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

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The Web That Binds:
Intimations of Mortality in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Waves,* *Gut Symmetries* and *Daniel Deronda.*

The pleasure principle seems actually to serve the death instincts (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle, SE XVIII: 63*).

Death was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them ... There was an embrace in death (*Mrs. Dalloway,* 1998: 242).

**Introduction: Rapture is the Only Way Through**

The heuristic adventure of this chapter will seek out theoretical fictions which enable the pleasure principle not to serve the death instincts, as Freud suggested, but to reverse their effects. In *Mrs. Dalloway,* Clarissa personifies death as an “embrace.” The rapture emerging from an event of death does not inhibit but enhances the current of communication between characters and through the text. For Septimus Smith, suicide is an exit which bequeaths to Clarissa neither annihilation nor melancholia. Her encounter with the account of a death brings into her narration the phrase used frequently throughout the novel, “Fear no more the heat of the sun” (244). Death as an event releases a rapture which I will examine here.

I have already explored rapture as a force of path-breaking and a generator of traversal. Here I will further analyse rapture as a force which, however paradoxically, becomes kindled by events of death and destruction or by the death drive in its aspect of the compulsion to repeat. The raptures produced by fictional deaths challenge what is, on the part of characters and texts, the “compulsion to repeat,” a term to be interrogated here. When this compulsion in the narrative is interrupted, the making and breaking of textual intimacies become enhanced.

The literary works encountering one another in this last chapter, stage deaths as events in the fabula, as transformations in the psyches of characters and as crises of fracture and restitution in each novelistic
structure. *Mrs. Dalloway* explores death through the figures of ghosts and prehistory. *The Waves* encounters mortality between poetry and twentieth-century physics. Both *Daniel Deronda* and *Gut Symmetries* explore the deathly through adventures between science and the occult. The realist form of *Daniel Deronda* declines, as its modernism struggles to carve out a destiny of its own. This occurs through competition between epistemological and occult theories. *Mrs. Dalloway* dramatizes a conflict not between modern science and mysticism, but between modern technology and Arcadian values. The novel’s modernist sites result from a combination of those *mise en scène* describing post-World War I London with pastoral descriptions evoking Arcadian terrains within the “modern” text. Twentieth-century urbanity confronting the pre-metropolitan and prehistorical produce parallel worlds. In Regent’s Park, Septimus Smith’s pantheistic focalization of trees and birds singing Greek words (31) as well as the bag lady first espied by Peter Walsh (105-107) all generate such domains. In *The Waves*, worlds within worlds emerge when Louis, one of the novel’s six character-bound narrators, launches into an interior monologue which conjures elements of a previous life in ancient Egypt. In the ontological terms defined by McHale (1987), therefore, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Waves* interweave modernism with postmodernism. *Gut Symmetries* deploys science and mysticism to carry postmodernism to untested frontiers. Those narratives which carry the idea of prehistory or the occult provide theoretical fictions which, in turn, contribute to intensifying the flow of rapture.

All the texts in this chapter dramatize annihilation and destruction as elements subscribing to cycles of repetition. In *Daniel Deronda*, Grandcourt’s violent death and its impact on Gwendolen is part of a larger pattern of painful reiterations. Shuddering to Deronda she confesses: “Things repeat themselves in me so. They come back - they will all come back.” Deronda assures her that “By degrees they will be less insistent” (Book VIII, Chapter 65, 840). In order for these “things” to become less insistent, they will undergo a working-through, integrated into the enlarging web of the characters’ life-histories. In *Daniel Deronda*, however, this life-history is not represented as being vital if it is a lonely, disconnected thread. As I have already argued, Gwendolen’s life after Grandcourt’s death brings her to a threshold
beyond the imprisonment of self-involvement. She discovers “a vast mysterious movement” beyond “her supremacy in her own world” (Chapter 69, 876). In chapter 11, the external narrator had termed Gwendolen an “insignificant thread in human history” (159). Thus the text’s implied metaphor of comparing individual destinies to threads, suggests that each man and woman as a separate filament can become more productive through connection with the fibres of other human souls. The text also implies that through such linking, patterns of deadening repetition can be mitigated.

The greater the connection between parts of the web, the better are the opportunities for the conduction of current through the narrative text. If it effectively binds energies which would otherwise get stuck following the same grooves, then textual rapture is in process. When reflecting on Septimus’ death, Clarissa’s thoughts produce one striking line. She focalizes the “leaden circles dissolved in the air” (1998: 244). These circles can be read as a metaphor for the deadening movement of energy around the old grooves. Septimus’ death breaks through Clarissa’s perception of dead circles. Having said this, her theory that Septimus’ death produces an “embrace” might be read as her own consoling fantasy. It might be less of a theoretical fiction than a fictional theory. Nonetheless, it connects for the first time the narratives of Septimus and Clarissa. The leaden circles are evocative of the lead spikes which went through Septimus’ body. The moment of destruction produces a rapture taking Clarissa Dalloway through the imaginative terrain of her troubled consciousness.

Mortal death and its attendant raptures are important rites of passage in Daniel Deronda. Mordecai’s “Cabbala” parable of transmigrating souls offers a theoretical fiction tracking how mortality multiplies the filaments in the spiritual universe. The fabric into which souls become woven is perennially incomplete and requires constant mending, suggests Mordecai. But overall, he suggests, the global soul can only be enriched. Souls find routes of conduction from one body to another. The result allows them to be “perfected and purified;” they will be ready to strengthen the soul they encounter in the next incarnation (Book VI, Chapter 43, 599). The process is implied to be endless. Furthermore, it is one which activates the organic web of the universal soul:
The world grows, and its frame is *knit together* by the growing soul; dim, dim at first, then clearer and more clear, the consciousness discerns remote stirrings. As thoughts move within us darkly, and shake us before they are fully discerned - so events - so beings; they are *knit* with us in the growth of the world' (559, emphases added).

Both events and human identities are conceived as being "knit" into a larger fabric. Mordecai's theoretical fiction argues that the world is alive and breathing. This idea owes its heritage to the seventeenth century notion of "Animus Mundi," a fiction which will intimate itself indirectly through the animist thinking of Septimus Smith and will find its way into the many references to alchemical knowledge in *Gut Symmetries.* In Mordecai's system, as the tissues between souls become further knit, dark turns into light, a visual figure for rapture. Such a spiritual and bio-energetic evolution requires not just physical death, but a repetition which aims not at entropy but the release of even more current. Thus what is repeated is not the result of pure acting out between souls-in-process. Mortality is a means to this end. In other words, death as a force of entropy or destruction does not enter into Mordecai's occult theory. What he envisages is a cyclical process akin to traversal, in that old identities relinquish their old structures which become interwoven into a collective working-through. Mordecai's parable interacts with the novel as a whole, contributing to the text's ongoing connections between theoretical fictions. The result is a rapture binding together human subjects, cultures, texts and ideas which otherwise would remain apart. In this respect, the unconventional achievement of *Daniel Deronda* was to bring together the conflicting worlds of Jewish and Victorian culture.

Unlike Mordecai, Clarissa Dalloway does not pursue self-reflection through weaving philosophical and occult fictions. She involves herself in narrative self-dramatisation by making her own fiction of Septimus' suicide. I would term it "theoretical" in that it produces a theory about the process of death which can illuminate the shadowy aspects of Freud's own troubled notion of the death instincts. The after-shock of Septimus' self-immolation, as Clarissa constructs it from the details she gathers from her party guests the Bradshaws allows her to touch hidden parts of herself (241). Between Clarissa and Septimus the intimacy which takes place will be imaginative.
In *The Waves*, Percival is a catalyst for eliciting the emotional and intellectual peregrinations of the six main characters. Through him, they repeatedly reflect upon and reconstruct themselves. Percival’s death forges an abyss around which the novel flows then ebbs, refusing the fixity of the six identities but safeguarding their particularity. Death may destroy and leave trauma’s black hole. But the result is that the narrating characters pit themselves against their loss by collectively intensifying the connections between the webs of their stories in such a way that the characters undergo profound changes.

In contrast, the journeys of the characters in *Gut Symmetries* are more circular and truncated. The novel’s closing sections find Alice having taken Jove’s place as Stella’s partner and lover. Yet one wonders whether the new marriage will be radically different from the old and what, if anything, has been repaired. The dialogue below narrated by Stella, dramatises fury and mutual incomprehension between husband and wife. Two characters confront each other with competing systems of logic:

ME: [Stella]: I have thrown all your things out of the window.
YOU: [Jove] Why?
ME: To make me feel better.
YOU: You could have killed someone.
ME: I could have killed you.
YOU: This isn’t making sense.
ME: There is no sense to what you have done. You didn’t think about me when you were touching her. You threw me out of the window (35).

Enraged that Jove is seeing another woman named Alice, Stella explodes in rage: Jove attempts to counter with common-sense logic. In a sense, the two characters dramatise the two types of transference in collision (Chase 1987). The transference which allows a working-through of hitherto repressed meanings (type one transference for Chase) is pleaded for by Jove when he complains that his wife is making no “sense.” But any possibility of sense-making between the couple is offset by Stella’s acting out of her sense of rejection (Chase’s second mode of transference) by her gesture of hurling his belongings through the widow. This action symbolises him throwing her away
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when he commits adultery. Dramatically, two types of transference are at war and no traversal can succeed.

Acting out dominates the quest for meaning in the final dialogue between the newly partnered Alice and Stella. The bone of contention is forgiving the cannibalistic Jove:

ME [Alice]: He lied to you.
SHE [Stella]: He is a liar.
ME: And that forgives him?
SHE: I forgive him.
ME: What?
SHE: And I forgive you.
ME: I don’t understand
SHE: Shouldn’t I forgive the woman who first took my husband and then took his wife?

Stella remains preoccupied with old conflicts of jealousy. She does so even after a love affair with the woman who was once her rival. Just as in the husband/wife tussle, the notion of “killing,” or of destruction, is made problematic. Between Alice and Stella, “forgiveness” becomes a contestable term. The text could be interpreted as raising questions such as “what exactly does it mean to kill, to murder, to destroy?” Or it could be read as a new marriage which may repeat much of the acrimony and negatively productive habits of the marriage between Jove and Stella. Whether the lesbian partnership will produce new patterns or repeat old ones is left to the reader’s imagination, but the signs are that repetition of precursor marital habits will dominate.

Thematically, Gut Symmetries raises the problems of how death instincts, aggression or rapture even, might operate behind the compulsion to repeat. This is explored in the text’s strategy of traversal, which involves the narrative expanding its routes of rapture through the figures of modern physics. The novel’s predecessor, The Waves, produces textual strategies which contrast to its successor. Winterson’s novel is unafraid to expose the inescapable movements of what Freud termed “death instincts” or Thanatos, a term to be scrutinised here.

At the heart of Woolf’s novel is an accidental death. This calamity leaves the principal characters to confront a black hole in their
own lives and in the current of the narrative. The Waves defies a narrative which would slow down its whole text towards entropy. Daniel Deronda defies the repetitive strategies of nineteenth century realism by breaking its fabric with a rapturous though unstable modernism which becomes the external narrator's (not just the characters') rite of passage. Against the onslaughts of an unmoving repetition and incipient death in over-used fictional forms, rapture revises the texts' theoretical fictions - these become the only way "through" in the quest for innovation.

**Troubling Instincts and Survival Tactics**

Freud's theory of the death instincts, also known as "Thanatos" was an innovation developed at one level to tackle questions about the disease of trauma, particularly as it affected survivors of shell-shock. In my chapter 2, I explored two modes of trauma: the first was related to primal scenes, the second to the experience of surviving a near-death experience or a catastrophic event such as rape in which the subject has just escapes a fundamental threat to identity. In this chapter and in this section it is the second mode of trauma which will be my concern. In Mrs. Dalloway, Septimus Smith survives the Great War only to live daily the onslaughts of affect from the catastrophic events from the battlefield. Chapter II of Freud's celebrated but controversial *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* [1920] raises the strange case of traumatic disorders (12-17). The puzzle for Freud is to understand how the repetition of distressing events such as bombs exploding could cause the sufferer to repeat them. Unlike dreams in which wish-fulfilment can be pursued, dreams symptomatic of traumatic events produce much suffering (13). In Mrs. Dalloway, Septimus Smith focalizes and refers to a man named Evans who, during the Great War, was Septimus' officer; the external narrator tells us that Evans died before the armistice (1998: 112). At various points in the novel, Septimus calls out his officer's name and focalizes the dead man's presence behind the railings in Regent's Park (31). Septimus hallucinates Evans again in his own home (121). The final invocation of the dead officer occurs just before Septimus commits suicide (193). The ghostly "presence" made available to the reader comes only through the words and visions of Septimus.

