other. _Gut Symmetries_ gives prominence to Stella’s Jewish father just as _Daniel Deronda_ gives Mordecai and Deronda pride of place. _The Waves_ focuses
on the silently scribing woman writer, tucked inconspicuously, but nonetheless crucially, in between narrative levels. *Daniel Deronda* prefigures the strategies of both novels by illuminating the Jewish as the feminine. The Jewish narratives, the *mise en abyme* of the lady writing, the stories of male characters, both quirky, mystical, scientific and maternal, all these fictions theorise the domains that ideology attempts to maintain in the shadows.

Light and illumination have a connection to Eliot’s use of the term “parable.” This concept includes two complex and intertwined definitions. In his reading of *Middlemarch*, J. Hillis Miller has drawn attention to the connection between the New Testament sense of parable as a moral lesson and its healing capacity to “make the invisible visible” (1992: 76). Secondly, the word’s Greek roots of “para” and “ballein” produce “beside” and “to throw.” It is important to carefully follow Miller’s wording: “a parable is set or thrown at some distance from the meaning which controls it and to which it obliquely or parabolically refers, as a parabolic curve is controlled, across a space, by its parallelism to a line on the cone of which it is a section;” furthermore, “the parabola creates that line in the empty air, just as the parables of Jesus remedy a defect of vision” (1992: 76). To clarify this, I should add that parabolas and these tangential lines can be used to draw cones. Put in less abstract language, one geometrical plane can be used to draw or re-map another. Paradoxically, this can occur even though the lines are being used to inscribe curves. In other words, two dissimilar shapes and structures become mutually supportive and can be used to configure each other. There is, though, an extra twist to this cunning narrative of the mathematical parabola. The curve and the line, as they proceed closer towards each other along their trajectory, in theory towards infinity, become more spatially intimate with each other, without actually touching. In other words, a parabola and by close analogy a parable, can be defined as being constructed on a fundamental asymmetry. One side of meaning (the curve) does not completely touch the other side (the line). Even though the parabolic signifier becomes close to its signified, one does not reflect the other in the crude “realist” sense of mirroring. Between the parable and what its various levels can signify, there is no easy fit. Indeed, the parable may produce a double reading. Hence Cynthia Chase (1986) makes a “double” reading of *Daniel Deronda*,
arguing throughout her essay that Eliot’s novel elicits two modes of reading, one which treats history as a series of causes and effects to be measured against each other, against a reading which questions the very status of teleological analysis.

Furthermore, fictions themselves can be approached as serving a double function. The tale of the parabola finds its analogy in the theory of the *mise en abyme* which can be defined at both a wide-ranging and specific level. Bal states (1997: 57) that the former is as important as the latter. “Writing, and by extension, painting or making a film, is an act of reading, and reading is manner of rewriting or repainting” (57). The “narratorial experiment,” she continues, helps “to give to messages” those meanings which “one vaguely senses but fails to analyse when only dogmatic or restricted methods are consecrated” (57). In her next section she uses the phrase “this phenomenon” to set up a closer definition of *mise en abyme*. The anaphoric “this” connects acts of rewriting not just to that of scholarship in the present, but to the business of producing ongoing interpretations which respond to contemporary culture and politics. Traditional academe tends to require so-called “secondary sources” to be the instruments of evaluation, not artistic production. But *Gut Symmetries* can be used as tool for reading *Daniel Deronda* and, *vice versa*. I would nuance Bal’s insights further by suggesting that the parabola is a special sort of *mise en abyme*, one that incorporates the asymmetry and uneasy doubleness, that is, the very refusal to produce a pleasing, one-to-one correspondence between signifier and signified.

The cultural activity of writing as offering itself both as an artistic object and as a mode of reading comprises, argues Bal, a “phenomenon” in which “the embedded text presenting a story that resembles the primary fabula” (57). The relationship between these two levels, that is, the embedded and the primary, is one of “infinite regress” (57). The notion infinity implies that between the two levels, a potentially infinite set of meanings can be liberated. Alternatively, I infer, there may be yet more *mise en abymes* within others. I would bring into dialogue with Bal’s term, Miller’s notion of the parabola. The mathematical curve goes off to infinity. The mutual configurations of curve and line set a boundary which is analogous to that demarcating the embedded text from the primary fabula.

The combined forces of the Bal-Miller models forge an intriguing
key to help open the first set of doorways in *The Waves* (1972: 5-23). The primary fabula of the novel’s initial section is Bernard’s story of the children. He and Susan make an expedition over the wall into someone else’s garden. The young narrating characters, Bernard and Susan, relay what is happening as it occurs. When this tale recurs again subsequently, particularly in the novel’s closing section, Bernard, the adult, recalls the adventure in the lady’s garden at Elvedon. This is a privileged site in the novel’s memory. When this recurs, it does so as a *mise en abyme* within Bernard, the adult’s, primary fabula. The adult will add to what the child has narrated. The grown-up also removes certain details from the first rendition, highlighting others. Thus the *mise en abyme* is a fictional work in miniature reflected upon by yet another. However, Bernard, the adult, never returns to the lady’s garden in his primary fabula. This is only possible in the *mise en abyme* of memory. Therefore between narrative levels a boundary, a garden wall, remains firmly in place.

Yet paradoxically, the *mise en abyme* refers to the very act of challenging the boundaries between narrative levels. The lady as a figure stands at a remove. She is unreachable behind her glass windows. The story of the children slipping into the garden, moving towards this enticing room before the gardeners chase them away, implies a centre to be reached. If Bernard might reach her, capture her gaze, he might recover a secret. Of what? The lady who sits writing could “reflect” the external narrator who conjures the characters. At this point I want to introduce a distinction between two modes of “self-reflection” from the many subtle delineations of the term installed by Bal in her readings of Rembrandt, amongst others (1991: 247-285). The term self-reflection connotes two notions of the concept of “reflection.” Firstly, there is the mirror metaphor which signifies that the painting reflects back an imago, be that of the painter or viewer. Secondly, to “reflect” means to intellectually interrogate and to do so especially in a discursive mode. A self-portrait can be self-reflective, not merely because it displays the artist at her craft, but because it reflects on the very processes of representation which the painting raises (254). Narcissistic reflections aim at making into a coherent “whole” the viewer (reader) and the painter at the heart of the depiction. The act of self-portraiture, argues Bal, gains in “self-reflexivity” (a term contra-distinct to self-reflectivity) when the painter’s self is not brought into “exultation” but when a “detail demonstrates a
danger” to that self portrayed (255). In other words, self-reflexivity is a form of self-reflectivity which challenges narcissism. The reflexive mode can help in negotiating the Other is that which cannot be forced to masquerade as the self. From this I can extrapolate a more nuanced definition of the term parable, which can be defined as a theoretical fiction which elicits between theory and text a self-reflexive mode of reading.

With this definition as a tool, I suggest that the lady writing is a “mirror” of Bernard the writer, but one with whom he cannot coincide. The first of The Waves’ two drafts contained an omniscient narrator, a type of trace of Bernard, that was not a man but a woman. Replacing “her” with a male character allowed a gap in identity to be produced between Bernard and his “reflection” who, in fact, operates self-reflexively. The lady of Elvedon never meets Bernard’s eyes. Lacan contended that the “mirror phase,” the period in which the child misrecognises itself, occurs because the human subject sees itself. The lady writes without speaking. When Bernard declares in the novel’s grand finale that he will “sum up … explain the meaning of my life” (1972: 204), he will return again to the lady writer, re-telling the child’s story in the direct discourse of an adult, declaring that nothing will “interfere with the fixity of that woman writing” (204). She is the object and subject of a transference which is crucial to the sustenance of the novel. She could be an external narrator but also a female figure who refuses to become the narcissistic screen for Bernard’s projection of himself as a writer. Yet she is there, inexorably and demandingly. He will never reach her behind the windows, and she will never meet his gaze. She remains Other, suspended between imago and index of the agent of symbolic castration. She reflects him back yet this is precisely what she does not do. Between Bernard and the lady writing, between primary fabula and self-reflexive text as parable of becoming in the symbolic order, meanings will emerge which will, I shall subsequently explore, attest to the inescapable need and link between transference as imago and as trope.

In turn, the lady writing can offer a key, another third term to analyse what will be examined below as the “transforming” aspect of George Eliot’s external narrators. The opposition between Bernard and the delicate figure of a woman writer in The Waves acts preposterously as a mirror-text to the opposing, yet richly productive tension between the
two figures of Daniel Deronda's external narrator. If in both Eliot's and Woolf's novel binary oppositions between male and female narrators, characters and actors are set up to be textually disfigured, in Gut Symmetries, such apparently opposing identities are put through dis-identifications. This process occurs so that male/female figures are played out by the narrative subject who is also involved in the text he/she spins. Winterson's novel is replete with parables wrapped away in yet more. What Bal terms "regress" becomes fore-grounded in Gut Symmetries.

**Just the Two of Us, Or Who Drowned Grandcourt?**

That an unsuccessful and unconventional "half" of the novel botched up a potentially great part of Daniel Deronda is the accusation levelled at this work by F. R. Leavis (1962: 79-125). He is adamant that the Victorian half and the drama of Gwendolen Harleth are good, but the Jewish part of the novel which focuses on Deronda and Mordecai "is bad" (82, Leavis' emphasis). In a hilarious moment of unabashed sexism, Leavis declares that Deronda, who needs little "analysis" is indeed a "woman's creation" (82). Throughout his exegesis of Eliot's novel, Leavis is fonder of Gwendolen Harleth, whom he regards to have been treated with irony and scrupulous observation. Barbara Hardy has been more than thorough in coming to the critical rescue of the misread Daniel Deronda (1981: 124-134). She underscores how meticulously organised imagery and coincidences of plot and character carefully connect Harleth and Deronda and, by implication, any allegedly distinct halves. Gwendolen's tendency to be overwhelmed by dreadful faces and her sensation of feeling displaced, finds parallels in Deronda's sense of exile and Mordecai's life of vision. It may seem odd, therefore, that I should introduce this section by quoting the elder statesman and his choice prejudices. I do so, however, because his berating had a point, but for the wrong reasons.

The two halves constitute the novel's success, I would contend, for reasons different from those set out by Hardy. The novel's apparently conflicting sections are a testament to a precursor George Eliot experimenting with a version of him/herself previously undiscovered. Furthermore, by so doing, the novel undergoes a textual process of loosening and subverting the grip of restrictive narrating agents; thus readers are offered more keys, or more third terms, to develop interpre-
tations which break through the restrictions.

In *Deronda*, there are two external narrators; one I will term the Victorian narrator, the second, the “transforming” narrator, because this latter entity is neither entirely Victorian nor fully modernist in its strategies. Both the Victorian and transforming narrators are “external” in Bal’s sense of the term (1997: 22-26). As “speaking subjects” neither of the narrators refers to a him or herself as one of characters who take part in the novel’s fabula (22). In contrast, what Bal terms “character-bound” narrators are also “perceptible” in the text (28). The external narrator is not an actor in the unfolding tale. However, *Daniel Deronda* offers an example of where an external narrator, what I have termed the “transforming” one, would more accurately define as an agency which is between Bal’s external and character-bound narrator. Teaming up with *Daniel Deronda*’s titular hero, the transforming narrator could be read as the character’s alter-ego. Furthermore, the Victorian counterpart is a precursor to the one who is “transforming,” being an inheritor and intermediary agent between the so-called “classical realist” and “modernist” text.

The Victorian narrator has the qualities of *Middlemarch*’s “EN.” In this novel a “he” teams up with the male readers; he speculatively gossips about how difficult it might be to marry a lass like Dorothea Brooke. “He” surmises that “such a wife might awaken you with a new scheme for the application of her income” (1998: 31, emphasis added). The “you” refers to the men in the audience. Furthermore, whilst the “speaker” of this sentence gives the impression of being a Midlands gentleman, he does not define himself as a specific character. So his function remains external to the fabula. My argument is not that all the agencies of external narration in *Middlemarch* are performed by this male agency. My point is that the speaking subject who associates with the men and remains outside the fabula, represents a force of Victorian omniscience. Furthermore, though “he” can be caught out posing in this gender, feminine as well as masculine identifications are possible, so it is more judicious to refer to the Victorian EN as an “it.”

Though the gender of the transforming narrator is kept unclear, it practices the habits of incipient modernism. These fuel the novel’s process of cleaving into a realist and modernist text. The interior monologues, which are so distinguishing a property of *Mrs. Dalloway* and
The Waves, find their prototypes in those passages in which character-bound narration from Deronda and Mordecai mingles closely with an external narration which has rebelled against the Victorian precursor. 17 This forerunner carries the paternal third term, or the Name-of-the-Father. Where Middlemarch achieves the illusion of omniscient narration it does so by setting apart the syntactic and figurative patterns of “his” discourse from those of the characters. Carried by the paternal presence which can reflect upon women and the marriage marker, the third term acts to claim clear distinctions between narrators and characters. Between the two, no imaginary mergings are permitted. Through Middlemarch, the external narrator weaves the narrative web by rarely delegating this task to other characters. In Deronda, in contrast, Eliot frequently delegates to Deronda, who takes on the qualities of the transforming narrator.

