NARCISSUS AS POET AND LOVER: TRANSCENDENCE OF GENDER BINARIES
IN THE WORKS OF LOU ANDREAS-SALOMÉ AND VIRGINIA WOOLF

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NARCISSUS AS POET AND LOVER: TRANSCENDENCE OF GENDER BINARIES IN THE WORKS OF LOU ANDREAS-SALOMÉ AND VIRGINIA WOOLF

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the contributions of Lou Andreas-Salomé and Virginia Woolf to the non-binary expression of gender within Western cultural discourse in general, with a focus on psychology as framed by the postmodern psycholinguistic theory of Julia Kristeva and positing a potential means for improving contemporary society through the increase of female psychic space. Salomé, as the first female psychologist and protégé of Freud, and Woolf, as a recognized English novelist and feminist theorist, viewed gender as constantly shifting and oscillating within men and women and creativity (inclusive of both male and female elements) as providing a means for transcending gender binaries. Moreover, Salomé’s gynocentric retelling of the Narcissus myth where Narcissus emerges as the ultimate lover and poet connects Salome and Woolf to Kristeva and other postmodern feminist theorists who, unlike Freud, incorporate the mother into the development process and recognize women as subjects-in-process who remain closer to the mother and primary narcissism (i.e., the semiotic or creative space in Kristeva’s theory) during the initial development process and throughout their lives. Thus, art and healthy relations between the sexes (e.g., dialogical communities) are proposed as potential resolutions to the binary sex/gender divide and illustrate how the increase of
female psychic space has the potential to improve contemporary civilization as a whole. Primary resources used in this thesis that provide the context for this alternative approach to feminism include Salome’s 1899 “Human Being as Woman” and her 1923 essay “The Dual Direction of Narcissism” along with selected fictional works like The Human Family and Fenitschka as well as designated works of Virginia Woolf, including Mrs. Dalloway, Orlando, A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas. Additionally, the postmodern theories of Hélène Cixous, Luce Iragaray, belle hooks and Judith Butler are referenced and provide additional support for assertions made throughout this paper.
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INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the significance of the contributions of the first female psychologist and protégé of Sigmund Freud—Lou Andreas-Salomé. In particular, the focus is on her positive theory of narcissism and non-binary model of human development which, unlike Freud’s androcentric theory of psychosexual development, incorporated the mother (i.e., the feminine) into the human development process. In her 1921 essay entitled “The Dual Direction of Narcissism,” Salomé applied a gynocentric reinterpretation of the Narcissus myth whereby Narcissus came to represent the ultimate poet and lover. At the boundary between self-discovery and self-annihilation, Narcissus ultimately plunged into the depths of his pre-symbolic imagination (i.e., unconscious) and became one with the natural world. With this alternate view of narcissism, Salomé challenged Freud’s intransigent model of narcissism that was based on auto-erotic love which he believed should be replaced with an appropriate object choice in adulthood. Conversely, Salomé perceived narcissism as a source of self-affirmation, love and creative energy that engenders human hope and desire.

Salomé’s psychological concepts, including her non-binary approach to human development, were prescient and comparable to those of French postmodern feminists, such as Julia Kristeva’s psycholinguistic development theory, which allows for men and women to fully develop, albeit along different lines. Salomé—nearly six decades prior to Kristeva—proposed a psychological development theory situated in language, which is amorphous and dynamic. According to both Salomé’s and Kristeva’s development theories, women remain closer to the mother, or primary narcissism, throughout their lives. In psycholinguistic terms, this is the semiotic, or pre-lingual, space that is characterized by a rich imagination (with the presence of images and forms) and lack of
structure. Instead of associating this less differentiated state of women with “lack” as Freud did, however, Salomé and Kristeva see women as *subjects-in-process*, which means they are consistently growing and adapting. On the other hand, men tend to be more fragmented and associated with the symbolic stage of psycholinguistic development, which Lacan termed the “Law of the Father.” In this respect, men are associated with the logos of language, including syntax and grammar/punctuation rules.

In addition to exploring the relevant similarities between the psychological theories of Salomé and Kristeva and their differences from the binary theories proposed by Freud, this thesis examines selected fiction and nonfiction of Virginia Woolf who serves as an example of positive narcissism associated with writers and who also employed psychological themes in her writing which illustrated how creating art and forging dialogical communities could transcend the binary representations of men and women (i.e., gendered representations) that form the foundation of patriarchy. Woolf, along with Salomé and Kristeva, suggested that individuals (i.e., men, women and transgendered persons) in Western society would benefit from an increase of feminine psychic space that challenged the prevalent masculine values characteristic to the West.

These views were opposed by those like Freud who believed feminine qualities, such as empathy and love, must be suppressed in order for civilization to flourish. As Freud expressed in his 1929 *Civilization and Its Discontents*: “Women represent the interests of family and sexual life; the work of civilization has become more and more men’s business; it confronts them [men] with ever harder tasks, compels them [men] to sublimations of instinct which women are not easily able to achieve” (2010, 73). Such shrinking of female psychic space in modern Western society has resulted in a crude simplification of universal human potential and a psychically unhealthy stress on
masculine personality traits in the public sphere. The remainder of this Introduction provides the reader with the context for understanding how the suppression of the feminine has adversely impacted both men and women within the Western world, beginning with the problems inherent to mainstream feminism (past and present) and concluding with some practical suggestions for increasing female psychic space based on the theories of the primary authors and thinkers drawn upon in this thesis—Salomé, Kristeva and Woolf—which still hold relevance in today’s globalized society.

Chapter One sets out the history of Western feminism along with the challenges inherent to each “wave” of the mainstream feminist movements that primarily took place in the United States and throughout Western European democratic countries. Chapter One is further framed by Julia Kristeva’s essay “Women’s Time,” which examines three generations of feminism and the problems inherent to the first and second generations, or waves, of feminism. The first- and second-wave feminist movements are critiqued and compared to postmodern feminist theory, or third-wave feminism, including the disconnect between theory and praxis inherent to postmodern feminism. After discussing issues related to the Western mainstream feminist movements, Chapter One provides a brief history of Russian feminism, which is approached as more of a cultural analysis since there was never a formalized feminist movement in Russia. As a mixed political state, Russia is also examined from a psycholinguistic perspective, especially with regard to how the suppression of language and femininity adversely impacts the wellbeing of all citizens, regardless of sex.

Chapter Two begins with a discussion of Russian culture and its influence on the lives and works of Salomé and Woolf. Unlike Woolf, who never traveled to Russia, Salomé’s Russian influence was gained through her lived experience—her childhood in
St. Petersburg and two return trips to Russia accompanied by the poet Rilke. Although she was of German lineage, Salomé identified as Russian on an emotional level. Salomé’s Russian experiences were conveyed through an emblematic process of remembrance, or corporeal memories, like those recorded in her travelogue *Rodinka: A Russian Recollection* published in 1923.

Although Salomé’s account of the Russian culture in *Rodinka* is often considered overly romanticized by critics\(^1\), Salomé captured the essence of what Russian culture provided to the imagination of a writer at the turn of the twentieth century, which she shared with the poet Rilke whose poetry was deeply inspired by the aesthetics of Russian culture. As Mahesh Sharma comments in her article entitled “The Liminality of Contemporary Culture”: “Borders are important thresholds, full of contradictions and ambivalence. They both separate and join different places. And by doing so it provides an immense possible site of representation which allows subaltern to speak” (2013, 114). In this respect, Russia was a site of emblematic representation for Salomé. From the nostalgia of her Russian childhood, as chronicled in her memoirs *Looking Back*, to her return visits to Russia documented in *Rodinka*, Salomé drew upon the liminality of Russian culture which evoked memories that inspired the non-binary approach to her psychological theories and fiction. Chapter Two culminates with inferences that can be drawn from Russia’s liminal and more ambivalent culture which may be useful in addressing some of the problems that stemmed from previous Western feminism (e.g., reification of the patriarchy and masculinization of women) and that continue to persist in global feminist movements today.

Chapter Three highlights Salomé’s significant contributions to gender psychology and feminism by providing a comparative analysis between her 1921 theory of narcissism and traditional interpretations of the Narcissus myth as well as by distinguishing her more positive theory of narcissism from the ideas expressed in Freud’s 1914 publication “On Narcissism.” Chapter Three also draws parallels between Salomé’s positive concept of narcissism and the theories of postmodern psycholinguist Julia Kristeva that re-envisioned Narcissus as the ultimate poet and lover, hence reiterating the need expressed by both Salomé and Woolf for widening the sphere in which female psychic space can be expressed in modern civilization.

