A Shadow in the Glass: The Trauma of Influence in Contemporary British Women's Writing

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This thesis investigates literary relationships between three contemporary women writers—Jeanette Winterson, Pat Barker and Hilary Mantel—and their proposed female precursors—Virginia Woolf and Muriel Spark. Analysing the usefulness of the most influential theories of intertextual relations—Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence", T. S. Eliot's model of tradition and the post-structuralist notion of intertextuality among others—the thesis proposes a revised model of literary influence, drawing on the concept of psychological trauma as developed in writings of psychologists and trauma theorists since the (re-)invention of the category of post-traumatic stress disorder by the American Psychiatric Association (1980). The thesis seeks to demonstrate the numerous ways in which a vocabulary taken from contemporary trauma theory can shed new light upon the phenomenon and paradigms of literary influence, as well as upon the specific literary relationships under investigation here. While there are many differences between literary influence and traumatic experience, the thesis argues that the former can be seen as a threat to the writer's uniqueness, literary identity and the integrity of his or her text, in ways analogous to how trauma itself can be defined as a threat to the subject's psychological and often bodily integrity. Relying on the elaboration of an idea of *the 'trauma' of literary influence* that draws on the psychological research on trauma, the thesis examines, through the analysis of Winterson's, Barker's and Mantel's respective fictions, a number of possible new approaches to the study of intertextual relationships in women's writing with potential to extend beyond the focus of the thesis. The discussion of Winterson's engagement with Virginia Woolf's work foregrounds the issues of writerly self-promotion and self-invention and connects Winterson's reliance on Woolf's fiction and essays with the concept of narcissism as elaborated by the self-psychologist Heinz Kohut. By contrast, the investigation of Pat Barker's very different engagement with Woolf's oeuvre draws attention to the highly ambivalent nature of her return to Woolf's fictional and critical work and incorporates the horizontal dimension of sibling relationships, thus emphasising the desirability of combining vertical and horizontal approaches in the study of literary influence. Finally, the analysis of Hilary Mantel's engagement with Spark's work illustrates the difference between a 'traumatic' and a 'non-traumatic' return to the work of a particular predecessor and demonstrates the applicability of the concept of anorexia to the study of intertextual relations. Through its emphasis on the connections between literary influence and the concept of psychological trauma, and its creation of new sub-models of intertextuality, the thesis attempts to demonstrate not only the necessity to construct ever new theories of literary relationships, but also the flexibility and the wide applicability of a modified 'trauma' model of literary influence.

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Statement of Copyright

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To my mother

Introduction

What are the different ways in which contemporary writers engage with the work of their predecessors and can they be subsumed under a single model of literary influence? For the past few decades, discussions of intertextual relationships between authors of fiction have been dominated by Harold Bloom's theory of the "anxiety of influence" (Bloom 1997) and the post-structuralist concept of intertextuality. The purpose of this study is to move beyond such traditional models and to construct a theory of intertextual relations that can serve as a point of departure, rather than a rigid mould, for the discussion of literary influence and appropriation in the context of contemporary British women's writing, but which also has the potential of accounting for the central aspects of *any* modern writer's engagement with the literary past. Rather than speaking of the *anxiety* of influence, the following thesis seeks to demonstrate that the word should be replaced with the term "trauma", whose delineation by contemporary, as well as earlier, theorists bears a number of important similarities to the process of influence and literary creation. In order to demonstrate these parallels, however, it is necessary to begin the discussion by introducing a definition of the concept which will be applied throughout this study.

According to the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (2013) issued by the American Psychiatric Association, "trauma" signifies "'[e]xposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one (or more) of the following ways'": by "'[d]irectly experiencing'" or "'witnessing'" "'the traumatic event(s)'", by "'learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or close friend'" or by "'experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s)'". As pointed out by psychiatrists John N. Briere and Catherine Scott, this definition has not been universally accepted due to its restrictive "requirement that trauma be limited to 'exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence'" (Briere and Scott 2015, 9). They argue that

"many events" not covered by APA's description—such as "extreme emotional abuse, major losses or separations, degradation or humiliation, and coerced (but not physically violent) sexual experiences" (9-10)—"may [also] be traumatic" despite the fact that "life threat or injury is not at issue". What these events may be seen as causing is, instead, a "[threat] to *psychological* integrity" (which formed part of the definition of "trauma" included in DSM-III-R[1], issued in 1987) (9, authors' emphasis). Briere and Scott's understanding of the concept is, consequently, that of an event which is "extremely upsetting, at least temporarily overwhelms the individual's internal resources, and produces lasting psychological symptoms" (10). These may involve the flashbacks and nightmares usually connected with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but they may also take the form of depression, substance abuse and anxiety (to name but a few).[2] While this definition of "trauma" is the one adopted in the following study, the concept of "the trauma of influence" it proposes is, in many ways, very different. My discussion of writers' individual responses to the trauma of literary influence is based on the broad conceptualisation of post-traumatic stress disorder as it has arisen from the diagnostic category; as a medical syndrome this describes the most extreme form in which the effects of traumatic experience manifest themselves and which constitutes the basis of the understanding of trauma in the majority of theoretical studies published over the last thirty years. It is also important to note, at this stage, that trauma does not necessarily signify a *single* traumatic event which produces certain symptoms, but it may also stand for a series of experiences which, when taken individually, may not be perceived as traumatic. Emotional abuse is a perfect example of this, with traumatic reactions arising out of the cumulation and/or repetition of painful and often humiliating events.

What has trauma to do with literary influence? In what sense can the relationship between one writer and another be considered traumatic? If one accepts the definition of trauma as an extremely distressing or overwhelming event (or events) which poses a threat to the subject's bodily and/or psychological integrity, then, by analogy, the trauma of influence might be seen as an event (or events) which threatens the literary integrity of the writer and the 'bodily' integrity of his or her text. Assuming that the writer's search for a unique, individual voice is an essential factor

[1] Revised edition.
[2] See (Briere and Scott 2015, 25-61).

in the process of literary creation (particularly as the Romantic notion of originality has dominated readerly and critical appreciations of literary texts since the nineteenth century), I would extend this definition to incorporate a threat to the writer's literary identity and his or her achievement of uniqueness and originality. I argue that *the 'event' which threatens the literary identity and integrity of the writer is the work of the precursor*,[3] who is first encountered in the later author's act of reading his or her text. This is not to say that writers experience the trauma of influence while reading the work of another writer, however, for the act of reading may occur many years before he or she embarks on a literary career. This event, which may be, like trauma, a highly emotional experience (albeit in a transferred aesthetic sense which I will elaborate during the course of my study), is, nevertheless, arguably recalled when the writer conceptualises his or her own work and when he or she sets pen to paper. To describe the experience as "an event" is not, of course, to indicate that the writer sitting down to his or her work will remember a particular moment of reading a particular precursor text. Writers are frequently voracious readers and not only will the number of texts interfering with their literary integrity be considerable, but the effect will also be compounded by their culture's perception and evaluation of those precursor works, as well as by their own re-readings of the same text (if these have occurred) and by their readings and re-readings of other works by the same author (as well as other authors). Consequently, the 'event'—which is, essentially, the precursor's work as perceived by the later author—might be seen as a cumulation of readings, assessments and interpretations performed, on the precursor's oeuvre, both by the writer and by his or her culture (which includes that precursor's re-writing by other authors). Rather than a single experience, the trauma of literary influence may thus be seen as an accumulation of literary encounters. What is more, while in some cases a writer will have one *primary* precursor, in many others no such central figure will be identifiable.

The trauma of influence as presented above might, consequently, be related not only to an understanding of traumatic experience as a series of events which may not be individually traumatic, or psychologically and/or physically threatening in themselves, but also to the vision of post-traumatic stress disorder as perceived by Cathy Caruth (1995a), who describes trauma as an "event" (or non-event) which is

[3] As well as jeopardising the writer's creation of a unique literary self, the precursor's work is also, unavoidably, part of it.

"not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly" (4). While this claim is questionable in the context of real traumatic experience, it is highly applicable to reading literary influence as a form of trauma, for the power, or shadow, of the precursor may not be felt until the later writer begins conceptualising and writing his or her own work, or until he or she decides to pursue a literary career. The 'symptoms' of the trauma of influence, and its resolution, will also, significantly, not become 'physically' manifest until the author starts producing his or her own text. It is in this way that they arguably resemble the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, which may not occur for weeks, months or even years after the precipitating event.

But there are more similarities. It is a well-known fact, for instance, that many writers take their very first steps in literature by imitating their literary heroes and that the development of their own unique voice occurs only subsequently. It is partly in this repetition that they resemble the victim of PTSD, whose symptoms (such as flashbacks and nightmares) are perceived in contemporary trauma theory as repetitive returns to the scene of trauma, whether the victim has a distorted or literal memory of the event or not. These extremely painful, and involuntary, returns of the experience—which possess "much of the emotional force of the original event" (Fernyhough 2012, 208)—are, nevertheless, paradoxically intertwined with episodes of deliberate avoidance of thoughts and stimuli associated with it. Emotional and cognitive immediacy thus oscillates with distance, for the victim might be seen as moving between his or her re-enactment, or 'imitation', of the distressing memory of the traumatic scene on the one hand and its repudiation on the other. The task of the trauma victim is to negotiate these two paradoxical tendencies, just as the writer must arguably reconcile imitation and rejection, identification and repudiation, mimesis and transformation, return and departure, sameness and difference, vis-à-vis the precursor's work. In therapy, the patient is thus encouraged to discuss the traumatic experience (or experiences) in detail (thereby arriving at its more complete picture) and to transform it and integrate it more fully into the psyche. Similarly, the task of the writer is perceived, throughout this study, as that of *transforming* and *integrating* the precursor's work into his or her text, thereby reconciling the contrary movements of repetition and rejection. On a parallel with the victim of trauma, the author might thus be seen as creating, or *writing*, *out of the trauma of literary influence*.

In order to both illustrate the connection between intertextual relationships and the traumatic and to demonstrate the different, and even paradoxical, ways in which contemporary British women writers might be seen as resolving, or failing to resolve, the trauma of their precursors' influence, I have chosen three contemporary female authors who engage with two of the most central, and therefore the most debilitating, 'shadows' in the twentieth-century female literary tradition: Virginia Woolf and Muriel Spark. While the former has had a profound influence on both the field of feminist literary criticism and contemporary male and female fiction, the latter might be seen as a particularly important figure largely due to her successful liberation from the influence of Modernism as early as in the late 1950s, when she managed to construct for herself a completely unique literary identity.

In the selection of Hilary Mantel, Jeanette Winterson and Pat Barker, who engage with their precursors' oeuvres in very different ways, I have been able to demonstrate the flexibility and openness of the trauma model to the creation of a variety of sub-models of literary influence, as well as its ability to incorporate both vertical and horizontal approaches. Furthermore, the fact that all of the writers discussed in this thesis are concerned, to different extents, with traumatic experience in the thematic content of their writing provides this work with a conceptual unity as well as the opportunity to discuss trauma in more detail in the individual chapters (especially Chapters III and IV). Last but not least, while the trauma paradigm can arguably be used in analyses of both male and female authors, I have chosen to focus on the latter not only to emphasise the desirability of perceiving intertextual relationships between contemporary women writers in non-gendered terms, but also because being a female author, and especially a feminist one, might be viewed, in some ways, as intrinsically traumatic. Whenever a contemporary woman writer engages with the work of a female predecessor—especially if she is, like Winterson, Barker and Mantel, interested in the position of women and the issue of gender—she unavoidably returns (whether consciously or not) to that precursor's positioning in a normatively masculine literary tradition, to her engagement with the question of woman, and, consequently, to the essentially 'traumatic' history of both the female sex and the female literary tradition, haunted as it has been by the traumas of patriarchal domination. This seems more or less inevitable whether or not the writer regards herself as feminist or eschews the category or whether, as for many writers, to write is intrinsically to refuse to regard oneself as a 'victim'.

While some of the most important similarities between trauma and literary influence have been discussed above, the trauma model proposed in this work is fully analysed in Chapter I (Section Two), which also includes an introductory discussion of the most influential models of intertextual relations to date (Section One). As well as delineating the 'traumatic' features of these theories, I attempt to demonstrate the trauma model's many advantages over the more traditional notions of intertextual relations.

In Chapter II, I analyse Jeanette Winterson's explicit identification with and self-conscious *hommage* to Virginia Woolf as an instance of what could be termed intertextual narcissism. The primary aim of the chapter is to demonstrate how a seemingly selfless act of literary tribute may be perceived as self-serving through its contribution to the later writer's apparent uniqueness and originality. In my discussion of the 'counter-traumatic' nature of Winterson's seemingly 'traumatic' engagement with Woolf's work, I rely on the theories of Heinz Kohut and his concepts of *selfobject*, *grandiose self* and *idealised parent imago*. The chapter foregrounds the issues of publicity and authorial self-invention, which the most influential models of influence to date have blatantly ignored.

Chapter III focuses on the highly complex interplay of confirmation and subversion, or sameness and difference, in Pat Barker's return to Virginia Woolf's oeuvre. Barker's engagement with her precursor's work is perceived here as a demonstration of intertextual ambivalence and described as an instance of "subversive *hommage*" in which the contrary movements of sameness and difference are frequently very close to each other. In Section One, I discuss the use of a variety of binary pairs, primarily those of absence and presence, in Barker's and Woolf's respective novels, the analysis serving as a preliminary to the next section of the chapter, which discusses Barker's engagement with Woolf's treatment of the subject of the First World War. Finally, in Section Three, I analyse Barker's ambivalent attitude to her precursor as demonstrated in her 2012 novel, *Toby's Room* and in connection with Juliet Mitchell's theories of sibling relationships.

Chapter IV looks at the intertextual relationship between Hilary Mantel and Muriel Spark. Having connected the theory of trauma with the concept of anorexia as discussed by Maud Ellmann (1993) in Section One, I attempt to demonstrate, in Section Two, that Mantel's *An Experiment in Love* (1995) is an instance of the externalisation, or traumatic dissociation, of such Sparkian texts as *The Girls of*

Slender Means (1963), *A Far Cry From Kensington* (1988) and *The Comforters* (1957). In Section Three, by contrast, my aim is to show that Mantel's *Beyond Black* (2005), unlike the earlier novel, might be seen as having reconciled, or united, the opposing tendencies of sameness and difference, and thus resolved the trauma of Spark's influence, through its figurative engagement with *The Hothouse by the East River* (1973) and "The Girl I Left Behind Me" (1957) and through its 'mirroring' of Spark's 1970 novella, *The Driver's Seat*. Like the victim of trauma, who both integrates the traumatic event into his or her psyche and incorporates it into his or her "ongoing life story" (Herman 2001, 37) through the process of therapy, Mantel might thus be seen, in her 2005 novel, as having finally incorporated Spark's work into her own ongoing poetic practice.

CHAPTER I

Psychological Trauma, Sameness and Difference: A New Model of Literary Influence

"Intertextuality is [...], like trauma, caught in a curious and undecidable wavering between departure and return" (Whitehead 2004, 90).

SECTION ONE

Previous Models of Influence and Their Relation to Trauma

Ever since the publication of T. S. Eliot's essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), literary theorists and critics have grappled with the problem of literary influence, devising models that would not merely reflect the nature of writers' engagement with their precursors' work, but that could also be used as aids to literary interpretation or even, as in the case of second-wave feminist criticism, as guides for politically committed poets and authors of fiction. Such distinct models of intertextual relationships as Eliot's vision of tradition, Woolf's idea of "think[ing] back through our mothers" (Woolf 1998a, 99) and the related notion of literary sisterhood, Adrienne Rich's concept of "re-vision" (Rich 1972), Harold Bloom's model of the "anxiety of influence" (Bloom 1997) and Julia Kristeva's and Roland Barthes's articulation of the theory of intertextuality, might also be seen, however, as revealing, albeit in a variety of often indirect ways, the connection between literary influence and trauma. In view of this fact, as well as the many similarities between the nature of intertextual relations on the one hand and psychological trauma and trauma theory on the other, the purpose of this chapter is to partially replace and partially complete the key insights of the most widely-used and influential theories of intertextual relations with a model that accommodates the research into psychological trauma conducted since the official introduction of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) into the third edition (1980) of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* issued by the American Psychiatric Association. I argue that the relationship of one writer to another might be considered as a form of trauma which the later author must work through in order to be able to develop his or her own voice. While some of the most significant parallels between literary influence and trauma have been discussed in the introduction, the following chapter analyses the new model in detail, pointing out both its connection with and its advantages over more traditional theories of intertextual relations and seeking to provide a theoretical backbone for the

models developed in the individual chapters. Before these tasks can be undertaken, however, it is necessary to point out the 'traumatic' qualities of the dominant theories of literary influence and appropriation which still inform, to varying degrees, the study of relationships between literary texts, and to evaluate their usefulness and applicability to discussions of contemporary women's writing and the genre of contemporary fiction more generally.

THE TRAUMA OF BLOOM'S "ANXIETY OF INFLUENCE"

Along with the post-structuralist concept of intertextuality developed by Julia Kristeva in such essays as "The Bounded Text" (1969) and "Word, Dialogue and Novel" (1969), and (most famously) by Roland Barthes in "The Death of the Author" (1967), Harold Bloom's model of the "anxiety of influence" has arguably been the most widely-applied theory of intertextual relations in use in the last three decades. Bearing, as it does, a strong connection to Freud's vision of traumatic neurosis put forward in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), it provides a convenient starting point for discussing literary influence in the context of contemporary trauma theory, which relies partly on Freud's deliberation on the subject of trauma and the related concept of "the compulsion to repeat" (Freud 2003, 58). Despite the fact that Freud's model of the mind is based on the notion of repression, which was rejected by many late-twentieth-century trauma theorists in favour of the concept of dissociation developed by Pierre Janet (1859-1947) at the end of the nineteenth century (Luckhurst 2008, 41-42), his writings remain one of the most important sources for contemporary conceptualisations of post-traumatic stress disorder (8). Along with Janet and other psychologists and neurologists in the late 1800s, Freud was a crucial figure in shifting the meaning of "trauma", which "derives from the Greek word meaning wound" and which originally denoted "a bodily injury caused by an external agent" (2), to the psychological, though the shift was by no means straightforward and debates "between rival theories" as to the physiological or psychic basis of trauma continued "up to the onset of the Great War, when shell shock once more reinvented the terms of the debate" (34).[1] Today, trauma is generally perceived as a psychological phenomenon, although the fact that it manifests itself partly through

[1] For a more detailed discussion of the history of the concept of "trauma", see (Luckhurst 2008, 1-76).

physical symptoms[2] suggests that the body is an inescapable element in the articulation of the contemporary syndrome of PTSD. What is more, with recent investigations into the workings of the human brain performed by such trauma theorists as Bessel van der Kolk and his associates, as well as by Daniel L. Schacter, Eric Kandel, Daniel Conway and other memory scientists, purely psychological interpretations may, once again, be yielding to an essentially biologised model of the mind as the brain as organ of the body.

Freud's discussion of "'traumatic neurosis'" in his essay of 1920 begins with a reference to such "life-threatening accidents" as "severe mechanical shock" and "train crashes". He also mentions the First World War (Freud 2003, 50), which had ended only two years previously and during which thousands of veterans were admitted for treatment of what was then known as "shell shock" and is now officially recognised as post-traumatic stress disorder. Freud argues that traumatic neurosis can be seen as "resulting from an extensive breach of the protective barrier ["around the psyche"]". He also stresses "the threat to life" (70) and, most importantly, "the surprise factor", or "the *fright* experienced by the victim", which he views as "the key causative element" of the disorder. He emphasises the difference between the words "'fright', 'dread' and 'fear'", which are "wrongly used as interchangeable synonyms", but which "can be easily differentiated from each other in their relationship to danger" (50; Freud's emphasis), since—as opposed to "'fright'"—"'fear'" (and, by implication, "'dread'", which "requires a specific object of which we are afraid") suggests "expectation of, and preparation for, danger of some kind". Freud thus sees the experience of fright, which "emphasizes the element of surprise", as a necessary factor for the development of traumatic neurosis. He mentions recurring nightmares as one of its symptoms, for whilst the patient does not appear to think about the experience in his or her "*waking* life"—if anything, the victim is, "[p]erhaps, [...] at pains *not* to think of it"—he or she reproduces the situation in dreams, along with the feeling of fright produced by the initial traumatic experience (51; Freud's emphasis). Freud identifies this re-enactment of the original event as an instance of what he terms "the compulsion to repeat", which does not manifest itself merely among the victims of traumatic neurosis, but also in such common, every-day activities as the

[2] "People suffering from PTSD flashbacks and nightmares typically feel the returning experience with much of the emotional force of the original event, including physiological correlates such as sweating and heightened heart rate" (Fernyhough 2012, 208).

play of children (61). In a famous passage in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud gives an example of this tendency in his description of "a game played by a one-and-a-half-year-old boy" (52) (Freud's grandson), who has the habit of throwing his toys into a corner of the room whilst "beam[ing] with an expression of interest and gratification, and utter[ing] a loud, long-drawn-out 'o-o-o-o' sound", which both the boy's mother and Freud himself interpret as representing the German word "*fort* ('gone')". Another and closely related game played by the child is that of throwing a wooden reel "over the edge of his curtained cot" with the utterance of "'o-o-o-o'", and of bringing it back (or making it re-appear) with the utterance of a "joyful *Da*! ('Here!')" (53). But while Freud is tempted to connect the child's game with the boy's attempt to re-experience the gratification accompanying his mother's returns, he stresses the fact that the child usually enacts only the mother's disappearance, since "Act One, the departure, was played as a game all on its own, indeed vastly more often than the full performance with its happy conclusion". One of Freud's interpretations of this curious fact is that the repetition of the mother's disappearance—a highly unpleasant event in whose unfolding the boy's "own role [...] was passive"—can be seen as an attempt on the child's part to "[give] himself an active one by repeating it as a game"; as an expression of "an instinctive urge to assert control that operates quite independently of whether or not the memory as such was pleasurable" (54). Repetition is thus seen by Freud as a method of coming to terms with a painful experience and of providing oneself with the illusion of control that the original event fails to grant the subject—the well-known powerlessness experienced by victims of trauma which is now an established fact of trauma theory. At the same time, however, while the play of children may be an attempt to "abreact the intensity of [an] experience" (55), the compulsion to repeat is not, in general terms, seen by Freud as a sign of health. He connects it not only with such traumatic experiences as that of the near loss of life, but also with other neuroses, whose sufferers unconsciously repeat "a particular element of infantile sexual life, namely the Oedipus complex and its off-shoots" in the transference relationship with the therapist (56-57). They thus "*repeat* the repressed matter as an experience in the present, instead of *remembering* it as something belonging to the past, which is what the physician would much rather see happen" (56; Freud's emphasis). This goal is,

interestingly, one of the major aims of contemporary trauma therapy (even though trauma theorists frequently perceive the traumatic experience as *dissociated*,[3] rather than repressed, by the mind), where the patient narrates the traumatogenic event in detail, thereby subjecting it to emotional and cognitive processing and transformation.

Bloom's vision of intertextual relationships, presented, most famously, in *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), relies heavily on Freudian psychoanalysis, including his concepts of repression, the id, the ego and the superego, the uncanny, sublimation and the repetition compulsion (to name but a few). According to Bloom, the precursor poem is repressed into the id (1997, 71), and is thus inescapable. Like the victim of neurosis, the poet is, in other words, forced to 'repeat' the work of the earlier poet in his own creative endeavours. In order to be original, however, and to attain mastery over the predecessor, the "latecomer" (80) strongly misreads the earlier poet in a variety of revisionary ratios, which Bloom sees as "defense mechanisms"[4] against "repetition compulsions" (88). This argument connects his model not only with Freud's vision of the neurotic who replays some constitutive element of his or her own early sexual development in the transference relationship with the therapist, but also with his discussion of traumatic neurosis. The relation between the theory of the anxiety of influence and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, "whose true subject" (as Bloom asserts in *A Map of Misreading*) "is influence" (2003, 12), is also evident in his understanding of the term "repetition", which is defined as "the *recurrence of images* from our own past, *obsessive images* against which our present affections vainly struggle" (1997, 80; my emphasis)—a description reminiscent of Freud's vision of the traumatic nightmare, which "repeatedly takes them [the victims] back to the situation of their original misadventure, from which they awake with a renewed sense of fright" (Freud 2003, 51). Another allusion (albeit most likely an unconscious one) to Freud's emphasis on the accuracy of the re-enactments of the initial traumatic event in traumatic neurosis occurs in Bloom's discussion of his sixth revisionary ratio, *apophrades*, which is also

[3] The concept of dissociation is discussed in more detail on page 34.

[4] Relying on the respective contributions of Sigmund and Anna Freud, the *Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* lists a number of such mechanisms, including *reaction formation*, *regression*, *repression*, *projection*, *undoing* and *isolation*. The authors stress that "all defences aim to reduce anxiety", "operate unconsciously" and "have their roots in childhood". What is more, "some defences seem specific to certain psychopathologic syndromes", such as hysteria (conversion) and obsessional neurosis (undoing) (Akhtar 2009, 70).

an obvious reference to the Founder's[5] description of the neurotic's repetition of repressed material in his or her transference relationship with the psychoanalyst, for these returns are referred to as "all-too-accurate reproductions of the past" (56):

> [...] strong poets keep returning from the dead, and only through the quasi-willing mediumship of other strong poets. *How* they return [Bloom's emphasis] is the decisive matter, for if they return *intact*, then the return impoverishes the later poets, dooming them to be remembered—if at all—as having ended in poverty, in an imaginative need they could not themselves gratify. (Bloom 1997, 140-141; my emphasis)

As well as Freud's analysis of traumatic neurosis, the above quotation echoes Freud and Breuer's discussion of traumatic experience in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895). They argue that "those memories which have become the precipitating causes of hysterical phenomena have been preserved with an *astonishing freshness* and retained their full affective emphasis over a long period of time" (Freud and Breuer 2004, 12; my emphasis). One hysterical patient's chronologically distant memories, which were "of aetiological importance", are thus described as "astonishingly *intact* and of remarkable sensory strength, and when they recurred [they] exercised the full affective force of new experiences" (13; my emphasis).

Significantly, Bloom also returns to Freud's analysis of the game of fort!-da! (Bloom 1997, 81) and suggests that the repetition of the precursor's work by the latecomer signifies poetic death, just as the compulsion to repeat is seen by Freud as, in Bloom's words, "driving us to Thanatos" (87). Yet, at the same time, the latecomer's complete rejection of the predecessor, whose work is impossible to evade, would be synonymous, as Bloom suggests, with not creating anything at all, signifying, in this way, a more complete and terrifying form of death.[6] Despite his reliance on the notion of the repetition compulsion and the death drive, however, Bloom is reluctant to connect his overall vision of intertextual relations between poets—at least as discussed in *The Anxiety of Influence*—more directly with the subject of traumatic neurosis, for his focus is on presenting literary influence as a variety of the so-called "family romance" and the related notion of the Oedipus

[5] Bloom refers to Freud as "the Founder" (1997, 80)—a mark of his profound respect for and recognition of Freud's contribution to the knowledge of the human mind and, consequently, poetic influence.

[6] According to Bloom, "[n]egation of the precursor is never possible, since no ephebe can afford to yield even momentarily to the death instinct" (1997, 102).

complex. What could be seen as his partial suppression of Freud's vision of traumatic neurosis nevertheless returns in the language used by Bloom in his descriptions of the relations between one poet and another—phrases as well as individual words which are apparently unrelated to Freud's theories, but which both clearly echo his interpretation of the disorder in his 1920 essay, as well as in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), and prefigure more contemporary descriptions of PTSD. In his discussion of the intertextual relationship of one poet to another, Bloom thus speaks of influence as a form of haunting ("[a]nd yet Marlowe haunted Shakespeare"; "[w]hen Hotspur declaims in *Henry IV, Part One,* Shakespeare takes care that we should note the muted ghost of Marlowe"; "Shakespeare's exorcism of Marlowe"),[7] and wounding ("Shakespeare's *King John* is too wounded by Marlowe to be a success")[8], which recalls the original meaning of the word "trauma" from the Greek for "wound". He also mentions Ibsen's "horror of contamination by Shakespeare" (xxiv) and perceives "poetic influence" as "*influenza* in the realm of literature" (38; Bloom's emphasis)—both phrases reminiscent of Freud's discussion of the "'incubation period [...]'" of traumatic neurosis in *Moses and Monotheism*, where he defines it as "[t]he time that elapsed between the accident and the first appearance of the symptoms", the term being "a transparent allusion to the pathology of infectious disease" (Freud 1939, 109).

It is, I argue, due to Bloom's own partial suppression of the traumatic aspect of poetic relations and his foregrounding of Freud's theory of the drives that he achieves his highly masculinist model, for while Freud's definition of traumatic neurosis in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is surprisingly gender non-specific, his view of familial relationships is notoriously male-centred. Had Bloom focused on the ephebe's first encounter with the precursor's work as a traumatic event in his or her imaginative life—an experience producing fright as opposed to anxiety, which denotes "'angst vor etwas'", "[a]nxiety *before* something" or "a mode of expectation" (Bloom 1997, 57; Bloom's emphasis)—he may have come up with a much more genderless, and therefore universal, theory, especially as he seems to regard the poet's discovery of his literary father in traumatic terms. His reference to the ephebe's first experience of great poetry as "a Second Birth" (25), for instance, precipitates his allusion to "the birth trauma, itself a response to our first situation of *danger*" (57;

[7] (Bloom 1997, xxii; xxxvii; xliv)
[8] (xxii)

Bloom's emphasis). And even though he suppresses the connection by pointing out that "Freud rejected [Otto] Rank's account of the birth trauma as being biologically unfounded" (57-58) and turns instead to the Founder's emphasis upon "'a certain predisposition to anxiety on the part of the infant'", he asserts that "[w]hen a poet experiences incarnation *qua* poet, he experiences anxiety necessarily towards any *danger* that might *end him* as a poet" (58)[9]. He also points out that the encounter with a great precursor "may come [...] as terror" (35) and refers to the latecomer as being "flooded" by the earlier poet's work (16; 57), the term recalling Freud's description of "external trauma", which "will doubtless provoke a massive disturbance in the organism's energy system" (Freud 2003, 68), since "[i]t is no longer possible to prevent the psychic apparatus from being *flooded* by large quanta of stimulation" (68-69; my emphasis). These 'traumatic' features of Bloom's model of "intra-poetic relationships" (Bloom 1997, 5) are, nevertheless, relegated to a secondary position in his theory of the *anxiety*, and *not* the trauma, of influence, even if the revisionary ratios defend the latecomer's work against the repetition compulsion, and are, consequently, both counter-neurotic and counter-traumatic.

The male-centredness of Bloom's vision of influence, consequent, as argued above, upon his foregrounding of the Freudian theory of family romance, constitutes the most significant obstacle to applying his model to women's writing—an opinion voiced, most notably, by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979) (2000, 48), who nonetheless praise Bloom for scrutinising the maleness of the literary tradition rather than taking it for granted, like "other theorists" have tended to do. Being so overtly "patriarchal" (47), his theory clarifies, in their view, the woman writer's difference from her male colleagues (48), with the former suffering from what Gilbert and Gubar term the "'anxiety of authorship'" (49). To a student of women's fiction, such Bloomian certitudes as the following use of Freud's notion of the Primal Scene appear particularly unpalatable:

> [...] what is the Primal Scene, for a poet *as poet?* It is his Poetic Father's coitus with the Muse. There he was begotten? No—there they failed to beget him. He must be self-begotten, he must engender himself upon the Muse his mother. [...] The strong poet fails to beget himself—he must wait for his Son, who will define him even as he has defined his own Poetic Father. (Bloom 1997, 36-37; Bloom's emphasis)

[9] All italics, apart from "*danger*", are Bloom's.

How can this statement be applied to Emily Dickinson, whose work is analysed in *A Map of Misreading* (1975)? For obvious reasons, Bloom never answers the question. Conveniently for him, the canonical poets of the Romantic age (his primary focus in *The Anxiety of Influence*) were all male—an arguably valid excuse for his application of a male-centred psychoanalytical model to his analysis of their engagement with the work of their poetic 'fathers'. The inclusion of a woman—"the formidable Dickinson" (2003, 185), as Bloom refers to her—in *A Map of Misreading*, which encompasses a much longer historical period (from John Milton to John Ashbery), must have forced him to reconsider his masculinist theory, for *Anxiety*'s companion volume, although relying much more heavily on the concept of the Primal Scene, is generally far more reluctant (despite its use of the pronoun "he" and the rather frequent appearance of the word "father") to base its theory of poetic relationships on the sex of the latecomer and his (or her) precursor. It could be argued, in fact, that in order to create a more genderless version of his model, Bloom has chosen to foreground the Freudian mechanisms of defence, as well as his notion of the repetition compulsion (both of which are already quite prominent in the earlier book) and the concept of the death drive at the expense of the Oedipus complex, which is barely mentioned in his 1975 study and which was the central Freudian notion adopted in *The Anxiety of Influence*. This shift of focus is hardly surprising if one considers the fact that these concepts, as opposed to castration anxiety and the male child's wish to eliminate his father and have a sexual relationship with his mother, are common to both the male and the female sex, with the drive towards "Thanatos" (1997, 87) being, according to Freud, a universal feature of *all* living beings (Freud 2003, 76; 78). As well as this new emphasis on the death drive and the repetition compulsion, both of which are directly related to Freud's discussion of traumatic neurosis, Bloom's presentation of his notion of the "Primal Scene of Instruction" (Bloom 2003, 6), which signifies, in simple terms, the poet's first encounter with his or her precursor, is much more explicitly connected with the traumatic. It is in his 1975 study that he relates poetic birth not only to "the Freudian *catastrophe* of instinctual genesis" (10-11; my emphasis), but also to his discussion of the "two Primal Scenes, of the Oedipal fantasy and of the slaying of the father by his rival sons" (47), which Bloom describes as "fantasy traumas" (48), or traumas of the imagination. More importantly, he connects "poetic incarnation" with Freud's

description, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, of the "influx", at the beginning of life on earth, "of an antithetical power" (13)—life—into inanimate objects, which was the origin, as Freud speculates, of the death drive (Freud 2003, 78). Simultaneously confirming and inverting Freud's theory, Bloom asserts that

> [p]resumably any poet wishes to end *as a poet*, if at all, only in his own fashion. Perhaps we can say that a man, even as a man, is capable of wishing to die, but by definition no poet, *as poet*, can wish to die, for that negates poethood. If death ultimately represents the earlier state of things, then it also represents the earlier state of meaning, or pure anteriority; that is to say, repetition of the literal, or literal meaning. Death is therefore a kind of literal meaning, or from the standpoint of poetry, *literal meaning is a kind of death. Defenses can be said to trope against death, rather in the same sense that tropes can be said to defend against literal meaning*, which is the antithetical formula for which we have been questing.
>
> [...] we can see the poem as an attempt to return to pure anteriority at the same time that it ambivalently tropes against anteriority. (Bloom 2003, 91; Bloom's emphasis)

While this shift of focus may be promising, however, Bloom's model is exceedingly complex. This renders it difficult to apply to the study of intertextual relations in any straightforward manner, partly due to its esoteric language, but primarily because of the frequently self-contradictory nature of Bloom's vision (evident in the last sentence of the excerpt quoted above, for example). One of the major contradictions of his view of intertextual relationships is related to the model's foundation upon the Freudian concept of repression, which is central to both *The Anxiety of Influence* and *A Map of Misreading*. If the precursor is repressed into the id, as Bloom affirms (1997, 71; 2003, 50), then the re-appearance of his or her work in the poetry of the latecomer simply *cannot be conscious* on the latter's part. What is one to do, in this context, with Bloom's assertion that misreading is an act of "*perverse, wilful revisionism*" (1997, 30; Bloom's emphasis)? Since he indicates that both a conscious and an unconscious repetition or transformation of a precursor's work is possible, his foundation of his model on the concept of repression is applicable only to the latter, excluding not merely Browning and Yeats, with their "*overt* struggle against Shelley" (2003, 24; my emphasis), but also the practice of re-writing the canon popular among more contemporary authors, such as Jean Rhys, Angela Carter, J. M. Coetzee, Margaret Atwood, Jeanette Winterson and Emma Tennant (to name but a few). In an age of this celebratory, and often self-conscious,

belatedness,[10] Bloom's Nietzschean vision of poetic self-deception is highly insufficient.[11]

Another problem with Bloom's theory is the enigmatic nature of some of its major concepts, including the most central one of the "anxiety of influence". In the preface to the second edition of his 1973 study, Bloom appears surprised at "how weakly misread *The Anxiety of Influence* has been, and continues to be". Objecting to some common misinterpretations of his theory by "[in]adequate reader[s]", he stresses that "[w]hat writers may experience as anxiety, and what their works are compelled to manifest, are the *consequence* of poetic misprision, rather than the *cause* of it" (1997, xxiii; Bloom's emphasis). And yet Bloom's focus on poets, rather than poems, suggests that the opposite is true, especially when he remarks that "[p]oems, [...] may be viewed (humorously) as motor discharges in response to the excitation increase of influence anxiety". They are not, he asserts, "given *by* pleasure, but by the unpleasure of a dangerous situation, the situation of anxiety of which the grief of influence forms so large a part" (58; Bloom's emphasis). The question "which one is it?" presses itself upon the lips of Bloom's "[in]adequate" (xxiii) readers and critics, many of whom have, in consequence, adopted a much simpler and more useful version of his model, according to which "the anxiety of influence" refers to little more than the latecomer's resistance to recognising the influence of other authors upon his or her work—a reluctance stemming directly from his or her desire to be original and resulting in the later author's transformation (or "misreading", to apply Bloom's word for it) of his or her predecessor's work. The term "misreading" is, in fact, another confusing concept, for Bloom's placing of an equal sign between reading and writing combines the clearly separate actions of the ephebe's first, and subsequent, encounters with a precursor poem with his or her later resurrection of that poem in his or her own poetry (even if the latecomer returns to these reading or re-readings in his or her work). Is "misreading" the act of transforming, or altering, the work of the predecessor in one's own poem? A repetition of the poet's initial misunderstanding of his precursor's work? Or a transformation, or re-writing, of this inaugural misreading? While Bloom's use of the

[10] As Bloom points out in *A Map of Misreading*, "Nietzsche insisted that nothing was more pernicious than the sense of being a latecomer, but I want to insist upon the contrary: nothing is now more salutary than such a sense" (2003, 29).

[11] For Bloom's discussion of Postmodernist writing, see Chapter 2 of *A Map of Misreading*, "The dialectics of poetic tradition" (2003, 27-40), especially pp. 29, 36 and 37.

term may reflect the existence of a strong connection between reading and writing, it blurs the two to such a degree that they become indistinguishable, rendering the term too vague and self-contradictory to be successfully employed in the practice of literary criticism.

To argue that there are significant obstacles in applying Bloom's model to the study of intertextual relationships, particularly if the writer under discussion is a woman, and especially if she is also a representative of contemporary fiction, which is frequently quite explicit about its intertextual sources, is not to dismiss the notion of the anxiety of influence altogether. As well as flagging up the possibility of a writer performing an *unconscious* transformation of a precursor's work in his or her own, of imitating it unknowingly, or of misunderstanding it in the first place, the most fruitful insights of Bloom's model lie in its recognition of artistic self-deception and the phenomenon of the anxiety of influence in the more widely-accepted sense (which is, as pointed out by Bloom himself, a misinterpretation of his theory) of the writer's desire to be original and unique. Last but not least, the distinction between repetition and misreading (*in the sense of transformation or re-writing*) as a defence against the anxiety of influence (another misapprehension of Bloom's model) is extremely useful in discussions of intertextual relationships, for it emphasises the latecomer's negotiation of sameness and difference, imitation and repudiation, mimesis and originality—the most basic feature, it could be argued, of a writer's relationship with his or her predecessors. It is this negotiation that is the foundation of the model of *influence as trauma*, whose elaboration is the focus of Section Two.[12] Bloom's theory—in all its complexity, contradictions and specific revisionary ratios—is, I argue, too complicated, too detailed and too narrow to be successfully applied to a wide variety of texts. Seeing influence as a form of trauma, however, is arguably general enough to yield space for the creation of other models, *which must stem from the work of the writer under discussion, rather than be imposed upon it*. The following thesis proposes a number of such models, all of which reflect the vision of influence as trauma and all of which are strictly related to the literary preoccupations of the authors studied in the individual chapters. At the same time, they open up new ways of thinking about intertextual relationships in contemporary

[12] The importance of the concepts of sameness and difference and the necessity of negotiating and reconciling them was first drawn to my attention by Juliet Mitchell's ground-breaking study of sibling relationships, *Siblings: Sex and Violence* (2003), which I discuss in detail in Chapter III.

women's writing, including the incorporation of the horizontal axis of sibling and peer relations, which is ignored not only by Bloom's model, but also by its most influential rival theories (analysed below).

THE TRAUMATIC IN T. S. ELIOT'S CONCEPT OF TRADITION

As pointed out by a number of critics, Harold Bloom's model of the anxiety of influence derives partly from T. S. Eliot's vision of the relationship between the literary past and the poet, outlined most famously in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919). According to Patricia Waugh, for instance, "Bloom's is the first sustained attempt to slay the demon of Eliot and to give birth to a new era of more theoretically developed criticism" (2011, 384). In line with the practice of "Antithetical Criticism" (Bloom 1997, 93) which he advocates, Bloom "[rewrites] Eliot's doctrine of impersonality as the expression of a psychoanalytically revived Romantic theory of authorship", "impersonality" becoming "the modern means of continuing to assert the Romantic personality of the poet in an age of democratic threats to its existence" (Waugh 2011, 384). As pointed out by Jean-Michel Rabaté, in turn, Eliot's essay contributed to the construction of a new vision of the relationship between the individual poet and the literary past, offering a view of tradition as refusing to be bound by conventional ideas of linear time. "Now texts appear always to be engaged in a struggle with each other as to which provides the more comprehensive frame of reference" (1994, 210)—an implication of Eliot's argument developed by Bloom through his "(mis)read[ing]" of his precursor "as a believer in benevolent influence" (Jay 1983, 68). Emphasising the profound impact of Eliot's vision of tradition upon later theoretical developments, Waugh suggests that "[t]here is actually little in either Bloom or Barthes that is not at least strongly implied by Eliot" (2011, 385). The post-structuralist concept of intertextuality developed by Kristeva and Barthes in the late 1960s might thus be seen as an extreme rendition of Eliot's emphasis upon the literary past as "[having] a simultaneous existence and compos[ing] a simultaneous order" (Eliot 1975, 38), for the concept of the *text*, as viewed by both theorists (i.e. the text in the sense of cultural, social and historical codes of meaning, as well as language itself) is arguably an even more abstract, dictatorial and ever-present entity than Eliot's

timeless "mind of Europe" (39).[13] Similarly, Barthes's idea of "the death of the Author" (Barthes 1977a) is arguably little more than an extreme, left-wing version of Eliot's view of impersonality (Ellmann 1987, 14). Just as Eliot's poet must recognise that the European mind is "much more important than his own private mind" (Eliot 1975, 39), so Barthes's author is all but forced to accept the impossibility of saying anything new, and to submit to the tyranny of language and text. Whilst "[f]or Eliot, impersonality implied a reinstatement of traditional authority; for Barthes, [it meant] the deconstruction of authority *per se*" (Ellmann 1987, 14).

The impact of "Tradition and the Individual Talent" is not restricted to Bloom's idea of the "anxiety of influence" and the post-structuralist theories of intertextuality and the death of the author, however. Many views taken for granted today (both within and outside the academy)—such as the impossibility of creating a truly original work of art and the "perpetual modification" (Reeves 2006, 109) of the literary past by the present (expressed, most succinctly, in Borges's "Kafka and His Precursors")[14]—derive from the arguments presented in the essay. So too does the second-wave feminist preoccupation with recovering a female literary tradition (Cianci and Harding 2007, 2), which Virginia Woolf, in her re-writing of Eliot's model (1929), perceived as one of the prerequisites for successful female literary creation. Needless to say, Adrienne Rich's concept of "re-vision" (Rich 1972) is another by-product of Eliot's view of intertextual relationships, for it emphasises the political necessity of transforming the misogyny inherent in the largely male-authored works of the literary canon, thereby not only demonstrating the author's hostility towards Eliot's patriarchal tradition, but also echoing his suggestion that the new work of art modifies the readers' perception of the past, which implies a view of the literary work as a highly unstable object. Even such a recent contribution to the study of the relationships between literary texts as Christian Gutleben and Susana Onega's notion of "refraction" clearly relies on "Tradition"'s emphasis on the new text's alteration of the past, for the concept is defined as "involv[ing] the assumption of a dialectic relation between the canonical and Postmodernist texts, affecting the result as well as the source, the new text as well as the old one" (Onega and Gutleben 2004, 7).

[13] The post-structuralist notion of intertextuality is discussed in more detail on pp. 40-44.
[14] "The fact is that every writer *creates* his own precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future" (Borges 1995, 337; Borges's emphasis).

Informing some of the most significant contributions to the study of literary influence and appropriation articulated since its publication, Eliot's model is thus inescapable in any discussion of the subject of the relations between literary texts. Another quality that speaks in its favour is its relatively general nature (far more general than Bloom's Freudian theory)—a feature which arguably renders it more appropriate to the study of as varied a field as contemporary women's writing. And while Eliot's view of tradition has been criticised as patriarchal and misogynist (Gilbert and Gubar 1988, 153) (Lamos 2004, 58), its author accused of putting an equal sign between the literary past and "the tradition of the 'Dead White European Male'" (Pope 2005, 96), it is arguably less masculinist than Bloom's Freudian theory. A crucial insight of Eliot's vision, and one that critics have pondered over for many years, is his perception of the literary past as "a simultaneous order" into which new works of art are incorporated. A major difficulty implicated in this view of tradition and the aspect which arguably makes it inapplicable as a model of influence is its abstract and potentially indefinite quality, for this "ideal order" (Eliot 1975, 38) "abandons", as Eliot affirms, "nothing *en route*", as though it were completely separate from what is, after all, a highly selective and political process of canon formation. At the same time, however, "nothing" is here doubly, if still insufficiently, restricted, for the work of art forming part of this "mind of Europe" (39) must be both "really new" (38) and an expression of "the main current, which does not at all flow invariably through the most distinguished reputations" (39). The order can accept and incorporate only "the really new" literary text, since it is only through the introduction of such a text that the "existing monuments" of that order (which were, consequently, also 'truly new' at the time of their publication and/or recognition) can be modified. To Eliot, a "really new", or original, work of literature is that which both returns to and breaks away from tradition; which combines, in other words, sameness and difference. He discourages both absolute novelty and pure repetition (even though he prefers the former to the latter) (38), suggesting that the poet should attempt to reconcile the two. Significantly, Eliot's advocacy of this negotiation brings to mind some of the central assumptions of contemporary trauma theory, which began with the inclusion of post-traumatic stress disorder into APA's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (1980) and which perceives the victim of PTSD as oscillating between two contradictory tendencies: that of rejecting the traumatic experience (ranging from the victim's struggle not to think about it or encounter its reminders to

amnesia relating to parts of or even the whole traumatic event) and of 're-living', or 'repeating' it through intrusive flashbacks, nightmares and bodily symptoms (Luckhurst 2008, 1). What is more, many writers on trauma, including the influential figures of Judith Lewis Herman (2001, 37), Bessel van der Kolk (1995, 160) Cathy Caruth (1995b, 153) and Anne Whitehead (2004, 140), accept the distinction between a "traumatic memory" (140) and an "[o]rdinary", or "narrative" one (van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995, 160), which derives, like the concept of dissociation, from the work of Pierre Janet. Summarising his insights, Whitehead points out that a narrative memory is marked by the subject's "[ability] to vary her account from telling to telling, adapting it to present circumstances. [...] Narrative memory is [...] a social act, taking into account the listener or audience"; it thus has an element of "flexibility" which traumatic memories lack (Whitehead 2004, 141). Unlike the traumatic memory, it is integrated into the person's "ongoing life story" (Herman 2001, 37). Whether the traumatic memory is a distorted version of the event or a "*literal*" and "*veridical*" one (Leys 2000, 229; Leys's emphasis) is a major point of contention among contemporary theorists of trauma. Not all theorists accept a fundamental distinction between the mechanisms of ordinary and traumatic memory. Charles Fernyhough (2012), for instance, argues that "intrusive memories of trauma are subject to the same kind of distortions as ordinary memories" (211). At the same time, "[t]here is certainly plenty of evidence that trauma can lead to certain aspects of the event not to be encoded properly". Consequently, he emphasises that the aim of therapy is to transform the memory of the original traumatic event from its status as an "extremely distressing fragment" to that of a more complete "whole" (229).

Regardless of whether the victim's 'traumatic' memory is perceived as literal and veridical (as seen by van der Kolk and Caruth), or as distorted and/or fragmented, however, the majority of therapeutic approaches in use today, including those mentioned by Fernyhough, strive to encourage the patient to discuss the experience in detail, thereby both re-living and *transforming it into something different than what it already is* (whether from fragment to whole, from a distorted to a more accurate memory, or from a "traumatic" to a "narrative" one). It is in this way that the experience becomes more fully integrated into the psyche, as well as into the narrative of the patient's life. This is exactly what happens to the new work of art in Eliot's vision of tradition, which could also be read as reflecting the workings of

memory as seen by contemporary memory scientists, who perceive the human mind as repeatedly re-creating the past "according to the demands of the present" (6):

> what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the *whole* existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered. (Eliot 1975, 38; Eliot's emphasis)

Eliot's model might thus be seen as a literary rendition (whether conscious or not) of Janet's distinction between a traumatic and an ordinary memory and as related, via their mediumship, to the concept of dissociation (also developed by Janet), which, though "[lacking] a single, coherent referent or conceptualization" (Cardena 1994, 15) in contemporary trauma theory, may be defined as "a defensive process in which experiences are split off and kept unintegrated through alterations in memory and consciousness, with a resulting impairment of the self" (Tillman, Nash, and Lerner 1994, 398). This partial or complete failure of integration is seen by many contemporary trauma theorists as conducive to the nightmares and flashbacks regarded as typical of post-traumatic stress disorder.[15] Significantly, unlike the Freudian concept of repression, which governed the understanding of the human mind for a greater part of the twentieth century, dissociation is currently the dominant model of trauma, the "*horizontal*" view of the mind which it implies differing from Freud's "*vertical* model" (Luckhurst 2008, 48; Luckhurst's emphasis) and resembling the simultaneity of Eliot's "ideal order" (Eliot 1975, 38). By echoing Janet, and prefiguring contemporary trauma theory, Eliot is essentially saying that a true work of art is non-traumatic in its relationship to the past. While arguing, like Eliot, that the author's task is to negotiate imitation and rejection in relation to the work of his or her predecessors, I view the relationship between writers and their precursors as *essentially traumatic*. To overcome the trauma of literary influence, or the threat to his or her own unique literary identity, and in order to develop his or her

[15] Unlike contemporary trauma theorists, Janet focused on patients suffering from hysteria and perceived the "dissociation of the personality", which he saw as "the core" of the disorder, as "an integrative deficit, rather than a psychological defense" (Reyes, Elhai, and Ford 2008, 371).

own voice, the later writer must find a way to reconcile sameness and difference, mimesis and anti-mimesis, vis-à-vis the work of earlier authors.

VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE TRAUMAS OF RE-WRITING IN FEMINIST LITERARY CRITICISM

In protest against the male-centred models of influence put forward by Eliot and Bloom, as well as Roland Barthes's theory of "the death of the Author" (Barthes 1977a), which threatened to bury the emerging category of the woman writer alive, many second-wave feminist critics, novelists and poets identified themselves with a distorted version of Virginia Woolf's idea of feminine writing as "think[ing] back through our mothers" (Woolf 1998a, 99)—a feminist adaptation of Eliot's 1919 essay. In *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Woolf bemoaned the lack of a feminine literary tradition on which a female author could rely in creating her own work, thereby clearly distinguishing the category of "woman writer" from the mainstream, and male-dominated, literary culture:

> the other difficulty which faced them ([...] early nineteenth–century novelists) when they came to set their thoughts on paper—[was] that they had no tradition behind them, or one so short and partial that it was of little help. *For we think back through our mothers if we are women*. It is useless to go to the great men writers for help, however much one may go to them for pleasure. [...] The weight, the pace, the stride of a man's mind are too unlike her own for her to lift anything substantial from him successfully. The ape is too distant to be sedulous. Perhaps the first thing she would find, setting pen to paper, was that there was no common sentence ready for her use. (1998a, 98-9; my emphasis)

Woolf's reliance on Eliot's model is explicit not only in her emphasis on the importance of a literary tradition in the creation of new, individual talent, but also in the famous sentence (in italics), which expresses his view that the poet must be aware "not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence" (Eliot 1975, 38), for the act of "think[ing] back" is an oxymoronic fusion of the past ("back") and the present ("thinking"). Woolf's statement has been repeated by numerous feminist critics, and adopted, in different ways, by such writers as Adrienne Rich and Alice Walker. It is the latter's essay, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens" (1974), that reveals, most explicitly, the traumatic aspects of Woolf's vision of intertextual

relations between women writers, as demonstrated by Walker's modification of a passage from *A Room of One's Own*:

> Virginia Woolf wrote further, speaking of course not of our Phillis [Phillis Wheatley, a slave and poet] that 'any woman born with a great gift in the sixteenth century [insert "eighteenth century," insert "black woman," insert "born or made a slave"] would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard [insert "Saint"], feared and mocked at. For it needs little skill and psychology to be sure that a highly gifted girl who had tried to use her gift for poetry would have been so thwarted and hindered by contrary instincts [add "chains, guns, the lash, the ownership of one's body by someone else, submission to an alien religion"], that she must have lost her health and sanity to a certainty.' (Walker 1983, 235)[16]

Some of these women, tormented by the force of their own spirituality and creativity, which disturbed the daily drudgery of their lives like the life that erupts in inanimate beings in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*,[17] are, as Walker asserts, "our mothers and grandmothers" (232). Like Woolf's witches, "possessed" women and herb sellers (Woolf 1998a, 63), Walker's female ancestors express their creativity in ways which are simultaneously "high—and low" (Walker 1983, 239): by making quilts, telling stories, singing songs and planting gardens. It is these gardens that the daughter, or granddaughter, is obliged, through her work, to recover, so as to give full artistic expression to "the creative spark, the seed of the flower they [the mothers and grandmothers] themselves never hoped to see", but which they have "handed" down to their female descendants (240), and expressed, as best they could, through the means at their disposal. To paraphrase, the daughter's task is to "extend, reveal, and elaborate her mother's often thwarted talents" (DuPlessis 1985, 93). Popular in second-wave feminist criticism, this thought might be seen as one of the central ideas behind its portrayal of intertextual relationships between women writers and their female precursors as a hostility- and rivalry-free zone—a utopian vision achieved

[16] In the passage quoted by Walker, Woolf is referring to her famous fictional account of the life of Shakespeare's (hypothetical) sister, which can, in itself, be described as traumatic. Beaten by her otherwise affectionate father for entertaining artistic ambitions, she runs away from home and tries to secure a job as an actress in a London theatre. Having been blatantly rejected and ridiculed, and finding herself with child by the abusive "actor-manager" Nick Greene, she commits suicide and "lies buried at some cross-roads where the omnibuses now stop outside the Elephant and Castle" (Woolf 1998a, 62).

[17] "For these grandmothers and mothers of ours were not Saints, but Artists; driven to a numb and bleeding madness by the springs of creativity in them for which there was no release" (Walker 1983, 233).

through the suppression of the negative implications of both object relations theory, on which it was based, and Woolf's idea of "thinking back through our mothers". Woolf herself never suggested that the process of going back to one's female ancestors is necessarily a return to a literary Eden. The misinterpretation might, nevertheless, be due to the Woolfian figure of "Shakespeare's sister" (Woolf 1998a, 63), introduced in *A Room of One's Own* as a woman whose creativity was not allowed to flourish on account of her sex, but who may be re-"born" through the creative efforts of future generations of women writers (149). This vision of intertextual relationships is perhaps most ostentatiously propagated, in contemporary fiction, by Jeanette Winterson, whose admiratory, but self-serving, engagement with Woolf's work is analysed in Chapter II. With the exception of Winterson, however, this highly benign, and usually false, perception of literary influence appears to have been discarded, even though the investigation of mother-daughter relationships is still a significant part of critical research into women's writing, as evident by the publication of such more recent studies as Heather Ingman's *Women's Fiction Between the Wars: Mothers, Daughters and Writing* (1998), *Writing Mothers and Daughters: Renegotiating the Mother in Western European Narratives by Women* (2002) edited by Adalgisa Giorgio, and Victoria Burrows's *Whiteness and Trauma: The Mother-Daughter Knot in the Fiction of Jean Rhys, Jamaica Kincaid, and Toni Morrison* (2004).

While the utopian ideology of women's writing as a form of rivalry-free literary sisterhood seems to have disappeared, it may, nevertheless, be seen as surviving—in a significantly modified and neutralised form—in the *genderless* and popularly-used concept of literary homage, or *hommage*. Zadie Smith thus pays, in her novel *On Beauty* (2005)—and by her own admission—"*hommage*" to the work of E. M. Forster.[18] Interestingly, the word "*hommage*", or "homage", appears to be used indiscriminately whenever a writer relies explicitly and often heavily on the work of an earlier author. A good example of this tendency is Dinah Birch's review of Hilary Mantel's *An Experiment in Love* (1995), in which she sees the novel as both a "homage" to and a "rebellion" against Muriel Spark's *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963) (Birch 1995). I argue that the word "homage", or "*hommage*", ought to be

[18] In the "acknowledgements" section, Smith writes: "It should be obvious from the first line that this is a novel inspired by a love of E. M. Forster, to whom all my fiction is indebted, one way or the other. This time I wanted to repay the debt with *hommage*" (2006).

used with more discrimination, for its implication is that of self-abasement—an act which ambitious writers are arguably reluctant to perform. In Chapter III, I perceive Pat Barker's relationship with Woolf as an act of simultaneous *hommage* and repudiation, the reason being that, despite her disagreement with Woolf on many issues, and even a certain amount of overt hostility towards her 'posh' precursor, Barker's attitude to Woolf is also one of profound respect—a feeling which appears lacking in Mantel's engagement with Spark's fiction. More importantly in the context of the general mechanisms of literary influence, the idea of *hommage* might be seen—like its daughterhood and sisterhood counterparts, both of which are based on overcoming the patriarchal exploitation and deprivation of women's lives—as related to the traumatic. The French word "hommage" translates into English as "homage, tribute"[19], suggesting both a feudal homage and homage to the dead. It is this implicit recognition of the precursor as dead—in both a biological and a creative sense, for he or she can no longer produce more work—and the process of literary 'mourning' implied by the term "hommage" or "homage" that connects this concept to the notion of trauma.

Another widely-used term in the field of literary studies is the concept of *re-writing*, which is strongly connected not only with Bloom's theory of "misprision" (or "misreading") (Bloom 1997, xxiii), but also with Adrienne Rich's literary manifesto, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" (1972). The basic definition of "re-writing" is that of a combination of a heavy reliance on and a radical transformation of a specific work of an earlier author—an understanding of the term which can also be applied to Rich's notion of "re-vision". Unlike Bloom's theory, hers is a highly political model, for women are not seen as fighting against individual precursors (as in Bloom), but against the patriarchal ideology which informs all aspects of culture. They are thus struggling against the various cultural codes which determine and constrict their lives and which literature conveys, preserves and disseminates. Rich sees "[r]e-vision", which she defines as "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction", as "an act of survival"; as a necessary step in overcoming the *traumas* of patriarchal domination. She perceives the "awaken[ing]" of the dead to the realisation that they have been exploited, manipulated and silenced as itself a "painful" experience (Rich

[19] "Hommage." *French English Dictionary*. Collins, 2014. http://www.collinsdictionary.com/. Accessed June 5, 2014.

1972, 18);[20] a discovery which can be dealt with only by changing the traumatic past through the act of seeing, and presenting it, in an entirely new way. She hopes that the moment has finally arrived "when women can stop being *haunted*, not only by 'convention and propriety' but by internalized fears of being and saying themselves" (20; my emphasis), illustrating the "'anxiety of authorship'" that Gilbert and Gubar identify, in a subversive transformation of Bloom's theory, as the major predicament of the woman writer (Gilbert and Gubar 2000, 49). Rich thus advocates, like Eliot and Woolf before her and Bloom shortly after her, a simultaneous reliance on and transformation of the past. It is this transformation that is perceived as the act that can heal the rupture and fill the gap between woman on the one hand and language, tradition and culture on the other.

As a political manifesto, Rich's essay expresses the concerns of such feminist re-writers as Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood and Jeanette Winterson, whose fiction frequently relies on a complete transformation of cultural myths and traditional genres, including the fairy tale, Greek myth and Biblical stories. Like Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence, however, which focuses solely on the individual poet whilst attempting to subsume different, and unique, poetic texts under the same model of influence, Rich's essay might be seen as only partially applicable to contemporary women's writing (and even to the explicitly feminist writing of second-wave feminism). As opposed to Bloom, and like many Anglo-American feminist critics of the late 1970s to the mid-1980s (expressing, in their studies of women's poetry and fiction, their belief in the existence of a utopian and benign literary sisterhood), Rich neglects, in the pursuit of a collectivist goal, to consider the individuality of the female author. Like many second-wave feminist critics, "When We Dead Awaken" regards authorial identity in primarily gender-based terms and separates the category of the woman writer from the mainstream literary tradition. And while this approach may be seen as justified in an age when female authors had to struggle against gender-based assumptions and stereotypes, at a time when women's work is an integral part of the literary market, such models as Bloom's and Rich's seem unnecessarily sectarian (which is not the same as saying that women writers no longer strive to deconstruct the gendered assumptions regarding feminine

[20] Like Alice Walker's description of "these grandmothers and mothers of ours [...] driven to a numb and bleeding madness by the springs of creativity in them for which there was no release" (Walker 1983, 233), Rich's vision of female awakening recalls Freud's discussion of the traumatic beginnings of life in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

identity). This fact is recognised by a large number of literary critics writing today, many of whom prefer therefore to draw their accounts of authorship from post-structuralist notions of intertextuality and "the death of the Author" (Barthes 1977a) in their interpretative engagement with intertextual relationships and textuality more generally. The popularity of these concepts in current criticism may perhaps have something to do with their 'traumatic' and essentially genderless qualities, which arguably render them more appropriate for discussions of late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century fiction—preoccupied as it frequently is with trauma, history and returns, rather than with questions around the gender-specificity of authorship.

THE THEORY OF INTERTEXTUALITY, OR THE TRAUMATIC MODEL *PAR EXCELLENCE*

The post-structuralist notion of intertextuality is usually connected with the influential figures of Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes. Whilst the former introduced the concept in the late 1960s, the latter might be seen as the most controversial and "the most articulate of all writers on the [subject]" (Allen 2000, 61). Relying on the work on dialogism of the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, Kristeva defined "the *text*" as "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality", which means that "in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another". Significantly, "other texts" are not limited to actual written documents, but include "the general text (culture) of which [the text is] part and which is in turn, part of [it]" (Kristeva 1980, 36; Kristeva's emphasis). Kristeva thus places an equal sign between "text" and "intertextuality" and presents culture, history and society in strictly textual terms (36-37). As pointed out by Graham Allen, the "[i]ndividual text and the cultural text are made from the same textual material and cannot be separated from each other". Unlike Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, which "centres on actual human subjects employing language in specific social situations, Kristeva's way of expressing these points seems to evade human subjects in favour of the more abstract terms, text and textuality" (Allen 2000, 36).