In all of George Eliot’s major novels, the opening paragraph finds the external narrator plunging the readers into their brave new world. No one else’s focalization intercedes. This is not the case with Deronda:

Was she beautiful or not beautiful? and what was the secret of form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to her glance? Was the good or evil genius dominant in those beams? Probably the evil; else why was the effect that of unrest rather than of undisturbed charm? Why was the wish to look again felt as coercion and not as a longing in which the whole being consents?

She who raised these questions in Daniel Deronda’s mind was occupied in gambling (1876; 1986, Book I, chapter 1, 35, emphasis added).

The bipartite rhetorical questions suspend any sense of the narrator’s traditional omniscience. Here is the rhetoric of ambiguity. Then the shock at the end - here is no external narrator, but Deronda. Closer scrutiny reveals a mind-style combining both that of an external narrator and Deronda presented as focalizor. If this were not the case, there would be a clear distinction between a narrating agent as opposed to one who focalizes. But it would be inaccurate to say that the external narrator “speaks” and Deronda focalizes. “She who raised these questions in Deronda’s mind” refers to more than Gwendolen. The focalized field
encompasses the questions themselves, or the very stuff of language. Focalization remains primarily associated with the five senses, but in the passage above, these are sub-ordinated to the weaving of rhetorical questions. Figuratively speaking, these questions think out loud. Importantly, the scene is described as congested with cigar smoke (35). It is laced with a “visible haze” (35). Common sense suggests that the gambling den would be a difficult place in which to focalize at all: there is too much smog. Which of course, rises as does Gwendolen raise thoughts in Deronda’s mind. Metonymically and through the canny phonetic slippage, the thoughts rise like smoke. Thoughts are thus associated with the object of focalization (smoke). What is syntactical can be focalized. The one who narrates merges with the one who focalizes. This merging is what marks the emerging traces of the transforming narrator.

Yet despite the newly emerging narrator “teaming up” with Deronda, the Victorian counterpart still persists. “It” delivers acerbic syntax and a merciless irony, being the master of parables, not the one to be subjected to them. When commenting on the marriage of convenience between Miss Arrowpoint and Herr Klesmer, the Victorian narrator tells us all, in a tone of universalising argument, how we ought to decode the “truth” of our emotions:

\[\text{We object less to be taxed with the enslaving excess of our passions than with our deficiency in wider passion; but if the truth were known, our reputed intensity is often the dulness of not knowing what else to do with ourselves (my emphasis, 281).}\]

Well, now we know. This Victorian entity appeals to our \textit{ethos}.\textsuperscript{18} Five references to “we” and “us” within one sentence leave the audience no room for escape. Comparing such ratiocination with the novel’s opening paragraph is informative. The team which consists of the transforming narrator and Deronda uses only questions; the Victorian narrator uses statements admitting no exceptions. Furthermore, the latter deploys the rhetorical technique of “anadiplosis,” or a repeating of the same words. This figure can betray a need to protest too much. The word “passion” is belted out. One wonders whether the narrator is treading on its own passion, its own need to dare and to be dangerous.
As I will suggest in the next section, Gwendolen is a creature the Victorian narrator would tame, yet is compelled to take to extremes. Thus does this narrator test his/her own threshold. The opening epigraph of the novel, “Let thy chief terror be thine own soul” warns of the dangers and havoc to come (32). These omens are directed to more than the novel’s principal characters. These portents are the Victorian story-teller talking to itself. The danger lies in the transition from the old-style narrator, to the new one. This latter, transforming entity is birthed through Deronda. When this happens, the transforming narrator detaches itself from the Victorian precursor, carrying as it does, the crucial third term. Therein lies the peril. The stakes are high. The old, paternal term needs to replaced by a new “key” which, though unlike its predecessor, must be capable of helping a more dynamic symbolic order to support the subject. During the substitutions, the subject must disengage from the old term. She may feel stranded. She may be caught between competing selves. The subject, be it character or narrator, may feel her identity split into two.

Such an experience of splitting is experienced by Gwendolen when she reflects on her impending marriage to Grandcourt. She peers over the edge of what she can know about herself:

Even in Gwendolen’s mind that result was one of two likelihoods that presented themselves alternately, one of two decisions towards which she was being precipitated, as if they were two sides of a boundary-line, and she did not know on which she would fall. This subjection to a possible self, a self not to be absolutely predicted about, caused her some astonishment and terror: her favourite key of life - doing as she liked - seemed to fail her, and she could not foresee what at a given moment she might like to do (Book 2, chapter 13, 173, emphases added).

The noun phrases “self not to be absolutely predicted about,” which is also a “subject to a possible self” are keys which unlock the movement undergone by the external narrator. In the quotation, Deronda is absent. Yet the Victorian narrator who accompanies Gwendolen with a vigilant irony is found treading a close boundary-line which is supposed to separate the omniscient “presence” from the character it is supposed to scrutinise. The last line explaining that Gwendolen “could not foresee
what at a given moment she might like to do” is an instance of free indirect discourse, that is the merging of external and character-bound narration. Both discourses find themselves fused at a moment of not being able to see ahead. The Victorian narrator is itself becoming infected by ambiguities.

Not only is the Name-of-the-Father failing to intervene, but neither is Deronda as a different type of third term. The syntactic and figurative markings of doubleness, indecision and questioning all imply a revelation that everywhere two sides predominate and no one aspect of a person or situation can be gauged. An explicit version of this revelation can be found in the remark that “Attempts at description are stupid: who can all at once describe a human being? ... We recognise the alphabet; we are not sure of the language” (145-146). An externally narrated observation about Grandcourt is both focalized and narrated by the Victorian external narrator and no one else. This agency betrays a sensitivity for that which comes in twos: “Grandcourt, like many others, had two remarkably different voices” (162). Commenting on Gwendolen’s growing realisation that she has married a cad, the Victorian narrator refuses to come down on sides. “It” prefers metaphors which balance their parts: “No chemical process shows a more wonderful activity than the transforming influence of the thoughts we imagine to be going on in another” (477). What goes on in Gwendolen’s chemical vessel reflects that of the Victorian narrator. Just as the entire novel has two parts which reflect back on each other, so Gwendolen holds a mirror up to the novel’s omniscient teller of tales, revealing that telling is not an unambiguous activity.

To explain this further, I need to delineate parallels within the work as a whole. In a subsequent section, I will argue how through Mordecai, Deronda not only discovers his Jewish culture, but that the key to his entrance therein, is a third term subverting the paternal and moving towards the maternal. Yet this term never becomes entirely maternal. The ambivalent and mobile term is carried by Mordecai. A marvellous example of the gender switches in Mordecai’s representation takes place in chapter 40. In a piece of pictorial framing, Mordecai and Deronda standing together are likened to Titian’s painting the “Tribute Money.” Mordecai stands in for the bearded, male priest who, in Titian’s painting, sensuously takes the coin from Jesus’ hand (552).19 This male
identification gives way in the same paragraph to that exchange between Mordecai and Deronda which the narrator defines as a "maternal transference of self;" this acts as a conduit for Jewish identity (chapter 40, 553). Deronda’s blood mother Alchirisi wanted him to be a Victorian gentleman. She gave him away to a British father, Sir Hugo. Deronda discovers that the paternity, and hence the father’s name conferred to him by his Victorian father is fake. It is through Mordecai, an agent who is a male of some complexity, erring on the side of the female, that Deronda receives the key to another cultural order, or what is a marginal terrain both inside and outside the Gentile and Victorian symbolic order.20

Although Gwendolen’s journey is distinct, her marriage gives her the third term she lacked. Yet it grips her in a vice: “His words had the power of thumbscrews and the cold touch of the rack” (745). Her life with Grandcourt is a sham. In order to pass through this stage, she would have to release herself from her tyrannical husband’s grip. Unlike Deronda’s release from his Victorian third term, Gwendolen’s painful escape happens with suddenness. The break from the Name-of-the-Father requires the breaking of the law. By letting Grandcourt drown - at least that is her focalization of what occurs - she violates symbolic prohibitions. She could be tried for manslaughter. Yet equally well, she did not lug the unwanted spouse over-board.

The one responsible for this crisis in the narrative is, after all, not the transforming narrator who accompanies Deronda in his focalizations. Rather, it is the Victorian narrator who was omniscient over the death. Such plot decisions are not arbitrary. To argue that these are made with the purpose of intensifying the drama would be banal and would beg the question. The drama lies in the fact that a narrator traversing third terms of its own, gives Gwendolen a second chance to do likewise. Gwendolen admits to allowing her husband’s death in “thought” (769). So does the Victorian narrator who has been found out: “it” killed Grandcourt in a bid to loosen the grip of the father’s name and so prepare the way for the traversal of the classic, realist text.

The clauses which compose the scene in which narrator and audience last see Grandcourt alive compose this reading:

And when they came down again at five o’clock, equipped for their
boating, the scene was as good as a theatrical representation for all beholders. The handsome, fair-skinned English couple manifesting the usual eccentricity of their nation, both of them proud, pale and calm, without a smile on their faces, moving like creatures who were fulfilling a supernatural destiny - it is a thing to go out and see, a thing to paint. The husband’s chest, back, and arms, showed very well in his close-fitting dress, and the wife was declared to be like a statue (745, emphases added).

There are numerous examples of the external narrator suspending the field of focalization by comparing its objects to a famous painting. As an immediate effect, by placing them in a frame, the narrator creates a distance between itself and the focalized objects. In all cases, Deronda is either absent or is the object. Thus, the precursor Victorian narrator is at work. In the above citation the use of words drawing self-conscious attention to narrative as art is remarkable. The couple makes a “theatrical representation.” They are fit to “paint.” Gwendolen looks like a “statue.” The audience is also underscored. The marital misalliance is something “for all beholders.” Gwendolen is statuesque by general opinion. Whenever the external narrator plays on ethos, it is the precursor at large. Here, the Victorian narrator has prepared the couple for Grandcourt’s death through what he/she controls, namely, a “supernatural destiny.” The realist narrator’s art is that of ut pictura poësis. This final example in the novel is for the Victorian narrator and offers a “swan song” for the realist’s technique. The team made up by Deronda and the transforming narrator avoid such devices. The theatre, the painting, the statue, are the last the readers see of the couple prior to Grandcourt’s demise. In other words, he has been set up. In drowning him, there has been an attempt to pronounce on the realist narrative style, a death penalty.

This endeavour has produced its anxieties for both narrators. No wonder the transforming narrator/Deronda pair open the novel by asking whether the good or evil “genius” resides in Gwendolen’s beams, with the answer being “probably” the “evil” (35). Through Gwendolen, the father’s name has been challenged. A prohibition has been transgressed. Genius is often associated with an ability to violate the rules. Iconoclastic texts may be capable of patricide, but should they repudiate all third terms, then chaos will reign. If Mordecai acts as a maternal
support, it is to guide Deronda towards discovering that he did, indeed, have a Jewish father. The dramatic moment at which the Jewish paternal term is acknowledged is when Alchirisi hands over to her son the terms of his family tree, the names of his father and grandfather (687). Thus Deronda’s negotiation between the British and Semitic aspects of his identity finds itself in the double performance of race and gender; this enactment traverses both the character-bound narrator and the text which is spun between the maternal and paternal terms which have acted as its hinges.

It has taken two narrators to activate the traversal: a Victorian agent which has roots in the male-identified narrator of Middlemarch, and the transforming narrator which has been touched by female gender through the maternal intercessions of Mordecai. Thus the two narrating figures, old and new, have been male and female identified respectively. In other words, Leavis’ sparring remarks that Deronda was a woman’s product did identify the surreptitious but nonetheless, subversive movements of gender supporting Deronda. The transforming narrator finds its inspiration from the Jewish narratives and its anchoring to a maternal term, which itself can be traversed in the discovery of other keys which have consequences for defining the novel’s form. As I argue in the next section, the character-bound narrations of Deronda and Mordecai show the qualities of interior monologue more associated with early twentieth century modernism. There is more than one domain within the symbolic order; each can be opened by different keys which signify different third terms. Paradoxically, in the passage above, the Victorian narrator’s “performative” act spells the beginnings of its own, but also the insurgence of the Deronda-borne, transforming narrator. If in Eliot’s last novel the old narrator were to be obliterated, the new one would die too. Oddly, while the Deronda-transforming narrator duo can figure and disfigure each other, the Victorian precursor cannot do so without obliterating itself. Gwendolen will bear the guilt of her husband’s death, not foreclose it. And for the external narrators of George Eliot, these things are parables.

**Victorian Brat Meets Phantom**
Following the development of Gwendolen’s fits of anxiety and terror provides more keys to understanding the Victorian narrator. Lacan
would argue that should the paternal term fail, the subject would lapse into psychosis. Unable to carry the weight of the third term, he or she would be pulled back into some degree of symbiosis with the mother. Should this be so between texts, a narrative would mimic that of the predecessor. In that case, no new style or narrative technique would emerge. Repeating and copying old patterns is "safer" than running the risk of narrative re-invention with all its threats of instability. The two halves which emerge in Daniel Deronda put their respective narrators under threat as the price which is paid to take one half of the novel over the threshold of a fresh stylistic experiment.