Unlike Freud’s androcentric psychosexual model of development, Kristeva’s postmodern feminist theory is centered on psycholinguistic development and how children become “speaking subjects.” Expanding upon Lacan’s model, Kristeva incorporated the mother into the development process. In sum, Kristeva’s theory is centered on how an infant develops a sense of identity through separation from the mother. This process of separation from the mother is what Kristeva calls abjection, which is necessary for the child to enter into the symbolic order (spoken and written language), which is associated with the Law of the Father and structure (i.e., syntax, grammar rules, etc.). The symbolic order is contrasted to the semiotic order associated with the mother, which is fluid and without definition (i.e., associated with the pre-gendered and unstructured imaginary). As a departure from Lacan, Kristeva proposes that identity is not fixed and that human beings continue to oscillate (at a place Kristeva calls the chor) between the semiotic and symbolic orders throughout their lives, with women typically remaining closer to the mother than men. Thus, Kristeva suggests that women
retain a closer connection to the semiotic imaginary and primary narcissism (i.e., creativity). This was a positive view of narcissism shared by both Salomé and Woolf.

By applying a more gynocentric interpretation to the Narcissus myth, both Salomé and Kristeva, though decades apart, imbue narcissism with positive characteristics like art and love. Instead of being destroyed by malignant self-love, which characterizes the most negative extreme on the narcissism spectrum, Salomé and Kristeva view Narcissus as the ultimate self-knower—a poet and lover. In her *Freud Journal* and *The Erotic*, Salomé describes Narcissus’ drowning as a “return to one and All”; when he embraces his own image in the water, he returns to nature (hence the flower that sprung up in his stead). Narcissus’ experience embodies the ultimate unity of life, art, and love as he became an extension of his image in a return to nature. In being submerged, Narcissus returns to the semiotic imaginary, which ultimately represents the maternal or feminine psychic space.

Through a comparative analysis of the psychology of gender reflected in the works of Salomé, a Russian-born writer and psychoanalyst (1861-1937), and the fiction of English-born novelist and essayist Woolf (1882-1941), the third chapter provides an overview of the non-binary, anti-structuralist gender models presented in the works of these two authors. Both Salomé and Woolf rejected the mainstream feminist movements of their day and re-defined gender within a context of cultural ambivalence that rejected binaries and, instead, arose from borderland/borderline situations of liminality. These two modernist authors were prescient in their depictions of gender differences, which are closely aligned to views espoused in contemporary feminist theories—specifically the theories of Julia Kristeva (Bulgarian/French; 1941-Present), Hélène Cixous (French Algerian; 1937-Present) and Luce Irigaray (French/Bulgarian; 1930-Present). Relating these two modernist authors to theories of postmodern feminists with origins from the
borders of the Western cultural semiosphere presents a flexible, multivalent model of
gender whereby the female subject is viewed as being always “in process” rather than
objectified as the static Other.

Chapter Three concludes by drawing parallels between this alternate theory of
narcissism, with its connection to creative consciousness, and the biography and works of
Virginia Woolf. As a writer who experienced profound personal trauma, including
repeated sexual abuse by her half-brother throughout childhood and life-long mental
illness, Woolf demonstrates the legitimacy of Salomé’s theory regarding writers and
narcissism. As Ender explains in her article that aligns Virginia Woolf’s biography with
Salomé’s theory of narcissism, Woolf explored her innermost pain in works like “A
Sketch of the Past” in Moments of Being and felt that it was her ethical obligation to do so
(Ender 2004, 21). Despite multiple nervous breakdowns, frequent episodes of hearing
voices when she would refuse to eat for extended periods, and several suicide attempts,
Woolf deemed her writing as “far more necessary than anything else” (Ender 2004, 21).
Although Woolf was sometimes able to resolve her personal pain through her writing,
such as letting go of the loss of her mother upon completion of To the Lighthouse, she
believed that writers had a larger social responsibility to raise civilizations’
consciousness—a theme she emphasized in both A Room of One’s Own and Three
Guineas.

Chapters Four and Five provide formalist literary analyses that illustrates how
fiction and non-fiction works of Salomé and Woolf support the premise that the art of
writing, as a narcissistic enterprise, has the capability to transcend gender binaries. As
aforementioned, both Salomé and Woolf were influenced by Russian culture and the
emerging field of psychology. Drawing on literary examples from Salomé’s fictional
accounts of “new women” in her collection of novellas The Human Family as well as her novella Fenitschka, Chapter Four demonstrates how Salomé’s “female characters in motion” and the aporetic endings to her stories reinforce her theory that gender is constantly vacillating within men and women; it is not static or based on one’s sexual identity. Salomé primarily portrayed the fluidity of gender through heteronormative relationships in her fiction where gender norms were constantly shifting between partners as well as within individual male and female characters. Passages from Salomé’s essay “Human Being as Woman” along with excerpts from her Freud Journal, memoirs, and The Erotic reiterate how the inclusion of both masculine and feminine attributes is critical to a psychologically healthy state.

Chapter Five provides a formalist literary critique of Virginia Woolf’s fiction and nonfiction works, primarily focused on her novels Mrs. Dalloway and Orlando, both of which offer examples of transcending gender binaries through an artistic process that embraces both masculine and feminine perspectives. Like Salomé, Woolf’s fiction displays gender as fluctuating instead of fixed; her male and female characters are strong, yet free to exhibit emotion and empathy that some mainstream feminists of her day discouraged as a sign of weakness for either sex. Instead of adopting more masculine traits to reify the masculine in a patriarchal society, Virginia Woolf’s female characters, such as Mrs. Dalloway, illustrate a female heroic in the ability to forge a more integrated, or dialogical, community. Likewise, Woolf’s transgendered character Orlando is able to achieve greater psychological balance by cultivating an androgynous mind, which allowed him (or her by the end of the novel) to publish poetry and symbolically give birth to fiction once the masculine and feminine aspects of his/her mind were engaged.

Relevant passages from A Room of One’s Own and Three Guineas, along with several of
Woolf’s essays, are also drawn upon to support the idea that individuals must be both masculine and feminine to realize their full human potential and to effectively contribute to society. As a bisexual author, Woolf further provides a unique example of Salomé’s theory of positive narcissism. As a love letter to Vita Sackville-West, *Orlando* was the ultimate narcissistic project that merged love and art with the material world.

The works of Salomé and Woolf separately discussed in Chapters Four and Five are comparatively analyzed in Chapter Six in order to extrapolate the core components of each of these modernist authors’ feminist theories. While Salomé believed in a fluid concept of gender like Woolf, Salomé often worked within a more traditional heteronormative framework in showing the fluctuations of gender within males and females involved in intimate relationships. Woolf, on the other hand, frequently showed gender parity as being achieved through the bisexual artistic process of writing or in situations where collaboration of masculine and feminine elements in an individual’s consciousness reached equilibrium. However different their approaches to a flexible gender model, both Salomé and Woolf were ahead of their time in realizing the performative nature of gender and that women and men must integrate both masculine and feminine aspects of themselves in order to achieve a homeostasis of mind. Chapter Six further explores the relevance of both Salomé’s and Woolf’s feminist theories in current society.

In addition to scrutinizing the validity of Salomé’s and Woolf’s feminist theories that are comparable to postmodern feminist theories, the Conclusion of this thesis presents issues and outstanding questions related to the future outlook of feminism. With no organized mass movement like the one that existed during earlier waves of feminism, is there still a viable feminist movement? More specifically, is a feminism that focuses on
individual self-growth and unifying gender parity within oneself feasible and sustainable in the globalized world in which we now exist? Is femininity, and feminism in general, still stigmatized as militant and perceived as a threat to men?

As hypothesized in Susan Mann’s and Douglas Huffman’s 2005 article “The Decentering of Second Wave Feminism and the Rise of the Third Wave,” there was a marked shift in the women’s movement with the rise of globalization, which essentially decentered the West. Due to increased global economic and social interdependency, the Western model upon which second-wave feminism was built (e.g., the white, middle-class populace) began to disintegrate, which resulted in a more culturally relative, polyvocal feminism with disparate voices imparting stories of their individual experiences of oppression. Master narratives, like those passed down from second-wave icons Gloria Steinem and Betty Freidan, were replaced with a myriad of personal “mini” narratives that embraced individual differences and undercut any perceived hegemony among women’s experiences. In this respect, the embrace of contradictions and revolt against binary gender identity politics have become primary forms of resistance that underpin third-wave feminism (2005, 57-61).

