1993

A Voice of One's Own: Virginia Woolf, the Problem of Language, and Feminist Aesthetics

Lisa Karin Levine
College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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by

Lisa Karin Levine

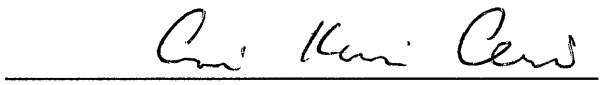
1993

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

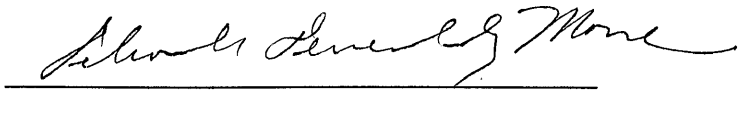


Lisa Karin Levine

Approved, May 1993

Esther Lanigan, Chair

Elsa Nettels



Deborah Morse

DEDICATION

The author wishes to dedicate this text to Drs. Arlene and Joel Levine, without whose love and support none of this would be possible.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to express her appreciation to Professor Esther Lanigan for her many hours of reading and invaluable criticism of this text, and also to Professors Deborah Morse and Elsa Nettels for their time and instruction. In addition, the author wishes to thank Professor Christopher MacGowan for his constant support and Bonnie Chandler for always having the right answer.

ABSTRACT

The idea of a feminist aesthetic, defined as a female-inflected style of discourse in literary studies, has been the subject of debate in feminist literary circles. Some critics tie women's lack of voice and representation in literature to the lack of the aesthetic. The French feminist critics Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous in particular champion the notion that for women to gain representation, they must write themselves into their texts, thereby inscribing feminine sexuality into their literary production. However, other critics oppose this particular method of liberation of language, critiquing the theories for their reductive, limiting essentialism. Mary Daly and Elaine Showalter, Anglo-American literary critics, deny the validity of l'écriture feminine. This thesis illuminates the ways that feminist criticism(s) interpret text, particularly Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse, which serves as a textual grounding for the theoretical concepts discussed.

A Voice of One's Own: Virginia Woolf, the Problem of Language, and Feminist Aesthetics

No one lives in this room
without confronting the whiteness of the wall
behind the poems, planks of books
photographs of dead heroines.
Without contemplating last and late
the true nature of poetry. The drive
to connect. The dream of a common language.

- from "Origins and History of Consciousness"
by Adrienne Rich

Feminist criticism is divided into disciplines: textual criticism and theoretical criticism. The first entails a critical examination of the portrayal and treatment of women through the texts produced in a patriarchal society. This focuses on culturally-determined gender differences, and ultimately on male domination and oppression. Feminist cultural history as such examines how culture has operated on behalf of those dominant within the culture, namely the males of the society. This idea is commonly termed "phallocentrism," defined as "the order of the masculine and the symbolic, where masculine sexuality is both privileged and reproduced by a belief in the phallus as primary signifier. Thus, the feminine is subordinated to a masculine order, and woman is placed on the side of negativity and lack (of a penis)."[1]

The second direction feminist criticism takes is that of an exploration of the idea of a feminine aesthetic, a development of distinctively feminine discourse in writing, but writing which is not necessarily limited to authorship by women. These distinctions emerge either as the result of sexual difference or cultural coercion, depending on the critic being cited, and can often be reduced to the same limiting essentialist argument from which a feminine specificity theory, a theory which names feminine writing as

being peculiar to women, should be trying to break free. The limiting essentialist core of a feminine aesthetic overshadows its purported liberating effects on feminine authorship. It obliges an "anatomy as destiny" approach, certainly to the detriment of expanded female creativity. While the first aspect of feminist criticism is interesting and merits study, this thesis will be limited to a discussion of the second direction in theoretical criticism, the concept of the feminine aesthetic, and the origins of such, primarily as manifested in the works of a few established critics, most prominently Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, and Mary Daly. Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse additionally exemplifies some of the theories discussed throughout the paper. The questions to bear in mind throughout the explications are, "What is the best way to approach the understanding of a feminine aesthetic? And, is making this distinction counter-productive for the legitimization and proliferation of feminine writing?"

The concept of a feminine aesthetic, of a distinctively feminine writing, has long been an issue under debate in feminist theoretical circles. The questions raised have ranged from whether or not a difference (between masculine and feminine) even exists, to whether the difference (existence assumed) stems from biological, psychological, or sociological stimuli. Are these differences inherent in a particular

gender type, or are they learned through exposure to culture? Is women's writing different? The French critic Xavière Gauthier, a professor at the University of Paris, asks,

> In what ways does their [women's] writing call attention to the fact that they are women?
>
> There are two popular positions on this subject. Both are extreme and hence they clash. On the one hand, we could conceive of feminine literature in the traditional sense of the word, that is - flowers, sweetness, children, tenderness, submission, and acceptance, etc....
>
> On the other hand, denying the difference between the sexes, we could say that there exists only one type of literature - it is neuter, and therefore it is the one in which women participate at the same rate at which they 'progress' both socially and economically.
>
> Regardless of their apparent differences, these two points of view are perfectly symmetrical; they are alike and should be condemned as the flip sides of the same prejudice dependent on the same humanist ideology. In the first case, certain qualities are attributed to women, and are seen as particularly 'feminine' (intuition, sensitivity, etc.); but it is men who render these judgements. Therefore the writing of 'woman' will respond to their expectations and will reassure them. This is a masculine point of view. In the second case, the woman (though slightly retarded) is considered to be 'like' a man or is in-the-process of becoming a man. This point of view is equally masculine and reassuring - it is one that can emanate only from a phallic system - and many women give in without any problem at all. Some women writers when asked the question we are raising now, namely, 'What about the specificity of women's writing?' confess to never having wondered about it.[2]

Gauthier's first position on feminist literature comprises the stereotype that there is one concept of 'feminine,' and it is to this that all feminine literature must conform. The confines and implications of this stereotype are generally

accepted now as not only stifling but grossly inaccurate. (For example, a reader of Anais Nin's Delta of Venus would be hard-pressed to find any sweetness or tenderness within the text; similarly, Ayn Rand's female protagonists are far from submissive and weak.) The second position Gauthier states, the denial of difference, proves counter-productive for readers of both masculine and feminine texts, and is examined in greater detail later in this paper.