When the paternal term underpinning Victorian realism is loosened, the newly emerging team of the transforming narrator and Deronda will be likewise released. The so-called Jewish parts of the novel do not confirm the psychoanalytic paradigm in the way that the Victorian sections do. And at certain points, the notion that Deronda is a novel possessing distinct sections, also collapses. Thus, meanings in one territory can acquire, and hence provide for working-through, even more significations in another. This process is a result of the novel's displacement of the paternal term from a position of dominance. Hence this interaction between the novel's "halves" constitutes a form of traversal, and certainly for the various narrating teams, who are unafraid of taking the risk to "change keys."

Such changes involve acts of subversion fraught with dangers. The heroine's journey takes her from narcissism to its shattering. She suffers a trial by separation from a cosmos in which she does as she pleases. Her itinerary comprises a cautionary parable about the dangers incurred by repudiating the third term. Indeed, a foreboding of doom ripples out from the novel's epigraph. It is a veritable parable in the Biblical and moral sense of the word. It states in no uncertain terms what will happen to the reader (the Victorian narrator?) should these warnings be disregarded:

Let thy chief terror be of thine own soul:
There, 'mid the throng of hurrying desires
That trample o'er the dead to seize their spoil,
Lurks vengeance.23
"Hurrying desires" lurch in the soul which should itself be regarded as a source of "terror." "Spoil" is a grammatical slip away from the adjective "spoiled." Gwendolen is introduced in the novel's opening section as the "Spoiled Child." She is characteristically impetuous even in the opening chapter, wilfully and unthinkingly risking her necklace at the gambling table (chapter 1, 35-43). Thus a link is made between "hurrying" or impetuous longings and their fateful consequences. Spoiled children may get their comeuppance. Gwendolen certainly does. Her husband drowns. Her widow's legacy is profound guilt. In the next section I will explain how the moral parable of Gwendolen's tale is turned upside down by that of Deronda, where the challenge to paternity is a matter not of terror but fecundity. Here, I will scrutinise how Gwendolen's experience of doubtful and dangerous paternity becomes that of the Victorian narrator, who is itself at risk of emulating its transforming counterpart. For where and when these narrators become subject to the doubt and the danger, then textual imagos are being deconstructed. Then traversal can take place through the intercession of keys which open up other imaginary spaces within the symbolic. But for these keys to be effective, the paternal term must be sought and challenged.

The character who first carried this term may be difficult to fathom. The narrative is noticeably silent on the subject of Gwendolen's father. The only information given is that his origin is "West Indian" (Book 1). Curiously, Mrs. Davilow finds this mysterious father a distressing topic of conversation. Reasons are never given. The reader can gain no information as to whether "West Indian" means a white colonial living abroad or indeed, a man of another ethnic origin. The ambiguity is tantalising. Staging Jewish characters who are actively loved (Silverman, 1996) in a nineteenth century novel is subversive enough. That Gwendolen's father could possibly be a foreigner of colour sends seismic ripples through the text.

In the Gentile half, the psychoanalytic theory that absent paternity causes the subject to suffer anxiety and narcissism is confirmed to a degree. As I will explain shortly, the so-called Jewish half will challenge that paradigm. Although Gwendolen's emotional habits show no sign of "foreclosure," an implicit link is made between absent paternity, the young woman's over-attachment to the mother and revulsion for the tender and desiring advances of others. When Rex shows an
interest in her, she hardens “like a sea anemone at the touch of a finger” (113). The thought that he should want to “make love to her” sends her into a crisis. Gwendolen seeks comfort in her mother’s “encircling arms.” Mrs. Davilow has never seen her daughter so distressed. She “felt something of the alarmed anguish that women feel at the sight of overpowering sorrow in a strong man; for this child had been her ruler” (114). The connection made between a “child” and a “strong man” suggests that the daughter has been placed in the role of being the father figure without herself having had the benefit of this support.

Gwendolen may not be psychotic, but she does entertain delusions of grandeur. When these crack, she succumbs to terror and anxiety. Despite her fantasies about being a “Queen in Exile” she is prone to feelings of helplessness. The narrator explains that “Solitude in any wide scene impressed her with an undefined feeling of immeasurable existence aloof from her, in the midst of which she was helplessly incapable of asserting herself” (95). Such contradictions between a sense of power and acute vulnerability, between being a daring creature and one prone to fits of terror, undermine her character at the profoundest level, leading to extensive prevarication when she must face for the first time, the symbolic father in the form of Grandcourt. The link is hard to ignore between her dubious and unexplained father and her lust for a rich and powerful husband whose actual character so little interests her, except that he does not get in the way of her demands to do as she pleases. As a lover, Grandcourt disinterests her. She seeks in him a status symbol to ratify what the narrator refers to as her sense of “divine right” to follow her whims (Book I). What she lacks in her life she would become in a parodied form.

The lacks in her life and psyche relate to the mysteriously missing signifier emerging in many of Gwendolen’s focalizations. Enjoying various delusions of grandeur about becoming a famous actress like the Jewish Rachael, Gwendolen aims to begin her own non-existent career by experimenting in charades (Book I, chapter 6). The planned performance is the crucial scene from Shakespeare’s *A Winter’s Tale*. Pretending to be a statue, Hermione is brought to life by her worthy servant Paulina. In Shakespeare’s version, Hermione’s husband King Leontes, driven insane by paranoid jealousy, has exiled her. Being led to believe that his tyrannical treatment of his wife caused her death, Leontes is
mortified. But her alleged death is in fact Paulina’s ruse. She aimed to teach the tyrant a lesson. Leontes is presented with a fake statue of his wife, for “it” is in fact the woman herself. At a choice moment, he witnesses Hermione turn from stone to flesh. Beholding the miracle ensures both his forgiveness and change of heart. Here, Paulina is the third term turning fantasy into symbolised reality, separating Leontes from his jealous delusions.

Gwendolen’s theatrical version stars her own mother Mrs. Davilow, cast as Paulina. Ironically, unlike her Shakespearean counterpart, Mrs. Davilow is a poor third term, unable to help her daughter grasp the boundaries between fact and fantasy. If Shakespeare’s tale of Hermione - the statue awakened to life - is a parable about fantasy as a deathly state awakening into the facts of life, Gwendolen’s parable reverses that of its precursor. In Shakespeare’s scene, the line that works the apparent miracle of transformation is “Music, awake her!” In the charade scene, Herr Klesmer the music master strikes a “thunderous chord” on the piano. He might as well have struck the heroine with thunder and lightning. In a moment of apparent simultaneity, a moveable wall-panel swings open to display “the picture of the dead face and the fleeing figure” (91). The use of the definite article is arresting. If the panel’s gruesome adornments were being focalized for the first time then they would have been duly articulated indefinitely, with the use of “a.” The external narrator has posed a slip. It implies that the face and figure have been or will be encountered. Grammatically, the external narrator warns of a death foretold: Grandcourt’s drowning face and Gwendolen’s fleeing the scene in horror (Book VII).

While the intrusion of reality spicing up the charade leaves the onlookers pleasantly startled, Gwendolen “looked like a statue into which a Soul of Fear had entered” (91). Her performance has given way to authentic terror, her eyes dilated, her body trembling until she falls on her knees (91). Klesmer misreads her reactions, declaring this miniature drama to have achieved a “magnificent piece of plastik” (92). In her editor’s notes, Barbara Hardy specifies “plastik” to mean “Artistic power” or “impersonation,” commenting though that she finds Eliot’s use of the word peculiar (888). Indeed, an external narrative tremor has rippled through the text. Gwendolen’s tableau vivant is a parable of what can occur when the third term, who in this case is a female (Mrs.
Davilow/Paulina) fails. For this crucial and primary signifier re-surfaces with all the power of overkill as a phantom. It is more than a spectre/metaphor of the haunting third term. Plastik is the artistic object with all the powers of horror because it is very much an object of illusion. Art may be powerful, but in a sense it is necessarily fake, however much the achievement of aesthetics and illusion gives pleasure. When the third term is imaginary, it can thus fail in its task of breaking up the imaginary; hence images overwhelm as horrors. Gwendolen’s charade thus become a disturbing, theoretical fiction which, with the support of external narration, suggests how a third term operates by dramatising the paralysing consequences of its failed operation.

Elsewhere, other faces disquiet Gwendolen. Carved faces of monks in the Abbey carry the ghosts of generations. She is anxious lest they refuse to remain in the shadows (461). There is little evidence to say that the phantom is a result of a missing and specifically paternal third turn. Mrs. Davilow is a failed Paulina figure, or an ineffective symbolic mother. Feelings, thoughts, suspicions often surface throughout the text qualified as “shadows” and the “shadow of a doubt” which might lurk in the wake of a decision to be made. Grandcourt’s drowning face is metaphoric of a tyrannical male removed. Ironically, only once the narrator has sent him to his doom, can Gwendolen begin the process of growing up. The repressive paternal third term will be replaced by another - that of Deronda. The “term” he provides is poised delicately between an imago and idealised verbal expression offered as a tool. Deronda suggests to Gwendolen that her misfortune might be allegorised as the action of a “severe angel” who “grasped her by the wrist” (Book VIII, Chapter 65, 840). She focalizes his figurative description as words which “were like the touch of a miraculous hand” (840). Between word and image comes a third term which is neither maternal nor paternal, the angel to which Deronda refers lacking a gender.

Whether the phantoms haunting Gwendolen are a result of paternity foreclosed, is a matter difficult to resolve. Insights can be found by turning to Rev. Gascoigne, a relative who has tried but failed to act towards his niece in locus parentis. To quell Gwendolen’s upset, the Rev. takes action to prevent the face and figure from further spooking the crowd. He confiscates the key to the panel. He claims that the reason
the panel swung open was a “sudden vibration.” When “however, the key was produced, the rector [Gascoigne] turned it in the lock with an emphasis offensively rationalising - as who should say, ‘it will not start open again’ - putting the key in his pocket as a security” (92). The opening, contrastive clause indicates that the focalization has returned to the narrator. It is the Victorian narrator who objects to the rationalising approach of hiding the key. The one who was in fact responsible for stealing it and causing the furore, was the young Isabel. What a little girl tampered with, her father will re-instate, much to the chagrin of the narrator.

This seemingly modest narrative of an afternoon’s charades serves a crucial function of drawing attention to a Victorian narrator whose authority is open to subversion. By precipitating and releasing Gwendolen’s terror, Isabel’s role is more intriguing than that of a character whose function is to stir up Gwendolen’s susceptible imagination. Isabel seizes and utilises a prohibited key, which the Rector will have to rescue. This “key” releases a phantom into Gwendolen’s focalized field. The key is hardly that which supports the Name-of-the-Father. In fact, it does quite the opposite, de-stabilising Gwendolen’s sense of anchorage in her comfortable, middle-class, Victorian environment. Isabel’s unlocking of the panel offers a parable which fails to narcissistically support the adult, Victorian narrator who wants to uphold a structure in which meanings are unlocked from judiciously chosen keys. Between this narrator at work in the Victorian “half and Isabel the young trouble-shooter, there is a tension and a self-reflexive reading which can be produced between the parable and the primary fabula. A narrator who performs in the text with the conviction that there are many keys to interpretation and not one, hierarchically validated term, comes into the “master” narrative with the playful longing to disturb the status quo.

In the Name of No Other: Touchy Signifiers
Mordecai is an elderly man, unmarried, childless and like a protagonist from Shakespeare’s “late plays,” he has lost a sibling. He is only reunited with Mirah in that final Book most suitably entitled “Fruit and Seed” (1876: 769-885). Siblings re-uniting might be a parable for the interweaving of the novel’s halves. Mordecai appears almost supernaturally in
Deronda's life. He first appears across Black-Friar's bridge in a haze of twilight and sun (Chapter 40, 549). Even in the early stages of their friendship, Mordecai, with neither reason nor logic, insists that Deronda is Jewish. The younger man's reactions to this are profoundly ambivalent. In some respects, he considers Mordecai as one "liable to hallucinations of thought" or one who "might have become a monomaniac on some subject which had given too severe a strain to his diseased organism" (551). In short, Deronda fears the older man is of doubtful mental health. But in fact, Mordecai turns out to be right. Deronda is Jewish. The older friend gently leads the younger to another life, culture, symbolic world. It is one which has been scorned and marginalised. Mordecai becomes the new anchor. In this section I encounter him as an imago who amongst his male/female phantasmic identifications, bears maternal characteristics. This does not mean that I will be reading him as carrying a maternal third term. A character's qualities and the term he or she bears can differ. I will analyse Mordecai's role as one who carries keys which unlock in the house of the symbolic, to echo again Henry James' metaphor, other rooms which are not specifically one of any dominating Other. Mordecai as a character is deployed by the external narrator as a tool to off-set keys which are exclusively paternal or maternal. In that these are both marshalled yet displaced in their function as imagos, a textual working-through or "cutting out" (in its double, contradictory sense of elision and formation) of a touchy signifier is partially achieved.