Due to the absence of any absolute unifying vision in this new sort of feminism, however, many second-wave feminists perceive young people today, particularly young women who came of age in the last decades of the twentieth century, as politically disengaged and apathetic about feminist causes that they so fervently rallied for in the past. The Conclusion addresses the relevancy of these types of judgments related to third-wave feminist theories, including the theories proposed by Salomé and Woolf, and further assesses scholars’ opinions regarding both positive and regressive paths within the
third wave of feminism and the alleged fourth-wave which began with the #MeToo movement in 2017.

Regardless of the status of today’s feminist movement or evolving perceptions on what feminism means, one thing is certain—there is still much progress to be made. Even in one of the world’s leading democracies, the United States of America, a woman working a full-time, year-round job earns 80.7 percent as much as her male counterpart earns. That gap can be larger or smaller, depending on the state someone lives in. Moreover, according to the US Census Bureau, white women earn 79 percent of what white men do, while black women earn 67 percent and Hispanic women earn 58 percent. (Sheth 2019). In addition to the protracted gender/racial pay gap, American women’s reproductive rights are consistently challenged by conservative lawmakers and judges who attempt to restrict access to abortions and contraception for women in many regions of the country. This continued discrimination against women, especially toward lower-class women and women of color, reflects a lingering devaluation of the feminine in Western civilization.

In closing, feminism must become synonymous with humanism and, further, be integrated into the cultural consciousness in order to be effective and sustainable. As the feminist philosophies of Salomé, Woolf and their postmodern feminist counterparts propose, men and women must unite and embrace both masculine and feminine qualities consistently fluctuating within themselves. When femininity is destigmatized and allowed to flourish alongside masculinity, all members of society will benefit. In the words of President Obama in a feature article published in Glamour magazine in 2016:

. . . gender stereotypes affect all of us, regardless of our gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation. . . we need to break through these limitations. We need to keep changing the attitude that raises our girls to be demure and our boys to be
assertive, that criticizes our daughters for speaking out and our sons for shedding a tear. We need to keep changing the attitude thatpunishes women for their sexuality and rewards men for theirs... forcing people to adhere to outmoded, rigid notions of identity isn’t good for anybody... These stereotypes limit our ability to simply be ourselves... That’s what twenty-first feminism is about: the idea that when everybody is equal, we are all more free. (Obama 2016, 224-225)

These words from President Obama, who is proud to call himself a feminist, strike at the very heart of this thesis’ premise and what Salomé and Woolf were attempting to convey over a century ago—transcending gender binaries begins with each individual’s inward quest for an authentic identity which, if realized, outwardly manifests in stronger communities enriched by diversity. In its simplest form, feminism is individual liberty with responsibility for all.
CHAPTER 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society’s definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference—those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older—know that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish. It is learning how to take our differences and make them strengths. For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. (Lorde 1984, 112-113)

These words are an excerpt from Audrey Lorde’s presentation on dealing with the role of difference within the lives of American women, which she delivered at New York University’s Institute for the Humanities Conference in 1979. I chose this passage from Audrey Lorde as a starting point for this chapter because Western feminism, at its core, has not been for everybody. It has also been more of an ideology than a methodology. Historically delineated by waves, beginning with the women’s suffrage movement and now entering into what is termed by some as its fourth-wave (Encyclopedia Britannica 2019), it is still sometimes unclear what being a feminist means and how it relates to achieving social justice for all women (e.g., women of color, lesbians, third-world women, etc.), while maintaining their unique differences, and, last but not least, not alienating men. Moreover, gender and sex are still being conflated within a very complex system of identity politics where everyone seems to be categorized by his or her choice of gender or sexual preference. In a globally connected world where language is deconstructed in real-time, the individually nuanced and constantly shifting roles of men, women, and transgendered persons along with the fluctuating boundaries of modern gender can make analyzing feminism very challenging.
This chapter is framed by Julia Kristeva’s essay “Women’s Time,” which examines three generations of feminism and the problems inherent to the first and second generations, or waves, of feminism. Feminist scholarship predominately concentrates on American and Western European mainstream feminist movements, which in itself exposes the limits of feminist inquiry. We begin this chapter with a discussion of the origins of patriarchy followed by an investigation of each feminist wave’s response to Western patriarchy. The first- and second-wave feminist movements are also critiqued and compared to postmodern feminist theory, or third-wave feminism, including the disconnect between theory and praxis inherent to postmodern feminism. After discussing issues related to the Western mainstream feminist movements, this chapter provides a brief history of Russian feminism, which is approached as more of a cultural analysis since there was never a formalized feminist movement in the West. Russian feminism has been adversely impacted by the political chaos and suppression of democracy throughout Russian history. As a mixed political state, Russia can also be examined from a psycholinguistic perspective, especially with regard to how the suppression of language and femininity adversely impacts the wellbeing of all citizens—women, men and transgendered persons.

The patriarchal oppression of women is deeply entrenched in Western civilization. Gerda Lerner’s book *The Creation of Patriarchy. Vol. 1. Women and History* traces the roots of patriarchy to the ancient civilization of Mesopotamia. Unlike some other theories related to the origins of patriarchy, Lerner does not begin with the assumption of a pre-existing matriarchal society or tie the origins of female oppression to the industrial age or capitalism. Instead, Lerner’s extensive research on patriarchy concludes that matriarchal societies were largely nomadic; consequently, they left little
proof of their existence. Moreover, despite being predicated on maternal lineage, matriarchal cultures had a tendency to still leave decision-making power to the kinship group or elder males in the society.  

Over time, matrilineal societies were unable to adapt to the competitive, exploitative, techno-economic systems that gave way to patrilineal societies. Lerner additionally claims that the patriarchy began within the family structure in Mesopotamian society with men’s control of female sexuality and reproduction (e.g., women exchanged as commodities in ancient bartering systems and “given away” by fathers in marriage). Since men held the material resources and means of survival in Mesopotamian culture, women subjugated themselves to men within the family structure in order to survive. Patriarchal authority was later inscribed into the first legal codes in Western civilization (Nielson 1987, 230-231). Class privilege and religion also played a role in dividing women into respectable and disreputable categories in society. In fact, Lerner claims that one of the founding metaphors of Western civilization was the devaluation of women in relation to the divine. Ancient philosophers like Aristotle furthered this pejorative image of women by developing philosophies that depicted women as incomplete and damaged human beings inferior to the male sex (Nielson 1987, 232-233).

The first sign of resistance to patriarchal oppression by women in Western civilization appeared in a French genre of literature classified as querelle des femmes (or “the woman question”). Christine de Pisan, who published The City of Women in 1404, is considered the first feminist thinker who sparked a debate related to a woman’s place in

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society that continued for nearly four centuries (Kelly 1982, 9). Christine’s writing was polemic and rebutted the misogyny inherent to medieval texts that often reduced women to sexualized objects of conquest and abandonment (Kelly 1982, 10). Specifically, Christine and other female authors who were part of this first feminist tradition wrote in opposition to texts that portrayed women as inferior to men – “. . . images of the virago, the disarmed lady, the modest women, the vessel of evil” (Kelly 1982, 28). Women who were part of the querell tradition—aristocratic and educated by their fathers—understood that these pejorative depictions of women that were constructed within patriarchal culture deprived them, especially women of lower class without education, of the dignity and authority required to fully participate in society. While these early feminist theorists were involved in a dialectic of response to male writing instead of an organized political movement, they raised the awareness of the dangers that the patriarchy presented to women’s autonomy. As Joan Kelly states:

The great achievement of the early feminist theorists was to set that dialectic in motion. Their struggle was not embodied in a political movement. It was limited to a battle of the pens. But in that battle they exposed the male bias of learning and its misogynist intent to keep women subject to men. They showed how learning was used to abase women and created a countervailing image of historic female power. (1982, 28)

The feminist movement, as a unified political resistance to patriarchal oppression, marks its origins with the Seneca Falls Convention led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott (both abolitionists) in 1848, which launched the suffrage movement and demanded social and civic rights for women equal to those of men. In this first convention in Seneca Falls, New York, Stanton and Mott lead a two-day meeting attended by approximately 200 women and a few men where they outlined women’s grievances and drafted a declaration of women’s rights to vote, own property and to take
part in other areas of civic life. This first-wave of feminism began in America and spread throughout Western Europe. American suffragists tended to separate themselves from European suffragettes who were considered much more radical in their methods of protest and more demanding than their American counterparts (National Women’s History Museum). The end of the first-wave was marked by Congress’s passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920 that granted women the right to vote in US elections.