*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* poses the problematic term of the "death" instincts. These forces are independent of the pleasure princi-
ple which, paradoxically, they serve. In chapter 2, Freud fathoms Thanatos' surreptitious operations in the games of children. He finds its “tendencies” more “primitive” than the pleasure principle (17). Another word Freud uses metaphorically to frame the uncanny aspects of Thanatos is “daemonic” (21). He gives the following examples: the master who is continually rejected by protégés, the lovers who repeatedly end up in affairs which reach similar conclusions (22). The patterns installed provide their neurotic sufferers with little pleasure, but would seem to serve a function which can be difficult to interpret. Septimus Smith repeats “meetings” with Evans. They lead to his suicide. In an entirely different context, Gwendolen Harleth suffers repeated anxieties. She is first terrified by the carving of a dead face and a fleeing figure (1986: Chapter 6, 91), then becomes disturbed by possibly ghostly presences of monks in an old Abbey (Chapter 35, 461) and a “cowled head” carved in ivory (463). Her ultimate terror is that these faces repeat themselves in Gwendolen’s focalization of Grandcourt’s drowning visage (Chapter 56, 753). Septimus’ and Gwendolen’s experiences are examples of compulsions involving miniature narratives in which the same incidents recur. For Septimus, Evans appears several times just as Gwendolen encounters various instances of terror. For each character, the final visitation of ghost or fright is the one which breaks the compulsion. For Septimus, Evans is more than a compulsive presence - he brings information and wisdom. Septimus’ insistence that men “should not cut down trees” is part of Evan’s message (1998: 31). Gwendolen’s horror of faces is an omen, though the narrative which has produced these faces remains occluded by the terrifying force of the face itself. What precisely happened with Evans, how he died, why trees are part of the gore on the battlefield is a question not cohesively answered by Septimus’ character-bound narrations. The human subject who repeats produces a narrative which is decisively incomplete, offering the signs of the representational problems set out by van Alphen (1997: 45) and discussed in my chapter 2. Septimus is a narrative subject struggling to effectively theorise his and her own frightful fictions of a past which intrude into a present which can hardly contain them.

Yet Septimus can be found interrogating Evans in a state of ecstasy, suggesting the opposite of fright. Gwendolen pursues her
object Grandcourt with all the pleasure of the hunt. Compulsion can be pleasure as Freud’s famous tale of his grandson Ernst’s “fort-da” game implies. The little boy masters his mother’s absence by symbolically deciding when she is “gone” or “there” (14-15). Freud claims that there is a “yield of pleasure” in repeating unpleasant experiences (16). Ernst’s simple game could be defined as a theoretical fiction in that he deploys a device which is both narrative and theory: Ernst controls his main character in terms of her presence or absence. The toddler frames his concept of mother, space and time.

A parallel example to the fort-da game can be found in Gut Symmetries. Alice’s reflections on quantum and “wave” theories help her consider where in space and time her deceased father might be (1997: 159-160). Theoretical physics positions a character in the face of insurmountable loss and separations. In The Waves, Bernard reaches a moment of crisis in which he would “have done with phrases” (1972: 254). Percival’s death has inspired Bernard to use many phrases about his deceased and beloved friend. But the very activity of phrase-making, the task of replacing what is lost with a narrative substitute can become futile. Bernard captures the relative artificiality of the writing game when he makes a connection between phrase-making and childhood:

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 or chintz. I need a howl; a cry (254).

Sewing is mother’s game and the child who Bernard focalizes needs no activities of mastery. The primitive and compulsive, the drive to produce a web of phrases to cover over her absence could be put outside for a more primitive cry. This “howl” would be for closeness. It is an invocation to end separation and pain. The miniature narrative of bright wool, if it theorises anything, argues for the hollowness of the strategy that would veil suffering, or the influx of painful affects. Indeed, the phrase-maker has plied his craft to off-set intimacy and to circumvent the traversal which would release too much rapture. The compulsion to repeat and the daring to release rapture are at odds.
Freud argues that the compulsion to repeat is the result of an anxiety which keeps the sufferer in a state of readiness in case another life-threatening situation occurs. At the same time, repetition is a means of keeping in check overwhelming amounts of affect, which could rupture the psychical system (Chapter IV). It is in chapter V that the contradictions in Freud's theory of the death instinct come to a head. "It seems, then, that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things" (36, Freud's emphasis). The pleasure principle will enable libido to be bound so that too much unpleasurable excitation is reduced. This principle will encourage the organism into a state of constant or low energy. According to Freud, the death instincts were early helpers in this process. They aid the psychical system in moving towards entropy. They do so "unobtrusively" (63). What is more, Freud concludes, "the pleasure principle seems actually to serve the death instincts" (63). The matter of exactly how is left unresolved in the closing chapter VII of Freud's problematic work. One wonders what might be the force of excitation, apart from outside stimuli, which actually keeps the psychical system from closing down. Freud's theoretical fiction about that "beyond" to pleasure contains its own black hole. It is difficult to come to an unambiguous formulation of whether death instincts are modes of aggression or primitive, pre-libidinous instincts. Freud's articulation of the death instincts is multivalent and ambiguous. His term does not necessarily define a force which is purely destructive.

The contradictions in Freud's thinking do not escape Laplanche and Pontalis (1988: 102). They draw attention to the fact that Freud's theory of the death instincts articulates an underlying principle for "instinct" itself, which is to bring life back to its "earlier state" of "repose" (1988: 102). Laplanche and Pontalis capture the rub of Freud's theoretical problems. They point out that for him, the "death instinct is postulated on the basis of facts which supposedly run counter to the principle in question" (102). Furthermore, they cite another passage in which Freud makes a clearer and more functional distinction between death instincts and Eros. The aim of the latter is "to establish even greater unities and to preserve them thus - in short, to bind together" (SE XIII: 148). In contrast, destructive instinct aims to "undo connections and so to destroy things" (148).
I will retain this more straightforward contrast between Eros and Thanatos to further explore my concept of rapture, and to clarify it next to the notion of compulsive behaviour resulting from the experience of survival. The notion of an Eros which binds parts together is closer to my notion of a rapture which enervates the web that binds and increases the connections between parts than Freud’s notion of an Eros which brings life and psyches or texts, for that matter, into a state of quiescence.

Equilibrium is not a force governing the relationships of textual intimacy between Daniel Deronda, The Waves and Mrs. Dalloway. Woolf’s novels increase the textual conduction generated by the nineteenth century forerunner. Winterson’s novel is left to balance and redistribute the energies of the web, taking on the historical traumas which its ancestors have bequeathed. Septimus suffers from shell-shock in World War I. Bernard in The Waves makes a statement which can be read as prophetic of the trouble brewing in pre-World War II England. He declares that “the canopy of civilisation is burnt out” (255). In Gut Symmetries, Stella’s father is a refugee from Hitler’s Germany. Her papa commits suicide, though why exactly is a mystery (1997: 171). In a later reference to Papa confronting the paradoxes of God, Stella narrates how Moses wanted to see the face of the Creator but was warned that this could lead to death (178). The reference to Moses is pertinent. In Eliot’s novel, Mordecai carries the trauma of Jewish history as does Stella’s Papa. Daniel Deronda uses modernism to bring an alien culture with its history of death and survival into the context of Victorian realism. Eliot’s novel makes Mordecai into a spiritual character steeped in the Kabbalah. The nineteenth century novel also quotes cutting-edge ideas in physics such as Helmhotz’s concepts about energy vortices. In Gut Symmetries, Stella’s Papa, himself an exile from Hitler’s Germany, is steeped in a study of the Kabbalah and quantum mechanics (1997: 75-94). An implicit connection is thus made between Papa’s association with his people’s history of survival and the spiritual and scientific knowledge which is his passion. Like in The Waves, all the character-bound narrators are closely associated with the death of Percival. Given the definition of trauma I have already established, I am not arguing that the six character-bound narrators of Woolf’s novel are themselves traumatised by catastrophic experiences which they have survived. Yet the technique of The Waves
is metaphorical. Percival’s death leaves a gap, a type of black hole in the narrative universe of the six characters, and it is confronted as though it were indeed an event which they might have survived. The issue is less that the characters are themselves traumatised but that the text contains lacunae which produce representational problems. These are challenged through language, and one which is associated with the wave theories of modern physics which weave their way into the novel. With the exception of Mrs. Dalloway, all the novels in this chapter interconnect the themes of death, trauma, science and survival.

In her excellent reading of Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Moses and Monotheism, Cathy Caruth argues that the experience of trauma is closely linked to the subject’s realisation that she or he is a survivor. Caruth traces Freud’s examination of dreams in traumatic neurosis (1996: 64). As she points out, he noted that patients awoke from their dream into yet another “fright.” Caruth follows Freud’s idea that the fright is a means of helping the traumatised subject to grasp what he or she could not master at the time of the awful event, namely, the “threat of death” (Caruth: 62). In a subtle twist on Freud’s theory, she argues that compulsive behaviour is motivated not by an urge to re-live the traumatic event, which cannot be grasped anyway, only for the reason that “trauma consists not only in having confronted death, but the very incomprehensibility of one’s own survival” (64). Paraphrasing Freud, Caruth states that “Life” is an “awakening out of a ‘death’ for which there is no preparation” (65).

Caruth’s re-theorising of Freud is helpful in reading Septimus’ pantheistic determination that trees are alive and love is universal (Woolf 1998:193). The text’s free indirect discourse between external narrator and Septimus notes that after returning from the War he did not consider himself a casualty: he was “still under thirty and was bound to survive” (113, emphasis added). Yet ironically, following Caruth’s principle that trauma is a reminder that one has survived, to be thus reminded requires approaching again those moments of death. Just before his suicide, Septimus experiences an entirely contradictory state of not “wanting to die” while declaring that he will “give it to you,” namely, he will hand over his life to what might be his doctors, wife, Evans or even the reader (1998: 195). Paradoxically, to be made aware of one’s survival may risk the death that was once confronted. Caruth’s
remark about the “origin of the drive,” that is the death drive, is noteworthy. She suggests that this origin is “precisely the experience of having passed beyond death without knowing it ... the failing to return to the moment of its own act of living, the drive departs into the future of human history” (1996: 65). Thus the drive continues its traumatic passage. Caruth carefully emphasises that not only are traumatised subjects grasping the unspeakability of their own survival and constantly confronting the origin of all their distress, but that the death drive, “failing to return to the moment of its own act of living,” continues to move into futurity (65). Caruth delicately teases from Freud’s troubled book the notion that trauma involves a painful coming to a state of life. She underscores how the sufferer can hardly grasp her own survival. This aspect of “coming to a state of life” I will explore as a state aided by rapture. Thus rapture is a facilitation which seeks out the origins of traumas to submit them to a working-through. Spun into operation is the endless process of repetition.

Caruth emphasises that a study of trauma’s repetitions is also an analysis of historical trauma (67). The violence of the past returns. Her reading of Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* links the account of the “fort-da” game with the ongoing movement of Jewish history as one of return and departure (1996: 65-67). To survive means to depart. In her analysis of *Moses and Monotheism* Caruth underlines Freud’s analysis of the murder of Moses as enacting a traumatic separation from the father (69). She draws attention to Freud’s interpretation that Christianity’s acts of violence against Judaism can be read as instances of Oedipal rivalry. To be Jewish and therefore to be chosen requires what Caruth describes as the “unending confrontation of the violence of the past” (69). In terms of textual traversal, when a novel returns to the provisional origins of its narrative, this turning back can be read as an attempt to confront the violence of that past. The traversal back can also be considered as being aimed at binding those affects which send narrative subjects into painful awakenings. Violence and the experience of being shocked into life are phenomena which certain levels of the narrative attempt to master and repress. But the mastery is challenged by the rapturings of the text’s quest to break new ground.

Chapter 52 of *Daniel Deronda* directly follows the scene in which Deronda parts painfully from his mother. The chapter contains an eccentric letter from Hans Meyrick to Deronda. In it Hans Meyrick
refers enthusiastically to Mordecai as a “sort of philosophical-allegorical-mystical believer” (705). Allegory, philosophy and mysticism can be described as areas of knowledge which reflect on history. Furthermore, Meyrick makes a riddled comment about “the present causes of past effects” (704). As I have explained, Mordecai forms a bond with Deronda which does not fit into the rubric of father with son. Rather, the feminine qualities of their intimacy with each other carry the qualities of “maternal transference” (Chapter 40, 553). The causes of the present in the form of maternal intimacy can heal the past effects of traumatic violence implied through a sexually aggressive and Oedipal bond with the father. Men connecting to each other through feminine identification can still produce a sense of belonging while lessening the trauma produced through Oedipal violence.

In *The Waves*, the loss of Percival as a loving presence causes the surviving friends to bond more closely in remembering him. The violence of accidental death tightens the links of Bernard’s phrases around and through his friends, leading him in his final soliloquy to once more invoke the past. On the novel’s last page, his confrontation with the figure of Death is to be “unyielding” and life-driven to the end (256). *Gut Symmetries* carries this energy with similar defiance, enabling dead fathers to return and rescue their daughters (208-209). The Jewish Papa saves his daughter Stella from death at the hands of her husband Jove. The ghostly Papa from a parallel universe does not kill Jove, whose very name signifies father of the gods. Another ritual death is not repeated. Violent affects are abreacted through a text which re-works the traumas of the past through the intervention of modern physics. Science becomes a key to traversing the narrative of trauma and the theoretical trauma of fiction.

As I will explore in *Mrs. Dalloway*, references to Greek gods and to a rustic prehistory constitute a past to which the novel at moments strives to return. The trauma of World War I may be an aggregate of earlier acts of barbarity against Nature. The mythical level of the “remembered” text is the corollary to Septimus’ scrambled recollections of the battlefield. These become the metaphors and metonyms which bind *Mrs. Dalloway’s* web. *The Waves* interweaves mythical, occult and scientific knowledge to traverse the core of identity. Death shocks this core into a state of rapture which facilitates an unravelling of the ego
so that its filaments bind with others. As Bernard asks in a question which hovers between modernism and postmodernism: “how describe the world seen without a self?” (247). For to do so is to overcome all projections and, therefore, to reach the idealised end-point of traversal. In *Gut Symmetries*, Alice notes that “Perhaps some things take more than a single lifetime to complete. Perhaps I too have begun to imagine more than can be seen with the instruments we as yet possess” (218). Achieving this may be a fantasy, but the dream remains.