In response to Gauthier's final comment, the lack of thought given to the specificity of women's writing, there do exist certain critics and writers who have wondered about this, and devoted much of their own writing to the issue. Among these, Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous stand out. These theorists "have identified a difference between men and women in their use of and abuse by language."[3] Beginning with women's exclusion from patriarchal discourse because of their lack of the phallus, Irigaray and Cixous espouse a system of writing created by women. They feel that women need to create, not re-create, that language which was handed to them by the fathers of the society. Women need to appropriate this language, and make it their own, a medium conducive for their own expression: a feminine voice. According to the critic Elaine Showalter, "Irigaray and Cixous go on to emphasize that women, historically limited to being sexual objects for

men (virgins or prostitutes, wives or mothers), have been prevented from expressing their sexuality in itself or for themselves. If they can do this, and if they can speak about it in the new languages it calls for, they will establish a point of view (a site of difference) from which phallogocentric concepts and controls can be seen and taken apart, not only in theory but also in practice."[4] Hence, Cixous and Irigaray tie the liberation of the feminine voice to the expression of the feminine body: Irigaray "argues for the liberating effects of a mode of speech and writing she calls 'womanspeak'; Cixous suggests that by writing herself in the discourse of l'écriture feminine, 'woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her' by patriarchy."[5] The feminine body and sexuality receive positions of primary importance in the French critics' search for access to language.

Mary Daly, a prominent American feminist critic, similarly sees the need for a language that women can call their own, much like Irigaray and Cixous. Daly, however, departing from the French critics, does not tie sexuality as physiological entity to the process. She instead calls for a "method of liberation" involving "a castrating of language and images that reflect and perpetuate the structures of a sexist world."[6] She wants to free language from its patriarchal

ties, without forging new ties to the corporeal body, and in doing so allow women the access to language they have been denied through their oppression by it.

One writer who recognized this oppression, both in language and society, is Virginia Woolf. Woolf, who wrote decades before the three preceding theorists ever put pen to paper, anticipated the problem and differentiation of the feminine voice in literature. "Woolf found the structure and power to declare that, as a woman, she had a different, more varied relation to language than many of her male contemporaries."[7] She explores this relation, as well as the constraints of Freudian theory, within the characters of her novel To the Lighthouse. Thus, within the works of each writer/critic, language, conceived/enforced gender roles, and sexuality in one form or another are presently entwined, all to the detriment of an active and effective mode of feminine discourse and expression.

Implicit in Irigaray's writing is her belief that, as Elaine Showalter states, "women have a specificity that distinguishes them sharply from men."[8] Irigaray, in This Sex Which Is Not One, includes an interview chapter entitled "The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine." In the critique, she begins with an examination of Freud, and the manner by which he examines female sexuality. She finds that

he discusses female sexuality only in terms of male sexuality, as a subset of a greater whole. Irigaray writes,

> Freud does not see <u>two sexes</u> whose differences are articulated in the act of intercourse, and, more generally speaking, in the imaginary and symbolic processes that regulate the workings of a society and culture. The 'feminine' is always described in terms of deficiency or atrophy, as the other side of the sex that alone holds a monopoly on value: the male sex. Hence the all too well-known 'penis envy.' How can we accept the idea that women's entire sexual development is governed by her lack of, and thus her longing for, jealousy of, and demand for, the male organ?...All Freud's statements describing feminine sexuality overlook the fact that the female sex might possibly have its own 'specificity.'[9]

Irigaray targets what has long been a problem in the definition of woman, namely that she has historically been defined in terms of "Other." Hence, set apart from the dominant group by that which she lacks, not that which she possesses, her achievements as well visions suffer compared to those holding the dominant views. "So what do men's eye's see?" asks Viviane Forrester, a French author and critic. They see "[a] crippled world, mutilated, deprived of women's vision."[10] The male vision and body has been accepted as the norm, and the female is viewed in terms of opposition, as missing that essential phallus. "'I am the unified, self-controlled center of the universe,' man (white, European, and ruling class) has claimed. 'The rest of the world, which I define as the Other, has meaning only in relation to me, as man/father, possessor of the phallus.' This claim to

centrality has been supported not only by religion and philosophy but also by language,"[11] Showalter asserts. We can see in language a manifestation of this, where, for example, the male of the species is a "poet," and the female labeled the diminishing and demeaning "poetess." Not permitted to take part of the man's greater whole, she becomes once more a subset of it, the Other, her achievements lessened with a diminutive, childish and discriminating ending. Consider also "author"/"authoress," "aviator"/"aviatrix," and "steward"/"stewardess," among a gallery of others. With this view of male's vision and assumption of his own centrality, Irigaray points out that Freud fails to study the role of culture in studying women. He describes society as it defines women; he does not question cultural assumptions underneath those descriptions. "Freud's discourse...lies in his tendency to fall back upon anatomy as an irrefutable criterion of truth,"[12] writes Irigaray. The meaning assigned to the anatomy, as well, comes from its interpretation. All interpretations are political, and all readers have their own agendas to fulfill. Freud was no different. And, as Irigaray points out, "Freud himself is enmeshed in a power structure and an ideology of the patriarchal type,"[13] and, as such, he claims "that the penis derives its value from its status as reproductive organ. And yet the female genital organs, which

participate just as much in reproduction and if anything are even more indispensable to it, nevertheless fail to derive the same narcissistic benefit from that status."[14] Madeleine Gagnon, a French-Canadian critic and poet, sums it up: "He [man] has become his own representative, his own reference point."[15] The masculine attained status as the yardstick by which all else is measured, and anything not measuring up is inferior or lacking, missing the benefit of having its own centrality. Hence, given masculine centrality, Freud has assigned the penis power for the erection of his own agenda.

Irigaray demonstrates the very cultural-specificity of Freudian theory by asking the value of such ideas in a society that does not define woman as Other, a society with an alternate centrality. Irigaray asks, "What meaning could the Oedipus complex have in a symbolic system other than patriarchy?"[16] Obviously, Freudian theory would be devoid of value in such a culture. The British modernist novelist Virginia Woolf, aware of this male/female hierarchy, incorporates it in her novel To the Lighthouse as a part of the dynamics that exist between members of the Ramsay household. The reader sees Mrs. Ramsay within the course of the text simultaneously helping her son James through his Freudian Oedipal struggles while reinforcing the reigning patriarchal ideals. Early in To the Lighthouse, James sits on

the floor, cutting out pictures from catalogues. When his father enters and expresses his belief that they will not be able to make the journey to the Lighthouse the next day, James's response to this is clearly Oedipal: "Had there been an axe handy, or a poker, any weapon that would have gashed a hole in his father's breast and killed him, there and then, James would have seized it. Such were the extremes of emotion Mr. Ramsay excited in his children's breasts by his mere presence."[17] However, Mrs. Ramsay, clearly her son's preferred parent (James thinks that Mrs. Ramsay is "ten thousand times better in every way than [Mr. Ramsay] was"[18]), persists in trying to teach her son to identify with men and with the hated father, and to scorn the women. She instructs James to spend his time cutting out pictures of sharp phallic objects: "All she could do now was admire the refrigerator, and turn the pages of the Stores list in the hope that she might come upon something like a rake, or a mowing machine, which, with all its prongs and handles, would need the greatest skill and care in cutting out."[19] The prongs and handles are immediately reminiscent of Mr. Ramsay, whom Woolf describes just prior to that passage as "standing...lean as a knife, narrow as the blade of one."[20] Hence, Woolf shows Mrs. Ramsay doing her best through instruction to force similarities between her husband and James in an effort to get James to relate to the man who

is his father, the two forming the most precarious of Freudian dyads.