Julia Kristeva’s article “Women’s Time,” which critiques the mainstream feminist movements in context of their relation to femininity and the symbolic order, contends that the first generation of feminists (i.e., the suffragists and suffragettes), aspired to gain a place alongside men in linear time, which is the time of project and history (1981, 18). Linear time is distinguished from what Kristeva calls women’s time, which is circular and monumental and associated with the feminine, or semiotic order. Consequently, the first-wave feminist movement was established on what Kristeva calls the logic of identification, which means that women rejected many traditionally feminine attributes, including the idea of motherhood, in order to gain rights connected with the “logical and ontological values of a rationality dominant in the nation-state” (Kristeva 1981, 19). In an article by Lynne Marks on feminism and motherhood, she postulates that the first-wave women’s movement; comprised primarily of white, middle-class women; also failed to recognize the diversity of mothers’ experiences and needs (2004, 74). While they lobbied for state assistance for lower-class mothers and children, first-wave reformers did little to improve the circumstances of these same women in the workplace.

While Kristeva acknowledges the benefits that women gained from first-wave feminism; such as the rights to vote, work and own property; she points to the problem of first-wave’s creation of a “Universal Woman.” In the words of Kristeva: “Universalist in
its approach, this current in feminism globalizes the problems of women of different milieu, ages, civilizations, or simply of varying psychic structures . . .” (1981, 19). Just as reform for mothers did not go far enough in its empowerment of lower-class women with children, the first-wave feminist movement was mostly limited to the experience and goals of white, middle-class women like those who founded it. The first-wave did little to advance the situation of poor women or women of color. For instance, after the 19th Amendment passed, poll taxes and literacy tests still kept black women from voting. Moreover, its foundation on the “sameness” between men and women with an underlying binary framework of gender identity essentially reified the patriarchy that first-wave feminists sought to destabilize. As Teresa Ebert states in her article “The “Difference” of Postmodernism”:

. . . the claim made by the Enlightenment and liberal feminism for a ‘sameness’ and ‘identicalness’ or ‘identity’ between men and women erases, or at the very least, glosses over social and historically constructed differences. Thus a statement such as the Seneca Falls Declaration of 1848, which resolved ‘[t]hat the equality of human rights results necessarily from the fact of the identity of race in capabilities and responsibilities’ (Schneir 82) is seen by many feminists as erasing or subsuming women’s difference into the dominant norm which is viewed as masculinist. . . . equality then is impossible since it merely reproduces discrimination against women by failing to account for their ‘difference’ in society. (1991, 890)

Harkening back to the metaphor used by Audrey Lorde at the beginning of this chapter, using the master’s tools was not effective in dismantling the master’s house. With its hierarchical organization and internal power structures of its own, first-wave feminism inadvertently replicated some of the same characteristics of the patriarchy as it excluded lower-class and black women from the progress that the more privileged members of the first-wave enjoyed.
Second-wave feminists were divided into two factions—*liberal feminists* at the start of the movement in 1963 with more *radical feminists* emerging around 1968. These feminist groups were also geographically split with liberal feminism practiced more in America and radical feminism (including Marxist/socialist feminism) predominantly practiced by Western and Eastern European women. At its peak from the mid-1960s through the early 1970s, second-wave feminism inherited some of the universalizing tendencies from the first-wave, especially among liberal feminists, like first-wave suffragists, who fought for space alongside men within the symbolic order (i.e., linear time and place within history). Consequently, they primarily focused on issues like equality in the workplace through raising wages for women as well as increasing the overall number of women in leadership and political positions. In this respect, liberal feminists struggled for inclusion *within institutions* (entry to colleges, workplaces, etc.), while radical feminists worked to either systematically overhaul existing institutions or to create their own separate organizations apart from men (i.e., counter-culture). Radical feminists fought oppression in both the public and private spheres and actively sought for the recognition and acceptance of women’s differences from men. A critique of both of these second-wave feminist sects is provided throughout the following paragraphs.

Liberal, or equality, feminism began with the publication of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, which explored the unhappiness of American middle-class women in post-World War II society who were (for the most part) financially, mentally and physically subservient to men. The “mystique” referred to an idealized image of the feminine (i.e., perfect wife and mother) which women tried to conform to in domestic life, despite their perceived lack of fulfillment. Friedan argued that women were losing their own identities to their husbands and children within the family structure and that
they could be more than wives, mothers and housewives (Fetters 2013, 3). As a testament to its widespread influence, three-million copies of *The Feminine Mystique* sold within three years of its initial publication (PBS).

In a 2013 review of *The Feminine Mystique* on the fiftieth anniversary of its publication, Ashley Fetters from *The Atlantic Magazine* addressed the racist, classist and homophobic ideas at the heart of the book (Fetters 2013, 1-7). Specifically, Fetters reveals how the following biases are present in the work that was considered the “feminist manifesto” for second-wave liberal feminists: 1) failing to discuss who would be called upon to take care of the children or maintain the house if lower-class women were freed from their labor at home and given equal access to the professions of white men; 2) ignoring single women, women without children or women who did not own their own homes; 3) ignoring the existence of lower-class women and women of color; and 4) suggesting that male homosexuality was a sinister source of cultural contamination (Fetters 2013, 3-7). As postmodern feminist belle hooks adds in her book *Feminist Theory from margin to center*:

Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* is still heralded as having paved the way for contemporary feminist movement—it was written as if these women did not exist. Friedan's famous phrase, ‘the problem that has no name,’ often quoted to describe the condition of women in this society, actually referred to the plight of a select group of college-educated, middle and upper class, married white women—housewives bored with leisure, with the home, with children, with buying products, who wanted more out of life. (1984, 1)

Thus, liberal feminism, like the first-wave before it, was largely reduced to the experience of white, middle-class women (in this case married) in Western society, particularly in the United States. With a concept of “sameness” between men and women (or indifference to the differences between them), liberal feminists concentrated on gender equality in the public sphere, equal access to education, equal pay, ending sex-
based job segregation and better working conditions, which were achieved primarily through legislative changes. Moreover, liberal feminists actively engaged in protests against sexism (e.g., Miss America pageants and pornography that objectified women) and advocated for control over their own bodies (i.e., sexual liberation) and reproductive rights. In this sense, the private sphere also became political, especially when restrictions on women’s private lives or stereotypes impeded their full participation in public life.

While many liberal feminists were simultaneously engaged in large-scale social movements, such as civil rights and students’ rights, they did not fully integrate women of different races, classes, or sexual orientations into their fight for women’s rights.

Additionally, women were forced to become more masculine as they assimilated with men (e.g., more assertive with less empathy) in order to compete for space within the public sphere, or the symbolic order. In this case, motherhood was also marginalized and mothers were often considered less valid than women with careers who advanced in the workplace. In the end, liberal feminism did not accomplish the systemic cultural changes required for women to maintain their own unique differences or to develop their own subjective realities within the linear time and space where liberal feminists fought for their freedom. Being equal to men was not achieved through being the same as men. The idea of equality versus difference between men and women became central to feminist debate toward the end of the 1960s, which lead to the practice of a more radical feminism.

Unlike liberal feminists, second-wave radical feminists focused on differences between men and women. However, this focus on differences within a binary, hierarchical system only resulted in the exacerbation of women’s position as the Other, or the second sex. It also failed to recognize the differences between women as unique
individuals, which lead to the same universalizing tendencies of liberal feminism. In “Women’s Time,” Kristeva links the goals of radical feminism, with its emphasis on systematic institutional changes in America and Western Europe, to those of socialist feminists in democratic countries throughout Eastern Europe who based their concepts of women’s liberation on Marxist socialism. As Kristeva notes, socialist ideology—with its concept of a human being’s place in production and in relation to production—did not take into account that same human being in relation to reproduction or to the symbolic order. In practice, therefore, women were still excluded from the social contract and relegated to the position of the Other. Consequently, the specific character of women could only appear as non-essential, or even non-existent, within such a totalizing structure (Kristeva 1981, 21). Although the second-wave feminist movement (with the combined efforts of liberal and radical feminists) resulted in women being permitted to work alongside men, including the advancement of women into leadership positions, radical and socialist feminism still discounted the unique characteristics of individual women. Patriarchal culture, where gender norms were constructed in the first place, was not fundamentally altered. As Kristeva explains in “Women’s Time”:

In socialist and in Western democracies, women are being heralded into leadership positions? Inequalities, devalorisations, underestimations, and even persecution are common, because their struggle is against archaisms. This resistance has to be broken down into change. What happens, however, when women refuse power and create a parallel society, a counter-power which then takes on aspects ranging from a club of ideas to a group of terrorist commandos? Because the presence of women in leadership positions has not altered any mindsets. It has even been used by totalitarian regimes. (1981, 26)

According to Kristeva, pushing for a radical overhaul of the social system only ruptures the symbolic order; it does not result in permanent change. Basically, institutions fell back into the archaic patterns that were initially combatted. “All protests initiated by
women are taken over by the system and credited to the system’s account,” says Kristeva, “and the long-awaited democratization of institutions as a result of the entry of women comes down to fabricating a few ‘chiefs’ among them” (1981, 27). Kristeva further emphasized that institutions must become more flexible in order for feminist ideals to flourish and for real change to occur. The patriarchy cannot be destabilized by constructing a radical counter-culture where men are isolated. Kristeva suggests that radical feminism becomes a kind of inverted sexism where women occupy only half of a space (1981, 27).