This focus on the text at the expense of the writing self—one of the hallmarks of intertextual theory—reaches its apogee in Roland Barthes's 1967 pronouncement of "the death of the Author", where he argues that "writing is the destruction of every

voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing" (1977a, 142). Rather than an expression of "a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God)", the text is thus "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture". As in Bloom, language is thus always pre-owned, possessing a variety of meanings before it is used by the 'author' of the 'newly'-produced text. The words which he or she employs are thus caught up in ever-expanding chains of meaning, referring to other words, which in turn go back to more words, "and so on indefinitely" (146). In consequence, according to Barthes, the text has no identifiable source, or origin; no signified, but only signifiers, which form part of the signifying chain. The author cannot control the proliferation of meaning produced by 'his' or 'her' text, for writing already belongs, not to a 'someone' (as in Bloom), but to a something else—language. Since it is impossible to locate the chronologically later text's origins in any specific precursor text, the very idea of influence and appropriation, or source study in critical terms, suffers a death similar to that of the author. Paradoxically, however, as if to compensate for this loss, or demise, of the authorial subject as the source of the work—or even the death of the precursor as its ultimate origin—Barthes replaces it with the figure of the reader (Burke 1998, 27), inverting the chronology of text production from source to destination, which now becomes the 'origin' of the text, for its "multiplicity" is now "focused" in the reader, who denotes "the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost" (Barthes 1977a, 148). Since flesh-and-bone readers are hardly capable of registering *all* of the texts which constitute the particular "textual arrangement" (Kristeva 1980, 36) in front of them, this Barthesian reader has to be "without history, biography, psychology" (Barthes 1977a, 148)—an abstract and barely defendable construct. If he or she were a real subject, Barthes's argument would cease to make sense and would merely transfer the Author-function, which it has only just destroyed, onto the figure of the reader.

Barthes's murder of the Author and his glorification of his empty reader figure are integral parts of what might be described as the *traumatic* features of his intertextual theory, for a degree of control, or power, on the part of the subject is precisely what is lacking in both Barthes's model of authorless intertextuality and in

traumatic experience as it is perceived by trauma theorists. To grant an agential subjectivity to either the author or the reader would restore an amount of control on his or her part, and imply, in this way, the greatly-feared return of the kind of liberal 'bourgeois' closure which Barthes seeks to eradicate. Like the victim of trauma, Barthes's writer thus hopelessly repeats the variety of literary, cultural and social texts which do *not* represent or stand for, but which *are*, the only reality available to the subject. The writer thus becomes a "scriptor" (145), someone who takes 'dictation', rather than the creator of a unique literary work. Like the powerless traumatised subject, he or she is completely overwhelmed and controlled by the text, the new work resembling traumatic flashbacks as defined by such theorists as Bessel van der Kolk and Cathy Caruth, who see them as literal reproductions of the traumatogenic event (Leys 2000, 229). As in trauma theory, which perceives the traumatised subject as haunted, or possessed, by the past, whose re-appearance bears, in its emotional intensity, the signs of an event happening now, in Barthes's model, and in the concept of intertextuality more generally, the past has literally become the present, for the cultural and literary texts 'possessing' the newly-assembled textual arrangement are presented as being of equal status on the page. Another feature which contemporary trauma theory and the concept of intertextuality have in common is their emphasis on fragmentation. Whilst in the former it is the victim's mind that is split off, unable to integrate the whole, or part of, the traumatic experience, in the latter it is the text (Barthes's true substitute for the author) that is fragmented, composed as it is of textual and linguistic bits. This fragmentation in trauma theory—otherwise known as dissociation—is, as pointed out above, a horizontal process, as opposed to the Freudian notion of repression, which is vertical (Luckhurst 2008, 48). Like contemporary theories of post-traumatic stress disorder, Barthes and Kristeva have thus horizontalised conceptions of textuality and intertextuality (in the sense of a relationship between texts), for the theory lacks the vertical dimension of origin. As Barthes puts it in "From Work to Text" (1971),

> [t]he intertextual in which every text is held, it itself being the text-*between* of another text, *is not to be confused with some origin of the text*: to try to find the 'sources', the 'influences' of a work, is to fall in with *the myth of filiation*; the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet *already read*: they are quotations without inverted commas. (1977b, 160; my emphasis)

By deconstructing the notion of origin, Barthes destroys the concept of expressive priority—one of the central tenets of liberal humanism. And whilst Kristeva's and Barthes's work on intertextuality draws attention to a number of important aspects of literary texts—such as their deconstruction of a single, unified authorial consciousness as the origin of the work in question; their re-use, or recycling, of the common currency of language; the author's inability to predict and contain all of the text's possible meanings; and the role and importance of the reader in the process of constructing a literary work—it does this at the cost of refusing to grant the writer any authority over the text, or, as in Barthes, any subjectivity whatsoever. In his vision of literature, texts are thus little more than the products of a lifeless, bodiless, mechanical being devoid, like his reader figure, of biography, society and history. As Virginia Woolf once said, literary texts are "not spun in mid-air by incorporeal creatures, but are the work of suffering human beings" (1998a, 53-54), even if those human beings use the same, meaning-laden currency or material. Fortunately, many contemporary critics using the concept of intertextuality, and even that of the death of the author, show no signs of putting their most disturbing and radical implications into practice, for most of them restore agency and control to the writer by demonstrating (either overtly or by implication) the presence of specific hypotexts within the work under discussion and the latter's intertextual play as a deliberate device on the author's part. Many of these assurances occur, unsurprisingly, in the context of Postmodernist and contemporary fiction, whose signature has often been regarded as a predilection for play with and displays of self-conscious engagement with the works of previous authors. This may be precisely why the post-structuralist concept of intertextuality does not threaten its creators', or compilers', authority and subjectivity.

Unlike the theory of intertextuality, the following study proposes a model that is, not merely in practice but at its foundation, both genderless (in a weak sense) and broadly humanist in that it refuses to bury the author among the multitude of signifiers that constitute his or her text. While acknowledging that language is a common currency, used and re-used by all human subjects, together with culturally, socially and historically determined and re-determined structures of meaning, the thesis emphasises the importance of the figure of the actual existential writer in approaching any text under discussion. While the latter, and not the former, ought to

remain the critic's priority, the thesis insists that the role of the actual author is more important than is generally recognised and that consideration of this factor need not produce reductionist biographical criticism. The importance of the writer is hardly to be avoided in an age of obsessively-reinforced copyright, a greater authorial presence in the media-world than ever before, and with an evident proliferation of authorial memoirs, autobiographies and widely-available interviews in the culture generally. Rather than ignore this visibility of the writer in contemporary culture, criticism might consider broader implications of the professional role, including the centrality of self-publicity in the production of literary texts—an aspect of the author's engagement with a precursor which post-structuralist intertextual theory, like the other models analysed above, fails to accommodate. Seeing literary influence as a form of trauma, however, with the model's emphasis on the latecomer's negotiation of sameness and difference, imitation and repudiation, mimesis and anti-mimesis, leaves space for such contemporary considerations, which are particularly important, as I shall argue, in the context of women's writing, for female authors are especially well-positioned to take advantage of the traditional feminist notions of literary sisterhood and the wide-spread critical focus on the text, rather than the author, to promote a particular, self-serving literary image of themselves. Last but not least, like most other models of the relationship between literary texts, the concept of intertextuality privileges only one axis of these relations, which is, in this case, the horizontal one. It thus neglects, to use T. S. Eliot's phrase, "the pastness of the past" in favour of "its presence" (Eliot 1975, 38). By contrast, seeing influence as a form of trauma, which transcends the artificial divisions of linear time by constituting a past event painfully re-experienced in the present, can accommodate not only horizontal, but also vertical approaches, as Chapter III seeks to demonstrate.

SECTION TWO

Trauma as a Model of Intertextual Relations

TRAUMA AND INTERTEXTUALITY IN CONTEMPORARY CRITICISM

In an influential study of trauma fiction (2004), Anne Whitehead connects intertextuality with the idea of trauma and identifies the former as one of the distinguishing features of the genre. She foregrounds in particular the genre's tendency to "collapse" "temporality and chronology" (3), its uses of "a dispersed or fragmented narrative voice", "repetition" (84), narrative "indirection" (3) and the appearance in it of the supernatural primarily through the use of the ghost motif (7). All of these techniques and devices serve to "mirror at a formal level the effects of trauma" (84), with intertextuality "suggest[ing] the surfacing to consciousness of forgotten or repressed[21] memories" (85). Whitehead's inflection of the concept of intertextuality picks up on Roland Barthes's definition of the term, understood as "a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (Barthes 1977a, 146). In view of the practical difficulties associated with such a vision of literature, however, Whitehead limits the definition by subscribing to the notion of intertextuality as "the particular set of plots, characters, images or conventions which a given text may bring to mind for its readers" (Whitehead 2004, 89). She emphasises both the intertextual qualities of trauma fiction and the traumatic aspects of intertextuality, which is not only "profoundly disruptive of temporality" (91), but which is also trapped "in a curious and undecidable wavering between departure and return". She argues that "[t]he intertextual novelist can enact through a return to the source text an attempt to grasp what was not fully known or realised in the first

[21] It is surprising to see Whitehead use the term "repression" in her study of trauma fiction, for contemporary trauma theory, including the work of Cathy Caruth, which is Whitehead's primary source, relies on the notion of dissociation. The only explanation for her use of the word "repressed" might be its popular meaning of suppressing painful memories rather than its connection with the Freudian concept of the repression of sexual instincts.

instance, and thereby to depart from it or pass beyond it" (90). Relying on Cathy Caruth's definition of trauma (1995), she suggests that it is in this way that the later text reveals its referent as "'fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time'" (92). Last but not least, just as there is a gap between the traumatic experience and its return in the form of symptoms, whose appearance may involve a temporal delay, so there is also a "gap between the source text and its rewriting" (93).

Even though the highly intertextual nature of trauma fiction and the resulting connection between trauma and intertextuality appears to be widely-accepted by contemporary critics of the trauma novel, the discussion of the two not only takes place largely within the purlieus of the genre, but even within studies of trauma fiction it is frequently treated as little more than a stylistic device reflecting the traumatic preoccupations of the work in question and thus of importance primarily as a clue to the traumatic nature of the novel, both in terms of form and content. Writing about Michael Cunningham's *Specimen Days* (2005), for instance, Olu Jenzen points out that the novel's use of the "ghost motif" is partly expressed through "the intertextual 'haunting' of the text by Walt Whitman's poetry" (Jenzen 2010, 6) whose lines "cut through the narrative" "[l]ike errant reminders, or obtrusive flashbacks" (11). Similarly, Elizabeth Outka, writing on Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), argues that "the intertextuality of Roy's novel signals a temporal hybridity that stands as a sign of trauma and as a possible instigator of more disruption" (Outka 2011, 41).

One possible exception to this tendency is Barbara Tannert-Smith's essay on Laurie Halse Anderson's young adult trauma novel *Speak* (1999). Quoting from the work of Kali Tal, she argues that "an engagement with significant precursor texts" on the part of a writer of young adult fiction "can lead to a shattering and reconstruction of the writer's 'personal mythologies' and a 'violation of psychological boundaries' traumatizing that writer's integrity as original" (Tannert-Smith 2010, 397). She points out that "when an adult writer engages a literary tradition that demands of her a return to the psychic space of adolescence, [...] she is relocated in a complex power relation with precursor childhood texts, a relation that [...] involves a process of return and repositioning that elicits a significant degree of authorial anxiety". She argues that the author of *Speak* "experiences a very similar 'problem with language' [to that of her protagonist] in a related power dynamic, a positioning in relation to significant precursor texts of childhood that is so far from 'top-down' and 'vertical' as

to be formally traumatic in nature" (398). But whilst this vision of the later writer's engagement with other literary works bears the potential of framing intertextual relationships within the overarching field of trauma theory—relations not just between the author of adult trauma fiction and his or her precursors, but also between writers and their precursors more generally—and of thus presenting literary influence in a completely new light, Tannert-Smith's argument is made solely in the context of young adult trauma fiction and ultimately becomes overshadowed by her discussion of the traumatic subject of the novel.

Unlike other critical approaches, this thesis presents literary influence as a form of trauma which the later writer must work through, or abreact, and resolve through the transformation of the predecessor's work in his or her own. The aim of the thesis is to assimilate the understanding of the nature of intertextual relationships—both within and *outside* the boundaries of trauma fiction—into a consideration of the field of trauma theory and to demonstrate why it might be more beneficial to speak of literary influence in traumatic terms than to rely on intertextual models which evade or avoid the question of trauma.

CONTEMPORARY TRAUMA THEORY: LITERALITY, DISTORTION AND TRAUMA THERAPY

One of the sources most widely used by critics of trauma fiction is the work of literary theorist and critic, Cathy Caruth, who sees traumatic symptoms, such as flashbacks and nightmares, as "*literal*" and "*veridical*" re-enactments of the traumatic event, which stands, as she believes, "outside representation" (Leys 2000, 229). Caruth perceives traumatic experience as "not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it" (4). Her emphasis on the literality and the anti-representational nature of the traumatic 'memory' is based not only on the work of deconstructionist critic Paul de Man, but also on the theories put forward by physician Bessel van der Kolk, influenced by the earlier work of Pierre Janet. Van der Kolk claims that traumatic events are stored in the mind in a manner distinct from ordinary memories; that rather than forming part of "existing mental schemas" (van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995, 170) and linguistic symbolisation, they recur in pre-linguistic "somatosensory or iconic" forms (172). Ruth Leys (2000) demonstrates that the neuroscientific evidence for the claims

put forward by van der Kolk and Caruth—to the extent that they see the traumatic event as literal, veridical and "inflexible" (van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995, 163)—is weak (Leys 2000, 274) and that both theorists refer to each other's work to validate their insights (229-230). To make matters worse, Leys clearly demonstrates Caruth's manipulation of some of her sources, "the sloppiness of her theoretical arguments" and the "arbitrary, wilful and tendentious" nature of her "interpretations". Regardless of these well-supported allegations, however, literary critics have tended to accept Caruth's views uncritically—which is, as Leys points out, also true of van der Kolk's theories in the humanities more generally (305). This may be largely due to the fact that the genre of contemporary trauma fiction—which includes the work of such writers as Toni Morrison, W. G. Sebald, Pat Barker, Michèle Roberts, Anne Michaels and Caryl Phillips—reflects a view of trauma which sees it as disrupting temporal, narrative and linguistic structures of meaning as well as traditional modes of representation (Whitehead 2004, 3; Luckhurst 2008, 88), and which is, consequently, highly compatible with Caruth's and van der Kolk's arguments.

In contrast with their vision of trauma, the second *DSM-5*-updated edition of *The Principles of Trauma Therapy* (2015), co-authored by psychiatrists John N. Briere and Catherine Scott, emphasises that one of the goals of treatment is the development of a "more *accurate*" (Briere and Scott 2015, 154; my emphasis) picture of the traumatic event in the client's mind, as well as the modification of his or her trauma-induced "'*distorted*'" (39; my emphasis) view of self and others (163)[22]. As pointed out above, whether the traumatic experience is perceived as literal and veridical or distorted (as well as distortive of self and others), the goal of recent therapy is usually both to access and face it and to attempt to transform it into something different, both aims being achieved through the use of and focus on language. The therapeutic transformation of the *literal*, *or distorted*, traumatic memory rests on combating its unassimilated, persistent, intrusive and frequently fragmented nature (emphasised by Fernyhough), which assumes, in PTSD, the form of flashbacks, nightmares, physical symptoms and the like, even though PTSD is by no means the only post-traumatic response, even if the most extreme one[23]. For this purpose, one

[22] According to *DSM-5* Diagnostic Criteria for PTSD, its symptoms may include "'[p]ersistent and exaggerated negative beliefs or expectations about oneself, others, or the world'" and "'[p]ersistent, distorted cognitions about the cause or consequences of the traumatic event(s) that lead the individual to blame himself/herself or others'" (Briere and Scott 2015, 39).
[23] See Briere and Scott's discussion of "posttraumatic responses" (Briere and Scott 2015, 31-57).

of the central goals of therapy is to put the traumatic experience into words. Rather than forget the initial traumatic event, victims of trauma are thus encouraged to remember (to the extent that this is possible) and to narrate the experience in detail (including thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations). By describing what happened, the patient is not only encouraged to face, or re-live the event (or events in the case of complex PTSD[24]), but also to process the memory (or memories) both emotionally and cognitively, to integrate them more fully into the psyche and to incorporate them into the narrative of his or her whole life, thus depriving the original events of their special status and overwhelming power. The patient thus enters the process of possessing the traumatic memory, as opposed to being possessed and controlled by it. This is not to suggest that constructing a detailed trauma narrative is sufficient for recovery, however. Therapy for PTSD is highly complex and encompasses the establishment of safety and stability in both the therapeutic environment and in the victim's life, the use of medication (if necessary) to combat the most intrusive symptoms (Herman, 2001; Briere and Scott 2015), the patient's control over his or her own body, the empowerment of the survivor (Herman 2001), the development of affect regulation skills, and psychoeducation (Briere and Scott 2015). More therapeutic methods are constantly being developed, including yoga, mindfulness-based therapies and Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) (193).

MIMESIS, ANTI-MIMESIS AND TRADITIONAL MODELS OF LITERARY INFLUENCE

The two distinct models of trauma represented by Caruth and van der Kolk on the one hand and Briere and Scott on the other may serve as illustrations of the oscillation between mimesis and anti-mimesis in trauma theory, as identified by Ruth Leys in her ground-breaking book on the history of trauma studies, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (2000). Her main argument is that "from the moment of its invention in the late nineteenth century the concept of trauma has been fundamentally unstable, balancing uneasily—indeed veering uncontrollably—between two ideas, theories, or paradigms". The "*mimetic*" model (Leys's emphasis), in her interpretation, has

[24] Herman defines "complex post-traumatic stress disorder" as "[t]he syndrome that follows upon prolonged, repeated trauma" (2001, 119), rather than upon a single traumatic incident.

perceived "trauma, or the experience of the traumatized subject, [...] as involving a kind of *hypnotic imitation or identification* in which, precisely because the victim cannot recall the original traumatogenic event, she is fated to act it out or in other ways imitate it" (298; my emphasis). The other extreme is the "*antimimetic*" paradigm, which "also tends to make imitation basic to the traumatic experience, but it understands imitation differently", for "[t]he mimetic notion that the victim is hypnotically immersed in the scene of trauma is repudiated in favour of the antithetical idea that in hypnotic imitation the subject is essentially aloof from the traumatic experience, in the sense that she remains a spectator of the traumatic scene, which she can therefore see and represent to herself and others" (299; Leys's emphasis). The major differences between the two models appear, in other words, to lie in their contrasting view of "individual autonomy and responsibility" (9) on the one hand and in their expression of two different kinds of episodic memory: one in which the subject inhabits the scene from the inside, and one in which he or she perceives himself or herself from the 'outside'. And while Caruth's and van der Kolk's related models may seem to be a perfect reflection of the mimetic tendency, they are in fact a combination of the two opposing paradigms, but with the mimetic dominant. While the largely "visual" nature of traumatic flashbacks repeatedly accosting the victim represents the anti-mimetic model (with the subject seen as outside the traumatic experience and independent of it), the traumatic event's existence "outside or beyond representation" and its infectious, or transmissible, quality are mimetic features (304). The theory that sees the trauma victim's symptoms as a fixation on and repetition of a *distorted* view of the event and the trauma-induced vision of self and others (represented by DSM-5, as well as Briere and Scott) appears, by contrast, to be primarily anti-mimetic, for the survivor is seen as being capable of remembering and finally relating the experience in detail, of having transformed it first through distortion and then by altering the distortion during therapy.

It is not the purpose of this chapter to analyse the difference between the mimetic and the anti-mimetic poles (a task to which Leys's book is wholly dedicated), but to draw on the idea in order to illustrate the applicability of trauma theory to the study of intertextual relationships. With some modification, Leys's distinction between the mimetic and the anti-mimetic tendencies can be seen as underlying every major critical and/or theoretical effort to reveal the essence of literary influence and to construct a general model of intertextual relations attempted

since the publication of Eliot's essay. The post-structuralist theory of intertextuality, for instance, might be seen as primarily mimetic, in the sense that the author is presented, especially by Barthes, as devoid of independence, responsibility and even subjectivity, for what he or she merely does is repeat, or imitate, in a kind of hypnotic or mimetic identification (which appears to be subconscious), the texts of previous authors and the 'text' of his or her cultural tradition. This disappearance of the author's individuality, which assumes the extreme form of the death of the authorial figure in Barthes's 1967 essay, might, nevertheless, be seen as partially redeemed in relation to the anti-mimetic paradigm through his transference of a kind of authorial function or agency to the reader. In other words, the model of intertextuality, as presented by Barthes in "The Death of the Author", is arguably an illustration of the oscillation between the mimetic and the anti-mimetic poles. By contrast, most of the other major models of influence attempt to reconcile the two—a goal which is also adopted in this study. Both Eliot and Woolf thus emphasise the importance of relying on a tradition (the female literary tradition in the latter case) and of modifying, or transforming it. The transformation of the male-dominated canon, which can only be achieved by returning to it, is also at the centre of second-wave feminist re-writing and Adrienne Rich's notion of "re-vision". Last but not least, Bloom sees the return to the precursor as inevitable in the context of the poet's belatedness (a claim shared by the following thesis), but sees hope for the strong poet, who may be able to transform the earlier writer's work in such a way as to actually find a place for himself or herself in a tradition already filled to bursting. To paraphrase, these major models (with the exception of the post-structuralist concepts of intertextuality and the death of the author) perceive the writer as a being capable of independence only at the cost of a return to the past. In their foregrounding of authorial agency they are thus primarily anti-mimetic.

LITERARY INFLUENCE AS TRAUMA: (1) INCORPORATION, (2) SAMENESS AND DIFFERENCE, (3) COLLECTIVITY, (4) TRANSMISSIBILITY, (5) BELATEDNESS AND (6) POWER

As pointed out in the introduction, literary influence might be seen as a form of trauma in its threat to the literary integrity, and identity, of the writer (even if it is also constitutive of that identity). In order to develop his or her own voice, the author

must, like the trauma victim, find a way to modify the predecessor's work (the memory of the traumatic experience) and to make it an integral part of his or her own (or, in the case of the trauma victim, to *incorporate* the memory more fully into the psyche and into his or her "ongoing life story"[25]). The fact that the most influential models of intertextual relations to date might be seen as demonstrating a connection between literary influence and trauma, and that a major similarity between trauma theory and these models appears to lie in their negotiation of the mimetic and the anti-mimetic paradigms, might, in itself, be perceived as sufficient justification for the construction of a trauma-based model of intertextual relationships. Most importantly, perhaps, what the major models of influence (with the exception of the post-structuralist theory of intertexuality) reveal through their attempt to reconcile the mimetic and the anti-mimetic poles is that every modern writer, whether male or female, has to negotiate sameness and difference, repetition and originality, imitation and repudiation, mimesis and anti-mimesis, in order to establish grounds for his or her place in a literary tradition. It is this negotiation that might, in other words, be seen as the most basic feature of any writer's engagement with his or her predecessors, at least as long as originality has been perceived as one of the primary requirements that a work of art must fulfil if it is to be considered a work of art at all, and as long as a sense of belatedness has pervaded modern consciousness. Both factors are stressed by Bloom, according to whom, complete freedom, or uniqueness, is no longer possible. The following argument does not, consequently, attempt to go beyond the mimetic/anti-mimetic dichotomy, which must arguably be engaged with in any discussion of intertextual relations and in any use of trauma theory (as Ruth Leys makes quite clear)[26]. Instead, it foregrounds it, *investigating the variety of ways in which contemporary women writers negotiate, and reconcile (or fail to reconcile), the two extremes of imitation and rejection vis-à-vis the work of their female precursors*. If such a reconciliation might be said to have occurred, the engagement with the earlier writer's work is perceived as non-traumatic. If it has failed, the relationship is viewed as a manifestation of an unresolved intertextual 'trauma'.

As well as emphasising the writer's negotiation of the two opposing tendencies of *sameness and difference*, a significant advantage of the trauma paradigm as a model of intertextual relations is its ability to take into account the *collective* aspect

[25] (Herman 2001, 37)
[26] (Leys 2000, 307)

of the literary tradition, which is not owned by the individual writer engaging with it, but shared, to different extents, by whole communities of authors, readers and culture in general. The work of a particular writer or literary movement might thus be seen as transmitted from generation to generation and from one literary work to another. Similarly, as Roger Luckhurst points out, trauma "appears to be worryingly *transmissible*: it leaks between mental and physical symptoms, between patients (as in the 'contagions' of hysteria or shell shock), between patients and doctors via the mysterious processes of transference or suggestion, [...] between victims and their listeners or viewers" (2008, 3; my emphasis), and even across generations, as in the case of the Holocaust (69).

One of the central features shared by trauma and literary influence is *belatedness*, for traumatic symptoms may "appear [...] months or years after the precipitating event" (1). Similarly, the work of a specific author, or even a whole group of authors, may exert little or barely any direct influence on the imagination of the following generation, only to be resurrected by the latter's immediate or less immediate descendants. The female literary tradition is perhaps the best example of this, for it was not until the late 1970s and the 1980s that numerous works by women authors and poets were recovered from oblivion through the establishment of women's presses and such literary studies as Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own: From Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing* (1977), Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1979), their three-volume study *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* (1988-1994) and Rachel Blau DuPlessis's *Writing beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* (1985). Significantly, second-wave feminist critics have also greatly contributed to the rehabilitation and re-discovery of Virginia Woolf's work. Her fiction has subsequently influenced a growing number of British and American authors, including Ian McEwan, Ali Smith, Jeanette Winterson and Michael Cunningham, whose work contrasts, in this respect, with the novels of such earlier figures as Iris Murdoch and Muriel Spark. Writers frequently return, in fact, not to their immediate predecessors, but to the generation of their grandfathers and grandmothers, which does not, of course, mean that their relationship with the former may not be described in traumatic terms. A perfect example of this is the literary movement of Modernism, which, while ostensibly repudiating the Romantic focus on

the author through the concept of impersonality, has been shown as a continuation of its literary and critical preoccupations by other means.[27]

On a more individual level, both the writer and the trauma victim might be described as "latecomers" (Bloom 2003, 27), for while the literary identity of the former is necessarily established, whether willingly or not, partly in relation to his or her precursors, the latter's selfhood is indelibly marked by the traumatic event or events. Like the victim of trauma, who lives in the shadow of the traumatogenic experience or succession of events (as in complex post-traumatic stress disorder), the contemporary author is frequently forced to create in the shadow of a particular precursor or a literary movement constructed either at the time or through subsequent critical commentary. During the second half of the previous century, this shadow was, for British writers, the movement of literary Modernism, while today it is arguably that of its uneasy descendant in the complex modes of Postmodernism. As regards British women writers specifically, in turn, it is the figure of Virginia Woolf who seems to have towered over later women novelists in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Why do writers keep returning to the same texts and the same literary figures? Is it not precisely because of their abiding if often ineffable power, whether conveyed by their status within the tradition, their aesthetic, moral and cultural values, or both? The movement of literary returns, or re-writing—one of the major tendencies within late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century fiction—as well as the sheer number of highly influential literary figures who have been shaping literature for centuries, means that writers cannot escape being "flooded" (to use Bloom's term)[28]. The question is how they will respond to the legacies of the past, which pervade not merely the work they read, but also culture more generally. Will they react by repeating its literal or distorted version in the present? Or will they take control of it and modify it according to their own unique aims? The following thesis demonstrates that these two possible responses to the 'trauma' of literary influence are among various forms that the negotiation between repetition and originality may take, for writers, in accordance with their primary strength, which is creativity, are capable of engaging with the problem in surprisingly creative and sometimes unexpected ways.

[27] The argument was first made by Graham Hough (*The Last Romantics*, 1949) and Frank Kermode (*The Romantic Image*, 1957).
[28] (Bloom 1997, 16)

The following study views a *traumatic intertextual relationship* as one in which the author's imitation and repudiation of the predecessor's work can be clearly distinguished from each other, or when the later writer *simultaneously* imitates and repudiates the precursor text—in other words, when the opposite movements of imitation and rejection have not been successfully negotiated and *combined*. It is in this sense that such an intertextual relationship might be seen to resemble the symptoms of PTSD, where the painful return of the experience oscillates with its departure. In simple terms, imitation or mimesis may involve, for instance, the later writer's repetition of a particular scene in the predecessor's work (for example Hilary Mantel's use of the fire scene in *The Girls of Slender Means* in her own *An Experiment in Love*, as discussed in Chapter IV below), in which case the repetition is literal, or veridical, resembling, in this way, the traumatic memory in Caruth's sense. The fact that writers use words to engage with their precursors' work (which is one of the major differences that separates them from victims of PTSD, many of whom avoid discussing the traumatic event) will, of course, mean that even the most straightforward repetition can never be completely literal, however, and that a modification of some kind will necessarily occur, for the writer repeats or imitates a predecessor's work in a novel or short story that is, in many ways, different from the precursor text. What is more, since literary interpretation is a necessarily idiosyncratic act (even if influenced by other interpretations), what the writer will frequently repeat, reject or transform is their own understanding of the precursor text. *Repetition goes*, as this study shall demonstrate, *frequently hand in hand with the most firm rejection*, or even hostility and hatred, of certain aspects of the earlier writer's work. In Mantel's case, for example, while repeating the fire scene which occurs in *The Girls of Slender Means*, the author rebels against Spark by sympathising, as opposed to condemning, the villain of her own story, Karina, who is a re-incarnation of Spark's anti-heroine, Selina Redwood. Mantel's imitation and repudiation of her predecessor can be clearly distinguished from each other and are thus seen as markers of a traumatic relationship. If sameness and difference, or imitation and rebellion, are seamlessly combined, however, as in a figurative engagement with a precursor text (by making the predecessor's metaphor literal for example), the relationship is seen as *non-traumatic*. The closer the two poles are to each other, in fact, and the more successfully they are negotiated, the less traumatic a relationship they arguably produce. The less traumatic the engagement, in turn, the

more original does the work of the latecomer *usually, though by no means always*, appear to be, for the writer can be seen as having assimilated or incorporated the influence or traces of the precursor text or texts into his or her own, and thus subjected them to the formal pressures and alchemy as well as the preoccupations of the new work. This is the issue of *power* present both at the heart of psychological trauma and influence, an aspect of intertextual relations which trauma theory provides with an apt metaphor. By transforming the traumatic memory, or negotiating the past and the present, the trauma victim regains the agency and power lacking in his or her experience of the traumatogenic event or events. Like the victim of trauma, the writer may be overwhelmed by the precursor's work and invaded by feelings of belatedness, inaptitude and inferiority, as Bloom himself emphasised. The dichotomy between power and powerlessness, being possessed and possession, might thus be seen as one of the central features of the author's relationship with his or her precursor. Consequently, a *traumatic* intertextual relationship might be associated with the term "influence", while a *non-traumatic* one could be connected with "appropriation".[29]

To present this general model of trauma as literary influence is not to suggest that a writer's work can be easily divided into those novels or short stories which demonstrate either the former or the latter in relation to a particular precursor. The two may mix in the same novel, even if one of the opposing tendencies appears to predominate. What is more, while the influence of one writer may be registered in the later work in a largely traumatic way, the work of another may have been transformed through counter-traumatic appropriation. Considering this, the argument that originality is frequently achieved through a reconciliation, or combination, of sameness and difference vis-à-vis a precursor's work can only mean originality *in relation to that particular predecessor*, rather than in the context of literary tradition more generally. Paradoxically, a writer may also use what appears to be a traumatic repetition or a blind, overt and deliberate identification with a specific predecessor as a way of emphasising their own uniqueness in the context of the literary past, as Jeanette Winterson does by identifying herself with Virginia Woolf. By directly quoting from or only slightly modifying a precursor's work, the latecomer may also

[29] I owe this distinction to Martin Hammer's conference paper, "Influence/Appropriation: A Perspective from Art History" (2013), in which he emphasised the difference between the term "influence", which suggests "passivity", and the term "appropriation", with its connotations of "active [...] transformation, emulation, subversion, even misunderstanding".

seem to be exhibiting a traumatic relationship with an earlier text, a perfect example of which is T. S. Eliot's celebrated *The Waste Land* (1922), whose originality (if not exclusive authorship by Eliot) is not usually in doubt among readers and critics. A traumatic relationship with the past may thus be, paradoxically, one of the markers of the latecomer's uniqueness. These complexities must be borne in mind in considering the work of any author, and the paradoxes involved in intertextual relations ought to prevent critics from imposing pre-designed models of influence on the relationships between writers and their precursors. Each writer must be treated individually, even if the trauma paradigm is seen as reflecting many aspects of intertextual relationships in general. This is the reason why the models presented in the following chapters are all different, while simultaneously relying on the insights presented here.

THE ISSUES OF (7) GENDER AND (8) AUTHORSHIP

While it could be argued that discussions of PTSD both at the end of the nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century have tended to attach themselves to particular, gender-specific traumas (hysteria, shell shock, rape and sexual abuse and the sufferings of the Vietnam War veterans among others), the *basic* assumptions of contemporary trauma theory—the definition of the concept, the symptoms of PTSD and the central goals and methods of therapy—are not founded upon the gender of the subject. This is not to say that the effect produced by traumatic experience or the severity and development of the symptoms are unrelated to the victim's sex, nor is it to claim that contemporary theories of trauma have not been influenced by traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity. In its essence, however, the theory is gender-neutral. In other words, unlike such paradigms as the Freudian model of infantile development, it is not founded upon the distinction between the male and the female, or the feminine and the masculine. This essentially genderless quality might thus be seen as explaining its application not only to those types of experiences that have been perceived as largely restricted to women (such as rape), but also to those commonly experienced only by men (for instance combat exposure). Consequently, perceiving influence as a form of trauma is arguably a way of moving beyond the highly-gendered models of Bloom's "anxiety of influence" and the feminist notion of literary sisterhood.

Another advantage of using trauma theory as a model of literary influence is that, unlike the genderless and rather vague concept of literary *hommage*, it offers the opportunity to explore the ambivalent nature of intertextual relationships. As Juliet Mitchell affirms, "[a]mbivalence is a condition of human relations" (Mitchell 2003, 37). The use of trauma theory and an emphasis on the writer's negotiation of imitation and rejection, return and departure, with respect to the precursor's work might thus also be seen as restoring the *human* aspect of the relations between an author and his or her tradition—an aspect lacking, as pointed out above, in the post-structuralist theory of intertextuality. The human, but genderless, orientation of the study of literary influence is perceived, in the following thesis, as the most appropriate direction that must be taken by the studies of literary influence. This is not, by any means, to suggest a purely biographical criticism, although aspects of the writer's life may be useful in the analysis of his or her response to a particular precursor, nor is it to eliminate discussions of the writer's gender, which may play an important part in his or her relationships with other authors, particularly in the case of women writers. The focus is, rather, on treating female authors as human beings first and women second, rather than the other way round, and thereby privileging their individuality over the features they share with their same-sex colleagues. The models presented in the individual chapters reflect this preoccupation, for while related to trauma and trauma theory—in more or less direct ways—they construct models of influence applicable to these particular authors and deeply connected with their own literary preoccupations. Literary influence as trauma is thus perceived as a *humanistic* model of intertextual relations, but one that leaves space for the creation of related theories and for discussions of the writer's individuality and group-identity. Reflecting the central issues involved in the relationship between one writer and another—*mimesis and anti-mimesis, the condition of belatedness, the issue of power and the status of the precursor text as simultaneously past and present*—trauma theory offers a particularly useful point of departure for the discussion of as varied a field as literary influence and appropriation in contemporary women's writing.

CHAPTER II

A Reflection of My Own: Jeanette Winterson, Virginia Woolf and the Narcissism of *Hommage*

> You are a looking-glass world. You are the hidden place that opens to me on the other side of the glass. I touch your smooth surface and then my fingers sink through to the other side. You are what the mirror reflects and invents. I see myself, I see you, two, one, none. I don't know.
>
> (Winterson 2001a, 174)

> To talk about my own work is difficult. If I must talk about it at all I would rather come at it sideways, through the work of writers I admire, through broader ideas about poetry and fiction and their place in the world.
>
> (1996, 165)

SECTION ONE

"I see no reason to refuse to bend the knee"[1]: Winterson's Tribute at Virginia Woolf's 'Altar'

Recent years have seen a re-establishment of Virginia Woolf's fiction as a major source of inspiration for contemporary writers, as evident in the publication of such novels as Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* (1998), Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003), and Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005), all of which, albeit in a variety of ways, engage with *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). Ali Smith has also acknowledged Woolf as a precursor and it is difficult not to see the influence of *The Waves* (1931) on her lyrical *Hotel World* (2001). Pat Barker is even more indebted, with her *Regeneration* trilogy (1991-95) returning to the topics of madness and the social repercussions of World War I as explored in Woolf's fourth novel. Her third work, *Jacob's Room* (1922), has been re-written by Barker in her most recent *Toby's Room* (2012), which is also a powerful reflection of the contemporary interest in Woolf's life, demonstrated not only in Cunningham's *The Hours* and its film adaptation directed by Stephen Daldry (2002), but also, more recently, in Susan Sellers's *Vanessa and Virginia* (2008) and Maggie Gee's *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan* (2014). The title of the high priestess of this Woolfian renaissance nevertheless belongs to Jeanette Winterson, whose fiction has consistently reworked Woolfian themes and engaged not only with such novels as *Orlando* (1928), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Waves*, but also with Woolf's essays. But whilst Winterson's reliance on Woolf's oeuvre has been widely recognised among literary critics, not enough emphasis has been placed on the connection between the former's self-invention and self-promotion and what bears the signs of a typical literary *hommage*. The following chapter constitutes an attempt to rectify this omission and to re-evaluate Winterson's tribute to her great precursor. I argue that Winterson's resolution of the 'trauma' of Woolf's influence is, paradoxically, achieved through her explicit identification with her predecessor.

[1] (Winterson 1996, 131)

Making use of the language and ideals of literary sisterhood, Winterson seeks to cope with the threat to her own writerly identity by transforming the seemingly debilitating Woolfian 'shadow' into a reflection and confirmation of her own preoccupations.

WINTERSON'S PRAISE IN *ART OBJECTS* (1995)

Winterson has made a significant contribution to the revival of Woolf's popularity among writers and readers alike. In her essay collection, *Art Objects*, she was part of a move to restore Woolf's reputation as one of the greatest British authors and stressed the relevance of her work to contemporary culture. More importantly, perhaps, she objected to "a crazed sub-Freudian approach to [Woolf's] work" (Winterson 1996, 63), which saw the Modernist writer's fiction through the prism of her sex, sexuality and madness, rather than on its own terms. Winterson also bemoaned the fact that Woolf's feminism took pride of place in critical work on her fiction, drawing attention away from its more purely literary merits. In praise of the material qualities of her writing, Winterson not only hailed the Bloomsbury novelist as a poet, but also invited criticism to shift its focus and to appreciate the "exactness" (79) of Woolf's language:

> There has been so much concentration on Woolf as a feminist and as a thinker, that the unique power of her language has still not been given the close critical attention it deserves. When Woolf is read and taught, she needs to be read and taught as a poet; she is not a writer who uses for words things, for her, words are things, incantatory, substantial. (70)

In her appraisal of Woolf's literary legacy, Winterson concentrates on *Orlando* and *The Waves*—two experimental masterpieces which have been somewhat undervalued in Woolf scholarship, at least when compared with *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*—the latter, especially, often regarded as the Modernist author's greatest work. Winterson excludes any mention of these texts, however, preferring to focus on the two novels that best exemplify the qualities which, in her view, have not only been overlooked in scholarly and popular appreciation of Woolf's fiction, but also most clearly constitute those elements of a literary text that determine its status as a work of art—imagination (*Orlando*) and a poetic use of language (both novels). Winterson's emphasis on Woolf's mock-biography as a masterpiece is the most

significant choice here, for her explication of its merits further challenges the popular image of Woolf as a frail "Bloomsbury madwoman" (97) whose lyrical prose harbours the seeds of depression and conveys her constitutional sadness. By contrast, Winterson's Woolf is the Woolf of the Dreadnought Hoax[2], an imaginative, witty, cheerful "Goat"[3] who dared to cross the rigid boundaries of Victorian propriety and to laugh in the process. *Orlando* is also—in Winterson's view—Woolf's most contemporary novel, a wellspring of ideas that fertilised later twentieth-century British fiction:

> What a carve-up! Such a daring thing to do in 1928. Here is the boldness of a fiction masquerading as a biography, a woman masquerading as a man. She smuggles across the borders of propriety the most outrageous contraband—same-sex love, time travel, shape-shifting, a revision of history. All the things we have come to take for granted from modern fiction, including the collapse of genres, begin here. (2005a, 15-16)

Orlando is much more than a convenient precursor to contemporary writing, however. For Winterson, it is the very epitome of art—a challenge to "the 'I' that we are", "the world turned upside down" (1996, 15); "transformation" as opposed to reflection (66). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the author of *Written on the Body* should proclaim Woolf "the most complete" of her "private ancestors", or that she should "bend the knee". As she herself asserts, "[m]y books are a private altar. They are a source of strength and a place of worship" (131). Could there be a more literal rendering of the idea of literary *hommage*?

WOMAN-CENTRED ANDROGYNY IN WINTERSON'S FICTION

[2] On 7 February 1910, Adrian Stephen, Horace de Vere Cole, Duncan Grant, Anthony Buxton, Guy Ridley and Virginia Stephen "dress[ed] up as the Emperor of Abyssinia and his suite" (Lee 1997, 282) and visited the Royal Navy's warship, the *Dreadnought*. Having got off the train at Weymouth, "they were met by a guard of honour, a red carpet, a launch to the battleship, and a naval band" (283).

[3] "The Goat" was Virginia Stephen's childhood nickname, which, as Hermione Lee points out, signified her "comical eccentricities" (1997, 110).

To a writer like Winterson—ambitious, feminist[4], lesbian—the work of Virginia Woolf must have appealed tremendously. Not only did the Modernist writer anticipate many of the concerns of second-wave feminism, but it was also during the late 1970s and the 1980s—a time when Winterson went to Oxford and composed her first, and arguably best, written work[5]—that a true Woolfian revival took place in feminist criticism, which rediscovered both Woolf's fiction and her views on art and politics. And even though Winterson cautions readers against foregrounding Woolf's feminism over the exactness and beauty of her language, she does not diminish her precursor's contribution to contemporary feminist thinking. "What woman writer writing now", she asks, "can pass by *A Room of One's Own* (1929)?" (131). Winterson certainly cannot, as evident in the form and subject matter of her work. Susana Onega observes that "all her fictions may be said to belong to a specific kind of novel: that claimed by Virginia Woolf for the woman writer of the future" (2006, 12). The task of this female author is semi-ironically described in *Room*:

> The book has somehow to be adapted to the body, and at a venture one would say that women's books should be shorter, more concentrated, than those of men, and framed so that they do not need long hours of steady and uninterrupted work. (Woolf 1998a, 101)

Onega views Winterson's fiction as fulfilling these requirements, for not only is her style poetic and "concentrated", but her novels are also brief and "crucially concerned with physicality and the human body" (Onega 2006, 13). The last of these qualities is not found in the passage cited above, however, for Woolf's argument that women's fiction should be "shorter" and "more concentrated" than the writing of men due to "physical conditions" and for the simple reason that "interruptions there will always be" (Woolf 1998a, 101) is misread by the critic as a call to write about the body. Woolf certainly encourages future generations to do this in *A Room of One's*

[4] Even though Winterson boasts a particular aversion to labels, her positioning of her own work within the tradition of women's writing leading to the re-birth of "Shakespeare's sister" (Woolf 1998a, 63) (discussed in Section Two), her strong attachment to Woolf, and the feminist concerns of her own work—such as her deconstruction of the heterosexual romance plot and stereotypical images of women—clearly identify her as a feminist author. She has herself admitted to being a feminist, as in *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal* (2011), where she says that her outrage at Nabokov's attitude to women, after she had read him in sixth-form college, was "the beginning of my feminism" (Winterson 2012a, 122).

[5] During the 1980s, Winterson published three major works of fiction (if one excludes *Boating for Beginners*, which is usually ignored both by Winterson and literary critics): *Oranges are not the only fruit* (her first novel, 1985), for which she received the Whitbread First Novel Award, *The Passion* (1987), which was awarded the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize, and *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), which received the E. M. Forster Award.

Own, but in another passage, when she discusses the work of the fictitious Mary Carmichael, whose task it will be

> to go without kindness or condescension, but in the spirit of fellowship, into those small, scented rooms where sit the courtesan, the harlot and the lady with the pug dog. There they still sit in the rough and ready-made clothes that the male writer has had perforce to clap upon their shoulders. But Mary Carmichael will have out her scissors and *fit them close to every hollow and angle*. (115; my emphasis)

Winterson's work embodies this vision through its exploration of "communities of women", including the brothel in *The Passion* (1987) and *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) respectively (Stowers 1996, 70; 73), as well as through its portrayal of such sexually-liberated characters as Villanelle (*The Passion*), Doll Sneerpiece (*Art & Lies*) and the nameless protagonist-narrator of *Written on the Body* (1992). The first two of these are prostitutes, as is "[t]he whore from Spitalfields" (Winterson 1989, 41), who appears in *Sexing*. According to Ginette Carpenter, who identifies "prostitution" as a "common Wintersonian topos", the e-writer, Ali(x)[6] (*The PowerBook*), could also be classified in these terms, for although she does not sell her body for sexual favours, she "plies her trade across the net and is contacted anonymously with the commission to tell stories that will give 'Freedom, just for one night'". Not only is she "rewarded" for this "service", but "she must [also] take account of the desires of her customer and alter her behaviour, i.e. her writing, accordingly" (Carpenter 2007, 77).

Apart from her choice of characters and the presence of female communities in her work, Winterson responds to the above quotation from Woolf by challenging the taboo surrounding the portrayal of a woman's body in all its forms and shapes. She explores it in a number of ways: through her vivid depiction of female genitalia, her portrayal of the Dog Woman, whose powerful, revolting physique questions conventional ideas of femininity, and her exploration of Louise's cancer-ridden organism (*Written*). Winterson's female bodies are idealised in their individuality and worshipped for what they are, rather than as reflections of a universal ideal ruthlessly imposed by contemporary media. Her close exploration of "female flesh" (Armitt 2007, 20), coupled with the fact that some of her characters are prostitutes, points to

[6] In order to emphasise the unity of the protagonist, narrator and central consciousness behind *The PowerBook*, where he/she appears under various disguises, I refer to him/her throughout this chapter as "Ali(x)" rather than "Ali/x", which is the approach of most other critics.

a deep connection between her work and Woolf's emphasis on the necessity to write about female promiscuity openly and without superstition, and to "fit" one's words "to every hollow and angle" of a woman's body (Woolf 1998a, 115). Winterson does not merely fulfil this task, but goes even further, for in *Written on the Body* her words dive into its hollows and crevices in order to explore Louise's organs and bones. At the same time, however, the medical terminology employed throughout these descriptions and the narrator's preoccupation with organs shared by both sexes create the effect of de-gendering the lover. In Lucie Armitt's view, Winterson's detailed study of the body in this novel both challenges and repeats the "shortcomings" of the theories of such French feminists as Hélène Cixous, for it demonstrates that an excessive focus on the body "can actually make women disappear" (2007, 21).

Winterson's use of poetic prose is also a response to Woolf's vision of a new feminine literary form, for it answers her call for the female author to "[provide] some new vehicle, not necessarily in verse, for the poetry in her" (Woolf 1998a, 101) (Onega 2006, 13). The future woman writer, like the author of *Life's Adventure*, should also "[write] as a woman", "but as a woman who has forgotten that she is a woman, so that her pages [will be] full of that curious sexual quality which comes only when sex is unconscious of itself" (Woolf 1998a, 121). What Woolf means by forgetting that one is a woman is that writing ought to be free from feelings of resentment towards the other sex, that the vision of Mary Carmichael's female legatees should be unimpeded by "any grievance" (136) towards men. In other words, women's writing needs to liberate itself from that "anger" (95) which muddled the "clear vision" (96) and "tamper[ed] with the integrity" of such nineteenth-century novelists as Charlotte Brontë (95). This requirement is connected with Woolf's pronouncement (in which she follows Coleridge) that "a great mind is androgynous", which means that it "uses all its faculties", is "resonant and porous", and "transmits emotion without impediment; that it is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided" (128). It is only by being "woman-manly or man-womanly" that the writer can convey "his experience with perfect fullness" (136). At the same time, the woman writer should *unconsciously* write "as a woman" (119), "[breaking] the sentence" (106) and "the expected order" which she has inherited from her literary predecessors. The latter act—of "[breaking] the sequence" (119)—signifies her shifting of the usual emphases of the literature of the past, challenging such

assumptions as "[t]his is an important book [...] because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing-room" (96). The technique marks a different way of thinking about the world and of "giving things their natural order, as a woman would, if she wrote like a woman" (119).

Winterson identifies with this vision of women's writing, for she asserts that:

> [a]s well as being a writer neither male nor female, I am a writer who is a woman. I am very conscious of that. I am conscious that the voice does get stronger all the time, the voice of the woman writing. Which is why I feel I have to continue, and do a bit more and take the bat on a little bit further, if possible. Otherwise, I am letting down the past as well as the future. You're insulting those women who did it absolutely to the best they could, making huge sacrifices at the time. There is a passage at the end of *A Room of One's Own* where Virginia Woolf says we have to work for women writers so that they will appear. My work is to do that work. (Bilger 1997)

Interestingly, despite this enthusiasm for Woolf's essay, Winterson's emphasis on being "very conscious" of her sex may be seen as a subversion of her precursor's argument, which states that "[i]t is fatal for a woman [writer] to lay the least stress on any grievance; to plead even with justice any cause; in any way to speak *consciously* as a woman" (Woolf 1998a, 136; my emphasis). Winterson's comment on the literary expression of anger in the same interview would appear to support this interpretation, for she believes that "Virginia Woolf was speaking quite rightly from her own anxieties, something that she personally was very worried about, but *I don't think that she was right*". At the same time, Winterson's elaboration of her disagreement with the Modernist author reveals her own unease about the presence of the author's feelings in art:

> It may be better to try to speak honestly even if that anger, to some extent, *flaws* part of the work than to try to suppress and possibly dampen down your own rocket fuel in the process. [...] *You can edit it out later if you want to*, and if you can't—because it would be sort of an amputation, or a surgery that would damage the rest—then leave it in, and let the passages speak for themselves. *And let people say, Well, this passage doesn't work*. I mean, *it annoys me in D. H. Lawrence when he starts his working-class rant*. I have written about that. I know I do it as well. But it probably doesn't matter, because *no work is perfect*. (Bilger 1997; my emphasis)

Winterson's aversion to the expression of anger in fiction is conveyed in less ambivalent terms in *Art Objects*, where she states that "when rant gets the upper

hand, there is no room left for fine writing" (Winterson 1996, 69). Consequently, her assertion that she is an androgynous writer who is also "very conscious" of being a woman is an *unintentional* departure from Woolf's argument, especially as the statement is immediately followed by a reference to *A Room of One's Own*. Furthermore, rather than denoting angry feminist politics, Winterson's emphasis on her work as marked by the presence of "the *voice* of the woman writing"—which denotes a *way* of speaking rather than content—coupled with her ambition to "take the bat on a little bit further" (Bilger 1997; my emphasis), suggests that she is referring to Woolf's vision of a specifically feminine literary experiment, which includes breaking the sentence and the sequence of the male-dominated literary tradition.

Woolf's call for a feminine writing that would find its own sentence and a new, unexpected, order is closely related to her views regarding the literary portrayal of relationships between women, including lesbian bonds. It is Woolf's representation of these, as well as her own bisexuality, that make her work even more appealing to the author of *The Passion*. Woolf was one of the first modern women writers to speak openly and favourably of lesbian relationships through art. More importantly, she perceived the portrayal of love between women as a sign of rebellion against patriarchy as expressed in literary history through an almost exclusive representation of women through the eyes of and in relation to men. "It was strange to think", she observes, "that all the great women of fiction were, until Jane Austen's day, not only seen by the other sex, but seen only in relation to the other sex. And how small a part of a woman's life is that" (Woolf 1998a, 107). The exploration of lesbian love and other situations in which women are either alone or in the company of other members of their sex was seen by Woolf as a necessary step on the road to female equality in fiction and a much more complete understanding of women in society. Interestingly, Chloe and Olivia—who introduce the subject of female homosexuality in the essay—recall the two female lovers in *Oranges* (1985) who run a paper shop together:

> Now if Chloe likes Olivia and they share a laboratory [...]; if Mary Carmichael knows how to write, and I was beginning to enjoy some quality in her style; if she has a room to herself, of which I am not quite sure; if she has five hundred a year of her own—but that remains to be proved—then I think that something of great importance has happened.

> For if Chloe likes Olivia and Mary Carmichael knows how to express it she will light a torch in that vast chamber where nobody has yet been. It is all half lights and profound shadows like those serpentine caves where one goes with a candle peering up and down, not knowing where one is stepping. And I [...] read how Chloe watched Olivia put a jar on a shelf and say how it was time to go home to her children. That is a sight that has never been seen since the world began, I exclaimed. And I watched too, very curiously. For I wanted to see how Mary Carmichael set to work to catch those unrecorded gestures, those unsaid or half-said words, which form themselves, no more palpably than the shadows of moths on the ceiling, when women are alone, unlit by the capricious and coloured light of the other sex. (Woolf 1998a, 109-110)

To represent women not only in relation to men, but also as they are to themselves and each other was Virginia Woolf's aim in her own work, of course. It is with this goal in mind that she explores the consciousness of Clarissa Dalloway as she walks down Bond Street, the thoughts of Mrs Ramsay as she stirs her Boeuf en Daube and Lily Briscoe as she expresses to herself her doubts about her painting. Woolf also addresses the subject of female homosexuality, as in *The Voyage Out* (1915), with its sexually-charged encounter between Rachel and Helen;[7] in *Mrs Dalloway*, where Clarissa and Sally's kiss (1992a, 38) is "unlit by the capricious and coloured light of the other sex" (1998a, 110) (at least until the sudden appearance of Peter Walsh and Joseph Breitkopf); and, more famously, in *Orlando*, which is Woolf's most socially subversive treatment of lesbian love:

> And as all Orlando's loves had been women, now, through the culpable laggardry of the human frame to adapt itself to convention, though she herself was a woman, it was still a woman she loved; and if the consciousness of being of the same sex had any effect at all, it was to quicken and deepen those feelings which she had had as a man. (1993, 115)

Despite all this, it is Winterson's fiction that can be seen as a more complete embodiment of the woman-centred writing that Woolf advocates in *Room*, at least as

[7] "A hand dropped abrupt as iron on Rachel's shoulder [...] She fell beneath it, and the grass whipped across her eyes and filled her mouth and ears. Through the waving stems she saw a figure, large and shapeless against the sky. Helen was upon her. Rolled this way and that, now seeing only forests of green, and now the high blue heaven, she was speechless and almost without sense. At last she lay still, all the grasses shaken round her and before her by her panting. Over her loomed two great heads, the heads of a man and woman, of Terence and Helen.

[...] they came together and kissed in the air above her. [...] Raising herself and sitting up, she too realised Helen's soft body, the strong and hospitable arms, and happiness swelling and breaking in one vast wave" (Woolf 2012, 381).

regards her particular uses of the first-person female narrator and the nature of her preoccupation with lesbianism. The latter is no doubt partly the result of a substantially more liberal attitude to homosexuality by the 1980s and of Winterson's much more definitive embrace of this orientation in her personal life. Whilst most of Woolf's female protagonists are primarily identified within their social contexts as heterosexual (with occasional crushes on women acknowledged), the majority of Winterson's heroines are openly bisexual or lesbian, e.g. Jeanette in *Oranges*, Villanelle in *The Passion*, Alice and Stella in *Gut Symmetries* (1997) and Silver in *Lighthousekeeping* (2004). This does not mean that many of her male protagonists are also homosexual, however. On the contrary, the sexuality of Winterson's heroes is usually "woman-oriented" (Andermahr 2007, 85). Such a narrative choice ensures not only that women are repeatedly portrayed, but that they are also viewed from different gender perspectives. This method recalls Woolf's fiction, where the reader's picture of the central female character is filtered through the minds of both women and men. Thus, Clarissa Dalloway is presented through the eyes of such figures as Miss Kilman, Sally Seton, Peter Walsh, Jim Hutton and Scrope Purvis, who appears to have been introduced merely for this purpose (Miller 1982, 180). Similarly, Mrs Ramsay is portrayed as seen by Lily Briscoe (in whose case the portrayal becomes an 'actual' portrait), William Bankes, Mr Ramsay, their son James and Mrs McNab among others.

As mentioned above, a number of Winterson's fictions are also marked by their engagement with female communities. According to Lucie Armitt, Winterson's first novel represents what Adrienne Rich has termed the "*lesbian continuum*", which "include[s] a range—through each woman's life and throughout history—of women-identified experience" (Rich 2003, 27; Rich's emphasis) (Armitt 2007, 25). This concept echoes Woolf's interest in "those unrecorded gestures [...] which form themselves [...] when women are alone, unlit by the capricious and coloured light of the other sex" (Woolf 1998a, 110). Armitt argues that Jeanette belongs to a "close-knit female community", which includes not only her mother, but also Elsie Norris, Alice, May, Mrs Arkwright, Mrs White, Miss Jewsbury, Betty, Nellie, Doreen, the two female lovers at the paper shop and Jeanette's girlfriends, Melanie and Katy (2007, 25). In addition, Cath Stowers points out the presence of "collectivities of women"—"emblems of female self-sufficiency and freedom" (1996, 69)—in *The Passion* and *Sexing the Cherry*. Both Henri and Jordan visit brothels which are

revealed to be self-supportive female groups. Jordan discovers similar female "protection and bonding" (73) while posing as a member of the opposite sex. He realises that women not only have "a private language" not understood by men, but that they also laugh at men behind their backs. When he visits a fish stall, the woman running it "warn[s] [him] never to try and cheat another woman but always to try and charge the men double" (Winterson 1989, 29). Winterson's portrayal of a (largely) female community controlled by women is, finally, to be found in *The Daylight Gate* (2012), with its socially excluded group of Lancashire witches, whose mysterious, magic-filled world challenges the patriarchal order represented by such characters as Thomas Potts, Constable Hargreaves and Tom Peeper.

Yet, despite the fact that Winterson's fiction portrays a variety of female communities, other non-erotic female bonds—such as the mother-daughter relationship—are frequently neglected in her work or presented in a strained or negative light. Villanelle (*The Passion*) has a daughter, but since she gives birth at the end of the novel, the child does not have a chance to grow up. The heroine's relationship with her own mother, who blames herself for her daughter's hermaphroditism, is certainly addressed, but it is far from occupying a central position in the story. Mrs Muck in *The PowerBook* (2000) resembles, in turn, Jeanette's mother in *Oranges*, but the relationship is—unlike that of Winterson's first novel—only a minor element in a plot filled largely with stories of lesbian and heterosexual lovers. The presence of Silver's mother in *Lighthousekeeping* is even more restricted, for the book begins with her tragic death. To make matters worse, "the only two female characters [...] with any *real* shaping influence on Silver's story—Miss Pinch and the librarian—both prove wholly disappointing" (Armitt 2007, 25; Armitt's emphasis). The most crucial emotional relationship in terms of her development as a human being is with the blind and *male* Pew, keeper of the Cape Wrath lighthouse. What is more, "the primary source of story is not a mother but a literary forefather, Robert Louis Stevenson". Consequently, "to say mothers are upstaged is putting it midly—in *Lighthousekeeping*, the mother gets 'ditched'" (24). Similarly, the central non-sexual relationship in *Sexing the Cherry* is that between Jordan and the Dog Woman. Relations between sisters and close female friendships (with the exception of the wider networks of female communities mentioned above) are also underprivileged in Winterson's work, whose central focus (at least with

regard to the subject of relationships between women) is the exploration of lesbian love.

Among the various works of fiction which constitute Winterson's oeuvre, the novel which best exemplifies Woolf's vision of women's writing as both woman-centred and androgynous is *Written on the Body*. Despite the fact that Louise is objectified by her lover and presented in a similar way to how women have always been portrayed in literature—as objects of desire perceived and controlled by men (Armitt 2007, 20), the narrator-protagonist of *Written* can, in many ways, be perceived as a response to Woolf's call for androgyny in writing and her hostility towards privileging one sex over the other. It is through her portrayal of this character that Winterson has attempted to treat both sexes equally by eliminating gender altogether, or, rather, by refusing to fix his/her sexual identity whilst simultaneously endowing him/her with a number of characteristics that stereotypically signify a man or a woman respectively (Andermahr 2009, 76)[8]. As a result of this, "there are times when the reader may be convinced that he [the narrator] is male and others when she seems clearly female" (Carpenter 2007, 71). Possessing the stereotypical features of both genders, the narrator is thus androgynous. Nevertheless, the text *is* woman-centred in that it is essentially preoccupied by the genderless protagonist's exploration of his/her love for Louise and an obsessive cataloguing and "fetishiz[ation]" of her body parts (Andermahr 2005, 116). It is the study of a woman from an androgynous/de-gendered perspective, or from the point of view of a character who could be classified as a man, a woman, a hermaphrodite or a transsexual (Haslett 2007, 43). In this way, Winterson not only shows the universal nature of love, but also allows both male and female readers to identify with the nameless hero/heroine[9]. She addresses Woolf's vision of a mind in which "[s]ome marriage of opposites" has been "consummated" (Woolf 1998a, 136), and it is through this mind—"porous", "undivided" (128)—that Louise is revealed. The novel is thus both androgynous and feminist in its politics, for it illustrates gender divisions as artificial distinctions. It is, in other words, a near-perfect embodiment of Woolf's vision of women's writing as androgynous, woman-

[8] Andermahr (2009) enumerates the 'male' and 'female' indicators (77).
[9] "I [Winterson] wanted to have somebody who is passionate, who is sexy, but who is also vulnerable, subject to the whims and misrules of the world. A narrator that men and women could identify with" (Bush 1993).

centred (the focus on Louise) and feminist (liberating women from restricting definitions of femininity through the device of the genderless narrator).