Cynthia Chase has adroitly dealt with the delicate issue of Deronda's circumcision (1986: 168-174). Let me spell out a point which may be not be obvious. Deronda's story is about the trials and tribulations of discovering his Jewish identity. But whether or not he was circumcised from birth remains unknown. Even if he were, whether the discursive practices of his milieu would allow him to read his Jewishness as written on the body, is another matter relegated to silence. Chase's multi-levelled, deconstructive reading of Eliot's novel suggests that its narrative tactics can be read as "circumcisive" (1986: 172). Chase argues that the narrative makes loops around its own hidden knowledge. For while Deronda's primary fabula can avoid mentioning the indiscreet topic, the novel's realism refers to it, even though "it" is not explicitly cited.
Furthermore, the text's noticeable silence has importance for other levels. As Chase notes, Hans Meyrick's letter and its now much quoted line concerning "past effects" of "present causes" performs a parabasis of the novel. Meyrick's letter draws attention less to the operations of the story than to those of the text and its meaning-makings (164-165). Brought into question are patterns of cause and effect and the notion of representation as carried forth by language's constative function. The issue is not just that characters such as Mordecai envisage items of plot before they are supposed to happen. The issue is that "effects" produce their "causes" after the fact. These phenomena are the work of the external narration team setting the text into states of contradiction. These states mobilise the reader into the affective task of questioning narrative teleology and identity. Just as the signifier of circumcision can neither be affirmed nor denied, neither can patterns of cause and effect be analysed as following the set rules of classical mechanics and linear temporality. Furthermore, the idea that someone is who he or she claims to be, even unto themselves, is brought into question. Yet nevertheless, and here is one aporia in Daniel Deronda, the protagonist "discovers" his Jewish identity if this sense of self can have an impact in a novel which questions the very notion of identity. The producing of collisions between contradictory states, between identity confidently hypothesised but not entirely embodied, suggests that even till the last page, Deronda cannot entirely carry either the Jewish father's name nor Jewishness as conferred by the mother.

Thus Eliot's novel puts into question the stable workings of paternal terms. Lacan's symbolic father would not be carried by someone remotely hallucinatory. Nor would it be carried by a fellow who switches around his cognisance of pasts, presents and futures. In psychoanalytic terms, tricks of memory and the future experienced in the past would constitute, in psychoanalytical terms, the intrusions of the unconscious. Affect would be regarded as disturbing the symbolic matrix. The activity of clairvoyance would be considered hallucinatory. In short, he whose interior monologues claim the gift of prevision, he who believes in reincarnation (600), who regards us all not to be made in God's image but to have evolved from an "eternal bosom" (600), whose mind is overwrought with images not thoughts, would hardly be considered a candidate for bearing the Name-of-the-Father.
My following point will not be about Mordecai’s psychology. What Mordecai “bears” is not a textual construction for the sake of offering the reader more distinguishing characteristics with which to diagnose the peculiarities of his bond with Deronda. Rather, acting with the Victorian narrator, Mordecai makes a team which influences readers by disturbing their faith in the alleged reliability of traditional, historical accounts. By this I mean the notion that history comprises a series of linear elements which act and react following the rules of cause and effect.

For Mordecai, Deronda is the “prefigured” friend (550). The “external” companion to Deronda, and by close association is the transforming narrator, who takes part in accounts which refuse the traditional rules of narrative teleology. This transforming agent becomes a preposterous narrator, one who facilitates the emergence of unexpected connections by taking over from the omniscient narrator. Once this Victorian imago surveying the narrative becomes de-stabilised, as it is through the passages of intense interaction between Mordecai and Deronda, the text can more freely traverse between present, future and past, and worlds of values and faith quite foreign to Victorian sensibilities.

Above, I cited the passage in which precursor Eliot describes Grandcourt and Gwendolen sailing off to their “supernatural” destiny. Mordecai experiences previsions. In other words, the external narrator has appropriated his visionary techniques. Another example of linear time undermined can be found in Hans Meyrick’s eccentric letter to Deronda. As I mentioned earlier, this missive refers to “the present causes of past effects” (Book VII, Chapter 52, 704). Here, the notion that effects follow causes is, in part, juggled. Gwendolen’s terror in the game of charades is a prevision of things to come. Cynthia Chase offers a detailed reading of such examples. She notes that Deronda seeks first and foremost a spiritual vocation, or the germ of his bildungsroman, only subsequently his Jewishness. Such a revelation reverses the expected process of cause and effect through which knowledge of the hero’s identity would determine his career. Therefore, concludes Chase, Deronda’s “origin is the effect of its effect” (1985: 162).

But more than this, what Chase terms by way of de Man, Mordecai’s “coercive” practice of positing, through speech act, what
Deronda is to become, telescopes the conflict between the performative and the constative function of discourse. This conflict is carried not by Mordecai alone, but by Victorian and transforming narrators. The latter would be expected to relate history according to teleological rules and the constative function of language. The narrator of the Jewish sections loses itself into the character-bound focalization and narration of Mordecai. His mental projections produce a plot full of implausible events, such as the wildly coincidental meeting with Deronda. The realist norms of plot propelled by pragmatic connections of cause and effect give way to synchronicities between the path's of characters. The subversion of teleologies takes its cue from the destabilising of the paternal signifier. Where this signifier becomes displaced, another key takes its place. As the intermediary in this process, Mordecai personifies himself as a parable. Added to which, narration becomes a mode of making parables which, to recall Bal (1997: 57-8), deliver meanings from the infinite regress between narrative levels. Mordecai tells Deronda of the “doctrine of the Cabbala.” Its central proposition is that the soul is immortal. When the body dies the soul continues its journey. The soul speaks the “truth” like a parable (600). As it moves from one generation to another, it has the opportunity to enrich those souls it encounters. One soul can cross-fertilise another.

Mordecai propositions Deronda. He does so in the Platonic sense. But perhaps he approaches the younger man at another level also. The older man wants their two souls to “join” so that they can be “perfected together.” This fecund venture might be described as “homosexual,” particularly in the light of their charged encounter from an earlier scene:

...two men, with as intense a consciousness as if they had been two undeclared lovers, felt
themselves alone in the small gas-lit book-shop and turned
face to face, each baring his head from an instinctive feeling that they wished to see each other fully (Book V, Chapter 40, 552).

The lovers would be “alone.” To “bare” the head is one slip away from being bare, or naked. The innuendo is this: perhaps the two men want be more intimate than just bare-headed. What has been focalized and
narrated by the transforming narrator, one phrase falling almost breathlessly on another, is then rescued from going too far by the Victorian narrator. The scene snaps into a painting of Titian’s “Tribute Money.” This image is religious in theme. The Victorian narrator returns to the use of “we” and draws our attention to the men’s “brilliancy of glance” (552). Here, a transfiguration has taken place. The dangerously erotic smouldering away in the gas-light book-shop has been legitimised under religious lights. The active light of love has borne a trangressive rapture into the Victorian world. To this innovative path of passion tribute has been paid. The abject semitic has been given a lighted room in the house of fiction. Through Mordecai’s parable, this love connects spiritual with bodily passion. That which has been prohibited has been given access, however limited, to the dominant order. Moreover, the longing that they “see” each other “fully” may also refer to the mutual desire to apprehend those touchy signifiers over which doubt may still linger. There is a longing to acknowledge circumcision. Though should these “facts” remain blinded in the smouldering light, then perhaps these too can be imagined, posited, figured by will. The parable is a key which is neither maternal nor paternal, which cannot be entirely signified except inasmuch as it can be located as that which has travelled between the two extremes of identification, maternal and paternal, in order to redeem itself from both.

The final key to my interpretation lies in the Victorian narrator’s description of Mordecai’s passion for Deronda. Described from the former to the latter is a “maternal transference of self” (553). Mordecai’s parable of souls moving from one generation to another would suggest that the maternal term is likewise transferred. But given the sexually charged scene between the two men, the “transference” implies a homosexual or, given the feminine identifications within which both men have been inscribed, lesbian passion which precludes fusion of identities. For Deronda, the paternal third term of Victorian identity is replaced by one which destabilises oppositions such as male/female, homosexual/lesbian, constative/performative. When this subversion is put into action through the infinite regresses of the text, traversal takes place.

In Eliot’s novel, the combination of the Victorian and transforming narrator can be regarded as precursors to the more character-bound narrated texts of literary modernism, replete with their explora-
tions of interior monologue. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, with the exception of the external narrator whose role is kept to a minimum, the main narrative agents are the characters, Mrs. Dalloway, Peter Walsh, Septimus Smith, his wife Reiza. In *The Waves*, the external narrator’s part is kept to the italicised sections only. There are six other narrators who are also characters: Bernard, Neville, Louis, Rhoda, Jinny and Susan. There are, therefore, a total of seven narrating agencies which far outnumbers those employed in *Daniel Deronda*. Yet this much misunderstood work contains within it the seed of multiple narrations, potentially burgeoning between the two external narrators and their supporting characters. Thus the works of Woolf have intimated the hidden proliferations of narrative agents in Woolf’s novel, displaced the father’s name with other keys, enabled a working-through of what has remained only potential or repressed to produce a plenitude of narrations. By reading *Daniel Deronda* as containing the potentials of *The Waves*, Woolf’s novel can be acknowledged as a literary intimate which offers keys to *Daniel Deronda*’s house of fiction, which would remain otherwise locked out of sight.

**The Lady Writing**

The lady sits between the two long windows, writing. The gardeners sweep the lawn with giant brooms. We are the first to come here. We are the discoverers of an unknown land... (1931: 13-14).

In the following analysis of *The Waves*, trees play an important role in the metaphoric, metonymic and parable-type organisations of Woolf’s most experimental piece. I cannot ignore in Eliot’s novel, the inclusion of the word “Cabbala.” Nor can I evade the fact that this one, complex word describing as it does the huge discipline of Jewish mysticism, refers to the “Tree of Life.” This tree is the same as the tree of knowledge in Genesis. My reading of *The Waves* revolves around a garden, emblematic of the Garden of Eden and the tree of life at its centre. In Woolf’s novel, trees allude to generation, procreation and tradition. At the heart of trees sits a lady writing.

The parable of the lady writing is introduced in the novel’s first section. She appears again in the middle, then as a figure between parallel worlds who returns and disappears, to ripple again like waves through
several of Bernard’s monologues (13-14; 52, 231; 245; 247). The place in which she is discovered, “Elvedon,” is phonetically evocative of “Avalon,” the site of Arthurian legend. Hence the garden carries an aura of magic, is an “unknown land.” Its effect on the adventurers becomes inexorable, particularly for Bernard.

He will grow up to be the phrase-maker, a writer of some description, though his choice of genre is never revealed. Perhaps he has none, being one who moves from one to another, as he does between parables. All we find out about the lady is that she writes. If her script in process is taken as a parable of the novel being written, she is crucially involved, though at a distance. This interpretation can be supported by Gillian Beer’s insight that the only observers in the scene are the actors, Bernard, Susan and the gardeners. The lady herself remains focused on her writing. Beer argues that the passage “turns its eyes upon itself, but entirely through the eyes of the actors. There is no outside place for the observer” (1996: 78). I should add that the lady’s position is between two windows. The act of observing is contained within. The scene is both self-reflective and self-reflexive. Bernard finds a prevision of his calling in life through what might be interpreted as the personification of his female self.

When she is first encountered, Bernard cannot touch her. She is concealed behind windows producing a text. Its contents remain secret. Her “book” is as beyond Bernard’s reach as is the possibility of his touching her. When first discovering her, he and Susan become intruders in a private garden. The lady works behind windows, protected by angry gardeners. The setting underscores yet another aspect of the term parable, where the prefix “para” emphasises a state of being next to or parallel to, but not touching. As is the case in Winterson’s novel, parallel universes are set up close to each other, but to travel from one to another, the characters must discover and decipher hidden pathways. The narrating character Bernard discovers secret paths during his first odyssey into the forbidden realm of the lady’s garden. It lies within the children’s world, but does not touch nor fuse with that world, for it must be reached along such a “secret path.”

This route connects together two parallel but distinct areas of Bernard’s life: that which is inside the garden and that which is outside. That the lady’s evolving script remains inaccessible can be interpreted as
signifying the marginalised worlds of the symbolic where it bifurcates into different imaginary terrains, much of which can remain hidden unless deciphered with specific keys. Furthermore, the spaces inside and outside the garden are parables of Bernard's world of phrase-making which often works at odds with that wherein his turbulent emotions, the longing for a "howl" and a "cry" remain enclosed. These two worlds, however, do meet, but not by merging (254). Rather, one cosmos resides within another, and Bernard journeys between the two along his "secret path" of phrases.

That this hidden route is a sign of his tenacity to produce clauses and sentences, is hinted at in Susan's complaint to Bernard in the first garden scene. As they flee the gardeners who chase them from the lady's private property, Susan complains: "Now you trail away...making phrases. Now you mount like an air-ball's string, higher and higher through the layers of the leaves, out of reach" (14). What is escaping? His desire to reach the lady? Finding part of the solution to this mystery requires returning to a passage in which Bernard makes an implicit connection between strings from balls of wool and the activity of phrase making:

My book, stuffed with phrases, has dropped to the floor...What is the phrase for the moon? And the phrase for Love? By what name are we to call death. I need a little language such as lovers use, words of one syllable such as children speak when they come into the room and find their mother sewing and pick up some scrap of bright wool, a feather, or a shred of chintz. I need a howl; a cry (1972: 254).