Postmodern feminism (i.e., third-wave), or what Kristeva called the “new generation” in “Women’s Time,” was a rejection of the binary thinking that was characteristic to Enlightenment philosophy prevalent in Western civilization and that further formed the foundations of first- and second-wave feminism. With origins in French feminism during the 1980s, postmodern feminist theorists (e.g., Kristeva, Hélène Cixous, and Luce Irigaray) re-evaluated the binary representations of sex and gender as well as the relationship of women and men to the patriarchy. Their objectives were to make feminism more intersectional and inclusive of all women—regardless of race, class or sexual orientation—without reifying the patriarchy like previous generations.

Postmodern feminist belle hooks, in her book *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity and Love*, redefined patriarchy for the modern age as follows:

> Psychological patriarchy is the dynamic between those qualities deemed ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ in which half of our human traits are exalted while the other half is devalued. Both men and women participate in this tortured value system. Psychological patriarchy is a ‘dance of contempt,’ a perverse form of connection that replaces true intimacy with complex, covert layers of dominance and submission, collusion and manipulation. It is the unacknowledged paradigm of relationships that has suffused Western civilization generation after generation, deforming both sexes, and destroying the passionate bond between them. (2004, 33)
As indicated in the passage above, modern-day patriarchy, as least within Western democratic countries, is no longer the tangible authoritarian figure of ancient times. Instead, patriarchy is woven into the fabric of civilization; it is part of the social consciousness that is manifest in our treatment of the Other, or foreigner (using Kristeva’s terms), in society. Therefore, patriarchal oppression must be confronted where it exists, which is within the DNA, or the cultural consciousness, of civilization. The balance of power must be restored with an embrace of differences within and between each individual with a respect for the feminine that allows it to flourish alongside the masculine within culture. In that sense, feminism is a humanism that works toward becoming a whole person within fully interconnected community.

With lessons learned from the successes and failures of the first- and second-wave mainstream movements, French postmodern feminists work primarily within language (with its fluid, amorphous nature) in order to subvert the patriarchy through women’s writing and discourse. In brief, they developed feminist theories around the concept of gender differences within individuals\(^2\), which helped remediate the identity crises inherent to first- and second-wave feminism. Kristeva’s psycholinguistic theory of human development (as a modification of Lacan’s theory) rejected the androcentric, binary development theory proposed by Freud that associated women with “lack.” As summarized in Table 1 on the following page, Kristeva’s theory allows for a mobile libido so that men and women can develop along different lines.

\(^2\) It is of note that Carl Jung (1875-1961), as a contemporary of Freud (but who defected from Freud’s school), proposed that the archetypes of the anima (feminine) and animus (masculine) were dually present in men and women’s psyches, thus allowing for the concept of androgyny or contra-sexuality.
### Table 1. Julia Kristeva’s Development Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Description of Psycholinguistic Development Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>0-6 months</td>
<td>The chora is dominated by a chaotic mix of perceptions, feelings, and needs with no distinction between oneself and the mother or the external world. The infant takes in everything experienced as pleasurable without acknowledgment of boundaries. This is the stage when the infant is closest to the pure materiality of existence, or what Lacan called &quot;the Real.&quot; At this stage, infants are purely dominated by drives (both life and death drives).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>4-8 months</td>
<td>During this pre-linguistic stage in the infant’s development, he/she begins to establish a separation between his/herself and the maternal, thus creating the boundaries between self and other that must be in place before the entrance into language: like the subject's confrontation with death, the threat of falling back into the pre-linguistic stage of the chora strikes the subject with fear and horror because it means giving up all the linguistic structures by which the social world of meaning is ordered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>6-18 months</td>
<td>This third stage, called the “mirror” stage, involves a &quot;libidinal dynamism&quot; caused by the young child's identification with his or her own image, what Lacan termed the &quot;Ideal-I&quot; or &quot;ideal ego.&quot; This recognition of the self's image precedes entrance into language, after which the subject can understand the place of that image of the self within a larger social context, whereby the subject must negotiate his or her relationship with others. This creation of an ideal version of the self gives pre-verbal impetus to the creation of phantasies in the fully developed subject. It establishes what Lacan called the &quot;imaginary order&quot; and, through the imaginary, continues to assert its influence on the subject even after the subject enters the next stage of development. Kristeva emphasizes the fact that this stage is preceded and troubled by the subject's relation to the abject, which is a narcissistic crisis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>18 mos-4 years</td>
<td>The acquisition of language during this fourth stage of development further separates the child from a connection to the Real (from the actual materiality of things). Once the young child enters into the differential system of language, he/she forever afterwards determines the perception of the external world so that the intrusion of the Real's materiality becomes a traumatic event. Kristeva adds that language is ultimately a fetish, an effort to cover over the lack inherent to our relation with death, materiality, and the abject.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Related to her feminist theory, Kristeva focuses on the semiotic and symbolic aspects of language development. The semiotic, associated with the pre-lingual *chora*, is connected to the maternal and characterized by inner drives and impulses that are chaotic.
and unregulated. These unconscious drives manifest themselves in rhythmical sentences and the images used to express what they want to convey (e.g., symbols). The semiotic state is later repressed through entry into the symbolic order when language is acquired in Stage 4 of the development process (refer to Table 1). The symbolic is the rule-governed part of language (i.e., Lacan’s “Law of the Father”), which is reflected in the grammar and syntax that provides language with its logical structure. Although the semiotic (associated with the feminine) and the symbolic (associated with the masculine) aspects of language naturally oppose one another, they complete each other in language. Herein lies the crux of postmodern feminist theory’s emphasis on the importance of gynocentric texts and discourse.

Postmodern feminists, including Kristeva, center their theories on resisting the patriarchy through the creation of texts that defy the androcentric, linear form of master narratives which dominated the Western literary canon. Specifically, Kristeva and other postmodern feminists like Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray advocate for the production of gynocentric texts and art that allows for creativity (derived within the semiotic space) to flourish within civilization, thereby raising social consciousness and increasing female psychic space. In this sense, power to combat patriarchal oppression (or suppression in this case) is achieved through affirmative sublimation and production of art. While still in the position of the Other, but within a liminal and bisexual space, women (or anyone occupying the space of the Other) can become speaking subjects without reifying the patriarchy. Through an aesthetic transcendence, culturally constructed gender norms and binary sexual identifications give way to the expression of desire, unspeakable joy and pain. This gynocentric revision of texts represents the social struggle of feminism within language. As Teresa Ebert states:
such textual strategies as deconstruction, mimicry, parody, pastiche, free association, and so on, are all subversive acts: they denaturalize and expose the illusion of identity and certainty on which the regime of patriarchal representation rests, and they depose the male/phallus from its privileged seat as the primary term, as the One and the Same. (1991, 896)

Kristeva’s theory, as summarized in the paragraphs above, is used as the foundational theory to foreground the prescient ideas of Salomé and Woolf who expressed postmodern feminist concepts in their fiction and non-fiction some sixty years prior to the advent of postmodernism. As detailed in Chapter Six, both Salomé and Woolf opposed the mainstream feminist movements of their day (i.e., first-wave) and, instead, offered open-ended gender models and subversive literary techniques that defied binary thinking and demonstrated their understanding of the need to increase the female psychic space within Western civilization.

Salomé credited much of her non-binary thinking to her own identification with Russian “otherness” (refer to Chapter Two). With cultural and political nuances that distinguish it from more developed Western countries, Russia is often considered the Other of the developed world. Periods of radical political change have significantly affected Russia’s history of feminism. Russian women have historically not engaged in large-scale organized feminist movements like those in the West. Instead, Russian feminism, or “the woman question,” has generally been confined to upper-class women, grassroots organizations or, alternatively, incorporated into national political movements, such as the socialist feminist movement during the Soviet Era. Therefore, despite gaining the right to vote and to own property prior to most Western women, Russian women have been mostly excluded from Western feminist movements.