All the novels in this chapter offer narrative accounts of how death as a destructive and entropic force producing its legacy of traumas can be confronted. The modernist web of *Daniel Deronda* can be read as an attempt to address the Jewish trauma of exile. *Mrs. Dalloway* pushes the limits of this web one step further to examine the predicament of metropolitan citizens exiled from within the oppressive territory of early, twentieth century Capitalism. Between *Daniel Deronda* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, then, is the intimate knowledge that the traumas of displacement can be shared between different ethnic and national identities. The pantheism which Septimus envisages is by definition pre-Christian, evoking a mythical time before the mechanised nightmares of modern war with all its carnage of Oedipally motivated murder. If *The Waves* offers a narrative means of healing trauma beyond its two precursors, it is through a textual performance of losing the ego and breaking to pieces the human imago. If trauma is produced by the overwhelming rapture of recognising survival, the disentangling of the ego would allow that rapture to be conducted into a variety of others, thus easing the tension to a state of equilibrium. *Gut Symmetries* takes on the burdens of narrative trauma from all these precursors, producing a character reminiscent of Eliot’s Mordecai and experimenting with the character narratives of *The Waves*. Death is not vanquished. But Winterson’s novel traverses its intimates by receiving from them an aggregate of textual strategies to encounter Thanatos.

**We Should Die Except for Death**

To discover more about how rapture encounters death, I turn to Teresa Brennan’s article “The Age of Paranoia.” Here she interrogates the role of the “Life” and “Death” drives as they forge our cultural and physical environments. She takes her cue from Lacan’s statement that the last three hundred years have comprised the “ego’s era.” Brennan examines
how this ego operates. Her starting points are some serious social and
psychical symptoms of our time: the instant need for gratification and
the quest to conquer Nature with the same aggressive impulse as the
infant at the breast (29-25). From Lacan, Brennan sets up the notion of
a “transhistorical fantasy” (1992: 21). This defines a psychical structure
forming new pathways which shape our contemporary experience of
“reality” (21-29). Her conceptualisation of the “Life” force aids me in
the further development of my term rapture.

Brennan focuses on what has puzzled psychoanalysts: the
problem of how new pathways are forged and which of the forces -
Death or Life - are most influential. Brennan counters the notion that
the Death force is solely one of inertia by offering the example of the
embryo. In utero, there is no break between need and satisfaction. This
state presupposes a “timeless” experience which also precludes any
cognisance of space-time dimensions (35-36). As soon as the embryo
becomes an infant, resistances are put into operation. A sense of tempo­
rality emerges from a sense of cause and effect, and necessarily, a gap
between need and its satisfaction. Thus does fantasy come into play.

Brennan argues that human history has been living with a
“transhistorical fantasy” which has consequences for daily life, for the
environment and for the manner in which we experience space and time
(30). The ego’s fantasy will encounter “points of resistance” (36). These
will occur not just in terms of the reality principle, but because of the
ego’s “own hallucinated responses” (36). These find form, Brennan sug­
gests, in capitalism’s financial and psychical investment in “commodity
values” (36-37). When the Nirvana principle comes into play, energy is
bound. Likewise, the stuff of infantile fantasy becomes bound into
commodities. Trees are cut down to be made into tables. To aid not just
our “realistic” needs but also our ego’s hallucinatory longing to have
more and more, the Life force becomes gradually frozen. My more
extreme interpretation and hence addition to Brennan’s position is this:
the engines of free enterprise behave like avaricious infants pursuing
omnipotence at the global level, cutting up environments, animals and
populations along the way. Brennan’s example of people kicking vending
machines draws comic attention to the ever intensifying expansion of
the transhistorical fantasy (39). The more quickly longings are satisfied,
the more quickly demands for their ever more rapid fulfilment grow.
What develops is a vicious cycle on the global level. The perpetuation of commodities increases the “points of resistance.” Not only does this deplete the Life force - more trees are being cut down than can be replaced with the attendant threat of global catastrophe - the proliferation of pathways means that there is more space to conquer (38-40). Put alternatively, the greater the territory claimed, the harder it becomes to break even more new ground, and hence what dominates is a sense that the space to be pioneered becomes even more elusive. The results of the drive towards ever greater mastery of the environment could be potentially lethal. The world’s resources and ecosystem become increasingly imperilled. Governments and populations repudiate the existence of the threats to global survival. Before its time, this fin de millénniel crisis is prefigured by Septimus Smith in the century’s first decades.

His extreme reaction to the Life force under threat offers a key to understanding how rapture contributes to aiding the Life force. Septimus does not distinguish between his own flesh and that of trees, which are “alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body” (1998: 28). A Greenpeace campaigner before his time, Septimus’ indirect discourse states the slogan: “Men should not cut down trees” (31). Connection with Nature becomes indexical with the experience of trauma and an intimacy with the deceased Evans. He is indexical with Nature by being amongst the dead who reside between the trees which stimulate Septimus’ pantheism (Woolf 1998: 31). Listening to sparrows, he imagines that these birds “sang in voices prolonged and piercing in Greek words, from trees in the meadow of life beyond a river where the dead walk” (31). This euphoria takes place before the visitation from Evans and at the same time, provokes it. Septimus’ narrative of birds who speak Greek is his own theorising of an alternative world in which he espouses a life of rapture rather than submission to the daily grind. The key to this fiction is the ghostly Evans who becomes the icon for the violence of modern warfare which eats into the modern psyche. The path-breaking task of Mrs. Dalloway is to traverse Septimus’ theoretical fiction and thereby integrate it into the textual web which can bind pre-historical time with modernity.

The prehistorical level of Woolf’s novel is figured through a compulsive return to historical origins. According to J. Hillis Miller, Mrs. Dalloway performs a “raising of the dead.” He implies through-
out his essay that this task relates closely to the novel’s technique of omniscient narration, reminiscent of novels such as *Middlemarch*. He suggests that the effect created is of a “universal, impersonal mind” binding characters together (51). The universal mind connects together different temporalities. The trauma of history (World War I) and of its victims (Septimus Smith) summons a pantheistic underworld, its gods and ghosts - the minds of millennia. The ghostly Evans could sojourn in Hades. Septimus acts like a clairvoyant for the dead soldier: “Evans, Evans, Evans - his message from the dead; do not cut down trees; tell the Prime Minister. Universal love: the meaning of the world” (193). Eros as “universal love” is metonymically linked to the perpetuation of the Life force in trees.

But Eros alone as a force bringing only pleasure, unification and discharge to some pre-Oedipal, prehistorical state is not the only element in Septimus’ Arcadian vision. The first four letters in the name “Evans” could be the prefix in “Evanescent,” meaning one who is here only temporarily. He is thus symbol and icon of mortality. In an iconic function, the ghostly soldier is no longer just a persona. More than this, he becomes a representation of a traumatic death on the battlefield (1998: 112). Yet Evans is less a personification of death than an icon of the Life force. A personification of Septimus’ trauma, Evans is the imago and icon of what Septimus has not succeeded in working-through. Until the moment of his suicide, the only way for him to confront trauma head on, is through rapture. Textually, Evans is a troubled forger of paths between textual sites through interior monologues, aiming at a “universal” and binding mind which is denied rest.

Yet the movements of the Life force are constantly under threat. What Brennan terms the commodity fantasy has also made its marks on Septimus’ pieces of paper.

Diagrams, designs, little men and women brandishing sticks for arms, with wings - were they? - on their backs; circles traced around shillings and sixpences - the suns and stars; zigzagging precipices with mountaineers ascending roped together, exactly like knives and forks; sea pieces with little faces laughing out of what might perhaps be waves; the map of the world. Burn them! he cried (193).
Shillings and sixpences are indexes of capitalist exchange and consumerism, here evacuated of meaning into form alone. Knives and forks serve likewise, imbued with the quotidian. The passage suggests that Septimus has been using sixpences as drawing implements to help him draw sun and stars, or in other words, to draw the cosmos. Followed by Brennan, Lacan asserts that the age of paranoia emerged from the seventeenth century. From this premise it follows that the destiny of the ego has emerged from revolutions in paradigmatic knowledge. In the seventeenth century, knowledge from a holistic body of study split into separate disciplines - mysticism on the one hand, epistemology as science, on the other.\footnote{14}

Citing Benjamin’s celebrated passage on the attitude of the ancients towards the universe (which I will quote below), Brennan implies (by way of Klein) that epistemology finds its analogue in the three following areas: a loss of wonder in the magical dimension of the cosmos, a desire to cut up the mother’s body, and a will to power in order to dominate nature. In Septimus’ scrambled drawings, the reference to mountaineers is an index of the determination to scale heights and beat nature. War is also an attempt to gain mastery. By destroying the world on paper, Septimus could be endeavouring symbolically to awaken the dead and remind everyone that they are alive and surviving. Feeling such a state of invigoration precipitated by the hypothetical yet rapturous gesture of burning the drawings, Septimus invokes the world to be shocked into redemption.

Other narratives of Septimus’ sufferings on the battle-field are not available. He commands everything to be burned. This could be interpreted as an invocation to destroy the childlike drawing game which perhaps has acted in a manner akin to the reaction-formation of the \textit{fort-da} game. But one point I would add to Freud’s concept is that the game’s narrative subject remains enclosed within its own \textit{mis-en-scène}. To destroy the game might herald a departure to other spaces. I suggest therefore that Septimus’ gesture to burn the cosmos is also a longing to discover new worlds from which he could break new territories and pathways to redeem the battle-field. Any such breaking of new ground constitutes an innovation to defy trauma. Its territory has neither roads nor signposts. To traverse trauma, to attempt to salvage some small terrain to signification requires, paradoxically, a rapturous and iconoclastic act which involves destruction.
This reading of Septimus’ confrontation with his trauma offers a parable for the crisis borne by modernity. The piece of paper with its child-like methods of drawing a cosmos is the screen not just for Septimus’ trauma, but that of modernity. To clarify I will quote an excerpt from Benjamin’s “One Way Street and Other Writings.” Though Brennan also takes this as her starting point, I will deploy Benjamin’s ideas about the relationship between humans and cosmos somewhat differently. He accuses the moderns of being short-sighted in failing to take seriously their predecessors’ state of “ecstatic trance” when contemplating the cosmos. Should such bliss be denied, the quest for such passion can return in the “spirit of technology” and its propensity for tunnelling into Mother Earth. During the Great War, states Benjamin, what was once a sense of wonder in the cosmos cannot be effectively denied. Instead, experiences of awe incarnate in “electrical forces” and “high frequency currents” (Benjamin, 1997).

While Benjamin implies that there may be utilitarian advantages in the approach of the moderns, exploitation of the environment is a consequence. Septimus’ scribblings capture the complex link between technical reproduction - as in his drawings - “designs” and the magical experience of the cosmos - “sun and stars.” Some of the stick people Septimus has drawn may possess wings. Perhaps they are angels. Septimus’ drawings thus serve as a complex and profound image of cultural history, the mystical a-syntactically embracing the technological in a bizarre chiasmus of clauses.

These clauses, their construction of the stick-drawing and metonymical reference to a traumatic break in history serves another important function. Ernst van Alphen’s analysis of “holocaust effects” in the work of Armando, draws attention to the function of indexes (1997:126-139). Van Alphen explores how Armando’s work “encircles” the unspeakable aspects of war, and how it does so by “voicing, or representing, what is contiguous to it, what touches it” (127). Van Alphen uses the image of a footprint - a “trace” which indexically refers to the one who made it, but one who is no longer present. Septimus’ stick drawings are indexical of battlefields in that the light flashes from bombs and fire would have make a “starry” sky. The drawings are also symbolic of a cosmos in crisis. As indexes, the drawings act as the traces of life-threatening experiences and the
historical upheaval which produce them. But by virtue of being indexes, these drawings underline the unspeakable quality of what Septimus and civilisation have survived.

Perhaps the trauma of history which hurtled the ego into its age of paranoia was, to borrow Christopher Hill’s phrase, a reaction to the violence of a “world turned upside down” by the Copernican revolution and the epistemological transformations which followed. The days of “ecstatic trance” will be repeated and remembered in the confused workings-through of the traumatising war. Between magic and epistemology a traversal aimed at wedding the two can be read between the lines of Septimus’ scrambled codes of metonymy. But the interconnection between the two opposing disciplines, magic and science, requires new pathways to be forged. For these routes to be made rapturous requires that fresh connections between the disciplines can emerge. These links are the pioneering roads which break-through and illuminate the murk of trauma. Septimus’ scribblings are a response to the quotidian aspects of twentieth century life as points of resistance. These ossifying knots have been produced by the entropic grip of Thanatos. Septimus’ invocation to burn all his papers is a dramatic call to re-theorise and “re-rapture” the transhistorical fantasy. For if this fantasy should turn to a deadening myth instead of a dynamic fiction open to cultural re-theorisation, then Thanatos will win.

There is an Embrace in Death
In a tone reminiscent of Beyond the Pleasure Principle, J. Hillis Miller captures the danger inherent in the quest for communion. “The realm of union,” he notes, “is a region of dispersion, of darkness, of indistinction, sleep and death” (1993: 51). When Woolf likens the writing process to tunnelling through underground darkness, she refers to wanting “humanity, humour, depth. The idea is that the caves shall connect” (1953: 59-60). To follow Miller’s notion of minds connecting, the tunnels could be read as symbolic of identities, themselves made of complex sub-tunnels connecting to others. Passageways can link together without collapsing into each other. Human psyches can cross through and over each other without actually merging.