Mrs. Ramsay continues to reinforce James's ties with the male of the species and the system of patriarchy through the misogynistic fairy tale she recites for him. The tale, "The Fisherman and His Wife," particularly appropriate for the sea-side setting of the novel, relates the story of a fisherman and his greedy wife who is never satisfied with what she has. She keeps demanding more and more of her spouse, until in the end, she is left with nothing. Thus, through the telling of this tale, James learns that male is good (after all, it is not the husband who is greedy), and female bad. This tale serves as a reinforcement of the established patriarchal order through language, the male discourse ironically mimicked and transmitted through the mouth of a woman, which permits the telling of such a skewed tale.

Like Woolf before her, Irigaray definitively links language to the role of sexuality in a patriarchal society. The act of mimicry is "historically assigned to the feminine,...whereas a direct feminine challenge to this condition means demanding to speak as a (masculine) 'subject,' that is, it means to postulate a relation to the intelligible that would maintain sexual indifference. To play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be

simply reduced to it."[21] Thus, under the present system of discourse, to have access to language, a woman must mimic the masculine discourse. In response to this, Irigaray calls for a different approach, an entire departure from the present system. This approach would be "not one elaborating a new theory of which woman would be the subject or object, but of jamming the theoretical machinery itself, of suspending its pretension to the production of a truth and of a meaning that are not excessively univocal."[22] For woman to become subject or object in a new theory would not dispel the problem of mimicry. To avoid mimicry, the new discourse must turn away from the mirrored masculine voice and rather seek the feminine voice as its point of origin. But Irigaray feels that a lack of knowledge of the feminine by the feminine causes problems. She argues "that women, because they have been caught in a world structured by man-centered concepts, have had no way of knowing or representing themselves."[23] Thus, to break the pattern of mimicry and utilize a feminine voice, there must be a system of female representation.

Irigaray's affirmations of the lack of female representation echo those of Elaine Showalter's from her study of the female literary past (or apparent lack of one), entitled "The Female Tradition." Showalter notes, "Women have generally been regarded as 'sociological chameleons,' taking

on the class, lifestyle, and culture of their male relatives."[24] Women have historically had no identity of their own. Their surnames are traditionally changed to those of their husbands at marriage. Even a woman wishing to reinforce her matriarchal ties and adopt her mother's maiden name is most likely getting her grandfather's surname. A woman's past changes and becomes increasingly invisible with each new female generation. Her lack of history leads up to Irigaray's important and difficult question, "How, then, are we to redefine this language work that would leave space for the feminine?"[25] She answers that it is necessary "to proceed in such a way that linear reading is no longer possible: that is, the retroactive impact of the end of each word, utterance, or sentence upon its beginning must be taken into consideration in order to undo the power of its teleological effect, including its deferred action."[26] Irigaray calls for cyclical readings of each and every text, ending the linear or straight process currently established. The cyclical, long associated with the feminine in everything from menstrual cycles to thought-patterns to lunar associations, must be applied to readings, as opposed to the masculine linearity, associated with both his sexuality and straight-minded determinedness.

Woolf, writing decades before Irigaray wrote her pivotal essay on feminine-inflected writing, employs these

cyclical/linear oppositions as distinctions between the characters of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. One of the most blatant contrasts between the husband and wife is the pattern of their thoughts and speech, as representative of differences between men and women. Woolf writes Mrs. Ramsay's character as diverse and cyclical in her nature, while her Mr. Ramsay character strives to be more and more linear. Claudine Herrmann, a professor of French literature, refers to such relationships when she writes that "If man lives in an organized temporal perspective, delineated by the realization of goals he sets for himself, woman, like the natives of impoverished countries, prefers to consume immediately, without keeping anything in reserve and prefers one happy moment to a momentary deprivation that would assure future advantages."[27] While the latter part of this assertion paints an image of a child-like women who only lives for the moment, incapable of forethought, the former part does accurately describe the differences between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. In her before-dinner stroll with her husband, Mrs. Ramsay's thoughts flow from "the dahlias in the big bed [to] wondering about next years flowers, and had [her husband] heard the children's nickname for Charles Tansley."[28] Her consciousness moves from one subject to an other, and finally at the end of the section, easily weighs both thoughts of fresh molehills and

her husband's mind: "she must stop for a moment to see whether those were fresh molehills on the bank, then, she thought, stooping down to look, a great mind like his must be different in every way from ours. All the great men she had ever known, she thought, deciding that a rabbit must have got in, were like that."[29] Mrs. Ramsay smoothly spirals between such thoughts, great and insignificant alike, returning again and again to each, completing the circular pattern. Consciousness flows. Everything happens simultaneously. Thought processes for her are not singular entities stored one after the other, but joined bodies consumed immediately with no center or delineation.

Contrasted with Mrs. Ramsay's flowing cyclarity and jointedness is Mr. Ramsay's determination to become more and more linear. He sets his goals in the model of linear organization, fulfilling Irigaray's claim that "his language is rational, linear, comprehensible." Mr. Ramsay conceives of the thought of "his splendid mind" as being "like the keyboard of a piano, divided into so many notes, or like the alphabet...ranged in twenty-six letters all in order."[30] He pictures thought solely in terms of linear designations, as keys, neatly arranged, one after the other, or the letters of the alphabet, a straight line from A to Z. In each case, key or letter, they are all single-standing entities unto

themselves. Mr. Ramsay has reached Q, in itself a remarkable feat in his eyes, but, "if he could reach R it would be something."[31] He yearns to make the next step, to clear the next hurdle. Through his thought patterns, Woolf reveals that Mr. Ramsay is capable only limitedly of the circular thought of Mrs. Ramsay; his real goal is stated to be to advance further along in the linearity of his alphabetical goals.