The concept of feminism was first introduced to Russia through the Western European Enlightenment during the eighteenth century. During the Enlightenment era,
Russian authors like Alexander Pushkin encouraged the increased power and autonomy of women in society as well as equality between the sexes. In his article entitled “Alexander Pushkin and His True Ideal,” Joe Andrew posits that Pushkin’s character Tatyana was the quasi-mythical exemplar of true Russian womanhood and a model for later generations of strong Russian women. He also notes that Pushkin has recently been acclaimed as the “first Russian feminist” (1988, 27). Moreover, the Russian writer Nikolai Chernyshevsky’s novel *What is to be Done?* embodied feminist goals (mostly shaped by the West) in the novel's heroine who envisioned a utopian egalitarian society. While Russia’s upper-class women did hold more power during the eighteenth century, especially under Catherine the Great’s rule, and became more prominent in the literary and intellectual spheres, there was no measurable progress made toward the emancipation of lower-class women in Russian society.

The “woman question” was first raised by aristocratic Russian women (e.g., activists like Maria Trubnikova, Nadezhda Stasova and Anna Filosofova) around 1850 when they sought access to education for all women, including those from the lower class. This small group of female activists also worked to create jobs for female translators and teachers, organized trainings and teaching courses. They used their connections in court to lobby for women’s education. Due to their efforts, authorities ordered the establishment of Bestuzhev Courses in 1868, which went on to become the most prominent institute of higher education for women in pre-revolutionary Russia. The late 1800s also marked a rise in Russian women’s writing, which raised social consciousness related to women’s experiences and issues (Yegorov 2018, 2-4).

After Alexander II’s death in 1881, all non-governmental social enterprises were shut down, including grassroots feminist organizations. The next phase
of Russian feminism occurred prior to the revolution and continued through the Soviet era, which ushered in some of the most radical changes for women in Russian history. Soviet rule propelled large numbers of women into the workforce. According to *Women and Transformation in Russia*, the peak of the Soviet women’s movement was in 1930 when the *new Soviet woman* became a symbol of the new socialist order and its superiority (Saaranin 2014, 6). On paper, the Marxist philosophy that underpinned the Soviet agenda guaranteed equality for women. The Constitution of the USSR guaranteed equality for women - "Women in the USSR are accorded equal rights with men in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social, and political life" (Article 122).

In reality, this *new Soviet woman* was a *working woman* who bore the double, sometimes triple, burden of working full-time (e.g., often in demanding factory jobs) while handling all domestic duties (Saaranin 2014, 5-6). Moreover, very few women were assigned to leadership roles in the workplace or elected to political positions under Soviet rule; men maintained positions of authority and oppressed women (e.g., often paying them less than men for the same jobs) in the workforce. From 1919-1930, however, Soviet women did enjoy more freedom in their relationships under Aleksandra Kollontai, the first female minister who headed the People’s Commissar for Social Welfare and advocated for “free love,” meaning women could freely choose and change their partners. In addition, abortion was legalized in 1920, making Russia the first country in the world to do so. Marital rape was also made illegal in 1922, and generous maternity leave benefits and universal child-care centers were established to offset some of the demands made on Soviet working women. Under Stalin, however, the system returned to a focus on more traditional family values. Under Stalinism, the state banned abortions and suppressed romantic relationships outside of marriage. Moreover, motherhood
became increasingly difficult for Soviet women who needed to work in dual-income households in order to support their families during difficult economic times (Yegorov 2018, 5-6).

Following the fall of the Soviet Union, which ushered in a period of democratic rule from the late 1980s through the 1990s, Russian women experienced greater autonomy and, for the first time, welcomed support from the Western world. During periods of glasnost and perestroika, Russian women prioritized reproductive rights (e.g., abortion, birth control, etc.) and programs to prevent domestic violence, including the set-up of women’s crisis centers. They worked toward implementing practical solutions to improve social and economic conditions for women and their families as a whole. With support from the United Nations and an influx of Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), Russian women began to advocate for their rights with an emphasis on achieving a human rights agenda (Saarinen 2014, 10-11).

Under Vladimir Putin’s authoritarian regime beginning in 2000, Russian feminism has regressed. Putin’s hypermasculine image and his persecution of homosexuals and political dissidents has encouraged Russian men and women to conform to more traditionally heteronormative and patriarchal norms. Moreover, Russian women, who were disillusioned by the false promises of equality made during the Soviet era, usually resist being labeled as feminists or being associated with any collective organizations (Saarinen 2014, 6). Assistance received from Western NGOs to prevent domestic violence, trafficking of women, etc. have also failed to help the majority of Russian women. Part of these failures may be political considering that Putin has enacted several restrictive measures (e.g., NGO legislation passed in 2012) which require NGOs to register as foreign agents and to comply with all government regulations. Thus, even
when NGOs attempt to build sustainable programs to assist Russian women, their efforts have been thwarted by Putin’s administration (Saarinen 2014, 10-12).

Recent feminist studies that compared Russian feminism to other women’s movements around the world concluded that women’s organizing in Russia faces serious obstacles in the foreseeable future. Even Russian women who consider themselves activists for feminist causes tend to use double speak when talking with Western audiences versus Russian audiences about women’s issues. As the authors of “Twenty-First Century Feminism under Repression” posit:

The gender lens suggests that Russia’s move toward authoritarianism over the past decade has been a gender regime change. Building on the work of theorists such as Sylvia Walby (2004), we understand gender regimes to evoke the comprehensive gender order, from public to private, in various domains . . . as well as social relations. Much like the political science concept of regime, which refers to the set of norms that structure the operation of government and its interactions with society, the gender regime refers to the constitutive structures that (re)produce gender relations: demographics, income, and political, economic, and cultural representations. (Johnson & Saarinen 2013, 549-550)

From the psycholinguistic perspective, Putin’s war on women is one waged through the hypermasculinization of language and his restrictions on free speech. Essentially, Putin has used the rhetoric of patriarchy to expand his political power. As Alexandra Novitskaya states in her article “Patriotism, Sentiment, and Male Hysteria: Putin’s Masculinity Politics and the Persecution of Non-Heterosexual Russians”:

A contributing factor to the current persecution of Russian non-heterosexual individuals is Vladimir Putin’s overcompensating masculinist wish to claim Russia’s role as a global powerhouse. . . . The discourse analysis of the speech acts in two of Putin’s public national addresses – the 1999 Millennium Manifesto and the 2013 Valdai Address – uncovers the signs of masculinity in crisis, or, as Pussy Riot has put it, ‘male hysteria.’ Putin’s visions of Russian national identity and the use of emotional rhetoric visible in his ‘paternalistically sentimental’ statements helped justify discriminatory antigay legislation. Borrowing from Ahmed, non-heterosexual Russians have become for Putin the ideal ‘displaced object’ of national bad feeling: borne out of his insecurities and projected onto the nation’s cultural and historic identity. (2017, 1)
In Russia, we find an example of the consequences of repressing female psychic space. Russia’s current political situation also validates the premise of Woolf’s *Three Guineas* and the parallels that she drew between fascism, with its tyrannical rulers, and patriarchal discourse. In the case of Russia, the malignant narcissism of an autocratic ruler has repressed the female psychic space of a liminal culture known for its mystical qualities that once provided a powerful source of creativity (i.e., positive narcissism) for poets like Rilke and thinkers and writers like Woolf and Salomé. When the freedom of expression is inhibited, no one (man, women or transgendered person) in a society can be free.

While postmodern feminist theory, such as Kristeva’s, addresses some of the shortcomings of previous feminist movements, there are still several questions that remain regarding the practical application of postmodern feminist theories. Many critics are concerned that, unlike the first- and second-waves, postmodern feminism has been confined to intellectual theory written within academia. In this sense, postmodern feminist theory is considered elitist in that it is largely limited to women’s studies programs within Western colleges and universities (also typically patriarchal institutions). Feminist critics are further concerned that applying the *difference within* reinscribes a new type of identity politics by failing to include any *difference-in-relation* to systems of oppression. In other words, as Teresa Ebert clarifies, the theory developed by Kristeva and her contemporaries remains at the microlevel and, while it has the potential to destabilize the patriarchy, does not include a plan for intervention at the macrolevel to be truly transformative (1991, 902). In a similar vein, Amber Kinser’s article entitled “Negotiating Spaces for/through Third-Wave Feminism” notes that postmodern feminism has some rhetorical challenges that can present as false feminism in its individual resistance being devoid of politics (2004, 139-142). Additionally, Patricia Hill Collins
and Sirma Bilge, in their book entitled *Intersectionality*, posit that feminist theory needs to be more globalized in its integration of intersectional inquiry; they emphasize that it is not enough to simply drop in a few references or statistics related to women’s race or class within theories. Further, Collins and Bilge express concerns with the disconnect between the theory and praxis of intersectionality, implying that theories should always include a social justice component instead of just a theoretical presentation of the problem (2016, 202-204).