Miller’s concept is similar to but different from Silverman’s model for making the gift of love active. She has argued for the psychi-
cal activity of idealisation without identification. As the tunnels meet, characters might exchange elements from each other. But they then move forward, maintaining their idiosyncrasies. Woolf's parable, then, suggests an activity in which the narrating identities so produced can intersect. Yet paradoxically, these identities disappear into and separate from each other through ever-changing causeways. If certain pathways become too trodden, these siphon off the rapture which would otherwise pioneer new plateaux. The transhistorical fantasy is symbolised by an ossified cave. The interaction between Clarissa and her focalization of Septimus' suicide can be read as symbolic of stagnations reversed. Tunnels meet and offer each other new possibilities of formation. What follows below is an examination of Clarissa's imaginative encounter with Septimus. Her fiction-making of his death and her theorising of its causes and effects dramatises the reversal of the transhistorical fantasy and the commodity fixations which perpetuate it.

Without ever meeting the living Septimus, Clarissa narrates her version of his death in a manner which suggests her vicarious involvement. At "first" reading, her tactics may appal. In fact, her act of "intimacy" might be replaced by the term "appropriation." This procedure occurs between a society hostess of the upper classes and a man from the lower middle-classes who was hired as canon fodder. At her own party, Clarissa hears from the Bradshaws the loose narrative of Septimus' suicide (241). She absorbs the event's after-shock: "her body went through it, when she was told, first, suddenly, of an accident; her dress flamed up, her body burnt" (241). It is curious that she should conflate what is in fact an event of human impaling with one of burning. Her own anxiety at the power of her own rapture is symbolised in the recurring line "Fear no more the heat of the sun" (1998: 11; 244). What she ingests from the shocking narrative produces epiphany: "Odd, incredible; she had never been so happy" (243). Clarissa's interior monologue betrays a lack of sentimentality. Her thoughts admit the brutality which accompanies her embracing another's tragic destiny.

The experience might be interpreted as idiopathic identification. But Clarissa does not ingest Septimus' entire identity. What she absorbs and re-constitutes are shock-waves from a traumatic event.
The moment of furore sounds when Big Ben strikes. Clarissa continues in her role of artist, assembling her materials, that is, her guests. Assuming control, she both fuses and separates from the ghost of Septimus. “She felt somehow very like him - the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad he had done it; thrown it away while they went on living” (244). Because he has done so, she has grasped the opportunity to exhort her own rapture. She sets a flame to her own psyche without running the risk of reducing it to cinders. Septimus, in contrast, went all the way. Clarissa has orchestrated her own session of acting out and working-through. She has achieved this by producing a narrative of her own in which she is also one of two main characters. Clarissa acts out on Septimus’ behalf. In doing so, even though after the fact, his traumatic experience will be submitted to an elegiac working-through.

It is possible to frame a reading of Woolf’s novel which tells a tale of class exploitation, even in the field of the psyche. Next to this interpretation I will assert one to contradict it: the aporia set up between conflicting frames offers a third analysis carrying aspects of those which are otherwise at odds. Gillian Beer intimates the possibility of two contra-distinguishing analyses of Mrs. Dalloway’s climactic sequence. Beer is well aware that the reader might, like me, feel “affronted” by Mrs. Dalloway’s appropriation of Septimus’ suicide. Beer asks rhetorically, “who is she, society hostess, to claim the life of a shell-shocked, lower-middle-class person, to perceive his experience as somehow her own?” (1996: 55). Beer defends the text’s choices thus. A sense of outrage so instilled might be an apt strategy for confronting the reader with the very stereotypes the novel challenges. There is a “kinship” at work, claims Beer, and one which “cannot be measured by event, by class, or even by gender” (55). That a man of vastly different experience can become Clarissa’s double may indeed be a testament to the novel’s mission to question the assumptions of its readers. The novel proposes, remarks Beer, that “separation may even be the condition for recognising kin” (55).

This argument can be taken a step further. Kinship and separation bound together comprise a teasing impossibility. Yet such oxymorons figure the motivation behind the quest for death as an agent of incandescence. Mrs. Dalloway reflects on and compares what Septimus has cast away.
She had once thrown a shilling into the Serpentine, never anything more. But he had flung it away. They went on living (she would have to go back; the rooms were still crowded; people kept on coming). They (all day she had been thinking of Bourton, of Peter, of Sally) they would grow old. A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them ... There was an embrace in death” (241-242).

Kinships with social equals - Peter, Sally and those from Bourton - this “closeness” can “draw apart.” Social bonding alone is not a guarantee of genuine communion or intimacy. Imagining this to be so involves disavowing the “impossibility” of reaching some “centre” which remains “mystically” out of reach. Communication without rapture produces “chatter,” a quotidian point of resistance to an incandescent web. But if libido transforms into its rapturous aspect, it can facilitate a binding between psyches, and one which goes beyond superficial socialising, working-through can be achieved. At the same time, the bonds which emerge refuse to escape the facts of class separation.

Clarissa’s moment of illumination that there is an “embrace in death” offers no easy solutions. Taken too far, rapture can provoke its opposite force, Thanatos. The result is oblivion. Septimus goes this far. But before the illuminations of rapture paves the way for the Grim Reaper, the veil over the mystical centre can open evanescently. To go straight into the trauma would be the equivalent of working it through entirely. But this cannot be done. Trauma is defined as precisely that which cannot be entirely seized, represented, cracked open. If all its secrets are ransacked, then by definition, trauma as such no longer exists.

Here, a comparison to Conrad’s Heart of Darkness is relevant. Kurtz faces the ultimate in annihilation, horror, nothingness and dies. Marlowe comes close, but pulls back from the precipice of complete psychical disintegration. For Clarissa, a death which “embraces” implies one which works erotically. The pilgrimage towards a “centre” is made towards the “heat of the sun.” In other words, the journey is
towards a heart of brightness. Septimus surrenders himself entirely to the oblivion of rapture, which produces death, while Clarissa utilises rapture, metaphorically sensing her dress in flames yet preventing the flames from going further. It is rapture which enables Clarissa to sympathise and even idealise Septimus without identifying with him. Hence rapture, the companion to “Death” as Clarissa theorises it, forms a fiction which parallels Silverman’s model for making active the gift of love.

Through Clarissa’s character-bound narration emerges a theoretical fiction. It confronts and subverts the transhistorical fantasy. Mrs. Dalloway throws away a sixpence, Septimus a life. The point is not that Septimus’ life is cheap, for to interpret the passage thus would be to take the sixpence as iconic of the character. The coin is an object of exchange. It is part of the system of commodity values whose macrostructure, according to Brennan, freezes the Life force. Septimus’ doctors aim to cure him because he should play his role in society. In their terms, he should pay his dues to the symbolic order. Yet in World War I, a human life was as expendable as a sixpence. Life is frozen into commodity values which can be trashed as easily as they are utilised.

The rapture that motivates Septimus Smith does quite the opposite. By throwing away his life he throws away the sixpence, the icon of the symbolic order. Thus Septimus meets that symbolic order with defiance. Septimus’ last words before flinging himself onto Mrs. Filmer’s railings are “I’ll give it you!” (195). This may read in contradiction to his sense, a few sentences earlier that “Life was good. The sun hot.” But disenchantment with “life” is not the issue. A life deadened by the insanities of modernity is. Defied is the Thanatos which inhibits the active gift of love. The “you” is not necessarily Evans nor Septimus’ wife. The “you” could be read as a sign for the reader. Septimus’ sacrifice is a rhetorical gift, an action as speech act exhorting the reader to defy an oppressive materialism, to let, in short, the Life force in. Ironically, when the rapturous drive is unmediated, as is the case with Septimus, mortality is the outcome, even though rapture is that which opposes the death instinct. Unlike Septimus, Clarissa becomes the catalyst for the text’s traversal between death and rapture, between still points of resistance and the flow of current which gives Mrs. Dalloway its political momentum.
In her imaginative construction of Septimus’ suicide Clarissa ponders the reasons why he should have sacrificed himself. As she does, she inscribes her own traversal in a way which fundamentally reflects on the larger traversals of Woolf’s novel. I would term Clarissa’s miniature traversal a theoretical fiction. Her narrative provides a theory of how traumas can be approached. The text imaginatively draws its audience into engaging with the symptoms of troubled modernity. The novel does so by weaving us into a prehistory of sublimity and anarchy which shocks us into renewed recognitions that we have survived. To continue to survive, the destructive aspects of traumatised culture require the mediations of rapture. The traversal which is thereby achieved enables both text and reader to be bound together in even greater signifying clusters. Thus is the cultural web made more incandescent from the deadening shadows of trauma.

The Physics of Intimacy: *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Waves*

*Mrs. Dalloway’s* project of “distancing and merging” minds, to borrow Miller’s phrase (1993: 55) or what Beer refers to as the novel’s “atomistic gathering through its piquant vignettes of people, its record of pathways” (1996: 56) is pushed to further frontiers in *The Waves*. Percival, Bernard, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda, Louis and Neville are more than vignettes, each growing into their own particularity. Percival loves Susan, Neville’s passion is Percival. Bernard the phrase-maker marries and has a son. Rhoda commits suicide. Percival is an object of idealisation, a blank page onto which the others inscribe their dreams and aspirations. His death leaves an abyss, a site of trauma.

The characters are separate, idiosyncratic but, in contrast to *Mrs. Dalloway*, the challenge to any notion of “I,” of a notion of identity which does not commune with a plurality of many possible selves and temporalities, is unrelenting. Gillian Beer has drawn attention to how *The Waves* absorbs and comments on Woolf’s reading of physics.19 Beer remarks that Woolf was acquainted with some of Einstein’s ideas. That energy and matter were interrelated, that the solid table was a series of waves, was an idea most definitely in “the air.” Broadly speaking, wave-theory undermines the notion that identities are at all separate.
Here I will suggest that textual traversal in *The Waves* emerges from a collaboration between the figures of physics and those representing identity as something kept in process by the rapturous aspect of Eros. A phrase persistent within *Mrs. Dalloway’s* interior monologues ripples back into Louis’ direct discourse. For him, the endeavour to claim “I am this, I am that,” is “false” (117). For Louis, Percival has been the one to reveal this. To identify the self as being a “this” or “that” is to position subjectivity at a fixed point in a spatial field. When positions become more mobile and more affect released, traversal takes place because in the distance, between “this” and “that,” stronger bonds between subjects can be formed. As I will argue, this traversing between adverbials binds rapture through the novel’s discourses of modern physics. Following rapture’s traces requires teasing apart the text’s carefully mixed metaphors, thereby subverting and warping the distance between “this-ness” and “that-ness.”

Louis’ soliloquy re-shapes the space between “this” and “that.” He ponders the force which binds together the six friends. He imagines a “chain whirling round, round, in a steel-blue circle beneath” (117). The subtly mixed metaphor condenses the image of a blue, electromagnetic field which conducts a whirl of energy with the image of a “chain.” The laser-like field would be perceived as continuous. A chain implies a series of small units connected together. One interlaced metaphor captures the idea of consciousness as having the properties of being atomic yet continuous. Beer has suggested that in *The Waves*, Woolf was interested in exploring the wave-like dimension of matter. What interested Woolf, claims Beer, was the notion that a table could be solid yet also vibrate with energy (1996: 118). To this I would add that the “chain” which also whirls with blue light signifies matter as both particulate and wave-like. The chain is a symbol of twentieth century science.

Louis will associate this chain with a “beast” (7). By way of metonymic association this creature can be interpreted as a symbol for fallen humanity. Humankind waits for redemption from the Beast of the Apocalypse. The links in the chain connect back to the first separation of humankind and God during the Fall. This mythical event is the first traumatic break in the Judaic-Christian historical narrative. Omens of destructive forces in the novel take various guises, shape-shifting themselves into the web of colliding qualities. For Louis, the
“beast” is foreboding in that it “stamps” (7). However, the creature’s apocalyptic associations are tempered by its first incarnation in Louis’ mind. He describes it as an “elephant with its foot chained” (7). Elephants have a reputation for having long, accurate memories. Maybe the metaphor implies that what we repress they keep in mind.

The beast too has a long prehistory, associated with what Louis digs out of the Nile from a thousand years ago. He finds “relics” of himself which remind him of the “chained beast stamping” (109). Intertextually, the image summons yet another incarnation of the Beast, namely that of Yeats’ poem “Second Coming.” In this foreboding piece the evil force “slouches towards Bethlehem” and signifies the Antichrist’s millennial birth. Just as Septimus Smith enacted a miniature Armageddon with his drawings of stars and planets, the theoretical fictions of ending in The Waves signify not just the apocalypse of Percival’s death, but the larger historical trauma of a civilisation waiting for redemption. The six friends, implies Bernard, and that web of his phrases which binds them, comprise a cosmos. He terms it “this globe, full of figures” (204). The last word can mean figures as either characters or the ensemble of metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche. Louis’ Apocalyptic beast and harbinger of destruction is figuratively weaving and unravelling itself through the web of characters, and in turn, tropes. As Louis notes, the “chain” can “break” so that “disorder returns” (122). In other words, without the “chain” the cosmos falls apart. Yet if the chain does not break, if the old ego in its “age of paranoia” (to recall Lacan) is not put through a “death,” there can be no redemption, no shock back to life, no possibility of enrapturing a world ossifying into deadening repetitions.