The "bright wool" metonymically connects to the "air-ball's string" and a "feather." Susan had claimed that Bernard flies away on phrases. Thus, through the metonymic chain of wool and string and feather, the mother's wool is connected to the idea of flight and escape. The bright wool may not alienate Bernard from the mother, but it does keep her at a distance. Mother would have a wool or sewing box full of different threads and balls just as Bernard's book is replete with phrases. Mother sews. Bernard writes. Both are engaged in activities which keep them connected but which do not lead Bernard to leap into his mother's space of a-symbolic bliss. Such delightful fusion is refused. Yet desire and
drive reach a crescendo. He calls for a “howl” and “cry.” These words are not merely used as loose exclamations, a-symbolically erupting from the narrative texture. The words are crafted into the elegant sentence, “I need a howl; a cry.” In other words, mother does not exist outside Bernard’s phrase and word-making, but is the cause of the affects which the syntax then binds. More than this, the sewing mother is a bridge between a symbolic order which over-determines affects and one in which they can be figured without tyranny, close to mother as she sews, generating as she does, a “little language such as lovers use.” The mother is the bridge between worlds

Moreover, the mother of this last passage and the lady writing, while linked, are far from identical. Both occupy rooms. But mother can be touched and the lady remains reflecting behind windows. While both act as tropes the keys of which unlock doors between worlds, if mother is the maternal imaginary then the lady conjures this term to displace it. Bernard’s implied mother is an imago while the lady suggests but subverts the figure of this imago. The lady writes. She is linked to the symbolic order, to that which refuses to return the children’s gaze, to that which by virtue of being so cuttlingly a third term would be difficult to define as maternal.

Whether she in any way carries the father’s name still needs to be scrutinised. To come close to the “woman writing” leads Bernard to an intimacy with despondency and ruthless self-questioning. He interlopes between two parallel experiences of life, the mundane and the emotionally charged, the regulated and the unpredictable. The latter is no vague place of “intuition” or affect. Rather, it is a cosmos organised through its own codes, its own symbolic order. Bernard comes upon this place at privileged moments. One occurs during an interior monologue in the novel’s seventh section. For the first time, he will be able to “touch” the lady. This opportunity comes from his reflecting on life’s daily grind. His is a life of “lunch at one-thirty” and the putting out of socks and shirts for the next day. Bernard confesses that ... it is a mistake, this extreme precision, this orderly and military progress; a convenience, a lie. There is always deep below it, even when we arrive punctually at the appointed time with our white waistcoats and polite formalities, a rushing stream of broken dreams, nursery rhymes, street cries, half-finished sentences, women writing - that rise and sink even as we hand a lady down to dinner (1931: 219).
By virtue of adjacent clauses, the “women writing” are linked metonymically, not only to the “broken dreams” but to the “lady” herself. As he figuratively hands her down to dinner, Bernard touches her. This latter verb also connotes the transmission or bequeathing of gifts from one generation to another. The lady belongs to an earlier temporality, that of nursery rhymes, of childhood, of hopes for the future borne but aborted. The other world “deep below” that of “military progress” and “convenience” is facilitated through a rigid, symbolic order. Nor is it in any way “a-symbolic.” This world is figured metonymically with “gardeners sweeping” as they step like ghosts from Elvedon into a final and adroitly handled main clause. The reference to half-finished sentences implies ones begun. Perhaps these will be finished by Bernard’s inheritors. Or perhaps these phrases have been seeds that failed to fall on fecund ground. Half-finished sentences may refer to subordinate clauses. Here a pun is suggested. Hidden within the military and regulated world is another subordinate one. If this one is ignored by the dominant world then it will be “military,” a “lie,” a sham. The truths of the world within are not to be ignored. For if this were to happen, the domain “without” would be left hollow and might implode.

In Woolf’s passage cited above, the linguistic cosmos “within” the conventional symbolic is neither nonsensical, nor is it an explosion of affect; nor does it operate at the behest of exclusively non-syntagmatic affects. In the above citation, sub-clauses lead to a main clause in the last phrase. In other words, syntagmatic rules are at work. Unlike the first part of the sentence up to the phrase “polite formalities,” the second half enacts a wave rhythm, a “rise and fall.” In other words, the clauses not only touch but are open to each other. This is also the case with Bernard’s two psychical spaces, first encountered as the inside and outside of the garden. Throughout the entire novel, the garden wall will remain intact. The lady will continue immovable in the act of writing.

Unlike the imaginary mother who keeps the subject enclosed in her matrix, the lady sets to work the process of symbolic castration. The key she carries comprises a new definition of the symbolic mother. “She” might be termed the signifier of woman in the process of self-naming, each day scribing afresh at her desk. She is a third term constantly in process. “She” who thus can deconstruct the personifica-
tion of maternal imago I provisionally imposed, can travel from behind
the windows to the inner recesses of Bernard’s consciousness. This key
opens many rooms in the house of fiction. The “she” who is no such
Other is personification, metaphor, metonymy, *mise en abyme*, and an
ever shifting ratio between the line and curve of Miller’s parable.
Without the lady writing there would be no pathways for the characters
to explore. If she were absent, Bernard would miss a *rite de passage*.

**The Lady’s Guardians**

Gardeners are working the lady’s grounds. They sweep away branches
with brooms. They pursue intruders. What is their function? To answer
this, I will offer two readings which work contrarily to each other.
Between the two analyses lies a solution.

The lady sits between the two long windows, writing. The gardeners
sweep the lawn with giant brooms. We are the first to come here. We
are the discoverers of an unknown land...

‘I see the lady writing. I see gardeners sweeping,’ said Susan.
‘If we died here, nobody would bury us.’

‘Run!’ said Bernard. ‘Run! The gardener with the black beard
has seen us! We shall be shot! We shall be shot like jays and pinned
to the wall! We are in a hostile country... There is a secret path. Bend
as low as you can. Follow without looking back. They will think we
are foxes. Run! (13-14).

My first reading begins as a classical, psychoanalytic reading, but does
not end as one. The children are intruders and have entered a prohibited
terrain. The guardians of the lady are men. The parable could be tracking
the children’s pre-Oedipal adventure of wanting to reach their mother.
Between children and mother is an antagonist - the father. The “black
beard” gives the impression of a stern and angry paternity. The very
notion of a garden implies the Garden before the Fall, emblematic of a
space of unconditional bliss. In Freudian and Lacanian terms, this is the
child’s unmediated relationship of bliss with the pre-Oedipal mother. No
explicit references are made anywhere to any of the characters having
actual parents. Thus parental figures, ones who give their children keys
to education and life, are curiously absent. The closest “representative”
to a maternal figure appears in the novel’s opening section. She is
implied to be a nanny, responsible for giving the children baths which involve sensuous delights such as “shots of water” (21-22). Called “Mrs. Constable,” her name is allusive of a police constable, suggesting that she is there to provide temporary protection. In contrast, the lady writing does not live in the children’s house and is remotely placed. She is inaccessible and not to be touched behind her windows. Her role as “pre-Oedipal” mother, then, would be more questionable. The psychoanalytic paradigm might stage the gardeners as castrating fathers. The children’s fear of “castration” might lie in Bernard’s terror of being shot and “pinned to the walls like jays.” In Lacanian terms, the pins suggest the vice-like grip of the father’s name. In the Woolf passage, such an interpretation is difficult to deliver. As they have never before encountered the lady, the children cannot separate from her. Thus she is not the pre-Oedipal mother.

Speculating on Woolf’s reading sources brings me to my second reading. In her diaries, Woolf cites the poetry of Marvell, though she does not always name particular poems. The parable of the lady conjured up in my mind Marvell’s poem about the English Civil War (1641-1649) “Upon Appleton House” (1681; Reeves and Seymour Smith 1969). The trees are referred to again when Bernard conjures snippets from the parable, be it the lady herself, the sweeping action of the brooms or the garden (231; 245; 247). In the first section, Bernard announces that “we are doomed, all of us, by the apple trees, by the immitigable tree which we cannot pass” (20). The verb “pass” is suitably multi-branched in meanings, connoting at one level the children being chased through the trees by the gardeners, as though they had not succeeded in getting past them. In terms of the parable of The Fall, “we” cannot “pass” back through into our pre-Edenic state. In addition, the trees connote “family trees,” parents, inheritances, destinies, all that cannot be avoided or denied. But perhaps after all, the tree can be “passed.” Bernard has found a “secret path,” even though it is in a direction away from the lady’s house. As Oedipus discovered, paths away can lead back towards origins. Even in the final section of The Waves, Bernard grapples with trees and their branches, construed at one point as hindrances to clarity: “A space was cleared in my mind. I saw through the thick leaves of habit. Leaning over the gate I regretted so much litter, so much unaccomplishment and frustration” (243).
The gardens in Marvell’s poem are more than a battlefield. They are a domain in which the gardeners clear out the older order. Allusive of Bernard’s own “clearing away,” the movement of the scythe through the grasses and trees offers a parable of the Ancien Régime of Charles I, toppled:

With whistling Sithe, and Elbow strong
These Massacre the Grass along:
While one, unknowing, carves the Rail (1978: 92, l. 395)

In seventeenth century English, the “Rail” alludes to new boundaries, kingdoms and methods of managing an Estate. There is “one” who is doing the carving as the gardener-soldiers clear away what is no longer required. Marvell’s gardeners sweeping with their scythes form the mise en abyme and parable for England’s historical psyche.

This point brings me to my second reading, which is not specifically psychoanalytic. Reading Woolf’s parable against Marvell’s text suggests that Bernard’s encounter with gardeners is not with castrating fathers. Rather, those who are in fact guardians, use their brooms to sweep away the old order, its paternal authorities, its outworn styles. At a more mundane but equally important level, they protect the lady from being disturbed in her writing. If she were to stop, her role as a maternal third term would be threatened. So would the inner cosmos of the novel without which there would be no narration, no characters.

In Daniel Deronda, if the Victorian narrator disappeared entirely, the transforming counterpart could not emerge. In this sense, the regime of the precursor supports the newly emerging inheritor-narrator without handing over all the power. In a sense, between the two an equal battle as well as a process of mutual support takes place. The split quality of this work is not re-duplicated in The Waves. The latter gives the maternal term a privileged position, the supportive paternal guardians are subordinate to her. What was a traversal between maternal and paternal terms in Daniel Deronda, is conducted in The Waves by the text’s making a loop around a potentially maternal figure but configuring other terms as a movement away from her. Thus Woolf’s novel has undergone traversal by travelling the loop through and around the maternal third term, thereby forging new pathways. The one who treads out these routes is
Bernard. At the same time, *The Waves*, whilst not disfiguring the paternal term, has submitted its metonymic elements to ideologies which have been repressed by the dominant order. Thus, what Woolf’s novel produces is an inverse hegemony.

**Back to the Fathers: Or Whose Daughter is She Anyway?**

Such an inversion of precursor hegemonies is also a tactic of *Gut Symmetries*. Unlike *The Waves*, in which the symbolic mother has pride of place, *Gut Symmetries* pays greater tribute to father figures than to their female counterparts. It does so while pursuing a postmodern agenda. The text cross-fertilises discourses of modern physics, Jewish mysticism, seventeenth century alchemy and chapter headings formed from tarot cards such as the “Tower” and “The Lovers.” The novel is narrated for the most part by three narrators - Jove, his wife Stella and Alice. Jove and Alice are physicists. They have an affair with each other. Then Alice seduces his wife Stella. Just as the characters make fecund with each other, the heterosexual cross-fertilising with the lesbian, the narrative burgeons with exuberant mini-biographies.

These miniature narratives spawn at the novel’s third level of narration. Being so embedded and given their function of mirroring aspects of the primary fabula, I would define these miniatures as parables. Paracelsus the alchemist and Einstein the physicist are incarnated. These are in turn cross-bred with stories about the narrator’s family lives, particularly the birth of children. In these stories father figures are given pride of place. This contrasts radically with *The Waves*. There, maternal (not paternal) figures such as Mrs. Constable and a figure who is implied to be Bernard’s mother both have prominence. Furthermore, the figure of the professional writer behind the windows is a woman. As I mentioned earlier, Bernard himself was once cast as a female character. The postmodernity of *Gut Symmetries* is thus allied to a contrary strategy, that is, the privileging of remarkable father figures. The argument that follows will examine the approach of foregrounding and revising the traditional paternal imago as a key in the postmodern agenda.

McHale contrasts the definition of the term postmodernism with that of modernism in the following way (1989). Modernist fiction offers different epistemological versions of a narrative. Different categories of
experience are at stake. In other words, the reader might ask, how am I now experiencing the world? What can I know? With postmodernist fiction, the question is ontological. It hinges on the question, which world am I in? (1989: 26-40). In Gut Symmetries, a character who might be Stella’s deceased father appears in a ghost ship to rescue her (186). In a novel which reflects on parallel universes and is preoccupied with the knowledges and discourses of early and late twentieth-century physics, one might wonder less whether Stella’s father is a ghost or whether he is a time-traveller, having passed through a “worm-hole” in time. Either way, one world intervenes with another and a cross over takes place between separate temporalities.