Irigaray recognizes these differences, linearity versus cyclarity, between the masculine and feminine thought processes and views them in much the same way that Woolf did. Irigaray asserts that "'[s]he' is indefinitely other in herself. That is undoubtedly the reason she is called temperamental, incomprehensible, perturbed, capricious - not to mention her language in which 'she' goes off in all directions and in which 'he' is unable to discern the coherence of any meaning."[32] The masculine is unable to interpret the feminine. And, finding the same problems with language that she found with Freud, Irigaray asserts that the masculine language has become its own basis of comparison, again the yardstick by which everything else is measured. What she wants to do is make room for other definitions and significations. Irigaray says,

> This language work would thus attempt to thwart any manipulation of discourse that would also leave discourse intact. Not, necessarily, in the utterance, but in its <u>autological</u> <u>presuppositions</u>. Its function would thus be

> to cast phallocentrism, phallocratism, loose from its moorings in order to return the masculine to its own language, leaving open the possibility of a different language. Which means the masculine would no longer be 'everything.' That it could no longer, all by itself, define, circumvene. circumscribe, the properties of anything and everything. That the right to define every value - including the abusive privilege of appropriation - would no longer belong to it.[33]

Irigaray contends that as all definitions and concepts of identity are assigned and defined by males, the holder of the phallus, and women are critically viewed by them as lacking, this has become a means for the exclusion of women from speaking and writing. Women fail to fit the imposed role of masculine identity, and hence the patterns of language designed for and by that identity are rendered inaccessible to them as they are. And, as we need to put an end to linear readings, the masculine mode of reading, its abused authority will be withdrawn, and women will find a place for themselves within language. Xavière Gauthier writes

> In fact, what surprises us is the fact that men and women seem to speak approximately the same language; in other words, women find 'their' place within the linear, grammatical, linguistic system that orders the symbolic, the superego, the law. It is a system based entirely upon one fundamental signifier: the phallus. And we can marvel...at the fact that women are alienated enough to be able to speak 'the language of Man.'[34]

There is a certain irony to the idea that women use the language handed to them by their oppressors to decry their oppression; they are forced to appropriate the masculine discourse or have no discourse at all. Irigaray states,

"Women's social inferiority is reinforced and complicated by the fact that woman does not have access to the language, except through recourse to 'masculine' systems of representation."[35] Only by the masculine system of discourse can women express their need for a new discourse.

As a remedy for this problem of inadequate representation and access to language, Irigaray "argues for the liberating effects of a mode of speech and writing she calls 'womanspeak'...[she] argues that womanspeak is produced from woman's libido,"[36] directly linking the concept of woman's speech with her innate sexuality. "Where female sexuality is unfixed and decentered, since '<u>woman has sex organs just about everywhere</u>,' male sexuality is fixed and centered on the penis. His language is rational, linear, comprehensible; hers is irrational, non-linear and incomprehensible - to men."[37] Woolf, too, employs this dichotomy in her writing. It is what enables Mr. Ramsay to think of his wife, "The extraordinary irrationality of her remark, the folly of women's minds enraged him."[38] Using himself as the basis for comparison, Mr. Ramsay finds not just his wife, but all women in general, to be irrational and frustrating. Again, the masculine dictates his own centrality. A critic of Woolf notes that

> Virginia Woolf would have agreed with D.H. Lawrence that human beings have two ways of knowing, 'knowing in terms of apartness, which is mental, rational, scientific, and knowing in terms of togetherness, which

> is religious and poetic.' As we shall see, Virginia Woolf associated these two ways with the two sexes. In A Room of One's Own she suggests that every mind is potentially bisexual. But she finds that among writers, and particularly among her contemporaries, most men tend to develop only the analytic, 'masculine' approach, what Lawrence calls 'knowing in terms of apartness,' and most women only the synthetic, 'feminine,' that is, 'knowing in terms of togetherness.' In her opinion, however, to be truly creative one must use the 'whole' mind. In keeping with this, the greatest writers are 'androgynous': they use and harmonize the masculine and feminine approaches to truth.[39]

Woolf writes in A Room of One's Own that it "is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly."[40] As such, Woolf advocates her own form of androgyny, a synthesis of sexuality, toward the end of creativity. In contrast with this, as Irigaray describes sexuality and speech, she "refuses to speculate on or represent what a feminine (use of) language may be. This would involve speaking for other women, which amounts to speaking as a man."[41] What Irigaray does speculate on is the problem of the male usurpation of the language. She gives it a socio-cultural grounding in Freudian theory, and she sets a course for the reclamation of the lost speech (through an increased awareness and proximity to female sexuality). But, what is missing from her essay is the form this new awareness and language should take, for such a prescriptive action imposed upon the rest of the community amounts to just the confining bounds from which she is trying to break. That

prescription equates to imposed masculine authority. However, what is made clear, in the words of critic Elizabeth Gross, is that

> such language would challenge rather than conform to patriarchal or phallocentric values. It would not be organized according to many of the dominant norms or ideals of knowledge today: it may avoid a singular, hierarchical structuring either syntactically or semantically, the subject-predicate correlation, adherence to a normative grammar, ideals of textual transparency or intertranslatability...This is not to create a discourse <u>without</u> meaning, but rather to proliferate many meanings, none of which could hierarchically unify the others...Irigaray locates <u>sexual</u> difference <u>sexually</u> - that is, she uses this concept in her attempts to articulate feminine specificity.[42]

The concept of feminine specificity and the proliferation of meanings within the discourse, of which none serves as the unifier, stems from Jacques Derrida's discussion of the "dissemination" or scattering of writing under the "hymen." Derrida posits a feminine side to writing where "meaning" does not emerge as a unified whole, but inevitably remains scattered and lost along discontinuous and irregular channels. This position clearly springs from post-structuralist theory that rejects meanings. In post-structuralist discourse meaning is unfixed, sliding, and plural, just as with Irigaray's woman's language and sexuality. "Women, she says, experience a diffuse sexuality arising, for example, from the 'two lips' of the vulva, and a multiplicity of libidinal energies that cannot be expressed or understood within the

identity-claiming assumptions of phallocentric discourse."[43] And, as the anatomy and physiological make-up are so dissimilar between the masculine and feminine whole, the dominant masculine discourse allows no room for difference, and denies the feminine voice. Anais Nin also noted the problem of language relating to feminine sexuality and the stifling results of such. Nin writes "I had a feeling that Pandora's box contained the mysteries of woman's sensuality, so different from man's and for which man's language was inadequate. The language of sex had yet to be invented. The language of the senses was yet to be explored."[44] Thus for Nin, as well as for Irigaray, access to language begins with the language of sexuality, a knowledge of the body, and a discourse of feminine sexuality.

Anatomical and sexual differences, so important for Irigaray and Nin, are key factors, as well, for Hélène Cixous. Cixous, as Elaine Showalter states, "is convinced that women's unconscious is totally different from men's, and that it is their psychosexual specificity that will empower women to overthrow the masculinist ideologies and to create new female discourses."[45] In her essay "The Newly Born Woman," Cixous writes,

> Freud moreover starts from what he calls the anatomical difference between the sexes. And we know how that is pictured in his eyes: as the difference between having/not having the phallus. With reference to these

> precious parts. Starting from what will be specified, by Lacan, as the transcendental signifier.
>
> But sexual difference is not determined merely by the fanticized relationship to anatomy, which is based, to a great extent, upon the point of view, therefore upon a strange importance accorded [by Freud and Lacan] to exteriority and to the specular in the elaboration of sexuality. A voyeur's theory, of course.
>
> No, it is at the level of sexual pleasure [jouissance] in my opinion that the difference makes itself most clearly apparent in as far as woman's libidinal economy is neither identifiable by a man nor referable to the masculine economy.
>
> For me, the question 'What does she want?' that they ask of woman...conceals the most immediate and the most urgent question: 'How do I experience sexual pleasure?' What is feminine sexual pleasure, where does it take place, how is it inscribed at the level of her body, of her unconscious? And then how is it put into writing?[46]