Just as matter can be constituted by waves as well as particles, the web binding and being bound is that which simultaneously and paradoxically both connects and breaks apart. The individual ego can be shocked into a renewed sense of life through an unravelling of that ego. The closing passage of The Waves links the event of an apocalypse with the deepest layers of historical memory and, simultaneously, takes Bernard through the cyclical renewal of self-loss and self-becoming.

“The canopy of civilisation is burnt out. The sky is polished whale-bone. But there is a kindling in the sky whether of lamp-light
or of dawn. There is a stirring of some sort - sparrows on plane trees somewhere chirping...Dawn is some sort of whitening of the sky; some sort of renewal. Another day; another Friday; another twentieth of March, January or September. The stars draw back and are extinguished. The bars deepen themselves beneath the waves...Yes, this is the eternal renewal, the incessant rise and fall and fall and rise again.

'And in me too the wave rises. It swells; it arches its back. I am aware once more of a new desire, something rising beneath me like the proud horse whose rider first spurs and then pulls him back...Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!' (255-256).

That which covers the world is destroyed, exhausted and is, simultaneously, associated with “whale-bone,” the dead representative of a creature living in the watery waves. The metonymic bindings between the metaphor for the prehistoric (whale bone), the dark night of the soul (Jonah inside the whale) text as textile (the canopy), the tree (sparrows singing) and by implication, the lady who sits writing in the garden (whom I examined in my chapter 4) become further mixed and imbricated with Bernard’s identity. “He” dissolves and arches in water. The character-narrator is taken apart and the filaments of his complex subjectivity finally connect to the novel’s final reference to Percival’s horse from which he fell and died. This event was the death which produced the trauma around which The Waves has spun its phrases.

Here is a marvellous example of repetition compulsion which will conjure the original loss, the loss of the loved one, so as to vanquish it. Bernard will brave being Percival, but this time he will not fall from the horse which also has become intricately connected with whales, canopies, quantum physics and trees. Bernard will joust with death. By himself confronting the ultimate catastrophe he will come close to achieving the ultimate rapture. In the novel’s last line the reader is left suspended, never to know whether he has succeeded. The reader leaves him suspended at the moment of destruction and redemption. The abyss of trauma and its threat of destruction looms at the edges of the text. The textual quest to master death is figured in the listing of adverbials which signify inevitably recurring events - the next day, the next Friday, a date in March. Yet emphasis is placed on the ebb and flow of the Life force, the conviction that when energy is
slowed down, another dawn and another bird will bring rapture to bear. To invoke once again Brennan’s notion of “still points,” those moments of slow-down and freeze are inevitably dissolved by the next arching wave and the rapture it conducts. The apocalyptic moment of “stars” which “draw back and are extinguished,” which links the notion of cosmos to textile through the phrasal verb “to draw back,” will only be temporary.

The figure of Death whom Bernard will challenge may indeed not have a single identity to kill. Bernard is bound together by so many metaphors defying the here and there, the this and that. “He” is very much a field of metaphors acting as pathways and strands. To pin down Bernard, to fix him into a character vulnerable to mortal death would be a daunting task indeed. How does one kill a wave which is both everywhere and nowhere?

My response to this question poses a quantum logic. Though dead, Percival continues to effect an intimacy of influence on all his friends. The individual dies, his wave-form permeates and spreads through subjects and temporalities. Such a paradox finds an analogue in my double-framed reading of Mrs. Dalloway. My first interpretation rendered her a dilettante exploiting the tragedy of a man she has never met. My second, in the wake of Beer’s reading, argued that a ruthless though non-idiopathic bonding does take place in Clarissa’s imagination. Septimus’ act is idealised though not identified with beyond a glimmer of productive recognition. Between the frames emerges yet more. Taken together in the spirit of quantum logic, a richer domain of interpretation evolves between these two frames. Even when subjects idealise without identifying, a moment of ingestion may be necessary. It may be possible to take a bite out of another without ingesting her whole. It might be equally true, that the two opposing frames above do contradict each other.

That they should do so is symbolic on yet another level. Beer ponders whether Woolf indirectly explores physics at all. Beer posits that the common danger for both artists and scientists of the thirties was a movement towards “mentalism” and a “withdrawal from the social fray” (Beer, 1996: 122). Moreover, Beer suggests that physics gave Woolf a “chime” with which to sound both “communal” and “universal” experience (1996: 123-124). To me, mentalism implies
over-intellectualisation. In Kristeva’s terms, the poetic texts are “revolutionary” in that they break down subjectivities. As these re-construct themselves, the field of signification can be enriched. Analytical discourse, in contrast, keeps the “semiotic” (le sémiotique) in its place. Put simply, the “mentalist” (not the academic) text can be overly worked through, thus leading it into a state of atrophy. Its “juices” so repressed, detach text from social context.

What rescues a work from Beer’s notion of mentalism is a fluidity, a refusal to settle on any one frame. To prevent this from happening, a text requires more than a line-up of frames. To bring back Bal’s term, it would require double exposures which refuse to agree. Just as the dynamic of psychoanalysis is lively and fertile when the two transferences (Chase 1987) creatively collide, so too is the landscape of the text when interpretative frames refuse each other an easy complicity. This tension between two movements finds its third term in that which emerges from the abyss of trauma: the force of rapture which never lets the text sleep. Repose is the antithesis of traversal. In the final moment of Woolf’s novel Bernard submits himself to the cusp between Thanatos and rapture, an adventure which belongs to that of the novel itself. The product is a legacy: an intimate and rapturous thread which will help its successor, Gut Symmetries, negotiate its way through the next set of abysses.

Because I could not stop for Death

I approach Winterson’s Gut Symmetries much as I would her reading of The Waves in the essay “A Veil of Words” (1995). Winterson’s “analysis” put that word to the test in the Greek sense of “analusis,” meaning “to free.” Winterson eulogises the rapture in Woolf’s novel. Without referring explicitly to the poetry of physics which resonates throughout The Waves, Winterson describes the novel’s words as “cells of energy” (Winterson, 1995: 92). Impressively, their “relationship to one another increases that energy but the circuit is only complete when the book is taken as a whole” (1995: 92). Winterson touches upon the devices of “repetition” and “recurring imagery” (92). She relates increased rapture with reiteration, going on to associate both with “plundering” the stock of literary tradition.

What Winterson applauds in Woolf she sets out to do in Gut Symmetries. This is one reason why I aim to explore Winterson’s force-
field of science and mysticism not just as narrative, but as an “essay-narrative” which can frame *The Waves* and *Daniel Deronda* so that they both deliver meanings yet to be articulated. Furthermore, *Gut Symmetries* can be read as a project to intensify the “cells of energy.” A theme pervading Winterson’s novel is alchemy. Certain alchemists believed that their work was connected to the relationship between matter and musical vibration. When the composition of substances transmuted to more refined forms, the alchemists raised the vibrations of matter. The ambition of *Gut Symmetries* is to re-activate those strands (metaphor for pathways) in the precursor’s protean web.

By so doing, the strands could, in theory, bring the filaments of the “younger” work to an even higher vibration. Whether this can, in fact, happen will be the question resonating here. Intensifying the energy cells of the existing parts of the textual web maintains the flow of Eros. But the creation of new threads, the forging of connections which have not existed or have been long defunct, is the process I have termed rapturing. When a trauma is to any degree traversed, when a portion of the fright to life can be bound, configured, signified to lift the weight of that trauma, rapture is likewise at work.

Mitigating the burden of trauma can involve disentangling the knots of resistance which support the self-involved ego. Woolf uses the telling phrase that the novel she is conceiving is a “mystical” and “eyeless” book. Phonetically, the word “eyeless” suggests the pun “I-less,” or a state in which the dominance of the ego ebbs. Both the state of being without eyes and that of losing the ego become associated with the abstract adjective mystical. What is mystical, then, lies beyond what can be visualised, be this fantasy or hallucination. The mystical, therefore, cannot be part of the imaginary. Rather, the former moves under and behind the latter. “Mystical” is a sign pointing anaphorically through an entire signifying chain. At its end is a signified buried deep in the primary processes, their terrain the unconscious. Moreover, what is mystical is closely bound up with the non-representational aspects of trauma. While Woolf deployed the word “mystical” to prefigure her plan for *The Waves*, in the novel itself the word is avoided. The un-graspable signification is shrouded in metaphors. Of his friends, Bernard reports:
All had their rapture; their common feeling with death; something that stood them in stead. Thus I visited each of my friends in turn, trying, with fumbling fingers, to prize open their locked caskets (229).

Through juxtaposition of clauses, this quotation metonymically links rapture, death and what constitutes the hidden quality of signs, signifiers and significations: an inter-linking characterised by a condensation which produces a figurative veil.

In Gut Symmetries, the mystical is neither shrouded nor protected. Even though Winterson’s essay of eulogy is entitled “A Veil of Words,” Gut Symmetries rips off the shroud. Put differently, the figures woven into The Waves through condensation and displacement, second and third level focalization, become heralded in the external narrator’s Prologue. As I already mentioned, this “voice” tells the reader we are all made of stardust and that Paracelsus taught us that “The galaxa goes through the belly” (1997: 2). That which is “mystical,” with all the word’s occult connotations, is named and concretised into chapter titles. Each comprises the name of a Tarot card. “The Moon” is a card signifying dream states and danger. Unlike The Waves, where no life event is prefigured, the card stands at the head of the chapter as an omen not to be missed. The Moon card signifies, amongst many things, being lost in the dark and madness. Jove and Stella will lose themselves at sea (165-169). The husband will almost murder his wife. He will gnaw away at the flesh around her spine to rescue a light hidden within - an embedded diamond (195).

Throughout Gut Symmetries, this jewel has been explicitly associated with Kabbalistic light, wave forms, magic and the potential powers of time travel. According to Alice’s narrative, Stella’s father, Raphael, appears from some unfathomable dimension to save his daughter’s life (208). A character qualified by his “parchments, his gems, his dark lit-up face” can also manipulate the boundaries between parallel universes. Such a connection between shining stones and synchronous events may be less obvious in Daniel Deronda, but it can be better illuminated using Winterson’s novel as a frame. Eliot’s novel has its share of diamonds and occult events. Grandcourt’s ex-lover Lydia Glasher has received from him a diamond necklace. After his marriage to Gwendolen, she receives from the enraged Glasher a necklace in a letter with a curse inscribed (Book IV, Chapter 31, 406-407). This
incident may not have the qualities of divine coincidence underlying the prefigured encounter between Mordecai and Deronda (Book IV, Chapter 33, 436-437). But the external narrator’s language, blended with Grandcourt’s focalization, provides a darkly prophetic statement of a type which might be more characteristic of Mordecai. “In some form or other … the Furies had crossed his threshold” (407). The curiously mystical comment would be out of place in a novel like *Middlemarch* or even *The Lifted Veil* (1878), the novella in which second sight is the theme. Furthermore, the image of each diamond scattered on the floor connects indirectly and negatively to the Kabbalistic notion of souls joining together. In Jewish mysticism, souls are repositories of light. Diamonds, too, are vessels of light. The fragmenting mass of light occasioned by the broken necklace is the opposing motif to the aggregation of souls. Diamonds are symbols of corrupted light and the deathly, cursed soul. They are inverted signifiers of the intimacy between science (materialism) and mysticism. They are reversed symbols of rapture turned into its deathly opposite, the (non)-site of trauma.

In *Gut Symmetries*, the intimate bonds between science and mysticism work through what is in both *Daniel Deronda* and *The Waves* the profound quality of such connections. Winterson’s novel pursues the intimacy between science and occult. Her work sheds light onto the murky terrain between these two disciplines as they have been figured in the predecessor novels. In other words, *Gut Symmetries* traverses the predecessors’ webs. It does so by working-through the mystical figures from the ancestor texts which these narratives left untouched. In this sense, traversal requires two contradictory processes. On the one hand, old pathways, or old literary routes, need to be shut down. When they are, unbound affect cannot vent its force by following the habitual paths. On the other hand, if these worn-out lines are fore-grounded, then they can provide starting points for newly emerging routes.

In Woolf’s novel, wave theory is implicated without scientific terms or scientists ever being explicitly mentioned. In *Gut Symmetries*, quite the opposite occurs. The names of celebrated alchemists and scientists and their theories are paraded throughout. The reader is fed historical information about Paracelsus’ notion of the synchronous
connections between planets and human destinies, one notable line being “As above, so below” (1). A variety of scientific paradigms are aired, from the quantum mechanics of Neils Bohr to the Schrödinger cat experiment (1; 3; 11; 12; 17; 97-99; 101-102; 103; 159; 160-162; 168; 191; 207-208). The novel often has the quality of an A to Z of scientific theories. Studies in popular science have been a popular genre throughout the 1990s. These books have provided inter-textual sources for Winterson’s novel. Woolf read books on science by James Jeans (Beer 1996: 113-114). In comparison to her predecessor, Jeanette Winterson went one step further. Not only did she read the requisite literature on late twentieth century physics, but she had herself tutored in university level mathematics and physics.

An intimate knowledge of quantum physics, for example, interweaves the interior monologues of all three main characters. Alice’s reference to quantum mechanics raises the question of how comparable passages from The Waves and Gut Symmetries can be used as frames for each another. Examining the results reveals much about the function of traversal operating between the two novels. Alice’s interior monologue concerns itself with the possibilities of her father’s afterlife and the wave theories attendant upon him. As she interrogates this scientific knowledge, so she dissects the predicament of human identity.