BREAKING THE SENTENCE AND THE SEQUENCE

As well as putting into practice Woolf's vision of woman-centred androgyny, Winterson repeats her precursor's appeal to the woman writer to "[break] the sequence" (119), thus firmly establishing herself as the inheritor of Woolf's literary legacy:

> There is always the danger of automatic writing. The danger of writing yourself towards an ending that need never be told. At a certain point the story gathers momentum. It convinces itself, and does its best to convince you, that the end in sight is the only possible outcome. There is a fatefulness and a loss of control that are somehow comforting. This was your script, but now it writes itself.
>
> Stop.
>
> Break the narrative. Refuse all the stories that have been told so far (because that is what the momentum really is), and try to tell the story differently—in a different style, with different weights—and allow some air to those elements choked with centuries of use, and give some substance to the floating world. (Winterson 2001a, 53)

The re-positioning of the "momentum" and the need to shift the "weights" handed down to the woman writer in the work of her predecessors is also the central thought behind Woolf's concept of breaking the sequence:

> She [Mary Carmichael] had broken up Jane Austen's sentence [...] Then she had gone further and broken the sequence—the expected order. [...] the effect was somehow baffling; one could not see a wave heaping itself, a crisis coming round the next corner. [...] whenever I was about to feel the usual things in the usual places, about love, about death, the annoying creature twitched me away, as if the important point were just a little further on. (Woolf 1998a, 119)

Unlike the passage from *Room*, however, Winterson's call to "[b]reak the narrative" (2001a, 53) concerns both writing and living. The connection between the two is clearly indicated in her view that "there are two kinds of writing; the one you write and the one that writes you. The one that writes you is dangerous. You go

where you don't want to go. You look where you don't want to look" (2012a, 54). Consequently, many of her characters—such as Jeanette in *Oranges*, the Twelve Dancing Princesses and the female chemist in *Sexing the Cherry*, Picasso in *Art & Lies* (1994) and Alice Nutter in *The Daylight Gate*—embark on alternative destinies to those suggested or directly imposed upon them by their respective milieus. Their main goal is to pursue their own emotional fulfilment and/or ambition—to be happy rather than normal if one were to evoke Mrs Winterson's words recently immortalised in the title of her daughter's 'memoir'[10]. The Woolfian concept of breaking the sequence is also evoked in *The PowerBook*[11], for Ali(x)'s lover, Tulip, can either liberate herself and Ali(x) from the past, which can be as constricting as convention and sociocultural pressure, and allow them to find "the Promised Land" (2001a, 200) in their love for each other, or return to her husband. But whilst this appears to be a choice granted to Tulip, it could also be argued that the second person pronoun in "[h]ere are two endings. You choose" (205) refers as much to Ali(x)'s beloved as to the reader. By rendering him or her the addressee of this passage, the author is suggesting that the reader has the power to implement change in his or her own life, for like the tales Ali(x) weaves throughout *The PowerBook*, life is also "'[...] just a story'" (27) and the reader is no more than a character in it.[12] "You can change the story. You are the story" (243), Winterson asserts. At the same time, however, to prompt both Tulip and the reader in the right direction, or perhaps to merely indicate her own preference, she places the 'happy' ending, in which the lover stays with Ali(x), last, rendering it more final merely on account of its place in the text. The fact that "[t]he train moves on ahead without [them]" suggests that they have decided (as long as the second ending is the chosen one) to abandon the conventional, "straightforward pathway" (Alighieri 2012, 1.3); to enter the Dantean Dark Wood, or "'the Wilderness'" (Winterson's version of it), which is "'the only way to the Promised Land'" (Winterson 2001a, 194), as much as it is necessary for Dante to walk through Hell and Purgatory before he can make his way to Heaven. And whilst in *The Divine Comedy* "abandon[ing] the true way" (Alighieri 2012, 1.6) signifies stepping off the path of righteousness, in Winterson it has a far more literal

[10] The questionable genre of *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* is discussed on pp. 96-98.
[11] The title of the original Jonathan Cape edition of the novel (2000) contains a dot after the article (*The.PowerBook*).
[12] In a conversation with Libby Brooks, Winterson draws attention to "the stories you make up yourself" and "the stories people make up about you. Never mind being a character in your own book, you become a character in your own life" (Brooks 2000).

meaning, for it is a path true to the self and its desires, leading towards personal fulfilment and happiness, and thus, as in Ali(x)'s and Tulip's case, *towards*, rather than away from, sin. It is by abandoning the conventional route, by "[breaking] the sequence—the expected order" (Woolf 1998a, 119) that one can liberate oneself.

The concept of breaking the sequence is also connected with Winterson's Postmodernist deconstruction of numerous social and literary paradigms, including those of identity, gender and genre. Not only does her work challenge the traditional concept of the self as separate and single, but her novels also deconstruct such literary forms as autobiography (*Oranges*), romance (*Written on the Body*) and history (*The Passion, Sexing the Cherry*). Finally, Winterson's own life is a perfect example of the subversive technique advocated by Woolf, for she has consciously rejected heterosexuality and motherhood in order to devote herself more fully to her art (Brooks 2000). What is more, her childhood (as that of Jeanette in *Oranges*) was marked by a series of successful rebellions against heteronormativity and the destiny of preacher imposed upon her by her working-class, Pentecostal environment. Winterson could be said, in other words, to have resisted and even fought against the religious and local equivalent of what Virginia Woolf called "an unseizable force" (1976, 152), described by Hermione Lee as "master of an existence [...] which is graceless, automatic, secularized, and where dreams are regulated by alarm clocks and work sirens" (1977, 88-9). Symbolising "[e]ducation, tradition and authority"—or the social system of Woolf's time in more general terms—the "unseizable force" not only pressurises individuals into curbing their passions and views so as to fit them into a common mould, but also threatens Jacob's spontaneity and "his inner conviction of reality" (86). Its tyranny is evident in Bradshaw's and Holmes's attempts to eradicate Septimus's difference from those who follow the law of "proportion" (Woolf 1992a, 106), in Charles Tansley's derision at Lily Briscoe's ambition to become a painter (1992b, 54), and in Jacob's struggle to publish an essay expressing his "outrage" at Professor Bulteel's omission of "several indecent words and some indecent phrases" in his "edition of Wycherley" (1976, 67). And even though Woolf's protagonist in *Jacob's Room*, like Septimus in *Mrs Dalloway*, appears to escape the demands of his society through death, the fact that Woolf presents "warfare" as "the extreme form of the mechanical 'reality' of modern life" (Lee 1977, 88) demonstrates the failure of Jacob's attempt to defy it. His death is foreshadowed a number of times throughout the novel, as well as by his own

surname (Flanders), signifying that his destiny is already decided and that the same relentless social and political forces which eradicate independent thinking in his contemporaries push him towards an end which may be heroic, but which will be met by millions of other young men. The path of one's life is thus pre-established, the sequence of individual elements arranged in such a way as to produce a conventional denouement, whether in wartime or in peace. There is to be no 'straying' of the subject, but a straight, steady progression towards a pre-inscribed finale. In the passage quoted below, Woolf questions such a sentence (in both its grammatical and legal connotations) by splitting the subject from the seemingly unavoidable conclusion, revealing the gap between the 'words' into which one may slip "as easily as a coin rolls between the floorboards" (Winterson 2001a, 215). Woolf is thus criticising the clichéd lives led by the men and women of her time. Interestingly, the language of maps employed in the passage is also to be found in Winterson's own writing. Last but not least, Woolf's suggestion that one's way into other lives is achievable through narratives brings to mind Winterson's use of the story—her central literary device—as a means of exploring other realities and selves:

> The streets of London have their *map*; but our passions are *uncharted*. What are you going to meet if you turn this corner?
>
> 'Holborn straight ahead of you,' says the policeman. Ah, but where are you going if instead of brushing past the old man with the white beard, the silver medal, and the cheap violin, you let him go on with his *story*, which ends in an invitation to step somewhere, to his room, presumably, off Queen's Square, and there he shows you a collection of birds' eggs and a letter from the Prince of Wales's secretary, and this (skipping the intermediate stages) brings you one winter's day to the Essex coast, where the little boat makes off to the ship, and the ship sails and you behold on the skyline the Azores; and the flamingoes rise; and there you sit on the verge of the marsh drinking rum-punch, and outcast from civilization, for you have committed a crime, are infected with yellow fever as likely as not, and—fill in the sketch as you like.
>
> As frequent as street corners in Holborn are *these chasms in the continuity of our ways*. *Yet we keep straight on.* (Woolf 1976, 92-93; my emphasis)

This liberating function of the story is one of the major themes of Winterson's fiction. In *The PowerBook*, for instance, Ali(x)'s customers seek freedom from their fixed, dreary lives through the stories which the e-writer conjures up for them. Similarly, in *Sexing the Cherry*, Jordan recounts his fantasy journeys to a number of

extraordinary locations, including "the city of words" (Winterson 1989, 14), in which he discovers a house without floors, the tightropes walked by its inhabitants suspended over enormous pits filled with crocodiles (15), and a city whose "entire population had been wiped out by love three times in a row" (80). And whilst the stories Jordan tells recall such works as Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) and Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* (1972), their aim of conveying Jordan's multiple lives and selves can also be seen as an allusion to Woolf's *Orlando* and a development of the Modernist writer's observation of alternative existences in the above extract from *Jacob's Room*. Returning to this passage—its hidden, unexplored paths, its language of maps and its indication of the power of stories—as well as to T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1943), which is one of the novel's main literary sources (1996, 118), the protagonist of *Sexing the Cherry* asserts that:

> [e]very journey conceals another journey within its lines: the path not taken and the forgotten angle. These are the journeys I wish to record. Not the ones I made, but the ones I might have made, or perhaps did make in some other place or time. I could tell you the truth as you will find it in diaries and maps and log-books. I could faithfully describe all that I saw and heard and give you a travel book. You could follow it then, tracing those travels with your finger, putting red flags where I went. (1989, 2)

Most importantly, Winterson's engagement with the passage from *Jacob's Room* and its recognition of the existence of "these chasms in the continuity of our ways" (Woolf 1976, 93) is also explored through recourse to contemporary science, thus not only demonstrating the validity of Woolf's observation, but also revealing the author of *The Daylight Gate* as a contemporary alter ego of her Modernist precursor: "In quantum reality there are millions of possible worlds, unactualised, potential, perhaps bearing in on us, but only reachable by *wormholes* we can never find. If we do find one, we don't come back" (Winterson 2001a, 53; my emphasis).

GENDER, TIME AND IDENTITY IN WINTERSON'S RE-WRITINGS OF *ORLANDO*

Despite the existence of numerous similarities between Winterson's and Woolf's respective oeuvres, in her fiction, as in *Art Objects*, Winterson privileges what she considers Woolf's greatest achievement, *Orlando*. Her admiration for this novel leads

her to re-write and transform it to an extent unparalleled in contemporary British fiction, for no other major novelist has made a single text of Woolf's literary oeuvre the foundation of his or her own body of work. In many ways, Winterson's vision of *Orlando* as the source of "[a]ll the things we have come to take for granted from modern fiction" (2005a, 16) could be employed to describe her own novels. The similarities between Woolf's mock-biography and Winterson's work are so numerous, in fact, that to list and analyse them all would require a lengthy study. The present chapter can, therefore, only mention the most significant parallels.

It is hardly surprising that Woolf's 1928 novel has become the primary precursor text of a writer whose main preoccupation is romantic love and who "happens to love women" herself (1996, 104). Not only does Woolf openly discuss and represent lesbian relationships, but the novel was also famously described by Nigel Nicolson as "the longest and most charming love-letter in literature" (1992, 186), an embodiment of Woolf's attraction to Vita Sackville-West. Winterson's view that Realism is "essentially anti-art" (Winterson 1996, 30-31) and her insistence on the imagination as the basis of literary creation (133) have also contributed to her appreciation of *Orlando*—one of the most imaginative Modernist novels. Furthermore, much of Winterson's fiction has been classified in the genre of magic realism, of which *Orlando* is one of the earliest examples. Woolf's blurring of the boundary between the real and the imagined is also identified by Winterson as "crucial" to her own preoccupation with the question of "how you define yourself" and her "fascinat[ion] with identity". Like the author of *Oranges*, the Bloomsbury writer was "radical to use real people in [her] fictions and to muddle [her] facts" (2012a, 119). Finally, Winterson believes that "the pursuit of artists" is "to disguise and distort or obscure their identity or invent a completely different role" (Francone 2005), a vision which presents literary creation as a transformation and extension of the self. This artistic credo recalls not only Woolf's fictionalisation of Vita, but also the way in which "the terms of history become Orlando's terms, and finally even history itself becomes Orlando's story" (Gilbert 1993a, xxvii). It is not difficult to see why a novel in which the self expands to swallow history and geography would appeal to a writer as obsessed with imaginative versions of the self as Winterson, whose protagonists are frequently their author's alter egos, her novels functioning as "cover stories" (Winterson 2009) of her own life.

Woolf's novel provides the contemporary writer with "the fixed point" which "is only the base camp—the journeys out from there are what interests" (2001a, 215). These journeys are numerous and varied—early-nineteenth-century Venice in *The Passion*, 1600s London in *Sexing the Cherry*, the virtual world in *The PowerBook.* What happens in these fantastic locations is, to a large extent, a re-inscription of the central preoccupations of Woolf's mock-biography, for Winterson's characters not only travel through time (in *Sexing the Cherry* and *The PowerBook*), but also share Orlando's androgyny, dressing up as both men and women, which is one way of breaking through the boundaries of their own identities and going beyond "the confines of heterosexual desire" (1996, 67). Recalling Orlando's experience as both man and woman, as well as her dressing up in male clothes in the second half of the novel, "by [which] device" "she reaped a twofold harvest", for "the pleasures of life were increased and its experiences multiplied" (Woolf 1993, 153), cross-dressing offers Winterson's characters the opportunity to see life through the eyes of the other sex and thus experience it in its fullness. Like the vibrant figures of Woolf's novel—such as the Russian princess, Sasha, the Archduchess/Archduke Harriet/Harry and Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine—all of whom pose a challenge to gender stereotypes, Winterson's women tend to be far from 'feminine', as opposed to her male characters, who often display that quality in excess. It would be hard to envision a less ladylike persona than the murderous Dog Woman—a giantess boasting but a few broken teeth, her face covered with smallpox scars that "are home enough for fleas" (Winterson 1989, 19). As Jane Haslett's argument makes clear, the heroine of *Sexing the Cherry* is one of the most daring representations of a woman in Winterson's fiction, for "[i]n the grotesque body of Dog Woman, Winterson has incorporated all the misogynist features of a female body imaginable" (Haslett 2007, 43), her character's physique representing "everything the female body is *not* supposed to be" (42; Haslett's emphasis). Nevertheless, it is "a fabulously invincible body" (43). Its power becomes starkly clear when contrasted with the Napoleonic soldier and chef, Henri (*The Passion*), who—although endowed with a male body—is conventionally much more feminine. Not only does he never kill another man during the eight years he spends in the French army (Andermahr 2009, 62), but he "can't pick up a musket to shoot a rabbit" (Winterson 2001b, 28), abhorred as he is at cruelty to animals (Onega 2006, 55). The object of his passion, Villanelle, is another androgynous being, though her androgyny is, as Haslett suggests, much bolder and

more "complex" (Haslett 2007, 43) than the Dog Woman's, for Villanelle has a truly "queer" body (44), which, although largely female, bears the webbed feet of the male Venetian boatmen (45). According to the critic, "Villanelle's webbed feet can be read as a metaphor for male genitalia, and Villanelle's body can be seen as hermaphroditic" (46). Consequently, unlike Orlando, whose male and female identity—though placed within the same body—are temporally separated by a week-long period of transformative sleep, and who has to leave the physical confines of one sex in order to be biologically included in another, Villanelle has crossed the boundary not only both ways but simultaneously, dissolving it in the process. This is also true of the Turkish girl, Ali (*The PowerBook*), whose male disguise in the form of tulip bulbs and a "fat stem supporting a good-sized red head" (Winterson 2001a, 12) comes to life as the Princess caresses the flower (22), the transformation turning the protagonist into a hermaphrodite, thereby collapsing the temporal distance between Orlando's two lives as a man and a woman respectively. By extending Woolf's politics of undoing gender difference to the body, Winterson has thus given voice to the contemporary taboo subjects of transsexualism and hermaphroditism[13]. In other words, both writers respond to the social issues of their own time, Woolf questioning what she saw as an artificial division between masculinity and femininity, Winterson challenging the binary opposition between male and female.

What the above analysis also makes clear is that Winterson's portrayal of Villanelle and Ali demonstrates a connection between the concept of queerness and her view of time as "eternally present" (2001b, 62; 1989, 100), in which she follows not only Woolf, but, most explicitly, T. S. Eliot.[14] This interpretation finds further support in the fact that both the division between man and woman and that between the present and the past constitute binary opposites, whose deconstruction is one of Winterson's major fictional aims (Grice and Woods 2007, 39). Following her Modernist forebears, she dissolves the boundary between the past and the present, filling her work, in a manner similar to Woolf, with passages where the two have a simultaneous existence. Speaking through the narrator of *The PowerBook*, she muses:

[13] See (Haslett 2007, 51-52).

[14] (Eliot 2004, p. 171, l. 4). If Woolf can be regarded as Winterson's literary 'mother', the title of her literary 'father' arguably belongs to T. S. Eliot. Not only does Winterson share many of his views on art, but her novels also engage with his poetry, especially *Four Quartets*.

> I wonder, maybe, if time stacks vertically, and there is no past, present, future, only simultaneous layers of reality. We experience our own reality at ground level. At a different level, time would be elsewhere. We would be elsewhere in time. (Winterson 2001a, 186)

This vision of time is also present in Woolf's work, both in the sense of the ancient past rising to the surface of modern life—as in the song of "the battered woman" in *Mrs Dalloway* (Woolf 1992a, 89)—and in the way in which memories continually surface into the consciousness of Clarissa, Peter Walsh and other characters. In one particular passage in her 1925 novel, Woolf places an equal sign between past, present and future:

> greatness was passing, hidden, down Bond Street, removed only by a hand's-breadth from ordinary people who might now, for the first and last time, be within speaking distance of the majesty of England, of the enduring symbol of the state which will be known to curious antiquaries, sifting the ruins of time, when London is a grass-grown path and all those hurrying along the pavement this Wednesday morning are but bones with a few wedding rings mixed up in their dust and the gold stoppings of innumerable decayed teeth. The face in the motor car will then be known. (17-18)

London as "a grass-grown path" refers not only to the eventual disappearance of the city from the face of the earth, and thus to the distant future, but also to the ancient past, "when the pavement was grass, when it was swamp" (89)—before London came into being. Its present-day inhabitants might thus be seen as equated both with their own remains, which will be scattered in the "dust" (18) once London has ceased to exist, and with the bones of their own ancient ancestors. That Britain's past is constantly embedded in its present is demonstrated in Woolf's description of the plight of Lucrezia Warren Smith:

> I am alone; I am alone! she cried, by the fountain in Regent's Park [...], as perhaps at midnight, when all boundaries are lost, the country reverts to its ancient shape, as the Romans saw it, lying cloudy, when they landed, and the hills had no names and rivers wound they knew not where—such was her darkness; (26)

Similarly, in *The PowerBook,* archeologists find a sarcophagus containing the body of the Roman Governor of London. Having informed the reader of this event, which is told in the past tense, Ali(x) moves back in time to narrate the Governor's journey "up the Thames" (Winterson 2001a, 168), which not only recalls the above

excerpt from Woolf's novel, but also uses the present tense to blur the boundary between "yesterday", when the body was "uncovered", and "one thousand eight hundred years" ago (167):

> There he is, coming slowly up the Thames in his rowed barge. [...]
>
> On either side of the broad river are marshes and dull sand, and deeper in are forests as tight-grown as a cash crop. But these forests are wild and the unseen eyes that watch him are as far from civilisation as he is from home. (168)

One of the best examples of Winterson's rejection of the division between past, present and future is her second work of fiction, *Sexing the Cherry*, which is not only "'a reading of Four Quartets'" (1996, 118), but, more importantly, a literary transformation of *Orlando*. Both the grotesque Dog Woman and the imaginative Jordan travel from the seventeenth century to the year 1990, their journey recalling Orlando's life story, which also spans a few hundred years, although the two protagonists of Winterson's tale skip the intermediate centuries and end up in the near future rather than in the present. The Dog Woman reappears as a female chemist fighting a lonely battle against water pollution, while Jordan comes back as Nicolas Jordan—a young man who joins the navy and, while "on board an Admiralty salvage tug", meets Jordan's friend, John Tradescant:

> TIME 1: A young man on board an Admiralty salvage tug close to the mouth of the Thames goes on deck to look at the stars. [...] A man stands next to him and says, 'I have heard they are burying the King at Windsor. [...] There is room for Charles, a little room.'
>
> The young man turns astonished; he knows of no King, only a Queen, who is far from being dead. He opens his mouth to protest the joke and finds he is face to face with John Tradescant. Above them the sails whip in the wind.

> TIME 2: They are cat-calling the girl as she comes out of school. [...] The traffic deafens her. She climbs up the steps at Waterloo Bridge to look at St Paul's glinting in the evening. She can't see St Paul's. [...] She can't hear the traffic any more, the roar of dogs is deafening. Coming to herself, she kicks the bunch of hounds [...] She can see her hut. [...] Jordan will be waiting for her. (1989, 89-90)

Whilst the first of these passages makes it more or less clear that it is Nicolas Jordan who goes back to the past rather than John Tradescant who visits the future (especially as Nicolas recognises him), the fact that the Dog Woman "[comes] to

herself" suggests that she may have briefly left her seventeenth-century self and travelled to contemporary times. The use of the present tense throughout these excerpts not only questions conventional temporal divisions, but also dissolves the boundaries between past, present and future, reflecting, in this way, Eliot's view of "all time" as "eternally present" (Eliot 2004, p. 171, l. 4) whilst also indicating self-reflexively the condition of the book itself. In other words, Winterson uses Eliot's ideas to go further than Woolf, who problematises traditional temporal divisions by having Orlando's self—which is always 'present'—span and incorporate a few centuries, but in whose novel the progress of the story is still linear, beginning in Elizabethan times and ending in 1928. Winterson is also trying to achieve a fictional demonstration of the Hopi sentence, which is described in the epigraph. This Indian tribe "have a language as sophisticated as ours, but no tenses for past, present and future. The division does not exist. What does this say about time?" (Winterson 1989). That Winterson's attempt is doomed to fail is obvious, for the English language has not abandoned these divisions and the only way to move beyond them is to either produce an ungrammatical sentence, such as "he go there", or to write it in Hopi. Interestingly, however, the language of this tribe is a curiously adequate rendition of Woolf's concepts of breaking the sentence and the sequence, pointing to these two seemingly separate ideas as mirror images of each other. The flaunted rejection of grammatical tense—the syntactic vehicle of time—not only destroys the boundaries between past, present and future, but also breaks the sentence apart by relieving its tension or tense-ness, which is what keeps it together. 'Freeing' the sentence of tense deprives it of sequence as well, which suggests not only Winterson's rejection of linearity (as in the passages quoted above), but also the blurring of the boundary between her work, which is highly intertextual, and other literary texts. As both Winterson and Eliot affirm, literature exists in a perpetual present[15] (Eliot 1975, 38), since from the point of its discourse, if not its history, all time is simultaneous.

Despite numerous parallels between *Sexing the Cherry* and *Orlando*, it is *The PowerBook* that has the most in common with Woolf's mock-biography. Winterson's novel is a series of tales whose creator is the gender-shifting Ali(x). One of his/her alter egos is the Turkish Ali—the heroine-turned-hero of the section "OPEN HARD

[15] In *The PowerBook*, the narrator affirms that stories "have no date. We can say when they were written or told, but they have no date. Stories are simultaneous with time" (Winterson 2001a, 216).

DRIVE". Working as a spy for the sultan and entrusted with a special mission, Ali transforms herself into a boy by strapping a tulip round her waist. On his/her way to Holland—the journey "replicat[ing] Orlando's voyage from Turkey to England dressed as a gypsy woman, after her change of sex" (Onega 2006, 185)—he/she breakfasts with the captain, who is soon captured by pirates and beheaded. Following this turn of events, Ali is employed by the Italian envoy to the Turks to teach his future bride "'the arts of love'" (Winterson 2001a, 20). It is then that the tulip comes alive and transforms itself into the male sexual organ—a humorous reference to Orlando's change of sex.[16] Like the narrator of Woolf's novel, the female Ali (dressed as a boy) ponders on the nature of identity as socially constructed by the body:

> Orlando had become a woman—there is no denying it. But in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity. (Woolf 1993, 98)

> Even my body is in disguise today.
>
> But what if my body is the disguise? What if skin, bone, liver, veins, are the things I use to hide myself? I have put them on and I can't take them off. Does that trap me or free me? (Winterson 2001a, 15)

A re-writing of *Orlando*, Winterson's work here re-inscribes Woolf's mock-biography into the field of information technology—another sign that Winterson does not merely copy her Bloomsbury ancestor, but establishes herself as her *contemporary* reincarnation. Like the eponymous hero/heroine of *Orlando*, who is also a writer, Ali(x) inhabits different times, places and genders, changing his/her sex along the way. However, unlike his/her fictional predecessor, who "changes her skin" (1996, 67), Ali(x)'s androgyny is safely positioned within the bodiless virtual world. This could be seen as either Winterson's shying at literary experiment—a conclusion which does not sit well with the novelist's reputation as a literary explorer and challenger of forms—or, much more justifiably, as her attempt to go beyond gender by eliminating the body.[17] This move appears much bolder than Orlando's physical transformation, for Winterson makes her characters not merely change but

[16] See Onega (2006, 185-186; 193-197) for more parallels between *The PowerBook* and *Orlando*.
[17] On the other hand, Winterson also paradoxically "insists on the materiality of the body and its desires at very turn". Coupled with her disembodiment of her characters, this strategy is designed to enable the author to "[write] sexuality beyond gender" (Andermahr 2005, 117).

also shed their skins: "Take off your clothes. Take off your body. Hang them up behind the door. Tonight we can go deeper than disguise" (2001a, 4). And yet, Winterson's work is only the logical completion of Woolf's own argument in *Orlando*, for the Modernist writer's observation that, after his transformation into a woman, "in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as he had been" (Woolf 1993, 98) suggests not only that "sexually defined selves or roles are merely *costumes* and thus readily interchangeable" (Gilbert 1993a, xix; my emphasis), but also that the nature of the self is independent of biological sex. Such a vision of the relationship between identity and gender points to the avant la lettre Postmodernism of *Orlando*, as does its blurring of the boundary between fact and fiction in the form of magic realism. Postmodernist too are Woolf's treatment of time and her deconstruction of the genre of biography. While the former is demonstrated in Winterson's use of time travel and her view of time as "eternally present" (Winterson 2001b, 62; 1989, 100), the latter—along with Gertrude Stein's revolutionary treatment of autobiography in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933)—inspired the contemporary writer's fictionalisation of herself in her semi-autobiographical *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. In other words, by exploring and developing the Postmodernist features of Woolf's novel throughout her oeuvre, and by joining them with numerous other references to her precursor's work, Winterson creates an image of herself as the fully feminist Postmodernised Virginia Woolf.

This is also evident in Winterson's treatment of the self. Like most of her fiction, *The PowerBook* deals with its protagonist's quest for identity through love. The novel is also influenced by *The Waves*, for both texts, like Woolf's mock-biography, present identity as multiple and shifting. In Woolf's 1931 novel, when Bernard reflects on "'what I call "my life"'", he remarks that "'it is not one life that I look back upon; I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am—Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis: or how to distinguish my life from theirs'" (1992c, 212). Similarly, in *The PowerBook*, Ali(x) points out that "[w]e think of ourselves as close and finite, when we are multiple and infinite" (Winterson 2001a, 103).

One of the stories Ali(x) tells is the tale of Orlando's quest for his beloved, which is also a search for himself. And while Winterson's major source here appears to be *Orlando furioso* (1532), the fact that *The PowerBook* contains a number of references to Woolf's magic realist novel suggests that this work is as much behind

Ali(x)'s story as Ariosto's epic poem. In the excerpt quoted below, Orlando—who, like Ali(x)'s other protagonists, can be identified with the e-writer—repeats his name in order to prevent his fragile self from disintegrating. As Onega points out, the passage alludes to the episode in Woolf's novel when the protagonist "hesitatingly" calls her own name, "'Orlando?'" (Woolf 1993, 212) (Onega 2006, 195), with the narrator observing that "we" are all made up of numerous selves which are "one on top of another, as plates are piled on a waiter's hand"[18] (Woolf 1993, 213):[19]

> In the forest every solid thing was changing into its watery equivalent. [...] My fingers closed on nothing [...] In the liquid forest, I was the only solid thing and already my outline was beginning to blend with other outlines that were not me. I said my name again and again—'ORLANDO! ORLANDO!'
>
> I hoped my name would contain me, but the sound itself seemed to run off my tongue, and drop, letter by letter, into the pool at my feet. I tried again, but when I put my hand down into the pool of water, my name was gone. (Winterson 2001a, 237-238)

Here, identity is revealed as constructed entirely through language, which, as de Saussure discovered, is nothing but an arbitrary set of signs. The self is both text and intertext (the reference to the two *Orlando*s), constructed out of the multiple discourses of culture (Barthes 1977a, 146), capable of referring only to other texts, and thus only to itself. This may be one reason why *The PowerBook* is "about a search for something which cannot be found, that leads back, inevitably, to the self" (Winterson 2012b). Orlando's repetition of his name does not prevent the dissolution of his self partly because identity depends on external confirmation—the presence of the lover[20]—and partly as a result of the fact that the name "ORLANDO", capitalised for emphasis, signifies, in itself, a multitude of identities and genders. Winterson is, in other words, drawing attention to Woolf's novel as an embodiment of Postmodernist multiplicity, and thus showing its relevance to contemporary literature and culture. What is more, by referring to *Orlando*, she presents the above passage not merely as another example of Postmodernist technique, but as a complex

[18] Winterson refers to this sentence directly in *Sexing the Cherry*: "Our lives could be stacked together like plates on a waiter's hand. Only the top one is showing, but the rest are there and by mistake we discover them" (1989, 100).
[19] For a more detailed discussion of the parallels between this episode in *The PowerBook* and *Orlando* respectively, see (Onega 2006, 195-196).
[20] "As I hesitated by the great iron gates, I heard her calling my name—'ORLANDO! ORLANDO!' I hesitated no longer, and rushed inside the palace [...], sensing myself again, knowing my own name" (Winterson 2001a, 238).

interplay of two literary movements, a maneouvre which adds complexity to her own work[21]. Significantly, Woolf's "Orlando" is also revealed as Ali(x)'s 'true' name, for both characters incorporate a multitude of selves. This interpretation is supported by Ali(x)'s status as a writer, which he/she shares with Woolf's protagonist, the fact that the Turkish girl, Ali, is a playful re-incarnation of Orlando and by numerous other references to Woolf's novel throughout *The PowerBook*.

WINTERSON'S CONTEMPORARY WOOLF

Although Winterson's explicit reliance on Woolf's work makes it difficult to accuse her of harbouring any "anxiety of influence" (Bloom 1997), her development of Woolf's ideas of identity, gender and time (often to the point of their logical conclusion, which the Modernist author had not reached herself) suggests that she suffers from an "anxiety of repetition"—of reproducing the glories of the past without adding anything new. Winterson's own views on intertextuality, which (ironically) seem to replicate those of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, suggest that her engagement with Woolf's work might be seen as an example of the latter's vision of influence as expressed in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), with its emphasis on the necessity to combine the present with the past, or originality with tradition:

> [...] the calling of the artist, in any medium, is to *make it new*. I do not mean that in new work the past is repudiated; quite the opposite, *the past is reclaimed*. [...] It is *re-stated and re-instated in its original vigour*. [...]
>
> [...] The true artist is *connected*. The true artist studies the past, *not as a copyist or a pasticheur* will study the past, those people are interested only in the final product, the art object, signed sealed and delivered to a public drugged on *reproduction.* (Winterson 1996, 12; my emphasis)

What "make it new" signifies, then, is the re-writing of the past in such a way as to make it appear contemporary and fresh—as original as it was at the time of its publication. That Winterson achieves this with respect to *Orlando* is perhaps best

[21] Winterson admits as much when she says that "naturally they [intertextual references] occur in my work. [...] I think about them while I'm writing, and I think, Yes, that fits. It then suggests an allusion, which the reader can gather or not [...] The more I can stuff in it, the more layers there are in my work, the more there is for people to mine" (Bilger 1997).

demonstrated by her transformation of Woolf's novel through the discourse of computer technology in *The PowerBook*. Characters such as Ali(x) show the reader the relevance of Woolf's mock-biography to the culture of the virtual world, where anything is possible. The multiple lives led by Woolf's protagonist are revealed as the antecedents of the virtual selves 'experienced' by the hero/heroine of *The PowerBook* and, by extension, the many users of the Internet who join chatrooms as someone other than themselves. As Winterson has herself asserted,

> Orlando is perfect internet material as someone who pushes time in different genders, different guises. And that's exactly what happens on the internet. People go into those chat rooms and they feel they can be anybody, which is great. It's sort of virtual transvestitism—all these guys who would never wear knickers going into chat rooms calling themselves 'Jennifer.' (Francone 2005)

Finally, Winterson's resurrection of Woolf's protagonist in her androgynous and bisexual characters points to *Orlando* as anticipating the progressively cross-gendered nature of contemporary society, where the differences between men and women, especially within gay communities, are becoming increasingly less marked. In other words, Winterson is saving Woolf for posterity as a prophet of contemporary times.

SECTION TWO

Writing as "mirror geography"[22]: Jeanette Winterson's 'Selfobjectification' of Virginia Woolf

THE "DAMNED EGOTISTICAL SELF"[23] OF WINTERSON'S FICTION

Despite their heavy reliance on both Eliot's and Woolf's literary and critical work, Winterson's novels are surprisingly far from embodying the Modernist ideal of impersonality, which she herself advocates.[24] Reading her fiction reminds one, in fact, of Woolf's famous description of a man's writing: "a shadow seemed to lie across the page. It was a straight dark bar, a shadow shaped something like the letter 'I'" (Woolf 1998a, 130). The "I" appears under various disguises, manifesting itself through language, characterisation and plot. As Brian Bouldrey remarks, "Winterson has made a career of placing herself at the center of her text". Not only is she "fascinated by self-portraiture in other artists" (Bouldrey 2000), but her own work frequently revolves around the figure of its creator, the plot functioning as a "cover version" of Winterson's own life (Winterson 2009). Nowhere is this more evident than in *Oranges are not the only fruit*, whose plot is a re-writing of Winterson's own childhood and whose main character is called Jeanette. The novelist's name is also concealed under its "near anagram", Winnet Stonejar (Armitt 2007, 16). As the author has herself admitted, "the book was such a good story that it had become my own cover version. Underneath it was a deep wound that I couldn't go near" (Winterson 2009). The cover story occurs in other novels as well, for, as Andermahr

[22] (Winterson 2001a, 174)
[23] (Woolf 1953, 22)
[24] According to Winterson, the author's personality and life experience "are of no interest" in writing. "What matters is what you can do with the raw material that is your life. [...] you must be prepared to do the Indian rope trick and disappear at the top. It's not about you, it's about the work" (Bush 1993). Similarly, in an interview with Audrey Bilger, Winterson asserts that "Eliot was [...] right to be very wary about people who want to express their personality. It is important, first of all, to be sure that you do have something to express, but also to show a care for language that suggests that it comes first, before you, before your personality, before your own ambitions" (Bilger 1997). See also Winterson's discussion of Eliot's concept of poetic impersonality in *Art Objects* (1996, 184-188).

points out, not only does Winterson identify "with the various child personae in her fiction", such as Silver in *Tanglewreck* (2006) (Andermahr 2009, 46), but "the adult Winterson" is also to be found in her novels "through her various alter egos, doppelgangers and mouthpieces" (43).

One such unmistakeable doppelganger is the protagonist of *The PowerBook*. Like Winterson, he/she resembles "a cross-legged Turk who knots a fine carpet and finds himself in the pattern". "Ask him about anything", the narrator says, "and it's himself he'll produce, dusty but triumphant" (Winterson 2001a, 215). Ali(x) is both the author and the subject of his/her tales; the unifying principle; *The PowerBook* itself. Like "a rope slung across space" from its anchor in the "mother's belly" (210), or Donne's pair of compasses (Donne 1933, 45), the stories come from and return to this enigmatic figure, never outside Ali(x)'s self. But Ali(x)'s story, and stories, are not his/hers at all, for their real author is Winterson, and so the tales Ali(x) spins both derive from and ultimately return to the godlike creator "paring [her] fingernails" (Joyce 2001, 166) in the background. This interpretation finds support in the numerous autobiographical details of Ali(x)'s life—pieces of information that Winterson leaves lying around like clues for the reader to pick up, such as her disguising of her own name as "Jehovah's Witness" in a conversation between Ali(x) and her lover (Winterson 2001a, 50). Both Ali(x) and *The PowerBook*'s author "are Virgo" (Onega 2006, 184), live in Spitalfields and own a shop called "VERDE"[25] (Winterson 2001a, 3). Furthermore, the story of "the Muck House" (138) soon reveals itself to be a disguised account of Winterson's own childhood. Like the author of *The Stone Gods*, Alix, who is one of Ali(x)'s two central selves, was adopted by a childless couple, her biological parents—whose occupation was weaving—having given her away. Both young Winterson and Alix were also forbidden to read books, although in Alix's case it is the mother who breaks the rule of no reading or writing when she responds to her daughter's request for words.[26] In her control and distribution of them, she thus resembles Mrs Winterson, who, as her daughter attests, "was in charge of language" (2012a, 27), sticking pieces of paper with "exhortations" "all over the house" (100) and even changing the ending of *Jane Eyre* without abandoning "the style of Charlotte Brontë" (102). What is more,

[25] This is the word that appears on the sign above both Winterson's and Ali(x)'s shop, though the former is usually called "Verde's".
[26] Most of these similarities are also listed by Onega (2006, 184).

Winterson's description of her biological mother in *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* is—intriguingly—an almost exact quotation of Ali(x)'s words in *The PowerBook*: "My birth mother, they told me, was a little red thing from out of the Lancashire looms, who at seventeen gave birth to me, easy as a cat" (17).[27] Finally, one of the dialogues between Mrs M and her adoptive daughter bears a very close resemblance to the young Jeanette's own conversation with Mrs Winterson, which the contemporary writer retells in her memoir:

> She [Mrs Winterson] once told me that the universe is a cosmic dustbin—and after I had thought about this for a bit, I asked her if the lid was on or off.
>
> 'On,' she said. 'Nobody escapes.' (22)[28]

In other words, Ali(x) is Winterson herself, *The PowerBook* putting into practice Winterson's artistic credo, which sees fiction as a transformation of the writer's self. Like Narcissus, gazing into the mirror-like surface of the pool, Winterson uses her own work as a looking-glass, her image distorted by the medium of language and disguise. Like Rembrandt, who "painted himself at least fifty times", Winterson is "shifting [her] own boundaries" and "inching into other selves" (2001a, 214). Her interpretation of the work of the seventeenth-century master serves, in fact, as one more clue to the identity of the central figure behind *The PowerBook*, for the author of *Gut Symmetries* uses her description of the Dutch painter as yet another disguise for herself—a Joycean author both present in and absent from her creation, the Cindy Sherman of fiction:

> The picture changes all the time. He dresses up, wears armour, throws on a hat or a cloak. The face ages, wrinkles, smoothes out again. These are not photographs, these are theatre.
>
> Why did Rembrandt use himself as his own prop?
>
> Well, because he was there, but, just as importantly, because he wasn't there. He was shifting his own boundaries. He was inching into other selves. These portraits are a record, not of one life, but of many lives—lives piled in on one another, and sometimes surfacing through the painter and into paint.

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[27] Compare this with Alix in *The PowerBook*: "My mother, they say, was a little red thing out of the Manchester mills, who at seventeen gave birth to me, easy as a cat" (2001a, 157).

[28] *The PowerBook* features an almost identical exchange:

> [Alix:] 'Is there a world beyond here?'
> [...] [Mrs M] 'Nothing but waste and scrap. [...] We live in a cosmic dustbin.'
> 'Is the lid on or off?'
> 'On. Nobody gets beyond the dustbin.' (2001a, 142)

> The fixed point is the artist himself, about whom we know enough to write a biography. But the fixed point is only the base camp—the journeys out from there are what interests. (214-215)

According to Onega, "some knowledge of her [Winterson's] life and background is indispensable for an understanding of her work, since one of the games she recurrently plays in her fictions is the confusion of her identity with that of her protagonists" (2006, 3). As in Sherman's playful photographs, which are both self-portraits and portraits of the other, the two merged into a hybrid entity whilst simultaneously questioning the very concept of a stable self, the face and its masks become indistinguishable in Winterson's work, whether it is Jordan who leaves the pen of prostitutes in female clothing or the author making use of language to dress herself up as Jeanette, Alix, Silver or Sappho. Both Winterson and Sherman can thus be seen as blurring the boundary not only between self and other, artist and work of art, but also between fact and fiction.

The centrality of the authorial subject in the art process, as well as in the finished product of the creative endeavour, is not the only manifestation of self-absorption in Winterson's fiction and certainly not among the features that weaken its power over its vast readership. On the contrary, this focus makes Winterson's work more complex, adding autobiographical and metafictional layers to the surface meaning of the story, and contributing to the conceptual and structural unity of both individual novels and the whole of Winterson's oeuvre. But the narcissistic, overbearing "I" is also revealed at the level of language—in the self-consciousness of Winterson's leitmotifs, maxims and dialogues. The last of these frequently assume the form of highly contrived one-sentence exchanges, which fill the pages of *The PowerBook* and introduce the individual sections of *Lighthousekeeping*:

> Tell me a story, Pew.
>
> What kind of story, child?
> A story with a happy ending.
> There's no such thing in all the world.
> As a happy ending?
> As an ending. (Winterson 2005b, 49)

Typically for Winterson, the dialogues end in a self-conscious punchline, another weakness which the author of *Art & Lies* appears unaware of, as in this conversation between Alix and Mrs Muck:

> 'What I tell myself is true.'
> 'What you tell yourself is a story.'
> 'This is a story—you, me, the Muck House, the treasure.'
> 'This is real life.'
> 'How do you know?'
> 'No one would ever pay to watch it.' (2001a, 229)

The same self-conscious quality is also visible in Winterson's leitmotifs and maxims. In order to give her novels a greater unity of vision, to bind her characters to each other and to impress the message of a given work more firmly on the reader, Winterson frequently repeats the same sentence at various points in the story, and sometimes even between novels. And whilst this repetition recalls Woolf's technique in such works as *Mrs Dalloway* and *The Waves*, where the same phrases and sentences are repeated a number of times, none of Woolf's connecting devices have the air of self-consciousness, artificiality, authority and even arrogance that can be detected in those employed by Winterson. The highly artificial leitmotif of *The Passion*, for instance, is one of the mottos of Winterson's oeuvre, blurring, as it does, the boundary between the real and imagined: "I'm telling you stories. Trust me" (2001b, 5). Connecting the technique with Mrs Winterson's habit of leaving Christian messages on the walls of the writer's family home in Accrington, Winterson provides a few examples of these "refrains" (Andermahr 2009, 28) in *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?*:

> *The Passion*: 'I'm telling you stories. Trust me.'
> *Written on the Body*: 'Why is the measure of love loss?'
> *The PowerBook*: 'To avoid discovery I stay on the run. To discover things for myself, I stay on the run.'
> *Weight:* 'The free man never thinks of escape.'
> *The Stone Gods*: 'Everything is imprinted forever with what it once was.' (Winterson 2012a, 157)

To this list may be added such sentences as "[t]here is no love that does not pierce the hands and feet" (2001a, 79) and "[t]here's no such thing as autobiography there's only art and lies" (1995, 69).[29] The authoritative nature of these leitmotifs might be seen as a manifestation of what Andermahr has described as "the god-like authorial voice of nineteenth-century fiction" (2005, 119), the maxims imposed by none other than Winterson herself. Thus, unlike her characters, who "represent almost exemplary postmodern selves—fragmented, contingent, discursively constructed", this elevated authorial figure "seems to exhibit few doubts about identity or anything else" (119), putting her own universal truths into the mouths of her fictional marionettes, regardless of her disdain for Realism. The author's voice thus hovers over the plot in a manner resembling, to borrow Virginia Woolf's image, "some giant cucumber [which] had spread itself over all the roses and carnations in the garden and choked them to death" (Woolf 1998a, 80).

WINTERSON'S "I" ON THE MEDIA WORLD

The ubiquity of the author in Winterson's work—whether demonstrated by the structural centrality of the authorial figure or the self-conscious style of her novels—is mirrored by the writer's presence in the media world, a large number of interviews with Woolf's legatee, especially since the publication of *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* (2011), revolving around her biography. She has also authored her own website, which is filled with her views on a variety of subjects (including that of her novels)[30], contains extracts from her books, author-related news, audio and video material, and numerous articles written by her. Winterson has also been criticised for her unashamed self-admiration, as when she named herself "her favourite author writing in English" and nominated her own novel, *Written on the Body*, as book of the year (Pritchard 1995). What is more, as early as in 1991, Winterson penned an introduction to *Oranges* (which had been published only six years previously) containing praise of its literary achievements: "*Oranges* is a threatening novel. It exposes the sanctity of family life as something of a sham [...] Worse, it does these things with such humour and lightness that those disposed not to agree find that they do". She also praised the television adaptation of the novel: "The

[29] See also (Andermahr 2009, 28).
[30] "In the following pages you'll find excerpts from all the books, my own view of what they are and how they work, and an easy way to buy them" (Winterson 2013).

BBC had more telephone calls after each episode of *Oranges* than for any other series or serial" (Winterson 2001c, xiv). To make matters worse, in 1995, Winterson published an essay collection (*Art Objects*) which promoted her own literary method[31] whilst diminishing the work of her contemporaries, whom she accused of writing "printed television" (1996, 175). Her outbursts of arrogance have not been restricted to the 1990s. In an interview with Louise Tucker, Winterson hoped that "I'm a good writer", following the statement with the assertion that "if not, *everybody*'s been conned for the last twenty years" (2005c, 9; my emphasis). In short, Winterson has taken full advantage of the various tools available to a writer for the purpose of self-invention and self-advertisement. That controlling the reception and interpretation of her fiction is one of Winterson's goals is also evident in the fact that her public statements merely repeat the same facts about her life and the same selection of her views on literature, as if she desired her readers to retain certain information about her.

One of the things Winterson emphasises in her interviews and essays is that her work belongs to the tradition of female authors leading to the re-birth of "Shakespeare's sister" (Woolf 1998a, 63). This thwarted genius, whose talent was not allowed to flourish on account of her sex, is waiting for her literary sisters to achieve freedom, independence and individuality of voice before she can rise from her unmarked grave "at some cross-roads [...] outside the Elephant and Castle" (62). "But I maintain", Woolf says, "that she would come if we worked for her, and that so to work, even in poverty and obscurity, is worth while" (149). Although "poverty and obscurity" are hardly Winterson's situation, she asserts that "[this] is where I am in history" (Winterson 1996, 164), the remark ambiguous enough to make the reader wonder whether the author of *Oranges* is merely working towards the return of this heroic figure, or whether she regards herself as her reincarnation. The latter interpretation is supported by Winterson's famous speech on BBC2's *The Late Show* special (1992), in which she proclaimed herself the contemporary Judith Shakespeare (Winterson 1992a). And even though she appears to have gone back on this

[31] Gary Indiana describes Winterson's arguments in *Art Objects* as "egregious self-promotion being offered as oracular wisdom" (1996). Similarly, another reviewer criticises Winterson for "propound[ing] aesthetic theories that, stripped to their essence, are nothing so much as celebrations and justifications of her own work" (Anon. 2010).

statement as early as two years after the publication of *Art Objects*,[32] certain details of Winterson's life—details which the author herself stresses repeatedly—make her particularly fit to fill this position. As in the case of Shakespeare's sister, Winterson's environment was particularly hostile to her creative development. Her "Old-Testament" mother (Byrne 2012), Mrs Winterson, considered reading, with the exception of Christian literature and non-fiction, so dangerous that she declared it forbidden, forcing her daughter to hide her books under the mattress and burning them once her secret was uncovered. As if this passion for words were not sinful enough, the young Jeanette fell in love with a girl, which led to an untimely break with her family and faith. Forced to leave home at the age of sixteen, she survived by sleeping in her "beaten-up old Mini" (Winterson 2012a, 121) and kept herself by doing such jobs as driving an ice cream van, working in a mental hospital and making up the deceased in a funeral parlour. Woolf's depiction of the life of Shakespeare's sister is thus—with a few exceptions—a surprisingly accurate reflection of Winterson's own experience, mirroring not only the novelist's teenage years, but also the passion for language which she has emphasised on numerous occasions[33]:

> She picked up a book now and then [...] and read a few pages. But then her parents came in and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books and papers. [...] Perhaps she scribbled some pages up in an apple loft on the sly, but was careful to hide them or set fire to them. Soon, however, before she was out of her teens, she was to be betrothed [...] She cried out that marriage was hateful to her, and for that she was severely beaten by her father[34]. [...] She made up a small parcel of her belongings, let herself down by a rope one summer's night and took the road to London. She was not seventeen. [...] She had the quickest fancy, a gift like her brother's, for the tune of words. (Woolf 1998a, 61)

[32] Winterson informs her interviewer of "a passage at the end of *A Room of One's Own* where Virginia Woolf says we have to work for women writers so that they will appear. My work is to do that work" (Bilger 1997). Her rejection of her earlier position is even more categorical in a more recent interview, where she states that "I don't think that I'm the direct heir to Woolf or anything like that. I think I'm doing the work, or taking up some of the challenges, and I'm very excited by other writers who are doing it, too" (Patterson 2004).

[33] As Winterson writes in *Why Be Happy*, as early as during her attendance at Accrington High School for Girls, "I had read more, much more, than anybody else, and I knew how words worked in the way that some boys knew how engines worked" (2012a, 98).

[34] According to *Why Be Happy*, Winterson was also beaten by her father when she was a child (2012a, 45).

During Winterson's time at St Catherine's College, Oxford, which she joined only four years after it first admitted female students, Woolf's essay must have seemed like an uncanny expression of her own struggle, especially as Winterson now boasted—for the first time in her life—a Woolfian "room of my own" (Winterson 2012b), a sacred place where she could begin to fulfil the destiny outlined for her in Woolf's essay.[35]

The story of Winterson's upbringing is certainly one of the most significant parts of her self-creation, the author focusing on those aspects of her childhood and teenage years which serve to emphasise the extraordinary nature of her achievement, as well as her unique position on the literary scene, not least because the circumstances she foregrounds would make any aspiring writer unlikely to succeed. Looking down on her largely middle-class contemporaries from her position of deprivation—even though all that remains of it is her strong Northern twang—Winterson repeatedly reminds her readers that

> I come at it from the outside in every sense because, whatever people say, working-class women don't get on in this job. If they do, where are they?[36] People come at me with a very middle-class consciousness [...] they can't understand what it means to come from a house with no books and no bathroom and your father a factory worker, not being in school much because you're traveling around in a gospel tent. No encouragement and no education, because it's not important, especially not for girls, and having to choose to leave home in order to carry on. And not getting any money to go to university with, and having to work all the way through. I mean, people do that now, but they didn't when I was there. So, *there was nothing anticipated about me or for me. What I did was unusual.* (Bilger 1997; my emphasis)

Winterson's most significant return to the story of her harsh Pentecostal upbringing since *Oranges* is her recently published "memoir" (as announced by the blurb), which may be seen—or so Winterson suggests—as the "silent twin" (Winterson 2012a, 8) of the "cover version" constructed in her first novel to protect her against the "deep wound" of her childhood (2009). This painful truth appears to

[35] In the 2012 BBC documentary, *Jeanette Winterson: My Monster and Me*, Winterson re-visits her bedroom at St Catherine's College, Oxford: "So here I am and this was a room of my own. And bigger than anything that I'd ever had before in Accrington—certainly a lot bigger than a Mini. And it felt like freedom. It was freedom" (Winterson 2012b).

[36] It is surprising to find Winterson so ignorant of the social backgrounds of her fellow British women writers. In fact, both Pat Barker and Hilary Mantel come from working-class families. In addition, Mantel's upbringing has a lot of similarities with Winterson's.

have been revealed in *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?*, though whether the story told here is true or not is as impossible to assert as it is to tell whether the book is a memoir or a novel, a work of necessarily misremembered fact or autobiographical invention. Winterson herself oscillates between tentatively calling it a memoir and refusing to name it as such, even though a quotation from John Burnside's review placed on the back cover—which the author must have approved—clearly places it in that category, whilst the blurb proudly states that the book is "generous, honest and true" (2012a). That baffling her readership as to the genre of this work is Winterson's aim is made clear by another public comment released by her, in which she introduces *Why Be Happy* in the following manner: "I've written a lot of fiction, but *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* is. . . what? A memoir? Perhaps. An autobiography? Maybe. I think of it as an experiment with experience". This statement may, of course, be considered as a playful invitation to question the concept of a literary genre, in a manner resembling Gertrude Stein's take on reality in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (which Winterson identifies as one of her primary precursor texts),[37] but it is also vague, leaving the issue of the nature of this work open and thus anticipating potential accusations of manipulating facts.[38] Winterson even goes so far as to assert that the "distinction" between fiction and non-fiction "seems irrelevant to me" and that what matters is the "authenticity" of the account—whether imagined or true (2012c). What is and what is not is often difficult to assert when it comes to the author of *Art & Lies*, whose novels have consistently blurred the boundary between fact and fiction, and who admits that "'I try not to tell lies to people I love, and I try not to tell lies where it matters, but I will sacrifice *a fair bit* of fact if I can tell a good story'" (Brooks 2000; my emphasis). What the memoir clearly does, however, is appeal to the reader's sympathy through a harrowing account of its author's lonely childhood, her mental breakdown a few years before its publication and her painful search for her birth mother. It would indeed be callous not to sympathise with this excruciating account, as when Winterson admits that "I wet myself" after receiving a letter

[37] See (Winterson 2012a, 119). *The Autobiography* is also discussed at length in *Art Objects* (1996, 45-60).

[38] One indication that *Why Be Happy* is as fictional as *Oranges* is Winterson's admission, in the 'memoir', that "I can't write my own [life]; never could. Not *Oranges*. Not now. I would rather go on reading myself as a fiction than as a fact" (2012a, 154). Another clue for the reader that they should not take this 'autobiography' too seriously is the fact that it contains quotations from Winterson's novels (two of which are mentioned on p. 90 above).

regarding her adoption records (2012a, 189) or that during her bout of madness she suddenly found herself walking "on all fours shouting 'Mummy, Mummy'" (162). Whether this melodrama did indeed happen is, of course, impossible to determine. The question that remains to be asked, however, is whether this kind of Rousseauian honesty, embellished with sympathy-inducing and highly emotional passages (whether true or not), may not serve a function in Winterson's three-decade-long construction of her literary identity, an image which suffered major damage in the 1990s, when her narcissistic outbursts and an angry evening visit to a journalist[39] turned the media—the most powerful tool of self-promotion—against her. It appears that one of the functions of this recent appeal to sympathy is an attempt to repair this damaged public persona, as well as to establish a valid excuse for past transgressions. One need not, of course, mention the number of new fans that this kind of exhibitionism will garner:

> Ria: 'I have counselled so many mothers over the years who are giving up their babies for adoption, and I tell you, Jeanette, they never want to do it. You were wanted—do you understand that?'
>
> No. I have never felt wanted. I am the wrong crib.
>
> 'Do you understand that, Jeanette?'
>
> No. And *all my life I have repeated patterns of rejection. My success with my books felt like gatecrashing. When critics and the press turned on me, I roared back in rage*, and no, I didn't believe the things they said about me or my work, because my writing has always stayed clear and luminous to me, uncontaminated, but *I did know that I wasn't wanted.* (185; my emphasis)

Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?, as well as Winterson's reluctance to identify its genre, therefore clearly demonstrates her ability not only to manipulate the public, but also to use her work for the purpose of self-promotion and self-invention. Her deliberate self-fashioning and control of the wor(l)d she thus partly creates, including her own literary identity, brings to mind the overbearing nineteenth-century narrator whose presence in Winterson's fiction has been pointed out by Sonya Andermahr[40]. But it is Winterson's own novel, *The PowerBook*, which provides the best trope for the writer's self-creation, for, like the e-writer, Ali(x),

[39] The journalist was Nicci Gerrard, who had, a few weeks previously, published a critical profile of Jeanette Winterson in *The Observer*. See Gerrard, "Cold blast of Winterson at the door" (*Observer*, July 3, 1994) and "The ultimate self-produced woman" (*Observer*, June 5, 1994).
[40] See p. 93 above.

Winterson is the author of stories about herself, be it her novels or her comments on her life and work. Her fiction is thus necessarily filtered through her own self-invented image. A significant part of this public identity is her overt association with Virginia Woolf, and the role that this identification has played in the reception and interpretation of Winterson's work is still to be fully appreciated. I argue that the author's emphasis on her intertextual relationship with Woolf can be seen as fulfilling a variety of functions in relation to Winterson's view of herself as well as the construction of her literary reputation. And although Winterson's self-admiration and self-promotion have been vaguely connected to her explicit identification with her predecessor,[41] the implications of their interrelatedness and the various methods that Winterson employs to establish a merger between herself and Woolf have not been thoroughly analysed. What is more, the available models of influence—such as Bloom's *agon*, the object relational *hommage*, the post-structuralist concept of intertextuality and T. S. Eliot's "tradition"—fail to take writerly self-promotion and self-invention sufficiently into account. Consequently, it is necessary to come up with a model of influence that would shed more light on Winterson's engagement with Woolf and which could help to explicate the intertextual relationships established by other contemporary writers, whose reputations are no longer made solely through their own work but are aided by the mass media. I will argue that an appropriate model might be found by turning to psychoanalytic writing, specifically the work of Heinz Kohut, founding father of self-psychology, whose reputation rests, to a large extent, on his ground-breaking study of narcissism. Just as the baby copes with the traumatic disruption of primary narcissism by splitting the original state of bliss into two inter-dependent entities (Kohut 1986, 63), so does Winterson arguably attempt to resolve the 'trauma' of Woolf's influence by presenting her work as a looking-glass image of her precursor and by re-creating the Bloomsbury author as a mirror reflection of herself. This mimetic identification, while seemingly an indication of the 'traumatic' nature of Winterson's relationship with her predecessor, is paradoxically a way of affirming her own literary identity and uniqueness.

[41] Winterson's famous proclamation of herself as the reincarnation of Shakespeare's sister in BBC2's *The Late Show* special (1992) has been perceived as yet another sign of her unrestrained arrogance and self-promotion. See for instance, Nicci Gerrard's Observer profile, "The ultimate self-produced woman" (1994), Maureen Freely's "God's gift to women" (2000) and Joyce Karpay's PhD dissertation (2003), which refers to Winterson's appearance on *The Late Show* as "an aggressive public relations move" (131).

WOOLF AS WINTERSON'S SELFOBJECT

Relying on the insights of Sigmund Freud (1914) and other psychoanalysts, Kohut defines primary narcissism as a state in which the new-born baby experiences the mother as one with itself, since "the I-you differentiation has not yet been established". Consequently, he argues, the infant's "expected control over the mother and her ministrations" resembles "the concept which a grownup has of himself and of the control which he expects over his own body and mind" (Kohut 1986, 63). The mother's care is inevitably flawed, however, which disrupts this early narcissistic bliss, prompting the child to re-create the primal state "(a) by establishing a grandiose and exhibitionistic image of the self: *the grandiose self*; and (b) by giving over the previous perfection to an admired, omnipotent (transitional) self-object: *the idealized parent imago*". The term *grandiose self* signifies "the child's solipsistic world view and his undisguised pleasure in being admired" (1971, 25), whilst the *idealised parent imago* is a selfobject "to whom the child can look up and with whom he can merge as an image of calmness, infallibility and omnipotence". The other kind of selfobject that the child needs is the so-called "mirroring selfobject", his or her role being that of "respond[ing] to and confirm[ing] the child's innate sense of vigour, greatness and perfection" (Kohut and Wolf 1986, 177).

A *self-object* can thus be defined as "an object or person undifferentiated from the individual who serves the needs of the self" (St. Clair 1996, 153-4). Both the idealised parent imago and the grandiose self become "integrated into the adult personality", the former transforming itself into the "idealized superego", the latter providing "the instinctual fuel for our ego-syntonic ambitions and purposes, for the enjoyment of our activities, and for important aspects of our self-esteem" (Kohut 1971, 27-8). Their integration into psychic structures does not mean that narcissistic needs disappear in adulthood, however. Although creativity, empathy, humour and wisdom (1986, 74) may be considered as advanced "transformations of narcissism" (74), "[t]he psychologically healthy adult continues to need the mirroring of the self by self-objects [...], and he continues to need targets for his idealization" (1977, 188). As Kohut affirms, "there is no mature love in which the love object is not also a self-object". In other words, "there is no love relationship without mutual [...] mirroring and idealization" (122).

While ostensibly an example of literary *hommage*, Winterson's relationship with the author of *The Waves* might also be read as an elaborate form of intertextual narcissism, reflecting the Kohutian split of "the original position" (1986, 63) into the grandiose self, supported by the mirroring self-object, and the idealised parent imago, with whose greatness the ego identifies. If Winterson's unconcealed self-admiration is an embodiment of the Kohutian "'I am perfect'" of the grandiose self, then her *hommage* to Woolf, performed at such length in *Art Objects*, can be seen as a reincarnation of the child's attitude to its idealised parent imago: "'You are perfect'". As stressed by Kohut, even though these attitudes are "antithetical", they "coexist", for the subject idealising his or her imago experiences himself or herself as part of it: "'You are perfect, but I am part of you'" (1971, 27). What is more, since the imago is a selfobject, it is "experienced as part of [the] self" (Kohut and Wolf 1986, 177). That Winterson the writer perceives herself as part of Woolf is evident in the way she positions her own work in relation to her Modernist precursor, stressing its place within Woolf's literary legacy. In addition, Winterson's fiction—by re-writing some of Woolf's main preoccupations—is a resurrection and a recollection of certain aspects of Woolf's work, a more literal rendition of "I am [a] part of you" and a rendition suggesting the contradictory nature of the statement. Since Winterson's novels reactivate Woolfian themes and methods, the Bloomsbury writer's work forms a part of Winterson's, as demonstrated in the 'material' way in which any text contains references to another. This double, contradictory containment is most vividly reflected in the implicit structure of *The PowerBook*. Although the central, unifying figure behind the work, and the real author of the stories which Ali(x) both creates and inhabits, is Winterson herself, Ali(x) might also be seen as a reincarnation of Orlando. This could, on the one hand, imply that *The PowerBook*'s true author is, in fact, Virginia Woolf, and that it is she who contains her much 'smaller' descendant, Winterson. At the same time, Ali(x)'s Woolfian identity and Winterson's numerous references to *Orlando* signify *The PowerBook*'s containment of its literary predecessor, whose omnipresence in Winterson's novel threatens to break it apart, the text being in danger of bursting at the seams. Winterson thus resembles the female chemist in *Sexing the Cherry*, who precariously holds her Dog Woman "*alter ego*" and "patron saint" (Winterson 1989, 142; Winterson's italics) inside her, the novel, even here, recalling Woolf's mock-biography, this time by referring to Orlando's desire for "'[l]ife and a lover'" (Woolf 1993, 130):

> When I'm dreaming *I want a home and a lover* and some children, but it won't work. Who'd want to live with a monster? I may not look like a monster any more but I couldn't hide it for long. I'd break out, splitting my dress [...]
>
> 'You're pretty,' said my father, 'any man would want to marry you.'
>
> Not if he pulled back my eyelids, not if he peeped into my ears, not if he looked down my throat with a torch [...] He'd see her, the other one, lurking inside. She fits, even though she's so big. (Winterson 1989, 144-5; my emphasis)

Like the contemporary reincarnation of the Dog Woman, Winterson contains the powerful figure of Woolf—one of the greatest women writers in the English literary tradition—her writing filled to the brim with Woolfian concerns, ideas and views. Like Jordan's mother, Woolf barely fits, not merely because "she's so big", but also because Winterson's reliance on her precursor's oeuvre is so great. In other words, the contemporary novelist's 'ingestion' of her ancestor resembles the self's introjection of its idealised parent imago, which is transformed into "a structure of the psychic apparatus" "[i]f the psyche is deprived [...] of a source of instinctual gratificiation" (Kohut 1986, 65).