While there is no agreed-upon end date for third-wave feminism, some scholars are suggesting that fourth-wave feminism was galvanized online with the #MeToo movement in 2017. While this paper focuses on the contributions and enduring applications of third-wave feminism, I would like to end this chapter with a brief commentary on the present state of feminism and its potential challenges. The #MeToo movement that began with one tweet by American actress Alysa Milano in 2017 launched a global campaign against sexual harassment that has implicated some very wealthy and powerful men accused of sexual harassment and assault. While this movement has effectively raised global consciousness of underreported sexual harassment and assault (over 19 million responses within 12 months)³, there are concerns about the disparate and subjective definitions of what constitutes sexual harassment as well as the potential for false allegations. Moreover, according to a poll conducted by *LeanIn.org* in February and March of 2019, sixty percent of male managers report being uncomfortable with common workplace interactions with female employees, which was

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an increase of thirty-three percent from the previous year⁴. Since men hold a vast majority of executive-level positions in corporate America and elsewhere, this could prove detrimental to women’s advancement in the workplace.

Alongside the #MeToo movement, there is a separate, ongoing cultural shift occurring within language that involves the use of *queering language* along with gender-neutral pronouns, such as “zie,” proposed to identify non-binary persons, transgendered persons, etc. As an example, Facebook has fifty-eight gender options to select, and (Goldman 2014) some online sites list as many as 112 options for gender identity. Some of these identities include *cisgender*, which refers to people who identify with the same biological gender they were born with—the opposite of transgender. *Genderfluid* is a term referring to individuals whose gender is unfixed; they fluctuate between different identities aside from their biological assignment, while *polygender* is the identification with different genders either at the same time or different times. Normally, the term *polygender* is used for those with four or more genders.

The intent of third-wave feminism was to transcend gender/sex binaries that restricted men and women to stereotypes that resulted in subjugating the female sex as the Other, yet there are more linguistically constructed categories for gender identity in today’s society than ever. So will this extreme pluralism become even more divisive through dilution of binary categories, rendering the effort meaningless? With sex and gender also commonly conflated or used interchangeably, what will the fourth-wave accomplish in this system with multiple gender identities, yet with gender-neutral pronouns? Related to this paper, the problem within each wave of feminism, including

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the most recent fourth-wave, is one situated within the politics of language and the problematic divide between theory and practice. As previously mentioned, both Salomé and Woolf developed feminist theories, embodied in their fiction and non-fiction, that still have relevancy today. Chapter Six of this paper provides a comparative analysis of these two thinkers’ and authors’ feminist theories along with some suggestions for practical applications and further inquiry to address some of these persisting challenges to the theory and praxis of feminism.
CHAPTER 2

GENDER IN ITS PLACE: RUSSIAN CULTURE AND FEMINISM

Russia, as the expansive land in-between Eastern Europe and Asia, may be viewed as a liminal space whose culture has been shaped by numerous political upheavals that challenged prior traditions and ushered in extended periods of uncertainty—e.g., the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Soviet Era and later fall of the Soviet Union. As a result of its geographical location and frequent political/economic turmoil, Russian culture is a combination of old and new, East and West, rich and poor, among other dichotomies. As Fransicso Martinez states in his article “On the Peripheral Character of Russia”:

. . . the Russian space has a liminal character par excellence, functioning as intermediator, membrane, isolator and black-hole. As such, it is an assemblage; a poly-periphery constituted by broad regions and a plethora of disparate communities and cultures; a collage of scraps, voids, dwellings and natural wealth depredated from an inaccessible core. Sergei Medvedev describes it as a conglomerate of peripheries (1999), a physical and mental borderland that includes cultures so diverse (and dispersed) as the Mediterranean, Islamic, Buddhist, Mongol, Turkic, Chinese, Ugro-finnic or Circassian (to name but a few). (2013, 2-3)

In psycholinguistic terms, Russian culture is in a state of aphasia, which means that the regressive transitional states throughout its history have left the culture in a more embryonic state—less inhibited and more ambiguous and narcissistic. It is a culture-in-process expressed—on the level of the signifier—as a subversion and reproduction of the previous symbolic structure (“the epidemic of nostalgia”), while the signified works through various mechanisms of personal investments and attachments associated with, rather than expressed, through the signifier (Oushakine 2000, 1009-1010). Consequently, Russian culture tends to be represented through nostalgic symbols and mythos embodied in such Westernized ideas as the Russian soul. As noted by Orlando Figes in Natasha’s
Dance: A Cultural History of Russia, there is no one way to portray what is authentically Russian; instead, the Russian culture is best viewed as a “series of encounters or creative social acts which are performed and understood in many different ways” (2002, xxviii).

This chapter begins with a discussion of Russian culture and its influence on the lives and works of Lou Andreas-Salomé and Virginia Woolf. Unlike Woolf, who never traveled to Russia, Salomé’s Russian influence was gained through her lived experience—her childhood in St. Petersburg and two return trips to Russia accompanied by the poet Rilke. Although she was of German lineage, Salomé identified as Russian on an emotional level. Salomé’s Russian experiences were conveyed through an emblematic process of remembrance, or corporeal memories, like those recorded in her travelogue Rodinka: A Russian Recollection published in 1923.

This chapter further links Salomé’s Russian experience—as a return to her “mother”land—with Caroline Levine’s revised theory of formalist criticism reflected in her book Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network and Kristeva’s psycholinguistic feminist theory. Russia’s liminality, combined with Salomé’s and Woolf’s open-ended approaches to gender, provide the context for a comparative analysis between the mainstream feminist movements of the West and Russian feminism, which was never a formally organized political movement. This chapter culminates with inferences that can be drawn from Russia’s liminal and more ambivalent culture which may be useful in addressing some of the problems that stemmed from previous Western feminism (e.g., reification of the patriarchy and masculinization of women) and that continue to persist in global feminist movements today.

As Lou Andreas-Salomé discovered during her childhood growing up in St. Petersburg and through her return visits to Russia in 1899 and 1900, Russia’s liminality
offers an environment to rethink the formative criterion of class, communities and identities. Although Salomé’s account of the Russian culture in Rodinka is often considered overly romanticized by critics, Salomé captured the essence of what Russian culture provided to the imagination of a writer at the turn of the twentieth century, which she shared with the poet Rilke whose poetry was deeply inspired by the aesthetics of Russian culture. As Mahesh Sharma comments in her article entitled “The Liminality of Contemporary Culture”: “Borders are important thresholds, full of contradictions and ambivalence. They both separate and join different places. And by doing so it provides an immense possible site of representation which allows subaltern to speak” (2013, 114). In this respect, Russia was a site of emblematic representation for Salomé. As Sharma adds: “Liminality provides enough space to stand outside of the center and challenge the authority as nomads do. Because in this phase the vertical position of authority, which is very much clear in capitalist societies, gives way to horizontal relation of cultures” (2013, 118). From the nostalgia of her Russian childhood, as chronicled in her memoirs Looking Back, to her return visits to Russia documented in Rodinka, Salomé drew upon the liminality of Russian culture which evoked corporeal memories that inspired the non-binary approach to her psychological theories and fiction (refer to Chapters Three and Four). Some specific characteristics of Russian culture that inspired Salomé’s fiction and non-fiction and Rilke’s poetry (e.g., The Book of Hours) during their two visits to Russia are discussed in paragraphs that follow.

In her book Image in Outline: Reading Lou Andreas-Salomé, Brinker-Gabler devotes a chapter to Salomé’s identification with Russian “otherness” and the influence that the Russian culture—as a culture of difference—had on her work, especially during her return visits at the turn of the twentieth century. According to Brinker-Gabler, Salomé
was often referred to as “the Russian” by those she encountered, and she was viewed as “exotic” among her Western friends and colleagues (2014, 76). While she regularly travelled back to visit her family, it was following an 1896 trip to St. Petersburg that Salomé immersed herself in Russian studies and produced four articles related to Russian art and culture. As Angela Livingstone notes in her biography of Salomé:

‘She was not among the earliest exponents of the idea that Russian people were close to the great truths that had been lost to the rest of Europe, an idea which informed the Western conception of the ‘Russian soul’ during two-decades of Russian enthusiasm. Russians were held to be childlike, spontaneous, passive and compassionate.’ (qtd. in Brinker-Gabler 2014, 76).