A wave function spreads indefinitely, though at its farthest it is infinitesimally flimsy. Theoretically, it is always possible, though unlikely, to find my father beyond the solar system, his clustered energies elsewhere. More obviously, my father seemed to be here, as you and I are here, but we too can be measured as wave functions, unlimited by the boundaries of our bodies ... My father, at the moment of physical death, may simply have shifted to an alternative point of his wave function (1997: 161).

Content-wise and syntactically, the quote repeats itself. Rather than a syllogism, the final sentence is a close paraphrase of the second. The discourse of abstract nouns and repetitions for the sake of clarity has the quality of a popular science book. In contrast to these accessible manuals with their non-poetic style, Gut Symmetries stages discursive reiterations by performing the ebbs, flows and infinite reproductions of the wave itself. The final sentence of the quotation carries a hint of
bathos. The energy of melancholy is being excessively bound, if not contained, through the discharge of an analytic rhetoric.

There is a curious sense of something affect-less, as though entropy has set in. In the domain of discourse, the evidence of the trauma can be traced through a series of ossifying repetitions. I would recall too, Brennan’s concept of “still points.” Abstract nouns slow down the sequence of clauses. The recurrence of the word “wave” along with many nominal clauses has the effect of suspending and freezing the flow of emotion.

Comparing the Winterson passage to Bernard’s driven account of his confrontation with Percival’s death is informative. The tragedy and shock of death send waves rippling through the prose. These waves act to dissolve the daily sense of materiality which keeps in place the quotidian. This project operates in the Winterson text. A similar aim is pursued in Woolf’s passage below, but is pursued to different ends. Bernard refers to

the first morning he [Percival] would never see - the sparrows were like toys dangled from a string by a child. To see things without attachment, from the outside, and to realise their beauty in itself - how strange! And then the sense that a burden has been removed; pretence and make-believe and unreality are gone, and lightness has come with a kind of transparency, making oneself invisible and things seen through as one walks - how strange (226).

More images are condensed into single sentences. The first day without Percival is alive with sparrows reminiscent of childhood. Clauses side by side set up adjacent oxymorons. The toy would be attached but yet Bernard is in a state of wonder, so cognisant for the first time of being able to “see” without the normal clutter of projections. What occurs is a bitter-sweet epiphanic moment. Simple exclamatory clauses such as “how strange” carry the emotional charge in his focalization.

Here is an adult startled into the freshness of a child’s perceptions. The wave-like quality of this brave new cosmos produces “lightness” and a loss of ego captured in Bernard’s sensation of being “invisible.” To aid this, “pretence and make-believe” have gone. The sham has been ripped away by the shock of death. This has released a charge of new emotions. Here is an example of mortality precipitating
a charge of rapture. Obviously, Bernard is not experiencing a fright that reminds him he has survived a death. Bernard confronts not his own near-escape from death but the pain of separation from a loved one. He does not here experience the painful fright of re-living Percival’s death. Woolf’s passage reveals an awakening caused by a rapture which shifts the subject’s experience of strong affects from suffering to ecstasy. The wave-like movements of the text enable this modulation from pain to a euphoria which has begun to take place. The textual strategies of Woolf’s passage offer a form of poetic healing to the text’s symptoms of a traumatic break, around which the narrative is woven. The intricate and poetic working-through achieved by the text is a movement towards mending the textual web which was damaged by the catastrophic event of Percival’s death. The abyss is submitted to a working-through, which in turn undergoes a further transformation into epiphany, or what M.H. Abrams has termed in poetry or prose fiction, the “sudden flare into revelation of an ordinary object or scene.” Epiphany and the transformation of the “burden” are linked to loss of ego and the re-generating of an incandescent web.

To take these two passages together, that from The Waves and from Gut Symmetries, and to use one as a frame for the other, is not to argue that Woolf’s passage is somehow more charged and therefore textually richer. What may pop into the field between the two frames provides a pertinent insight into traversal. Bernard’s epiphany involves traversal in the Lacanian sense. The object of adoration is acknowledged as gone. The objet a has been surrendered. It is useful here to combine Lacan’s insight into what happens when the objet a is released and Caruth’s (1996) explanation about what happens to the death drive as a result of traumatic experience. As she notes, the drive attempts to master the awakening into life: “failing to return to the moment of its own act of living, the drive departs into the future of a human history” (65). Traumatic experience can be defined as the installation of the death drive in the place of an objet a which is not relinquished. In Bernard’s epiphany, the moment of embracing the abyss passes on the instance of awakening into elegy and exultation. Releasing the supportive imago (Percival) is what allows the working-through of language into an epiphany. This process will not remove the entire burden of the trauma but can lessen it. Traversal produces the result
that when the death drive moves forward into futurity, a portion of it has been transformed into rapture.

Alice’s interior monologue challenges Woolfian traversal. She uses abstract discourse, not the charged language of dramatic projections. Yet between the lines of the extract is an unwillingness to let go of the lost object. This reluctance makes her lines of mourning arresting. She wreathes her father in knowledge. She places him in a state of theoretical “deep freeze” with the conviction, she half avows, that George is somehow immortal in the realm of quantum phenomena. What evinces itself as a genuine passage of working-through in fact veils an acting out of the refusal of death. She disallows the facts of death as an annihilation of all aspects of her father’s identity. To do so she deploys a provoking metaphysical conceit between science, emotion and death. In a sense, her father becomes eternalised in a sophisticated manipulation of language, one which will ensure Alice’s compulsion to repeat such metaphysical conceits. The poetic design of The Waves is not copied, but challenged. The intimacy of influence between the two novels produces in the inheritor, a strategy to keep repetitions alive. For if Gut Symmetries were allowed to heal, by means of working-through too many of the predecessor’s wounds, then little might be left for the next heir to the narrative task.

Indeed, and in respect to novels yet to come, Gut Symmetries may be holding back on specific textual performances. Stella notes that frameworks are provisional (1997: 168). Yet the novel is pregnant with myriad references to paradigms from seventeenth century alchemy to the String Theories of late twentieth century physics. Winterson’s work becomes entrenched in the very terms it would deconstruct. Gut Symmetries sets up structures in the form of copious metaphysical conceits which, to recall once more Cynthia Chase’s adoption of Paul de Man’s terms, the novel disfigures to only a limited degree. Until the novel’s last page, the reader will find “the universe curving in your gut” (219). It could be argued that the shifting movement from one paradigm (as metaphysical conceit) to another, constitutes a “performance” which draws attention to the provisional status of all models of thought. Yet there is always a paradigm waiting to support the narrator. In The Waves, Bernard at least had a go at charging into the abyss. He declares “I have done with phrases.” As I emphasised in my chapter 5, he
pushed that attempt as far as he could. The cadenza to *The Waves* takes the task of traversal and runs with it, even in the “face” of death. Winterson’s novel challenges this strategy. It does so by pitting the narrative of human relations against that of quantum mechanics. In a sense, the one is given the task of working-through the other. But if this were to happen in its entirety, neither one of the novels would qualify as a narrative fiction or theoretical fiction, both of which require, in order to be propelled forward at all, a degree of compulsion and a substance demanding working-through.

**Past Fictions of Present Theories**

In this section I will explore rapture between the frames, or more precisely, the frame which *Daniel Deronda* and *Gut Symmetries* offer each other. Winterson’s novel can be used to establish new interpretation which might otherwise lie dormant in the precursor’s work. In turn, *Daniel Deronda* might be used as an “essay” to address the silences in Winterson’s work. In both novels, the scientific, the mythological and the mystical are gathered into similar knots. Unlike the character-narrators of *The Waves*, *Daniel Deronda*’s external narrator does make some mention of scientific and occult topics. *Gut Symmetries* makes the union between science and mysticism a theme openly reflected and ratiocinated upon. In *Daniel Deronda*, however, the discourses of science and the occult are more provocatively embedded, serving as textual superconductors to heighten moments of dread. In *The Waves*, traversal disentangles the novel’s separate egos, making them rhythmic force-fields in a matrix of physics. In *Daniel Deronda*, rhetorical figures become “superconductors,” producing connections between characters and taking one of the more egotistical characters, Gwendolen, into a field that threatens her self-involvement.

Having said this, I would suggest that character as identity marked by genealogy is not a pattern the novel repudiates. Deronda’s discovery of his Jewish roots, Mordecai’s reunion with Mirah, Gwendolen’s uncanny sense about her absent father all draw attention to the importance of family trees. Relevantly, the genealogical theme becomes figured in the novel’s opening paragraph. It is utilised to link together the thematics of inheritance with that of science and narrative.
Men can do nothing without the make-believe of a beginning. Even Science, the strict measurer, is obliged to start with a make-believe unit, and must fix on a point in the star’s unceasing journey when his sidereal clock shall pretend that time is Nought. His less accurate grandmother Poetry has always been understood to start in the middle; but on reflection it appears that her proceeding is not very different from his (Book I, Chapter 1, 35).

Many critics have quoted this passage as an example of the external narrator’s recognition that the notion of a beginning is arbitrary. Sally Shuttleworth has linked the novel’s “more radical theory of scientific method” with its experiment in unconventional narrative structure. Although these insights are important, she pays little attention to the personifications which propel the epigraph. Poetry and Science are genealogically linked. Curiously, the former is gendered female. While the grandson Science may be regarded as more “accurate,” the two share the common characteristics of sustaining “make-believe.”

Using Judith Butler’s notion of phantasmic identification, I suggest that the male identifies with the more “female” characteristics of Poetry and her fiction-making talents. Science thereby enacts a traversal between the gendered masculinity and the femininity of the ancestor. What can thus be liberated in Science are the multifarious positions between the two genders. Philosopher of science Evelyn Fox Keller has made eloquent cases for avoiding the approach of considering science a discipline of pure epistemology. The “one to one correspondence with the real” does not hold (1992: 73). Like “stories” and “theories,” scientific paradigms can be regarded as “tools” for mediating physical reality (73).

In particular, as Keller has exposed, “Nature” has historically been gendered feminine, and this has had consequences for gendering Science as masculine. The epigraph to chapter 1 subverts precisely such a gendering and does so by allowing both grandmother Poetry and grandson Science to share similar characteristics. One wonders what or who represents the generation between grandparent and grandchild. Prose fiction might be a good candidate. Shuttleworth makes a convincing argument for interpreting the novel’s deployment of radical ideas in science as an analogue for the text’s equally radical experiment with narrative structure.
Take for instance Heisenberg’s “Uncertainty Principle,” a scientific concept which post-dates Eliot’s novel by forty years. The theory finds its prefigurative and theoretical fiction in Daniel Deronda. I say “fiction,” because clearly Eliot was not a physicist in the literal sense, though her experiment with narrative patterns can be interrogated with the hindsight of Heisenberg’s celebrated principle, of which I will offer a crude paraphrase. Heisenberg asserted that it is mathematically impossible to predict the position of an electron with any accuracy. Particles can collide and certain predictions can be made. But in the final analysis, particles can leap off into the unknown. Almost anything can happen. Gillian Beer has noted that when the nineteenth century novel functions conventionally, it sets out a “gradualist world of uniformitarian accretion and disliming” (1983: 207). What is progressively accrued in Daniel Deronda becomes shaken up by sudden and unexpected events. Furthermore, these happenings have no feasible explanation. Chapter 41 finds Deronda wrestling with his attitude to the unconventional and unworlisy Mordecai’s. The elders man’s eccentric conviction that in Deronda he has met a Jewish soul-mate troubles the younger man. Appropriately, the epigraph to chapter 41 comprises a quote from Aristotle: “It is part of probability that many improbable things will happen” (567). Mordecai comes into Deronda’s life apparently from nowhere. The two men’s accidental meeting could be deemed an improbable event which stages the uncertainty principle. Yet at the same time, Mordecai has foreseen the unpredicted meeting. To claim that uncertain events are always uncertain would be, quite contradictorily, to endow them with a certainty. Daniel Deronda weaves occurrences that emerge between destiny and uncertainty. Other examples are Deronda’s realisation that Mallinger is not his father, Gwendolen’s sudden losses at the gambling table and Grandcourt’s death. But although unexpected and unexplained, none of these events come entirely out of the blue. As Beer notes, the reader may have “foreseen” them.

I would frame Beer’s reading by pointing out that Heisenberg’s Uncertainty principle posits that even though an electron might go berserk, some of its movements can be predicted. Statistics might track the particle’s movements, though Uncertainty will confound any expectation. Likewise, it can be predicted that if someone gambles a sufficient number of times they are bound to win and lose in roughly the same proportions. But whether one is lucky or unlucky cannot be so
calculated. That the marriage between Grandcourt and Gwendolen causes disharmony may stimulate the reader to predict that the couple’s leisurely outings cause havoc. The tension between the two on their boat trip might be deemed a contributory factor to Grandcourt losing his balance. It is, though, strikingly unexpected that Grandcourt should plunge into a watery grave, unless the reader reflects on the novel’s earlier revelations of ghostly monks’ faces and the panel which springs open without warning, considering all these as omens. But a reader who follows omens might catch herself believing in them. This might make knowing readers uncomfortable if they feel too closely identified with Gwendolen, a character who often plays such games of imaging and “pleasing probabilities.” The probable gives way to the frightfully possible. This, in turn, becomes doubly disturbing by virtue of what Beer coins the text’s “dysteoleological” narrative set-up (207). Put plainly, in a universe where the laws of cause and effect cannot be entirely relied upon, life will often be lived at the edge.