As well as 'containing' her Bloomsbury precursor through her absorption of *Orlando* in her fiction, Winterson presents herself as a looking-glass image of the Modernist writer, much as the Cambridge scholar in *Jacob's Room*, Erasmus Cowan, "hold[s] up in his snug little mirror the image of Virgil" (Woolf 1976, 39). In this way, Winterson simultaneously establishes her literary ancestor as a mirror to her own greatness. That this is one of Woolf's functions is evident in Winterson's vision of British literary history, for she presents her own contemporary cultural and literary milieu as a reflection of Victorian times, against which the Modernist writer composed her experimental novels. Winterson observes that:

> [w]e are the Victorian legacy. Our materialism, our lack of spirituality, our grossness, our mockery of art, our utilitarian attitude to education, even the dull grey suits wrapped around the dull grey lives of our eminent City men, are Victorian hand-me-downs. Many of our ideas of history and society go back no further than Victorian England. (1996, 137-138)

For Winterson, an ugly Victorianism pervades late-twentieth-century fiction as well. Like Gertrude Stein and Virginia Woolf, the contemporary writer has to fight against her readers' suspicion of "deep emotions" (50) and the transformative power of art,

most people—according to Winterson—desiring only to see themselves and their world reflected in the fiction that they read (83). A large number of writers comply with this wish, producing fiction that is "printed television" (175-176). In this way, they merely replicate the work of the previous generations, for—as far as Winterson is concerned—even Postmodernism was affected by "'mirror of life' longings" and even an experimental writer like Muriel Spark is dismissed as "a Realist" (42). The most recent literary period which has managed to challenge the view that literature is a reflection of reality is then Modernism, with whose methods the novelist identifies[42] and which is described as "a poet's revolution" filled with "play, pose and experiment" (30). As Winterson asserts,

> [t]he terrible thing is that, in this country, since Virginia Woolf died, nobody has really bothered about experimenting with the shape and the form of the novel in a way that keeps it readable and pleasurable. That experiment must be continued. It's shoddy just to go back to traditional narrative structures inherited from the 19th century, which I'm sorry to say is what started to happen here after the war. (Bush 1993)

Significantly, such a self-serving vision of "the literature of my own language" (Winterson 1996, 41) finds virtually nothing of any importance between the publication of Winterson's own work and that of her Modernist precursors, rendering her connection to Woolf—whom she celebrates as "the most complete" of her "private ancestors" (131)—much more direct. By stressing her close relationship with Modernism, Winterson paradoxically renders her fiction more original in her own eyes since, according to Winterson herself, few Post-Modernist writers have actively engaged with this literary period as a genuine extension of its practices (176). Interestingly, whilst Woolf invented her literary legacy partly to ensure her own survival by creating a line of descendants for herself, Winterson—in a typically reversed mirror likeness of this action—has invented herself backwards.

Winterson's emphasis on her connection with her idealised parent imago performs many other narcissistic functions. By identifying herself with Woolf, she increases her own profile as a writer and influences the way readers and critics

[42] "To use the experiments of modernism without doing any work myself would be theft. It's important to push the form further. So with all *the preoccupations of modernism, which are my preoccupations,* and the glorious realities of the 19th century, I hope to bring together a different kind of fiction, certainly a fiction that makes space within it for the female voice in all its complexity" (Bush 1993).

approach and interpret her work. Winterson's explicit identification with her precursor also encourages scholars to look for similarities between the work of the two authors and to note the elaborations and differences which give credit to Winterson for her development of the past—a tendency which the present study also demonstrates. Furthermore, by stressing her relationship with one particular predecessor, Winterson has focused critical and readerly attention on the Woolfian qualities of her writing, thus potentially diminishing her connection to other female authors, especially those working within the conventions of a later Postmodernism; Winterson, it might be said, spurns Postmodernism as populist and prefers to identify herself with an overtly elitist, complex and difficult Modernism. Her emphasis on Woolf's influence on her fiction is, nevertheless, sufficient to place her work within the feminist tradition, leaving the author free to pursue her policy of resistance to labels.

The narcissistic nature of Winterson's approach to her Bloomsbury precursor is most evident in the section of *Art Objects* which Winterson devotes to her apparent *hommage*. As she admits in the last chapter of the essay collection, "[t]o talk about my own work is difficult. If I must talk about it at all I would rather come at it sideways, *through the work of writers I admire*" (165; my emphasis). Thus, when Winterson objects to "a crazed sub-Freudian approach to [Woolf's] work" (63), stating that "a writer's work is not a chart of their sex, sexuality, sanity and physical health" (97), she is arguably referring to the widespread and often hostile media focus on her own sexual life in the 1990s in an attempt to re-shift public attention towards her fiction. Her apparent concern for the reception of Woolf's literary legacy might thus be seen as a screen for her own difficulties, the contemporary author using her ancestor "to provide a function for the self" (St. Clair 1996, 155). Similarly, as regards Winterson's praise, her *hommage* focuses on *Orlando* and *The Waves*—the two novels with which her oeuvre has the most in common. The titles that her work had not engaged with as directly—the High Modernist *Jacob's Room, Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*[43]—are not even mentioned. Winterson also, unsurprisingly, chooses those aspects of *Orlando* and *The Waves* in which they most resemble her own fiction—"lesbianism, cross-dressing, female power" (Winterson 1996, 50), imagination and a poetic use of language, manifested through "exactness"

[43] After the publication of *Art Objects*, Winterson returned to *To the Lighthouse* in *Lighthousekeeping* (2004).

(79), rhythm (76), and emotional "excess" (98). In this way, she is indirectly praising her own novels, whose reception was particularly hostile around the publication of *Art Objects*, a time when the contemporary writer was in need of a strong mother figure who could defend her method against attack.

By emphasising those features of Woolf's fiction which her own work shares with it, Winterson presents herself as a looking-glass reflection of her precursor, however adamant she may be that "[w]e cannot look for the new Virginia Woolf" (177). Thus, she praises *Orlando* for "exploit[ing] the weak-mindedness of labels" (50), a feature which marks not only *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, but also Winterson's whole career as a novelist and public figure. Woolf is also celebrated as the most perfect artist among the Modernists, for, unlike Joyce and Eliot, she is truly "connected" (12), not just to the literary past (92), but also to the physical world around her (84). This vision of her work mirrors Winterson's description of herself, for she states that "I cannot do new work without known work" (172) and that "[m]y connections are to the earth under my feet and the words that fill both hands" (163). Winterson's use of words is, of course, that aspect of her writing on which she particularly prides herself, stressing her "'fidelity to words'" (Pritchard 1995), her "love-affair [...] with language" (Winterson 1996, 155), and "[t]he passion that I feel for [it]" (168). It is hardy surprising, therefore, that she places special emphasis on Woolf's poetic style, her appreciation demonstrating how literal the mirroring can become: "Unlike many novelists, then and now, [Woolf] *loved* words. That is she was devoted to words, *faithful* to words, *romantically attached* to words, *desirous* of words" (75; my emphasis). Last but not least, Winterson's interpretation of *Orlando* as a "Trojan horse", with whose help "Woolf smuggled across the borders of complacency the most outrageous contraband" (50),[44] is immediately brought to mind upon reading Winterson's portrayal of her own method two years later: "It's [...] a *smuggling*, a kind of *contraband*, wanting to get something across *frontiers*, places where it's not normally allowed" (Bilger 1997; my emphasis). In other words, Winterson is employing language to simultaneously merge herself with her idealised parent imago and to both reveal her work as a looking-glass reflection of Woolf's

[44] Winterson is here making a direct allusion to *Orlando*, where Woolf uses the metaphor of "a traveller" illegally carrying "a bundle of cigars in the corner of his suit case" (Woolf 1993, 183) to refer to Orlando's "smuggl[ing]" of the idea of lesbian love "past the literary censors of the age" in her poem (Gilbert 1993b, 259). As Orlando admits, "she was extremely doubtful whether, if the spirit [of the age] had examined the contents of her mind carefully, it would not have found something highly *contraband*" (Woolf 1993, 183; my emphasis).

fiction and to present her precursor as a mirroring selfobject attesting to her own "greatness and perfection" (Kohut and Woolf 1986, 177).

Winterson's blurring of the boundary between herself and Woolf has its problems, however. Although she frequently exhibits profound understanding of Woolf's work and emphasises her poetic craftsmanship, imagination and sense of humour—qualities often neglected by both readers and critics—she also distorts Woolf's literary legacy, especially when she projects herself onto her precursor. This method of identification betrays the narcissism of Winterson's *hommage* most clearly, for it reveals the true "I" behind her literary tribute. Woolf thus becomes not only "what the mirror reflects", but also what it "invents" (Winterson 2001a, 174), as demonstrated by Winterson's introduction to the 2004 edition of *The Waves*:

> Virginia Woolf lived from intensity to intensity. There were lit-up days when she could see everything, days where nothing was hidden, where secrets became only a code that needed the light to fall on them to be read. (2004, vii)

This appreciation of Woolf's creative engagement with the world conceals one of the most significant passages in *Written on the Body*: "Written on the body is a *secret code* only visible in certain *lights*" (1992b, 89; my emphasis). Projection leading to distortion is also evident in Winterson's vision of her precursor as "an experimenter who managed to combine the pleasure of narrative with those forceful interruptions that the mind needs to wake itself" (Winterson n.d.). Whilst both Woolf's and Winterson's fiction could certainly be called experimental and their respective narrative methods recognised as employing "forceful interruptions", not many readers or critics have regarded Woolf's work (perhaps with the exception of *Orlando*) as filled with "the pleasure of narrative". This last feature is, by contrast, one of the key elements of Winterson's own writing, the novelist celebrated as a brilliant storyteller.

A similar process of projection and what could be termed the "self-invention" of one's predecessor occurs in Winterson's discussion of *Orlando* and Gertrude Stein's *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*[45], since her appreciation not only boasts a quote from *The Passion*, but also stresses the Wintersonian storytelling element in both novels:

[45] Stein is also used narcissistically by Winterson. See her discussion of *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* in "Testimony against Gertrude Stein" (1996, 45-60).

> The biography [Woolf] and the autobiography [Stein] both pretend to honesty and frankness [...] Both have the whiff of the bedroom about them even if they are not talking about sex. Voyeurism is a vice and a pleasure few of us can deny ourselves and because human beings [...] are still not sophisticated enough or technological enough or dead enough yet to resist *the lure of a good story*, we can be taken in by someone who offers truth with a wink and says *'I'm telling you stories. Trust me.'* (1996, 71; my emphasis)

Winterson's 'mirroring' method is also employed here, visible in the author's description of her own work towards the end of *Art Objects*:

> The reader, like the writer, has to work, and as long as work remains a four letter word, the average reader will not understand why they should struggle through their leisure time [...] one answer is to set a trap for the reader's attention. To catch it with something that glitters: *the lure of a good story* [...] As a pedlar, I know how to get a crowd round when I unpack my bag, and if one person buys The Dog Woman, and another, a pair of webbed feet [...], then I am glad of my wares, or should I call them my bewares?
> Beware of writers bearing gifts. Might we be back at *the Trojan horse*?
> *I'm telling you stories. Trust me.* (188-189; my emphasis)

Winterson's tribute to Woolf is thus revealed as an *hommage* to the self, for the Modernist writer's work is frequently employed as a mirror "reflecting" Winterson "at twice [her] natural size" (Woolf 1998a, 45), as well as a powerful source of identification—in short, as a selfobject used "to provide a function for the self" (St. Clair 1996, 155). What is more, Winterson's merger with her precursor—established through introjection, projection and mirroring (which is frequently the consequence of the other two)—influences not only the way that Winterson's work is read and interpreted, but also, it could be argued, the scholarly and readerly perception of Woolf's fiction. Consequently, it is Winterson who is the more powerful element of this intertextual dyad, depicting Woolf's work through her own language and directing the appreciation of readers and critics towards specific elements of her precursor's work. "Beware of writers bearing gifts", Winterson says (1996, 189), and as she perceives both her own novels and Woolf's mock-biography as a kind of literary "Trojan horse", whose "belly" conceals powerful, socially subversive messages (50), it becomes evident that the author in all her disguises is not merely the focus of Winterson's work, but that she has also concealed herself in the literary

tribute to the earlier writer. Winterson's self-invented "I" thus not only governs the reception of her own oeuvre, but casts its long shadow over Woolf's literary legacy, "as if some giant cucumber had spread itself over all the roses and carnations in the garden and choked them to death" (Woolf 1998a, 80).

CHAPTER III

The Dead Sister in a Broken Mirror: Pat Barker's Subversive *Hommage* to Virginia Woolf

"Ambivalence is a condition of human relations" (Mitchell 2003, 37).

SECTION ONE

"Nothing exists except insofar as it does not exist"[1]: "Border Crossing"[2] in Barker and Woolf

Both Jeanette Winterson's and Pat Barker's work can be seen as varieties of *hommage* to Virginia Woolf's fiction. But whilst in Winterson's case the tribute might be read as, at least in part, narcissistic, Barker's novels might be seen as fictional embodiments of (intertextual) ambivalence not unlike that found in early sibling relationships (Mitchell 2003, 37-8). Her tribute to Woolf in her work is, therefore, only half the story, for Barker simultaneously imitates and repudiates the influence of her precursor's fiction as well as the political and literary views expressed by her in such essays as *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938). Subversion and confirmation are, in fact, frequently very close to each other in Barker's engagement with Woolf's oeuvre. In order to fully analyse both, however, it is necessary to begin at the very beginning—with the notions of absence and loss.

THE DICHOTOMY OF ABSENCE/PRESENCE IN BARKER'S AND WOOLF'S RESPECTIVE FICTIONS

According to Lacanian theory, "'lack' [is] essential for access to language, or at least to signifiers" (Bailly 2009, 97), for "it is the *absence* or the *lack* of the mother that makes her apprehensible as an entity, and this apprehension is, long before the baby is able to say 'mama', the first act of representation of an idea-embodied-in-an-object", or "the formation of the first signifier" (96; Bailly's emphasis). Absence, or "*loss*", is not merely "a precondition of re-presentation" (Mitchell 2003, 87; Mitchell's emphasis), however, for it is also at the very heart of the writing process, as well as the finished text. All writers are, in other words, and by nature of being writers, engaged with absence and loss.

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[1] (Lacan 2006, 327)
[2] (Barker 2002)

One particular fictional genre could, nevertheless, be seen as reliant upon the dichotomy of absence/presence more than others. The task of the historical novel is to resurrect—or to make 'present' (in the sense of both "no longer absent" and "no longer past")—a particular historical event, period and/or figure. Combine that with psychoanalytic theory, which is arguably founded upon the idea of lack (whether one means Freud's castration complex or the baby's experience of the mother's absence in the work of such theorists as Winnicott, Klein and Lacan himself), and what emerges is a fusion characteristic of the historical fiction of Pat Barker—a novelist whose engagement with the binary opposition of absence/presence goes beyond her use of this particular literary genre or her reliance on psychoanalysis.

Barker's literary reputation rests primarily on that part of her oeuvre which depicts the First World War and its impact on British society. Her most famous and critically acclaimed work is the *Regeneration* trilogy, comprising *Regeneration* (1991), *The Eye in the Door* (1993) and *The Ghost Road* (1995). Looking at the way in which she portrays both the Western Front and what happened on the other side of the English Channel, it becomes clear that Barker's goal is to bring the Great War back in its full immediacy and horror, and to make the reader experience it as though it were happening now; to make that which is absent and past appear present. It is partly for this purpose that Barker's characters speak in a distinctly contemporary way (Prescott 2005, 170)[3], and it is also one of the reasons why she has made use of the more liberal sections of wartime British society. One of the major characters in *Regeneration* is thus the poet and soldier Siegfried Sassoon, whose protest against the war opens the trilogy. But while Sassoon plays a very imporant part in the novel, its central figure is W. H. R. Rivers, whose progressive views on gender and humane methods of treating shell-shocked veterans contrast starkly with those of his contemporaries, such as Dr Yealland, who subjects his patients to electric shocks in order to cure their symptoms rather than the underlying problem. In *Life Class* (2007) and *Toby's Room* (2012), in turn, Barker takes as her main characters the free-thinking artists associated with the Slade School of Art, such as Paul Tarrant, Kit Neville and the feminist-minded Elinor Brooke, who is "loosely based" on Dora Carrington (Scutts 2012). Other figures associated with the Bloomsbury Group also

[3] According to Lynda Prescott, Barker's use of dialogue in her historical fiction serves to "dissolve the barriers between past and present". Not only does the "spareness" of her dialogue "[feel] entirely familiar to the contemporary reader", but she also "handles vocabulary and phrasing in such a way that characters' speech is never tethered to an out-dated idiom" (2005, 170).

make an appearance in Barker's 2012 novel: Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell and Ottoline Morrell (among others), who is also mentioned in *Life Class* and, along with Bertrand Russell, in *Regeneration*. In addition, a lot of Barker's male characters are gay, making her portrayal of wartime British society even more relevant to the social issues prevalent in the contemporary West. Her homosexual characters include Toby Brooke, Siegfried Sassoon, Billy Prior (bisexual), Charles Manning, Wilfred Owen and, according to Barker herself, W. H. R. Rivers (Westman 2005, 83).[4] The sexually-liberated and promiscuous Prior becomes the protagonist in the second part of the trilogy, *The Eye in the Door*, where both his heterosexual and homosexual affairs are related in detail. Barker's portrayal of Prior's girlfriend, Sarah Lumb, and her female friends in *Regeneration* might be seen as even more 'modern', as evident in the scene in which they openly discuss Betty's unsuccessful attempts to get rid of her unborn baby (Barker 2008a, 201-202). While such issues as abortion, gay rights and promiscuity occupy a different place in contemporary British society than they did at the beginning of the twentieth century, when many British citizens would have considered them worthy of condemnation, Barker's prioritising of minority views which resemble contemporary opinions brings a chronologically distant historical period conceptually and emotionally much closer to her Western readers. By converting the past that she depicts into a mirror image of the present—with its sexual liberation, loosening of moral standards and the freedom of self-expression—Barker is thus not only trying to demonstrate the continuing relevance of history to what is happening now, but she is also 'altering' the past by means of the present. As she hints in *Border Crossing* (2001), this is a transformation to which the past is subjected on a daily basis. It is evident, among others, in the way in which Tom and Lauren begin to perceive their past life in the light of the recent failure of their marriage. Tom reflects that

> [a]lmost the worst thing about the last week had been the way in which the snag in his present life ran back into the past and unravelled it. Because they were splitting up, it was easy to believe they'd never really been happy. When he tried to visualize Lauren painting the estuary, the image was changed by the fact that she had left him. The slim figure in the baggy jeans became doubly insubstantial, as if her recording of that sunset over the river had been no more than the first stage of her saying goodbye. (2002, 188)

[4] Apart from Toby Brooke, all of these appear in the *Regeneration* series.

Barker's demonstration of the way in which a current mood or search for narrative completion can effect a transformation of the past into the present is only one way in which absence features in her work.[5] According to Lacan, the child's idea of absence—the formation of which is necessary for his or her later acquisition of words, which make presence out of absence[6]—cannot arise without "the experience of loss", or, specifically, without the loss of the mother's presence (Bailly 2009, 96). Loss is everywhere in Barker's work, constituting one of the key themes of her whole oeuvre and underlying her other major concerns, such as the subjects of identity and trauma. Most obviously, it manifests itself in Barker's novels in the form of death and mourning, as in *Double Vision* (2003), where Kate Frobisher grieves after the loss of her husband, and *Toby's Room*, whose protagonist, Elinor Brooke, uses her art to cope with her brother's death and struggles to see the "'man'" behind the "'wound'" (Barker 2012a, 139) in the patients whose mutilated faces—missing noses, eyes, cheeks and jaws—it is her task to draw. Other kinds of loss in Barker's work, and especially in her historical fiction, include the loss of ideals, innocence and sanity, as in her portrayal of the shell-shocked veterans in the *Regeneration* series, whose vision of masculinity as courage, endurance and "emotional repression" (2008a, 48) collapses with their experience of the brutal reality of the trenches. In a less obvious way, the theme of loss is also present in one of the key features of Barker's novels, which is the blurring of the boundaries between self and other, past and present, masculine and feminine, fact and fiction, good and evil. Last but not least, as noted by John Brannigan, "[t]here are many fatherless children in Pat Barker's fiction" (Brannigan 2005, 77)—a fact one could associate with the writer's own experience, where a gaping wound replaced what ought to have been the father's place.[7]

As in Barker's treatment of the historical past, which is portrayed in such a way as to reflect the social issues of her own time, her presentation of absence and loss is a way of affirming presence, or of making—like the words described by Lacan—presence out of absence. A good example of this technique is evident in *Toby's*

[5] As pointed out by Charles Fernyhough, most contemporary scientists accept the "reconstructive" view of memory (2012, 7), according to which the human mind repeatedly creates, or reconstructs the past "according to the demands of the present" (6). In this sense, the past might thus be seen as always being lost. (I owe this observation to Prof. Patricia Waugh.)

[6] In *Ecrits* (1966), Lacan describes the word as "a presence made of absence" (2006, 228).

[7] Barker grew up without her father, whom she never met and knew very little about. It was as late as in 2000 that she found out that her mother did not, in fact, know who Barker's father was (Jaggi 2003).

Room, whose eponymous hero dies a suicidal death on the Western Front after he is caught having sex with another man. Barker focuses in this novel on the depiction of Toby's sister's grief, which is (literally) portrayed by Elinor in a series of paintings which she completes after her brother's death. Apart from one work, which is a portrait of Toby, all of Elinor's paintings represent a desolate winter landscape, indicative of barrenness and death. At the same time, each work contains an outline of a man, who, as Elinor herself admits, is her dead brother (Barker 2012a, 96). This indistinct figure thus haunts Elinor's paintings, emphasising the vast emptiness which—like Toby's empty bedroom—symbolises not only his absence, but also the "gap" or "wound" in the subject which trauma typically leaves in its wake (Mitchell 2003, 9). More importantly, this "wound" or "gap" is Toby himself, who is now defined by his absence, which Elinor's paintings endow with a 'body'. His absence is transformed into presence in other ways as well. The smell of his clothes pervades the house, even though they have been hidden in the attic. Elinor's own appearance begins to resemble his even more closely. What is more, since her life revolves around her brother's death, her whole being consumed by longing and despair, his absence can be perceived (at least temporarily) as the essence of her selfhood. Toby's ghostly presence nevertheless manifests itself most explicitly at the end of the novel when, hearing him calling her name, Elinor goes downstairs to discover her brother's ghost "standing with his back to the window" (Barker 2012a, 263). His presence is so physical that they embrace, although Elinor herself later realises that her experience may have been little more than a dream. At the same time, she is convinced that, "unlike any other dream that she'd ever had, it had been an event in the real world with the power to effect change" (264).

Barker's engagement with the dichotomy of absence/presence, although a powerful theme in her 2012 novel, reaches its climax in the work immediately preceding the *Regeneration* trilogy—the largely autobiographical[8] *The Man Who Wasn't There* (1989). The protagonist is twelve-year-old Colin Harper, who desperately tries to find out who his father really was. The father is present, but only as a wound in Colin's identity and self-esteem and a gap in his birth certificate:

[8] Barker shares with her protagonist Colin not only the fact of having grown up without her biological father, but also her year of birth (1943) and her Northern, working-class background. As in Colin's case, Barker's mother wanted to give the baby away and was persuaded against it by the baby's grandmother. Finally, like Colin, Barker "was told that her father was in the Royal Air Force during World War II" (Westman 2005, 7).

> Very slowly, he [Colin] unfolded the thick paper and smoothed the creases out. His own name and sex, Viv's name and occupation, and then:
>
> *Name and surname of father:* _____
> *Rank or Profession of father:* _____
>
> (1990, 17; Barker's italics)

As if to reveal the omnipresence of the father's absence, the novel is itself very brief (and would be more usefully classified as a novella). In addition, the text is formatted in such a way as to render a significant number of pages either partly or wholly empty[9]—gaps that can be justified only by reference to the topic of *The Man*. The title itself is, finally, enough to reveal the paradox with which Barker engages in this work, for the phrase "the man who" introduces a defining clause, which is supposed to describe and to qualify the figure, to inform the reader who he is, or to make him present. What the clause itself reveals, however, is a contradiction, for the man—like Toby—is defined by his absence, by the fact of not being there. This is what constitutes him, demonstrating how presence ("the man who") can become an absence ("wasn't there"), and how the very essence of his existence is simultaneously his non-existence. The title can thus be seen as a reflection of Lacan's Hegelian proposition that "[n]othing exists except insofar as it does not exist" (Lacan 2006, 327). Absence and presence become mirror images,[10] in both senses of the word, for Barker portrays absence as an inverted presence, the other side of the binary as well as a reflection, the two changing places as easily as the subject's own features are reversed in the mirror or as easily as the self of the child becomes the other perceived by him or her in the looking glass (and vice versa) (Lacan 2006, 76) (Bailly 2009, 30). Such a combination of opposites is characteristic of Barker's work and it is difficult not to connect it with Lacan's ideas, considering how "immersed" she is in psychoanalysis (Showalter 2003).

A deep interest in psychoanalytic theory is only one possible origin of Barker's preoccupation with the dichotomy of absence and presence. Another source is the

[9] Virago (1989) and Penguin (1990) editions.
[10] The idea of binary opposites as mirror images was first drawn to my attention by J. Hillis Miller's study (1982) of Woolf's use of the images of rising and falling in *Mrs Dalloway*. Miller's argument is discussed on p. 126.

work of a writer with whom Barker is frequently connected, although the number of apparent differences between their style and subject matter, combined with Barker's assurances that she does not "'see [her] own work as existing within a particular literary tradition'" (Tew, Tolan, and Wilson 2008, 19), prevents literary critics from identifying Woolf's fiction and essays as one of the major intertextual sources of the *whole* of Barker's oeuvre, rather than merely individual novels. Despite the fact that Virginia Woolf seems a more obvious choice for the study of literary influence in the fiction of someone like Jeanette Winterson, whose references to the Modernist writer's work are more numerous and direct and whose poetic style overtly displays a number of Woolfian features, I argue that Barker's whole body of work engages with Woolf's oeuvre to a comparable degree. And while there are quite a few similarities between Winterson's and Barker's respective treatment of Woolf's fiction, the latter's engagement with such novels as *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *The Waves* (1931) and *The Years* (1937) represents a different *kind* of intertextual relationship.

The themes of absence and loss are as central to Woolf's oeuvre as they are to Barker's.[11] Death and mourning, along with varying kinds and degrees of absence of key characters and events, feature throughout Woolf's fiction, beginning with *The Voyage Out* (1915), where death is not only frequently mentioned, but is also the fate of the protagonist herself. What is more, Terence Hewet's ambition is to transform absence into presence by writing "'a novel about Silence'"—"'the things people don't say'" (Woolf 2012, 324). In *Night and Day* (1919), in turn, the daily lives of Katharine Hilbery and her mother revolve around the commemoration of Katharine's late grandfather, the poet Richard Alardyce (Lee 1977, 61). Among the novels most preoccupied with the subjects of mourning and death is *The Years*, which begins by portraying the individual responses of the members of the Pargiter family to the impending death of Mrs Pargiter, and the theatrical grief that follows. The text is also full of references to other people's deaths and terminal illnesses. Another work where death plays a major part is *The Waves*, which ends with the famous apostrophe: "'Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!'". The statement, in which Bernard compares himself to a rider charging at his "enemy" (Woolf 1992c, 228) is a reference to the novel's absent character, Percival, who dies

[11] The study which helped me realise the tremendous importance of loss in Woolf's work is Mark Spilka's *Virginia Woolf's Quarrel with Grieving* (1980).

by falling off his horse. His absence in the text is, nevertheless, a powerful presence, for not only is he resurrected by the other characters, who summon their memories of him throughout the narrative, but he also forms the centre of Woolf's "hexagon of words"—"Susan, Jinny, Rhoda, Louis, Neville, Bernard"—who constitute the "[s]ix sides and six angles that form a crystal around [his] silent figure" (Winterson 1996, 86). Significantly, this absence at the centre of the novel resembles Barker's portrayal of both Toby Brooke and the eponymous "man" in *The Man Who Wasn't There*.

The other male protagonist who, perhaps more than any other, prefigures Barker's depiction of these two figures is Jacob Flanders. Not only is he almost equally absent from the narrative both before and after his death on the front, but the information about who he is taken really to be is also fragmentary and often unreliable, while he himself is little more than a gaping hole in the text filled with extensions of himself in the shape of domestic objects and significant others' impressions—a dim outline tentatively sketched by the doubtful narrator. It is largely this literal and figurative absence of the hero that connects Woolf's third novel with *Toby's Room*—whose title serves to emphasise the connection—and with *The Man Who Wasn't There*, although Colin's father, unlike Toby and Jacob, fails to appear in the novel at all. His only possible physical manifestation is the mysterious man repeatedly seen by Colin in the streets of his home town, though the figure is, as hinted by the title of the novel and the fact that Colin is an exceptionally creative child, most likely a figment of the boy's imagination. Like Colin's father and Toby Brooke, who not only separates his family from the life he leads in London, but the circumstances of whose death also remain far from certain, Jacob is defined much more by his absence than by his presence, by the things the reader does not know about him. And while certain features of Jacob's character and physique become evident throughout the course of the novel—such as his physical awkwardness, his "distinguished" look (Woolf 1976, 58), his immature admiration of Ancient Greece and his "youthful arrogance" (Lee 1977, 85)—he remains, both for the other characters and for Woolf's readers, an ever elusive figure, as difficult to pinpoint as Elinor's brother. The reader catches numerous glimpses of Jacob—usually through the eyes of dozens of major and minor characters and sometimes as the narrator perceives him—but these glimpses are fleeting and even the narrator is not always sure what Jacob might be thinking or even what he has said, not least because, being a woman, she finds "herself endlessly locked out of the various exclusively male

haunts—colleges, libraries, bedrooms and the like" (Waugh 2012, 31). To make matters worse, both Jacob's fate—shared by millions of young men during the First World War—and his surname, which denotes an everyman of wartime rather than an individual, render the reader's task to get to know him even more difficult. This inability to truly see Jacob—which is, in Woolf's view, the "manner of our seeing" other people (Woolf 1976, 69)—is most explicitly demonstrated in the conversation between the object of Jacob's affections, Sandra Wentworth Williams, and her husband Evan:

> 'There is that young man,' she [Sandra] said, peevishly, [. . .] 'that Mr Flanders.'
>
> 'Where?' said Evan. *'I don't see him*.'
>
> 'Oh, walking away—behind the trees now. *No, you can't see him. But we are sure to run into him*,' which, of course, they did. (149-150)

Like the characters of Woolf's novel, the reader cannot see Jacob for who he really is, but keeps running into him in a variety of situations described by the narrator. And although Jacob is physically visible to the other characters, he disappears among the odds and ends of life as well as the observer's own egocentricity:

> But though all this may very well be true—so Jacob thought and spoke—so he crossed his legs—filled his pipe—sipped his whisky [...], there remains over something which can never be conveyed to a second person save by Jacob himself. Moreover, part of this is not Jacob but Richard Bonamy—the room; the market carts; the hour; the very moment of history. Then consider the effect of sex—how between man and woman it hangs wavy, tremulous, so that here's a valley, there's a peak, when in truth, perhaps, all's as flat as my hand. Even the exact words get the wrong accent on them. But something is always impelling one to hum vibrating, like the hawk moth, at the mouth of the cavern of mystery, endowing Jacob Flanders with all sorts of qualities he had not at all—for though, certainly, he sat talking to Bonamy, half of what he said was too dull to repeat; much unintelligible (about unknown people and Parliament); what remains is mostly a matter of guess work. Yet over him we hang vibrating. (70)

> Nobody sees any one as he is, let alone an elderly lady sitting opposite a strange young man [Jacob] in a railway carriage. They see a whole—they see all sorts of things—they see themselves. . . . (28)

There is, thus, in *Jacob's Room*, more 'room' than there is Jacob. The empty space is, nevertheless, his, for—like his college bedroom—it is full of his absence, just like the spaces in Elinor's paintings are filled with Toby's. Like Colin, who is for ever looking for his father, and thus for himself, the reader is always searching for Jacob, much as his brother Archer, who is looking for him on the beach, shouts 'Ja—cob! Ja—cob!' (6)—a kind of motto for the whole text repeated by Clara (162) and by Bonamy, who yells it out in despair after Jacob's death (173).

If *Jacob's Room* is a novel of absence, which is what ultimately defines Jacob for the reader, *Mrs Dalloway* is concerned with mourning, for what else does Clarissa do throughout the day than grieve for the passage of her youth and the fast approach of her own demise, announced by the repeated striking of Big Ben and precipitated by the menopause, which, Showalter reminds us, is "sometimes" referred to as "the 'little death' of women" (Showalter 1992, xxxii)? She argues that "Clarissa's time of life [...] has much to do with her sense of ageing, mortality, and loss" (xxxii). It is both the menopause, which—in Woolf's time—was "closely allied with insanity" (xxxiii), and Clarissa's preoccupation with mourning for her youth—for Sally, for Peter, and for what she might have become—that connects her to the mad Septimus, who is not only grieving after the death of his friend and officer Evans, but whose final act is the taking of his own life. Interestingly, as in *Jacob's Room*, absence is once again transformed into presence. As argued by J. Hillis Miller, Woolf's novel represents "a resurrection of ghosts" (1982, 189), or the return of the dead; a kind of "All Souls' Day" (190) during which people from Clarissa's past—who have been 'accompanying' her throughout the day—make an actual appearance at her party (189; 190-91). This return of the dead becomes much more literal in Septimus's case (who Woolf intended as Clarissa's double)[12], for the shell-shocked veteran is haunted by the ghosts of those who died in the First World War, including his close friend, Evans.

The work which deals with the subject of death and mourning most famously is, nevertheless, *To the Lighthouse*. Apart from the deaths of Prue and Andrew Ramsay—related in square brackets (Woolf 1992b, 144; 145)—the novel is a fictional elegy for the character of Mrs Ramsay, as well as Woolf's own commemoration of her parents, Julia and Leslie Stephen. Both in life and after death,

[12] Woolf, Virginia. 1928. "Introduction." In *Mrs Dalloway*. Modern Library Edition. New York: Random House, p. vi.

Mrs Ramsay is—like Jacob, Percival, Toby Brooke and Colin's father—defined primarily by her absence, for the other characters struggle to see her as she really is. Her physical disappearance from the novel in "The Lighthouse" section is given force by Lily's grief and her attempt to recapture Mrs Ramsay through art. As argued by Patricia Waugh, it is only after "Lily has stripped Mrs Ramsay of her iconic status", of "the conventional reverence for female beauty" (Waugh 2012, 40), that she can truly see her, her absence, as if by magic, almost literally transformed into presence:

> 'Mrs Ramsay! Mrs Ramsay!' she [Lily] cried, feeling the old horror come back—to want and want and not to have. Could she [Mrs Ramsay] inflict that still? And then, quietly, as if she refrained, that too became part of ordinary experience, was on a level with the chair, with the table. Mrs Ramsay—it was part of her perfect goodness to Lily—sat there quite simply, in the chair, flicked her needles to and fro, knitted her reddish-brown stocking, cast her shadow on the step. There she sat. (Woolf 1992b, 219)

MIND INTO BODY AND MAN INTO WOMAN – BARKER'S AND WOOLF'S "VANISHING BOUNDARIES"

The transformation of absence into presence in Barker's and Woolf's respective novels is one of the main techniques connecting their work: absence in the sense of the body and interiority of a key figure, as in *Jacob's Room, The Waves, To the Lighthouse*, *The Man Who Wasn't There* and *Toby's Room*, and in the sense of the continuing haunting presence of the past in the characters' present. In making the subjects of trauma and grief a major concern, both novelists ensure a constant blurring of the boundary between time past and time present in their fiction. According to Cathy Caruth, one of the characteristics of trauma is that of a past event which "is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it" (Caruth 1995a, 4; Caruth's emphasis)—in other words, as though it were happening in the present moment. This is certainly the case both in Woolf's portrayal of Septimus, who is almost literally *possessed* by the ghost of the dead Evans returning from the front, and in Barker's depiction, in the *Regeneration* trilogy, of the shell-shocked veterans who are not only visited by the dead in hallucinations and nightmares, but whose traumatic experiences also manifest themselves in their muteness, tremors, paralysis, vomiting

and enuresis among others. It is in this way that Barker joins the mind and the body—traditionally thought of as binary opposites—and transforms the latter into a mirror image of the former, for the body reflects in its own bodily terms the conflicts and trauma present inside the mind.[13]

Like Barker, Woolf disagrees with the conventional separation of the mind and the body, for she believes that they constitute a unity. She expresses this view quite clearly in *Jacob's Room*, where among the primary culprits of this dissociation are the patriarchal institutions of the Church of England (symbolised by St Paul's Cathedral and King's College Chapel) and the university (represented by Cambridge University). Whilst the former stands for the separation of the body from the spirit, the latter splits the body from the intellect:

> Look, as they pass into service, how airily the gowns blow out, *as though nothing dense and corporeal were within*. What sculptured faces, what certainty, authority controlled by piety, *although great boots march under the gowns*. (Woolf 1976, 29; my emphasis)

> And then before one's eyes would come the bare hills of Turkey—sharp lines, dry earth, coloured flowers, and colour on the shoulders of the women, standing naked–legged in the stream to beat linen on the stones. The stream made loops of water round their ankles. *But none of that could show clearly through the swaddlings and blanketings of the Cambridge night*. The stroke of the clock even was muffled [...] (42; my emphasis)

Following the doctrine of the Church, in *Mrs Dalloway*, Miss Kilman attempts to 'disembody' herself in order to overcome her unattractiveness, which is the source of her unhappiness, for it prevents her from ever "meeting the opposite sex" (1992a, 141). But while she repeatedly tells herself how "[i]t [is] the flesh that she must control" (140) and "subdue" (141), her own behaviour demonstrates the impossibility of the task:

> Elizabeth rather wondered whether Miss Kilman could be hungry. It was her way of eating, eating with intensity, then looking, again and again, at a plate of sugared cakes on the table next them; then, when a lady and a child sat down and the child took the cake, could Miss Kilman really mind it? Yes, Miss Kilman did mind it. She had wanted that cake—the pink

[13] According to Ashley Green, "[t]he visceral" in Barker's fiction "acts both as text by which incommunicable trauma expresses its presence and locale by which trauma is enacted" (2012, 3-4). She argues that, in *Regeneration*, "Barker is specifically interested in the ways in which the physical symptoms of war neurosis communicate the nature of an internal crisis" (i).

> one. The pleasure of eating was almost the only pure pleasure left her, and then to be baffled even in that! (142)

As well as craving for food, Miss Kilman longs for Elizabeth with a passion that transcends platonic love. After the sight of Mrs Dalloway's attractiveness "revive[s] the fleshly desires" in Miss Kilman—"for she minded looking as she did beside Clarissa" (140-141)—she attempts to control them by focusing "her mind upon something else until she had reached the pillar-box. At any rate she had got Elizabeth. But she would think of something else; she would think of Russia; until she reached the pillar-box" (141). Why does Miss Kilman wish to repel the thought of Clarissa's daughter? Is it not precisely because Elizabeth stirs the "fleshly desires" that she tries so hard to "subdue"? The unity of the mind and the body—as well as Miss Kilman's desire for Clarissa's daughter—is perhaps most poignantly demonstrated in her silent protest against Elizabeth's departure from the Army and Navy Stores, which they are visiting together:

> Ah, but she must not go! Miss Kilman could not let her go! this youth, that was so beautiful; this girl, whom she genuinely loved! *Her large hand opened and shut on the table*. [. . .]
>
> She was about to split asunder, she felt. The agony was so terrific. *If she could grasp her, if she could clasp her*, if she could make her hers absolutely and for ever and then die; that was all she wanted. But [. . .] to see Elizabeth turning against her; to be felt repulsive even by her—it was too much; she could not stand it. *The thick fingers curled inwards.* (144; my emphasis)

In an essay on Woolf's engagement with the concept of Cartesian dualism, Patricia Waugh argues that Woolf strove, through her fiction, to save the idea of the soul from two kinds of "reductionism" (2012, 23): the Cartesian concept of the soul as limited by individual consciousness, both opposed to and separated from the subject's own body, the bodies of other people, the world of nature and inanimate objects, on the one hand, and, on the other, the "biological reductionism of her own time" (23), which tried to explain matters of consciousness in purely "neurological" terms (28). In order to "preserve" her vision of the soul as "never orderly, never bounded [or] hierarchical", Woolf had to "rewrite it, by rethinking thought" (25). Consequently, the individual minds of her characters are connected both with their own bodies—as seen in the above excerpt from *Mrs Dalloway*—and the minds and

bodies of other people. Woolf's work is thus filled with examples of "meta-representational activity—imagining the 'inside' of the mind of another", which is frequently "about trying to work out the other's intentions from their external behaviour", such as "gesture, movement and facial expression" (24). More than that, "[t]he rhythms of places, spaces and bodies organise the field of thinking" in Woolf's work (30). In the case of Mr Ramsay, for example, "the activity of thinking and the substance of thought mingle indistinguishably and emerge seamlessly out of physical movement through space", which includes "the rhythm of gesture, relations with others, the shapes and borders and horizons that encircle and support his body and his proprioceptive sense of himself" (29). And just as the landscape surrounding the house shapes, dictates and merges with his thoughts as he walks the familiar grounds both literally and figuratively (treading the same philosophical 'paths' in his mind), so does the 'inside' of his mind alter the landscape and the objects around him, "[t]he geraniums that have adorned thought now bear[ing] its impress" (30). Similarly, Lily's thoughts "metamorphose into things" (26) when their 'explosion' is magically transformed into the shot fired by Jasper and the "flock of starlings" startled by the noise (Woolf 1992b, 30) (Waugh 2012, 24).[14] According to Waugh, Woolf's work expresses "the idea of an embodied soul" (32), one that dissolves the distinction between thoughts on the one hand and "things, movements", bodies and "environment" on the other (30). In addition, Woolf portrays many of her characters as "bodies that think" (29), Mr Ramsay being the most obvious example. And just as things can contain thought, so they can carry the soul, just like Mr Ramsay's boots contain his, for by admiring them—and, in this way, "solac[ing] his soul" (Woolf 1992b, 167)—Lily "recognise[s] his view of himself as a steadfast worker in the Guild of Thoughtcraft, toiling in his boots across rugged landscapes, to inch thought forward even a step" (Waugh 2012, 40). Woolf's work can thus be seen as transforming not only thoughts into things, but things into thought.

Interestingly, when asked to comment on her explicit portrayal of "menstruation, childbirth and back-street abortion" in *Union Street* (1982), Barker responded that it was an expression of "'Virginia Woolf's "truth of the body" [...] As a woman, you

[14] "All of this danced up and down, like a company of gnats, each separate, but all marvellously controlled in an invisible elastic net—danced up and down in Lily's mind, in and about the branches of the pear tree, where still hung in effigy the scrubbed kitchen table, symbol of her profound respect for Mr Ramsay's mind, until her thought which had spun quicker and quicker exploded of its own intensity; she felt released; a shot went off close at hand, and there came, flying from its fragments, frightened, effusive, tumultuous, a flock of starlings" (Woolf 1992b, 30).

have to tell that truth'" (Jaggi 2003). And while it could be argued that this statement only confirms Barker's preoccupation with the *female* body as an *hommage* to Woolf's work, it could also, as Ashley Green suggests, be applied to Barker's examination of the bodily symptoms of the male patients at Craiglockhart in *Regeneration*, which become the primary means of expressing the truth about their minds (Green 2012, 170), just as Miss Kilman's opening and shutting hand speaks volumes about her feelings for Elizabeth. More importantly, in her portrayal of the shell-shocked Septimus in *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf also connects the mind and the body, for Septimus's madness—caused by war trauma—is expressed partly in physical terms, as when he observes that

> trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement (Woolf 1992a, 24).

Barker's blurring of the distinction between absence and presence on the one hand and the mind and the body on the other is yet another manifestation of what Lynda Prescott has described as the writer's "'vanishing boundaries'", the phrase—borrowed from Barker's *Liza's England* (1986)[15]—denoting "some key features of Barker's writing" (Prescott 2005, 167) and referring to the novelist's preoccupation with the deconstruction of such binary opposites as past and present, fact and fiction, "the known and the unknown", and masculine and feminine (168). Considering this major feature of Barker's work, it is hardly surprising that she has chosen the Great War as one of the major settings of her novels, for war is a space where binaries collapse, where evil (such as the act of killing another person) becomes good, where those present become absent/past at an alarming rate and where the dead haunt the living in hallucinations and nightmares, dissolving the fine line separating the present from the past. But the Great War, as Prescott suggests, was also the space where seemingly fixed gender divisions became blurred, for the departure of millions of men to the front granted women unprecedented freedom, empowerment and independence. Thus, Sarah Lumb's new job at the munitions factory provides her with "five times her pre-war wages in domestic service". What is more, "she can enjoy the independence of a single woman away from her home town and family"

[15] The novel was originally published as *The Century's Daughter*.

(172). While working-class women acquire the social status traditionally assigned to the opposite sex, the effect of the Great War on men is one of "feminisation" (173), a highly ironic result considering the all-time vision of war as a quintessentially masculine experience.[16] Prescott quotes the example of Ian Moffet, Rivers's patient in *The Ghost Road*, who collapses "in a 'fainting fit'"—an action traditionally associated with a distressed female—"shortly after hearing the guns [on the front] for the first time" (Barker 2008b, 20). Rivers's other shell-shocked patients in the *Regeneration* series—with the exception of Sassoon—are equally far from embodying the ideals of courage, as well as emotional and physical endurance, which constitute the bedrock of the traditional concept of masculinity and which the war is supposed to bring out and test. To make matters worse, the symptoms of the veterans treated by Rivers for what is now known as post-traumatic stress disorder resemble those of hysteria—a condition not only historically connected with women, but whose very name is "related to the Greek for womb" (Mitchell 2003, 7). More importantly, in her portrayal of this aspect of shell-shock, Barker recalls Woolf's depiction of Septimus Warren Smith, whose behaviour following his return home falls short of the cultural ideal of masculinity, as his wife's attitude illustrates:

> Then there were the visions. He was drowned, he used to say, and lying on a cliff with the gulls screaming over him. [...] Or he was hearing music. Really it was only a barrel organ or some man crying in the street. But 'Lovely!' he used to cry, and the tears would run down his cheeks, which was to her the most dreadful thing of all, to see a man like Septimus, who had fought, who was brave, crying. (Woolf 1992a, 154)

> [...] looking back, she saw him sitting in his shabby overcoat alone, on the seat, hunched up, staring. And it was cowardly for a man to say he would kill himself, but Septimus had fought; he was brave; he was not Septimus now. (25)

As in Barker's case, Woolf's writing is, in fact, filled with examples of the deconstruction of numerous binary opposites. A man literally becomes a woman in *Orlando*, where Woolf also turns fact into fiction by incorporating the history of Knole and Vita Sackville-West's family into the story of the title character. Woolf's goal of deconstructing the boundary between the real and the imagined is also

[16] As Rivers reflects in *Regeneration*, "[t]he war that had promised so much in the way of 'manly' activity had actually delivered 'feminine' passivity, and on a scale that their mothers and sisters had scarcely known. No wonder they [the soldiers] broke down" (Barker 2008a, 108-109).

revealed in the full title of the novel, which presents itself as a "[b]iography" (Woolf 1993).

The best example of binary opposites being transformed into mirror images can, nevertheless, be found in Woolf's fourth work of fiction. The tendency is discussed by J. Hillis Miller in his essay "*Mrs Dalloway*: Repetition as the Raising of the Dead". Miller draws attention to the phrase "What a lark! What a plunge!" (Woolf 1992a, 3), which appears at the beginning of the novel and which he perceives as expressive of the theme of "terror combined with ecstasy", which recurs throughout the text (Miller 1982, 185):

> What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) *solemn*, feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, *that something awful was about to happen*; looking at the flowers, at the trees with the smoke winding off them and the rooks rising, falling; (Woolf 1992a, 3; my emphasis)

According to Miller, "Clarissa's plunge [...] into the open air" is not only "an embrace of life in its richness, promise and immediacy", but also an "anticipat[ion] [of] Septimus's plunge into death" (1982, 185), which is foreshadowed by her memory of "feeling [...] that something awful was about to happen" and connected with this opening scene through her use of the word "plunged" to refer to Septimus's final act after she hears of it during her party (Woolf 1992a, 202). The whole novel is, in fact, "organised around the contrary penchants of rising and falling", where the former include Clarissa's act of creation—the party—as well as the "rising [from] the dead" of the figures from her past who make their appearance on that day. But rising and falling, whilst retaining their status as binary opposites, "are also ambiguously similar". Miller argues that "[t]hey change places bewilderingly, so that down and up, falling and rising, death and life, isolation and communication, are mirror images of one another" (1982, 53). As Clarissa ponders the meaning of Septimus's death, she reflects: "But this young man who had killed himself—had he plunged holding his treasure? 'If it were now to die, 'twere now to be most happy,' she had said to herself once, coming down, in white" (Woolf 1992a, 202). Mrs Dalloway's memory of a

moment of ecstasy in connection with Septimus's suicide is no coincidence. Like her "plunge" "into the open air" (3) at the beginning of the novel, it can be seen as an affirmation of life, signifying that Septimus's act of self-destruction can be perceived in the same terms, for it is his death that brings "the intensity and joy of a life" (Showalter 1992, xlv) back into focus. In this context, it is important to bear in mind that the railings onto which Septimus throws himself point upwards, a fact which Woolf herself draws attention to when she has Clarissa imagine the moment of Septimus's death: "He had thrown himself from a window. *Up* had flashed the ground; through him, blundering, bruising, went the rusty spikes" (Woolf 1992a, 201-202; my emphasis). But whilst Septimus's act of self-destruction reminds Clarissa of the ecstasy of living, it also makes her come to terms—"if only fleetingly" (Showalter 1992, xiv)—with the fact of her own mortality, which she literally faces when she looks at the elderly lady "going to bed" "in the room opposite"—this image of death who "stared straight at her!" (Woolf 1992a, 203):

> It was fascinating, with people still laughing and shouting in the drawing-room, to watch that old woman, quite quietly, going to bed alone. She pulled the blind now. The clock began striking. The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him [...], with all this going on. There! the old lady had put out her light! the whole house was dark now with this going on, she repeated, and the words came to her, Fear no more the heat of the sun. She must go back to them. But what an extraordinary night! She felt somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away while they went on living. (204)

Septimus's death is also an act of "defiance" against his doctors, Holmes and Bradshaw, whose treatment of their patient is a way of denying his individuality, of "forcing [his] soul" (202). According to Patricia Waugh,

> "[i]n Woolf, the soul is never orderly, never bounded and hierarchical, and is violated precisely by those who try to impose on it—the Holmeses, the Bradshaws, the Brutons—the kind of measured calibration broadly understood as 'method.'" (2012, 25)

The novel makes it clear that it is Dr Holmes's appearance at the Smiths' apartment that prompts the young veteran to jump from the window crying "'I'll give it you!'" (Woolf 1992a, 164). Similarly, Bradshaw's approach to the men and women who

come to him for help, including Septimus, is an instance of treatment becoming its antithesis, of healing transformed into destruction:

> Worshipping proportion, Sir William not only prospered himself but made England prosper, secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalised despair, made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views until they, too, shared his sense of proportion [...]. (109)

By destroying himself, Septimus is thus avoiding the destruction of his personality, suicide becoming—paradoxically—a means of saving the self. The soul can, therefore, be seen as the meaning of "treasure" in Clarissa's rhetorical question, to which the implied answer is affirmative: "But this young man who had killed himself—had he plunged holding his treasure?" (Woolf 1992a, 202). In other words, Septimus's final act demonstrates how the death of the body can be transformed into the survival—or life—of the soul.

Interestingly, in Barker's *Toby's Room*, the act of self-destruction is also a means of self-preservation, although in Toby Brooke's case it is the preservation of truth and lie combined. Toby commits suicide in order to preserve an image of himself as both a war hero (which he is) and a heterosexual man (which he is not), for the revelation that he has had a sexual relationship with a member of the same sex would not only bring disgrace upon himself and his entire family, but it would also undermine his heroism in the eyes of society and grant him a court martial. Barker's protagonist thus kills himself in order to preserve a masculine ideal which is, by implication, heterosexual. Through his action Toby is, then, preserving the entire status quo, which Septimus's suicide seeks to flout and undermine.

Like *Mrs Dalloway*, Barker's work—and specifically the *Regeneration* series—is also engaged with dissolving the boundary between the two opposites of healing and destruction. And while Dr Rivers is a much more complex, humane and likeable figure than Woolf's flat and simplistic portrayal of Bradshaw, what the two share is their partial responsibility for the death of their patients, for Rivers's task is to cure shell-shocked veterans so that they can return to the front. As he himself admits, his patients' "recovery meant the resumption of activities that were not merely self-destructive but positively suicidal" (Barker 2008a, 238).

In the first part of the trilogy, Rivers watches Dr Yealland—a more direct descendant of Bradshaw—perform 'treatment' in the form of electric shocks on a

mentally-disturbed patient by the name of Callan, who suffers from muteness. Not only does Yealland exhibit no compassion whatsoever, but his method of treatment is exactly like torture. As well as electric shocks, it involves the application of "[h]ot plates [...] to the back of the throat, and lighted cigarettes to the tongue" (227). Yealland also repeatedly reminds the patient that "'[y]ou must talk before you leave me'" (229). Paradoxically, however, as Rivers soon realises, the muteness is an expression of the man's individuality and his protest against the horrors of the trenches, while the restoration of speech is designed not merely to make him fit to fight again, but to "silence" him (238). This is partly why, in a dream following his "confrontation" (234) with Yealland's methods, Rivers associates the activity of applying electricity to the back of Callan's throat with "an oral rape" (236), for Yealland forces Callan into a feminine position (238), despite the fact that the purpose of his actions is to make the patient 'manly' again and to return him to the front. The act thus recalls the story of the rape of Philomela, whose violator—Tereus—cut out her tongue in order to prevent her from telling anyone about his crime.

But whilst Rivers, as opposed to Yealland, is moved by compassion and acutely distressed by the spectacle, his dream—in which he tries to force "a horse's bit" into a patient's mouth (236)—makes him realise that, although their methods of treatment are entirely opposite, the end they strive for is exactly the same: not only to return the disturbed men to the slaughter of the trenches, which is the very experience that had caused their illness, but also—in order to ensure this return—to destroy the "unconscious protest" manifesting itself in the veterans' symptoms (238). His task is, in other words, to silence his patients into compliance. Both Yealland and Rivers then, despite their very different approaches, resemble not only each other, but also Woolf's Dr Bradshaw, who "shut people up" (Woolf 1992a, 112) in order to ensure that their "unsocial impulses" "were held in control" (111). Consequently, the story of Yealland's 'treatment' of Callan and Rivers's reworking of the experience in the dream might be seen as illustrating the transformation of not only healing into destruction, but also of 'masculinity' into 'femininity' (and 'femininity' into 'masculinity') and of silence into speech (and vice versa).

SECTION TWO

Binary Pairs, Magritte's Mirror and the First World War: Intertextuality as the Transformation of Absence into Presence in Pat Barker's Fiction

There are many ways in which Barker's work might be seen as an *hommage* to Virginia Woolf's oeuvre. But whilst their shared concern with the transformation of binary opposites into mirror-like reflections may be regarded as one such expression of this relation, it is also through the study of binary pairs in their respective treatment of the First World War that one can see the complexity of Barker's intertextual relationship with Woolf, its simultaneous endorsement and repudiation. In my view, not only does the contemporary novelist pay tribute to Woolf—who was one of the first female writers to address the subject of the European War—but she also questions her approach to the issues thrown up in the attempt to depict it. Her fiction thus explores those parts of binary oppositions which Woolf's treatment of the conflict can be seen as neglecting: the 'masculine' as opposed to 'feminine' experience of the war (or the front line as opposed to the home front) and the body as opposed to the mind, i.e. the war's physical as opposed to psychological destruction. I argue that the Great War—which is, like Jacob Flanders, Mrs Ramsay and Percival, *physically absent* but *psychologically and/or metaphorically present* in Woolf's oeuvre—is endowed by Barker with a 'body', *an absence transformed into presence.*

THE WOUNDS OF WORLD WAR I IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S FICTION

Even though the First World War is certainly to be found in various guises in Woolf's novels, its presence is usually more like a gaping wound in the text than an actual representation in words. Its absence is combined with the 'actual' presence of events which bear a relation to it and are influenced by it, but which are, in many ways, its opposite. Thus, rather than explore what is happening on the front in the middle section of *To the Lighthouse*—which is set during the war—all that the reader

can see is a deserted house, witnessing hardly any human activity, the very opposite of the crowded trenches in France and Belgium and, in terms of location, the opposite side of the English Channel. The only glimpse of the front afforded the reader is when the narrator reports the death of Andrew Ramsay, yet even that fact is only related in parenthesis: "[A shell exploded. Twenty or thirty young men were blown up in France, among them Andrew Ramsay, whose death, mercifully, was instantaneous.]" (Woolf 1992b, 145). And although the circumstances of Andrew's death are also mentioned in the final part of the novel (169; 210), the reader does not find out much more than the fact that he was "killed by the splinter of a shell instantly" (169).

But while the Ramsays' house can be seen as the 'opposite' of the war, it is also its reflection, for it suggests not only the numerous abandoned buildings in the areas closest to the fighting on the Continent and the sense of life being put on hold experienced by both soldiers and civilians, but also the destruction wreaked by war itself. That its portrayal was Woolf's goal in "Time Passes" is made clear by the holograph draft of the novel (Lee 1997, 342; Haule 1991, 166). The annihilating force of the war is also manifest in the language employed throughout the section. At the beginning, when the characters are going to bed, Prue remarks that "'[o]ne can hardly tell which is the sea and which is the land'" (Woolf 1992b, 137). This observation brings to mind the Biblical account of creation, when "the earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep" (Gen. 1:2; original emphasis) and thus suggests the end of an old world and the beginning of a new one that the European War would initiate. After the characters have retired for the night, the reader is informed that "a downpouring of immense darkness began", which "[n]othing [...] could survive". The objects and people lose their identity and nothing is as it used to be: "Not only was furniture confounded; there was scarcely anything left of body or mind by which one could say, 'This is he' or 'This is she'" (Woolf 1992b, 137). This confoundment parallels how the experience of the war made people question everything they used to take for granted: their lives, their identities, their faith, the purpose of human existence and the essence of masculinity and femininity respectively. The "stray airs, advance guards of great armies" (140), "detached from the body of the wind", roam the house asking the "torn", discarded letters, "the flowers, the books [...] Were they allies? Were they enemies?" (138). "The nights now are full of wind and destruction" (140) and "divine goodness" sends

on his "treasures" "a drench of hail, and so breaks them, so confuses them that it seems impossible [...] that we should ever compose from their fragments a perfect whole or read in the littered pieces the clear words of truth" (139-140). These "fragments" bring to mind T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) and its portrayal of the post-war Western world struggling to make sense of the remains of its identity, culture and tradition. The war is also alluded to much more obviously in "the silent apparition of an ashen-coloured ship" on the horizon as well as in the appearance of "a purplish stain upon the bland surface of the sea as if something had boiled and bled, invisibly, beneath" (Woolf 1992b, 146). The most poignant symbol of the reign of death is, nevertheless, the "loosen[ing]" (142) of Mrs Ramsay's green shawl—symbolising fertility and life—which covers the sheep's skull (signifying death) that so frightened Cam in the first part of the novel. "[I]n the absence of civilized life", the house is soon "take[n] over" by nature—Woolf's way of demonstrating "the threat World War I posed to the social order" (Bazin and Lauter 1991, 38). It is Mrs McNab's and Mrs Bast's task to curb this expansion and to restore the rule of civilisation. At the same time, the way in which the house becomes the breeding ground for a variety of animals and plants implies hope in the midst of destruction and the return of life, however blind and formless. As a simultaneous opposite—in the sense of location and lack of human presence—and illustration, or metaphor, of both World War I and war in general, the Ramsays' Hebrides home and its surroundings can thus be seen as the mirror image of the conflict, a reversed reflection; as yet another example of Woolf's blurring of the boundary between the two parts of a binary pair.

Despite the fact that physical images of the First World War occur more frequently in *Jacob's Room*, the subject is rarely addressed directly. Although it could be argued that war in general is present in the novel from the very beginning, its place is on the edges, rather than at the centre, of the text. This positioning paradoxically draws attention to its importance, especially retrospectively, after the reader has discovered what has happened to Jacob. The subject of war appears in the hero's surname, in fleeting references to the Crimean War (Woolf 1976, 14), Gibraltar (73; 121; 168) and "the battle of Waterloo" (81), as well as in the presence of a number of invalids, such as Mr Curnow, who "had lost his eye" in a "gunpowder explosion" (8); "old Jevons with one eye gone" (98) as a result of an incident which is not revealed; and, finally, Captain Barfoot, who "was lame and wanted two fingers

on the left hand, having served his country" (22). War in general is also suggested by the ruins of "the Roman fortress" (15) on Dods Hill, where Betty Flanders spends much of her time, in Archer's ambition to join the Navy (19), which he fights in during the Great War, and in the "green clock guarded by Britannia leaning on her spear" in a passage (recalling T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*) in which Woolf describes the house of a prostitute visited by Jacob (100). Jacob is also compared to "a British Admiral" (141) and taken "for a military gentleman" by a "stall-keeper", who "told him about his boy at Gibraltar" (73). The protagonist watches "Italian officers" through the window of a train (130-1) and sees Sandra Wentworth Williams being "brushed off the pavement by parading men" (154). Out of the above, Jacob's surname is, of course, the most significant reference to the First World War, for it heralds his fate and prepares the reader for his death. It also makes him representative of the millions of men who had lost their lives whilst fighting in Belgium. Woolf's seemingly casual mention of the Crimean War is no less accidental, however, for the conflict, "famed for the 'Charge of the Light Brigade', would fundamentally alter the balance of power in Europe and set the stage for World War One" (Lambert 2011).

Whilst all of the above are some of the constant reminders of war dotted throughout *Jacob's Room*, there is little direct engagement on Woolf's part with the events of the Great War in particular. The narrator's description of the fate of two peripheral characters, who never actually appear in the novel, "Helen and Jimmy", can be seen as one of the darkest and most ominous allusions to the conflict, if one considers the ambiguity of its meaning: "And now Jimmy *feeds crows in Flanders* and Helen visits hospitals" (Woolf 1976, 93; my emphasis). The First World War is also referred to in "the ships in the Piraeus fir[ing] their guns" (144) and the "wires of the Admiralty", which "shivered with some far–away communication", such as the message that "the fleet was at Gibraltar" (168). The closest Woolf gets to the conflict is the following description:

> The battleships ray out over the North Sea, keeping their stations accurately apart. At a given signal all the guns are trained on a target which (the master gunner counts the seconds, watch in hand—at the sixth he looks up) flames into splinters. With equal nonchalance a dozen young men in the prime of life descend with composed faces into the depths of the sea; and there impassively (though with perfect mastery of machinery) suffocate uncomplainingly together. Like blocks of tin soldiers the army covers the

> cornfield, moves up the hillside, stops, reels slightly this way and that, and falls flat, save that, through field glasses, it can be seen that one or two pieces still agitate up and down like fragments of broken match–stick. (151-2)

The horror conveyed here is partly the result of the fact that the situation is presented with the same indifference that marks the accuracy of "the master gunner" and the people in power who send their young men to die. Still, the image is generic, rather than specific, for the description is crafted in such a way as to reflect the erasure of the individuality of the soldier in wartime (Bazin and Lauter 1991, 16)[17]. Apart from the instances discussed above, there are, in fact, few direct references to the First World War in *Jacob's Room*.