Appropriately then, each of the three principal narrators, Alice, Stella and Jove tell the tale of how they came into the world. Alice is implied to have been born from the waters surrounding a tug-boat. Jove emerged from a piece of Spaghetti. Stella’s mother was impregnated with a hoard of diamonds. These are all origins which cause the reader to wonder from which world they have emerged and consider the hypothesis that they occupy a plurality of all possible worlds. Winterson’s novel, then, pursues an experimental and cutting-edge agenda very much in the spirit of many end-of-millennium novels and films, so many of which are preoccupied not with male scientists, but female ones.

In the light of this cultural frame, reading Winterson’s most recent novel for the first time, left me puzzled to find a work ostensibly experimental yet profoundly exploratory of relationships with fathers. This seemed unexpected within the light of textual genealogies I had been tracing in the novel’s predecessors. Daniel Deronda can be read as a parable casting away rigid modes of paternal intervention, not just between characters and their worlds, but between external narrator and his/her previous modes of textual practice. As I have argued, The Waves goes even further. Thus, I at first expected Winterson’s work to take the symbolic mother to yet another cutting edge. At first, I was disappointed. I regarded Gut Symmetries as oddly reactionary, as “going backwards.”

Yet on further reflection, I realised that Winterson’s text nevertheless traverses the desire of her immediate ancestor, The Waves. If one of the important narrative desires of Woolf’s novel finds its parable in the lady writing, then Winterson’s work explores a different desire,
which is not to reach the writerly mother but to re-negotiate the symbolic father as a means of displacing him. Such a strategy, as it developed through the interdisciplinary crossings of the text, does not presuppose a return to the symbolic father as the prohibiting influence. The father figures of *Gut Symmetries* are not all of the same ilk. Alice’s father George errs on the side of tradition. He goes to work, his wife stays at home. He has an extramarital affair, she does not. Stella’s “Papa,” the father without a name, functions quite differently. He inspires his daughter to question the conventional. Indirectly, through example not prohibition, he awakens in Stella the desire to question what is meant by “reality.”

Before turning to him, it is important to explain the logic of the novel’s opening section. Entitled the “Prologue” (1-8), it is the only sequence in the novel which is not narrated by one of the three principal characters, Alice, Stella or Jove. This prologue functions to establish the novel’s important themes, setting out a series of reflections on parables both mythical and Biblical. Miller has explained “parable” as a figure in which one sign corresponds to another, yet this sign can provide an interpretation of yet another without the two merging or even coinciding. An example of a parable which would now be regarded as seventeenth century mysticism, is set out in the “Prologue.” Through the seventeenth century there was a general consensus that whatever happened in the cosmos amongst the planets and stars had direct consequences for the fate of nations, the development of crops, the occurrence of natural disasters as well as the bodily and psychical constitutions of human beings and the state of a single soul. In this historical period, psychological attributes were dictated by anatomical ones in terms of the theory of “humours.” Too much gall, for instance, caused distemper and aggression. Such a principle of “correspondences” the narrator credits to Paracelsus, quoting the famous gnomic phrase “As above, so below” and “the galaxa goes through the belly” (Winterson, 1997: 2). The combination of allusions to the belly along with a preoccupation with physics gives the novel its title.

The “Prologues” narrator applies the technique of narrating through correspondences to its own theoretical agenda. Just as Freud chose optical instruments to pose theoretical fictions about the nature of the psyche, so the narrator brings a scientific instrument into the
proceedings to make it correspond to the Biblical story of Genesis. The creation myth of modern physics, namely the “Big Bang theory,” is made analogous with a revised version of the Creation myth.

In the beginning was a perfect ten-dimensional universe that cleaved into two. While ours, of three spatial dimensions and the oddity of time, expanded to fit our grossness, hers, of six dimensions wrapped itself away in tiny solitude.

The sister universe, contemplative, concealed, waits in our future as it has refused our past. It may be the symbol behind all our symbols. It may be the mandala of the East and the Grail of the West. The clouded mirror of lost beauty that human beings have stared into since we learned to become conscious of our own face (1997: 4).

These “parable signs” are further extended to include Eastern myths and that of Narcissus, which is emended somewhat in the reference to a “clouded mirror of lost beauty.” For Narcissus, his image was in water and its clarity would have rippled slightly. But for Winterson’s narrator, the reflection has been “clouded” and lost. The suggestion is that there is an image of ourselves which might indeed be useful but has been lost.

The net result of these cunningly layered parables is to set out the following thesis: there is a world lost within a world. The two were torn apart from each other. The two need to re-connect. In this sense, Gut Symmetries has much in common with Daniel Deronda. The difference lies in the expansion of the principle that science and mysticism are intricately connected. Deronda argues for harmonising of different religious and ethnic cultures while Winterson’s novel urges for a re-uniting of opposites on every level. The external narrator makes an indirect plea to break down the boundaries between such diverse oppositions as: “black/white, good/evil, male/female, conscious/unconscious, Heaven/Hell” (5). Given the hegemonies of the white symbolic order, other ethnic groups have been kept in the shadows; if the symbolic is regarded as predominantly patriarchal, the term “male” has pride of place. In Christian and allegorical terms, “Hell” is that domain in the human heart which needs to be repressed. The narrator makes a plea to break down divisions, hence bringing together two bifurcated universes: “What was halves, and seeks again its wholeness” (5).
This plea sheds new light on the function of the father in this text. Two of the novel's many paternal figures act as bridges between these "halves." One is Paracelsus, the other Einstein. Both influence Alice and both are presented as vignettes. In keeping with the novel’s agenda of interrogating origins, their places and times of birth are given, along with the relevant astrological information. Paracelsus is dealt with briefly but his role is important. It must be noted that in the seventeenth century, there was no large rift between empirical investigation and examination through religion and faith.\(^{35}\) Paracelsus is portrayed as a creature defying binary oppositions: "he wanted to be a hero and looked like a victim." His gait embodies all that is conventionally undervalued: "So odd was the anatomy of this mis-bodied bel esprit that some hazarded his sex as female" and he "had a habit of re-begarring himself" whenever his fortunes were on the rise (1; 2). Paracelsus even transgresses the chasm between heaven and hell, having had his pact with Mephistopheles (1-2). Unlike the Devil's secretary, Paracelsus would prefer to be like Luther and "change the world" (1-2). Paracelsus is an important ancestor for Alice, and for her vital work as a scientist. Her aim is to re-connect the split between modern physics and alchemy (1997: "The Fool," 9-28).

Alice's other immediate ancestor Einstein carries a similar though somewhat contrasted role to that of Paracelsus. Einstein is one who bridges the gap between what Alice defines as the "Word and the Number" (Winterson, 23). The allusion to the "Word" implies the word of God which, traditionally, has its roots in the logos. Incidentally, for Lacan, this would be the symbolic order par excellence. Lacan said less about mathematics and its symbols than those aspects of the symbolic they might serve. For Gut Symmetries, numbers are borne of another quality, less stable, more prone to shifts and deformations. Einstein finds in them, his element.

[...] What patterns do the numbers make breaking and beginning in the waters of his spirit? He floats in numbers. Now he rests on a nine, now he swims hard against a seven, numbers iridescent, open mouthed, feeding off him as he feeds on them.

The numbers come when called. From the strange seas of the galaxy the numbers shoal to him (my emphasis, "The Fool," 23).
Alice is born on a tug-boat at sea, and describes herself as having been born, “in delight, in water and in spirits, with fish above and below an exacting star” (74). Metonymic connections between the fish and water and stars of Alice’s birth find parallels in those the parable of Einstein swimming in his best talents. Alice is born in water, not just metaphorically, but literally, in terms of emerging from her mother’s watery womb.

In other words, water is a metaphor for birth and is metonymically allusive of the womb. Hence, Einstein’s exploration in the symbolic of numbers does not abject that pre-Oedipal, “choric” female space of amniotic fluid and parturition. In fact, Einstein operates through it. Not only does he “feed” from the numbers but they from him. Thus is he inscribed as not only working within a female space and being nourished by it, but as also taking the role of the wet-nurse. While he is certainly no symbolic father to compare with the Victorian patriarchs of Daniel Deronda, it would be reductive to say he is merely a stand-in for maternity. The mothers in the novel are given highly conventional roles. Alice’s mother is a house-wife and Jove’s mother makes pasta and runs a restaurant. The choice of Einstein as a physicist of reputation is crucial. He is the father of Relativity Theory and a parent for Alice’s work. As a male character and paternal figure, he does not separate Alice from the desires of the maternal space. He brings her closer to their source. Einstein the figure of parable, then, is a bridge between the male symbolic (“The Word) and that other world of patterns (still within the symbolic), a comparatively female terrain (“Number”).

The citation above also and importantly suggests that defining the water domain as the Lacanian imaginary, as somehow outside the terrain of the symbolic, would lead to an impasse. This particular extract from Gut Symmetries breaks down the boundaries between the binary opposition “symbolic” versus “imaginary,” as well as between the Kristevan notions of “symbolic” as opposed to “semiotic.” Furthermore, I am not arguing for an imaginary realm which has traces of the “symbolic.” The parable of Einstein swimming in his fluid of numbers is highly structured. It makes a case for understanding even the most “hard-core” scientific knowledge as that which is produced not only in the wake of the imaginary but also through harnessing the symbolic. To work “creatively” with numbers requires imagination in no more or less degree than to conjure the Word and make it flesh. Both are terrains of
the symbolic. The world of mathematics, however, is less understood, less accessible, less privileged. Here, the figure of Einstein acts as a bridge between two worlds not in the mother’s name, but in the wake of an unconventional father.

A paternal figure who is still more extraordinary and more outside the conventional terrains of the symbolic order is Stella’s father. He is a man with no name. He is referred to throughout as “Papa.” He knows the life of the abjected and marginalised, having fled Nazi Germany to New York. Stella speculates that when he first arrived in America, he was still fleeing his Jewishness, only beginning the study of the Kabbala three years after settling into marriage. His research develops into a passion, but one that turns him “inward” (80). It is noteworthy that each letter of the Hebrew alphabet and, consequently the various words of Hebrew, have numerical and numerological values which can form codes of their own. In this respect, the Hebrew alphabet is a bridge between two symbolic domains. This fact links Papa’s work to that of Einstein as summarised in the novel’s vignette of him. Like Paracelsus, Stella’s father practices alchemy, and in the tradition of many seventeenth century practitioners, he does so in the kitchen with the saucepans.

The “other” worldly terrain of “signs, shadows and wonders” is Papa’s domain. Indirectly, father positions his daughter within what will emerge to be, for her, types of knowledge questioning the status of “reality.” For Papa, this dimension is best apprehended through omens and miracles. Like her father, Stella explores these as a code to illuminate with fresh eyes the official and normative world. Her heritage from father is a propensity to discover keys which can unlock doors to alternative perceptions. Stella refers to the ways in which early twentieth century painters were accused of being astigmatic and suffering from a “defect of vision.” She offers a non-pejorative correction - “affect of vision.” She also adds an extra note: “Perhaps art is an eye problem; world apparent, world received/Signs, shadows and wonders” (81). Artistic practices of “world” magnitude are then associated with quotes from three distinguished scientists of global stature, Max Planck, Einstein and Oppenheimer. A quote from the last of the three about the behaviour of electrons adds another turn to Stella’s emerging argument:
If we ask whether the electron’s position changes with time, we must say no. If we ask whether the electron is at rest we must say no. If we ask whether it is in motion we must say no (82).

Following the rules of classical logic, the three conditional statements add up to nonsense. The electron will not follow one of the three conditions which would otherwise endow it with at least some fixity of definition. A piece of nature which so refuses to fit into any ontological category might well be a candidate for non-existence. When the Lacanian notion of the paternal metaphor can be regarded as a “yes-no” device it functions to prohibit, setting the limits of the “law,” ensuring that certain acts and drives are given a “no” sign whilst others are allowed. Like his predecessors, Fink cites the French “Nom-du-Père,” drawing attention to the Nom as being one slip away from the French Non (Fink 1997: 79-81, 82).

Thus, closely akin to the “Name-of-the-Father” is the father’s “no saying.” Oppenheimer’s strategy in the citation is rhetorical. He summons a form of paternal “no-saying” only to turn it on its head. Oppenheimer is in fact arguing that the electron’s status cannot be limited to any “no,” for it is all things at once. It embraces all contradictions, changing but not changing with time, being both particle and its opposite, a wave. Paradoxes cannot be borne by the Lacanian “father’s name.” “He” protects the subject from too much unreality. Yet Oppenheimer’s quote argues that the New Physics has access to orders of “reality” beyond what is empirically privileged. Stella has reflected on art as a “defect of vision,” and that she has done so prior to her quoting Oppenheimer makes an implicit connection between such a “defect” and the apprehension of Nature’s peculiarities and paradoxes. Moreover, “paradox” is a figure closely allied to that of “parable,” for in the former, the parallels at work in the latter may contradict each other without cancelling each other out.