Cixous, like Irigaray, locates the problem of the exclusion of the feminine in the centrality assigned to the masculine by men. She maintains that anatomy is not the real root of difference, rather difference is located in the experience of sexual pleasure, not the organs used to achieve it. But, as women's sexual pleasure is obviously not a part of the masculine economy, it suffers by its exclusion from discourse, and hence from writing itself. Of her own authorship Nin writes "I believed that my style was derived from a reading of men's works. For this reason I long felt that I had compromised my feminine self....In numerous passages I was intuitively using a woman's language, seeing sexual experience from a woman's point of view. I finally decided to release the erotica for publication because it shows the beginning

efforts of a woman in a world that had been the domain of men."[47] As such, Nin found her feminine voice, and engaged in forcing feminine sexuality (and with it access to discourse) into the masculine domain.

For Nin to have found a voice is an exception, not the rule. Cixous begins her pivotal, originative essay "The Laugh of the Medusa" with a direct statement of her purpose addressing these questions: "I shall speak about women's writing."[48] Later in the piece, however, with hesitation similar to Irigaray's, she states that "It is impossible to <u>define</u> a feminine practice of writing."[49] What she does do, though, is implore woman to "write her self,"[50] to "put herself into the text,"[51] acting as her <u>own</u> originator and definer, rather than as a product or creation, which is as Nin claims to have done. Marguerite Duras is another author who strives to write and define her self. However, she recognizes, as does Cixous, the problem that women have in becoming their own originators. Duras said in an interview "I think 'feminine literature' is an organic, translated writing...translated from blackness, from darkness. Women have been in darkness for centuries. They don't know themselves. Or only poorly. And when they write, they translate this darkness."[52] Duras' claim echoes of Cixous' assertion that women have written in white ink, a communication which obviously does not

communicate. Women, denied the feminine voice for so long, find they have little to work with to achieve full expression. Hence woman does need to begin to write her self, and as such, light the darkness. Showalter, again from "The Female Tradition," notes that "As novelists, women have always been self-conscious, but only rarely self-defining."[53] They have not written themselves. To this end, Cixous poses the all-important question, "And why don't you write?"[54] In response, she lists standard patriarchally-inflected responses: "it's reserved for the great - that is, for 'great men'; and it's 'silly.'"[55] These replies again echo those of Showalter. Among her reasons for why women do not write, besides their exclusion from formal education and discouragement by friends and family in favor of pursuits such as motherhood, Showalter cites that "the 'lady novelist' is a composite of many stereotypes,"[56] and as such was molded to fulfill a masculine view of what her identity should be. Feminine writing consisted merely of conformed-to masculine structure. Duras notes

> There are many women who write as they think they should write - to imitate men and make a place for themselves in literature. Colette wrote like a little girl, a turbulent and terrible and delightful little girl. So she wrote 'feminine literature' as men wanted it. That's not feminine literature in reality. It's feminine literature seen by men and recognized as such. It's the men who enjoy themselves when they read it. I think feminine literature is a violent, direct literature and that, to judge it, we must not - and this is the

> point I want to make - start all over again, take off from a theoretical platform.[57]

Duras points out the discrepancy between what is expected of feminine literature (by men) and what it really is (something about which she, like Irigaray and Cixous, refrains from writing prescriptive directions). These dilemmas of feminine literature are also addressed by Christine Rochefort, who describes the problem of women writing in the following way:

> Well. So here you are now, sitting at your writing table, alone, not allowing anybody anymore to interfere. Are you free?
>
> First, after this long quest, you are swimming in a terrible soup of values - for, to be safe, you had to refuse the so-called female values, which are not female but a social scheme, and to identify with male values, which are not male but an appropriation by men - or an attribution to men - of all human values, mixed up with the anti-values of domination-violence-oppression and the like. In this mixture, where is your real identity?
>
> Second, you are supposed to write in certain forms, preferably: I mean you feel that in certain forms you are not too much seen as a usurper. Novels. Minor poetry, in which case you will be stigmatized in French by the name of 'poetesse'...
>
> You [women] are supposed, too, to write <u>about</u> certain things: house, children, love. Until recently there was in France a so-called <u>littérature féminine</u>.[58]

Rochefort recognizes the structure the feminine writer feels the need to adapt to, including values and form. In this adaptation, real feminine identity remains lost. The feminine writer remained long patronized and sentimentalized in her writing efforts by critics and publishers who looked upon woman writing as a "cute" endeavor, but not to get in the way of the "real" work being done by the men. She wrote for about

certain prescribed areas (love, children, the home), areas not to be taken too seriously, and devalued by diminishing titles (again relegated to being different by those with claims to centrality). Rochefort reflects, "A man's book is a book. A woman's book is a woman's book."[59] She remains a subset of the larger authoritative whole; she still is Other.

Feminine Otherness through the ages transcends literature and even infiltrates the economy of language and words. Gauthier's study indicates the following:

> Throughout the course of history, they [women] have been mute, and it is doubtless by virtue of this mutism that men have been able to speak and write. As long as women remain silent, they will be outside the historical process. But, if they begin to speak and write as men do, they will enter history subdued and alienated; it is a history that, logically speaking, their speech should disrupt....
>
> If, however, 'replet' words (mots plein) belong to men, how can women speak 'otherwise,' unless, perhaps, we can make audible that which agitates within us, suffers silently in the holes of discourse, in the unsaid, or in the non-sense.[60]

Gauthier rephrases her disapproval for the idea of women beginning to "speak and write" like men, for not only is the concept of women as "in-the-process" of becoming men demeaning and inaccurate, it still does not provide for adequate access to language. Gauthier appears headed for the essentialist argument by imploring women to "make audible" that which is within them, presumably expression similar to Cixous' jouissance. Cixous herself posits that "writing has been run

by a libidinal and cultural - hence political, typically masculine - economy: that this is a locus where the repression of women has been perpetuated, over and over, more or less consciously."[61] According to Gauthier, this repression, stemming from a libidinal economy, has served to deny women their voice and expression, and disallow their speech.

Denial is also of central importance to Woolf's novel. The sentiments emerge from the mouth, significantly enough, of Mr. Ramsay's protege, Charles Tansley. Woolf writes, "there was Mr. Tansley whispering in her [Lily Briscoe's] ear, 'Women can't paint, women can't write...."[62] Later the same thought re-appears in the mind of Lily Briscoe, "Then why did she mind what he said? Women can't write, women can't paint."[63] Interestingly, as Lily reflects upon the words, she places primary importance upon the writing rather than painting, this being first in her recollection of Tansley's speech, despite her own career as a painter. In light of this disallowment to words and speech which remains propagated by the masculine culture, ironically in the final scene of "The Window," Mrs. Ramsay thinks of Mr. Ramsay looking at her and wanting her to say that she loves him. Here we read a will to speech on the part of Mr. Ramsay for his wife. Instead of appeasing him by saying the words, it becomes a victory for her to withhold her speech: "And she looked at him smiling. For she had triumphed

again. She had not said it: yet he knew."[64] Her triumph is the withholding of the language usually denied her in the first place. That she exerts control through a lack of speech is the ironic victory for the woman Woolf showed earlier using speech through mimicry as a tool of the patriarchy, instructing her son in misogynistic fairy tales.