Nor does the reader find out exactly what has happened to Jacob. It is quite clear that he met his end whilst fighting for his country, but the exact circumstances of his death are never revealed. It could, in fact, be argued that this gap is filled by Pat Barker in her re-writing of this novel in *Toby's Room*, where Elinor Brooke's determination to find out how her brother died finally breeds results when she is told that he had walked out into No Man's Land and committed suicide (Barker 2012a, 257-8).[18]

Another text where it is justifiable to expect direct references to the First World War is *The Years*—a fictional saga of the Pargiter family spanning fifty-seven years and including the period of the Great War. The reader is not disappointed, for not only is the conflict frequently mentioned, but there is a whole chapter devoted to Eleanor's experience of an air raid in the cellar of the house of her cousin, Maggie, and her husband, Renny. The characters discuss the war while the guns boom first overhead and then "far away in the distance". They "[raise] their glasses" and drink "'to the New World!'" (Woolf 2004, 256). Nevertheless, as in the case of most of Woolf's novels, the front is not depicted at all, unless one counts the maid informing Eleanor that "'[t]he soldiers are guarding the line with fixed bayonets!'" (250) or North's brief reference to his experience of the trenches, prompted by the sight of some young men at the party he attends at the end of the novel: "At their age, he thought, he had been in the trenches; he had seen men killed" (353). The sight is not, however, afforded the reader and the Great War as presented by Woolf is—as in

[17] See also William R. Handley's discussion of Woolf's engagement with this issue in *Jacob's Room* published in the same collection (Handley 1991).
[18] *Toby's Room* is discussed in more detail in Section Three.

Jacob's Room—a bodiless conflict, much as it appeared in contemporary newspapers (where lists of names stood for dead bodies) and the censored letters arriving from the front line.

Even in *Mrs Dalloway*, where one of the two protagonists is a World War I veteran suffering from shell-shock, Woolf chooses to show his life in England *after* the war and to translate his experience of the trenches into the symptoms of his madness rather than to depict it directly. And while the war is less bodiless here than it is in such novels as *Jacob's Room*, *To the Lighthouse* and *The Years*, the dead seen by Septimus in his visions are not described in any detail. Apart from Woolf's portrayal of these hallucinations, there are, in fact, only a few passages in *Mrs Dalloway* which contain images taken from the front, as when Richard Dalloway reflects on the "thousands of poor chaps, with all their lives before them, shovelled together, already half forgotten" (1992a, 126) or when Septimus remembers how after the death of his friend, Evans, "[t]he last shells missed him. He watched them explode with indifference" (95). One particular hallucination experienced by Septimus can be seen as suggesting not only what Evans's body looked like after his death, but also the desolation of the front line:

> A man in grey [Peter Walsh] was actually walking towards them. It was Evans! *But no mud was on him; no wounds; he was not changed*. I must tell the whole world, Septimus cried, raising his hand (as the dead man in the grey suit came nearer), raising his hand like some colossal figure who has lamented the fate of man for ages in the desert alone with his hands pressed to his forehead, furrows of despair on his cheeks, and now sees light on the desert's edge which broadens and strikes the iron-black figure [. . .], and with *legions of men prostrate behind him* he, the giant mourner, receives for one moment on his face the whole— (76-7; my emphasis)

But whilst the "legions of men prostrate behind him ["the giant mourner"]" can be seen as Woolf's attempt to convey the omnipresence of death and dead bodies on the front, the description is far from directly portraying the slaughter of the trenches, especially as the landscape depicted by Woolf bears the traces of some fairytale land, rather than France or Belgium. What is more, as far as Evans's death is concerned, what is (indirectly) conveyed is merely the idea that his body was covered in mud and that he was wounded and "changed".

What the Modernist author certainly does, however, is depict the Great War from what could be termed a 'feminine' perspective, for women, apart from the nurses looking after the wounded soldiers, were officially, if not practically, excluded from the bodily horrors of the conflict. Consequently, rather than describe the mindless slaughter of the trenches, Woolf focuses on presenting the effects of the war on the people remaining at home, the most important exception being Septimus, though even he, as argued above, does not offer more than a fleeting glimpse of the realities of trench warfare. In addition, his experience is translated by Woolf into the language of madness—a form of communication familiar to her, for, like her protagonist, she once heard birds singing in Greek (2002, 45) and was also psychologically haunted by her mother. Apart from Septimus's and North's (limited) point of view, the First World War or, more specifically, its effects on the society of Woolf's time, is shown exclusively through the eyes of male and female civilians, such as Clarissa and Peter Walsh in *Mrs Dalloway* and Eleanor Pargiter and Nicholas Pomjalovsky in *The Years*. In the case of the first two, the reader is offered their comments on the changes that have occurred within British society as a result of the war. Thus, Clarissa notes how "[t]his late age of the world's experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears. Tears and sorrows; courage and endurance, a perfectly upright and stoical bearing" (1992a, 10), while Peter Walsh observes how much more open his contemporaries have become with regards to the matters of sex and the body:

> Those five years—1918 to 1923—had been, he suspected, somehow very important. People looked different. Newspapers seemed different. Now, for instance, there was a man writing quite openly in one of the respectable weeklies about water-closets. That you couldn't have done ten years ago—written quite openly about water-closets in a respectable weekly. And then this taking out a stick of rouge, or a powder-puff, and making up in public. On board ship coming home there were lots of young men and girls—Betty and Bertie he remembered in particular—carrying on quite openly; the old mother sitting and watching them with her knitting, cool as a cucumber. The girl would stand still and powder her nose in front of every one. And they weren't engaged; just having a good time; no feelings hurt on either side. (78-79)

Since neither Clarissa nor Peter took an active part in the war, they can be seen—along with Eleanor and Nicholas—as occupying the 'feminine' sphere. Even including Woolf's description of some of Septimus's war experiences and the

symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder from which he suffers, her depiction of the Great War from a 'masculine' point of view is incomplete, for the enormous gap in the narrator's portrayal of Septimus's madness are the sights and smells of the front line, as well as the physical and mental suffering of his fellow soldiers. What Woolf's account lacks, then, is a distinctly male perspective—an eye witness account of the slaughter. In this sense, the war is virtually invisible in her work, happening on the other side of the English Channel, which Woolf's texts reach extremely rarely. But even when they deal with the destruction of the war on the home front, as in the description of an air-raid in *The Years*, the bodies and ruins left behind once again fail to make an appearance.

Why did Virginia Woolf decide to exclude the physical aspect of war and the male experience of the trenches from her fiction? One reason may be the fact that, with the exception of air raids, she had been personally excluded from both. As a woman, she was not allowed to join the army and since she was not a nurse, she did not witness the physical and mental suffering of the wounded soldiers, although she had certainly "absorbed a lot of first-hand poetic responses to the [conflict]" (Schaefer 1991, 134), such as the work of Siegfried Sassoon. As she says of World War II in "Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid" (1940), "[t]he defenders are men, the attackers are men. Arms are not given to Englishwomen either to fight the enemy or to defend herself" (Woolf 2009a, 1). In addition, "[n]one of her closest friends fought" (Lee 1997, 345), as a result of which they had no experience of the front. And while Woolf was more than familiar with grief—for death had struck both young and elderly members of the Stephen household in close succession[19]—the First World War was not, for her, a personal tragedy—or at least not to the same extent as it was for the millions of British women who had lost their husbands, brothers and sons. Despite the fact that both two of her cousins and Leonard's brother, Cecil, were killed (Leonard's other brother, Philip, was wounded, as was her friend, Nick Bagenal, both of whom she visited in hospital), she did not lose any of her closest relatives or friends (351). It was not until 1937 that war brought with it a truly harrowing experience, though this time it was the Spanish Civil War, which took away Woolf's nephew, Julian Bell. This is not to say that Woolf was not

[19] Woolf's mother, Julia Stephen, died on 5th May 1895, when Virginia was only thirteen. She was quickly followed by Woolf's half-sister, Stella Duckworth, who died two years later. In 1904, Virginia's father, Leslie Stephen, died of cancer, while in 1906 Virginia lost her beloved brother, Thoby.

affected by the losses experienced by the men and women around her—one of whom was her own husband—for, as argued by Nancy Topping Bazin and Jane Hamovit Lauter, the traumatic events of Woolf's adolescence and early adulthood—when she lost her mother, her half-sister, her father and her beloved brother—"made her identify in a personal way with the families and friends of those who died in the wars" (1991, 15). What is merely suggested is that Woolf, on account of her pacifism, the explicitly "anti-war" stance of her closest friends and family members (such as Vanessa Bell, her husband Clive, Lytton Strachey, Duncan Grant, Ottoline Morrell, Bertrand Russell and even, to an extent, Leonard Woolf[20]) (Lee 1997, 345) and the lack of a personally experienced trauma, may have felt more distant from the events unfolding on the Continent than many other British civilians. "Her reactions to the war were", in fact, "a mixture of a pacifist's horror of the glorification of militarism, and alienation from the ordinary combatant or civilian's view" (344).

But whilst it could be argued that Woolf's experience of the European War was not as painful as that of many of her contemporaries, she was, like other civilians, not exempt from experiencing German air raids, food shortages and other war-related issues, as Hermione Lee's biography (1997) makes clear. Woolf was also "curious about what was going on 'behind the scenes'", acquiring information from such people as Maynard Keynes and her cousin, H.A.L. Fisher (350). Her portrayal of Septimus Warren Smith and Jacob Flanders, whose life, which is full of promise, is "snuffed out" in an instant (Schaefer 1991, 139) by the senseless machinery of war, clearly suggests that she did see the devastating effects of the conflict upon her society. Both Peter Walsh's and Clarissa's observations on the social changes that have occurred since its conclusion clearly mark World War I as a key event in modern history. Josephine O'Brien Schaeffer emphasises the fact that Woolf was one of the first British women writers to address the subject of the First World War in her fiction. She was preceded by Rose Macaulay (1916), Rebecca West, who wrote about shell-shock in *The Return of the Soldier* (1918) and Cecily Hamilton (1919) (135). War in general was, in fact, extremely important to her. And while the Great War is not only virtually bodiless, but also physically almost completely absent from

[20] Hermione Lee points out that Leonard's opposition to the Great War was not as extreme as that of the other members of the Bloomsbury Group. Quoting from his autobiography (*Beginning Again*) and his letters, she remarks that "[i]n retrospect Leonard said that he was 'against the war', but not a CO", for "'[o]nce the war had broken out it seemed to [him] that the Germans must be resisted'. But at the same time he wrote to Margaret Llewelyn Davies: 'I feel I am a conscientious objector . . . for I loathe the thought of taking any part in this war'" (Lee 1997, 347).

Woolf's fiction, it is also—psychologically and socially—everywhere in Woolf's work[21], most prominently in *Jacob's Room, Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *The Years*.

It is in her extended essays—*Three Guineas* and *A Room of One's Own*—that one can find more convincing reasons than Woolf's biography for her refusal to depict the conflict directly—reasons which are connected with her perception of the future of fiction and the related issue of gender difference. And while she is famous for her portrayal of an androgynous character in *Orlando* and known for advocating androgyny in literature, her discussion of war is marked by the same polarisation of the sexes as that instigated by and traditionally associated with war itself. In Woolf's own words,

> though many instincts are held more or less in common by both sexes, *to fight has always been the man's habit, not the woman's*. Law and practice have developed that difference, whether innate or accidental. (1998b, 158; my emphasis)

Woolf also makes it clear that "as fighting [. . .] is *a sex characteristic* which she [a woman] cannot share, the counterpart some claim of the maternal instinct which he cannot share, so it is an instinct which she cannot judge" (311; my emphasis). It is for this reason, as well as in order to help "prevent war" (314), that women ought "not to incite their brothers to fight, or to dissuade them, but to maintain an attitude of complete indifference" (310), for it is only by not paying attention to their brothers' wish to fight for their country that they can effect any change, in a manner similar to ignoring an annoying child "strut[ting] a trumpet outside the window: implore him to stop; he goes on: say nothing; he stops" (314). Women should also, according to Woolf, refuse to contribute to the war in any form whatsoever, whether by "fight[ing] with arms", producing "munitions" or "nurs[ing] the wounded" (310). They should, in short, found what Woolf terms the "Society of Outsiders" (314), undermining the system from without. Can the "indifference" she preaches, as well as the extreme polarisation of the sexes with regard to the masculine instinct for

[21] That this is the case is made evident in *Virginia Woolf and War: Fiction, Reality, and Myth* (1991), a series of essays edited by Mark Hussey, which demonstrate that "*all* Woolf's work is deeply concerned with war; that it helps redefine our understanding of the nature of war; and that from her earliest to her final work she sought to explore and make clear the connections between private and public violence, between the domestic and the civic effects of patriarchal society, between male supremacy and the absence of peace, and between ethics and aesthetics" (Hussey 1991, 3; Hussey's emphasis).

warfare—which is "as foreign to [women] as centuries of tradition and education can make it" (311)—go some way in explaining her reluctance to portray the war more directly? Woolf's readers might protest that, after all, she claims that the best writers are "androgynous", meaning that "[i]f one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her" (1998b, 128). As Woolf's argument appears to suggest, however, the male side of a woman's brain does not include the experience of war—what she calls, in her letters, "'this preposterous masculine fiction'" (Haule 1991, 164)—or the understanding of what she sees as a typically male wish to fight.

A Room of One's Own, where Woolf famously calls on fellow women writers to "[break] the sentence" and "the sequence" of the predominantly male literary tradition (Woolf 1998a, 106), contains more potential reasons for the absence of the front in her work, for the revolution she advocates signifies, among others, challenging the traditional assumption of the literary critic that "[t]his is an important book [...] because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing–room". Woolf complains that "[a] scene in a battle-field is more important than a scene in a shop—everywhere and much more subtly the difference of value persists" (96). She believes that, rather than imitate their male precursors and their concerns, women writers ought to create their own literary form and explore the subject matter that is important to them—as important, in fact, as what concerns the other sex:

> Above all, you must illumine your own soul with its profundities and its shallows, and its vanities and its generosities, and say what your beauty means to you or your plainness, and what is your relation to the everchanging and turning world of gloves and shoes [...]. (117)

> There are so many new facts for her [the woman writer embodied by Mary Carmichael] to observe. She will not need to limit herself any longer to the respectable houses of the upper middle classes. She will go without kindness or condescension, but in the spirit of fellowship, into those small, scented rooms where sit the courtesan, the harlot and the lady with the pug dog. There they still sit in the rough and ready–made clothes that the male writer has had perforce to clap upon their shoulders. But Mary Carmichael will have out her scissors and fit them close to every hollow and angle. It will be a curious sight, when it comes, to see these women as they are [...]. (115)

If Woolf had depicted the "battle-field" (96), she would have had to move away—if only for the time being—from this goal of laying bare the female soul and body. She would also have arguably reverted to the values of 'masculine' fiction; to the old, 'masculine' way of depicting war in literature and of telling history as a collection of great events. By depicting the front—devoid of women—she would be expelling the female element from the picture and going against the necessity (voiced by her in *Room*) to recover the forgotten history of women (57-8), to fill the absence which marks the historical accounts written by men, for men and about men. To reconcile the goals of showing women as they really are and of portraying history as it is experienced by them on the one hand and of writing about the war (which was such a critical event) on the other, Woolf "turn[s] away from the battlefront to the home front, to the home, in thinking about war" (13). Hussey argues that Woolf's depiction of war is an embodiment of what Margaret R. Higonnet and Patrice L.-R. Higonnet refer to as a "'feminist re-vision of *time* in wartime'", which "'can make the history of war more sensitive to the full range of experience of both men and women'". In accordance with this principle, Woolf moves away from the actual event and extends the picture both "temporal[ly]" (depicting periods before, during and/or after the war in such novels as *Jacob's Room, Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse* and *The Years*) and "spatial[ly]" (by illustrating "the reverberations of war through all society" and "'includ[ing] the private domain and the landscape of the mind'") (Hussey 1991, 4), seeing, as she does, the interrelatedness of "private and public violence" and of "male supremacy and the absence of peace" (3). Speaking of the subject of war in general, Hussey remarks that

> [t]he domestic conflict engendered by the patriarchal family that is the matter of *The Voyage Out* (1915) and *Night and Day* (1919), Woolf's first two novels, gives way to direct consideration of the effects of war in *Jacob's Room* (1922), but in every subsequent fiction the two are entwined as Woolf sees the personal and the public as inseparable. (5)

As a *woman* writer, Woolf positions herself *outside* the all-male experience of the trenches, as no doubt befits a member of the Society of Outsiders. But the vision of the First World War as demonstrated in her fiction is also, as Hussey's argument suggests, part of her attempt to portray history as it is *really* experienced not only by women, but also by the ordinary civilian man. James M. Haule argues as much in his

study of Woolf's drastic revisions of "Time Passes". By eliminating the "[d]irect identification of the war with male destructiveness and sexual brutality" (Haule 1991, 166) from the final version of *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf made her novel far more "universal"—a work of art rather than feminist politics (177), an androgynous vision without the "sex-consciousness" which she deplores in *A Room of One's Own* (Woolf 1998a, 135). Haule states that the middle section of *To the Lighthouse* is "in direct opposition to the 'historians' histories' that so annoyed her in 1919" (1991, 177), when she complained that "the history of the war is not and never will be written from our point of view", which is not merely that of the ordinary civilian, but of the ordinary civilian who is also a unique individual (Woolf 1919). And while "Time Passes" does not show the war from an individual perspective, Woolf's other novels—especially *Mrs Dalloway* and *The Years*—can certainly be seen as reflecting her attempt to show its effects from the point of view of 'flesh-and-blood' men and women; to portray history "as it is lived" (Woolf 1919) by ordinary, but unique, individuals, who constitute, after all, the majority of the population.

Woolf's rejection of a direct depiction of the physical violence of war—whether on the Continent or on the home front (in the form of air raids)—may also be connected with the fact that the ability to perceive the essence of traumatic events and to write about them directly requires a significant temporal distance. That portraying the horrors of the trenches was a problem for Woolf is suggested by Hermione Lee, who points out that "she drew back from the 'raw stuff'" in Siegfried Sassoon's poetry (1997, 343), which she reviewed during the war. What Woolf means by calling Sassoon's poems "raw stuff" is that what he conveys to the reader is an 'undigested' experience (Woolf 1918). If one were to put Woolf's argument in her review in different words, one could follow Jeanette Winterson in saying that the poems are a reflection of experience, rather than a "transformation" into something else, which—in both Winterson's and Woolf's view—is the condition of art (Winterson 1996, 66). But "raw stuff" also suggests what Woolf says of Geoffrey Dearmer's poems: that "the war, perhaps, has brought these pieces forth before their time" (Woolf 1918). As far as fiction is concerned, Woolf remarked, "'[t]he vast events now shaping across the Channel are towering over us too closely and too tremendously to be worked into [it] without a painful jolt in the perspective'" (Lee 1997, 343). According to Jonathan Atkin, "Woolf assimilated the war only after the event and then only with a subtle tone" (2002, 36). By the time a considerable

number of years had elapsed, both Leonard and Virginia were arguably distracted from thinking about the Great War by the rise of Nazism in Germany in the thirties, followed by a potential, and—for Leonard—deadly, German occupation. Another fact to consider with respect to Woolf's rejection of a direct portrayal of the trenches and the air-raids is her "contempt for patriotism", pointed out by a number of critics (Zwerdling 1986, 275; Lee 1997, 343) and clearly evident in such passages in her work as the one in which the parading boys observed by Peter Walsh

> marched [...] as if one will worked legs and arms uniformly, and life, with its varieties, its irreticences, had been laid under a pavement of monuments and wreaths and drugged into a stiff yet staring corpse by discipline (Woolf 1992a, 56).

And yet, as the Modernist author herself points out, "[i]s it not possible that if we knew the truth about war, the glory of war would be scotched and crushed [...]?" (1998b, 295). It is the sight of a photograph of a dead body, she claims, that brings the two sexes—so profoundly different when it comes to their attitude to war—back together:

> They are not pleasant photographs to look upon. They are photographs of dead bodies for the most part. [...] the photograph of what might be a man's body, or a woman's; it is so mutilated that it might, on the other hand, be the body of a pig. But those certainly are dead children, and that undoubtedly is the section of a house. A bomb has torn open the side; [...]
>
> Those photographs are not an argument; they are simply a crude statement of fact addressed to the eye. But the eye is connected with the brain; the brain with the nervous system. [...] When we look at those photographs some fusion takes place within us; however different the education, the traditions behind us, our sensations are the same; and they are violent. You, Sir, call them 'horror and disgust'. We also call them horror and disgust. And the same words rise to our lips. War, you say, is an abomination; a barbarity; war must be stopped at whatever cost. And we echo your words. (164-5)

Is it not justifiable to expect a similarly direct and honest portrayal of the Great War from someone who was not only a pacifist herself, but also surrounded by people "who were articulately anti-war" (Lee 1997, 345)? One could only surmise that filling the gaps in history in general and literary history in particular and turning *his*-story into *her*-story in both was, for Woolf, a more important goal than the possibility of contributing to the prevention of war. Her fiction, in which she

explores the minds of such female protagonists as Rachel Vinrace, Katharine Hilbery, Clarissa Dalloway, Lily Briscoe and Eleanor Pargiter, as well as their relationships with other women, attests to this. However—as if to kill two birds with one stone, and despite Woolf's opinion that women should position themselves outside anything to do with war—her novels, as indicated above, are barely "indifferent" (Woolf 1998b, 314) to the conflict.

PAT BARKER'S PORTRAYAL OF THE GREAT WAR, OR VIRGINIA WOOLF IN MAGRITTE'S MIRROR

Just as Woolf attempts to fill a gap in the predominantly male literary tradition with respect to the presentation of women and war, so does Pat Barker's fiction fill various gaps in the work of her Modernist predecessor. First and foremost, unlike Woolf, Barker demonstrates the full slaughter and horror of the trenches, not shirking away from the depiction of even the most gruesome details. It is enough to quote one such passage (and there are many) from Barker's work to demonstrate the glaring differences between her own method of approaching the First World War and that of her Bloomsbury predecessor:

> Burns. Rivers had become adept at finding bearable aspects to unbearable experiences, but Burns defeated him. What had happened to him was so vile, so disgusting, that Rivers could find no redeeming feature. He'd been thrown into the air by the explosion of a shell and had landed, head-first, on a German corpse, whose gas-filled belly had ruptured on impact. Before Burns lost consciousness, he'd had time to realize that what filled his nose and mouth was decomposing human flesh. Now, whenever he tried to eat, that taste and smell recurred. Nightly, he relived the experience, and from every nightmare he awoke vomiting. Burns on his knees, as Rivers had often seen him, retching up the last ounce of bile, hardly looked like a human being at all. His body seemed to have become merely the skin-and-bone casing for a tormented alimentary canal. (Barker 2008a, 19)

The war is also accessed through the soldiers' own memories of traumatic events, as when Prior, during hypnosis, recalls the most significant experience that has led to the onset of his muteness. After the explosion of a shell kills two of his men, he has to dispose of their remains:

> Logan picked up a sandbag and held it open, and he [Prior] began shovelling soil, flesh and splinters of blackened bone into the bag. As he shovelled, he retched. [...]
>
> They'd almost finished when Prior shifted his position on the duckboards, glanced down, and found himself staring into an eye. Delicately, like somebody selecting a particularly choice morsel from a plate, he put his thumb and forefinger down through the duckboards. His fingers touched the smooth surface and slid before they managed to get a hold. He got it out, transferred it to the palm of his hand, and held it out towards Logan. He could see his hand was shaking, but the shaking didn't seem to be anything to do with him. 'What am I supposed to do with this gob-stopper?' He saw Logan blink and knew he was afraid. At last Logan reached out, grasped his shaking wrist, and tipped the eye into the bag. (103)

What the above excerpts demonstrate is Barker's focus on the bodily, as well as the psychological, aspects of war. By showing the experience of the men through their memories and/or bodies, as in Burns's vomiting or Prior's shaking hand, Barker is not only expressing what she has herself termed "'Virginia Woolf's "truth of the body"'" (Jaggi 2003), but she is also subverting her precursor's approach to the conflict by exploring that part of the binary which is virtually absent in Woolf's fiction, i.e. the exclusively male experience of the trenches, or what has already been described as a 'masculine' vision of the war. Barker's portrayal of the fighting is arguably rendered even more direct in the third part of the *Regeneration* trilogy, *The Ghost Road*, which contains the diary of Billy Prior written in France towards the end of the war. He describes the "utter devastation" of the front – "[d]ead horses, unburied men, stench of corruption", "craters, stinking mud, stagnant water, trees like gigantic burnt matches", the land into which "[p]oison's dripped [. . .] from rotting men, dead horses, gas" (2008b, 240). The reader also follows Prior and Owen as they fight the last battles of the European War, experiencing the reality of the trenches through Prior's eyes and as the events occur. Through her explicit depiction of the slaughter, Barker can thus be seen as challenging Woolf's refusal to portray the war's physical destruction of human beings, animals and landscapes, or—in more general terms—as repudiating Woolf's depiction of the First World War as a bodiless venture. Simultaneously, however, Barker's work might alternatively be viewed as a confirmation of Woolf's argument in *Three Guineas*, for her novels stand in for the usual role of photographs, reflecting the reality of the trenches in an apparently indifferent, matter-of-fact way, giving Barker the label of a realist writer and

producing in the reader the same effect as that described by Woolf in her essay—that of "horror and disgust" and the conviction that war "is an abomination; a barbarity; war must be stopped at whatever cost" (Woolf 1998b, 165). In other words, whilst fulfilling the aim specified by Woolf in *Three Guineas*—which is that of helping to prevent war by showing its true nature—Barker is simultaneously confirming and rejecting her precursor's own approach to the issue in her fiction.

There is no doubt that Woolf's portrayal of World War I has had a tremendous influence on Barker, for her fiction, while filling in the gaps in her precursor's work, can also be described (even more so than Woolf's) in terms of what Margaret R. Higonnet and Patrice L.-R. Higonnet have termed "'a feminist re-vision of *time* in wartime'" (Hussey 1991, 4). Despite the largely masculine focus of her war trilogy, Barker herself admits that

> 'I think about war from a very feminine perspective. In all my books, there's a great emphasis on the long-term damage to the individual and to the family. There are male carers, for veterans, but the overwhelming burden of caring for someone who will never be the same again falls on women. I've always been aware of the psychological damage inflicted on families, sometimes not clearing for several generations.' (Fraser 2008)

Women's view of the conflict is thus expressed in such novels as *Regeneration*, where Sarah Lumb and her female friends explore the new professional and personal opportunities that the departure of millions of men, including their own fiancés and husbands, affords them. What is more, the second part of the series, *The Eye in the Door*, features a starving pacifist, Beattie Roper, visited by Prior in Aylesbury Prison. One of the major characters of *Life Class*, in turn, is the painter Elinor Brooke, who assumes the role of protagonist in *Toby's Room*, where her views on the conflict are one of Barker's major concerns. The effect of the war on male civilians is also addressed, as in the case of Barker's portrayal of both W. H. R. Rivers, who is one of the central characters in the *Regeneration* trilogy, and Henry Tonks, who, while making his first appearance in Barker's 2007 novel, becomes a major figure in *Toby's Room*. Like Woolf, Barker also extends her portrayal of the war both temporally and spatially, as in *Another World* (1998), which is set in contemporary times and whose protagonist, Geordie Lucas, is a WWI veteran haunted by wartime memories; in *Life Class*, which focuses on the period leading up to the outbreak of the conflict, as well as covering the first year of the war; and in *Toby's Room*, which

is set largely on the home front and whose two parts relate the fictional events of 1912 and 1917 respectively. Despite the fact that Barker echoes Woolf's treatment of the subject from a 'feminine' perspective, however, her engagement with the effects of the war on the men and women who remain at home, as well as on British society in general, is far more detailed and direct than that of her predecessor.

What is more, unlike Woolf, Barker does not believe that women differ fundamentally from men with respect to their propensity to violence. As Elinor Brooke points out in *Toby's Room*, Woolf's view—which is *also* expressed in *Three Guineas*—that "*women are outside the political process and therefore the war's got nothing to do with them*" is incorrect, for "*women aren't more peaceful than men*". In fact, "*the one thing this war* [WWI] *has shown conclusively is how amazingly and repulsively belligerent women are.* Some *women*" (Barker 2012a, 71; Barker's italics and emphasis). By depicting the male experience of war and emphasising women's own warlike nature, Barker is thus challenging not only Woolf's opinion that women cannot understand the male urge to fight and defend their country and are thus not only fundamentally different, but also morally and emotionally superior to men. She is also questioning the whole mainstream feminist tradition, which has emphasised those differences, seeing women as the victims and men as the oppressors. Woolf is, interestingly, in her fiction, usually above such simplistic distinctions, for Septimus is among her most tragic victims—as is Jacob Flanders—while Lady Bruton is portrayed as a staunch supporter of the British Empire who "could have led troops to attack"[22]. Woolf's depiction of this character defies her conviction that "as a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country" (Woolf 1998b, 313). Furthermore, in *The Voyage Out*, through her portrayal of the woman who cuts a chicken's head off "with an expression of vindictive energy and triumph combined" (2012, 355), Woolf demonstrates women's own aggressive tendencies. There are, in other words, contradictions between Woolf's essays and her fiction, as a result of which Barker's

[22] "For she [Lady Bruton] never spoke of England, but this isle of men, this dear, dear land, was in her blood (without reading Shakespeare), and if ever a woman could have worn the helmet and shot the arrow, could have led troops to attack, ruled with indomitable justice barbarian hordes and lain under a shield noseless in a church, or made a green grass mound on some primeval hillside, that woman was Millicent Bruton. Debarred by her sex, and some truancy too, of the logical faculty [...], she had the thought of Empire always at hand, and had acquired from her association with that armoured goddess her ramrod bearing, her robustness of demeanour, so that one could not figure her even in death parted from the earth or roaming territories over which, in some spiritual shape, the Union Jack had ceased to fly. To be not English even among the dead—no, no! Impossible!" (Woolf 1992a, 198).

challenge to her precursor's views on the relationship between gender and violence is both a confirmation and a repudiation of her work.

Barker's exploration of the strictly male experience of the trenches can also be seen as reflecting the Bloomsbury author's view that "a great mind is androgynous" and that "it transmits emotion without impediment", is "resonant and porous", even if Woolf herself did not believe that the male "part of [a woman's] brain" (1998a, 128) contained what was, in her time, an *exclusively male* experience of war. Woolf did, nevertheless, voice her conviction that women ought to portray men as they really are in order to end the rule of patriarchy. She argues that "[w]omen have served all these centuries as looking-glasses [...] reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (45) and that men have depended on women to maintain their social position and their sense of their own superiority. It is only if women begin to "tell the truth" about men that "the figure in the looking-glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished", for women—according to Woolf—have the unique advantage of noticing "the vanities" and "peculiarities" of men:

> For there is a spot the size of a shilling at the back of the head which one can never see for oneself. It is one of the good offices that sex can discharge for sex—to describe that spot the size of a shilling at the back of the head. (118)

And yet, what Woolf is here referring to is what women—not men—are capable of seeing, which is certainly not the experience of the trenches. Whether serving as mirrors reflecting the other sex, or as observers describing "the back of the head", women are seen by Woolf as distinctly different—the 'Other' to man's 'Self', or the 'Self' to man's 'Other'. Barker undermines this distinction in her fictional method, for she gets into the skin of the male soldier and follows him to the front. Furthermore, while Woolf implies that "the truth" about men is less than flattering, Barker shows many of her male characters as the victims of the patriarchal system, for the shell-shocked veterans in *Regeneration* suffer precisely because of the glaring discrepancy between the ideals of masculinity cherished by patriarchy and installed in them as boys and the profound and virtually constant sense of 'unmanly' "helplessness" (Barker 2008a, 222) and fear which is so characteristic of the reality of trench warfare. At the same time, Barker's veterans, as mentioned above, owe their existence partly to Woolf's portrayal of Septimus, who is such a victim himself.

According to Barker, "analysis of men's dependency and their lack of autonomy in that war, a study of why they suffered from hysterical symptoms rather than paranoia is a feminist analysis'" (Westman 2005, 15). As Juliet Mitchell points out, "all grand theories", including psychoanalysis, have rendered "the male psyche" "invisible" by "follow[ing] the pattern of assuming an equation between the norm and the male" and by "expelling the feminine as other or different". Consequently, "[t]he current feminist challenge to this ideology means that masculinity is emerging as an object of enquiry" (Mitchell 2003, 4). But while this may be so, it does not change the fact that the history of feminism is itself marked by a marginalisation of men and masculinity. Consequently, by rendering the male and the masculine visible, Barker is challenging the whole movement of feminist politics, theory and literary criticism, which have not only focused upon presenting women as morally and emotionally superior to the opposite sex, but have also suppressed the man and devoted most room to their exploration of the female. She is thus aligning her own work much more with the perspective adopted in gender studies than with traditional feminist concerns. According to feminist criticism, a woman writer—and particularly a writer concerned with the position of women—is generally expected to focus her attention on her own sex. By privileging male consciousness, the male experience of war and exclusively male relationships in the *Regeneration* trilogy, with its focus on the bond between soldiers, gay men and between the male therapist and the male patient respectively, Barker is thus not merely questioning the idea that a woman cannot write from a male perspective convincingly or the feminist notion of a woman writer—she is deconstructing the idea of the "woman writer" itself. What she becomes is merely a writer, though she remains, as she herself stresses, a feminist one. Last but not least, in depicting an experience unavailable to most women, she is presenting herself as an author striving to be truly androgynous, one who treats men primarily as human beings, and only secondarily as men. As Woolf states in *A Room of One's Own*, an androgynous mind is "[perhaps] less apt to make these distinctions [between the sexes] than the single-sexed mind" (Woolf 1998a, 128).

As opposed to Woolf's treatment of the subject of the First World War, Barker's work is thus marked by a detailed exploration of the latter side of the binary oppositions of woman/*man*, feminine/*masculine*, mind/*body* and the home front/*the front line*. Her unrestrained examination of this *other* side of Woolf's work brings to mind Rene Magritte's famous painting, *Not to Be Reproduced* (1937). In it, a man

stands in front of a mirror with his back to the viewer. Despite this fact, what the mirror reflects is not the man's face and front, but his back, which is, interestingly, not reversed, but reflected correctly. The painting can thus be perceived as an illustration of Woolf's idea of "that spot the size of a shilling at the back of the head" (118) which is, unusually, seen by Magritte's subject in the mirror. Similarly, the gaps in Woolf's portrayal of the Great War can be seen as signifying "that spot the size of a shilling" in Woolf's fiction. It is this spot—the other side of the binary opposition—which is fully reflected in Barker's work, as it is reflected in Magritte's mirror. As in the case of Barker's and Woolf's respective transformation of one side of a binary opposition into its opposite, Barker's intertextual engagement with her precursor's work is thus one of turning absence into presence and the implied into the explicit. At the same time, however, Barker's portrayal of the war owes much both to Woolf's fiction and essays, as well as to the fact that Woolf was one of the first female writers—and one of the first writers—not only to write about the war, but also to question its purpose and to criticise the government and the governing classes for their treatment of soldiers as canon fodder (as in the passage in *Jacob's Room* quoted on pages 133-134) or as unruly social elements in need of silencing (in *Mrs Dalloway*). Last but not least, by employing what Margaret R. Higonnet and Patrice L.-R. Higonnet refer to as "'a feminist re-vision of *time* in wartime'" (Hussey 1991, 4), or by exploring, like her precursor, the effects of the war on both the mind of the soldier and on male and female civilians, Barker resurrects that side of Woolf's work which her engagement with the physical destruction of war seeks to undermine. Her treatment of the subject of the First World War can thus be seen as a simultaneous *hommage* to and repudiation of Woolf's fiction.

SECTION THREE

"Such were some of the parts, but how bring them together?"[23]: The Literary Sibling as Dr Frankenstein in Pat Barker's *Toby's Room*

> We have done our best to piece out a meagre summary from the charred fragments that remain; but often it has been necessary to speculate, to surmise, and even to use the imagination.
> (Woolf 1993, 84)

> These fragments I have shored against my ruins (Eliot 1954, p. 57, l. 431).

BARKER AND WOOLF AS LITERARY SISTERS

As argued in the previous section, Pat Barker's intertextual relationship with Virginia Woolf is a complex interplay of imitation and subversion, *hommage* and repudiation. Such a combination of sameness and admiration on the one hand and difference and even hostility on the other is one of the indications that her engagement with Woolf's work resembles the relationship between siblings as explored in Juliet Mitchell's ground-breaking study, *Siblings: Sex and Violence* (2003). In the following section, I argue that Barker's intertextual engagement with Woolf's oeuvre may be read in the context of Mitchell's theories, which can open up the field of intertextual studies to a fresh approach and offer critics new ways of looking at literary influence.

According to Mitchell, the interplay of sameness and difference is one of the key aspects of sibling relationships. Apart from the ways in which a twin can be perceived as both a replication of the self and a distinct individual—or, in other words, a double—Mitchell draws attention to the fact that every small child expecting a sibling "imagines [the] new baby as himself reproduced" (Mitchell 2003,

[23] (Woolf 1992b, 161)

99). The experience constitutes a *trauma*, for the impending arrival of a brother or sister prompts the older sibling to question his or her own uniqueness and identity. Since the new baby is seen as a replication of the self, the subject's own self is temporarily lost, creating a void or "gap" characteristic of traumatic experience (9). The new baby is loved narcissistically and simultaneously hated for its "dethronement" (200) of the self (10). And even though Mitchell focuses her analysis on the older child, she makes it clear that the trauma of the "loss of uniqueness", which is, "at least temporarily, equivalent to annihilation", is also felt by the younger child (43), who both hates "the pre-existing older brother or sister that it will never be" (10) and "registers [the] threat to its existence from the older sibling" (47), who experiences "murderous desires" (43) towards this new version of himself/herself. Death thus becomes the mirror image of life, the other side of the same coin, for the birth of one sibling entails the "annihilation" of the other.

Mitchell stresses the curious interplay of love and hate taking place within all sibling relationships, where sameness and difference, affection and the desire to kill—which the child "experiences [...] simultaneously" (37-8)—have to be successfully negotiated.

> Into the wish to kill the one who annihilates the subject by its existence rushes the love that was also present in the anticipation of another self. One can see the *near simultaneity of murder and adoration* on the face of the toddler who 'loves the new baby to bits'. This psychic mechanism of the *'reversal into its opposite'* can also be seen in the love replacing hate as the 'life drive' flooding in to mitigate the death drive. It enables the displaced, annihilated subject to love the sibling and at the same time gradually to restore the self. (29; my emphasis)

It is only by recognising the other as not only the same, or "alike in position", but also as "different in identity" (103) that the child can accept what Mitchell refers to as the "'law of the mother'" or the law of "seriality", according to which "[t]here is room for you as well as me" (44). Before this state is achieved, however, the lost self has to be mourned (29).

Despite the universal nature of the phenomenon of sibling relationships, which affects not only brothers and sisters but also only children, and which has a profound influence, Mitchell argues, on all aspects of culture, it is the "vertical relationship of

child-to-parent" that has been "greatly privilege[d] over all else" "in all the social sciences" (x). As the blurb rightly states,

> [i]n the Western world our thought is completely dominated by a vertical model, by patterns of descent or ascent: mother or father to child, or child to parent. Yet our ideals are 'liberty, equality and fraternity' or the 'sisterhood' of feminism; our ethnic wars are the violence of 'fratricide'.

These "patterns of descent or ascent" are also demonstrated in the study of literary influence, where writers are almost uniformly fathers or mothers, sons or daughters. And while the literary "'sisterhood' of feminism" could be regarded as a "'lateraliz[ation]'" (17) of intertextual relationships, it suggests little more than a mutually-supportive relationship—either between contemporaries or between later and earlier writers—inspired by a common cause and based on sameness and love for one who is like the self and who, on account of being of the same sex, has faced or must face the same discrimination. The feminist term "literary sister", or "sister" in a more general sense, has, in other words, very little to do with actual sibling relations, for—like the Western "abstract ideals of social brotherhood" (xv) on which it is based—it emphasises sameness and love and represses hatred and difference, which are part and parcel of not only sibling relationships, but of all "human relations" (37). This is not to say that this utopian vision of intertextual relationships between literary women has not been questioned, for such important works as Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *No Man's Land* (1988-1994) and especially Betsy Erkkila's *The Wicked Sisters: Women Poets, Literary History, and Discord* (1992) reveal the rivalrous aspects of feminine literary relationships. What the use of Mitchell's study for the purpose of constructing a model of influence can do, however, is to demonstrate the simultaneity, the interplay, and (in cases such as Barker's) the closeness—in the relationships between women writers—of sameness and admiration on the one hand and difference and hatred on the other. What is more, Mitchell's theories (which were unavailable to the authors of these earlier studies of women's writing) create the possibility of constructing a new, *sibling* model of intertextual relations and of connecting intertextuality more firmly with the subject of trauma.

Mitchell herself challenges the prevailing verticality of the available theories of literary influence by stating that the literary precursor ought to be treated as a sibling

(Mitchell 2003, 17). This argument comes up in her discussion of Riccardo Steiner's essay on the creative artist's relationship to the past, "Some Notes on the 'heroic self' and the meaning and importance of its reparation for the creative process and the creative personality" (1999). Mitchell draws attention to the fact that Steiner's argument illustrates the "'lateraliz[ation]'" of the precursor, for the "predecessors" that the artist "uses [...] as internal models—though long dead and buried" (16-17)—are perceived by him as his "peers" (Steiner 1999, 705), or—in Mitchell's paraphrase—"imaginatively experienced as the same age as the subject". Mitchell also draws attention to the fact that "before Steiner's patient could use them [his precursors] as fully creative and not just rivalrous/imitative models, he had to learn to differentiate himself from these former artists". In other words, and on a par with sibling relationships, "he had to discover that they were generically the same as him (all were artists) but individually diverse". Before this differentiation occurred, he wished to "eradicate each self-same rival who threatened his uniqueness" (Mitchell 2003, 17). Significantly, Steiner also perceives the artist as someone who negotiates sameness and difference in the sense that his "heroic self" manifests itself in his or her "need" to both "identify with" (Steiner 1999, 706) or "*associate himself with*" and to "compete with and excel the heroes of his own cultural tradition" ([Steiner] 1999, 685; Steiner's italics)—an argument strongly reminiscent of T. S. Eliot's vision of the relationship between tradition and the individual poet (Eliot 1975)[24]. But whilst Steiner's model bears many traces of sibling relations, the author himself does not identify the two relationships with each other.

Mitchell's claim that the precursor can be seen as a literary sibling deserves much more attention than it has so far received from critics studying literary relationships, although the application of a lateral model of influence based on sibling relations to the study of intertextuality should not be used to replace the vertical models already in existence, but to complement them, for precursors, like parents and unlike most siblings, usually belong to a different generation. Mitchell herself states that "we need [...] a paradigm shift from the near-exclusive dominance of vertical comprehension to the *interaction of the horizontal and the vertical* in our social and in our psychological understanding" (2003, 1; my emphasis).

[24] See Chapter I of this thesis for a discussion of Eliot's vision of literary influence.

Literary precursors can thus be seen as both ancestors and contemporaries, both parents and siblings. As T. S. Eliot famously stated in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), the poet must be aware "of the pastness of the past, [and] of its presence" (1975, 38). Though the authors are, in most cases, dead (past/absent), their works physically exist in the present, manifesting, once again, how one part of a binary opposition can turn into its opposite.[25] The precursor is, on the one hand, a parent—in the sense that he/she belongs to an older generation—and, on the other, a sibling, because it is the earlier artist that was there first, before the present of the latecomer. This word, which is used by Bloom to denote the later poet (Bloom 1997), suggests a potential sibling relationship between earlier and later writers, even though Bloom's model is, in all respects, a vertical one. Rather than fighting for the love of the Muse (mother) against the precursor (father), which is what the poet does according to Bloom, the artist can thus be seen as negotiating love and hate, sameness and difference, against the sibling who preceded him or her in the mother's (Muse's) affections.

Pat Barker's intertextual relationship with Virginia Woolf is a perfect example of intertextuality as a sibling relationship not only because Barker's fiction is, as argued above, a simultaneous expression of sameness and difference, imitation and subversion, admiration and hostility, but also on account of the subject matter of their respective oeuvres. Thus, in the novels set during the First World War (*Regeneration*, *The Eye in the Door*, *The Ghost Road*, *Life Class* and *Toby's Room*), Barker depicts roughly the same historical period as that portrayed in most of Woolf's fiction. She also takes as some of her (mostly minor) characters members of the Modernist author's circle of friends. A perfect example of this is *Toby's Room*, where Woolf herself appears and which contains the historical figures of Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, his lover Richard "Bunny" Garnett, Vanessa's children, Julian and Quentin, and Ottoline Morrell. Interestingly, Barker's portrayal of Elinor Brooke (one of the central figures in *Life Class* and the protagonist of *Toby's Room*) is "loosely based" on another friend of Woolf's, Dora Carrington (Scutts 2012). The major characters of both works, including Elinor, are also students at the Slade School of Art, where—like Carrington and Vanessa—they are taught by Prof. Henry Tonks—a major figure in Barker's 2012 novel. One of the protagonists of

[25] In "A Letter to a Young Poet" (1932), Woolf states that "I do not believe in poets dying; Keats, Shelley, Byron, are alive here in this room in you and you and you" (2009b, 315).

Regeneration is, in turn, Siegfried Sassoon, whom both Woolf and Ottoline Morrell knew personally. The text also mentions both Ottoline and Bertrand Russell—another friend of the Bloomsburies. Last but not least, Rivers's friend and a character in his own right, the neurophysiologist Dr Henry Head, is Barker's fictional portrayal of the same Dr Head whom Woolf herself had consulted shortly before her suicide attempt in September 1913.

But whilst Woolf and Barker often write about the same times, their treatment of such common subjects as war, class, gender, identity, homosexuality, boundaries, trauma and loss is, in many ways, very different. As argued above, Barker explores those parts of a number of binary oppositions which are either insufficiently explored or merely latent in Woolf's fiction. At the same time, however, she also investigates the impact of the war on the mind of the soldier, on ordinary civilian men and women, as well as on society in general. This *'feminine'* perspective, her exploration of the effects of the war on *the home front* and her focus on *the mind*, are thus a confirmation of Woolf's preoccupations, for Barker might be seen as exploring *both* sides of the binary oppositions connected with Woolf's treatment of the subject. In this way, she asserts both sameness and difference, which all siblings, all writers, and all trauma victims must negotiate. In Barker's case, in fact, repudiation and *hommage* appear to be particularly *close* to each other, especially since she blurs the boundaries between the two parts of these binary pairs.

Interestingly, Barker's own idea of parents and siblings is arguably marked by a lesser degree of differentiation than that which is normally assumed among adults and children. As noted by Karin Westman, "[b]ecause of the social stigma of bearing an illegitimate child in the 1940s, Moira [Barker's mother] came to think of her daughter as a sister". Westman quotes an interview with the author, who admits that "'she [my mother] explained me away as her kid sister or niece so often that she ultimately forgot who I was'" (Westman 2005, 8). Taking all this into account, Barker's possible perception of Woolf as both a literary mother and a literary sister deserves further consideration.

ART AS THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE DEAD

The lateral aspect of Barker's intertextual relationship with Virginia Woolf is best demonstrated through a detailed analysis of *Toby's Room* (2012), which has a

distinctly Woolfian title. Released ninety years after the publication of *Jacob's Room*, it might be read as both an instance of *hommage* and an open expression of hostility towards the earlier writer. I argue that Barker's engagement with Woolf's work in this novel is concealed in her portrayal of the relationship between the artist Elinor Brooke and her brother Toby, who dies a suicidal death during the First World War. But *Toby's Room* can also be read as a powerful statement on the whole history of feminist art and the need to abandon the woman-centredness of its concerns; in other words, to introduce the male element into the picture (in both its metaphorical and literal sense). Before any of these claims can be developed further, however, it is necessary to delineate a theory of creativity which arguably lies behind this novel and which is crucial to understanding Barker's intertextual relationship with Woolf in *Toby's Room*.

In her essay on the nature of art (1952), and referring to Marcel Proust's *A La Recherche Du Temps Perdu* (1913-1927), the psychoanalyst Hanna Segal contends that:

> all creation is really a re-creation of a once loved and once whole, but now lost and ruined object, a ruined internal world and self. It is when the world within us is destroyed, when it is dead and loveless, when our loved ones are in fragments, and we ourselves in helpless despair—it is then that we must re-create our world anew, re-assemble the pieces, infuse life into dead fragments, re-create life. (1994, 491-2)

While bearing a resemblance to the Lacanian idea of language and writing as founded in absence and loss, Segal's essay is firmly based on Melanie Klein's concept of the "depressive position", in which the baby attempts to restore "the loved object" (Klein 1935, 153) whom it feels it has destroyed through its own "sadistic attacks" (149). Only once the object is seen by the baby as "a whole object both good and bad" (Segal 1994, 487), rather than as a part-object, can its ego "fully [...] realize the disaster created through its sadism and especially through its cannibalism, and [...] feel distressed about it". The young child's ego thus "become[s] aware of the state of *disintegration* to which it has reduced and is continuing to reduce its loved object", which is now "*in bits*". According to Klein, the baby experiences various kinds of anxiety associated with this new situation, such as the "anxiety how to put the bits together in the right way and at the right time" and "how to bring the object to life when it has been put together" (Klein 1935, 153; my emphasis).

The need to reconstruct the object—which is perceived as "'perfect'"—is, as Klein affirms, a "determining [factor] for all sublimations" (153). In her essay on the relationship between the child's experience of the depressive position and the subject matter of art, she discusses Karin Michaelis's article, "The Empty Space", about her friend, Ruth Kjär, who, while a naturally happy woman, would occasionally "'be plunged into the deepest melancholy'", which she would explain as the presence of "'an empty space in me, which I can never fill!'" (1929, 439-440). When a painting which hung amongst others on the wall of her house was removed, "'[s]he sank into a state of the most profound sadness'", for the "'empty space on the wall [...] seemed to coincide with the empty space within her'" (441). She decided to paint over it, producing—quite unexpectedly—a very skilled work of art. She then went on to produce more "masterly pictures" (442), nearly all of which were portraits, including one showing an elderly woman whose "'skin is wrinkled, her hair faded, her gentle, tired eyes […] troubled'" and whose "'look […] seems to say'" that her "'time is so nearly at an end!'"; and "one of her mother"—a "'*[s]lim, imperious*'" woman in the prime of life (443; Klein's italics). In Klein's view, art was for Ruth Kjär a means of restoring the mother whom the artist had destroyed, "in phantasy" (1935, 149), as a baby.[26] This restoration thus allowed her to fill the empty space inside her:

> It is obvious that the desire to make reparation, to make good the injury psychologically done to the mother and also to restore herself was at the bottom of the compelling urge to paint these portraits of her relatives. That of the old woman, on the threshold of death, seems to be the expression of the primary, sadistic desire to destroy. The daughter's wish to destroy her mother, to see her old, worn out, marred, is the cause of the need to represent her in full possession of her strength and beauty. By so doing, a daughter can allay her own anxiety and can endeavour to restore her mother and make her new through the portrait. In the analyses of children, when the representation of destructive wishes is succeeded by an expression of reactive tendencies, we constantly find that drawing and painting are used as means to make people anew. The case of Ruth Kjär shows plainly that this anxiety of the

[26] Klein points out that "[t]he little girl has a sadistic desire, originating in the early stages of the Oedipus conflict, to rob the mother's body of its contents, namely, the father's penis, faeces, children, and to destroy the mother herself. This desire gives rise to anxiety lest the mother should in her turn rob the little girl herself of the contents of her body (especially of children) and lest her body should be destroyed or mutilated. In my view, this anxiety, which I have found in the analyses of girls and women to be the deepest anxiety of all, represents the little girl's earliest danger-situation. [...] At a later stage of development the content of the dread changes from that of an attacking mother to the dread that the real, loving mother may be lost and that the girl will be left solitary and forsaken" (1929, 442).

> little girl is of great importance in the ego-development of women, and is one of the incentives to achievement. (1929, 443)

This kind of dynamic evidently underpins many feminist interpretations of literary influence—prevalent between the late 1970s and mid-1980s—in which the literary daughter is seen as resurrecting and paying homage to her foremother in her own text, and in so doing invokes in order to eliminate the more destructive aspects of the relationship as perceived by Klein. Both the creative and the destructive elements are, by contrast, present in Steiner's re-working of Klein's theory, in which he describes the artist's 'heroic self' as characterised by his or her "specific need to identify [with]", to compete with and "to surpass" his or her precursors and/or contemporaries (Steiner 1999, 706). Following both Klein and Segal, he connects creativity with the depressive position. He thus interprets his patient's adolescent wish to remove his colleagues' paintings from an exhibition, and to "destroy with his own eyes all the paintings of the famous painters exhibited" in "the Tate and other galleries", as "vengeful, envious attacks on the creative parental intercourse and the mother's body, and against the gallery containing other possible children" (699-700). As Mitchell argues, these children are "most importantly *autonomous* siblings" (2003, 17; my emphasis). Steiner, nevertheless, suggests that the creation of a work of art is not only a means of resolving internal conflicts which originate in early childhood, but also those that the artist experiences towards the work of his precursors and/or contemporaries. Art is thus an attempt to resolve the conflict of ambivalence—of wishing to merge and identify with a given artist/writer on the one hand and to annihilate his or her work on the other (Steiner 1999, 711). In this view, the role of art is reparative. In Mitchell's paraphrase of Steiner's argument, artistic creation resembles the process of working through the depressive position, although "this time" it is "not the mother", but "the heroic other" whom the artist both identifies with through projection and introjection and seeks to destroy, and whom he then "resurrects"/repairs through his own creative endeavours in order to be able to "emulate 'him'", compete with him and outshine him (Mitchell 2003, 17). If one combines Steiner's and Mitchell's theories, one can thus see how the creation of a work of art can be a simultaneous expression of identification, destruction and reparation of a literary sibling. But art can, of course, also be perceived as a reaction to the actual loss of a brother or sister, for it can be seen not only as a reconstruction

of the good object of early childhood, but of those lost in later life as well (Segal 1994, 491)—each death "reactivat[ing]", according to Klein, the "anxieties, guilt and feelings of loss and grief" associated with the depressive position and the need to restore both the earliest and the recently lost good objects internally (Klein 1994, 104). The important thing to remember is that, as emphasised by Segal, art can be seen not merely as a recreation of a lost good object, but of the whole "existing complex and organized internal world" (1994, 489) which was fragmented together with the loved object's destruction (488).[27]

Art as a process of mourning and of resurrecting what is dead from the fragments that remain—and of reconstructing a dead sibling specifically—is crucial to understanding both Pat Barker's *Toby's Room* and the work it most explicitly returns to—Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*. Interestingly, both novels reflect an attempt to cope with the death of a beloved brother, Toby/Thoby. Barker's work tells the story of Elinor Brooke, whose brother commits suicide whilst fighting in the First World War and whose grief is most successfully worked through in her paintings. In turn, Woolf's protagonist is frequently assumed to be based on Virginia Woolf's brother who died prematurely of typhoid. Like Thoby Stephen, Jacob attends Cambridge University and visits Greece shortly before his death at the age of twenty-six. And even though Jacob is killed during the conflict raging on the Continent, both deaths appear equally pointless. The connection between Thoby Stephen and Jacob Flanders is further stressed by the novel's numerous references to Greece, where Woolf's brother contracted the disease that killed him. Not only does Jacob see Florinda "turning up Greek Street upon another man's arm" (Woolf 1976, 91), but he also boasts a rather immature admiration for the country's ancient culture and philosophy. In addition, Fanny Elmer, who is in love with Jacob, acquires the strongest sense of his presence by looking at the Ulysses of the Elgin Marbles, a collection of Greek sculptures. Valerie Sanders, who mentions a few more similarities between Thoby Stephen and Woolf's hero (Sanders 2002, 165-6) argues that "Fanny's experience of the absent Jacob replicates Woolf's attempts to *reconstruct her dead brother from isolated memories of him*" (166; my emphasis). Interestingly, Jacob's enigmatic figure, which the numerous characters of Woolf's work try unsuccessfully to fathom, mirrors the structure of the whole novel, for

[27] According to Klein, "[t]he rebuilding of [the] inner world characterizes the successful work of mourning" (1994, 114).

Jacob's Room is made up of a series of relatively isolated scenes. What joins them is the unknowable main character, as well as the fact that they have been assembled and subsumed under a single title—what Hermione Lee has described as "a biography of fragments" (Lee 1977, 72).

A Frankenstein-like resurrection of the dead performed by joining separate pieces becomes even more literal in *Toby's Room*. As one reviewer has insightfully observed, "through her art, Elinor seeks to retrieve a dismembered self, embarking on the immemorial journey of Isis to collect the parts of a brother into a whole" (Davies 2012). This interpretation is reminiscent of Segal's argument, which goes back to the writings of Melanie Klein, that the "lost and ruined object" is equivalent to "a ruined internal world and self", which can be restored only by "re-creat[ing] our world anew, re-assembl[ing] the pieces, infus[ing] life into dead fragments" (Segal 1994, 492). Similarly, according to Mitchell, both after the birth and death of a sibling, the surviving brother or sister has to reconstruct the self that they had subsequently lost, for "if a brother dies or is killed in war, his sister will retard an awareness of his loss by identifying with him" (2003, 191). Both the birth and the death of a sibling are thus seen by Mitchell as equivalent to the death of the self.

The various fragments that remain of Toby, and which Elinor uses to 'reconstruct' her brother both through her art and in her own mind (which her paintings can be seen as representing), are her memories of him, his room and its contents, his spare uniform, which she re-arranges on Toby's bed to form his shape (Barker 2012a, 84), and, finally, her own appearance, which bears a striking resemblance to her brother's. Toby's fragmentation is also evident in the manner of his death. Even though he actually shoots himself in No Man's Land, the heavy bombardment that follows will have, as Kit Neville suggests, torn his body into thousands of pieces (251). Not knowing how Toby met his end, Elinor has to reconstruct his final moments. All she has to rely on, however, is her brother's enigmatic note, which he wrote her before he died, and the words murmured by Kit in his sleep. Significantly, Toby Brooke is also associated with the nameless dead man whose unclaimed body Elinor dissects as part of her training as an artist. As the corpse is gradually divided into smaller and smaller pieces, which no longer suggest the wholeness of which they were once part, Elinor becomes obsessed with finding out the man's true identity—a task as futile as that of the reader of *Jacob's Room*,

who desperately tries to acquire not only a unified picture of Jacob, but of the whole disjointed plot.

The most important part of Elinor's mourning for Toby is her art, through which she tries to commemorate and reconstruct her brother, as well as capture his essence—an effort bringing to mind Lily Briscoe's painting of Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, as well as Woolf's own portrayal of Jacob Flanders/Thoby Stephen. Like Elinor, who struggles to acquire a complete picture of her brother, for she knows very little about his private life, Lily is unable—until the very end, when she manages to "[strip] away" Mrs Ramsay's iconic beauty[28] (Waugh 2012, 40)—to truly *see* the subject of her painting.[29] What is more, the empty space on Lily's canvas can be seen as symbolising the trauma of her loss of Mrs Ramsay—that 'gap' within the subject instigated by the death of a loved one. It is thus suggestive of both the empty landscapes in Elinor's paintings and the "empty space" inside Ruth Kjär, who attempts—like Lily—to fill it:

> and so, lightly and swiftly pausing, striking, she [Lily] scored her canvas with brown running nervous lines which had no sooner settled there than they enclosed (she felt it looming out at her) a space. Down in the hollow of one wave she saw the next wave towering higher and higher above her. For what could be more formidable than that space? (Woolf 1992b, 172)[30]

ELINOR BROOKE AS A DEAD(LY) SISTER

Despite Elinor's artistic tribute to her brother, her attitude to him is highly ambivalent, as typical of early sibling relationships (Mitchell 2003, 37-8). On the one

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[28] See p. 120 above.

[29] "Was it wisdom? Was it knowledge? Was it, once more, the deceptiveness of beauty, so that all one's perceptions, half-way to truth, were tangled in a golden mesh? or did she lock up within her some secret which certainly Lily Briscoe believed people must have for the world to go on at all? Every one could not be as helter skelter, hand to mouth as she was. But if they knew, could they tell one what they knew? Sitting on the floor with her arms round Mrs Ramsay's knees, close as she could get, smiling to think that Mrs Ramsay would never know the reason of that pressure, she imagined how in the chambers of the mind and heart of the woman who was, physically, touching her, were stood, like the treasures in the tombs of kings, tablets bearing sacred inscriptions, which if one could spell them out would teach one everything, but they would never be offered openly, never made public. What art was there, known to love or cunning, by which one pressed through into those secret chambers?" (Woolf 1992b, 57).

"One wanted fifty pairs of eyes to see with, she [Lily] reflected. Fifty pairs of eyes were not enough to get round that one woman with, she thought" (214).

[30] This passage is also quoted by Hermione Lee (1977, 131), whose chapter on *To the Lighthouse* drew my attention to the importance of empty spaces in the novel.

hand, she desires to merge with him, as evident in their incestuous relationship and in Elinor's identification with Toby's stillborn twin sister. At the same time, however, the protagonist's sense of herself as a mirror-image of the dead baby illustrates her feeling of entrapment within her relationship with her brother and a related desire for freedom and independence. As Elinor's mother informs her at the beginning of the novel, Toby had a twin sister, who "had died quite late in the pregnancy, six, seven months, something like that". As he continued to grow, he squashed the other baby against the wall of the uterus, turning her into a roll of flesh, a so-called "'papyrus twin'"[31]. Elinor's mother suggests that it was his twin sister's death that prompted Toby to invent an "'imaginary friend'", who was so "'real'" that "'we had to set a place for her at the table'" (17). Significantly, this "imaginary twin" (Mitchell 2003, 39) disappeared not long after Elinor's birth. As her mother put it, "'[a]s soon as you [Elinor] could walk, you followed Toby round like a little dog. [...] And the girl vanished. *He didn't need her anymore*, you see. *He had you*'" (Barker 2012a, 18; my emphasis).

Toby's own behaviour in the novel certainly seems to imply that he sees the now grown-up Elinor as a reincarnation of his dead sister, as when she finds out that he has told his friend, Andrew Martin, that he and Elinor are twins (52). To refer to Mitchell's argument once again, following the death of a brother or sister, the surviving sibling reverts to an earlier state of identification with the dead one. In Toby's case, however, there would have been no reversion, for his sibling died so early on that he would not have been able to differentiate himself from her. In his incestuous relationship with Elinor, he appears to demonstrate both the narcissistic love and the hatred connected with the struggle for survival which are so characteristic of early sibling relationships. And while the feeling of sexual desire appears to be mutual, Toby's kiss takes Elinor by surprise and she experiences it as aggressive. It can, in fact, be seen as a reliving of the drama enacted in the womb, which the empty and dark "disused mill" (8) arguably symbolises. Interestingly, being "the forbidden place of their [Elinor and Toby's] childhood" (9), it also metaphorically represents the taboo on sibling incest[32]. Barker's language in this

[31] Elinor's mother recalls that the baby "'had turned into a kind of scroll. You know the parchment things the Romans used to write on? A bit like that, but with features, everything. You could tell it was a girl'" (Barker 2012a, 17).
[32] "They were not to go in there, Mother would say" (9).

passage deserves particular attention, indicative as it is of violence and death, which are, as Mitchell affirms, part of all sibling incest (Mitchell 2003, 81):

> He *grabbed* her arms and pulled her towards him. *Crushed* against his chest, *hardly able to breathe*, she laughed and *struggled*, taking this for the start of some childish game, but then *his lips fastened onto hers with a groping hunger* that *shocked her* into stillness. His tongue *thrust* between her lips, a strong, muscular presence. She felt his chin rough against her cheek [...] (Barker 2012a, 9; my emphasis)

And even though Elinor's surprise is soon transformed into desire, she later recalls that "[s]he'd been frightened of him" (12). Like Enid Balint's patient, who translates the trauma of sibling incest into a nightly "'anticipation of some object descending upon her from above and crashing on to her head'" (Mitchell 2003, 60), and like the character Rose in *The Years*, who dreams of the "grey, white, purplish and pock-marked" face (Woolf 2004, 33) of the man "unbuttoning his clothes" in front of her in the street (24)—"[a]n oval [...] shape" "hanging close to her as if it dangled on a bit of string" (33)—Elinor sees Toby's "face hanging over her, the glazed eyes, the groping, sea-anemone mouth" (Barker 2012a, 12-13). She notes that "he hadn't looked like Toby at all" (13), the brother "who'd always protected her" (12).