Winterson’s novel has Heisenberg’s theory as a precedent. In deploying it, the novel focuses on preoccupations different from Daniel Deronda’s study of anxiety. Stella mentions that her Papa met Heisenberg who introduced him to the other side of the Uncertainty principle, which is quantum mechanics. Papa finds the theory exciting, particularly the idea that matter is both particle and wave, and that the “reality of matter is conceptual” (1997: 168). For Papa, this idea is consistent with the Kabbalah’s methods “to free the individual from conceptual frameworks, which are all and always provisional” (168). The struggle here is not with the anxiety of being unable to predict. Rather, the conflict emerges from a longing to escape teleology. The passage describing the need to free individuals from “conceptual frameworks” is a curiously disfigurative sequence. The “meaning” is that Heisenberg’s ideas can liberate thought from its own fixities. Yet ideas take the form of concepts devolving from paradigms which, in their own terms, contain unavoidable points of theoretical fixity. Like that of Alice quoted in the previous section, Stella’s rendition is crammed with the trappings of the conceptual: abstract nouns. Her intention is to escape the conceptual, yet the text’s strategies enact quite the opposite.

Daniel Deronda does not have any recourse to Heisenberg’s actual theory, nor could any nineteenth century text quote it. Yet Daniel Deronda
enacts a version of it. *Gut Symmetries* quotes the theory yet does not enact it. Even the ghostly phenomenon of Papa's sea rescue, however wildly impossible, can be predicted by an Uncertainty principle. In a narrative cosmos in which rules of plausibility are often suspended, where magic reigns and where almost anything can happen, what surprises, shocks and disturbs readers may be more difficult to produce. Anxiety in the nineteenth century novel has been traversed to produce over-determination in the late twentieth century counterpart. Deronda's furies are frightening ghosts because their secrets of Nature, their role as enervating, terrifying manifestations threaten any still points of resistance which stand in the way. *Gut Symmetries* has tamed such terrors. With so many secrets of Nature having been worked through, with so many unconscious terrors reined in on a tight leash, traversal may have gone full circle to produce too many pathways.

To expose the paradox in my own rhetoric, I would say that "in theory" quantum mechanics should be a conceptual framework on behalf of secrets. If one can never entirely "know" where a particle/wave will pop up, then particles and waves protect their privacy. Of course, if there are secrets which escape the paradigm, then they keep themselves beyond the theoretical. In *Daniel Deronda*, secrets are kept by a refusal on the part of characters and external narrator to ever come to a definitive opinion about anything. Just as grandson Science is found out as a fiction-maker, mystical notions such as "second sight" are both given credence and subjected to scepticism. *Daniel Deronda* will not offer coherent answers to any of these problematic fields of knowledge. No theoretical fiction is final; Eliot's novel underlines the fictional in the theory. In *Daniel Deronda*, death as an event and as a notion implying spiritual decay and re-birth provides fissures in the textual web. Such gaps draw attention to the lacunae in theoretical fictions and the importance of theorising fictions as terrains through which uncertainties can come into play.

Through Deronda, the problematic topic of "second sight" is not just interrogated, but figuratively linked to cutting-edge ideas from the world of science. The external narrator could be deemed as possessing a clairvoyant gift. Tellingly, the epigraph to the entire novel, already quoted, professes such clairvoyance:
Let thy chief terror by thin own soul:
There, 'mid the throng of hurrying desires
That trample o'er the dead to seize their spoil,
Lurks vengeance, footless, irresistible (32).

This is more than a narrative prolepsis. Little of the story is in fact “given away.” So-called proleptic elements serve less to scoop out the story for the reader’s pre-reflections but rather to suggest that there is more in earth and heaven than dreamed of in science. My previous reference to Gwendolen’s encounter with an ill-fated diamond necklace is a case in point. The Furies from the epigraph enter the narrative and colonise the bedroom.

Metonymically speaking, be it mythical entities or the psyches of key characters, all are in cahoots with the hottest ideas permeating the novel’s historical times. The novel’s opening scene with its macabre, fury-like collection of gamblers lurking in the Hadian fumes, bristles with the discourse of magnetism and electricity, as in the “dynamic” of Gwendolen Harleth’s glance (35). The word refers to Maxwellian thermodynamics. The Deronda Notebooks contain an alluring caveat on the subject of Maxwell’s “rings.” Gwendolen’s “dynamic” glance does more than raise imponderable questions about the fateful heroine’s beauty (Book I, Chapter 1, 35). Eliot notes down Maxwell’s lecture on Helmholtz’s theory of “ring vortices” (Irwin, 1996: 17). Developed along with an essay in which “Dynamism” was a subject, the quote becomes informative: “if a whirling ring be once generated in such a perfect fluid, it will go on forever, always consisting of the same portion of fluid first set going” (1996: 17-18). Clearly, although this is not a manifesto for quantum theory, the notion of a non-particulate “field” of energy could be read as a likely precursor for wave theory.

Given this, a new frame can be offered to the celebrated and much critiqued lines “Was she beautiful or not beautiful? and what was the secret form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to her glance?” (Chapter 1, 35). The sentences could be read as symbolic (in Peirce’s sense) of the following questions re-framed: is she inherently beautiful in traditional terms or does she constitute a field of energy whose force field creates an illusion of beauty? Equally importantly, questions are raised as to the nature of beauty and what this aesthetic
value implies about moral values. To quote Einstein’s famous dictum, energy as the equivalent of mass multiplied by the speed of light squared \((e = mc^2)\) is not the sole issue. It is important in Eliot’s cosmos that energy equals a narrative and moral trajectory.

This is also the case in Winterson’s word-worlds. Jove’s primitive attack on his wife’s spine will be addressed with a moral response in the form of ghostly intervention. In Eliot’s notebook, a paragraph on the relationship between light and photography claims that “every portion of light may be supposed to write its own history by a change more or less permanent in ponderable matter” (Irwin, 1996: 20). This insight prefigures its fictional analogue in Alice imagining her dead father moving through space and time through her story. As he does so, he transmutes himself through his own wave energy. The narrativising of science in Eliot’s novel helps to unlock the moral dimension of Winterson’s text. This is important to note, particularly as so often “postmodern” novels are not associated with the quality of moral universe credited to the literary ancestors of the nineteenth century.

Furthermore, both the “dynamic” of Gwendolen’s glance (Chapter I, 35) and the wave functions of Gut Symmetries are powered by the rapture that keeps the textual circuit alive. Even in the afterlife domains of Winterson’s novel, the energy is conserved so as to thwart the entropy at the heart of Thanatos. Gwendolen’s “glance” is metonymic of the power-cells the text maintains. Eliot’s novel figures the “look” and the “gaze” as closely associated with terror and death. Grandcourt’s features sinking under the sea waves will cast back at Gwendolen a punishing glance. The petrifying face of a monk’s face carved in wood or the frozen faces glaring from behind hidden panels, have dogged Gwendolen throughout her trajectory. In my last chapter, I interpreted these faces as sites in which the father’s name was foreclosed. They are points at which a third term separating subject from Other fails. Great anxiety ensues. The terror “outside” Gwendolen manifests the furies of egotism within her. The reference to Medusa’s stare is informative. The embodiment of fury, this mythical figure turned men to stone. Through Grandcourt, Gwendolen becomes as much the object of the Medusian stare as its perpetrator. Gwendolen’s own look focuses on her husband as he drowns. Thus the dynamic of Gwendolen’s glance is
indeed deathly. Its energy acts not to intensify conduction but to freeze it.

Yet there is an entirely different utilisation of dynamic energy in Mordecai’s world; understanding the distinction helps to interpret the two aspects of thermodynamics deployed in the novel. One more important example is Mordecai’s theoretical fictions for explaining the transmigration of the soul. Its substance is immortal. It continues its movement eternally and can do so through the re-generative movements of earthly existence (Book 6, chapter 43, 600). These itineraries must necessarily repeat themselves like the interminable movement of Helmholtz’s rings. Just as the fluid energy of the rings is eternal, so is (as Mordecai tells us) the cyclical movement according to the soul’s Kabbalistic doctrine. Physical death is a catalyst for spiritual dynamism rather than the ruthless victor over life.

Quite differently, the dynamic glance of Gwendolen Harleth freezes energy, limiting the potential of traversal so as to increase the flow of emotion between subjects. In contrast, the dynamic of the novel’s Kabbalistic narrative acts to cross planes of identification between souls. Rather like the Lady of Shallot, Gwendolen is frozen in a mirror gaze of atrophied and stymied narcissism. A dynamic without the catalyst of a third term intensifies the negative transference which inhibits working-through. In Mordecai’s parable, the third term is the Kabbalistic system itself, the tree of life as a genealogical system.

The intimacy between Deronda and Gut Symmetries lies at the cutting edge between occult and scientific knowledge. Just as grandson Science, for all his “accuracy,” is disallowed any complement of objectivity in comparison to grandmother Poetry, so scientific pursuits are not valued over those of the religious or occult. In the introductory pages of chapter 41, Deronda may feel a certain “alarm” at Mordecai’s “energetic certitude” that dreams can become realities (567). However, Deronda does not want to be dominated by the type of conventional focalizations which might be espoused by a staunch Victorian such as Sir Hugo Mallinger. The latter, speculates Deronda, might consider one like Mordecai to be a “consumptive Jew, possessed by a fanaticism” (568). Deronda’s focalization, wedded to the external narrator’s language, produces a comparison to offset the case against visionaries.
While Mordecai was waiting on the bridge for the fulfilment of his visions, another man was convinced he had the mathematical key of the universe which would supersede Newton, and regarded all known physicists as conspiring to stifle his discovery and keep the universe locked (568).

The scientist can be as mistakenly fanatical as the mystic dreamer. Yet the character-bound focalizor interweaving through an indirect discourse between himself and the external narrator refuses to disqualify these impassioned researchers. The cautionary note suggests that before anyone judges these fanatical folk, it is important to understand their “subject matter” (569). Only if there are a varied number of “Just judgements” can these be treated as valid. The implication is that amongst the ranks of fanatics and the “immovably convinced” are the likes of Copernicus and Galileo.

In psychoanalytical terms, fanaticism could be interpreted as akin to fixation. Strictly speaking, then, there is a fine line between the single-minded and the neurotic. Yet the possession of certitude and conviction has enabled webs of knowledge and discovery to be woven. The theory that obsession inhibits such elegant and influential acts of working-through can be questioned. Acts of traversal may be powered by obsessions which, once they have paid their dues, can release rapture into the work. That the result is a veiling over of realisation and insight does not mean that revelations are not made.

In Daniel Deronda, the art of binding together previously unconnected ideas requires bringing opposing paradigms into confrontation. As Irwin points out (1996: 20), a note in the Deronda Notebooks indicates Eliot’s familiarity with Paracelsus, an important cameo character in Gut Symmetries. The external narrator of Winterson’s novel draws attention to Paracelsus’s dictum “As above, so below” (2). As I mentioned earlier, this refers to the pre-Enlightenment belief that the planets and their movements had dominion over human and global destinies. Astrology and astronomy were not regarded as separate disciplines. The Copernican revolution began to cause a fissure in this paradigm, in the process of producing a new one. Shuttleworth points out that Eliot’s reading matter included Bernard Fontenelle’s Entretiens sur la Pluralité des Mondes (1686). This is a delightful series of dialogues between a Marchioness and a gentleman, the former being a femme savante who looks through
telescopes and is curious about the solar system. At the time, Fontenelle’s piece had a radical edge. It proposed that other beings might reside in other worlds. Shuttleworth points out that the Marchionness is aghast at the vision of an infinite universe in which she becomes less significant. Gwendolen too, as Shuttleworth notes, would like to have a Ptolemy sense of her world - herself at the centre. But life experience will give her psyche a Copernican moment in which she will be forced to realise she cannot be the universe’s centre. Deronda and Mordecai do not suffer from these moral stupidities. To put it another way, Gwendolen occupies, for a great part, the Ptolemaic system and Deronda and Mordecai the Copernican, even though the latter is more closely associated with traditionally mystical disciplines. If Gwendolen is figured as Ptolemy, then so are the prejudices of the narrow, racially bigoted and Victorian society which has reared her.

The conflict and interweavings, or the products of working-through between the “Victorian” and “Jewish” halves of the novel thus figure a battle between paradigms, very much in Kuhn’s sense of the latter term. Just as Daniel Deronda is a novel painstakingly moving towards modernism, so its moral universe attempts to connect one paradigm with another. It takes several deaths to achieve this - that of Grandcourt, ultimately Deronda’s dying mother and, of course, Mordecai. Rather than orchestrating a furore between two major paradigms, Gut Symmetries holds within it as many as can be crammed in - Paracelsus’ notion that the stars order human destinies, along with “GUT” theories and quantum physics and a narrative account of ghosts. In Winterson’s novel, paradigms are not pitted against each other, but concur and support one another. For instance, on the QE2 Alice gives a lecture on the relationship between Paracelsus and the new physics (1997: 15). In the pre-Enlightenment world of the 1600s, epistemological and occult paradigms were part of one system. Winterson’s novel thus attempts to breach the gap installed since the Enlightenment, just as Eliot’s novel exposes this gap to raise questions about the objective relations between beginnings and endings, causes and effects.