The critic Chantal Chawaf finds that throughout history "[l]inguistic flesh has been puritanically repressed." She continues, "[i]n order to reconnect the book with the body and with pleasure, we must disintellectualize writing."[65] If the "disintellectualization" of writing includes severing the monopoly of ties with the brain and replacing them with ties to the body, this accords with Cixous' concepts for a feminine voice in language. Cixous' concerns involve the inclusion within language of the multeity of feelings which women experience, their diverse sexuality. Rochefort writes, "In brief, we [women] are read below the belt - men are at the glorious level of brain."[66] Thus, in Rochefort's analysis, the brain is privileged over the body. To begin to change this subordination of the feminine under patriarchy, according to Cixous and her adherents, woman must write her self into her texts, "reconnecting the book with the body." In doing so, Cixous claims that she "will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has turned into the

uncanny stranger on display."[67] Additionally, she must also act by "seizing the occasion to speak, hence her shattering entry into history, which has always been based on her suppression."[68] By doing so, by writing her self and speaking and thus ending her suppression, "women should break out of the snare of silence."[69] Silence, the place allocated to women as Other and assigned by the vocal and represented phallus, depicts another form of sexual opposition. Cixous proceeds in her essay to point out what is perhaps the obvious: such sexual opposition has always functioned for male's profit, as is the case when the dominant group makes the rules and acts as enforcer. Sexual opposition profits the masculine economy.

Not only does the masculine economy profit through sexual opposition, but what differentiates the masculine and feminine writing has become ignored. Cixous posits that it is through ignorance that people do not admit to the distinction. She also decries the concept "that writing is bisexual, hence neuter, which again does away with differentiation."[70] Rather than wanting to see a destruction and reduction of difference, Cixous proclaims the merits of "the other bisexuality,"[71] one which highlights and increases differences. With this definition in mind, Cixous sees woman as bisexual, and man as monosexual, "being poised to keep glorious monosexuality in view [and] by virtue of affirming the primacy of the

phallus."[72] Again, returning to what is also Irigaray's position, differences and outlooks remain as functions of sexuality. As males proclaim the primacy of the phallus, all is a unified linear force for him. But, woman, with multeity in sexuality, avoids the trap of monosexuality, and suggests circularity in thought and diversity in meaning.

The privileging of patriarchy manifests itself clearly within the pages of Woolf's text. It takes the form of Mrs. Ramsay's constant and recurring role as unifier, and similarly, as the object of unity. Lily Briscoe, "[s]itting on the floor with her arms round Mrs. Ramsay's knees," is thinking of loving in regards to "make her and Mrs. Ramsay one...for it was not knowledge but unity that she desired."[73] Unity, that masculine aspect, is what the woman told she cannot paint or write, denied these outlets, aspires to. Later, she thinks that "the danger was that...the unity of the whole might be broken."[74] Unity is of the utmost importance to Lily, the artist trying to express herself. Mrs. Ramsay herself occupies the role of unifier several places within the text: In her efforts at match-making with Paul and Minta, her re-unification of Cam and James after the disagreement over the boar's head on the wall, and, with the biggest challenge to her unification skills, at the dinner party. At the party, she unifies discontented guests and active children, all over

the Boeuf en Daube, which itself took three days to cook with its "confusion of savory brown and yellow meats and its bay leaves and its wine."[75] Significantly, the main course of the meal requires stewing and simmering for three days to allow the flavors to mingle, and become as one. Yet, it was still a "confusion," even after the symbolic attempt at culinary order.

Returning to the theoretical from Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party, Cixous finds that "[a]lmost everything is yet to be written by women about femininity."[76] Part of the reason for this lack is "that language conceals an invisible adversary, because it's the language of men and their grammar."[77] Previously discussed critics already claimed that men's language is both inaccessible to women and inadequate for their own expression. For woman, on the other hand, "lets the other language speak - the language of 1,000 tongues which knows neither enclosure or death....Her language does not contain, it carries; it does not hold back, it makes possible."[78] Cixous implores women to explore their sexuality, for in its understanding and multeity (for example, the "1,000 tongues") will women find the ink with which to write. "Cixous insists on the primacy of multiple, specifically female libidinal impulses in women's unconscious and in the writing of the liberatory female discourses of the future."[79]

Thus, with the expression of the body and sexuality will woman find her expression in language.

Both Cixous and Irigaray closely link female sexuality with notions of access to and agility with language. They both state, as well, that if women are ever to be able to claim and master the language, and use it to their own ends and purposes, the first step is to understand their own sexuality, long denied them by the phallocratic order. With their sexuality understood, the linguistic problems themselves become approachable. However, these linguistic problems are a primary concern of Mary Daly, who is more interested in looking at the ways in which language currently serves the patriarchy and operates toward the continued oppression of women, denying a feminine voice, than looking at the problem of repressed sexuality as origin. As such, Daly avoids much of Cixous' and Irigaray's tendencies toward essentialism. For turning the tides stemming from the abuse of language, Daly proposes a new means of language for women. Daly warns, however,

> It would be a mistake to imagine that the new speech of women can be equated simply with women speaking men's words...This is not to say necessarily that an entirely different set of words is coming into being full blown in a material sense - that is, different sounds or combinations of letters on paper. Rather, words which, materially speaking, are identical with the old become new in a semantic context that arises from qualitatively new experience...The word's meaning is stripped of its patriarchal, biblical context, while at the same time

speaking to and beyond that context.[80]

Thus Daly seeks not to create a whole new system of language and meaning accessible only to women, but rather she wants to exorcise what she finds offensive and repressive from the already established system, such as the diminutive endings added to words describing women (the author/-ess dichotomy), as well as the fact that men are conventionally made virile and potent through language, women rendered passive and weak. For example, men participate in "guy talk," or "shoot the shit"; women, on the other hand, "chit-chat," "chatter," or "gossip," each with its own negative connotations. Men traditionally perform the sex act, while women are the passive recipients of such. Daly seeks to end the reinforcement of words that perpetuate the degradation and belittlement of women, as seen in the every-day language of the marketplace. Toward this aim there existed a feminist movement on college campuses, the goal of which was the reclamation of the language, just what Daly calls for. In their efforts to reclaim the language being usurped from them, women gave new meanings to old words, changing their connotations. For example, it became very common for women to jovially refer to each other as "bitch," an inversion of the masculinist usage. They attempted to remove what they found degrading by turning the word into a tool of their own, in Daly's words, stripping

it of its patriarchal meaning.