Considering the shock produced by this sudden change in her relationship with Toby, the traumatic discovery of the secret of his birth and the parallels between Elinor and the dead twin indicated by Mrs Brooke—all of which happens in the space of twenty-four hours—it is not surprising that the protagonist identifies with Toby's twin sister. What is more, even though Toby did not really kill the little girl, Elinor struggles not to blame him for her death. Following the conversation with her mother, and shortly after her brother had shot a hare, she experiences a strong feeling of identification not only with the animal that Toby had killed, but also with what is, after all, *her own* dead sister:

> Climbing the stairs to her lodgings, Elinor *felt vulnerable*; *an animal leaving a trail of blood behind in the snow*. Even with the door locked, the gas ring lit and the kettle boiling, *she still didn't feel safe*. [...]
>
> [...] The face in the mirror stared back at her *with no sign of recognition*.
>
> Suddenly, she was [...] searching for her scissors. As soon as she found them, she began hacking away at her hair. [...] *Floating between her and the glass*, *she saw the flattened, scroll-like body of the little female thing Toby had killed.* Oh, what nonsense, of course he

> hadn't killed it; he hadn't *killed* anybody. It had died, that was all, it had died, and he went on growing, as he was bound to do, taking up more and more room until there was no space left for her. (20; apart from "*killed* anybody", all the italics are mine)

Elinor's use of the word "room" is significant here, not merely because it refers to the womb, but also because it mirrors its use in Juliet Mitchell's study of sibling relationships, where it appears as a metaphor for the struggle between the newborn child and its brother or sister, who must accept what Mitchell refers to as the "'law of the mother'". This law "introduces seriality—one, two, three, four siblings, playmates, school friends . . . tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor. *There is room for you as well as me*" (Mitchell 2003, 44; my emphasis).

Interestingly, Elinor's identity is soon 'taken over' by Toby. Not only does she begin to resemble him even more after cutting her hair, but she also discovers that "[h]er signature [...], usually so sprawling and self-confident, seemed to have crumpled and folded in on itself, like a spider in the bath when the first swirl of water reaches it" (Barker 2012a, 22). And whilst Barker's use of the spider simile is quite ingenious here, the shape of Elinor's sister after her death—that of a papyrus, scroll or "'parchment'" (17)—would constitute an even more apt metaphor.

As if the above passages were not enough to make the reader identify Elinor with her dead sister, Barker literally puts her protagonist in a similar position to that of Toby's twin. When Toby is seriously ill in bed, Elinor "curl[s] up in the narrow space between his spine and the wall", the word "curl" suggesting not only an ancient folded manuscript, or papyrus, but such words as "crumpled" and "swirl", which are used by Barker in the passage quoted above.

> [...] [A]fter a while she did manage to doze off, though she was aware, all the time, of the other body beside her, kicking, turning, never still, not for a moment, *always wanting more room, more room*. Without waking, he rolled over towards her. She wriggled away, but *he seemed to be following her, pressing in on her, until her face was only a few inches from the wall*. (56; my emphasis)

Consequently, the landscapes in which Toby appears as an indistinct figure on the edge of the canvas can be seen as acts of revenge on Elinor's part for his unintended mutilation of the other baby and for "always wanting more room, more room". By pushing her brother to the edge of her paintings, Elinor leaves nearly all

of the space to herself and her dead sister. Her process of mourning, accomplished through her art, is thus not only an attempt to cope with the loss of Toby and to commemorate him, but also to save his dead twin and, by extension, herself. To paraphrase, the empty landscape can be seen as representing Elinor's and her sister's independence and freedom. It is thus a highly feminist space, a Woolfian "room of one's own" (Woolf 1998a), where Elinor can resurrect her dead predecessor—a sister who, by being *literally* thwarted by male presence, resembles Woolf's famous vision of Judith Shakespeare (63)—and where she can also fulfil her own ambitions as a person and an artist. In other words, like Harold Bloom's *ephebe*, the protagonist of *Toby's Room* is battling the dead for "imaginative space" (Bloom 1997, 5) in order to be able to realise herself, although her struggle, unlike that of Bloom's poet, has a distinctly feminist dimension. Toby's pre-natal 'crime' makes him a symbol of male oppression, especially as Elinor's sense of the sexism raging around her is particularly strong, if not excessive, as when she reflects on her aversion to the word "'*muse*'", which "*always makes me think of seedy old men groping young girls*" (Barker 2012a, 206; Barker's italics). Her desire to liberate her twin, and thus herself, is reflected in Barker's subtle reference to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's famous short story, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892). On visiting Paul in his lodgings, Elinor looks around the room and notices that "[t]he walls were covered in a dingy yellow paper with an intricate paisley pattern that would have driven her mad in a week" (175-6). Elinor is thus identified with Gilman's protagonist, a woman writer who discovers a female figure trapped within the pattern of the wallpaper as if behind bars and whose obsession to liberate her—a mirror image of herself—leads to a mental collapse until she is found ripping the paper off the walls at the end of the story.

TOBY'S ROOM AND THE HISTORY OF WOMEN'S WRITING

"The Yellow Wallpaper" is only one among many intertextual sources used by Barker in this novel, which is filled with the *fragments* of, or literary allusions to, both male and female writers. The former include such titles as Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1623), James Thomson's "The City of Dreadful Night" (1880), James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight Children* (1981), whose protagonist, Saleem Sinai, is in love with his sister. More importantly in the context of Elinor's art, the

novel also contains numerous references to various women writers and their work. On visiting Garsington, Lady Ottoline Morrell's estate, for example, Elinor mentions the so-called "Red Room" (Barker 2012a, 204), thereby establishing a tentative connection between her own novel and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847). The parallel is strengthened by an earlier scene, which occurs the day after Toby's unexpected kiss and Elinor's secret visit to his bedroom. Sitting in front of a looking glass, Elinor notes that "[t]he face in the mirror stared back at her with no sign of recognition" (20), recalling Jane's surprise at the sight of "the strange little figure [...] gazing at me" in the looking glass (Brontë 1991, 13). What is more, like Jane, who can hear strange noises on the floor above, Elinor hears the floorboards "[a]bove her head [...] [creak] as if somebody were pacing up and down in the corridor outside his [Toby's] room" (Barker 2012a, 82). Most importantly, Brontë's novel is also—like Gilman's story—about female entrapment within patriarchy—a message which is conveyed not only by Jane's temporary incarceration in the red-room, but primarily by Bertha Mason's imprisonment in the chamber on the upper storey of Thornfield Hall. The theme of entrapment is, in fact, the most powerful connection between Brontë's and Barker's respective novels. Not only does it manifest itself in the morbid tale of Toby's birth, but it is also present in the scene in which Elinor notices a moth "trapped inside the skylight" (33) shortly before she is to participate in the process of dissection.

The secret room which symbolises the crimes of patriarchy—and for which Elinor's mother's womb becomes a symbol—is also referred to, seemingly casually, when Elinor jokingly describes Paul, who had already had one other female visitor on that day, as "'Bluebeard'" (177). Most importantly, this literary allusion suggests Bluebeard's chamber, filled with the corpses of the wives he had murdered and re-worked by Angela Carter in her famous story, "The Bloody Chamber" (1979), an appropriate phrase to use in describing the tragic death of Elinor's unborn sister, for whom the womb is ultimately the grave. Through its connection with female entrapment, male violence against women and the uterus, the story of Bluebeard's last wife thus establishes another parallel between the death of Elinor's sister and the system of patriarchy.

Toby's Room contains more allusions to women's writing than the references discussed above. Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) is mentioned (Barker 2012a, 178), as are such names as Olive Schreiner (173) and Katherine Mansfield

(205). Barker's work can also be seen as returning to Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), with its theme of brother-sister incest. Elaborating on these connections is not, of course, the subject of this section, but it is worth noting the presence of these allusions in the novel, for they suggest that Barker may be trying to tell her readers something about the history of women's writing itself—a history which can be glimpsed in the landscapes painted by Elinor.

Elinor's art can certainly be seen as her struggle not only against her brother—whom she subconsciously comes to perceive as a symbol of patriarchy—but also against the prevalent ideas of the roles of women in the society of her time. Before she becomes a full-time painter, Elinor has to face her family's protest against her 'unladylike' choice of vocation, which is usually associated with creativity, eccentricity, freedom of thought and even asociality—characteristics which go against the traditional concept of femininity observed with particular strictness during the Victorian period, from which the early-twentieth-century England depicted by Barker is only just emerging. In other words, Elinor's situation resembles that of numerous female artists who have struggled, over the course of history, to free themselves from gender stereotypes and to become established painters, sculptors, writers, photographers, musicians. It was partly to overcome this hostility and partly to construct a separate, but equally valid, feminine literary tradition, that there was, during second-wave feminism, a strong emphasis on literary sisterhood. Women writers were thus frequently perceived as existing in mutually supportive literary networks and as resurrecting their forgotten literary predecessors in their work. These female precursors were given a new space in the texts of their descendants, where the subject matter of the female body, female consciousness and women's relationships with each other predominated over the authors' concern with a complex portrayal of the opposite sex. Elinor's work can be seen as illustrating these tendencies, for her paintings are arguably used by her to give her dead sister the space that she had been denied by her male contemporary, Toby. Interestingly, Elinor's mother refers to Toby's dead sibling as "a *papyrus* twin" (17; my emphasis), thus establishing a connection between literary sisters, or literary precursors, and the dead baby. It is also worth noting, in this context, that Elinor is an artist interested primarily in women—in the female, rather than the male, body.[33]

[33] "She [Elinor] knew, without being able to say how or why, that her business as an artist was with women" (Barker 2012a, 36).

THE VIOLENCE OF BARKER'S LITERARY SISTERHOOD

That female authors ought to focus their attention on depicting their own sex is advocated by Woolf—whose fiction dominates Barker's use of the history of women's writing in this novel—in that Bible of literary feminism, *A Room of One's Own*. Woolf criticises the literary output of past generations for its omission of a woman's view of her own body (Woolf 1998a, 115) and mind and their neglect of exclusively female relationships. She also complains that "all the great women of fiction were, until Jane Austen's day, not only seen by the other sex, but seen only in relation to the other sex" (107). She is, in other words, suggesting that the space occupied by men in art needs to be reclaimed by and for women and that the male point of view of a woman ought to be replaced by a female one.

But whilst Barker may appear to agree with this argument, her own fiction attests to the fact that she is against the marginalisation of men in women's literature. This is evident in such novels as the *Regeneration* trilogy, *The Man Who Wasn't There* and *Border Crossing*, where it is women who are pushed to the edges and men who constitute the centre of Barker's attention. What is more, the empty space on Elinor's canvases symbolises not only the apparent freedom and independence of the female artist—the Woolfian "room of one's own"—but also trauma, absence and loneliness. After Toby leaves Elinor's lodgings, for instance, she finds herself "staring ["for many minutes"] at the space where he'd been, feeling the empty air close around his absence" (Barker 2012a, 30). Her overwhelming sense of grief after his death is yet another proof of it.

As well as a symbol of loneliness and absence, Woolf's room of one's own is shown as a site of violence. Woolf herself sees it in two different ways. It is, thus, on the one hand, a space in which the female artist can freely think and create, although this meaning applies to it only in the sense of a physical space, away from the distractions of family life. As a space inside the mind, it is far more complex, for the woman writer has to fight against prejudice directed at her from all sides—from "the bishops and the deans, the doctors and the professors, the patriarchs and the pedagogues", who, among shouts of "warning and advice" (Woolf 1998a, 122), inform her solemnly that "'[w]omen can't paint, women can't write . . .'" (1992b, 54). Woolf's vision of a room of one's own as both a physical and a creative space aligns

it with the womb, a parallel clearly established in Elinor's paintings. As suggested above, in the case of Elinor's sister, the womb is also a death chamber. The similarities between the three are, in fact, strengthened by the words themselves, for "room", "womb" and "tomb" are near-homophones. But whilst the womb in *Toby's Room* is seen by Elinor as the site of violence inflicted by a brother on a sister, her own 'womb', creative mind or the space in her paintings which represent it is the site of female aggression against men, for it is only by reducing Toby to a "shadowy figure" (Barker 2012a, 95) on the edge of her paintings that Elinor can reclaim the space for his, and her own, dead sister. Most importantly, this feature of Elinor's work illustrates the tendency to diminish the presence of men and to focus on portraying women in feminist writing and art. Significantly, upon seeing Elinor's paintings, Paul observes that they convey "the paradox of the front line: an apparently empty landscape that is actually full of men" (96). These "men" include both the soldiers in the trenches and the corpses left in the area between enemy positions which is known as "no man's land"—an apt name for a feminist space in art and one used by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar as the title of their three-volume study of women writers, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*. The titles of the first and the third volumes, *The War of the Words* (1988) and *Letters from the Front* (1994), are equally suggestive of conflict and war. Interestingly, Elinor's art, as well as her mother's womb containing Toby and his twin sister, can be seen as representing both the war between the sexes and the First World War, with the two sides pushing against each other to acquire more territory. And whilst it is Elinor's sister who loses the battle in the womb, in Elinor's art she becomes the victor. Significantly, when Elinor hides Toby's army clothes in the attic in order to get away from their pervading smell, she feels as though she had "disposed of a corpse" (Barker 2012a, 81). Similarly, Paul reflects that "[h]er talent flourished on his death, like Isabella's pot of basil growing out of a *murdered* man's brains" (96; my emphasis). What her art represents is thus not so much the harm done to the female artist by the system of patriarchy, but the bloody chamber of feminism, filled with the 'corpses' of men.

Finally, there are a number of clues within *Toby's Room* which suggest that Toby is not a patriarch in any sense of the word. First of all, the story of his birth is far from being a tale of some pre-natal murder, since, according to Toby's mother, his twin sister had simply "died" (17). All *he* did was to grow larger, something "he

was bound to do", as Elinor reflects (20). She also remembers how he had "always protected her" (12) and was the only member of her family to support her in her decision to study at the Slade School of Art, "when her mother and Rachel had been so resolutely opposed" (43). It was, indeed, thanks to *him* that Elinor's dream of becoming an artist came true, just as it was Bluebeard's latest wife's brothers who rescued her from certain death.[34] Toby is also on Elinor's side against her family's objections to her lifestyle. When she offers to walk with him to the old mill (which is a long distance away), remarking that "'I walk all over London'", Toby responds by mocking their sister: "'Don't let Rachel hear you say that. *Rep-u-tation*!'" (7). Significantly, Elinor is also far from feeling disgust at Toby's kiss. On the contrary, after the initial shock, she "felt herself softening, flowing towards him" (10). On the evening of the same day, even though she claims she had been frightened of Toby, she goes to his bedroom, where they have sex. Why does Barker—usually so verbal about various sexual acts, including child rape (*Union Street*), whose portrayal is socially far more controversial—not depict this scene at all (apart from a couple of very brief glimpses later on)? Would such a depiction not shed some light on the earlier scene at the old mill? Would it perhaps reveal that Toby is a tender lover rather than someone who sleeps with his sister only to assert his power over her? In what is perhaps Barker's most complex novel to date, the reader thus finds this strange and unjustified omission, unless one sees it as a fault in the text, as Barker's conscious decision not to depict the scene, whose portrayal, it could be argued, would make her artistic vision fall apart at the very beginning of the novel.

As for the rather aggressive nature of Toby's kiss—or Elinor's experience of it as aggressive—she herself remarks that he could have been merely experimenting to

> find out what it was like to be close, in that way, with a girl. But then, why would he need to do that? She knew perfectly well that young men had access to sexual experiences that girls like her knew nothing about. So why would he need to experiment on her? (11)

What Elinor does not know at this point is that Toby is gay—a good reason for him to conduct such an experiment and a possible cause for the extreme awkwardness of the kiss, which Elinor perceives as aggressive. In this context, her observation that

[34] Significantly, in Angela Carter's "The Bloody Chamber", it is the protagonist's *mother*, rather than her brothers, who comes to her rescue.

"[h]e'd grabbed her the way a drowning man grabs a log" would arguably make more sense than her own explanation that it might have "seemed to him that she was moving away, leaving him" (11). Toby's homosexuality is, finally, what puts him in a position which was socially much lower than that of a woman at the beginning of the twentieth century, for while it was not against the law to be female, it was certainly illegal to be gay. Toby thus belongs to a community much more marginalised than the female sex and can be seen as a victim of patriarchy. His suicide is a means of taking his destiny into his own hands, preserving his reputation as a war hero and saving his family from humiliation, just as madness and suicide were frequently the only way for women to express their individuality and their protest against oppression.

This sympathetic portrayal of Toby, as well as Barker's defence of men, does not mean that her depiction of the other sex is entirely positive, however, for she certainly draws attention to the sexism faced by her protagonist. But whilst some of the prejudice comes from men—such as Elinor's lecturer, Dr Angus Brodie[35]—it is also voiced by women against members of their own sex. For instance, Elinor's sister, Rachel, disapproves of her living in London on her own, for she is worried that she will "get a reputation" (5). Women are, in other words, not as innocent as feminism would like them to be. Not only do they—in Barker's novel—perpetuate the gender stereotypes of the Victorians, but they also take part in war mongering. Specifically, Elinor remembers "*women in Deptford hurling bricks through the windows of 'German' shopkeepers*", as well as the white feathers handed out by girls to embarrass young men into volunteering. "*No*", she concludes, "*it's not true, women aren't more peaceful then men. It pains me to say it,*" she continues, "*but the one thing this war has shown conclusively is how amazingly and repulsively belligerent women are.* Some *women*" (71; Barker's italics and emphasis). Elinor is here referring to Woolf's views on women and war, which were, as Hermione Lee asserts, "formulated" by her during World War I, but which, in Barker's rendition, "[sound] more like the Woolf of 20 years later, in *Three Guineas*" (Lee 2012). According to the Bloomsbury author, waging war is an essentially male need, and

[35] "*At the end of the lecture, Dr Brodie offered us [his female students] a way out. Dissection was not for everybody, he said. Women, in particular, found the long hours of standing difficult. Any young lady who discovered she'd been mistaken in her aptitudes should come to him at once—there'd be no disgrace in this, mind, none whatsoever—and he'd arrange for her to transfer to a more suitable course: biology or chemistry or—his face brightened—botany.*
Ah, yes. Girls and flowers" (Barker 2012a, 32; Barker's italics).

since women neither feel the same urge nor are able to contribute to the making of political decisions in the same way as men, they ought to separate themselves from it completely, to refuse to contribute to it in any form whatsoever, "to maintain an attitude of complete indifference" (Woolf 1998b, 310). In this seemingly passive way, Woolf argues, they are actually helping to "prevent war" (314). As pointed out by Barker herself, Elinor's initial attitude to the conflict raging on the Continent is very similar (Williams 2012), prompting her to ignore the war and to isolate herself from everything that is connected with it. Thus, when Michael Stoddart, a conscientious objector, tries to elicit Elinor's reaction to the fact that he is not on the front, her reply is that

> [...] *it didn't concern me. As a woman, it didn't concern me. To be honest, I was copying something I'd heard Mrs Woolf say last night after dinner, about how women are outside the political process and therefore the war's got nothing to do with them. It sounded clever when she said it, and stupid when I repeated it.* (Barker 2012a, 71; Barker's italics)

The reason why it sounds "*stupid*" is arguably that it is merely a copy of Woolf's opinion, rather than Elinor's own. It is at this point that she recalls her own experience of women's warmongering and aggressive acts, a recollection which undermines Woolf's views on the subject. The challenge is only partial, however, for the statement that women are as belligerent as men is qualified by the addition of "Some *women*" (71; Barker's italics and emphasis). What is more, Elinor still maintains her attitude of "complete indifference" (Woolf 1998b, 310) to the conflict. When she is offered the position of Tonks's assistant at Queen's Hospital—a job which involves drawing the mutilated faces of his patients—she replies that she is "'trying not to have anything to do with the war'" "'[b]ecause it's evil. Total destruction. Of everything'". She admires the stance of the "'absolutists'" who "'[would] rather go to prison than contribute anything, anything at all, to the war'" (Barker 2012a, 141). Despite these qualms, she accepts the job, which provides her with an experience that finally liberates her from the influence of Woolf—who is, unlike Elinor and as Barker's portrayal of her implies, isolated from the horrors of the conflict and thus not really qualified to comment upon it. Elinor thus manages to form opinions which are distinctly her own, if not uninfluenced by the Modernist writer. She finally has the courage to express them during her visit to Garsington,

when Ottoline admits that she cannot understand why Sassoon would "*want to go back and look after his men*":

> *I can actually and I said so. Everybody seemed surprised. I suppose I don't normally say very much. It's a hangover from being a Sladette: look pretty, keep your mouth shut. I said I admired people like Tonks, who hates the war as much as anybody but nevertheless spends hour after hour drawing ruined faces, because it's the only thing he can do to help. And perhaps looking after a particular group of men is the only thing Sassoon can do.* (205; Barker's italics).

Significantly, Elinor's dependence on Woolf and her progress towards achieving her own views brings to mind her emotional struggle for liberation from the influence of her brother. While she is—following the scene at the old mill—completely dominated by him and resentful of his apparent desire to usurp her identity, her paintings can be seen as an attempt at regaining her own self by depicting the empty space—which is her space—on the canvas. Barker might be perceived as attempting to do the same in relation to Woolf—by questioning her precursor's political and literary views—though the highly ambivalent nature of her engagement suggests that the 'trauma' of the Bloomsbury author's influence retains its haunting power over Barker's text. She could, in other words, be seen as implying that it is time for women writers—now that they have regained their own selves by marginalising men in their work and by giving themselves a space for self-expression—to fight a battle against their literary sisters and to push *them* to the edges of their texts in order to have more room for themselves.

Consequently, although it may at first appear more natural to connect Virginia Woolf with Elinor's dead sister, whom the artist tries to resurrect in her work—a traditional feminist interpretation—I would argue that Barker's intertextual relationship with Woolf bears more similarities with Elinor's ambivalent attitude to Toby, for it represents Barker's desire to liberate herself from the Modernist writer's influence, or, in Harold Bloom's words, to "clear [some] imaginative space" (Bloom 1997, 5) for herself. Like Elinor's brother, who is placed on the very edge of her paintings, the figure of Woolf—who actually briefly appears in the novel—is present at the metaphorical 'edges' of Barker's text. Although Elinor does mention meeting the Bloomsbury author, her presence (if not her views) is overshadowed by that of Vanessa Bell and Ottoline Morrell, whom—unlike Woolf—Elinor does actually like.

Her attitude to the Modernist writer, is, by contrast, highly hostile. Having presented Woolf's views on women and war as her own, for example, she points out that Michael Stoddart "*didn't have the temerity to disagree with me. No doubt Mrs W's* [Woolf's] *views are sacrosanct*" (Barker 2012a, 72; Barker's italics), she mocks. Describing her meeting with the author upon arriving in Charleston, she also presents Woolf as a rather unpleasant woman who appears not to remember Elinor despite having met her several times. Not only does the young painter receive a "*lukewarm welcome*", but she also "*suspect[s]*" that Woolf "*[d]oesn't like young women*" (67; Barker's italics). What is more, while Elinor certainly devotes a few words of admiration to Vanessa and Ottoline, the Bloomsbury circle is generally presented as a bunch of good-for-nothing conchies out of touch with reality and fed on huge doses of daily gossip, discussing their anti-war philosophy while the naked Bell children, like a pair of savages, engage in a battle or entertain themselves by "*blowing up toads*" (69; Barker's italics).

As well as challenging Woolf's views on the war and her concept of a room of one's own, Barker questions her famous concept of androgyny, which is illustrated, in *Toby's Room*, both by Elinor's paintings and, more literally, in the coexistence of the two foetuses of both sexes—Toby's and his sister's—side by side in the womb. The womb containing the twins is, in fact, a subversive re-telling of the famous scene in Woolf's essay when the narrator illustrates her idea of androgyny by the image of a man and a woman getting into the same taxi-cab (Woolf 1998a, 125-6). As argued earlier, for Woolf, the best writers are androgynous, their minds "resonant", "porous", "naturally creative, incandescent and undivided", the two sexes coexisting in the mind, if not in the same proportions—for "in the man's brain the man predominates over the woman" and vice versa—then in "harmony" (128) and "peace" (136). Barker shows Woolf's ideal of androgyny as a utopia, suggesting—through the symbol of Elinor's paintings as well as the story of Toby's birth, which Elinor interprets as a site of battle between the sexes—that the male and female elements cannot, as Woolf would wish, be reconciled.

TOBY'S ROOM AS *HOMMAGE* THROUGH RECONSTRUCTION

Like Elinor's brother, who is pushed to the edge of her paintings, Woolf is thus presented as a dangerous presence capable of annihilating her younger literary

sibling. But just as Elinor's art is a simultaneous representation of her struggle for expression outside Toby's influence and a tribute and reconstruction of her brother, so is Barker's novel a powerful *hommage* to Woolf. This is most evident in its title, for the phrase encapsulates not only Woolf's biography (in its reference to Thoby Stephen), but also the Bloomsbury writer's third work of fiction. There are, in fact, numerous parallels between Jacob Flanders and Toby Brooke. Both die at virtually the same age (Toby is twenty-seven, Jacob—twenty-six) whilst fighting in the First World War and neither is ultimately knowable to the people who come into contact with him. Both are, in this way—as well as a result of their deaths—defined primarily by their absence. Barker's own description of *Toby's Room* is perhaps the best illustration of the connection between the two characters, for she calls her latest work the "story of a man who, actually, in the novel, hardly appears". She also draws attention to the fact that "the reader gets to know him, basically, through the minds of the other characters" (Barker 2012b). Toby's skin is also frequently described as "glow[ing]" (2012a, 57; 263), "gleaming" (162) or "*glitter*[*ing*]" (14; 250, Barker's italics), a fact which connects him with Woolf's protagonist:

> After six days of salt wind, rain, and sun, Jacob Flanders had put on a dinner jacket. [...] Even so his neck, wrists, and face were exposed without cover, and his whole person, whether exposed or not, *tingled and glowed* so as to make even black cloth an imperfect screen. (Woolf 1976, 54; my emphasis)

Toby is, nevertheless, much more than a reincarnation of both Jacob Flanders and Virginia Woolf's dead brother, for Barker's description of her novel quoted in the previous paragraph can also be applied to Woolf's portrayal of Percival in *The Waves*. Like Toby Brooke and Jacob, Percival dies at a young age and is seen by the reader "through the minds" and memories "of the other characters", for he himself "hardly appears" in the text. But while it could be argued that the primary reason for the relation between Barker's protagonist and Percival is the fact that Percival resembles not only Jacob, but also Thoby Stephen (Sanders 2002, 166), Barker establishes other parallels, through which Toby Brooke can be connected primarily with the absent hero of Woolf's 1931 novel. While Toby is a fearless army captain who often risks the lives of other soldiers, as well as his own, to bring in dead bodies and find identity discs, Percival is perceived by Bernard as "a hero" who is not only

admired, but also unsuccessfully imitated, inspiring the other boys to "assume the sober and confident air of soldiers in the presence of their captain" (Woolf 1992c, 92). Not only does his "magnificence" resemble that of "some medieval commander", but Louis also describes himself and Percival's other friends as "trooping after him [...] to be shot like sheep, for he will certainly attempt some forlorn enterprise and die in battle" (26). What is more, while Percival dies by falling off his horse, Toby is known amongst his men for his love of horse-riding, which ultimately contributes to his undoing, for it is in the stables that Kit discovers the truth of Toby's sexual orientation. Last but not least, the news of both Toby Brooke's and Percival's death arrive in the form of a telegram.

Toby Brooke echoes one more Woolfian figure—Septimus Smith—who also fights in the First World War. Both men are victimised and driven to suicide by a society which castigates what it perceives as effeminacy in men, whether in the form of Toby's homosexuality or Septimus's 'unmanly' nervous breakdown in the face of the horrors he experienced in the trenches. The suffering of Woolf's and Barker's respective protagonists, coupled with their symbolic resurrection by their female counterparts—Elinor through her art and Mrs Dalloway during her party—make them into Christ-like figures. Toby is, in fact, explicitly compared with Christ, as when Elinor sees his ghost—her brother come back from the dead—and remarks that "his arms [were] outstretched in a parody of crucifixion" (Barker 2012a, 263). Even Septimus's dead friend, Evans, is recalled in Barker's novel, for one of its very minor characters—a soldier who, like Woolf's Evans, dies in the war—bears his name.

Apart from Toby Brooke, who, like one of Sir Francis Galton's composite portraits, unites various aspects of Thoby Stephen, Jacob Flanders, Percival and Septimus (as well as the historical figure of Rupert Brooke), the character who can be perceived as made up of a variety of fragments of other literary and historical figures is Toby's sister. She can be seen not only, to some extent, as Barker's alter ego—an artist using her work to pay tribute to but simultaneously undermine a dead sibling—but also as a combination of three Bloomsbury figures: Virginia Woolf, her sister Vanessa Bell and Dora Carrington. Finally, Elinor's name is arguably an echo of Eleanor Pargiter, Woolf's protagonist in *The Years*, a novel which is full of siblings and sibling relationships, particularly those between brothers and sisters. The most intense of these is the relationship between Eleanor's younger sister, Rose, and her brother Martin, whose frequent quarrels resemble those often found between

lovers. It could, in fact, be argued that the relationship is of a romantic, if not a sexual, nature, although Woolf never states this explicitly. When, many years later, Martin and Rose recall a particular "'row'", which was "'one of the worst'" and one of "'so many'", Eleanor senses that "[t]here was something queer about the memory", for Rose "spoke with a curious intensity" (Woolf 2004, 136). The row was so emotionally charged, in fact, that Rose had "'dashed into the bathroom'" with a knife "'and cut this gash'—she held out her wrist" (137). By portraying the incestuous relationship between Elinor and Toby, Barker can thus be seen as, once again, filling in the gaps in Woolf's fiction. Both the Pargiters and the Brookes hoard a number of secrets (such as Colonel Pargiter's and Mr Brooke's respective love affairs), whose presence can be felt by other family members as "a shadow underneath the water" (Barker 2012a, 6), as when Eleanor tries to make Rose reveal the horror that has made her cry out at night. And while her sister never tells her about the man "unbuttoning his clothes" (Woolf 2004, 24) in front of her in the street, Eleanor is convinced that "[s]omething was being hidden from her" (35).

There is, finally, one scene at the beginning of *Toby's Room* which can be seen as a re-writing of a similar passage in *The Years*, although Woolf's protagonist is by this time (1911) more than thirty years older than Elinor Brooke:

> After dinner, she [Elinor Brooke] suggested cards. [...] So the table was set up, partners chosen [...]
>
> [...] [at] ten o'clock [...] she was able to plead the remains of a headache and retire early to bed.
>
> Once in her room, she threw the window wide open, but didn't switch on the lamp. No point inviting moths into the room, though she didn't dislike them, and certainly wasn't terrified of them as Rachel was. She thought she looked a bit like a moth herself, fluttering to and fro in front of the mirror as she undressed and brushed her hair. It was too hot for a nightdress; she needed to feel cool, clean sheets against her skin. Only they didn't stay cool.
>
> [...] Downstairs, a door opened. [...] Footsteps: coming slowly and heavily, or quickly and lightly, up the stairs. The floorboards grumbled under the pressure of so many feet. (Barker 2012a, 12-13).

> She [Eleanor Pargiter] went into her room and undressed. All the windows were open and she heard the trees rustling in the garden. It was so hot still that she lay in her night-gown on top of the bed with only the sheet over her. The candle burnt its little pear-shaped flame on the table by her side. She lay listening vaguely to the trees in the garden; and watched the shadow of a moth that dashed round and round the room. Either I must get up

> and shut the window or blow out the candle, she thought drowsily. She did not want to do either. She wanted to lie still. It was a relief to lie in the semi-darkness after the talk, after the cards. She could still see the cards falling [...]
>
> [...] A board creaked in the passage outside. She listened. Peggy, was it, escaping to join her brother? She felt sure there was some scheme on foot. (Woolf 2004, 183-4)

Interestingly, the above excerpt once again suggests possible sibling incest and conveys the theme of mystery which pervades Woolf's novel. In *Toby's Room*, Elinor actually 'becomes' Peggy, for she slips out of her room and (on her way to Toby's bedroom, where the two have sex) "tiptoe[s] along the corridor, avoiding the places where she knew the floorboards creaked". As she does so, she remembers that "[s]he'd made this groping journey so often in the past: the unimaginably distant past when she and Toby had been friends as well as brother and sister" (Barker 2012a, 13).

As well as a few of Woolf's characters and themes, Barker's novel borrows a significant number of images from the Modernist writer's work. Most prevalent in *Toby's Room* are symbolic representations of life and death, such as (respectively) light and dark, hot and cold, rising and falling, up and down, all of which recur throughout Woolf's oeuvre. As suggested in Section One, rising and falling—and thus life and death—function as mirror images in *Mrs Dalloway* (Miller 1982, 53). This is also the case in *Toby's Room*, where the words "rising" and "falling" are used repeatedly and where the characters can frequently be seen going up and down staircases, echoing both Clarissa's daily climb to her attic bedroom and the elderly man "[c]oming down the staircase opposite" the Smiths' window seconds before Septimus's suicide (Woolf 1992a, 164). Life and death are also connected in *Toby's Room* through the appearance of bluebottles and butterflies feeding on animal droppings (Barker 2012a, 8; 67), as well as birds devouring a discarded chicken carcass (59). This theme is, significantly, explored in *Jacob's Room*, where butterflies feed on animal flesh (Woolf 1976, 22). Both Barker and Woolf can thus be seen as presenting waste, or death, as a source of life in very literal terms. A butterfly—something beautiful—survives by consuming that which is dead. This could, on the one hand, symbolise Elinor's mourning for her brother, which involves

her introjection of his qualities into both herself[36] and her painting, as well as the fact that Toby's death feeds, or inspires, her art. To quote Paul's observation once again, "[h]er talent flourished on his death, like Isabella's pot of basil growing out of a murdered man's brains" (Barker 2012a, 96). That death and life cannot be separated is also evident in Barker's vision of the womb, which is the site of creation and birth on the one hand and violence and death on the other.

Another image closely connected with both life and death in Woolf's work is that of the window, which denotes, in *Mrs Dalloway*, both Septimus's suicide and Clarissa's ecstatic "plunge" into the Bourton air (Woolf 1992a, 3) at the beginning of the novel. But windows are also, in Woolf, a means of escape from different forms of entrapment. They can thus be perceived as symbols of freedom and flight, for Septimus's final act of throwing himself "on to Mrs. Filmer's area railings" (164) is a means of escaping the rigid moulds into which both Bradshaw and Holmes seek to force his individuality. Significantly, the central characters of *Toby's Room* look out of windows and open them frequently, as do the characters of *The Years*, who use them to 'escape' from the oppressiveness of their family circumstances, as when Delia goes up to the bedroom of her dying mother:

> When she came to the bedroom door [...], she paused. The sour-sweet smell of illness slightly sickened her. She could not force herself to go in. Through the little window at the end of the passage she could see flamingo-coloured curls of cloud lying on a pale-blue sky. After the dusk of the drawing-room, her eyes dazzled. She seemed fixed there for a moment by the light. Then on the floor above she heard children's voices—Martin and Rose quarrelling. (2004, 16-17)

The window is also, of course, a powerful symbol in *To the Lighthouse*, where it constitutes a conceptual frame for Lily's portrait of Mrs Ramsay, symbolising a form of entrapment through art. Like her painting, through which Lily seeks to *capture* the essence of her subject, Elinor Brooke's art conveys her own attempt to define her brother, or to 'imprison' him both inside the frame and in her mind. Her inability to fully know him is evident in the fact that he is almost always presented as an indistinct figure, sometimes as what appears as "no more than an accidental

[36] Ruminating on the subject of grief and recalling the ancient practice of sons "*eat*[ing] *their* [dead] *father's liver*", Elinor remarks that she feels as though "*I'm turning into Toby*. […] *As if you cope with loss by ingesting the dead person*" (Barker 2012a, 206; Barker's italics).

confluence of light and shade", while his positioning on the edge of the canvass—"as if he might be about to step outside the frame" (Barker 2012a, 95-6)—conveys his own resistance to be known.

One more reminder of death which connects Barker's novel with Woolf's oeuvre is that of the clocks that tick throughout *Toby's Room*. Significantly, they recall not only the church bell representing the voice of the dead Seabrook and heard by Mrs Flanders in *Jacob's Room* (Woolf 1976, 14), but also the clocks striking the hour in *The Years*, and the chiming Big Ben in *Mrs Dalloway*, intoning "[f]irst a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable" (1992a, 4).

As the above parallels make clear, *Toby's Room* is much more than an engagement with Woolf's third work of fiction. It is, rather, a compilation of references to the most important works of Woolf's fictional and critical oeuvre, many (though not all) of which have been enumerated above. To re-iterate, Barker explores, extends and challenges Woolf's idea of a room of one's own delineated in her 1929 essay. She also questions Woolf's vision of the androgynous mind, as well as her views—expressed in *Three Guineas*—on women's essentially peaceful nature. Toby is, as argued above, a composite figure made up of the 'fragments' of various 'bodies' in Woolf's fiction—Jacob, Septimus and Percival. Elinor, in turn, resembles not only Dora Carrington, Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell and Barker herself, but also Eleanor Pargiter and Lily Briscoe. Both Barker's heroine and Lily have an ambivalent relationship with their subjects, use their art to cope with grief and struggle to complete their portraits. In addition, Barker employs a number of Woolfian images, such as windows, mirrors, clocks, staircases, rising and falling, up and down, light and dark, hot and cold, as well as the theme of mystery and sibling incest which can arguably be found in *The Years* (and, in the case of the former, also in *Jacob's Room*). Finally, *Toby's Room* contains Woolf herself, no matter how overshadowed she appears to be by the other members of the Bloomsbury Group who appear on the pages of Elinor's diary.

In other words, like the protagonist of *Toby's Room*, whose paintings are an attempt to re-assemble the fragments of her dead brother, as well as herself, Barker appears to be putting together the various pieces of Woolf's *body of work*—her criticism, fiction and biography—in an attempt to resurrect her precursor, to "infuse life into dead fragments" (Segal 1994, 492), as much as to try and arrive at the essence of her subject. It is in this sense that Barker's attempt to reconstruct a dead

sibling recalls Elinor's obsession with finding out the identity of the corpse in whose dissection she participates. In order for the man's body to be analysed in detail, it has to be dismembered, its fragments scrutinised in isolation. Elinor remarks that "[t]he need to name him, to understand how and why he'd come to this, grew in her with each stage of his disintegration" (Barker 2012a, 45). But while Elinor does make the attempt to find out the man's name, she is forced to abandon her quest with less knowledge of his identity than she possessed when the body was still whole. This thread in the story is thus reminiscent of Mitchell's observation that "we murder to dissect" (2003, 120)—a treatment to which writers' oeuvres are also typically subjected, for in order to analyse a particular novel, as well as a writer's whole body of work, it is necessary to divide it into parts: characters, themes, symbols, influences and the like. Literary critics, writers and readers all commit this violation, dismembering the text in the process of reading, re-writing and literary analysis. As both Elinor's story and Woolf's *Jacob's Room* demonstrate, those who attempt to return to the whole are doomed to fail. This is evident in Elinor's only portrait of Toby, in which his face fills the whole canvas and which does not quite "work". Instead, Elinor finds that she has "slipped into self-portraiture" (Barker 2012a, 261), recalling the remark of the narrator of *Jacob's Room*, who states that "[n]obody sees anyone as he is [...] They see a whole—they see all sorts of things—*they see themselves*. . . ." (Woolf 1976, 28; my emphasis).

The "whole" perceived by others being an artificial construction, the only successful paintings of Elinor's brother are those in which the wound—representing not just his absence but also Elinor's incomplete knowledge of who he was—is acknowledged, and where he himself is but a shadowy figure placed in the corner of the painting. This does not mean that his position in these landscapes is not simultaneously 'central', however, for the figure influences the mood of the whole picture. More importantly, the "wound" or "gap" depicted in these works as an empty landscape is not only a representation of trauma, but of Toby himself. Woolf's presence in *Toby's Room* is similar, for however numerous are Barker's references to the Bloomsbury writer's work, many of them are so subtle that they could easily be missed were it not for the explicitly Woolfian title of the novel, as well as for the Bloomsbury author's brief appearance in Elinor's diary. These indistinct echoes do, nevertheless, strengthen the sense of Woolf's presence throughout *Toby's Room*. Furthermore, like Woolf's third work, where the apparently isolated characters are

joined together by their connection to Jacob Flanders, Barker presents the disparate elements of Woolf's life and work as fragments connected by the figure of the Modernist writer, as well as by their presence within, and relevance to, Barker's novel. The fragments remain merely fragments, however, for a full reconstruction, or resurrection, of the dead is impossible. Rather than trying to present a whole, which would constitute, at best, a partial self-portrait, Barker arguably settles for the acknowledgement of absence, which is the best way of conveying the essence, or presence, of her literary sibling. By merely putting the pieces side by side—an act which echoes Elinor's arrangement of her brother's clothes in the shape of his body (Barker 2012a, 84)—the contemporary author commemorates her precursor, showing that her work is not merely a funeral dirge for a brave young man who died in the war, but also an elegy for an admired and hated, enigmatic and elusive literary sister.

To conclude, Barker's engagement with Virginia Woolf's fiction and essays parallels the relationship between Elinor on the one hand and Toby, her dead sister and the dissected corpse, on the other. All three have to be re-assembled by Elinor, who, in the process, reconstructs her own self. Nevertheless, Barker's engagement with Woolf's work in *Toby's Room* resembles Elinor's relationship with Toby and the dissected corpse with whom he is identified much more than her connection to her sister. Like Elinor's art, Barker's novel is an expression of its author's ambivalent relationship with a dead sibling, for not only does it pay tribute to Woolf, but it can also be seen as demonstrating Barker's desire to liberate herself from the Bloomsbury writer's influence, the empty space, or gap, at the centre of Elinor's paintings arguably representing its traumatic quality. The relationship thus resembles an unresolved sibling conflict, where the literary sibling is both narcissistically loved and hated. Like Elinor, whose paintings express her desire for freedom, the author of *Regeneration* attempts to "clear [some] imaginative space" (Bloom 1997, 5) for herself, to make some 'room' (some room for *Toby's Room*) in which she can exist, by challenging a few of Woolf's most influential views. *Toby's Room* is thus the product of Barker's combined admiration and hostility towards Woolf's oeuvre—an ambivalent *hommage* in which Barker positions herself not as Woolf's descendant but as a literary sibling. The title of Barker's 2012 work is perhaps the best illustration of this complex intertextual relationship, for not only is it a combination of fragments of *Jacob's Room*, *A Room of One's Own* and Woolf's biography, but it also encapsulates both sameness and difference. This is evident in the name of the

title character, for "Toby" both is and is not "T*h*oby" Stephen, Jacob Flanders, Septimus Smith and Percival, just like Barker's novel *both is and is not* Woolfian.

CHAPTER IV

From a Haunted House to a Home of Her Own: Hilary Mantel's Ingestions of Muriel Spark's Fiction

"What we cannot hold, we cannot process. What we cannot process, we cannot transform. What we cannot transform haunts us" (Bobrow 2011).

"'You'll never gain strength if you don't eat'" (Mantel 2010a, 52).

"It is through the act of eating that the ego establishes its own domain, distinguishing its inside from its outside. But it is also in this act that the frontiers of subjectivity are most precarious. Food, like language, is originally vested in the other, and traces of that otherness remain in every mouthful that one speaks—or chews. From the beginning one eats for the other, from the other, with the other: and for this reason eating comes to represent the prototype of all transactions with the other, and food the prototype of every object of exchange. [...] Because every mouthful testifies to the seduction and annihilation of the other, it is impossible to eat alone. But it is equally impossible to starve alone, since self-starvation also importunes the other, if only to defy its alimentary dominion" (Ellmann 1993, 53).

SECTION ONE

Trauma, Falling and the Weight of Reference

Despite Hilary Mantel's refusal to acknowledge the influence of Muriel Spark's fiction on her own writing, literary critics and reviewers have repeatedly emphasised her indebtedness to her precursor's oeuvre. And while the numerous differences between Mantel's and Spark's respective novels, including their distinct literary style, problematise an unqualified identification of Mantel as Spark's literary heiress, there is no doubt that both Mantel and Spark combine, in their work, comedy and wit on the one hand with eschatological questions and a study of the nature of evil on the other. Mantel's novels, such as *Beyond Black* (2005), *Every Day is Mother's Day* (1985), *Vacant Possession* (1986) and *Fludd* (1989), are also concerned with the subject of the afterlife and ghosts, combining the supernatural with the mundane in a manner recalling Spark's fiction. The following chapter focuses on two of Mantel's Sparkian texts, *An Experiment in Love* (1995), which is a direct engagement with *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963), and *Beyond Black*, which returns to such works as *The Comforters* (1957), *The Driver's Seat* (1970) and *The Hothouse by the East River* (1973). The perspective to be developed here is that while *Experiment* demonstrates Mantel's resistance to incorporating Spark's work into her own novel—an 'externalisation' which results in a 'traumatically' literal repetition of Spark's fiction and which is reflected in Mantel's interviews, where she refuses to consider her precursor's work as integral to her own—*Beyond Black* represents the very opposite, for it is in this text that Mantel has arguably engaged with Spark's oeuvre in more figurative terms. The chapter traces this development, relating it to contemporary trauma theory, Maud Ellmann's study of anorexia, and Mantel's portrayal of the central characters of these two novels.

TRAUMA, (ANTI-)MIMESIS AND THE WEIGHTLESSNESS OF REFERENTIAL RESISTANCE

Taking into consideration the theories of PTSD which have emerged since its official recognition by the American Psychiatric Association (1980), Cathy Caruth concludes that

> the pathology [of PTSD] cannot be defined either by the event itself—which may or may not be catastrophic, and may not traumatize everyone equally—nor can it be defined in terms of a *distortion* of the event, achieving its haunting power as a result of distorting personal significances attached to it. The pathology consists, rather, solely in the *structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event. (Caruth 1995a, 4-5; Caruth's emphasis)

As well as emphasising the belated impact of traumatic experience, Caruth stresses its literality, for the recurring nightmare of the survivor of trauma is "purely and inexplicably, the *literal* return of the event against the will of the one it inhabits" (5; my emphasis). She draws attention to the fact that "modern analysts [...] have remarked on the surprising *literality* and nonsymbolic nature of traumatic dreams and flashbacks, which resist cure to the extent that they remain, precisely, literal". The victim of trauma is thus haunted by "an overwhelming occurrence that [...] remains, in its insistent return, absolutely *true* to the event". The survivor becomes thus possessed (in the sense of being both haunted and controlled) by their own history, which they themselves "cannot entirely possess" (5; Caruth's emphasis). In other words, like other theorists, such as Freud (2003, 54) and Herman (2001, 33), Caruth stresses the issue of power at the heart of psychological trauma.

What the following chapter seeks to demonstrate is the distinction between a *literal*, or what I shall, after Caruth, call *traumatic*, engagement with a precursor's fiction on the one hand and its opposite—a *non-traumatic* or *figurative* re-writing of the earlier writer's work. Rather than supporting the questionable view that traumatic symptoms are necessarily a "*literal*" and "*veridical*"[1] re-enactment of the trauma,[2] however, I shall attempt to demonstrate that a figurative engagement with a precursor's work, as opposed to a literal repetition of it, might be seen to constitute a reconciliatory manoeuvre allowing successful resolution of the issue of sameness and

[1] (Leys 2000, 229; Leys's emphasis)
[2] The disputable nature of Caruth's views on the literality of traumatic symptoms is discussed in more detail in Chapter I (pp. 47-48).

difference, or mimesis and anti-mimesis. As pointed out in Chapter I, this is posited as the goal which the trauma survivor strives to attain as evidenced in the majority of contemporary therapeutic approaches (Herman 2001; Briere and Scott 2015) by re-living, integrating and transforming his or her memory of the experience—*whether literal or already distorted*. Significantly, the incorporation of the event—into language, narrative and, in cases of dissociative amnesia, into consciousness as well—can be seen as a metaphorical gaining in 'weight', a restoration of the connection between language and its referent. Analysing Paul de Man's essay, "The Resistance to Theory" (1982), Caruth points out that it reveals the concept of reference as "inextricably bound up", "in the history of thought", "with the fact of literal falling" (Caruth 1996, 75), although her discussion of reference as falling and "referential weight" (81) focuses on a post-structuralist vision of language, according to which it fails to refer to the world, rather than on the frequent lack of the signifier mediating the traumatic referent in the mind of the trauma victim, who usually avoids discussing, or referring to the incident. Returning to Newton's "revolutionary notion, introduced in [...] *Principia*, that objects fall toward each other", she emphasises that, with his discovery of gravitational force, "the world of motion became, quite literally, a world of falling" (75-76). She also stresses, in Freud's discussion of "the accident, or *Unfall*" as an example of a traumatic event in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), his use of "other forms of *fallen*, 'to fall'". Pointing out these instances in brackets, she quotes the following passage from his work:

> 'As an afterthought it must strike us *[es muss uns auffallen]* that—in spite of the fundamental difference between the two cases *[Fälle]*, the problem of the traumatic neurosis and that of Jewish monotheism—there is a correspondence in one point. It is the feature that one might term *latency*. There are the best grounds for thinking that in the history of the Jewish religion there is a long period, after the breaking away *[Abfall]* from the Moses religion, during which no trace is to be found of the monotheistic idea.' (Caruth's emphasis)

Commenting on this excerpt, Caruth argues that "[b]etween the *Unfall*, the accident, and the 'striking' of the insight, its *auffallen*, is the force of a fall, a falling that is transmitted precisely in the unconscious act of leaving" (22), by which Caruth means the act of leaving the site of the accident, or the original traumatic event. Caruth's discussion points, in other words, to a connection between trauma, falling and

reference—*a term which I associate with the survivor's incorporation of (aspects of or the whole of) the traumatic event into consciousness, language, narrative and his or her own personal life story.*

The relation between trauma, reference and falling is evident not only in the fact that the trauma victim, in his or her deliberate avoidance of traumatic triggers and frequent refusal to discuss the traumatic experience, is reluctant to *incorporate* the traumatic memory into language, as well as into an ongoing narrative of his or her life, and to transform it and re-transform it through the use of words, but also on a purely linguistic level, since both "falling" and "reference" imply a combination of distance and impact, and those precisely in that order. One of the primary meanings of "reference"—that of a "'direction to a book or passage'"—is recorded from as early as the early seventeenth century (Harper n.d.). What is interesting about the wording of this particular definition is that "direction" and "to" clearly connect the notion of reference with a certain distance between two objects. Similarly, the verb "to refer", in the sense of referring someone to something or somebody else, is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as the act of *"[d]irect[ing]* the attention of someone to" an object or person.[3] The process of *referring to* something can thus be seen as, on the one hand, the act of traversing the distance separating two objects and, on the other, as the distance, or difference, that always separates a word from its referent. In naming an object, the speaker simultaneously destroys it, for the arbitrary signifier attached to the signified necessarily distorts its essence, which is, consequently, unknowable (or—as post-structuralists would have it—non-existent). The notion of reference is thus connected with the concept of falling also in its implication of impact, which suggests damage or destruction. As pointed out in Chapter I, the trauma victim tends to oscillate between a withdrawal of the trauma (which ranges from his or her avoidance of thoughts and stimuli associated with the event to partial or complete post-traumatic amnesia) and its return (in the form of flashbacks and nightmares) (Luckhurst 2008, 1). This continuously frustrated negotiation between *immediacy and distance* might thus be seen as not only a kind of incessantly replayed fort!-da!, in which the victim struggles to regain the control and power absent from his or her experience of the original traumatic event, but also as his or her attempt at *establishing reference*, which reconciles these two contrasting attitudes. Last but not

[3] "Refer." *Oxford Dictionaries*, 2014. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/refer. Accessed Feb 2, 2014.

least, the notion of reference can be related to the concept of time, with pastness representing distance and presence standing for immediacy. Consequently, *reference* might be seen as related to the trauma victim's attempt to convert a past event repeatedly re-experienced in the present into one firmly belonging to the past via the process of integration and transformation.

The notion of reference—*in the sense described above*—might thus be viewed as particularly useful in discussing the relationships between literary texts. The same is true of the image of falling, not least because of the numerous meanings of the word "fall" (whether on its own or in combination with other words), many of which illustrate the frequently ambivalent nature of intertextual relationships. If Bloom's agon is thus seen as a kind of 'falling out' between the poet and the precursor, the ephebe's first encounter with great poetry is also, as Bloom stresses, "a kind of *falling* in love with a literary work" (Bloom 1997, xxiii; my emphasis). The word "fall" is, in addition, commonly associated with a reduction in status—something Bloom's poet dreads and, if he is not strong enough, inevitably experiences. What makes the image of falling even more appropriate for discussing intertextuality as a form of trauma is also its direct relation to the perception of traumatic experience in Western culture, based on the traumatic event of the Biblical Fall of Man and the helpless repetition of original sin by the descendants of Adam and Eve. Bloom himself discusses the concept of the Biblical Fall, as well as the fall of Satan in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1674), seeing the poet as falling from the precursor-God and "creat[ing] Hell" "by his impact" (21). But whilst Bloom's notion of a poetic fall can be seen as the latecomer's move away from the precursor—or as the establishment of distance—it could also be argued that it denotes immediacy, for it is, as Bloom suggests, not enough for the later poet to simply fall from his "Poetic Father", for in order not to repeat the earlier poet's work, the ephebe also has to "swerve" (42), or to change direction at a certain point. Bloom's rendition of the Miltonian fall is thus related not so much to the concept of non-traumatic reference as to the notion of traumatic repetition—an oscillation between immediacy and distance, or imitation and originality, which can be reconciled only through the act of swerving, which thus arguably becomes synonymous with non-traumatic reference.[4] Since it is impossible for the ephebe to escape the influence of the precursor, who has been repressed into

[4] Swerving, or *clinamen* is, of course, merely the first of Bloom's six revisionary ratios.

the id (71), his or her work has to be transformed by the later poet if originality is to be achieved. The poet can thus be seen as fighting against traumatic literality, or the "intact[ness]" (141) of the precursor's work in his or her own. The fact that he or she uses language when he or she repeats the earlier poem is, of course, an indication that this literality cannot be completely literal, not only because the poet's own interpretation of the precursor text is—as in the case of each reader—idiosyncratic, but primarily as a result of the fact that the words he or she will use in the process of repeating will (in the majority of cases) be different from those used by the earlier writer. The autobiographical, political, social and cultural contexts in which the precursor's and the latecomer's respective works were composed will also play a defining role here. Rather than resembling the trauma survivor in Caruth's sense, then, the writer appears to have more in common with the survivor's repeated possession by his or her own personally-, culturally- and socially-conditioned cognitive and emotional distortions of the traumatic event, as indicated by Briere and Scott (2015). Transformation (in the writer's case) can be achieved in a variety of ways, not least because even the same words used in different historical and cultural conditions will invariably fail to retain exactly the same meaning across generations and cultures. Depending on this factor, as well as on the way the precursor's work is employed in the later text, even a direct quotation may turn out to be a transformation.

Using the concept of traumatic literality, the following chapter identifies it with Hilary Mantel's non-figurative repetition of Muriel Spark's work. The notion of "literality", although strongly connected with trauma theory, is thus used in its strictly literary meaning. The importance of this term in intertextual relationships is evident in Bloom's *A Map of Misreading* (1975). Summarising one of its major arguments in his preface to the second edition (2003), Bloom contrasts "ironic repetition" with non-repetitive modes of engagement. Responding, like Caruth, to the work of Paul de Man, for whom "irony (which he defined as the permanent parabasis of meaning) was not just a trope, but was the condition of literary language itself", he states his "counter-argument", according to which "poems cannot get started without irony, yet cannot abide there" (xiii). Referring to *Lycidas*, he asks if it is, "despite Milton's ambitions, an ironic repetition of the pastoral elegy of Theocritus, Moschus, Vergil, Sannazaro, and Spenser? *Or is it a cascade of newness—*[*synecdochal*]*, metonymic, hyperbolic, metaphoric, metaleptic?*" (xiv; my emphasis). What this

excerpt suggests is that, for Bloom, originality is equivalent to a *figurative* engagement with a precursor's work, which is thus the opposite of what could be termed a *literal*, or non-figurative, repetition of the earlier poem. Since *ironic* repetition, despite repeating the earlier text, is also a mode of figuration, Bloom includes it in his "map of misreading", seeing irony as the "rhetorical trope" for the revisionary ratio of *clinamen*, which he connects with the Freudian defence of reaction-formation (84). Even though the argument presented below differs—in many ways—from Bloom's highly complex application of his intertextual map, where the above tropes are inextricably connected with psychological defence mechanisms as discussed by Sigmund Freud and later Anna Freud, and with Bloom's own revisionary ratios delineated in *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), it can be related to Bloom's vision of poetry through its claim that a figurative engagement with a predecessor's work results in the production of *new* work (a freedom which cannot be complete). At the same time, unlike Bloom's view of influence, where the modes of figuration and the Freudian psychological defences become tropes for the poet's intertextual relationship with the precursor, the following chapter discusses literality and figuration in strictly linguistic and thematic terms, as either literal repetition of an aspect of the predecessor's work or as its transformation into a mode of figuration. Consequently, the argument presented below is much more accessible to the reader than Bloom's complex theorisings.

The later writer's figurative engagement with a precursor text is associated not only with originality, but also with counter-traumatic incorporation and—consequently—"referential weight" (Caruth 1996, 81). These concepts are related, in Section Two, to Hilary Mantel's use of the motif of anorexia in *An Experiment in Love*, and, in Section Three, with her successful incorporation, or non-traumatic integration, of Spark's fiction into *Beyond Black*. What follows can thus be seen as a "*wilful*"[5] 'traumatic' misreading of Bloom's model of influence and its application to the study of Mantel's engagement with Muriel Spark's oeuvre. Significantly, the chapter perceives traumatic repetition as the failure to resolve the contrary movements of imitation and repudiation, sameness and difference, which need to be successfully negotiated if the later writer is to achieve a non-traumatic relationship with the precursor. Figuration is seen as one of the main ways—though by no means

[5] (Bloom 1997, 30; Bloom's emphasis)

the only one—of reconciling these two opposing tendencies and of achieving, in this way, a nourishing intertextual relationship with one's predecessor.

ANOREXIA AS RESISTANCE TO REFERENTIAL WEIGHT

In her study of anorexia and hunger strikes, *The Hunger Artists: Starving, Writing, and Imprisonment* (1993), Maud Ellmann draws attention to the trope of eating as one of the central images of Western culture. Referring to the theories of such key figures as Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx, she stresses the fact that the consumption of food constitutes "the origin of subjectivity", since "it is by ingesting the external world that the subject establishes his body as his own, distinguishing its inside from its outside" (Ellmann 1993, 30). What is more, in Melanie Klein's work, the mother's breast and the milk ingested by the infant represent "love, goodness and security" "in the infant's mind". It is these that "are felt by the baby to be lost [...] as a result of his own uncontrollable greedy and destructive phantasies and impulses against his mother's breasts". They are thus subsequently "mourned" by the infant as he or she goes through the so-called *depressive position* (Klein 1994, 96), whose outcome determines his or her psychological development. As Heinz Kohut's theories, in turn, demonstrate, it is the "traumatic delays" in the mother's response to her baby's needs—including the need for nourishment—that are the first indicator of the existence of a gap separating the self from the other (Kohut 1986, 63). The infant's dependence on its mother's milk is also a powerful indicator of the inability to function in complete isolation from other people. The ingestion of food is thus the origin of—and the first metaphor for—the distinction between the internal and the external, the self and the other. As a result, it is inextricably connected with the question of identity. It thus comes as little surprise that, as pointed out by Ellmann in her discussion of Freud's essay, "Negation" (1925), "[t]he notion of interiority is bound up from the beginning with ingestion, and the notion of exteriority with anorexia; that is, with the sentiment that 'I should like to keep that out of me'" (Ellmann 1993, 40). Taking all this into consideration, anorexia can be seen as an attempt to preserve the essence of the self, to deny and expel the influence of the other, even as—in its physical manifestations—it is simultaneously an affirmation of the fact that the "reality [...] of the object can never be annulled because it occupies the very core of what we call the self" (33). Echoing

Simone Weil, whose work she refers to throughout her study, Ellmann asserts that "*self-inflicted* hunger is a struggle to release the body from all contexts, even from the context of embodiment itself. It de-historicizes, de-socializes, and even de-genders the body" (14; Ellmann's emphasis). "To starve" is thus—as Ellmann reiterates after Weil—"to renounce the past", to shed "the weight of that which was", "to void the body of its stored anteriority" (10). Referring to the work of Helmut Thoma and Karl Abraham, Ellmann points out that anorexia has also been seen as a defence against the ego's own destructive and cannibalistic impulses (42), for to eat—or incorporate—the object is not only to assimilate it, but also to destroy it in the process, just as the signifier both contains (or purports/attempts to contain) and destroys the signified.[6] Consequently—through its relation to weight and weightlessness, assimilation and destruction, immediacy and distance, the internal and the external—incorporation is arguably connected with the subjects of reference and trauma, and, by implication, with both literature and literary influence.

Ellmann herself draws attention to the relation between writing and starving. Not only does she stress the presence of such phrases in the English language as "to devour books" and "to read voraciously" (47), but she also points out both the physical bulk of the available research on anorexia and the inversely proportional relationship between eating and literary composition. Drawing on the two distinct examples of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747-48) and the Long Kesh hunger strike (1981), she remarks that

> the less they [the strikers] ate, the more they seemed to write. Like Clarissa, their starvation generated a peculiarly prolix and rapacious literature, where words rushed in to fill the emptiness that food might occupy. That this literature assumed an epistolary form in both *Clarissa* and the Long Kesh hunger strike is not surprising, insofar as food is the first letter one receives, the first comm [communication] to be inserted in one's body by the other. (83)

Food is, as Ellmann asserts, "the prototype of *all exchanges with the other*, be they *verbal*, financial or erotic" (112; my emphasis). And if the verbal exchanges between the self and the other ultimately originate in the process of eating, then the concept of intertextual relations is, in itself, bound up with the notion of ingestion. Its echoes can be seen in Bloom's model of the anxiety of influence, where he mentions

[6] Ellmann points out that "the physical enclosure of the body corresponds to the semantic enclosure of the word" (Ellmann 1993, 89).