Stella offers a radical definition of “knowledge” by following the Oppenheimer quote with one of father’s key remarks, before connecting this to Talmudic paradigms: “Is truth what we do not know?” (82). Her next move is to explain that in the Torah, “to know” can be used in a “sexual context” (81-82). She does not expand on the word “sexual.” Instead, she makes a contrast between knowledge in the conventional
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sense, as "facts," or "a hoard of certainties, bug collected" with that suggested by the Torah meaning, one which defies taxonomy and acknowledges "patterns, rhythms, multiplicities, paradoxes, shifts, currents, cross-currents, irregularities, irrationalities, geniuses, joints, pivots, worked over time, and through time, to find the lines of thought that still transmit" (83). The list of nouns signifies processes which have much in common with what Kristeva terms the semiotic (le sémiotique) operations of language. The special type of Cabbalistic knowledge implied in Winterson's text subverts conventional notions of "hoarding" of facts or of knowledge as a material object. The "sexual" sense is associated with the drive to "connect" dissimilar arenas which might otherwise not be linked or which would be "irrational" and "irregular" if combined. In other words, to "know" in the Torah sense, is a fecund activity, in that "differences" are cross-fertilised and re-generated. In that possibly alien worlds of concern are thus connected and allowed to interact, the paternal third term is not in a position of rigid control. The paternal third term links the young subject to the maternal space in such a way that the gap of the bifurcated symbolic is bridged.

Such acts of bridging are even more dramatic in Stella's tale about her own inception, gestation and birth. Miraculously, she can tell the story of how she became an embryo. Papa summons all the Jewish elders. Each, including himself, produces a hoard of diamonds for Uta to consume. She ingests every one. Diamonds are wittily associated with sperm. One diamond becomes embedded in the spine of the embryo Stella. To whom this particular diamond belongs, that is, whose father's name it carries, will remain eternally unsolved. In other words, in a comic inversion of the patriarchal tradition of naming children with their father's name on the understanding that his "seed" has done the job of fertilisation, Stella's story subverts the notion of there being one, privileged, paternal figure.

I would define Papa's linguistic performance prior to the birth as a parable which unlocks another level in Papa's paternal role. Papa launches into a series of phrasal spasms:

He began to call. He called from the Creation. He called from the flocks of Abraham. He called from Jacob's williness. He called out of Pharaoh's dream. He called with the rod of Moses.
voice of the prophets he called with the ecstasy of David. He called up the light that was within him (91-92).

Papa is having contractions. Curiously, Uta’s birth cries are neither heard nor reported by Stella. As Papa calls out, Stella is born. The “light within him” is his child breaking out of his body. He names a long list of patriarchs in the process. But amongst them is no Name-of-the-father which will provide a traditional key. Stella’s birth is linked not only to an unconventional paternal intervention, but it is one which mimics female parturition while still maintaining a paternal influence. Thus the definition of traversal which I stated earlier, the movement between the binary terms, maternal and paternal, is here carried out by Papa’s intervention in the birthing process. Furthermore, the light is indexical and symbolic of wave forms which can be understood by the sophisticated studies of modern physics. Papa is not “giving birth” in the sense of Kristeva’s release of the “semiotic,” that fluid, timeless burst of drive which is beyond the symbolic order. Papa’s wave-like syntax of calling enacts the process by which the word is turned flesh, his hailing interacting and perhaps, implicitly, bringing forth Stella as well as that which her name connotes, “stellar” light and hence universal light. This light is an index and symbol of the novel’s various theoretical fictions of light, including the opening myth of how the universe came to be (1-5) or Papa’s stories of physicists and their theories of light.

It is through involvement with light, be it Alice and Jove’s shared study of physics and Stella’s upbringing, that the desire between Alice and Stella can emerge. In Gut Symmetries’ house of illuminated fiction, traversal involves the discovery of such unusual keys as paternal terms which can act maternally, undermining the binary opposition “paternal/maternal.” The key which emerges in Papa’s birth soliloquy is not in name of a specific mother or father, but areas of mystical and scientific knowledge between and beyond paternal imagos.

Furthermore, Gut Symmetries offers a parable for the process of influence which suggests that creative endeavour need not involve fighting the Other as predecessor, going into wreck or vanquish the ancestor’s terrain. On the contrary, as is the case with authors and narrative subjects, to traverse an intimate Other requires a study of the tradition from which the creative work is inspired. When an external
narrator, for instance, only rebels against the precursor narrator, the third term may be used in a reactionary way. But if the narrating agent uses the best from a predecessor without being overwhelmed by her, the intimacy between the two may produce similarities borne in idiosyncrasy. If knowledge of an intimate Other is depreciated, then a movement away may pose problems.

Alice claims she is invariandy “her father’s daughter.” The greater part of her narrative attention is focused on him as a source of identification. Her mother is an Other whose desire is never unlocked. Stella likewise winds an excellent yarn about her Papa, but what she can relate about her mother is truncated. This leads me to suggest that her Other is the father. In _Gut Symmetries_, then, paternity carries the weight of not only implementing a third term but carrying part of the burden of maternity and subverting the binary opposition which these parental figures imply. The intimacy of influence, then, is aided by a third term which has been assisted by parental terms, which has taken on their influence, but which can then supersede both.

In _Daniel Deronda_, the novel’s traversal between its two alleged halves is propelled when narrative subjects negotiate maternal and paternal terms which each function problematically. It is the novel’s determination to discover keys between these troublesome and disturbing poles that the notion of identity and history is challenged. In _The Waves_, traversal does not function because of movement between points of a purely parental model. The writing lady is the subversion of the maternal figure. She does not function as an imago in the mirror because she will not return the gaze. She is a figure who writes. The only focalizations of her are as a woman immersed in the task of representation. Here I should like to reiterate an invocation from Kristeva’s “Women’s Time.” Kristeva invites her readers to bring into the “very interior” of their identities, “the cutting edge” of the symbolic (1987: 210). The lady who sits writing is the index, icon and symbol of the narrative subject as she breaks and re-makes herself. She submits her identity to the cutting edge of narrative language, breaking and making her subjectivity as the products of her workings-through emerge on the page, perhaps interspersed with those of Bernard. Woolf’s enigmatic figure writing behind windows is, from all three novels, the clearest personification of the narrative subject in traversal. _Gut Symmetries_ offers
no comparable figure. By providing such complex male characters who can be problematically maternal as well as paternal, the traversing strategy of Winterson's novel comes closer to that of *Daniel Deronda* than *The Waves*. Paternal figures in Eliot's novel are absent or just plain dangerous. In Winterson's piece they are troubled but crucial to the journeys of the female narrative subjects. The narratives of Alice and Stella undergo traversal at a price. The female narrators pay their dues by acknowledging the loss of their fathers. These paternal figures carry, *par excellence*, what Lacan refers to repeatedly, as the desire of the Other (Lacan, 1986). When Alice and Stella both incorporate within and yet remove from their narratives, citations from their fathers stories, the female narrators attempt to work through parental imagos who are resistant to being deciphered into their constituent tropes.

**Conclusion: The Sacrifice of Other**

In some respects, I contend that Winterson’s novel is more intimate with *Daniel Deronda* than *The Waves*. To recall Bloom’s ratio *apophrades*, Mordecai could be read as haunting Papa and the delight which the novel takes in upsetting conventional ontologies of cause and effect. Yet for Bloom, the ratio is about emptying the ancestor of its qualities. *Gut Symmetries* does not defuse radical textual forces in Eliot’s novel, but helps them to be read as a form of Ur-modernism. This may be surprising given that Winterson has written not in homage to Eliot but to her immediate ancestor Woolf. Indeed, Winterson may or may not have read Eliot’s novel. The intimacy between the realist and postmodern novel may indeed have arisen out of the movement of the revisionary loop which turned full-circle through the intermediary, modernist work.

*The Waves* offers representations, that is, it engages in working-through what resides in the lacunae of *Daniel Deronda*. Eliot’s text turns around issues of circumcision as it applies symbolically to narrative levels. Woolf’s novel is less interested in the masculine concern; rather, it deploys male characters to give the maternal figure greater opportunity for displacement and further representation. In moving away from this strategy, Winterson’s book works through what remains relatively silenced in Woolf’s text, that is, the paternal imago. By so doing, Winterson’s novel offers a complex troping of masculinity which found no
working-through in either Eliot’s novel or Woolf’s. In traversing between texts, one novel returns full circle to an intimate’s old space, but does so to find a key to a room which resides somewhere hidden behind or within the precursor’s special place. To return to Henry James’ metaphor of the house of fiction, Winterson’s novel closes some rooms in order to open others that have never seen the interpretative light of day. To do so, household re-building requires breaking down walls in order to build new passageways. Thus are theoretical fictions broken and re-made.

Yet the provisional results will not always be free of losses and acts of damage along the way. It is tempting to read Winterson’s work as a building together, a type of super working-through of her predecessors texts. The radical movements of Daniel Deronda are taken to their logical conclusion. The soliloquy structure of The Waves is followed in the character-bound narrations of Alice, Stella and Jove. But perhaps there are vibrations of postmodern disenchantment to be heard in the mansion of Gut Symmetries. The “Prologue” announced a Fallen state, a universe split in two, with one lost universe of six dimensions lost to the “grossness” of our four dimensional cosmos (4). By the novel’s end, there is little indication that the clefts in our galactic and space-time predicaments can be radically repaired, just as Alice and Stella betray symptoms of becoming trapped in the conventional bickering (215-217) that underlined Stella’s marriage with Jove. In Daniel Deronda, the conflicts, tensions and disturbances between the Victorian and transforming narrator are what characterise the novel, not the resolution between these tussling narrators. In The Waves, Bernard may die defiant as he confronts death, but the lady writing never even espied him, nor did he address her. In all the novels, a constitutional separation between parts, terrains, space, desire and its rapturing are maintained. It is between such places and topoi that hidden, theoretical fictions can be suspected, discovered and unlocked.

Building between sites as an act of moving around closed off places is a suitable metaphor for textual traversal. Deronda builds intricate networks between two sections; The Waves comprises a microcosm of a Garden with a larger, unredeemable world without. Winterson’s novel also mends rifts between separated parts. The “Prologue” of Gut Symmetries pledged to explore the rifts between an array of “binary” opposites.
The parable of the universe as separated twins, seeking each other again, is also a parable about traversal. As the three narrators seek to remember their childhoods, they are likewise re-connecting splits between science and subjectivity, knowledge and passion, analysis and art. Alice refers to the human quest for that which is unique to the individual self. For her, the “difficulty” and the “dream” is “To pan the living river that you are and find gold in it” (218). Rivers flow into each other, so no one is disconnected. Yet each grain of gold is distinctive. The flow of water is a metaphor for the movement of time and generation, through which the “we” implied by “you” can each find those priceless particles of our ubiquity.

Perhaps James’ “house of fiction” has something in common with Coleridge’s *Kubla Khan* (1941: 18-21). While the fictional domains of Winterson’s novel are hardly Utopian, the “Alph,” or sacred river which runs through the magical dwelling of Coleridge’s poem could be implied in the river reference of Winterson’s novel. The river flows not only through human psyches but between novels. It is the guarantee and the very conduit of intimacy. This river has flowed with the waters of the Thames over which Deronda met Mordecai. The river in which gold might be found has mingled with the watery complexities of *The Waves*. Winterson’s work does employ the interior monologue techniques of Woolf’s novel. Furthermore, *Gut Symmetries*’ paternal figures have affinities with either water or wave-like structures. Alice’s father is a sailor, Stella’s father dealt in Heisenberg’s wave functions. If Woolf’s novel deploys wave structures to continually make and break the lines of definition forming the six characters, even to the point of unfixing the notion of character, Winterson’s text subverts this strategy by using the medium of water to re-build the paternal imagos. When this is achieved it is as a contradiction in terms. The paternal imagos are oxymorons, part character, part Cabbalistic or quantum stuff. A process of complete unravelling and reweaving of character never occurs. Traversal moves both forward and backward. It moves forward if the impulse gravitates towards a greater working-through. Having said this, the river will not create a heaven on earth; the postmodern disenchantment of *Gut Symmetries*, that is, its refusal to represent a cosmos where the rifts and damage are solved, is an insurance that the river will continue to flow, for the process of traversal is potentially endless. Traversal moves
backward if the tendency is towards allowing projections and actor “characteristics” to be re-established. Winterson’s novel, unlike Woolf’s, does not carve out a loop which completes a figure eight of destruction and re-creation. The loop is localised, the imago and its undoing occurring over sentences. This is how Gut Symmetries differs from its immediate ancestor. In other words, the movement of traversal from one novel to another can involve a series of reverse movements, forwards and backwards, if only with the aim of offering to the next traversal the opportunity to move in the opposite direction. Whatever directions are taken, however, no two movements will ever be identical. In this sense, the river cited above from Winterson’s novel is one apt metaphor for the work of traversal. The river has no name. It has no ratio. It flows in the name of no Other.

Notes

1 Henry James, “Preface” to Portrait of a Lady (1975: 7). James’ quotation is worth quoting in full. It offers itself as a miniature theoretical fiction, very much in the spirit of Freud’s optical trope. James’ image of the window involves the reader in imaging the construction of the house and its glass fittings.

The house of fiction has in short not one window, but a million - a number of possible windows not to be reckoned; rather, every one of which has been pierced, or is still pierceable, in its vast front, by the need of the individual vision and by the pressure of the individual will (7).