But the job of changing meanings and liberating the language goes beyond small linguistic communities reclamation attempts. Daly continues,

> The method of liberation, then, involves a castrating of language and images that reflect and perpetuate the structures of a sexist world. It castrates precisely in the sense of cutting away the phallocentric value system imposed by patriarchy, in its subtle as well as more manifest expressions. As aliens in a man's world who are now rising up to name - that is, to create - our own world, women are beginning to recognize that the value system that has been thrust upon us by the various cultural institutions of patriarchy has amounted to a kind of gang rape of minds, as well as of bodies.[81]

Towards that task of rejecting inauthentic words and "castrating" them of their phallocentric values, Daly, in 1987, conjured up her Webster's First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language. Playing from the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of "webster" as "a weaver, as the designation of a woman," Daly weaves the webs of her Wickedary, offering new definition for old words, highlighting the problems of the language as she sees them. In doing so, she aims to create both a new history and a new past with the reworking of the language from the inside-out. Daly says, "The journey [of the feminist process] requires the courage to create, that we may learn from lucid criticism, that we may re-member the dismembered body of our heritage, that we may stop repeating the same mistakes. Patriarchal erasure of our

tradition forces us to relearn what our foresisters knew and to repeat their blunders."[82] This, too, echoes of Showalter's observations from the "The Female Tradition," where she notes that women's literary records disappear without a trace, vanishing from any recorded and preserved literary past. "Thus," she says, "each generation of women writers has found itself, in a sense, without a history, forced to rediscover the past anew, forging again and again the consciousness of their sex."[83]

Like Showalter, as well as Irigaray and Cixous, Daly stresses the absolute importance of women's link to language and of a recorded female tradition. But, in order for women to have a language in which to operate, the journey must first begin with "a process of freeing words from the cages and prisons of patriarchal patterns....Under [the rule of the patriarchy] words are beaten down, banalized, reduced to serving the sentences of father time. They are made into ladies-in-waiting, wasted and worn in the service of thought-stopping grammar."[84] As such, Daly sees the process of empowering women with a language of their own as beginning with making the language accessible to them. This means a departure from the phallocentrically-oriented language, which serves the fathers, and oppresses the mothers. In otherwords, a departure from the standard. Duras writes,

> You know, in his Discourse on Politics, Aimé Césaire, the black poet, says that when someone is brown, people always wonder if he or she has black blood, but never do they wonder if he or she has white blood. And when we have a male in front of us, we could ask: does he have some female in him? And that could be the main point. That's it: reverse everything, including analysis and criticism...Reverse everything. Make women the point of departure in judging, make darkness the point of departure in judging what men call light, make obscurity the point of departure in judging what men call clarity.[85]

For women gain access to a language, there must be a new point of departure and a different vision: that which is oppressive must be stripped away and words assigned a new meaning; not a meaning that reflects the patriarchal society with women delegated the role of "Other," but rather one in which neither sex is privileged. "To destroy the differences between the two sexes is to abolish the hierarchy that today exists between two terms, one of which is defined in relationship to the other and in this process is kept in an inferior position."[86] But destruction of difference is not the solution. Each sex should serve as its own reference point, not depending solely on the other for its being. This would not lead to the "androgyny" or blurring of distinction between the sexes that Cixous warns against, but would rather celebrate the differences of the sexes, Cixous's "bisexuality" and Woolf's "androgyny," where neither is pushed down in favor of the other. Yet, the point where Irigaray and Cixous want to begin is specifically with an exploration of female

sexuality. They implore women to know and write themselves and their own sexuality. However, this is potentially a troublesome aspect to stress. It brings to mind the idea of biological differences, differences inherent to a person solely on the basis of gender, and serves to legitimize the stifling concept of a strictly "female imagination" and an "anatomy is destiny" train of thought. Showalter asserts,

> I am also uncomfortable with the notion of a 'female imagination.' The theory of a female sensibility revealing itself in an imagery and form specific to women always runs dangerously close to reiterating the familiar stereotypes. It also suggests permanence, a deep, basic, and inevitable difference between male and female ways of perceiving the world. I think that, instead, the female literary tradition comes from the still-evolving relationships between various women writers and their society.[87]

Showalter's sociological approach is preferable to the biological approaches expressed in Irigaray's and Cixous's writing because Showalter takes the differences of masculine and feminine sensibilities out of the bodies themselves. She denies them a corporeal (and thus permanent and unchanging) existence, which, as she notes, can foster the damaging stereotypes. These stereotypes constitute just the trap of language that the feminist theorist is trying to break free from. Once differences are grounded in biology it leaves no room to go, for if difference is harbored in the physical, how can one escape? Julia Kristeva writes, "Women who write are brought, at their own pace and in their own way, to see sexual

differentiation as interior to the praxis of every subject."[88] But what Kristeva claims is not particularly desirable for the following reason: Sexual differentiation may be important, and even be defining to a certain degree, but should it be dominant? The essentialist argument is a dangerously limiting one, for it constitutes the same approach that the patriarchy employed for the subordination of the feminine and the myth of the weaker sex. Another group of critics asserts,

> Some women declare that 'language must be shattered,' because language is supposed to be male as it is a conveyer of, among other things, male chauvinism. They claim for themselves 'another' language, that, in its new form, would be closer to women's lived experience, a lived experience in the center of which the Body is frequently placed. Hence the watchwords: 'liberate-the-body' and 'speak-the-body.' It is legitimate to expose the oppression, the mutilation, the functionalization' and the 'objectivation' of the female body, but it is also dangerous to place the body at the center of a search for female identity. Furthermore, the themes of Otherness and of the Body merge together, because the most visible difference between men and women, and the only one we know for sure to be permanent (barring mutations) is indeed the difference in body. This difference has been used as a pretext to 'justify' full power of one sex over the other.[89]

The essentialist argument trades one limiting barrier for an other, and biology confines in a way that cannot be altered. As to corporeal/sexual differences, interestingly, of the three authors Cixous cites as having successfully inscribed femininity in their work, two are women (Colette and Duras), and the third (Jean Genet) is a gay male. And Nin also notes

that "The homosexuals wrote as if they were women."[90] Can only women and gay men achieve the feminine quality? This is a corner the feminist aestheticist should not want to get boxed into. It will not be possible to create a new language expressing the feminine when differences are again reduced to corporeality and natural biological essence. "For the oppressor, it is safer to speak of natural differences that are invariable by definition. That is the basis of racist and sexist ideologies. And thus a status of inferiority is inextricably bound to a status of difference."[91] Rather than turn difference into inferiority, it is more beneficial to leave the realm of sexual difference as origin out altogether, and rather rely upon experience and socio-cultural differences - differences <u>learned</u>, not inherent to being itself.