The revolutionising cosmos which Deronda intimates, Gut Symmetries continues to re-write. Just as this process is mediated in Eliot’s novel through deaths, in Winterson’s text the narration of births and deaths, from Paracelsus to Einstein, to the main characters like Alice’s father,
become the central points from which the paradigmatic discourses are woven. The two textual fields together - that of *Deronda* and *Gut Symmetries* - both set each other in surprising frames. The emerging modernism of Eliot’s novel is motivated by a refusal to prioritise one type of knowledge over another or to favour any one psychical approach. Obsession and the fantasy-like quality of image-making, such as Mordecai’s, may be a necessary catalyst in the alchemical process of bringing into being a web made of a tessellation of different forms of knowledge and paradigms.

In Eliot’s novel, no one key could ever be considered “final.” Furthermore, these keys could also be metaphorically considered as laser-like designs woven from waves of light. In *Gut Symmetries*, few question are raised over the viability of Stella’s Papa. He is a literary descendant of Mordecai, yet equally, he has ancestors in the character-narrators of *The Waves*; like them, Papa moves himself through the wave-functions of space and time. That his daughter has been saved and that Alice, physicist that she is, reports in her narrative the manifestation of a ghost ship, utilises narrative as a type of epistemological proof. In *The Passion*, the enunciation which protests too much - “Trust me I am telling you stories” - alerts the reader to consider the fictional status of the novel and that lies may be offered as means of telling the truth. In *Gut Symmetries*, no comparable alert is given. Nor are the knowledge-systems laid out like an embarrassment of so many riches, held up or supported by gaps, within which the text encourages the reader to ferret out the contradictions. (I must emphasise that I do not regard this as a disadvantage in Winterson’s novel.) To traverse *Gut Symmetries* again might mean rapturing through the scientific and occult discourses of the novel, which themselves are treated as points of resistance. Likewise *Daniel Deronda* may be the road-map for a future work intent on traversing *Gut Symmetries*. For any act of traversal to occur, areas of the text need to be discovered that until raptured through, can be approached as lacunae beyond signification.

**Conclusion: Rapturing the Trauma**

The four novels which have been the centre of this chapter all maintain their secrets, and specifically for future traversals to come. Between narrative discourse and the metaphors of science and the occult “silences” linger. These silent areas of *terra incognita* are not
metaphorical, but indexical of traumas which have been carried not just by history as a narrative form, but literary fiction as an ongoing, theoretical fiction. As the trauma inscribes itself into futurity, this dynamic process produces theorising fiction, that term which accounts for the connecting wave-forms of different but mutually supportive theoretical fictions, which together and through literary history, contribute to the shifting and incandescent web.

For this web to change its structure, it may need to be broken. *Daniel Deronda* dramatises the after-effects of a break between mysticism and science, faith and rationality, the conventions of teleological narrative as opposed to the nineteenth century tradition of linear story-telling. Though this break is not traumatic in the strict sense of the term, the novel itself can be read as hinting at symptoms of representational problems. In my chapter 4, I explored the text's warping of patterns of cause and effect so that effects come to be read as causes. This distortion of traditional patterns of narrative logic plus the never entirely resolved issue of Deronda's circumcision, together with the incomplete narrative "explanation" of Grandcourt's death - did he fall or to what extent was he "accidentally" pushed - suggest that even though Eliot's novel does not suffer from the "lack of narrative frame" which van Alphen uses as a criterion of traumatic experience narrated (45), some of *Daniel Deronda*'s patterns of narrative coherence are indeed warped. Such distortions and breaks in the web are indexical of the novel's implicit representations of Jewish history as one confronting its own breaks and clefts. Unlike *Gut Symmetries*, *The Waves* does not take up the explicit task of concentrating on a very selected number of broken threads in a specialised area of Jewish history, as does *Daniel Deronda*. At one level, Woolf's novel takes on the challenge of healing a wound shared by six people, Percival's death. Yet at another level, a vast array of metonymies emerge from this wound, thereby connecting indirectly to Biblical themes (the Garden of Eden, as allegorised in the house at Elvedon) and Louis' broken associations with ancient Egypt. Intertextually, this mythical and historical site suggests the old Testament stories of Moses liberating his people from the Pharaoh. The theme of survival and the quest to heal broken shards of history is explicitly stated in the very first draft of *The Waves*. The external narrator claims to be "trying to find, in the
folds of the past, such fragments of time, having broken the perfect vessel, still keep safe ... The perfect vessel? The quest for complete healing is concluded with a question mark. Time is implied to be broken. In _Mrs. Dalloway_, prehistory is figured as breaking up the pavement and causing, through the external narrator's/tramp's focalization, potentially even more damage and rupture (1998: 106). Should all the pieces of history be put together in one narrative text, no traversal would be necessary. The “Prologue” to _Gut Symmetries_ claims that space and time came into being because a perfect, “ten dimensional universe” broke in two (4).

In the intimacies of influence, the novel of each generation generously offers to its inheritors a structure of broken pieces and incomplete temporalities which can be used as a starting point for further re-inventions. The survival of traversal between narrative and theoretical fictions requires the continuance of trauma which, however much it can be modulated from one generation of texts to another, remains a terrain of non-signification. Like the imploding stars, or quasars, familiar to modern astronomy, these abysses in the narrative can explode into new life.

I would like to suggest that these potential abysses are the gifts to future generations, not just to “scholars,” but to those people tautologically termed “creative writers.” It is through such abysses that they can make new pathways. I am aware that I am about to deploy a personification, but it will help to make my point. If I say that “Death” deploys a sickle which can eradicate old routes, crossing them out and through, so that fresh pathways can be formed, and new seeds planted in the ridges, then I am employing a personification which has its ancestry in Baroque imagery. Prosopopoeia is a figure which dramatises, acts out no less, the point being made. As such it could be said to be motivated by a projection which requires disentangling. Yet what requires to be unknotted and pulled apart might, on its own terms, help to clarify other sets of meanings.

In traumatic experience, the compulsion to repeat is a subcategory of acting out. Caruth emphasises that traumatic experience is both “destruction and survival” (72). Novelistic forms which continue to take their journeys into the next millennia ensure that their intimacies of influence with the previous generation engage in a double process. The successor may cause narrative and theoretical fictions in
the predecessor to be crossed out, that is destroyed, as well as protecting and further developing the textual heritage that will survive. If the traumatic "breaks" of the predecessor's work are to be healed, more will be preserved than eradicated.

The intimate connections between the four novels of this chapter underline an insight which goes beyond asserting that texts carry and transmute the "unspeakable." Narrative and theoretical fictions carry the unspeakable quality of the breaks, fractures and division in the history of paradigms, be these of the occult, science or technology. That *Gut Symmetries* bears more explicit connections to *Daniel Deronda* than *The Waves* suggests that the postmodernism of Winterson's novel is prophesied in the fracturing realism of Eliot's last, monumental and much underrated work. I would emphasise too that the history of trauma in literary and theoretical fictions does not follow a straight line, but has more in common with the "preposterous" historical processes referred to by Bal (1999). In many respects, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Waves* offer bridges between *Daniel Deronda* and *Gut Symmetries*. These novels do so not by imitating either predecessor or successor, but by keeping parts of the web "out of commission" and focusing on other aspects of its incandescent operations. Harold Bloom's ratio "tessera" which refers to the successor's determination to "fill in" for the predecessor, would not explain the complex and oddly non-competitive intimacies between Woolf's oeuvre and that of Winterson. Woolf's novels warp and re-shape their web so that the works of successors can then find the texture and space to discover innovations of their own.

**Notes**

1 The line comes from a song in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, Act IV, scene (ii).

2 For a discussion of stylistic elements which have been identified with postmodernism, see Brian McHale, *Postmodern Fiction* (1989: 149). When McHale refers to *The Waves*, he quotes it, along with Joyce's *Ulysses* as a modernist work offering elements which function in postmodernism (9-11). *The Waves* raises both epistemological and ontological questions about daily experience. The different characters explore their varied feelings towards Percival. At the same time, as this chapter will examine, the various refer-
ences towards different worlds produces the sense that the novel is built from not just six interior monologues but that these function as “word-worlds,” or monads in Leibniz’s sense of the term. For an account of his monadology, see Resheer 1991.

3 For an exposition of the notion of the “Anumus Mundi,” see Robert Fludd and His Philosophical Key, Debus 1979.

4 For analyses which take a semiotic reading of the text and make this approach intimate with a biographical reading of Freud, his relationship to his grandson, but most particularly, his experience of the death of his daughter Sophie Freud-Halberstadt, see Jacques Derrida, “Coming into One’s Own,” Hartmann 1978: 114-148 and Elisabeth Bronfen, “The Lady Vanishes,” Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic (1992: 15-38).


6 George Eliot’s Daniel Deronda Notebooks (Irwin 1996: 18) indicates that there is a connection between the opening sections of the novel and Eliot’s reading of what was, at the time, state of the art ideas about energy fields. The “dynamic quality” of Gwendolen’s glance (Eliot 1986: Chapter 1, 35) has a connection to Helmhotz’s theorem that a ring vortex, “if once generated, would go on whirling forever” (18).

7 Freud’s Moses and Monotheism (1939), Standard Edition Vol. XXIII: 3-140

8 The quotation comes from Wallace Stevens’ poem “Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery” (1972: 103). The title to the section quotes the first line of stanza VI: “We should die except for Death/In his chalk and violent robes./Not to die a parish death.” I should emphasise that despite the grossly racist title, the use of “nigger” in fact ironizes its racist associations.


of resentment towards the mother and the epistemomaniac urge. For essays on the concept of "good and bad breast" see in the same volume "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States (1935: 262-290).

The new routes so formed subvert the hackneyed, over-used pathways contributing to neurosis. Traversal can also be defined as the process which subverts neurotic patternings. Though Brennan does not deal with traversal, she does question whether pathways are forged on the side of Freud's Eros or Thanatos. Brennan paraphrases Laplanche's theory (1968: 1-18) that the ego is a "giant fantasy" and one necessary to survival (35). The term "fantasy" implies a structure instating a gap between desires and their fulfilment. Fantasy is a configuration of pathways harnessing drives which would otherwise run riot. It plays a crucial role in survival. Brennan emphasises that for Laplanche, fantasy guarantees that drives are made manageable. Laplanche takes issue with Freud's notion of Thanatos. Entropy need not be the end result, he argues. Laplanche has recourse to the earlier Freudian distinctions between the Principle of Inertia and that of Constancy. The latter principle allows that the psychical system can be sustained by a flow of affects and their binding at a constant level and one which will not peter out. For the Principle of Constancy see Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988: 341. They define the "Principle according to which the psychical apparatus tends to keep the quantity of excitation at as constant a level as possible."

"Mrs. Dalloway: Repetition as Raising of the Dead" (Reid 1993: 45-56). This essay can be read in the context of accompanying essays on this topic. See J. Hillis Miller, Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels (1982: 176-187).


On the subject of angels, another Benjamin passage which can be brought into comparison with the one already outlined is his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (Benjamin 1982: 259). Here, Benjamin reflects on a painting by Klee, named "Angelus Novus." Benjamin paints a word-picture of an angel seeing history's chain of events as a "single catastrophe;" the debris of the catastrophe which is also called "progress" catches in the angels wings (260). Benjamin's poetic portrait of historical catastrophe collecting like rubble and blowing the angel into futurity is apt. Benjamin's parable parallels Cathy Caruth's theory (1996) that there is a level of history which figures itself as an ongoing repetition of traumatic events.

The lines are from Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*, Act IV, Scene (ii).


In his short but splendid *A Sense of an Ending* (1968), Frank Kermode argues that in our literary forms we seek not just an understanding of beginnings but a sense of an ending, an apocalypse to which the narrative will arrive. Literary fictions, however, do not offer crude, mythical resolutions. The production of literary endings is dynamic and relates the processes by which we mediate our own cultures. I should add to Kermode’s ideas that fictional endings reflect upon a culture’s negotiation of the history of trauma.

Kristeva 1984: Chapter 10, 68-72.

The opening line is from Emily Dickinson’s celebrated poem of that title. I quote it not because of any analysable, intertextual links between the Dickinson poem and Winterson’s novel, but because of its appropriateness in capturing the theme of the ensuing section.

*XXVII*

Because I could not stop for Death,
He kindly stopped for me;
The carriage held but just ourselves


De Rola Klossowski 1997: 42.


See for example, Stephen Hawkins *A Brief History of Time*.


Abrams 1993: 57.


See Keller (1992: 40-41). She argues that the “well kept secrets” of life and death, which fall under the rubric of Nature’s secrets, can “pose a
predictable challenge” to those who do not share them (40). She asserts that traditionally, “life” is a secret of women and a secret kept from men. What she terms the “ferreting out of nature’s secrets” also involves the “tearing of Nature’s veil” (41).

Shuttleworth (1984: 195) eloquently refers to the novel’s “complexity and contradiction: a form that would disrupt the association of the temporal sequence of language with a theory of causality.”

See Heisenberg 1949 for study of the Uncertainty principle.

See Michio Kaku, *Hyperspace* (1995: Chapter 1). Field theories have been vital in the development of quantum mechanics, as well as other domains of the “New” physics. The quest has been to find a unifying connection between the forces of Nature, such as the electromagnetic, weak, strong nuclear forces and gravity.

Tennyson, “The Lady of Shalot” (1914: 123).


Beer (1996: 11) notes that Woolf read Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism*.