To “pierce” defines the action of an instrument penetrating, making a hole into a surface or structure; to pierce means also, quite simply, to explore an area. Thus James’ theoretical fiction aptly captures the role of the viewer as being instrumental in the construction of the fiction. Different piercings, or different modes of “individual vision” will cause the window to function according to the approach of the viewer/reader.

2 I am intertextually echoing the title of an Italo Calvino novel, The Castle of Crossed Destinies (London: Faber, 1982). Calvino’s novel uses tarot cards as a device to re-tell a range of stories, including Shakespeare’s plays. The titles of specific cards such as “The Moon” and “The Star” head the chapters of Gut Symmetries. After the opening “Prologue,” the first chapter is entitled “The Fool” and sets out Alice’s story (1997: 9-28). In Tarot, the card
symbolises beginnings and potentiality. These meanings resonate throughout the first chapter. For a dictionary of tarot card meanings see Crowley 1986.

For a reading of Silverman’s notion of symbolic castration brought into an encounter with Elizabeth Bowen’s *Eva Trout*, see Hoogland (1991: 162-169).

See also my chapter 1. Freud’s notion of imagos is not limited only to that of the mother or father. Freud (*SE XII*: 102) mentions the “brother-imago,” crediting the “father-imago” to Jung’s work (1910: 38).

Whilst it is scattered throughout his work, the notion of “Nom-du-Père,” or the “Name-of-the-Father” is treated extensively in “On a Question Preliminary to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis” (1977: 180-225). Lacan’s concept has its roots in Freud’s work on the “primal horde” and the totem figure in *Totem and Taboo* [1913]. Freud states that the totem comes to serve as the symbolic device binding the tribe, once the primal father has been killed. The totem is the precursor term to Lacan’s “Name-of-the-Father.” The synonym I use for the father’s name is the “symbolic father.” There is yet one more term deployed by Lacan - the “paternal metaphor.” All three terms refer to the father’s name as a symbolic function which represses the subject’s desire for the mother. Clearly, the notion of the paternal metaphor can be read in close alliance with Freud’s theory of the Oedipus complex. To exit this complex requires the intervention of the Name-of-the-Father. “Traversal” encompasses the stage during which one third term can be replaced by another, outside of the subject’s “initial” family.

The phantom face so terrifying Gwendolen Harleth in *Daniel Deronda* is a personification of a third term; as I will show, this term is difficult to clinch as a signifier of paternity. The phantom is certainly not the personification of the paternal metaphor but of a third term difficult to pin down as either exclusively paternal or maternal. What can be said is that Gwendolen has not undergone the experience of being entirely clinched in place (separated) by this third term.

Lacan’s paper is based on a reading of Freud’s famous “The Case of Schreber” [1911], *SE XII*: 3-84.

For an analysis of the role of the lady writing and her relation to the “eyeless” (I-less) medium of the novel, see Gillian Beer “The Waves: The Life of Anybody” (1996: 77-78).

One final point about Lacan’s *Nom-du-Pere* is that it functions
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successfully when incorporated into the mother’s speech. When the mother refers to father or makes remarks such as “your father says this” or “wait until I ask dad” or “I and your father” or all such instances of the mother signifying that she has a partner, the child comes to realise that the family does not orbit around her. I depart from Lacan by arguing that logically, there is no reason why this third term cannot be carried by another parent, parents or caregiver who could include the mother’s female lover. Furthermore, the notion that the third term has to be carried by a caregiver can also be questioned. The third term may be introduced by teachers or other types of cultural institutions.

See note 2 above. My chapter 1 makes a closer investigation of third terms between Woolf and Eliot, Winterson and Woolf, examining how external narrators adopt third terms if the precursor is considered to be the Other.

Strictly speaking, “psychosis” defines a state in which the subject hallucinates. Not all hallucinatory states are necessarily psychotic. The boundaries between what constitutes psychosis and neurosis are not, in clinical practice at least, that clearly defined (Fink 1997: 82-86). Between psychosis and the experience of daydreams, intermediary states can be traced. Yet Lacan’s position on what determines a psychotic state was clear. “Foreclosure” is the cause. This defines the disavowal of the paternal signifier. The negation of this term would be insufficient to cause a psychotic state. The terms of Lacan and one of his interpreters, Bruce Fink, are implicitly heterosexual. In a revealing passage, Fink indirectly criticises single and lesbian mothers, suggesting in thinly veiled terms that such child-rearing practices are “downplaying” paternity. In his account, there is no hint that the mother’s desire for another woman could equally well give the child a third term. Nor does he allow that more than one type of symbolic anchoring is feasible. Fink emphasises that this structure is “all or nothing” (Fink, 1997: 82). It is the one, not the many. It cannot function with competition from another signifier. For Lacan and Fink, there is but one key.

See for instance, Felix Holt [1866] (1986). Chapter 39 is a case-study of Mrs. Transome’s suffering. Towards the end, the external narrator comments “These Things are Parables.” The example I read closely in this section is from Gordon S. Haight’s edition of Selections from George Eliot’s Letters (1985). The letter is to Rabbi Emmanuel Deutsch. It was written two years before the publication of Daniel Deronda. The letter is in Haight 1985: 389-390.
Frederick R. Karl 1995. See “Discovering Herself” (Chapter 3: 48-64) and “Herbert and George: The Two Voices” (Chapter 7: 142-170). Karl makes a biographical reading of Eliot’s development as a writer. In each of these chapters, he makes insightful links between Mary Anne Evans’ friendships and how these contributed to the evolution of her narrative voices.

In a letter written to Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mary Anne Evans expands on the scope of what she regards as Western and Christian prejudices against Jews. The extract from the letters (Letters Vol. VI) is quoted in Haight 1985: 487.

J. Hillis Miller does place “allegory” and “metaphor” into the same category as parable. This I dispute, as it takes away from the specificity of his definition.


Lacan 1977: 3-7. The short article concerns the young child experimenting with its image in the mirror. The infant sees itself and considers itself as “whole,” a non-recognition which constitutes a misrecognition. The illusion of the unified image is the imago which gives the child a sense of triumph.

In The Waves, the six soliloquies function as six character-bound narrations. The italicised sections, heading each of the novel’s movements from childhood to old age and death, can be read as the external narrator’s own soliloquy, set apart from that of the six main characters.

For a definition and description of ethos see Aristotle’s The “Art” of Rhetoric (1975: 2; 3; 12-18).

In Titian’s painting are two figures, Christ and one of the priests from the Temple. The painting narrates the scene in the New Testament in which Christ responds to a gruelling question and answer session from the priests; in the Biblical story, Christ tells the assembled to “render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s, unto God what is God’s.” In Titian’s painting, the male figure of the priest tenderly approaches Christ from behind, their hands touching and a coin passing between the hands of the priest and Christ. The characterisation and the drama enacted between the two men is ambiguous. It could be read as being intimate if not erotic. The intimacy is picked up in Daniel Deronda, where the painting is quoted to give the interaction between Mordecai and Deronda a definite lustre.
The term symbolic order I use in its Lacanian sense; the term defines that part of a culture which constitutes the signifying system of signs. But importantly, the symbolic is that which is not the imaginary (1986: 279-280). The symbolic order prevents consciousness from being an endless fantasy, breaking up the imaginary relation between the ego and its images. Thus the symbolic order constitutes the law, constructing the subject in terms of what actions and activities are prohibited or not. The notion that a subject is simultaneously both “inside” and “outside” the social order (the symbolic order), culture and ideology comes from Teresa de Lauretis “Technologies of Gender” (1987: 1-31). Broadly speaking, she argues that culture is made up from a variety of interweaving ideologies. For instance, a lesbian may be marginal to heterosexual ideology, but it is impossible not, at some level, to have been constructed by this “technology.”

Gail Marshall explores the themes of statues, theatrical spectacle and Shakespeare’s Winter’s Tale in “Actresses, Statues and Speculation in Daniel Deronda” (1994).

For a study of genius, women and gender see Christine Battersby, Gender and Genius (1989). For an investigation of the difference between the male “Outsider” who is romanticised for breaking the rules and the woman artist who is constructed as female “Otherness,” see chapter 14, “The Margins Within” (134-145).

The word “incarnadine” has the association of bloodied seas, from Lady Macbeth’s reference to “seas incarnadine” which will not be sufficient to wash away the bloodstains from her hands. See the Arden Edition of Shakespeare’s Macbeth, Act V (1994). I find the word satisfying in reference to Grandcourt as an incarnation of the symbolic father (incarnadine meaning “flesh coloured) who then ends up drowning in the incarnadine.


It is worthwhile to quote the entire passage. Gwendolen’s fear of phantoms is also a terror of ancestors. The passage below is a witty critique of how one generation dreams the after-affects and “effects” of its ancestors. Gwendolen’s upset remark is a response to Sir Hugo teasing her about the ghosts of monks in the Abbey.

“Please don’t!” said Gwendolen, with a playful shudder. “It is very nice to come after ancestors and monks, but they should know their
places and keep underground. I should be rather frightened to go about this house all alone. I suppose the old generations must be angry with us because we have altered things so much (461).

I use the phrase “written on the body” to echo Winterson’s fifth novel, Written on the Body (1993).

I refer to Cynthia Chase’s delightful adjective “elephantine” from her essay “The Decomposition of the Elephants” (1986: 157-174), which she takes from Hans Meyrick’s bizarre comments about a “private elephant,” which his financial means will not allow. Elephants, I should note, symbolise the facet of memory. Elephants are reputed to have long memories.

Another postmodern novel employing the tarot pack in its fable-making is Italo Calvino’s The Castle of Crossed Destinies (1982).

For those unfamiliar with tarot cards see Crowley 1986.

Michio Kaku (1995) defines a worm-hole as an anomaly in the spacetime continuum which would, should it exist at all, act as a corridor between different space-times in the universe or different temporalities (23-24). See also Stephen Hawkins, A Brief History of Time (1988) for a layman’s/woman’s explanation as to what forms a “black-hole” as opposed to a worm-hole.

The second half of the nineties has delivered narratives which are examples of a postmodern cross-fertilisations between literary genres and scientific knowledge; a number of these works feature women scientists. See Martin Amis, Night Train (1997), a detective novel where the “whodunnit” is replaced by the “whydunnit” of a woman scientist’s suicide. The world into which the reader is taken is her study and profoundly disturbing perceptions of physical laws and the universe. The recent film Contact (Robert Zemekcis 1997) starring Jodie Foster, adapted from the novel by Carl Sagan (1991) satisfies McHale’s definition of postmodernism; both the novel and the film bring together different space-times.

For an excellent overview of basic tenets of natural philosophy in the seventeenth century see Huffman 1988 and Godwin 1979. Though both books are specifically about the natural philosophy of Robert Fludd (1574-1637), each gives a useful overview of the intellectual period. Importantly, both studies emphasise that what post-Enlightenment thinking regards as “science” was part and parcel of alchemy and herbal approaches to medicine. Sir Isaac Newton practised alchemy. For an in depth study of Newton’s work, which throw light on the references to alchemy and physics in Gut Symmetries, see Dobbs 1979. For an excellent study which examines how Sir Robert Boyle integrated so-called mystical ideas into his study of
mechanics see Shapin and Schaffer 1989.

This split emerged during the eighteenth century when science spurned mysticism. There are some who may consider this an oversimplification (Schaffer 1989). Yet the eighteenth century saw experimental science cleansing itself of mysticism (Brock 1992).

See Kristeva (1980: 133-139) for a definition of “chora.” The notion of the chora and the relationship of the infant to the pre-Oedipal mother is taken to another frontier in chapters 2 and 3 of The Acoustic Mirror (Silverman 1988).

His male friends share his eccentricities. The owner of a pack of huskie dogs, Raphael, goes around the snow-lined streets of New York in a sleigh. Raphael helps out with Uta’s birth. On his sleigh, he transports her to the Temple. Given the religious and theological themes in Winterson’s novel, it is useful to consider that Raphael might be allusive of the Archangel Raphael who was responsible for healing. One of the angel’s techniques “is” (if you regard angels as inhabiting an eternal present!) to use musical harmony to heal the dissonance of illness. Music is closely akin to mathematics, physics, astronomy, astrology and alchemy, particularly as these disciplines are interwoven and set against each other within the novel.

A concise and accessible guide to the Kabbalah is provided in a concise account by Daniel D. Matt (1995).

It is relevant to note that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, certain levels of alchemical practice were regarded as “women’s work” (Smith 1994).

This a paradox which has remained hard to grapple with, even into the later parts of the twentieth century. The category of scientific knowledge loosely termed “quantum mechanics,” which emerges in the first three decades of this century, was never and still often is not fully accepted by some wings of the scientific establishment.

The relations between the Torah, sexuality, knowledge and virginity are analysed in Chapter 2 of Death and Dissymmetry, “Virginity and Entanglement” (Bal 1988: 41-68).

In the line “He called with the voice of the prophets he called with the ecstasy of David” the text contains no comma after the first main clause. This may give the impression of being grammatically odd but contributes to the sense of the grammatical instability accompanying the moments before Stella’s birth.