"Milton's positive capability for *ingesting* his precursors" (Bloom 1997, 34; my emphasis), the term implying incorporation and destruction. He also discusses "*askesis*" (a term used by Ellmann to refer to the anorexic's "quest for bodilessness")[7] as "a movement of self-purgation which intends the attainment of a state of solitude" (15) and "*kenosis*", in which

> [t]he later poet, apparently *emptying himself* of his own afflatus, his imaginative godhood, seems to humble himself as though he were ceasing to be a poet, but this ebbing is so performed in relation to a precursor's poem-of-ebbing that the precursor is *emptied out* also [...]. (14-15; my emphasis)

If eating is thus the most primary and powerful trope for all human exchange, as well as the more general exchange between the subject and the external world, then it is arguably a highly appropriate way of talking about literary influence,[8] especially if the writer under discussion is as preoccupied with the subject of flesh as Hilary Mantel. Ellmann's summary of Aldous Huxley's "The Farcical History of Richard Greenow" (1920) constitutes, in fact, an explicit identification of self-starvation with the writer's resistance to influence:

> the eponymous hero finds himself possessed by the spirit of a sentimental lady novelist called Pearl Bellair, who scribbles endless twaddle with his helpless hand while Greenow *goes on hunger strike in order to protest against her occupation of his consciousness* (1993, 27; my emphasis)

I will argue that Mantel's intertextual relationship with Muriel Spark might be seen as a dialogue between self-starvation or traumatic literality on the one hand and incorporation or the restoration of referential weight—achieved largely through her figurative engagement with Spark's work—on the other. The connection between trauma and self-starvation is, in fact, evident throughout Ellmann's study, where she discusses the conviction, shared by a large number of feminists of the time, that in the 1980s and 1990s anorexia "has [...] replaced hysteria"—a disorder with an

[7] (Ellmann 1993, 15)
[8] The appropriateness of the subject of the ingestion of food for analysing intertextual relations is perhaps best demonstrated in the passage from Ellmann quoted in the epigraph to this chapter.

arguably traumatic background, as Janet and Freud had discovered[9]—"as the illness that expresses women's rage against the circumscription of their lives" (Ellmann 1993, 2). Interestingly, Ellmann also points out the connection between nourishment and the notion of original sin—the fundamentally traumatic event of the Biblical Fall of Man. She thus argues that "[t]he locus classicus of the analogy [between eating and cognition] is Genesis, where man's first disobedience—or rather woman's—was to eat the apple of the tree of knowledge" (29). Last but not least, Ellmann's use of language echoes the oldest definition of psychological trauma, which relies on the root meaning of the term and which sees the initial traumatic experience as a *wound* inflicted on the psyche: "*All eating is force-feeding*: and it is through the wound of feeding that the other is instated at the very center of the self" (36; Ellmann's emphasis).

[9] (Herman 2001, 12)

SECTION TWO

"'We haven't the class for Girls of Slender Means'"[10]: The Mantel-Spark Hybrids of *An Experiment in Love*

INTERTEXTUAL 'ANOREXIA', OR HILARY MANTEL ON MURIEL SPARK

As the first British writer to receive the Booker Prize twice, Hilary Mantel's status as one of the most significant contemporary authors in the UK appears beyond question. But while her name has been, if only for the past few years, widely associated with bulky historical novels, namely *Wolf Hall* (2009) and *Bring Up the Bodies* (2012), the style and subject matter of much of her earlier fiction is frequently described, more or less directly, as Sparkian. In his 2005 article on Mantel in *The Guardian*, James Campbell remarks that "[e]ach time Mantel publishes a novel, the critical reception toasts her debt to Muriel Spark" (Campbell 2005). Even when reviewers do not explicitly associate Mantel's narratives with Spark's fiction, they describe her work in the same, or similar, terms as those frequently applied to Spark's own. A *New Statesman* review, quoted on the back cover of *An Experiment in Love*, thus notes the "'imperturbable aplomb'" and "'crisp [...] irony'" of Mantel's oeuvre, as well as her "'sardonic ear for dialogue'". Referring to the same novel, Helen Dunmore hails its author as "'a wonderfully unsurprised dissector of human motivation'" and describes *Experiment* as "'seamed with crackling wit'". According to Anita Brookner, in turn, the book's "'examination of female alliances'" is "'cool, unsentimental, and unassumingly authoritative'" (Mantel 2010a), its author's apparent lack of sympathy for her characters reminiscent of Spark's own reserved attitude to such figures as the suicidal Lise in *The Driver's Seat*, the elderly murder victim, Dame Lettie Colston, in *Memento Mori* (1959), and the three characters in *Not to Disturb* (1971)—the Baron, the Baroness and Victor Passerat—whose anticipated death forms the centre of the

[10] (Mantel 2010a, 18)

plot.[11] What is more, *Beyond Black* is described as "'[s]parkling, sinister and supremely original'" (*Sunday Telegraph*), "'[l]aceratingly observant, a masterpiece of wit [...] glorious, insolent and slyly funny'" (*Independent*), "'[w]ickedly funny and often unsettling'", "'[s]trikingly intelligent and original'" (*Literary Review*) and "'[s]avage, startlingly subversive and raucously funny'" (*TLS*) (Mantel 2010b).[12] These Sparkian features are also present in Mantel's first novel, *Every Day is Mother's Day*, and its sequel, *Vacant Possession*, whose central character—called, perhaps tellingly, Muriel—is a sinister presence dominated by her mentally unstable mother in the first part of the story and a psychopathic schemer of many disguises plotting revenge in the second. Like Patrick Seton in *The Bachelors* (1960), Evelyn Axon is, in fact, a spiritualist medium. Mantel's third novel, *Fludd*, is also indebted to Spark's work, for it explores the Sparkian conceit (most evident in *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*[13], but also present in such works as *Memento Mori* and *The Girls of Slender Means*) of the stranger entering and transforming a small, self-contained community.[14]

Despite these numerous similarities between Spark's and Mantel's respective fictions, Mantel herself resists recognising Spark (at least officially) as an influence. Commenting on the fact that the name of the protagonist in Mantel's first novel, *Every Day is Mother's Day*, is Muriel, an interviewer asked Mantel if it signified her "nodding towards your influences", something that "young writers often do". Laughingly, Mantel replied that

> [y]ou know, I never thought of that. I think the discussion of Muriel Spark's influence on me was started off by Auberon Waugh in the first review of my first book. By the time I wrote *An Experiment in Love* I thought I'd have some fun with the Spark comparison [...]. But it never occurred to me that I was influenced by Muriel Spark. Even to this day I haven't read many of her books. We work in the same territory but *she wasn't a particular influence*. (Mantel 2009; my emphasis)

[11] In an article for *The New York Times*, Charles McGrath points out that "[i]n her fiction Spark loved to play God, loftily manipulating her characters' fates, and she was less the benign and loving God of traditional Catholic theology than Calvin's cruel jokester, who would allow you to think you were saved only to surprise you at the end" (2010).
[12] All of the above reviews are quoted in the 2010 Fourth Estate editions of *An Experiment in Love* (Mantel 2010a) and *Beyond Black* (Mantel 2010b) respectively.
[13] First published in 1960.
[14] This conceit is partly reversed in *The Girls of Slender Means*, where the outsider, Nicholas Farringdon, is transformed by the all-female community at the May of Teck Club.

Like many writers who want to be seen as merely themselves, Mantel pleads ignorance ("it never occurred to me that I was influenced by Muriel Spark" and "[e]ven to this day I haven't read many of her books") and uses the argument of coincidence ("[w]e work in the same territory") to salvage the remains of uniqueness. So curious is, in fact, the assumption that her work is influenced by Muriel Spark that she must try it herself and invite the earlier writer into her own text—Mantel's seventh novel, *An Experiment in Love*. The fact that Mantel consciously and deliberately extends such an invitation suggests that she perceives Spark's work as *external* to her fiction, something that *requires* incorporation. The title of Mantel's novel can thus be seen as not merely referring to the lives led by the young female students at Tonbridge Hall, but also to its author's own experiment in 'loving' her precursor. Like a chemist, Mantel thus consciously applies a Sparkian element to her fiction, suggesting, in this way (as her interview attests), that the inclusion is an artificial one. The result is not only explosive, but it is also—to a certain extent—a demonstration of traumatic repetition or intertextual literality. Even though Mantel can be seen, in this novel, as having de-repressed Spark, as having consciously incorporated and narrativised her precursor, *An Experiment in Love* is, in many ways, a 'traumatic' re-enactment of *The Girls of Slender Means*. It is, it could be argued, marked by Mantel's resistance to reference—in the sense of a successful reconciliation of immediacy and distance, or sameness and difference, and a figurative, as opposed to literal, engagement with her precursor's work. Mantel's unsuccessful incorporation of Spark's fiction in this novel is thus arguably represented in the relationship between the anorexic protagonist and her opposite and double, Karina. Just as it is Carmel's search for her own identity, so it is Mantel's quest for her own, unique, literary selfhood. Before these points are elaborated on in more detail, however, it is necessary to sketch out the complexities of Carmel's relationship with Mantel's anti-heroine.

EXTERNALISING THE INTERNAL: CARMEL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH KARINA IN *AN EXPERIMENT IN LOVE*

Karina's physical enormity can be accounted for not only by the quantity of food that she swallows throughout the novel, but also by the amount of meaning crammed by Mantel into her corpulent anti-heroine. Looming over Carmel's life, she is a

powerful symbol of a variety of 'burdens' which Carmel desires to free herself from, but which can, paradoxically, be shed only by recognising her deep affinity with her childhood enemy. Before this recognition occurs, however, Carmel unsuccessfully tries to expel those parts of herself which Karina represents and which the protagonist is reluctant to perceive as constitutive of her own identity and personality. Since her desire is to resemble the slim, fashionable and liberal-minded middle-class girls of the new generation (the novel is largely set in 1970, as well as going back to Carmel's childhood and adolescence in the 1950s and 1960s), she does not welcome the constant reminders of her northern, working-class, Catholic background which Karina appears to embody.[15] The latter's roots somewhere in Central-Eastern Europe do not help either, for they arguably remind Carmel of her own foreignness both within the largely middle-class world of Tonbridge Hall and within the working classes, where she no longer belongs. Most importantly, however, Karina is a reminder of Carmel's rejection by her own mother, who sets her up as a model for Carmel to imitate. Recalling the sound of Karina's "deriding voice", Carmel notes that "it was also, somehow, my mother's" (Mantel 2010a, 182). As emphasised by Margaret Atwood, "Karina is the protegee and voice of the mothers, especially Carmel's mother: angry, self-righteous, annihilating" (Atwood 1996). It is thus, it could be argued, partly in order to repudiate her past—in the form of her northern, working-class, Catholic background and the influence of her mother—and to establish her own, independent self that Mantel's protagonist refuses to eat,[16] decreasing in size as the novel progresses. As Hilary Mantel points out in an article for *LRB* on the subject of anorexia, the disorder "is a way of shrinking back, of reserving, *preserving the self*, fighting free of sexual and emotional entanglements. It says, like Christ, 'noli me tangere'. Touch me not and take yourself off". It is thus a desperate attempt to preserve boundaries and to differentiate between the self and the other, a way of "nourish[ing] the inner being while starving the outer being" (Mantel 2004; my emphasis). By refusing to incorporate the other (or what is perceived as other) into the self, and by rejecting the "weight" of what went before (Ellmann 1993, 10), the anorexic is thus symbolically repudiating reference, just like Carmel's starvation of her body can be seen as her attempt not to see herself—and not to be

[15] Whilst still at the Holy Redeemer, Carmel admits that "[a]s I became more acceptable to Julianne and her friends, I grew away from Karina" (Mantel 2010a, 146).
[16] There are a number of reasons for Carmel's self-starvation, including, most obviously, her lack of money.

seen—in relation to her background and her cultural, religious and emotional past. That her desire for social progression—suggested, among other ways, by Carmel's recitation of poetry in order to improve her diction—is one of the reasons for her rejection of food is made clear by the protagonist's account of breakfasts at Tonbridge Hall:

> I came down to breakfast every day, and tried to get it inside me. [...] I felt the Sophies[17] were watching me; the toast was palatable, but I dared not take more. I longed to eat it with my bacon, as a northerner always would, but I did not dare that either; if I did not come up to scratch, I felt obscurely, I might be sent back home, my education at an end, and have to get some menial job. (Mantel 2010a, 40)

Despite Carmel's disgust with Karina's eating habits—her constant munching emphasised throughout the novel—Mantel clearly presents her two central characters as alter egos, the affinity transcending their working-class, Catholic roots and demonstrating itself, among others, in the homophonic equivalence of the first syllable of their respective first names. Carmel's name itself indicates her double nature, for while it is an obvious reference to the Roman Catholic order of Carmelites,[18] it is also suggestive of caramel. Starving herself of food, Mantel's protagonist is thus willing to honour only the former part of the implication of "Carmel", suppressing the needs of her body, which Karina so aptly symbolises, just like Bertha Mason (as Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar have famously argued[19]) represents Jane Eyre's own anger. An anecdote discussed by Ellmann may, in fact, shed some light on Carmel's true nature:

> an anorectic woman once informed me that self-starvation was a 'quest for immorality'. She meant 'immor*t*ality,' of course, and yet the slip reveals the strange affinity between askesis and excess: the quest for bodilessness—'immortality'—masks a darker quest for bodiliness—'immorality'—and for the most ecstatic surrender to the flesh. (Ellmann 1993, 15; Ellmann's emphasis)

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[17] "The Sophies" is Carmel's name for Tonbridge Hall's posh residents, many of whom had reached university via boarding school.

[18] As Atwood points out, Carmel's name is also a direct allusion to "the name of the mountain where the prophet Elijah slaughtered the priests of Baal" (Atwood 1996).

[19] Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. 2000. "A Dialogue of Self and Soul: Plain Jane's Progress." In *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, 336-371. 2nd ed. First published 1979.

That Karina's insatiable appetite is an expression of Carmel's own suppressed rapacity (already hinted at in the above quotation from the novel) is evident, among other ways, in the protagonist's memory of lunches at the house of her boyfriend, Niall. She remembers

> [l]emon meringue pie: the Everest peaks pale beige and studiedly crisp, the meringue beneath a soft lather of whipped sweetness. Then, even more triumphant, there was Baked Alaska: the oven now so hot that blue wisps seemed to issue from its every orifice, and when the door was opened, [...] I would wrap a tea-towel around my hands like a surgeon dons his gloves, and I'd go in, and I'd fetch it out . . . speed was of the essence then, so that we could sink our teeth together, our family teeth, into the hot sweet froth on top and the oily frozen block of vanilla ice beneath. (Mantel 2010a, 158)

Interestingly, in her description of the retrieval of the cake, Carmel uses language reminiscent of childbirth and suggestive of the popular, though by now rather old-fashioned, phrase "a bun in the oven". Consequently, it can be argued that Carmel's rejection of food represents her repudiation of her femininity, a tendency which—according to Mantel—is shared by her fellow female students, who, like her, have been educated on a male model while secretly harbouring specifically female needs, such as the wish to have a baby.[20] "We did not speak of it", Carmel asserts, "but each corridor of Tonbridge Hall seethed with fertility-panic", the girls' fear of being pregnant actually representing "[their] desires, [their] ambivalence" (165). It is, appropriately, Karina who can be seen as 'fulfilling' this wish on Carmel's part, for it turns out that her increasing size, which is accompanied by Carmel's progressive invisibility, is due to pregnancy. Karina is thus, like Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre* (1847) (one of the novel's primary literary sources), both an expression of Carmel's needs and of their sources of fulfilment, as when she cleverly assures both her and Carmel's successful admittance to the highly devout Holy Redeemer by selecting (in

[20] "When men decided women could be educated—this is what I [Carmel] think—they educated them on a male plan; they put them into schools with mottoes and school songs and muddy team games, they made them wear collars and ties. It was a way to concede the right to learning, yet remain safe; the products of the system would always be inferior to the original model. Women were forced to imitate men, and bound not to succeed at it. And this is what we were, when we grew up at the Holy Redeemer; not so much little nuns, but little chappies, little chappies with breasts. [...] They [the girls] forfeited today for the promise of tomorrow, but the promise wasn't fulfilled; they were reduced to middle-sexes, neuters, without the powers of men or the duties of women. Our schools kept from us, for as long as they could, the dangerous, disruptive, upsetting knowledge of our own female nature" (Mantel 2010a, 164-5).

her essay) the Pope as "'The Person I Would Most Like to Meet'" (110),[21] and when she saves Lynette's fox fur from the fire at the expense of murdering its owner. As Carmel has blatantly stated upon meeting Lynette, "'I would kill for this coat'" (57). And while it is more than likely that she would never act upon this statement, her imagination seethes with acts of violence which point to a hidden rage, as when she is offered some unasked-for relationship advice by her doctor. Using the recurring phrase, "wine-dark sea", from Homer's *The Iliad*[22] and *The Odyssey*[23], and alluding to Joyce's transformation of it in *Ulysses* (1922)[24], she relates how

> I imagined myself leaning forward [...] and taking hold of a handful of the woman's denatured hair; then leaning back, firm and leisurely, until a part of her scalp was in my hand and her desk was awash and her notes were bobbing in a sea of blood. The wine-dark sea. (Mantel 2010a, 79).

According to Maud Ellmann, "the anorectic turns her anger into hunger" (Ellmann 1993, 2), a kind of linguistic twist employed by Mantel, who arguably performs it, in her novel, in relation to Jane Eyre's rebellious tendencies.

Just as Carmel transforms her anger into hunger, so she also turns her hunger into an appetite for words. Ellmann points out that the anorexic frequently displays a gluttonous relationship to language (70). Carmel is no different, for not only does she send Niall exceptionally wordy letters (which she describes as "too *fat* for normal envelopes to contain"[25]), but she also 'feeds'—day and night—upon the letter of the law. Describing the beginning of her studies, she admits that "I *tore into* the work set for me, I *rent it* and *devoured it* and I *ate it all up every scrap*" (Mantel 2010a, 45; my emphasis). Having replaced food with books and the promise of intellectual and social betterment, Carmel thus resembles her mother, who is "vicariously hungry for her daughter's fulfilment" (Birch 1995). Relating her return from school one day, for instance, Carmel recalls "an anxious, *greedy* edge to her [mother's] voice" as she asks her daughter to compare her aptitude at sums with Karina's (Mantel 2010a, 86; my emphasis). Significantly, Margaret Atwood points out that, by starving, Carmel also

[21] Even though she feels "anger" and "disgust" at Karina's action, Carmel admits that "Karina's piece of hypocrisy spread its great black wings over me, and wafted me towards my future, protected by its stretching shadow. She had vouched for me, in a perverse way" (110).
[22] Homer. 1991. *The Iliad*. Translated by Robert Fagles. Penguin Classics. London: Penguin.
[23] Homer. 2003. *The Odyssey*. Translated by E. V. Rieu. Penguin Classics. London: Penguin.
[24] "The snotgreen sea. The scrotum-tightening sea" (Joyce 2010, 5).
[25] (Mantel 2010a, 77; my emphasis)

replicates the insufficiency of parental affection on the part of her mother, as well as the scarcity of "actual nourishment" in her family home (Atwood 1996). Finally, the need that Carmel feels to shed a few extra inches of flesh before she feels ready to wear the sweater she has knitted—and of which "[m]y mother would be proud" (Mantel 2010a, 218)—is further indication that her desire to please her parent is one of the major causes of her anorexia.

As the above analysis indicates, Carmel's rejection of food is a simultaneous imitation and repudiation of her mother. The latter is accomplished not only through Carmel's rejection of Karina, but also by the symbolic act of cutting her hair, "which, via the torturing use of curl rags, has been one of the instruments of maternal control" (Atwood 1996). The complexity of Carmel's relationship with her mother is also evident in the heroine's fantasy of weightlessness—a "dream of disembodiment" (Ellmann 1993, 15) which is most explicitly revealed upon her daily returns from the meagre dinners served at Tonbridge Hall:

> When I returned to my desk after dinner, [...] my foot would ruck up the cotton rug on the polished floor, and I would imagine sliding lightly on my back across the room and through the wall, floating out, *weightless*, over Bloomsbury. (Mantel 2010a, 69; my emphasis)

This dream of floating free of the burdens of the past is arguably related to Mrs McBain's academic and social ambitions for her daughter, whom she desires to

> build my own mountain, build a step-by-step success: the kind doesn't matter as long as it was high and it shone. And as she told me that it is ruthless people who rise highest in this life, I would slash through the ropes of anyone who tried to climb after me; I would prize out their pitons, and jump about on the summit alone. (135)

By what can be seen as her desperate attempt to defy the law of gravity, Carmel is thus not only trying to fulfil her mother's dream of rising above other people, but also rebelling against it, since—if she were truly weightless—there would be no need for her to construct a "step-by-step success" from which to look down upon others. Weightlessness also appears, significantly, to be a state where to fall—or fail—becomes impossible. In short, Carmel's predicament, which is also the cause of her anorexia, is arguably her inability to reconcile sameness and difference, imitation and rejection, mimesis and anti-mimesis. This inability is, significantly, related not only

to her relationship with her mother, but also to her attitude to her Catholic roots, which she repudiates by having pre-marital sex and using the contraceptive pill and simultaneously imitates by depriving herself of food, her condition replicating the Christian ideology of self-deprivation and self-sacrifice (Atwood 1996) and confirming the justice of the outrage felt by Mother Benedict upon discovering that Carmel has been seen eating in public (Mantel 2010a, 143-4).

As well as representing the complexity of her attitude to her mother, the dream of defying gravity and Carmel's need to starve herself are related to the notion of guilt, which plays a powerful part in Roman Catholic doctrine. Her relationship with Karina is, from the beginning, marred by Carmel's remorse for what she describes—in highly Kleinian terms—as destroying Karina's '"baby"' (93). This "baby" is a doll in a toy truck, kicked out of its lorry by four-year-old Carmel's disobedient foot, which gives vent to her anger at the "stupid[ity]" of Karina's game. Having observed her doll land "on the classroom floor, down on its bald pink head. Dead", "fat tears" roll down Karina's cheeks, "scorching" (33), and thus indelibly marking, Carmel's hand and conscience. Referring to this incident, Carmel remarks that "[m]y tie to Karina had to do with restitution. I had done her a wrong, an injury" (31). Carmel's progressive starving, which is—coincidentally as it turns out—accompanied by Karina's own increasing dimensions, can thus be interpreted as a Kleinian attempt at reparation, especially as the depressive position, in Klein's theory, concerns the relationship between the greedy, voracious infant and its mother, the depository of milk. At one point in the novel, Carmel actually remarks that '"[t]here's something about Karina that makes me damage her"' (200). But just as the greedy infant comes to fear the attacks of the objects ingested from the mother (Klein 1935, 145; 1997, 34), so Carmel's refusal to ingest food—which is symbolic of Karina herself—can be seen as her attempt to keep the bad, vengeful object out of herself. Considering this, it is hardly surprising that Carmel's intense feelings of hatred for and fear of Karina subside upon her discovery (at the very end of the novel) of her enemy's pregnancy, this symbolic restoration of the 'baby' Carmel had destroyed arguably enabling the latter to forgive herself and to recognise—like Freud's neurotic patients and the victims of trauma—the past as past. Through the connection Mantel establishes with Klein's theories, Karina might thus be seen as not merely a kind of wicked sister, whom Carmel seeks to replace in her mother's affections, but also as the mother herself, especially since she appears to embody the expectations and ambitions of

Mrs McBain. Karina is thus, on the one hand, the hated sibling at whose hands, as Juliet Mitchell affirms, destruction is feared (Mitchell 2003, 47), and, on the other, a threatening maternal presence. It is, in other words, in the figure of Karina that the horizontal and the vertical come together.

As the ending of the novel indicates, it is only by recognising the other as part of the self, or by incorporating the 'external', that a resolution between sameness and difference, imitation and repudiation, can be achieved. It is not surprising that Carmel's anorexia disappears soon after the tragic fire at Tonbridge Hall, for it is only at the scene of Lynette's death that she is arguably able to acknowledge the voracious, violent and feminine side of herself which Karina represents. She thus begins to perceive that what she has externalised, or seen as alien and external to herself, has been inside all along. The sudden feeling of love and connection—resembling the love that overcomes hatred in successful sibling relationships and that enables the sibling to reconcile sameness and difference (Mitchell 2003, 29)—is perhaps most evident shortly after Carmel's escape from the burning building, when she feels "a breath at my shoulder. I felt it. *It was familiar*. *I wanted to hug the breather*. 'Karina,' I said. 'Thank God'" (Mantel 2010a, 244; my emphasis). She also observes that "[m]y voice was choked and frail, far away; *I hardly recognized it as mine*" (245; my emphasis), the word "choked" suggesting not only the smoke from the fire, but also an act of incorporation. Realising that Karina has probably murdered Lynette in order to acquire the fox fur, Carmel nevertheless decides to protect her by conspiring in the concealment of her pregnancy (246). Her newly-found desire to re-incorporate those parts of herself which Karina symbolises is, nevertheless, still counter-balanced by her reluctance to do so, for even though she "seize[s]" Karina's outstretched hand without hesitation, she subsequently struggles in her grasp as they leave the scene of the tragedy. Once they stop running, Carmel throws up and *falls*, her head landing not on "the pigeon droppings", but into Karina's palm (247-8). While the act of "retch[ing]" (which "produc[es]", significantly, "only stained saliva") (247) appears to suggest Carmel's desperate attempt to resist the incorporation, the final act of falling can be seen as not only Carmel's surrender of the dream of weightlessness and her acceptance of possible failure *vis-a-vis* her mother's expectations, but also as a symbolic restoration of reference, a re-union or re-incorporation of the different aspects of the protagonist. If Karina is seen in these terms—as a vehicle for Carmel's projections of parts of herself which are

unacceptable to her, as well as her projection of her feelings towards her own mother—then it could be argued that Mantel's heroine and anti-heroine are, in fact, one and the same person. Such an interpretation would thus make *An Experiment in Love* not only "a story about appetite" (69), but also a fictional portrayal of dissociative identity disorder.

TWO MANTELS

That Carmel and Karina can be seen as constituting two parts of the same person is also confirmed by Mantel's own vision of herself as composed of two distinct women. Interestingly, Sophie Elmhirst has remarked that "[y]ou can't write about Mantel without writing about her body" (Elmhirst 2012), not only because bodily size is an important theme in Mantel's work, but also because Mantel herself splits the story of her life into two distinct parts separated by the drastic gynaecological surgery which she underwent at the age of twenty-seven and which led to a profound crisis of identity. "Now my body was not my own. It was a thing done to, a thing operated on", she recalls (Mantel 2013a, 211).

> I was no good for breeding, so what was I good for? Who was I at all? My hormonal circuits were busted, my endocrinology was shot to pieces. I was old while I was young. I was an ape, I was a blot on the page, I was a nothing, zilch. (211-12).

What is perhaps most interesting about this quotation is Mantel's comment on the effect of the procedure on her perception of herself as simultaneously young and old, "[t]he incision [running] up the midline of my body, slashed from pubic bone to navel" (210) reflected in the split into two women. More importantly, the hormonal treatment which followed the surgery led to a sudden and extreme gain in weight, transforming Mantel from a "frail" woman with "a narrow ribcage, a tiny waist and a child's twig arms" in her late twenties into someone resembling "one of Candia McWilliam's characters, 'barded with a suit of fat'" in her early thirties. Mantel thus became, in her own words, "perpetually strange to myself", "grotesque", "grounded" and "mutated" (54), a self-image which she has always found difficult to accommodate. "Even today," she confesses, she still has dreams in which she is "trim and narrow, though younger than I am now" (223-4). She believes that "somehow, if

I could see my fat self in a dream, I would have accepted it all through, and would accept the waking reality" (224). Significantly, she also points out that the hormonal treatment did not merely alter her bodily identity, but also her personality. "If you skew the endocrine system, you lose the pathways to self", she remarks. Suggesting a connection between literary creation and self-invention, she confesses that "I have been so mauled by medical procedures, so sabotaged and made over, so thin and so fat, that sometimes I feel that each morning it is necessary to *write myself into being*" (222; my emphasis).

Interestingly, Mantel's perception of herself as containing two distinct identities is not the only example of the theme of the double, which can be seen as running through her whole life. She thus remembers wanting to be a boy when she was a child and recalls how an early series of fevers transformed her from a dark, "fat and happy" little girl of four (44) into "a tiny doll creature with [...] stick limbs, and fair hair: [...] a feather on the breath of God" (80). As well as being haunted by the 'ghosts' of these former selves, Mantel had two fathers, for her biological father and her mother's husband, Henry, was still living with his family when her mother's lover, Jack Mantel, moved in. They continued to live like this, quite awkwardly, for a few years, before the family moved—without Henry, whom Mantel never saw again—to Romiley, Cheshire. Once there, the young Hilary not only had to pretend that Jack was her real father, but she was also forced to accept his surname as her own. This double sense of self—two people within one—is also reflected in Mantel's Irish roots and English upbringing, as well as in the history of her marriage, for she has been married "twice to the same man" (12). Even Mantel's perception of her literary identity is divided into two, for she separates her historical from her non-historical fiction. As early as 1998, with only one historical novel to date (*A Place of Greater Safety*, published in 1992), she remarked that "'I suppose I've split into two really, there's the person who writes the other novels, and then there's the person who works on the [French] Revolution, and in many ways I regret not having been a historian'" (Arias 1998, 289).

MANTEL-CARMEL VERSUS SPARK-KARINA: *EXPERIMENT*'S DISSOCIATION OF SPARK'S FICTION

I argue that Carmel and Karina represent not only Mantel's own split self, but that they also symbolise different aspects of her attitude to Muriel Spark. Significantly, both Spark's and Mantel's novels are frequently self-reflexive, their authors using the figure of the protagonist to comment on the art of fiction writing and on their own experience of literary creation. As far as Spark's fiction is concerned, the figure of the writer is thus symbolised by such characters as Caroline Rose (*The Comforters*), who hears the voice of "'[t]he Typing Ghost'" (Spark 2009a, 146) narrating her actions and thoughts and who subsequently becomes the author of the novel in which she is a character; Lise (*The Driver's Seat*), who creates the story of her death by arranging her own murder and by precipitating the content of the police reports and newspaper articles written after her death; and Fleur Talbot in *Loitering with Intent* (1981), which begins when she is in the early stages of writing her first novel, *Warrender Chase*, and which studies the relationship between the artist and his or her art on the one hand and truth and reality on the other, blurring the boundary between the two. In Mantel's work, in turn, the central character of *Vacant Possession*, Muriel Axon, "'survives'", in Mantel's own words, "'by changing into other personalities, rather like an author, you might say'" (Arias 1998, 284). Similarly, the protagonist-medium of *Beyond Black*, Alison Hart, whose mind and body are invaded by the ghosts of the dead, is explicitly identified by Mantel with her own writing practice (Mantel 2010c, 8-9)[26]. Last but not least, Mantel compares the figure of the writer with the main character of the eponymous novel, *Fludd*, whose hero is an alchemist combining different elements to produce new combinations and whose task is "'transformation'" (Arias 1998, 280).[27] If Muriel, Alison and Fludd represent Mantel's vision of the literary profession, then it could be argued that this is also true of Carmel, whose rejection of her past, represented by the figure of Karina, might be seen as an illustration of Mantel's attempt at originality *vis-a-vis* her literary precursor. Significantly, Carmel's relationship with her enemy and double is a combination of the horizontal and the vertical, for Karina—as argued above—also represents Carmel's mother. She can thus, in other words, be seen as a reflection of the sibling-precursor; a combination of "the pastness of the past, [and]

[26] For a more detailed discussion of Mantel's identification with Alison Hart, see p. 243.
[27] "'I am preoccupied'", Mantel tells Rosario Arias, "'with the theme of transformation. This runs through all my books, and in *Fludd* I make it very specific because I'm actually writing about an alchemist, and comparing, if you like, the creative process to the process of alchemy'" (Arias 1998, 280).

[...] its presence" (Eliot 1975, 38). At the same time, however, as this section shall demonstrate, Spark can also be identified with Mantel's portrayal of her heroine, a doubleness illustrating the complexity of Mantel's intertextual relationship with Spark in this novel.

Despite significant differences of style and the authors' respective engagements with distinct historical moments, *An Experiment in Love* is, in many ways, a traumatic repetition of Spark's work—a literal as opposed to a figurative engagement. By conveying her predecessor 'intact' (to use Harold Bloom's term[28]), Mantel thus exhibits a resistance to incorporating Spark suggestive of Carmel's rejection of Karina. Like Carmel, who externalises bits of herself, Mantel appears to 'externalise' Spark within her own novel. Significantly, such a combination of inside and outside is suggestive of contemporary definitions of PTSD, which—unlike Freud's repression model—tend to emphasise dissociation as one of the defences employed by the victim during the traumatic experience. The traumatic event, or aspects of it, becomes isolated from consciousness and later returns to haunt the victim in the form of recurring flashbacks and nightmares, remaining, in this way, simultaneously inside and 'outside' the mind. This is not to say that Mantel repeats her predecessor's work without knowing about it, however, for her engagement with *The Girls of Slender Means* is both conscious and deliberate.

The argument that Carmel can be seen as, to an extent, Mantel's alter ego, is supported not only by the similarity between "Carmel" and "Mantel", but also by the fact that Carmel's life bears a strong resemblance to Mantel's own childhood and early adulthood. And even though Mantel herself stresses that "the main character isn't me", she also admits that "we do have a lot in common" and that *Experiment* is "the closest I've come to fictionalising my own life—aspects of it, anyway" (Mantel 2013b). Like the protagonist, with whom she shares the year of her birth (1952), her working-class origins and her Irish roots, Mantel grew up in the North of England. Having passed her Eleven Plus, she managed to secure a place at the Convent of the Nativity, which "had been", "at first", "off limits to Hadfield girls, to Derbyshire girls in general" (2013a, 132) and of which the Holy Redeemer is clearly a fictional version, with its "sarcastic nuns" (Atwood 1996), strict codes of dress and "posh girls" (Mantel 2013a, 133). Like Carmel, Mantel also went to London to study law

[28] (Bloom 1997, 141)

and "to live in a women's hall of residence in Bloomsbury" (155)—a life of poverty and scarce nourishment, with a "pot of yoghurt" (156) (Carmel's chosen 'filler') between the pre-paid breakfast and supper. Finally, both Mantel and her heroine took part in student political meetings and awaited their long-distance boyfriends' weekend visits "with a sick intensity" (159).

Experiment's traumatic repetition of *The Girls of Slender Means* resembles Carmel's own obsession with passages of verse, which invade her consciousness like traumatic flashbacks, as when the sight of Lynette "spooning out instant coffee" triggers, in Carmel's mind, "the obvious bit of T. S. Eliot" (2010a, 58). These unwanted intrusions are, interestingly, echoed in Spark's portrayal of Joanna Childe, who not only teaches elocution to those residents of the May of Teck Club who wish, like Carmel, to improve their diction and their social standing, but whose recitation of various poetic works forces itself upon the ears of her fellow residents, as well as the body of Spark's text. In addition, Carmel's fear of drowning—whilst connected primarily with her indirect, but traumatic, memory of the famous Chappaquiddick incident of 1969—is also related to the main text recited by Joanna, which is Gerard Manley Hopkins's "The Wreck of the Deutschland" (1918). The poem with which Carmel appears most obsessed is, nevertheless, Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1798), which is also, significantly, recited by Spark's character.

As well as being interspersed with numerous quotations, which haunt Spark's and Mantel's respective novels like ghosts and which refuse to be suppressed, *Experiment* and *The Girls* also share a number of significant elements of plot. Both texts are concerned with studying the relationships between women in the microcosmic world of shared accommodation: a hostel for working women in Spark's case; a student hall in Mantel's. What is more, *Experiment* heads towards a very similar conclusion, for both novels end in a fire (which, in *The Girls of Slender Means*, is set off by the explosion of a bomb) and the death of one of the characters. In Spark's novel, the victim is Joanna Childe, the daughter of a country rector and—without a doubt—the most moral and admirable resident of the May of Teck Club. Similarly, in Mantel's book, the student who dies—Lynette—is the girl who lends the famished Carmel money, gives up the better bed and desk in her room to Karina and funds a fellow student's abortion, although this particular action would hardly be regarded as moral by Joanna. The deaths of both characters are, furthermore, foreshadowed. While Joanna "contempt[uously]" remarks that she will probably die

at the club (Spark 1994, 212), Carmel unwittingly announces Lynette's tragic end by entering her room with a skull in her hands (Mantel 2010a, 57). Significantly, Lynette is also, with her beauty, her goodness and her wealthy[29] and supportive parents, an embodiment of an ideal which Mantel's heroine strives unsuccessfully to attain. As if in an attempt to move away from Spark, Mantel makes Lynette's death much more gruesome and spectacular than that of Spark's character, for while the latter is simply buried under the rubble of the club, Lynnette's death is a voyeuristic performance, with fire leaping out of her hair and "burst[ing] out between her ribs" (244). Although her death appears (from a narrative point of view) justified—a symbolic destruction of Carmel's vision of perfection, which is one of the main causes of her anorexia—its horror is arguably not, suggesting that Mantel's primary motive for disposing of Lynette in such a horrific way was a departure from Spark's text. As if the re-enactment of the fire in Spark's novel were not enough, Mantel also repeats Selina Redwood's action of climbing back into the burning building in order to retrieve the glamorous Schiaparelli dress, a "vision of evil" (Spark 1994, 237) which prompts Nicholas Farringdon to convert to Catholicism and become a missionary. The changes that occur in *Experiment* are minimal, for the dress is replaced by a fox fur (could this be an echo of *The Girls*' mad character, Pauline Fox, or perhaps an allusion to the white fox fur worn by Elsa Hazlett in *The Hothouse by the East River*?), while Selina's role is taken over by Karina (her physical, though not moral, opposite), who does not return to the building, but simply grabs the coat on her way out. But whilst Selina's action is clearly condemned by both Spark and her main character, Nicholas, Carmel and her author appear to admire (to an extent) Karina's resourcefulness. Once again, as if to move away from Spark—and, in this case, to rebel against her—Mantel renders Karina's action far worse than Selina's retrieval of the dress, which does not involve hurting anyone. Moreover, Mantel's repetition of Spark's novella is evident in the fact that, like Dorothy Markham in *The Girls*, one of *Experiment*'s characters (as well as Karina) gets pregnant. Nicholas's association of the Schiaparelli dress hanging over Selina's arm with a dead body is also repeated by Mantel, for the sight of the fox fur held by Karina makes Carmel think of an animal carcass. Describing it as "something limp and slaughtered"

[29] Lynette's claim that her parents are not rich (Mantel 2010a, 191) is contradicted both by her own clothes and those worn by her parents during the inquest. Carmel thus remarks that "Mr Segal wore a stiff, expensive dark suit" while his wife boasted "expensive stockings […] and a bag that might have been made of some rare lizard" (248).

(Mantel 2010a, 245), she even uses some of the same words employed by Spark in her description of the dress, which is referred to as "*something* fairly long and *limp*" (Spark 1994, 226; my emphasis).

Consequently, while the novel's direct engagement with *The Girls of Slender Means* may indicate the very opposite of what could be termed literary, or intertextual, anorexia on Mantel's part, it could be argued that Spark's novel is not incorporated and transformed, but merely repeated by Mantel in a different guise. Most obviously, perhaps, Mantel's own resistance to acknowledging Spark as an influence indicates that—despite the numerous similarities between her work and Spark's—she fails to recognise her precursor's fiction as part of, or integral to, her own. Both Mantel and Carmel can thus be seen as rejecting the past, even if Mantel appears to embrace it by relying so heavily on the plot of *The Girls of Slender Means*. Her involvement with Spark's text is perhaps more indicative of intertextual bulimia, for Mantel seems to 'take in' Spark's novel only to expel it. Spark's text is thus not digested, but repeated and, simultaneously, repudiated, *Experiment* becoming a kind of dialogue between pushing the precursor away and inviting her in. As in the case of the relationship between the victim of trauma and the traumatic experience, there appears to be no emotional distance towards the precursor on Mantel's part. By making Spark's "vision of evil" much more evil in her own novel, Mantel ridicules her predecessor, suggesting that—as opposed to Spark—she knows what evil is. Rebelling against the theological message of *The Girls*—that "a vision of evil may be as effective to conversion as a vision of good" (237), she suggests that morally admirable actions can also lead to evil ones, for it is Lynette's goodness that prevents her from applying for a transfer to another room and that enables, in this way, Karina's theft of the fox fur and possible murder of her roommate. Most importantly, Mantel's repetition of Spark's novel, indicative of a failure of integration, or incorporation, brings to mind the phenomenon of traumatic dissociation, which splits off the traumatic event from ordinary consciousness.

Although *Experiment*'s engagement with *The Girls of Slender Means* can be seen as an example of traumatic literality, as evidence of Mantel's oscillation between imitation and repudiation, it would be wrong to assume that her failure at incorporating Spark is complete, for—according to some trauma theorists—while in trauma it is the lack or insufficiency of words that fosters the continuous return of the traumatic experience, writers unavoidably use language to engage with the writing of

the past. Mantel's novel is, significantly, very different from Spark's in many ways, for she replaces her predecessor's detached third person narrator with a very emotional first person one, focuses on a different historical moment and uses a style—filled with long and detailed descriptions of clothes and food—that differs significantly from the characteristic Sparkian pared down economy. At the same time, when Mantel *does* return to *The Girls of Slender Means*, the return appears to be almost always one of literal, traumatic repetition (even if it is ironic repetition), as opposed to a metonymic, metaphorical or other figurative engagement. An apt metaphor for the intertextual relationship between the two writers is, in fact, the ending of the novel. Remembering the past, Carmel glides her hand along the surface of the table, "trac[ing] with my nail the lovely line of the wood's exposed heart, its graceful curves like the fingerprints of those giants on whose shoulders we stand" (Mantel 201a, 250). This comparison can arguably be interpreted as Mantel's allusion to her literary precursors, including Spark herself. Her mention of "nail" and "fingerprints" is particularly telling, for it recalls the title of Malcolm Bradbury's famous essay on Spark's work, "Muriel Spark's Fingernails" (1972). But while Mantel's realisation of 'gravity' and the necessity to refer to, or *fall* back on, one's predecessor, may be behind this remark, she appears to return to the dream of weightlessness in the following, and final, paragraph:

> But then in the dappled sunlight, filtered through conifers, *the wood seems to dissolve beneath my fingers*. The angles of the white room soften and melt around me; and *the past runs like water through my hands*. (250; my emphasis)

Perhaps the only success at actually incorporating and transforming Spark that can be ascribed to *An Experiment in Love* is in its choice of an anorexic heroine. In *The Girls of Slender Means*, which is as obsessed with size as Mantel's text, it is only by squeezing through a narrow lavatory window that the residents can access the roof, attaining, in this way, "a release" from the confines of the club (Bold 1986, 74). More importantly, the girls' very lives depend on being thin, for the "narrow slit" (Spark 1994, 163) turns out to be the only means of escape from the building (at least until the firemen burst through the bricked-in skylight) after the explosion at the end of the book. As Dinah Birch's discussion of Mantel's engagement with Spark's novel makes clear, Mantel transforms this literality into a metaphor, for her characters need

to be slim in order to "make it to the top as women" (Birch 1995). Similarly, Carmel's anorexia is symbolic of her struggle to preserve an independent self, to save the essence of her person from the influence of others, even if it is—simultaneously and like all anorexia—physically self-destructive and, in consequence, the very opposite of Spark's presentation of slimness. In other words, what is literal in Spark arguably becomes metaphorical in Mantel. It is through Carmel's disorder that the incorporation—synonymous with transformation and the establishment of distance—appears to have occurred, for it is here that language ceases to be literal, or repetitive, and begins to truly transform. Unlike Mantel's repetition of some of the most significant incidents in the plot of *The Girls*, Carmel's anorexia—while denoting her author's own reluctance to incorporate Spark—might thus be seen as counter-traumatic in the sense that it seems to make Spark's work Mantel's own.

Having said this, Spark herself appears to use her characters' slender means in figurative terms, for the physical "[d]imensions of the girls are", as Alan Bold points out, "psychologically [...] important". Possessing little money, "they cannot afford ethical absolutes, so ration their moral resources" (Bold 1986, 74), as well as their emotional ones. Three of the club's young residents thus have both lovers and male acquaintances with whom they maintain a sex-free relationship and whom they hope, eventually, to marry (Spark 1994, 161) (Bold 1986, 74). Mantel's choice of anorexia as the major trope of her novel can thus be seen as an extreme version of the financial, emotional and bodily 'slimness' of Spark's girls, rather than a figurative engagement with her precursor's work. Significantly, *Experiment* also repeats Spark's preoccupation with measurements. While the Girls of Slender Means must carefully use their money and their emotional and moral resources, as well as measure their hips (which cannot be wider than thirty-six and a quarter inches if a successful exit through the lavatory window is to be achieved), Carmel counts and divides her meagre student grant, reduces the size of her hand-writing so as to save money on paper, and does everything to lose an extra half-inch in order to be able to wear her "flowerpot sweater" (Mantel 2010a, 200) with pride.

While *Experiment* is arguably a repetition—in some ways, extreme—of aspects of *The Girls of Slender Means*, it is also possible to argue that it repeats, albeit to a much smaller extent, Spark's other work, *A Far Cry from Kensington* (1988). Like Mantel's novel, it is narrated in the first person by a highly emotional, unsympathetic, narrator, who is even more corpulent than Karina herself. While this may suggest

that Mantel's anti-heroine is a version of Mrs Hawkins, it appears equally justified to regard *Carmel* as Spark's protagonist's alter ego, especially as Mrs Hawkins, in the course of *A Far Cry*, actually goes on a diet and begins to lose weight. Interestingly, her housemate, Wanda Podolak—a Polish refugee—bears a strong resemblance to Karina, whose Central-Eastern European origins are never specified, but whose father's fear of the Russians implies that at least one of her parents may be Polish (if Poland's historically traumatic relationship with Russia and Mantel's portrayal of Muriel Axon's paranoid landlord, Mr Kowalski[30], are anything to go by). More importantly, just as Carmel slowly disappears as Karina gets bigger and bigger, so does Mrs Hawkins (purely as a result of her diet) become slimmer and slimmer—a transformation interpreted by Wanda as the result of her working of the infamous Box, which Mrs Hawkins's enemy, Hector Bartlett, induces her to operate in order to destroy the protagonist. Karina's attitude to food is also echoed by Wanda's "capacity for suffering", which "verged", as the narrator emphasises, "on rapacity" (Spark 2009b, 3). Is Karina's greediness a transformation of Wanda's emotional greed? Mantel's literalisation of Spark's metaphor? Perhaps. What is certain is that, while Mantel's most obvious intertext is *The Girls of Slender Means*, *A Far Cry from Kensington* reveals itself as an important secondary source. Like Mrs Hawkins, who recalls the events leading to Wanda's tragic death from a position of emotional stability, Carmel is, by the end of the novel, a far cry from Bloomsbury, which is where Tonbridge Hall is situated. The "cry" in Spark's title is also, as Ali Smith points out, the cry of its most tragic figure, Wanda (Smith 2009, x), who commits suicide by drowning herself—Carmel's most feared kind of death.

Interestingly, the motif of drowning suggests the influence of another work by Spark, which arguably constitutes a much more important secondary intertext than Spark's 1988 work. *The Comforters*, which was Spark's first novel, ends not only with the death of the villain by drowning, but engages, like *An Experiment in Love*, with the subject of physical and moral rapacity. Mrs Georgina Hogg, whose first name—like "Selina"—rhymes with "Karina", resembles Mantel's anti-heroine not only in her status as the primary villain of the story and the focus of Caroline's physical revulsion (the heroine's name shares the first syllable with "Carmel"), but also as the moving force behind the action of the whole text. It is thus Caroline's

[30] Mr Kowalski is a character in *Vacant Possession*.

meeting with Mrs Hogg that initiates the arrival of the voices narrating the heroine's activities and haunting Caroline throughout the course of the novel, just as it is Carmel's destruction of Karina's doll that contributes to her anorexia and that appears to be the central event in the history of their relationship. What is more, it is Mrs Hogg's death, rather than the survival of the heroine, who manages to crawl out of the water after Georgina's firm grasp nearly leads to a double tragedy, that constitutes the climax of the novel. The most morally repulsive of the characters—a view clearly shared by Spark herself, who attempts, through the figure of Georgina, to demonstrate the despotic side of Catholicism—Mrs Hogg feeds on the guilt of the other characters and is surely echoed in Mantel's portrayal of Karina, who, although nowhere near as morally voracious as Spark's villain, can be seen as an embodiment of Carmel's conscience.[31] Described as "a sneak, a subtle tyrant" (Spark 2009a, 125) with "turbulent mythical dimensions" (127) and a "tremendous bosom" (124), Mrs Hogg is a "moral blackmailer", a tendency displayed by her as early as at the age of ten. Recalling his former wife and first cousin, Mervyn Hogarth points out that

> he had known in his childhood her predatory habits with other people's seamy secrets. Most of all she cherished those offences which were punishable by law, and for this reason she would jealously keep her prey from the attention of the law. Knowledge of a crime was safe with her, it was the criminal himself she was after, his peace of mind if she could get it. (130-1)

Georgina's appetite for the sinful side of other people is matched by her constant consumption of food in her childhood, her voraciousness resurrected by Mantel in her portrayal of her own villain. Mervyn thus recalls that "[t]here was always something in her [Georgina's] mouth: grass—she would eat grass if there was nothing else to eat". Making a connection between these two different types of rapacity, he remembers his wife-to-be accusing him of a minor theft: "'You stole two pennies,' and in making this retort Georgina looked as pleased as if she were eating a thick sandwich" (128). Like Carmel, who both hates Karina as a person and abhors her body, Caroline is morally and physically repulsed by Mrs Hogg. Alan Bold's succinct comparison between the characters of Caroline and Georgina reveals the

[31] "When she [Karina] followed me on the bus in the mornings, I felt as if my conscience were coming after me, ready to fell me with one blow" (Mantel 2010a, 147).

extent to which Mantel was relying on Spark's portrayal of these two figures in her creation of Carmel and Karina:

> Caroline is '*thin, angular*, sharp, enquiring' [...], Georgina is *a bulky woman* with a 'colossal bosom' [...]. *Caroline is occasionally anorexic* (so it is established by the priest providing her with food), *Georgina always eats heartily and sticks in Caroline's consciousness 'like a lump of food on the chest which will move neither up nor down'* [...]. *Caroline is an intellectual with bookish interests*, Georgina is a dogmatist to whom the often invoked 'Our Lady' [...] is a piece of personal property. *In order to save her own soul, Caroline has first to rid herself of Georgina Hogg*. It is, for Caroline, a spiritual imperative. (Bold 1986, 40; my emphasis)

Mantel repeats, in *An Experiment in Love*, nearly all of the above qualities of Spark's characters, the major difference being that, while Caroline and Georgina are clear opposites, Carmel and Karina are presented as doubles. Unlike Caroline's anorexic tendencies, Carmel's self-starvation can thus be directly related to her refusal to incorporate those aspects of herself which Karina so aptly symbolises. Furthermore, whilst the villain rejected both by Spark and her heroine dies in a struggle between the two women in the waters of the Medway, Caroline emerging victorious, Karina triumphantly survives, finally embraced by Mantel's heroine. More importantly, Caroline's theological, emotional and physical struggle with Mrs Hogg can be read as symbolic of the battle between the convert and the cradle Catholic, the former represented by Spark's heroine, the latter by Georgina. The reversal performed by Mantel in relation to the ending of *The Comforters* is thus clearly related to her literary agon with her predecessor (a Catholic convert), for Karina's victory is also Mantel's, who is, like Georgina, a cradle Catholic, a fact which she emphasises herself (Campbell 2005).[32]

SPARK-CARMEL VERSUS MANTEL-KARINA: SPARK'S LITERARY 'ANOREXIA' VERSUS MANTEL'S 'RAPACITY'

As pointed out above, to argue that Mantel's engagement with Spark's work is an example of traumatic repetition, or traumatic literality and a failure of incorporation,

[32] The main difference between Mantel and Mrs Hogg is, of course, the former's self-confessed atheism.

is not to imply that their work does not differ in many important respects. Nor is it to suggest that Mantel's literary style is a repetition of her precursor's. Significantly, *An Experiment in Love* and *The Girls of Slender Means* portray two distinct historical moments, even if the actions of their respective plots are separated by no more than twenty-five years. Focusing on 1945, Spark is thus concerned with the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and the nature of the lives led by single, meagrely employed, middle-class women resident at the May of Teck Club during a time of strict rationing and in the wake of a global situation that opened the job market to a large number of female employees. Mantel's focus is, by contrast, the effect on both middle- and working-class girls of the traditionally male system of education, which the generation of women born after the war entered in greater numbers than ever before. Interestingly, the large amount of background detail provided by Mantel with regard to the 'feminist' era contrasts with the relative scarcity of historical detail in *The Girls*. Despite the fact that Spark's novel clearly positions itself in a specific historical moment—references to major historical and political events of the time are numerous—its engagement with history is largely the background for a far more important, and universal, preoccupation, which is the presence of evil in every-day life, the pitfalls of blind idealism (represented by Nicholas's desire to convert Selina's "soul" by sleeping with her[33]) and Spark's opposition to the separation of the spirit (symbolised by Joanna, whose sexual and emotional needs find expression in poetry) and the body (represented by Selina, whose only preoccupations are materialist). As argued by Norman Page, in her fiction, "Muriel Spark shows much less interest in the psychological or sociological novel than in the form's capacity to explore theological, metaphysical or mythic elements" (Page 1990, 15). This is hardly the case in *An Experiment in Love*, which is firmly grounded in its historical moment though not devoid of metaphysical resonance. While Spark's novel resembles a fairy-tale—for it "begins and ends with the fairy-tale phrase 'long ago in 1945'" (Bold 1986, 72)—and thus suggests that the text can be seen as an expression of universal truths, the moral of Carmel and Karina's story can hardly be separated from their historical and social circumstances. Unlike its precursor text, whose historical plot unfurls before the beginning of second-wave feminism, Mantel's work studies the consequences of female liberation

[33] (Spark 1994, 205)

on the new generation of young women. Faced with opportunities that their mothers had been denied, Carmel and Karina are forced to fulfil Mrs McBain's own unrealised ambitions, assuaging, in this way, the latter's life-long frustrations. Educated "on the male plan" (Mantel 2010a, 164), Mantel's girls are torn between academic careers and the desire to start a family—a need which, as Mantel suggests, is not merely socially conditioned, but inherent in the very nature of the female body. "[T]rained to defer gratification" (165), but divided between two paths—that of "imitat[ing] men" (164) or that of imitating their mothers—the young women residing at Tonbridge Hall find themselves "[rebelling] against the lives they had led since puberty" by performing such conventionally female tasks as ironing their boyfriends' shirts (164). The men they go out with are unattractive, suggesting, as Carmel observes, that her fellow C-floor residents feel guilty for "taking so much from the world" (75) through their academic and social progression. The novel thus identifies itself not as "a story about anorexia" (69)—"too middle class", as Margaret Atwood points out (1996)—but as "a story about appetite" (Mantel 2010a, 69). And even though the 'dualism' of career versus family can also be applied to contemporary women, the significance of the historical moment is beyond doubt, *An Experiment in Love* being inextricable from the social circumstances in which it is set. As emphasised by Rosario Arias, Mantel's books "are never cut off from the outside world; they are well embedded in their socio-political context", which is, as Mantel herself emphasises, "'absolutely vital'" to her work.[34] (Arias 1998, 280).

Despite the fact that Spark's novel contains numerous references to the events of 1945—VE Day on 8 May, the Labour victory in July, the atomic bomb, which was dropped by the USA on Hiroshima on 6 August and Nagasaki on 9 August, VJ night on 14 August—(Page 1990, 44) her descriptions of the historical moment (with the exception of London's ruined and bombed houses) are rather lean, at least by comparison with Mantel's, for the latter endows the setting of her novel with an effect of physical solidity produced by an accumulation of vivid, descriptively picturesque detail. Carmel's memories are thus filled with detailed and sensory

[34] "This is why", Mantel continues, "I would never be a proponent of a bitter-sweet love story which takes place some time, some place, and you don't know where. I can only envisage things embedded in a society, and I'm not a novelist with a political agenda in the sense of I am pushing the politics of the Left or the Right, but I always think let us look for the politics of the situation because, as I say, one of my main concerns is power. So when I write about a household, I'm not simply writing about someone's domestic set-up, I'm writing about them as a reflection of politics in the wider world" (Arias 1998, 280-81).

depictions of the past: the working-class northern town where she grew up, the games she and the other children used to play, the comics which were popular in her childhood, the clothes people wore and the food they ate. Mantel's descriptions—especially those of food and clothes—match, in other words, her socio-historical voracity, since "as a narrator Carmel is like her mother: she does a little embroidery on everything". "Never have dripping tights hung over a radiator or the smell of a child's wooden ruler been so meticulously rendered", Atwood remarks (Atwood 1996). Interestingly, in her memoir, Mantel contrasts plain, transparent prose with stylistic rapaciousness. Offering advice to young writers, she urges them to

> [r]emember what Orwell says, that good prose is like a window-pane. Concentrate on sharpening your memory and peeling your sensibility. Cut every page you write by at least one-third. Stop constructing those piffling little similes of yours. Work out what it is you want to say. Then say it in the most direct and vigorous way you can. [...]
>
> But do I take my own advice? Not a bit. [...] I stray away from the beaten path of plain words into the meadows of extravagant simile: angels, ogres, doughnut-shaped holes. And as for transparency—window-panes undressed are a sign of poverty, aren't they? How about some nice net curtains, so I can look out but you can't see in? [...] Besides, window-pane prose is no guarantee of truthfulness. Some deceptive sights are seen through glass and the best liars tell lies in plain words. (Mantel 2013a, 4-5)

The difference here appears to lie between what is considered to be good prose—a set of rules to follow—and what Mantel herself wants to do, or what is true to *her* and what she regards as 'true' in fiction. Significantly, the bare, laconic, or 'anorexic' style discussed in the first part of the passage recalls not only the figure of Carmel—where the skeleton of 'truth' is adorned by a paper-thin repository of flesh—but also Spark's technique in *The Girls of Slender Means* and in her 1970s novellas, particularly *The Driver's Seat*, *Not to Disturb* and *The Hothouse by the East River*, where her stylistic spareness reaches its apogee. A quotation of one of Spark's most 'detailed' descriptions of food (which one can barely call a description) in *The Girls of Slender Means* next to Mantel's own will serve to illustrate the difference:

> 'Oh, Christ,' she [Jane Wright] said. 'I'm tired of picking crumbs of meat out of the shepherd's pie, picking with a fork to get the little bits of meat separated from the little bits of potato.' (Spark 1994, 186).

> The cakes were stacked on decks of sloping shelves, set out on pink doilies whitened by falls of icing sugar. There were vanilla slices, their airy tiers of pastry glued together with confectioners' custard, fat and lolling like a yellow tongue. There were bubbling jam puffs and ballooning Eccles cakes, slashed to show their plump currant insides. There were jam tarts the size of traffic lights; there were whinberry pies oozing juice like black blood.
>
> [...] There were sponge buns shaped like fat mushrooms, topped with pink icing and half a glacé cherry. There were coconut pyramids, and low square house-shaped chocolate buns, finished with a big roll of chocolate-wrapped marzipan which was solid as the barrel of a canon. (Mantel 2010a, 25-6)

The scope of Mantel's novel is also, significantly, wider than Spark's, for *Experiment* relates not only the events of 1970, but also Carmel and Karina's childhood and adolescence spent in the working-class North of England. This is highly significant, for by stressing the importance of past events to their psychological development, Mantel endows her protagonists with personal histories that Spark's Girls of Slender Means appear (with the exception of Joanna[35]) to lack. As implied by Dinah Birch in her review of *Experiment*, the ending of the novel is anti-Sparkian, for it suggests that

> [n]either absolute evil nor absolute good can be determined in her [Mantel's] humanly mixed and contingent world. Damnation is not final, salvation is never certain. The crime committed by Karina is worse than anything that happens in Spark's novel. Yet Mantel's vision is less fixed, and less bleak, than Spark's devastating certitudes. Karina is what her life has made her; a consequence of the harm visited on her parents years before she was born, but also stubbornly herself, a source of life, ambivalent, puzzling and persistent. (Birch 1995)

Unlike Spark, whose villain appears to have no past whatsoever—becoming, in this way, a symbol of evil rather than a human being of 'flesh' and 'bone'[36]—Mantel shows not only Carmel's, but also Karina's, behaviour as pre-determined. Mothers are

[35] Joanna's adolescent infatuations and life at the rectory are presented by Spark in some detail. Her obsession with poetry is revealed (in a rather Freudian manner) as a substitute for sexual gratification and as directly related to her idealised view of love—taken, unsurprisingly, from the poets and amounting to Shakespeare's famous dictum in Sonnet 116 that "'[l]ove is not love / Which alters when it alteration finds, / Or bends with the remover to remove'" (Spark 1994, 156). This statement is transformed by Joanna into a moral law through the agency of the Scriptures, forcing her to suppress her passion for a man merely on account of the fact that he is, chronologically, her second, and not her first, object of love.

[36] The only part of the novel which suggests otherwise is Selina's reaction to seeing Nicholas some time after the tragedy: "'She screamed. She couldn't stop screaming. It's a nervous reaction'" (Spark 1994, 236).

crucial here, for the heroine's self-starvation and the anti-heroine's sense of deprivation and greed are conditioned by Mrs McBain's own frustrated ambitions and Karina's mother's traumatic war-time experiences respectively.

Taking these points into consideration, *An Experiment in Love* is stylistically, temporally, geographically and socially more expansive than *The Girls*, a fact which, when combined with Mantel's much more detailed engagement with the historical moment she describes, could be read, once again, in terms of the relationship between Mantel's emaciated protagonist and her all-consuming anti-heroine. Spark's 'anorexic' engagement with the historical moment, her focus on a very specific, and very limited, period of time, her preoccupation with a single location[37] and her focus on the professional middle-classes can thus be contrasted with Mantel's much fuller, or 'fatter', approach to her subject. Consequently, her portrayal of Carmel could be connected not only with Mantel's engagement with the work of her predecessor, but also with Spark's fiction, whose literary style the heroine can be seen as representing. Mantel's portrayal of Carmel's relationship with her childhood enemy could thus no longer be simply perceived as an illustration of her author's dissociation, or 'externalisation', of Spark's work with her novel, but also as a representation of Mantel's own, unique approach.

That Carmel represents not merely Mantel, but also Spark herself, appears to be confirmed by the latter's biography. Namara Smith points out a number of similarities between Carmel and Spark, such as their red hair[38] and their experience of a nervous breakdown. What Smith also implies is Carmel's and Spark's shared propensity to self-starvation (Smith 2013). In dire financial circumstances and hard at work on reviews, non-fiction books and what later became her first novel, *The Comforters*, Spark ate little and took Dexedrine, which led to amphetamine poisoning and hallucinations. Her greedy relationship to words, contrasted with a low food intake, is thus clearly reflected in Mantel's portrayal of Carmel's combination of self-starvation with her voracious study of law cases. What is more, her name refers to the Carmelite Order, where Spark recovered after her breakdown. Finally,

[37] Despite the fact that the novel refers to the tragic death of Nicholas Farringdon, who is killed in Haiti, the May of Teck Club remains the setting of *The Girls*. The furthest that the reader can actually see Spark's characters travel is to Buckingham Palace for victory celebrations.

[38] During her first year at Tonbridge Hall, Carmel accidentally dyes her hair "a flaming red" (Mantel 2010a, 172). Red hair is also one of the characteristics of such Sparkian villains as Dougal Douglas (*The Ballad of Peckham Rye*) and Hector Bartlett (*A Far Cry from Kensington*).

Dexedrine is an appetite suppressant, an interesting fact considering *Experiment*'s status as "a story about appetite" (Mantel 2010a, 69).