That there exists a difference between men and women is undeniable biology. However, the way these differences are treated and highlighted is strictly cultural. Camille Paglia claims that "[m]ale urination really is a kind of accomplishment, an arc of transcendence. A woman merely waters the ground she stands on."[92] Obviously this is a subjective assessment where the phallus is again privileged. Perhaps an other culture would find the more direct female method of urination preferable. Besides, there is a lot to be said for "merely" watering the ground, but what is said stems

from cultural bias. This cultural bias is touched on by Marguerite Duras, who in an interview said,

> I know that when I write there is something inside me that stops functioning, something that becomes silent. I let something take over inside me that probably flows from femininity. But everything shuts off - the analytic way of thinking, thinking inculcated by college, studies, reading, experience. I'm absolutely sure of what I'm telling you now. It's as if I were returning to a wild country. Nothing is concerted. Perhaps, before everything else, before being Duras, I am - simply - a woman..."[93]

Duras shuts off the influence of culture (i.e., college, reading, experience) in order to find feminine expression. Woolf, like Duras, has tapped into this femininity, and is agile enough with it to distinguish it from the Other - masculinity. She sets up these differences for display in a blatant manner, and directly juxtaposes the college/studies-thinking of Mr. Ramsay with the freer, less restrained thought of Mrs. Ramsay. Virginia Woolf's "fluid, diffuse, sensuous style offers a resistance to the kind of male metaphysical world symbolized by the philosopher Mr. Ramsay....Ramsay's world works by abstract truths, sharp divisions and fixed essences: it is a patriarchal world, for the phallus is the symbol of sure, self-identical truth and is not to be challenged."[94] However, while in the course of the textual reality of the novel the patriarchal world is not to be challenged, Woolf does just that as writer, with pen and paper, as observer and critic. At the same time, Woolf

authors the existence of a feminine aesthetic, stresses difference, and finds her voice.

Sexuality as experience constitutes undeniable difference, and one which should neither be ignored, universalized, nor used as a factor to pigeon-hole. Within the last few years, the internal image of the United States has changed from that of the "melting pot," the place where all people with all differences successfully assimilate to become American. The new image is that of a patchwork quilt, where differences are showcased and put on proud display. In the same way, the feminine should be celebrated, not dismissed as sub-masculine ("in-the-process" of becoming a man) nor should it be denied its existence through claims of equality and sameness. The feminine is not the masculine, nor should it aspire to be such. As deconstruction examines the validity and stability of meanings in Western culture based upon subjective dualities, so should the concepts of feminine and masculine be reexamined. The role of society is very influential in the reinforcement and propogation of such differences. The polarization of sexual differences is easily viewed in society, as male children are taught to be independent and strong, and female children to be passive and weak. Rochefort cites that "female children are driven mad, schizophrenic - because there is a total antagonism between what they are and what society wants them to be. Among them,

a remarkable proportion is defeated in this combat. I almost was, between twelve and twenty: then I was rescued by a small light of political consciousness: I learned that I was an oppressed person."[95] Those not fortunate enough to recognize their oppression serve the existing order, like the submissive Mrs. Ramsay and those women authors limited to love poems and other "feminine literature." We have already seen how these societal values are reinforced through common language use. To legitimize the feminine aesthetic and a feminine discourse, sexuality needs to be stressed not as originator, but as experience. Chantal Chawaf asks, "Isn't the final goal of writing to articulate the body?"[96] But rather the final goal of writing should be to articulate feelings, and these should transcend gender boundaries. The feelings may rise from sexual difference, but it is still the feelings that must be articulated, not their corporeal origins. "We acknowledge a biological difference between men and women, but in and of itself this difference does not imply an oppressive relation between the sexes. The battle of the sexes is not biological."[97] To articulate her feelings, woman must claim access to writing and language, dismissing stereotypes and demeaning rhetoric. Women need to reclaim the language that denies them their wholeness, the completeness of their being. When woman can write her self in this manner, transcending the

demeaning effects of language and the suffocating ties of essentialism, then she will have found her voice.

Endnotes

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[31] Woolf, 34.

[32] Luce Irigaray, "This Sex Which Is Not One," New French Feminisms, ed. Marks and de Courtivron, 103.

[33] Irigaray, "Power," 80.

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[50] Cixous, 1093.

[51] Cixous, 1090.

[52] Marguerite Duras, from an interview by Susan Husserl-Kapit in Signs, in New French Feminisms, ed. Marks and de Courtivron, 175.

[53] Showalter, 1104.

[54] Cixous, 1091.

[55] Cixous, 1091.

[56] Showalter, 1104.

[57] Duras interview, 174.

[58] Christiane Rochefort, "Are Women Writers Still Monsters?" New French Feminisms, ed. Marks and de Courtivron, 185.

[59] Rochefort, 183.

[60] Gauthier, 162-163.

[61] Cixous, 1093.

[62] Woolf, Lighthouse 48.

[63] Woolf, Lighthouse 86.

[64] Woolf, Lighthouse 124.

[65] Chantal Chawaf, "Linguistic Flesh," New French Feminisms, ed. Marks and de Courtivron, 177.

[66] Rochefort, 184.

[67] Cixous, 1093.

[68] Cixous, 1094.

[69] Cixous, 1094.

[70] Cixous, 1096.

[71] Cixous, 1096.

[72] Cixous, 1096.

[73] Woolf, Lighthouse 50-51.

[74] Woolf, Lighthouse 53.

[75] Woolf, Lighthouse 100.

[76] Cixous, 1097.

[77] Cixous, 1098.

[78] Cixous, 1100.

[79] Jones, 366.

[80] Daly, Beyond 8.

[81] Daly, Beyond 9.

[82] Mary Daly, Gyn/Ecology (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978) 23.

[83] Showalter, 1107.

[84] Mary Daly, Webster's First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987) 3.

[85] Duras interview, 174-175.

[86] Editorial Collective of Questions Féministes, "Variations on Common Themes," New French Feminisms, ed. Marks and de Courtivron, 215.

[87] Showalter, 1107.

[88] Julia Kristeva, "Oscillation between Power and Denial," New French Feminisms, ed. Marks and de Courtivron, 166.

[89] Editorial Collective, 218.

[90] Nin, xiii.

[91] Editorial Collective, 219.

[92] James Wolcott, "Paglia's Power Trip," Vanity Fair, September 1992, vol. 55, #9, page 300.

[93] Duras interview, 175.

[94] Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983) 189.

[95] Rochefort, 184-185.

[96] Chawaf, 177.

[97] Editorial Collective, 223.

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VITA

Lisa Karin Levine

Born in Brooklyn, New York, on December 23, 1968. Graduated from Hampton Roads Academy in Newport News, Virginia in June, 1986. Received a B.A. in English Literature from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in May, 1990. M.A. from the College of William and Mary in May, 1993.