If Carmel represents Spark, how is one to interpret Mantel's intertextual relationship with her predecessor in *An Experiment in Love*? As an expression of its author's own doubts as to her literary identity, her rejection of herself in favour of Spark? If Mantel is identified with Karina and Spark with Carmel, the latter's hatred of her enemy and "oldest friend" (232) can be seen as representative of the precursor's resistance to the writing of the latecomer. At the same time, the fact that both Carmel and Karina arguably reflect different aspects of both Spark's and Mantel's fiction and biography suggests a beguiling complexity of this relationship. Mantel's complicated attitude to her precursor is perhaps most evident in *Experiment's* first, and most explicit, allusion to Spark's novel, which occurs in a conversation between the narrator-protagonist and her roommate, Julianne:

> 'It would be nice if we went about and talked like an Edna O'Brien novel. It would suit us.'
> 'Yes, it would become us,' I said. 'We haven't the class for Girls of Slender Means.'
> 'Speak for yourself. You charwoman's daughter.' (18)

Carmel's conviction that "'[w]e haven't the class for Girls of Slender Means'" is a perfect reflection of her author's ambivalent attitude to her predecessor, for it demonstrates her simultaneous imitation and repudiation of Spark's work—two contrary movements which Mantel finds impossible to reconcile. On the one hand, the sentence might be read as suggesting that Mantel positions Spark's novella as a literary ideal that her work strives to imitate, just as Carmel's ambition is to rise to the more middle-class and liberal standards of female appearance and behaviour. On the other, it can be seen as implying a repudiation of *The Girls of Slender Means*, for Mantel's novel focuses on the two central working-class characters and is, consequently, a working-class re-writing of Spark's text. The passage is thus an illustration of the 'traumatic' nature of Mantel's engagement with Spark's work—an intertextual relationship in which the later writer oscillates between immediacy and distance, mimesis and anti-mimesis, "fort!" and "da!".

To conclude, it appears justifiable to regard *An Experiment in Love*—which is Mantel's most direct engagement with Muriel Spark's fiction to date—as a reflection of the complexities of her intertextual relationship with her precursor. Carmel

McBain's attitude to her arch enemy and the *bane* of her life, Karina, who stands for her northern, working-class and Catholic upbringing, as well as for the figure of her mother, can, on the one hand, be seen as representing Mantel's resistance to incorporating her precursor's work, particularly *The Girls of Slender Means*, and her consequently traumatic repetition of Spark's fiction, with a lack of figurative engagement that would imply transformation and a resolution of the contrary movements of sameness and difference. At the same time, Mantel's portrayal of the emaciated Carmel and her voracious, highly physical opposite and double, can arguably be related to Spark's and Mantel's distinct literary styles and respective treatments of their subjects. Mantel's vision of herself and her predecessor can thus be seen, in *Experiment*, as always shifting between Carmel and Karina, both of whom, as argued above, combine the literary and biographical figures of the two novelists.

SECTION THREE

Ingestion, Weight, and the Restoration of Reference: The Mantelian Spark of *Beyond Black*

While *An Experiment in Love* exhibits signs of Mantel's resistance to non-traumatic reference, her more recent work, *Beyond Black* (2005), might be seen as an example of its author's successful incorporation of Spark's oeuvre into her own text. Rather than traumatic literality, the novel thus exemplifies Mantel's figurative transformation of *The Hothouse by the East River* and "The Girl I Left Behind Me" (1957). Instead of oscillating between imitation and repudiation, mimesis and anti-mimesis—which contrary tendencies remain unresolved in her 1995 novel—Mantel's engagement with Spark's work in *Beyond Black* successfully combines sameness and difference, which become *inextricable from each other*, not only through its metaphoric use of the earlier writer's work, but also through its mirroring of Spark's 1970 novella, *The Driver's Seat*. The following section explores Mantel's incorporation of Spark's fiction into *Beyond Black* and analyses the ways in which its author overcomes the 'trauma' of her predecessor's influence and begins to possess and control Spark's literary legacy, as opposed to being possessed by it in *An Experiment in Love*. It is partly in this sense that *Beyond Black* can be seen as a companion piece to Mantel's seventh work of fiction.[39]

BEYOND BLACK AS A NOVEL OF TRAUMA

One of the reasons why trauma is so useful in discussing Hilary Mantel's work is her preoccupation with the subject of haunting and ghosts, as in *Every Day is Mother's Day*, where Evelyn Axon's house is inhabited by threatening presences; in

[39] *Beyond Black*'s status as a companion novel to *An Experiment in Love* is also confirmed by Mantel's portrayal of her two central characters, Alison and Colette. While the former is even larger than Karina, Colette resembles Carmel not only in her slimness, but also in the fact that her dimensions decrease in reverse proportion to Alison's. Furthermore, like Carmel and Karina, Al and Colette are presented as doubles. Not long after meeting Colette, Alison admits to having "'laid out a [Tarot] spread for you'". "'And what did you see?'", Colette asks. "'I saw myself'" (Mantel 2010b, 92).

Vacant Possession, where Isabel Field's alcoholism is clearly related to her traumatic encounter with Evelyn's ghostly housemates in the prequel; more metaphorically, in *An Experiment in Love*, whose protagonist is haunted by guilt after 'killing' Karina's 'baby'; in *Fludd*, where unidentified footsteps and a mysterious slamming of doors disturb the peace of Miss Dempsey; and in *Giving Up the Ghost*, which not only begins with Mantel's account of the manifestation of her stepfather's spirit in her Norfolk home, but where she also relates a traumatic childhood experience which led to the loss of her belief in God[40]. What is more, Colin Sidney's sister, Florence, who is one of the characters in *Every Day is Mother's Day* and *Vacant Possession*, is a victim of sexual abuse, even though she is far from occupying a central position in either work. Finally, Carmel's fear of drowning in *An Experiment in Love* is directly related to the 1969 Chappaquiddick incident. "All spring I had dreamt about the disaster"; about "the lung tissue and water, the floating hair and the sucking cold" (Mantel 2010a, 2), she confesses.

Mantel's most explicit and detailed engagement with the subject of psychological trauma nevertheless occurs in her 2005 novel, *Beyond Black*, which can be seen as a fictional study of PTSD, or of what Judith Lewis Herman refers to as "complex post-traumatic stress disorder" (Herman 2001, 119), for Alison Hart is a victim of long-term childhood sexual abuse. Like Mantel's 1995 work, *Beyond Black* is also engaged with the dichotomy of inside and outside—a crucial aspect of contemporary definitions of trauma. Like the victim of PTSD, whose traumatic memory returns in the form of nightmares and flashbacks, and even physical symptoms, Alison's consciousness and body are repeatedly invaded by the spirits of the dead, including those of her childhood abusers. The ghosts' external, or unassimilated, status in Alison's mind is emphasised frequently, for not only are they described as "'coming through'" (Mantel 2010b, 14), but their penetrations of the protagonist's body are also presented in terms of physical consumption. Alison is thus forced to eat more than most people so as to "pad her flesh and keep her from the pinching of the dead, their peevish nipping and needle teeth" (11). Consequently, the heroine's task, like that of the survivor of complex PTSD, is to remember, narrativise and integrate the events of her childhood, many of which remain entirely or partly outside the sphere of conscious recall, into "an ongoing life story" (Herman

[40] See (Mantel 2013a, 105-108).

2001, 37). Just as Carmel must accept her own emotional, social and cultural history, as well as her femininity, in order to overcome her anorexia, Al is thus forced to incorporate those events which her consciousness has externalised and forgotten (or dissociated). Deeply connected with her traumatic memories is also the issue of the identity of her father, whom she had, as a little girl, hoped to discover among the abusive customers of her prostitute-mother, Emmeline Cheetham. Emmeline's approach to her daughter's repetitive enquiries is, nevertheless, to dismiss them with a simple, 'motherly' pearl of wisdom, according to which "'[w]hat you don't know can't hurt you'" (Mantel 2010b, 122). This statement summarises, in one sentence, the historical amnesia which appears to be one of the distinctive features of modernity as reflected by Mantel in her portrayal of the inhabitants of contemporary British society, those who may flock to Alison's shows, but are simultaneously uninterested in their own origins. What is more, Emmeline's dictum, repeated in the novel, becomes its anti-motto, not merely due to its blatant falsity in the context of Alison's story, but also because the text constitutes Al's emotional journey across the boundary separating the known from the unknown and the remembered from the dissociated—a journey "beyond black", or beyond the point where memory fails.

The primary manifestation of Alison's traumatic memories (and non-memories) is the figure of the vulgar, obnoxious and abusive Morris—her spiritual guide since the age of thirteen, joined, many years later, by the ghosts of Emmeline's entire male "gang" (369). But while the reason for Morris's first ghostly appearance is Al's profoundly traumatic childhood experience involving (as the reader later finds out) the death and dismemberment of a young woman called Gloria, the menacing figures of Keith Capstick, Danny Aitkenside, Bob Fox, MacArthur, Pikey Pete and others appear to have been inadvertently summoned by the protagonist as a result of actively remembering and narrating her childhood to her assistant, Colette, who tapes her interviews with Al in the aim of writing a book about her, and who functions as a pragmatist reader figure resembling, in many respects, Salman Rushdie's Padma in *Midnight's Children* (1981). Consequently, the appearance of "'the fiends'" (Mantel 2010b, 197) might be seen as a manifestation of Al's own resistance to recalling the original traumatic event, just as Freud perceived the development of transference (seen by him as a manifestation of the repetition compulsion) as a defence mechanism against de-repression (Freud 2003, 56-7). Towards the end of the novel, the control exerted by these ghosts is, in fact, so extreme, that they cause the death of

Mrs Etchells, whom Alison likes to think of as her grandmother. This event can thus be related to Herman's description of traumatic experience, which "breach[es] the attachments of family, friendship, love, and community" (Herman 2001, 51), even if Mrs Etchells is very far from being an ideal grandmother or even a biological one. The effect of trauma on the victim's relationship with other people is also evident in the fiends' murder of the homeless Mart—the stranger taken in by Alison in recognition of a suffering that resembles her own. Expecting that the guest in the shed might be dangerous, she arms herself with a pair of bacon scissors. That they are "much the sort of weapon you'd choose to break up a fight in a primary school playground" is significant, for Al's growing empathy with and affection for the homeless man is deeply connected with her memories of her own childhood. Seeing him lying on the floor of the shed in "a foetal position, arms around his knees" (Mantel 2010b, 292), her initial fear transforms itself into charity. Not only does she offer him a cup of tea, but she also makes him "the very best plate of sandwiches Mart had ever seen in his life". The fact that she makes "twice as many as one homeless mad person could possibly consume" (297) suggests that, through her "good action" (309), she is also 'feeding' her own depleted self. Concluding that he suffered, as a baby, from a complete lack of maternal affection, Al recalls her relationship with her own mother and wishes that, like Mart, she had also been adopted: "If I'd just been given a break till I was two or three, I might have turned out normal" (297). Al's charity towards Mart, her intense compassion and love for him are thus arguably a reflection of her feelings towards her own traumatic past, as well as her newly-found recognition of her status as a victim, especially as, upon hearing that Mart was beaten as a child, and recalling being beaten herself, she informs him that "'you're the victim'" (305). Not only does Al experience a sense of "fellow feeling [...] hauling her back in the direction of Mart" (298), but her explanation of harbouring a stranger in the shed is also clearly related to the traumatic childhood events which she is only just beginning to recall. Analysing Colette's perception of her act of charity as "'retarded'", she ruminates:

> But that's not true [...]. Surely not? She knows I'm not stupid. I might be temporarily muddled by the ingress of memory, some seepage from my early life. *I feel I was kept in a shed*. I feel I was chased there, that I ran in the shed for refuge and hiding place, I feel I was then knocked to the floor, because in the shed someone was waiting for me, a dark shape

> rising up from the corner, and *as I didn't have my scissors on me* at the time I couldn't even snip him. I feel that, soon afterwards, I was temporarily inconvenienced by someone putting a lock on the door; and I lay bleeding, alone, on newspapers, in the dark. (317; my emphasis)

More importantly, the act of accommodating a stranger in one's own home—even if it is just a shed at the back of the house—is arguably symbolic of the trauma victim's attempt at incorporating or allowing in, showing hospitality to, what is 'external' as a figure too for the traumatic memory being finally allowed a place in consciousness, language and the narrative of the victim's life. The fact that the homeless character's name begins with "M"—the most important letter used throughout the novel—and the fact that Al, through her encounter with him, begins to remember the key events of her past, would appear to support this interpretation. Significantly, both Morris, whose name is a near-anagram of "mirror", and Mart, can be seen not only as embodiments of Al's perception of herself, but also as representations of different types of memory. While the former might be perceived as representing the unassimilated and dissociated *traumatic memory*, coupled with Al's self-hatred and sense of guilt (which she feels in connection with her childhood[41]), the latter could be seen to stand both for the fully-integrated, ordinary memory[42] and for her newly-found acceptance of and affection for herself. Unfortunately, the significance of Mart's name lies also in its resemblance to "mort" and "martyr"—a foreshadowing of its bearer's ultimate fate. In the context of the above argument, Mart's murder by Emmeline's "crew" (207) (who appear to have driven him to suicide) might thus be seen as a symbolic destruction of Alison's new, and healthier, image of herself, as well as a reflection of trauma's resistance (emphasised by such theorists as Herman, van der Kolk and Caruth and most evident in cases of complex PTSD) to being incorporated into ordinary memory and consciousness. Last but not least, Mart's positive influence on Alison's view of herself indicates the importance of the stranger, or the other, in the process of overcoming PTSD, in which empathetic listening is as crucial as the telling.

[41] Thinking about Morris at the beginning of the novel, for instance, Alison reflects that she "probably deserved him" (Mantel 2010b, 6).
[42] For a discussion of Janet's distinction between a traumatic and an ordinary memory, see Chapter I, p. 33.

It is only after Alison, following Colette's departure, makes a conscious decision to recall her traumatic childhood, to narrate the events inside her mind in a reverse chronological order, her memory moving back ("[b]ack and back"[43] beyond black), that she is able to assume control over the past and, consequently, the present, for the central, dissociated events of her childhood trauma (Gloria's murder and dismemberment, Al's actual and symbolic castration of Keith and MacArthur respectively, and the fiends' retaliation[44]) are finally incorporated into consciousness and language, which is, of course, the language of the novel. Taking this into consideration, it is no surprise that Al's band of pursuers has been replaced, by the end of the book, by two new guides who could not be more different from Morris and his gang—the ghosts of elderly women who accompany Al on her car journeys. Having replaced Colette, who has returned to her ex-husband, in the driver's seat (an echo of Muriel Spark's 1970 novella, *The Driver's Seat*), the protagonist is thus symbolically presented as having regained control over her own life. The novel is, in other words, a reflection of contemporary trauma theory, which emphasises dissociation and haunting as the key features of traumatic experience and its effects, and which stresses the need to actively remember the past in order to liberate oneself from it, and to put it into words, the act of reference (which has to be repeated in the therapeutic environment) contributing to the establishment of emotional and cognitive distance from and transformation of the experience that caused the trauma. As well as theories of PTSD, *Beyond Black* thus also recalls Mantel's own 'incorporation' of Spark's work—particularly *The Girls of Slender Means*—into *An Experiment in Love*, which is also, as argued in the previous section, a paradoxical and 'traumatic' resistance to reference and incorporation.

MANTEL'S 'TRAUMATIC' TRANSFORMATION OF "THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND ME"

The Sparkian echoes in Mantel's 2005 novel are both general and specific. The ghostly aspect of Mantel's text can certainly be seen as a Sparkian quality, although it could equally be referred back to the tradition of the Gothic novel, especially if the

[43] (Mantel 2010b, 436)
[44] Traumatised by the sexual assaults of the men, the young Alison deprived Keith Capstick of his testicles and the voyeuristic MacArthur of his eye. These two acts of understandable violence led to the punishment meted out by Alison's oppressors, who mutilated her body with a knife.

figure of Alison, whose flesh is home to the dead, is perceived as an embodiment of the theme of the haunted house. What Mantel certainly shares with Spark, however, is her vision of the real as extending beyond that which can be empirically or scientifically proved—a definition of reality present in such works as *The Hothouse by the East River*, where all the characters turn out to be dead; *Memento Mori*, with its recurring phone calls from "'Death himself'" (Spark 1993, 605), and such short stories as "Portobello Road" (1958) and "The Girl I Left Behind Me", whose dead female narrators are both the victims of murder. But whilst it is tempting to attribute Mantel's apparently Sparkian vision of reality to the influence of Spark's work, it seems more justified to argue that what contributed to it most was Mantel's early experience of mysterious occurrences in her parents' house at Brosscroft, Hadfield, which was, as she then believed, inhabited by ghosts. Mantel's experience of reading Spark's work would thus seem to have strengthened, rather than initiated, this perception of reality on her part. Having said this, Spark's dead narrators have arguably found their way into Mantel's portrayal of Alison, her author transforming Spark's use of this device by turning it into a metaphor, as opposed to merely repeating this motif in her own fiction.

In his analysis of two of Spark's novels, *A Far Cry from Kensington* and *Loitering with Intent* (1981), Norman Page argues that their protagonist-narrators, Fleur Talbot and Nancy Hawkins respectively, can be seen as "speak[ing] from beyond the grave" (Page 1990, 104). Whilst Fleur's narrative begins, tellingly, upon a tombstone, where she has sat down to consume her sandwich, Mrs Hawkins's emphasis on being "a far cry" (Spark 2009b, 2) from the circumstances and the events she describes might be interpreted, as Page suggests, as a euphemism for death. Significantly, Mrs Hawkins not only "does a lot of her remembering of the past as she lies awake in bed, in the dark, in the silence", but she also marries a man whose surname (Todd) "has exactly the same sound as the German for death". While this interpretation may be, as Page himself admits, rather "far-fetched" with regards to Spark's 1988 novel (Page 1990, 115), and mere "speculation" in the case of *Loitering with Intent* (104), it is hardly surprising considering Spark's reputation as a writer whose vision of the real encompasses the transcendental, and who was fond—particularly in her short stories, but also in such novels as *The Hothouse by the East River*—of describing her fictional reality through the eyes of those who have departed life. While Mantel's heroine in *Beyond Black* does not have the same claim

upon being dead as the female murder victims of Spark's "Portobello Road" and "The Girl I Left Behind Me", evidence for her speaking from beyond the grave can certainly be found in the text. The scene which most powerfully suggests this possibility is Alison's interpretation of her memory of seeing strange men "carrying boxes" in the garden of her mother's house—the episode illustrating the phenomenon of (partial) dissociative amnesia:

> Sick came up into her throat. She swallowed it and it burned. Very slowly, she turned her head away. She took one plodding step towards the house. Then another. Air thick as mud clotted around her ankles. She had some idea of what was in the boxes, but as she stepped inside her house *it slipped clear from her mind* [...] (Mantel 2010b, 108; my emphasis)

Responding to Colette's enquiry as to the contents of the packages carried by the men, Alison expresses her doubts about her assistant's interpretation, according to which they may have been "'[b]its of Gloria'"—the girl who had gone missing and with whom Al's mother is obsessed, constantly speaking to her as though she were present. And even though the reader later finds out that the boxes did, most likely, contain the dismembered body of Mrs McGibbet's daughter, what is more important in the context of Alison's psychological development is her confession that "'I don't know what was in those boxes, but sometimes I feel as if it's me. Does that make sense to you?'" (113). If one were to take this statement literally, this would, of course, suggest, that Alison is a ghost herself. The first appearance of her new guide, Morris, whom she spots in the mirror instead of her own face, could thus be seen as symbolic of her own death, especially as "Morris" (as pointed out above) is a near-anagram of "mirror". Alison's mother's repeated attempts to abort her would lend further support to this interpretation. But while this reading is arguably justified and remains within the sphere of possibility as regards Alison's identity and status as a character, the text itself suggests that Mantel's portrayal of her heroine is much more than what might be read as a literal repetition of Spark's device of the dead protagonist, especially since *Beyond Black*'s main concern is not—despite appearances—the subject of the afterlife, but the issue of psychological trauma. Like much else in the novel, Alison's confession can be related to her status as a victim of complex PTSD, for the dismembered body of Gloria, which she identifies with, could be seen as a literal rendition of the notion of dissociation, or the process of

splitting off the traumatic memory and the subsequent creation of two or more 'selves' in the mind of the trauma victim—selves associated with different aspects of the traumatic event or events. Following on from this, the ghosts invading Alison's mind and body can be seen as dissociated parts of herself indicative of the dismemberment of her identity and personality in the wake of childhood trauma. More importantly in the context of Mantel's intertextual relationship with Spark, the novel might be seen as a transformation of the latter's short story, "The Girl I Left Behind Me". What is perhaps most interesting is that Mantel's engagement with this text (whether conscious or not) reveals new layers of meaning within this work and—unlike *An Experiment in Love*, which is little more than a repetition of *The Girls of Slender Means*—actually alters, or creates (if one were to allude to Borges's famous statement on literary influence)[45], Spark's story anew.[46]

"The Girl I Left Behind Me" begins with its nameless protagonist standing at the bus stop after another day at the office, where she works under her boss, Mr Mark Letter. Like Alison, whose mind is invaded by the voices of the dead, the narrator of "The Girl" is haunted by a song sung by her employer throughout the day, "The Girl I Left Behind Me". The protagonist is, tellingly, ignored by the other people in the bus queue and even by the conductor, who does not ask her to procure a ticket. When she accidentally steps on another man's foot and apologises, the man simply turns away without a word. Having arrived home, she decides to return to the office, where—she is convinced—she has left something she must attend to—a conviction which, like the song, has been torturing her even since she left work. And even though she has been remembering the day throughout the bus journey home, it is only upon opening the door to her office that she discovers her own dead body lying, strangled, on the floor. In other words, like Alison Hart, who makes the effort to actively remember her traumatic childhood, Spark's protagonist returns to the site of trauma. But whilst in the latter case this return is literal, in the former it is metaphorical, especially if trauma is, itself, seen as a form of death—an affinity Mantel appears to be drawing attention to when her heroine remembers seeing the

[45] According to Jorge Luis Borges, "every writer *creates* his own precursors" (Borges 1995, 337; Borges's emphasis).

[46] As pointed out above, Mantel's traumatic engagement with *The Girls* in *Experiment* is conscious and deliberate, and thus at odds with the trauma victim's involuntary re-experiencing of the traumatic event through flashbacks and nightmares. Similarly, her possibly unconscious, or involuntary, return to "The Girl I Left Behind Me" in *Beyond Black*, though transformative and thus 'non-traumatic', differs from the conscious engagement with the traumatic event on the part of the trauma victim during therapy.

boxes and feels that they contain her own body. Like the song haunting Spark's dead narrator, the traumatic event keeps coming back, in Al's case, in the repetitive returns of Morris and, following on his heels, the other members of her mother's gang. Mantel's transformation of the literal return to the site of one's bodily death in "The Girl I Left Behind Me" into a metaphorical return to the site of psychological trauma thus points to the connection existing between Spark's short story and trauma theory, for it reveals the possibility of reading "The Girl" metaphorically, as the story of a woman who—through the act of recollecting the events of the past—is finally able to discover the original traumatic event; to "embrace" her body "like a lover" (Spark 2002, 223) or—in other words—to reunite the dissociated, or split off, part of herself with her core self. It is thus, arguably, in *Beyond Black* that Mantel has restored the reference to her precursor's work that was resisted and partially suspended in *An Experiment in Love*. As far as the literal return to the site of trauma is concerned, this motif is not completely done away with by Mantel, however, for Alison does, at one point, physically return to the town where she grew up, although this literal return functions primarily as an aid in the process of actively remembering the past, and is thus subordinated to the metaphorical meaning of re-visiting the site of trauma. Having restored reference, Mantel has thus successfully negotiated immediacy and distance, combining sameness and difference in one literary movement, as opposed to oscillating between rejection and imitation, the traumatic fort!-da! of intertextual relations evident in her engagement with Spark's fiction in her 1995 novel.

TRAUMATIC DISSOCIATION, THE GHOST STORY AND THE CONTEMPORARY WEST—*BEYOND BLACK* AND *THE HOTHOUSE BY THE EAST RIVER*

Mantel's view of traumatic dissociation as a form of death is also connected, in *Beyond Black*, with her apocalyptic vision of Western, and particularly British, society, disconnected as it is from its own historical, cultural and religious origins. The contemporary world as portrayed by Mantel is not single and unified, but double, for the clean and expensive housing estates surrounding London, their houses made of "plastic oak", "false brickwork" and "faux pargeting" (Mantel 2010b, 228), and boasting "dormers and [...] Juliet balconies", look out "over low hills made of compacted London waste" (237). Newly but hastily constructed, the estates are soon

taken over by the ghostly (Spooner 2010, 87), which arrives in their playgrounds and well-tended lawns in the form of Japanese knotweed, rabbit deaths and toxic land pollution. Just as in *Vacant Possession* the mysterious breakdowns of house appliances and the fungus expanding on the wall signify the Sidneys' failed attempt at erasing the house's traumatic past—Mr Axon's sexual abuse of children, Muriel's difficult childhood under the dictatorship of her unstable mother and the latter's tragic death witnessed by Colin—so does the past seem split off from the present in the dissociated world portrayed in *Beyond Black*. The housing estates helplessly defending themselves against the dead and the traumatic mirror, in fact, the British capital itself, for London is surrounded by suburban areas that buffer it "from the provincial hinterlands", "the outer suburbs" constituting "a haunted landscape" (Spooner 2010, 80) filled with "starving ponies", "outcasts and escapees", with "cats tipped from speeding cars" (Mantel 2010b, 1), "perjured ministers and burnt-out paedophiles", all of which can be seen as suggesting the traumatic. The figure of Alison is, in other words (like Salman Rushdie's Saleem in *Midnight's Children*), a reflection of her society, for her mind and body, which have split off the traumatic events of her childhood, are repeatedly invaded by their reminders. Describing the M25 (another significant "M" in the novel), Alison indicates her special status, for "the space the road encloses is the space inside her: the arena of combat, the wasteland, the place of civil strife behind her ribs" (2). The heroine's act of taking in the stranger, a homeless person externalised by legal and social codes, is thus, also in this sense, counter-traumatic. The rejection of Mart by both Colette and Alison's neighbours and their condemnation of her charity is, consequently, Mantel's way of criticising contemporary morality and 'traumatic' mode of existence, which—like the victim of trauma—dissociates, or externalises, what it perceives as a threat to its integrity. By taking in Mart, Alison also incorporates the ghostly, for Mart's homeless status can be seen as a state of metaphorical death.[47] In a society which not only expels the traumatic, but also perceives history as external to its own identity, the figure of the medium thrives, for it is through her that the past can safely filter, ready to be faced for a fee and for a limited amount of time. The narrator, identified

[47] Alison's act of charity resembles, in fact, one of the most important events in *Hotel World* (2001) by Ali Smith, who is another writer influenced by Spark. In Smith's novel, hotel receptionist Lise (who shares her name with the protagonist of Spark's *The Driver's Seat*) offers the homeless Else a room for the night (Else's name is another reference to Spark, this time to Elsa Hazlett, one of the two main characters of *The Hothouse by the East River*). Smith's novel is, interestingly, also haunted by a variety of ghosts.

here with Alison, thus comments on one girl's inability to recall her grandmother's name:

> It was not uncommon to find family memory so short, in these towns where nobody comes from, these south-eastern towns with their floating populations and their car parks where the centre should be. Nobody has roots here; and maybe they don't want to acknowledge roots, or recall their grimy places of origin and their illiterate foremothers up north. These days, besides, the kids don't remember back more than eighteen months—the drugs, she supposed. (16-17)

Alison's presentation of the other world in her shows is also considerably self-censored. "'The last thing you want, when you go out there, [...] is to make them think of funerals'" (4-5), she confesses. Mantel's protagonist is thus not only an area of strife, but also the buffer zone protecting her contemporaries from a direct encounter with death.

Mantel's portrayal of contemporary Britain—representative of Western culture in general—recalls, most obviously, T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), where the quotations from past literary works constructive of Western civilisation invade the text like the ghosts penetrating Alison's mind and body. Interestingly, it is Mantel's tribute to Eliot that suggests the influence of Spark's *The Hothouse by the East River* on the plot of Mantel's work. For Spark's text, whose ghostly characters seem to exist in a kind of Purgatory (Page 1990, 86) or limbo that both is, and is not, 1970s New York, can be read as a metaphor for the postmodern condition and for Western culture in particular, its cultural and spiritual emptiness reflected in Elsa and Paul's aimless and uncannily repetitive conversations. Their days are not much different either, revolving, as they do, around Elsa sitting in the window and Paul making her drinks, and blending, in this way, into one and the same day, a perpetual present reflected in the present tense used by the narrator. This is perhaps best demonstrated in Paul's uncertainty as to the temporal location of certain past events: "Today she [Elsa] began a new course of analysis, or perhaps she began last week" (Spark 1975, 15). Like Mantel, Spark also recalls Eliot's obsessive repetition of other literary works by demonstrating her society's obsession with the past, evident in its addiction to psychotherapy, as well as in its characters' repeated dissection of their own

personal histories. Another allusion to Eliot's poem,[48] which is also a reference to one of the novel's primary intertexts, J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (Page 1990, 87), is Spark's use of the metaphor of Elsa's unmovable shadow, which not only indicates her status as a literal zombie, but which also represents her denial of the passage of time and thus of the inevitability of old age and death. More generally, Elsa's shadow becomes symbolic of her culture's resistance to consider "the four last things": "'Death, Judgement, Hell and Heaven'"[49], which for Spark—as a Catholic novelist—were primary considerations. The characters' denial of death is finally conveyed by the insufferable heat reigning in the Hazletts' apartment, for rises in temperature typically increase the speed of decomposition—a fact reflected in the hatching of the silkworms surrounded by the warmth of Princess Xavier's bosom (Spark 1975, 45). No wonder that Elsa ruins her son's geriatric version of *Peter Pan*, which—in its choice of elderly actors—brings home the denial of ageing and death at the core of Barrie's play and, consequently, Elsa's story. Through her use of the metaphor of the zombie, Spark is thus satirising the contemporary loss of faith, a state of perpetual death which is, simultaneously, a denial of death, a 'traumatic' existence oscillating between imitating and repudiating its inevitability.

Like Spark, Mantel presents her characters as though they were dead, thereby recalling the famous crossing of the London Bridge by the zombie-like inhabitants of London in *The Waste Land*.[50] While in Spark the status of the characters as zombies is both metaphorical and literal (for there is no doubt that they died many years before the action of the novel is set), in Mantel it is purely the former. Colette's "touch" is thus compared to "a spirit touch", "her face" described as "hollow, her feet noiseless" (Mantel 2010b, 272). Similarly, Gavin would "say nothing for such a long time that you wanted to lean over and poke your finger in him to see if he was dead" (278). While Colette's life has been emotionally and professionally uneventful, Gavin appears to be the perfect embodiment of the rootless, postmodern, televised culture, one of its walking dead whose mind and heart are fed only by the promises of consumerism, for what seems to matter to him the most is not his wife, or his recently deceased mother, but the make of his car. Rather than telling Colette about

[48] "(Come in under the shadow of this red rock), / And I will show you something different from either / Your shadow at morning striding behind you / Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you; / I will show you fear in a handful of dust" (Eliot 1954, pp. 41-2; l. 26-30).
[49] The passage from *The Petty Catechism* quoted here is used by Spark as an epigraph to *Memento Mori* (Spark 1993).
[50] (Eliot 1954, p. 43, l. 62-3)

the sudden death of her mother-in-law—which he "'can't mention when [he's] hungry'" (62)—he spends the afternoon looking through a car catalogue, certain that "Renee's will would bring him nearer to what he most coveted in life, which was a Porsche 911" (63). Another Sparkian feature evident in Mantel's novel is her presentation of Alison's ghosts as more alive than the living, a portrayal which repeats Spark's presentation of the dead as "more vibrant and alive than [...] contemporary New Yorkers" (Cheyette 2000, 86). To paraphrase, both Spark and Mantel use the genre of the ghost story for a number of purposes, one of which is to satirise the cultural and moral condition of the contemporary West.

As in the case of *Beyond Black*'s allusions to "The Girl I Left Behind Me", Mantel reveals the traumatic aspect of *The Hothouse* by associating the trope of death with PTSD. While all of the ghosts of Mantel's work have, like Paul and Elsa Hazlett, 'survived' their own literal deaths, Mantel's portrayal of Alison is a reversal of their situation, for while her body still lives, her unified sense of self has been destroyed, for her identity can be seen as defined by the voices of the dead inhabiting her mind and her enormous physique. It is, consequently, herself that she is partly looking for among the ruins of the past and the ghosts of her childhood, who keep coming back to haunt her. Since Mantel's heroine might be seen as a 'reversal' of the ghosts peppering the plot of *Beyond Black*, it is hardly surprising that it is the dead Morris who appears in the mirror in place of her reflection, for—like the other ghosts in this narrative—he can be seen as a reversed image of the protagonist. If one compares this interpretation of Alison Hart with Spark's portrayal of Paul and Elsa Hazlett in *The Hothouse*, it becomes clear that they can also be seen as the survivors of traumatic experience and the victims of psychological trauma. As the reader finds out at the end of this short book, Paul and Elsa—along with their friend Princess Xavier and their co-worker, Miles Bunting—died instantly after a German bomb hit the train in which they were sitting. Despite this fact, they appear to have continued to 'live' in a relatively 'normal' way, denying the fact of their own non-existence and that of their children, Pierre and Katerina, who were born—and yet cannot have been born—after the war had ended and thus after the death of both their parents. As Bryan Cheyette emphasises, it is Paul who is perhaps the most to blame for this state of affairs, for not only does he refuse to accept "his fate", but "his ensuing restlessness causes him to invent an illusory future for himself and his wife" (Cheyette 2000, 86). This denial of one's own death is resurrected by Mantel in

Beyond Black—where it is repeated literally—for Alison points out that "'when they [people] go over *suddenly*, they don't know what's happening till somebody puts them right . . . Yes, don't they, hanging around for days'" (Mantel 2010b, 148; my emphasis). What she means is that

> they don't always know they've gone. They have a pain, or the memory of one, and there are people in white, and strange faces that loom up and there's a noise in the background, metal things banging together—*as if there were a train wreck going on*, but in another country. (149; my emphasis)

This subtle allusion to the bomb which killed Paul and Elsa connects their own ghostly nature and denial of death not only with the dead accosting Mantel's medium, but also with Alison herself, since—as pointed out above—the protagonist can be seen as metaphorically dismembered, or dead. This denial of death by Mantel's ghosts—as well as by the characters in *The Hothouse*—could thus be read as a metaphor for the dissociation of the traumatic experience by the victims of trauma, as well as the belatedness of the event (emphasised by Cathy Caruth)[51], which—both in the case of Alison and that of Elsa and Paul—is only recalled, and thus fully-experienced, many years later. While the ignorance of their own death on the part of many of the ghosts in *Beyond Black* can thus be seen as a mere repetition of this motif in Spark's novel, its effect (whether conscious or not) is arguably that of transforming Spark's text into a novel of trauma and, in this way, of creating it anew.

There is no doubt that *The Hothouse* contains what could be termed "traumatic" elements. First of all, like some victims of PTSD, Paul and Elsa appear to have no recollection of the original traumatic event, which is—in their case—the train bombing. Both characters—and especially Paul—are, furthermore, haunted by the past. At the beginning of the novel, Elsa encounters a man who may or may not be the German spy and prisoner of war, Helmut Kiel, with whom she had an affair during the war. Believing that his life is now in danger, Paul develops an obsession with the figure, convinced that the Kiel in the shop and the war-time Kiel must be, despite the number of years which have elapsed, the same person. The traumatic nature of the characters' existence is also reflected in Spark's frequent use of the present tense, which illustrates the frozenness of time in psychological trauma—an

[51] See p. 187 above.

aspect of PTSD demonstrated by Paul and Elsa's uncannily repetitive daily existence. Like Dickens' Miss Havisham—traumatised by her fiancé's desertion on their wedding day—Spark's two central characters appear, in other words, to exist in a perpetual present, haunted by the past which arrives in the form of their war-time and equally dead friends, Miles Bunting, Princess Xavier and Kiel himself, their 'clock', like Miss Havisham's, stopped at the original traumatic experience.

Before the realisation of his wife's death is fully accepted by Paul, he appears to keep Elsa 'alive' by refusing not only to accept his literal loss of her, but also her war-time infidelity. It is the couple's memory of Elsa's adultery, in fact, that forms the plot of *The Hothouse*, for both Helmut Kiel and Miles Bunting, who make their appearance in New York, are potential ex-lovers. Joined by Princess Xavier, who worked with Paul and Elsa at the Compound during the war, and Colonel Tylden, who humiliated Paul by informing him of Elsa's infidelity, the four—with Elsa at the centre—constitute a representation of Paul's traumatic past. Denying his fiancee's betrayal, which can be read as the death of love, Paul thus constructs an illusory future for himself and Elsa, a future which is nonetheless haunted by the traumatic, even to the extent of Elsa actually sleeping with the newly-incarnated Kiel in order to confirm his identity. "'Go back, go back to the grave,'" Paul urges his wife, 'from where I called you'", while she despairs that "'It's too late. [...] It was you with your terrible and jealous dreams who set the whole edifice soaring'" (Spark 1975, 95). Another traumatic event haunting Paul is arguably his contribution to Helmut Kiel's death—a good reason for his apparent re-appearance in Paul's life thirty years later. Last but not least, the hauntings of *The Hothouse* are, perhaps most obviously related to the traumas of WWII itself.

Even though Paul finally realises and accepts the fact that his wife is dead, he is far more reluctant to admit that of himself. Spark thus transforms the well-known traumatic reaction of denying someone else's death into a denial of one's own. Recalling the train wreck, he relates how "'I remember standing by the side of the track when they pulled your body out of the wreck. I remember too many things to be dead'" (126). Interestingly, his description echoes one of the major implications of trauma theory, which perceives the traumatic event as a form of surviving one's own death. If the event plunges the victim, moreover, into a state of dissociation, the threat to life may be 'witnessed' rather than experienced directly, for the victim "may feel as though the event is not happening to her, as though she is observing from

outside her body" (Herman 2001, 43). What is more, as Roger Luckhurst points out, "the general scholarly consensus is that the origin of the idea of trauma was inextricably linked to the expansion of the railways in the 1860s" (2008, 21). The condition referred to as "railway spine" was thus the "inaugural version of trauma" (24) and one that soon "became contentious because rival theories placed it at opposing ends of the spectrum from physical to psychical etiologies" (22). Due to the large number of casualties each year, the railways, while symbolising scientific progress, became synonymous with traumatic experience. The status of the railway accident as a paradigm for traumatic neurosis is reflected in Freud's discussion of trauma in both *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (where he mentions the train wreck as an instance of a traumatic event) (Freud 2003, 50) and *Moses and Monotheism*, where he uses the example of the "train collision" to discuss the delayed appearance of symptoms in traumatic neurosis (what Freud refers to as "*latency*") (1939, 84; Freud's emphasis). It is, nevertheless, Mantel's novel which most clearly points to a connection between *The Hothouse* and theories of trauma, not least because—by having Alison literally followed, from house to house, by the ghosts of Morris, MacArthur, Keith Capstick and others—she arguably repeats one of the final scenes of Spark's novella, in which Elsa and Paul find themselves changing one pub after another in an attempt to lose their pursuers—the ghostly Princess Xavier, Helmut Kiel, Colonel Tylden and Miles Bunting. Most obviously perhaps, the re-appearance of the letter "M" throughout the novel is clearly a repetition of Spark's frequent use of "P" (*Peter Pan*, Poppy Xavier, Paul, Pierre, Peregrine). Through its connection with the word "memory", it draws attention to the traumatic nature of *The Hothouse*, of which the compulsive recurrence of "P" is arguably a symptom.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE OF FICTION: ALISON HART AS A WRITER FIGURE AND THE FUNCTION OF THE NOVEL

Mantel's and Spark's respective portrayals of their characters are also related to the metafictional quality of *Beyond Black* and *The Hothouse by the East River* respectively. One of the most Sparkian qualities of Mantel's work is, significantly, its self-reflexivity, although Mantel—by combining Spark's *The Comforters* with *The Hothouse by the East River* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*—manages to create a unique effect, transforming Spark's work in the process.

As well as embodying contemporary theories of trauma and suggesting their presence in Spark's work, *Beyond Black* can be seen as a metaphor for the art of fiction-writing, the affinity between Alison's line of work and that of the novelist emphasised by Mantel herself:

> [o]nly the medium and the writer are licensed to sit in a room by themselves with a whole crowd of imaginary people, listening and responding to them. Social convention allows the medium and the writer to talk to the dead, and our occupations are seen as respectable forms of economic activity, by which I mean ones on which we must pay income tax. Of course, I think also that there's the element of public performance in both professions, this need to go out and ply your strange trade in public. Through Alison I was making overt what my experience of writing novels has been, and my experience of living in the competing realities of the solid flesh-and-blood world and the layers of voices, and other realities, that demand your attention. Of course for me the object is to be serene and not let people see that there's mayhem going on inside. *Beyond Black* is about the terror of living beyond consciousness, of going down every day and every night into the realm where the demons are and where the bodies are buried. It's what the writer does all the time. (Mantel 2010c, 8-9)

Writing for the *New Statesman* in 2012, Sophie Elmhirst drew attention to the importance of voices for Mantel the novelist, who relates how, during the process of writing *Bring Up the Bodies* (2012), she went for walks "'along the seafront home with my head feeling as if it was wobbling with the weight of ideas and voices inside it and then coming and sitting down at my desk to catch it all down'".[52] "Historical fiction doesn't cover it", Elmhirst points out, "these books [*Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*] are an inhabitation". She emphasises Mantel's own identification with Alison Hart, who is, according to Mantel,

> how she would have turned out if she hadn't had an education—not necessarily a medium, but not far off, someone whose brain hadn't been trained, and so whose only (but considerable) powers were those of instinct, of sensing, of awareness. (Elmhirst 2012)

As well as her author's alter ego, Alison is arguably an embodiment of the form of the novel itself, for the dead invading her consciousness and flesh might be seen

[52] Interestingly, the importance of voices to Mantel the writer recalls Spark's own method (whether actual or merely legendary) of writing fiction. "Rumor has it", Parul Sehgal points out, that "her drafts were pristine—no strike-throughs, scant revisions. It was as if she were taking dictation, faithfully transcribing those rawboned stories of blackmail and betrayal in her schoolgirl script" (Sehgal 2014).

as representing the literary ancestors whose voices accost the mind of the latecomer and the *body* of his or her text. It is in this sense that Alison thus becomes not merely the embodiment of a haunted house, but also her author's metaphor for the haunted house of fiction. Both Mantel's interviews, where she denies the Sparkian quality of her work—even as late as four years after the publication of *Beyond Black*—and her engagement with Spark's oeuvre in *An Experiment in Love* suggest that her view of her predecessor resembles Alison's vision of the dead, who are perceived as trespassers and invaders filling the mind and feeding on the bodies of their victims. Mantel's vision of Spark is, in other words, traumatic, for her predecessor's work, integral to her own, is perceived as external. Bearing in mind the fact that Alison might be seen as the embodiment not only of her author, but also of *Beyond Black* itself, it could, in fact, be argued that the size, or wordiness, of this work—like the flesh Alison accumulates to both feed and to defend herself against the voracious attacks of the dead—is Mantel's way of preserving the originality of her text against the powerful voices of the great works of the past; of swallowing selected 'bits' of her precursors into the capacious and weighty body of her text. Spark's novels are, nevertheless, also incorporated in another sense, for the above analysis of Mantel's engagement with her work suggests that, unlike its 1995 precursor, *Beyond Black* represents a restoration of the reference to Spark—*inextricably combining*, as opposed to oscillating between, imitation and sameness on the one hand and distance, destruction and difference on the other.[53] As opposed to *Experiment*, Mantel's 2005 novel might thus be seen as representing the establishment of a *nourishing* intertextual relation with its combination of a reliance on and freedom from, the work of Muriel Spark. While Mantel's predecessor—to reiterate Bloom's statement—returned more or less "intact" (Bloom 1997, 141) in *An Experiment in Love*, she has been significantly altered here. She has thus, in the language of trauma studies, been transformed from a traumatic, to a non-traumatic (or ordinary) memory, or—in literary terms—from literality to various forms of figurative engagement.

Mantel's own identification with Alison makes it easier to notice the many ways in which the heroine represents the quintessential novelist, especially as regards his or her relationship with the characters. Her ability to read Colette's mind, which her

[53] This restoration of reference does not mean that literal, or traumatic, repetition of Spark's work is not present in *Beyond Black*, however. As my discussion demonstrates, along with a metaphorical engagement with her predecessor's fiction, Mantel also repeats a number of aspects of Spark's work, especially with regards to *The Hothouse by the East River*.

assistant resents, can be seen as a repetition of Caroline Rose's statement in *The Comforters* to the effect that her experience of hearing the typewriter and the voices is "'exactly as if someone were watching me closely, able to read my thoughts'" (Spark 2009a, 53). Alison also admits that "'I often ask myself, let's see now, is Colette in the room or not? When you've been gone for an hour or two, I wonder if I've imagined you'" (Mantel 2010, 4). This statement recalls not only Elsa's accusation of having been imagined by Paul, as well as Caroline's protest against her apparently fictional existence, but also Fleur Talbot's suspicion that she has invented her employer, Sir Quentin Oliver: "It was almost as if Sir Quentin was unreal and I had merely invented him, Warrender Chase [the protagonist of Fleur's novel] being [...] a real man on whom I had partly based Sir Quentin" (Spark 1981, 182-83). Al's observation is also reminiscent of one of *The Comforters*' most mysterious scenes, which is the sudden disappearance of the villain, Georgina Hogg, from the back seat of Helena Manders's car. Described as having "no private life whatsoever" (2009a, 142), Mrs Hogg is arguably the embodiment of all fictional characters, who have no existence beyond the words on the page, or beyond the reader's gaze. As soon as the writer or the reader abandon a character to a description of the landscape, another character or an unrelated scene, the figure vanishes completely. This essential truth about all fictional characters—i.e. their non-existence—is, finally, reflected by Spark in the deceased status of the central characters of *The Hothouse by the East River*. Mantel is thus arguably repeating, rather than transforming, this theme in Spark's fiction, for she describes Colette's "features" as "minimal" (Mantel 2010b, 80), her slim figure, paleness, and "bony fingers" recalling the image of a skeleton. Her husband, Gavin, whom she divorces after merely a year, is described as never listening to his wife, as though she were invisible (60). Colette also complains that "[w]hen I'm gone I leave no trace. Perfume doesn't last on my skin. I barely sweat. My feet don't indent the carpet". She contrasts this invisibility with Alison's powerful "presence", even in rooms which she has vacated, "her scent—Je Reviens—[...] linger[ing] in curtain fabric, in cushions and in the weave of towels" (4), just as the writer inevitably leaves traces of herself in her work. Filled with voices of all kinds, Alison—like the writer—is also a kind of "conference" (151), the allusion to Salman Rushdie strengthening the impression that, like Saleem Sinai, Al (her name suggesting the word "all") can be seen as containing the whole world around her, which is also the world of *Beyond Black*. Resembling the construction of fictional

plots, Alison's shows are also carefully scripted and—like fiction—involve the suspension of disbelief on the part of the audience (readers). Like the writer, Mantel's protagonist, who is very much the *author* of these shows, skillfully manipulates the emotions of her listeners, being careful not to cause "mass hysteria" (39), but also blending fact and fiction to produce a particular effect. Her central listener (or reader), Colette, is constantly at pains to dismantle Alison's public performances, but frequently finds her efforts frustrated, for truth is here, as in fiction, indistinguishable from artifice. What is more, the characters or readers—both groups being represented by the members of Al's audience—tend to behave unpredictably, and a very good plot, or elements of it, may end in a miserable failure, as when Alison tunes into the spirit of one woman's grandmother, whom her customer sceptically refuses to acknowledge. At the same time, at her best, Alison resembles a divine being, controlling the reactions of the audience and leading to a successful climax and burst of applause. Strengthening the connection between the figure of the author and God—one recalled famously by Roland Barthes in "The Death of the Author" (1967)—Colette thus points out that "[l]ike the punters out there, she [Colette] could entertain simultaneously any number of conflicting opinions. They could believe in Al, and not believe in her, both at once" (31). This association of God with the figure of the novelist is also, significantly, behind Spark's portrayal of the heroine's relationship with the Typing Ghost in *The Comforters*, for "Caroline's awareness of the novel's coming into existence can be compared to her awareness of God's ordering of human affairs, including her own life" (Page 1990, 12). Trying to "'[assert] free will'" (Spark 2009a, 86) against this mysterious being, Caroline openly criticises the novel in progress (Smith 2009, xiii) and resolves to change the plot of the book by refusing to obey the voice's narration of her near future. Most importantly in the context of Mantel's *Beyond Black*, however, she is not only the novel's protagonist, but also its author—this double identity revealed by Spark only towards the end of the text. But while the significance of voices in Spark's work finds its way into *Beyond Black*, the portrayal of the writer figure—Alison Hart—is quite different. While both protagonists can certainly be seen as both part of their respective novels and as containing them, Alison is a much larger figure who encompasses everything in the fictional world of *Beyond Black*. While Caroline's role as the author of *The Comforters* is partly at odds with her rebellious presence as a character within it—the two roles appearing equally important—Alison can be seen

as simultaneously belonging to and containing the whole narrative, just as Rushdie's Saleem Sinai is both part of and 'contains' the history of his country. Like Caroline, Alison hears voices, but whilst in *The Comforters* the voices clearly belong to the narrator (or to Caroline's own, future writerly self), in *Beyond Black* they can be seen as not only the voices of the dead from Al's past, but also as symbolic of Mantel's literary sources. By making Alison contain the voices inside her mind and body—and thus engaging with Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*—Mantel transforms Spark's protagonist into her own version of the novelist as containing both life and death, reconciles her two identities as a character and a writer-figure, and even suggests that Alison can be seen as an embodiment of the book itself. Through her use of Rushdie's novel in combination with *The Comforters*, the theory of trauma and the theme of haunting, she is thus able to create her own vision of novel writing.

Significantly, like Spark's work, *Beyond Black* raises the question of the function of the novel in contemporary times. Is it there to comfort and obscure the truth or to reveal that which lies buried—the dissociated traumas of modern life? Mantel's portrayal of Alison and contemporary society appears to suggest the latter, for Mantel clearly shows that it is only by remembering, assimilating and processing the traumatic that one can gain control over the present and make it one's own. At the same time, as her identification with Al indicates, Mantel sees the writer as the person through whom the horrible is filtered; through whom it assumes forms more acceptable to the public. Al's shows—with their blending of 'truth' and fiction—are a perfect illustration of this, although Al, unlike Mantel, who does not spare her readers in exposing them to the highly disturbing and gruesome events of Al's past, relies largely on the latter. The shield that Mantel provides for the reader against his or her complete immersion in the horror of that which lies "beyond black", or inside *Beyond Black*, is the humour with which Alison's ghosts are presented, including Morris, who is, in many ways, an ominous jester figure. The conversations among Al's fiends also tend to be funny, despite their often gruesome, or vulgar, content. Significantly, this use of humour recalls Spark's fiction, where the horror of death and the human propensity to evil are alleviated by the comic aspects of the novels, as in *Memento Mori*, whose portrayal of its elderly coffin dodgers is both highly disturbing and immensely humorous, or in *The Hothouse*, where Elsa's psychotherapist becomes a servant in the Hazletts' household to be able to study his patient's extraordinary case in more detail; where Princess Xavier breeds silkworms

by placing them under her breasts, and where Elsa ruins her son's staging of *Peter Pan* by throwing "squelchy" tomatoes at the actors (Spark 1975, 92). This use of humour in Spark's work does not serve the function of distracting the reader from the horror of the message, however, but to encourage an intellectual, as opposed to an emotional, appreciation of her art. That this is, to Spark, the primary role of literature is made clear in her essay "On the Desegregation of Art" (1970), where she places "the arts of satire and ridicule" above literature's so-called cathartic effect, which is frequently achieved by manipulating the reader into an emotional identification with the protagonist. According to her, the literature of victimhood has become almost a disease; the mark of "a civilization [...] of depicted suffering". As opposed to the "literature of sentiment and emotion" (2014, 28), which has a short-lived moral effect on the reader, "the art of ridicule [...] can penetrate to the marrow [...]. It can paralyse its object". It thus fulfils Spark's desire to "see less emotion and more intelligence in these [art's] efforts to impress our minds and hearts" (29). Interestingly, despite the combination of horror and comedy which is characteristic of both Spark's and Mantel's fiction, *Beyond Black* appears to rely, to an extent, on the reader's affective identification with Alison. This does not appear to be the case in *An Experiment in Love*, where Mantel's approach is closer to Spark's, for its protagonist is not only far less likeable than *Beyond Black*'s heroine, but Mantel herself also seems to sympathise with Carmel McBain to a lesser extent than she does with Alison Hart.

MANTEL IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT, OR SAMENESS AND DIFFERENCE COMBINED

The Sparkian writer figure who has undergone, in *Beyond Black*, the most significant transformation is the protagonist of *The Driver's Seat*, Lise. The importance of the theme of travelling—in both a literal and a metaphorical sense—the symbolic meaning of Alison's transition from life's passenger to its driver and, finally, Al's status as a writer figure, all point to *Beyond Black*'s reliance on this text, whose slim proportions, like those of *The Hothouse* and "The Girl I Left Behind Me", belie the strong connection between the two works. It is in Mantel's engagement with this novel that her successful reconciliation, or *inextricable* combination of (as opposed to an oscillation between), imitation and originality,

sameness and difference, is arguably most evident—an engagement with the work of Muriel Spark that might be seen as a reversed reflection.

Like Alison, Lise represents the figure of the novelist, for not only does she write her own story—in the sense of planning it, carrying it out and having it appear in print in the police reports and newspaper articles which follow her death—but her seemingly trivial, if bizarre, actions (such as her refusal to buy a stain-resisting dress, her purchase of garishly coloured, non-matching clothes and her unnecessary monologue regarding her hand-luggage at the airport check-in desk) are all pre-meditated and endowed with meaning in the context of the final resolution. By making everything matter, Lise is thus also the figure of a poet, or the artist of the short form, like Spark herself. Finally, as in the case of the novelist, whose work cannot be entirely pre-planned and predicted, Lise fails to retain absolute control over her 'text' (which is also the text of *The Driver's Seat*), for the murder, or story, which she has so carefully scripted, turns into a sexual crime quite against her wishes. As a victim of murder and unforeseen rape (as well as murderer and victim in one), Lise is thus a highly tragic figure, *The Driver's Seat* being one of Spark's few texts where the presence of comic elements fails to alleviate its horror. Part of the novella's disturbing quality is also its heroine's resemblance to a robot or a marionette, controlled by her author—herself—and pulled, as if by a magnet, towards her self-imposed and gruesome end. Quoting from Kleist's *On the Marionette Theater* (1810), Cathy Caruth emphasises that "in the puppets, the limbs are 'what they should be: dead, mere pendula, governed only by the law of gravity'", just as Lise's actions seem to be directed purely by the final outcome of her story. What is more, de Man points out that "'[t]he puppets have no motion by themselves but only in relation to the motions of the puppeteer'" (Caruth 1996, 80). Consequently, Spark's protagonist can be seen as both author and character, puppet and puppeteer, manipulated by herself and signifying only in relation to her death and its aftermath.

Alison, is, as her name suggests, a Lise (A-Lise-on), although Mantel's treatment of Spark's heroine is, in many ways, a *reversed* mirror image. Unlike the protagonist of *The Driver's Seat*, who begins the story in control of her fate and ends it by losing it, Al transforms herself from a victim, of life's 'passenger', to a person in control of her inner life. Defined by her childhood trauma at first, Alison makes the conscious decision to recall the central traumatic events of her girlhood and thus manages to

free herself from her own tragic past. Whilst Lise thus literally drives herself to destruction, Alison's journey terminates in self-healing. Furthermore, unlike Spark's novella, which, in the vein of the *nouveau roman*, is completely devoid of any descriptions of Lise's feelings and thoughts, *Beyond Black* can be seen as a projection of its heroine's mind, for many of the ghosts of the dead peppering the plot are the products of Alison's own psychic trauma. In addition, although Mantel's heroine is an undoubtedly tragic figure, the comic elements discussed above balance the novel's emotionally challenging content. By contrast, as argued by Norman Page, "the closing words" of *The Driver's Seat*, "the Aristotelian phrase 'pity and fear', remind us that this is a tragedy on classical lines in which, whatever may happen on the way, the only destination can be the death of the protagonist" (Page 1990, 71). Last but not least, whilst the primary narrative movement of *The Driver's Seat* is proleptic, with all of Lise's actions leading and contributing to the final outcome which is known, or planned, from the beginning, *Beyond Black* is primary analeptic, for the story, like many trauma novels, plunges the reader into the same sense of having forgotten the past as that sometimes experienced by victims of PTSD. The movement of the novel is thus towards a resolution that, like Lise's murder, was there from the beginning, but which can only be arrived at by going back, the sense of an ending constituted by its beginning. In other words, *Beyond Black*'s engagement with *The Driver's Seat* is a marker of Mantel's successful reconciliation of sameness and difference, imitation and repudiation *vis-a-vis* the fiction of her precursor.

All in all, Hilary Mantel's two novels, *An Experiment in Love* and *Beyond Black*, can be seen as representing two distinct forms of engagement with Muriel Spark's oeuvre—a 'traumatic' and a 'non-traumatic' one respectively. In her 1995 text Mantel thus frequently repeats Spark's work in literal terms, thereby exemplifying her resistance to recognising her precursor's fiction as integral to her own and her reluctance to incorporate it into her text. *Beyond Black* exemplifies, by contrast, its author's successful integration of Spark's fiction into her own work in the form of a figurative engagement with *The Hothouse by the East River* and "The Girl I Left Behind Me". In other words, as opposed to *Experiment*, *Beyond Black* might be seen as reflecting Mantel's successful combination and resolution of the binary opposition of sameness and difference, imitation and repudiation, which is also demonstrated in her re-writing of *The Driver's Seat*. Mantel's return to these works thus marks her transition, in a manner recalling the resolution of Alison Hart's childhood trauma,

from 'passenger' to 'driver'; from being possessed, or controlled, to possessing and controlling, Spark's literary legacy.

Conclusion

The model of influence based on the concept of psychological trauma offers a number of possibilities for future studies of intertextual relationships. Not only is it general enough to incorporate the literary returns performed by both male and female writers in their work, but it also leaves room for the creation of new sub-theories of influence and appropriation—theories that can accommodate both horizontal and vertical approaches. Consequently, it can be applied to the study of writers' relationships with their contemporaries—one of the most neglected aspects of intertextual relations within the field of literary studies. Most importantly, perhaps, the model offers literary critics the opportunity to liberate themselves (at least in part) from the 'trauma' of Bloom's impact on theory and criticism, as well as that of the post-structuralist theory of intertextuality. Despite the risk that the use of the term "trauma" in the study of literary relationships might be read as yet another instance of extending the notion of psychological trauma beyond its strictly medical and/or psychological application, as well as a trivialisation and misrepresentation of trauma itself, trauma theory opens up the study of literary relationships to a number of new and fruitful approaches. In this sense stripped of its pejorative context, the notion of "trauma" within the revised model of *the trauma of literary influence* focuses on the precursor's disruption of the later writer's literary identity and the latter's response to the intrusion, whether it is desired or unwanted, intentional or unconscious. In this way, the model of influence as 'trauma' can not only serve as a tool of literary analysis, but it can also provide the field of intertextual studies with a unifying framework within which to carry out these investigations.

Considering the fact that many contemporary writers not only self-consciously return to the past, but are also interested in, and even preoccupied with, the subject of trauma—Pat Barker, Hilary Mantel, Toni Morrison, W. G. Sebald, Michèle Roberts, Caryl Philips and Ali Smith (to name but a few)—the idea of shifting from the

anxiety, to the 'trauma', of influence, seems compelling in the contemporary context. What is more, as this study demonstrates, the trauma model provides the critic with the opportunity to look at the various ways in which women writers deal with the shadows of literary giants—such as Virginia Woolf and Muriel Spark—without privileging, but equally without neglecting, the sex of both predecessor and latecomer. The model could thus be applied to the work of a number of contemporary authors, including Ali Smith, whose major precursor is Muriel Spark, but who also returns, particularly in *Hotel World* (2001), to Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (1931); Maggie Gee, whose recent *Virginia Woolf in Manhattan* (2014) resurrects the figure of the Bloomsbury author and places her in contemporary times; and Monica Ali, who engages with Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) in her critically-acclaimed *Brick Lane* (2003). Since the model is also intrinsically genderless, it can be used to analyse not only female writers' engagement with their male predecessors, of which Zadie Smith's "*hommage*" to E. M. Forster in *On Beauty* (2005) is one example, but also male writers' intertextual relationship with their female precursors, such as Michael Cunningham's tribute to Woolf in *The Hours* (1998) or Ian McEwan's return to her work in *Atonement* (2001) and *Saturday* (2005).

But the 'trauma' model of influence is also, it could be argued, a theory that can accommodate not merely the individual writer's response to a particular predecessor, but also his or her reaction to specific literary genres and conventions. Furthermore, it can be applied to discussions of the general response of a particular literary movement to its immediate, or less immediate, predecessor, such as Modernism's response to Romanticism, or Postmodernism's reaction to Modernism, as well as to the engagement of historically traumatised groups with the work of earlier generations, such as the intertextual relationships established by African-American authors, and Black writers in general, with both their white and their black literary ancestors or of so-called post-colonialist writers such as Derek Walcott or Salman Rushdie with their colonialist predecessors. Here the relation to the precursor may be 'traumatic' not only in the sense of threatening the contemporary writer's uniqueness and originality, but also by having contributed to the dissemination of those ideologies which caused and perpetuated the trauma of these authors' collective and sometimes individual identities. Any writer whose individual and/or collective sense of self involves social or political exclusion and a history of trauma (Jewish, Muslim, Eastern European, homosexual, transgendered and working-class writers among

others) would arguably be affected, albeit in various ways and to different extents, by this doubly traumatic nature of the literary tradition. There might be something to be said for Borges's insistence that writers should be free to create and continue to recreate their own precursors in an act that is a continuous recreation of themselves (Borges 1995).

The implications of the individual chapters for future directions taken by the study of literary influence are equally broad-ranging. My discussion of Winterson's engagement with Woolf's work, for instance, foregrounds the necessity to take into account, and—in some cases—to particularly emphasise, writers' creation of their own literary identities not merely in their own work, but also in their use of the media and the available publicity machines. What is more, while critics, following Bloom, have tended to distrust authorial refusals to acknowledge the influence of a particular writer or movement, they have generally taken for granted the acknowledgement of the author's admiration for, and *hommage* to, a specific predecessor. I demonstrate that the latter should not be taken at face value either, especially in an age when, while still perceiving originality as one of the hallmarks of a work of art, both writers and critics appear to view intertextual references in literary works as markers of erudition, depth and rootedness.

My discussion of Pat Barker's complex intertextual relationship with Woolf's work, in turn, illustrates the need to incorporate horizontal approaches into the study of literary influence, opening up a new dimension to the field of intertextual studies. The emphasis falls here more on Barker's highly complex interplay of sameness and difference, imitation and repudiation, suggesting the necessity not merely to list the similarities and differences between the work of a particular writer and his or her ancestor, but to study the interaction and proximity of these two opposing tendencies and to add to models of familial genealogy those involving siblings as well as mothers and fathers.

Sameness and difference are also foregrounded in the final chapter of the thesis, which focuses on Hilary Mantel's 'traumatic' repetition and counter-'traumatic' incorporation of the work of Muriel Spark. Following Maud Ellmann's work in its emphasis on the connection between writing and starving, my discussion thus points to the possibility of analysing other writers' engagement with their predecessors through the theme of nourishment and ingestion.

Given the preoccupation of contemporary culture with trauma and the resonance of trauma theory across psychoanalysis, neuroscience, bio-medicine, theories of intersubjectivity and intergenerationality as well as the many and burgeoning new models of filiation and family and friendship on offer, a 'trauma' theory of influence should perhaps be viewed as a flexible, renewable framework, an outline, or a foundation on which to build, rather than a limiting and restricting vision of creative authorship. It bears a more satisfactory witness than many other models to the infinitely complex, varied and idiosyncratic ways in which writers repeat, transform and dispel the shadows of the literary past.

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