Livingstone further addresses Salomé’s and Rilke’s idealized approach to Russian culture, including its spiritual or mystical elements. Despite Tolstoy’s best efforts to dissuade Salomé and Rilke from getting caught up in the formality of the Russian Orthodox church’s Easter celebrations in 1899, both Salomé and Rilke were enamored and deeply moved by the celebrations taking place in Moscow, particularly by the “…praying crowds, the little chapels with dusty icons, [and] the ecstatic believers there” (Brinker-Gabler 2014, 77). These unique experiences of Russian cultural difference were occurring at the same time that Salomé was composing her 1899 essay “Human Being as Woman” and may have also been the source of inspiration for her later theory of positive narcissism discussed in Chapter Three.

In her memoirs *Looking Back*, Salomé devotes a chapter to her Russian experiences as well as a chapter to her relationship with Rilke. Within these two chapters, Salomé outlines the differences that she perceived between the liminality of Russia and the more binary West. In one passage of her memoir, Salomé acknowledges that licentiousness and debauchery are present in Russia (perhaps even more so than in other places), but that did not detract from the rich inwardness of spiritual life that she
witnessed first-hand among the Russian people, specifically among the peasantry. In a passage comparing the spiritual nature of the Russian culture with its underlying mysticism to Western civilization, Salomé states:

. . . the spiritual life remains innocent and childlike in its simplicity when compared to more 'mature' nations which focus upon personal love of a more ‘egoistic’ kind. The Russian ‘collective’ is marked by attachment to the people, to what is fundamental, an intimacy of the heart rather than the principle of civilized behavior, or intelligence, or rationality. All ecstasy finds its expression there, in no way diminished, with an emphasis upon the difference between the sexes: for passive submission and receptivity mesh with a sharp, active revolutionary quality in a state of spiritual alertness. (LB 1991, 36)

In a separate passage of her memoir related to her Russian experience, Salomé contrasts the Bolsheviks, with their stirrings of revolution devised from what she refers to as “cold theories” of the West, to Old Russia which she and Rilke experienced during their visits. She contended that it was only from the perspective of Old Russia that one could envision the Russian future (LB 1991, 41-42). Salomé’s approach to understanding and conveying Russian culture is similar to what Caroline Levine describes in her book Forms when she posits that it is through the collision and interplay of multiple forms, or images, and not just through isolated forms, that one comes to understand the aesthetic and political culture of a place.

Salomé also characterized Russian cultural difference through an account of how Russian culture (i.e., the culture of Old Russia) influenced Rilke’s writing. Basically, Salomé suggests that it was Rilke’s experience of Russian culture, especially his experience dwelling among the peasants along the Volga, that provided him with the creative inspiration to produce some of his best lyrical poetry. Rilke found God in Russia, but not the omniscient and omnipotent God of patriarchal Western Christianity. Rilke’s God, according to Brinker-Gabler, was the Russian “God of Becoming,” as expressed
through Russian Orthodox icons. Rilke was additionally influenced by the nature of prayers uttered by the peasants. It was the sincerity by which the Russian peasants, despite their history of oppression and misery, prayed to God for protection. Their prayers were intimate and devoted. From listening to the peasant’s prayers, Rilke learned how to more effectively transfer the unspeakable forms from his imagination into poetry.

As Salomé conveyed in *You Alone are Real to Me: Remembering Rainer Maria Rilke*:

Later in the early summer of 1900 after the second journey of several months to Russia, if he [Rilke] reflects at all on the meaning of that country as a redemption for him, he does so most profoundly in *The Book of Hours*. For it was conceived there from the most immediate experience of the hours, verse for verse, prayer for prayer, suspended through days and nights that were filled with inexhaustible devotion—as perhaps has never been revealed in poetry or prayer. It was as if both needed only to ‘be’ because they were one and the same. This is found in the name of God that cloaks everything in *The Book of Hours* like a mantle of motherhood under which, and through which, even the most insignificant thing is baptized in its own name. (2003, 38)

Both Salomé and Rilke were also deeply impacted by their encounters with Russian Orthodox icons. Brinker-Gabler asserts that it was Russian icons that most defined Salomé’s approach to Russia’s cultural difference (2014, 83). While travelling throughout Russia in 1900, Salomé looked at many icons in churches, cloisters, museums, and in peasant’s huts. She was amazed at how such simple icons emitted such powerful expressions. Salomé viewed the Russian icons as shaping a community of people. She described the experience of both *seeing* and *reading* the icons in her journal as follows:

Everywhere the walls brimming with gold make such a strong impression on me because they provide numerous little golden dresses for the dark, brown, nearly unrecognizable holy figures emerging from behind; like a ghostly procession behind the golden robes, they allow here and there a face, a hand to appear. Opposite this mysticism, even beautiful painting,—which however ‘betrays’ and limits the sacred, seems banal, and how well one now understands even the prohibition on bringing plastic arts into the church! Beneath the golden dresses, everyone can think of what he wants; what he sees are merely questions, symbols,
In the passage above, Salomé distinguishes the difference between religious paintings and icons. According to Salomé, religious paintings offered only banal representations of spirituality; they did not possess the power of divine representation inherent to Orthodox icons, which she considered thresholds. In this respect, Salomé suggests that Russian icons are brought to life through an interaction between the perceiver and the perceived (like Levine’s concept of text and context in her revised formalist theory). “Icons draw the ‘invisible’ into the ‘visible’ in such a way that there is simultaneously both openness and withdrawal, says Brinker-Gabler. “The divine is ‘present,’ but at the same time it is unapproachable” (2014, 85).

Salomé’s experience with icons, as recorded in Rodinka, is comparable to Kristeva’s psycholinguistic discussion of icons in her book entitled Crisis of the European Subject. Raised in an Eastern Orthodox family in Bulgaria, Kristeva discusses the primary differences between Orthodoxy and Western religions, such as Catholicism. Unlike the concept of the Trinity in Catholicism, Kristeva explains the concept of per filium in Orthodoxy, which means that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son, which puts the Father and Son on equal footing. According to Kristeva, this Oedipal structure results in a fusional and sensual dyad whereby the Orthodox Son, or man, is bisexual; the Son is essentially effeminized. Consequently, the Oedipal complex is unresolved, which results in feelings of rejection, separation and depressive malaise. However, this emotional state can be countered by mysticism in the Orthodox psyche. In this context, psychological wholeness can be realized through connection to the Divine, such as through hesychasm, which is a state of divine quietness of spirit achieved through...
prayer and meditation (2000, 138-152). The power of prayer is illustrated in the anonymous work *The Way of the Pilgrim* with its narratives that show how the power of prayer is manifest within one’s heart and spirit as well as through revelations. As described in the Second Narrative:

In the spirit there is the sweetness of God’s love, inner peace and the rapture of the mind, purity of thought, and the delightful remembrance of God. In the feelings, there is a pleasant warming of the heart, a sweet delight that fills all the limbs, the heart bubbling over with joy, an inner lightness and vitality, the delight of being alive, and an inner detachment from illness and offenses. Revelations bring enlightenment of the intellect, an understanding of the Holy Scripture, a knowledge of the language of all delights of the interior spiritual life, and a conviction of the close presence of God and of His love for us. (Pokrovsky 2001, 55)

Kristeva explains how Russian theologians emphasize the humanistic qualities of the Orthodox faith through the intermediation of the Trinity. Since the Oedipal complex remains unresolved between God the Father and Son, Orthodoxy does not allow for knowing God like Western Christianity. Instead, God can only be experienced through the theology of prayer, as previously mentioned. Additionally, Orthodox icons are critical to the believer’s experience of the Divine. In *Crisis of the European Subject*, Kristeva stresses the difference between the icon, as a *graphein*, and a spectacle (2000, 153).

Kristeva, like Salomé some six decades before her, recognizes that viewing an icon is a wholly sensory experience. As Kristeva concludes:

An Orthodox icon is not viewed, it is embraced. You plunge into it, and your eyes are flooded by touch, smell, taste, hearing . . . The Orthodox faith, if you adhere to it, lets you touch the mystery of the incarnation not with a finger but with your entire body: the Word is made Flesh in an Orthodox church, no doubt about it. (qtd. in Bodin 2014, 208)

In *Windows to Heaven: Introducing Icons to Protestants and Catholics*, Elizabeth Zelensky and Lela Gilbert explain how icons transcend space and time, meaning that they are not defined as belonging to any certain epoch, nationality or group of people; instead,
they are venerated as sources of revelation (2005, 30-32). From a psycholinguistic perspective, Orthodoxy is rooted in the semiotic imaginary associated with the maternal. In the words of Kristeva: “... one might say that Orthodox experience valorizes the pre-Oedipal, narcissistic, depressive stages of personality; in linguistic terms, that it favors the ‘semiotic’ preverbal more than the verbal ‘symbolic’ signs, syntax, and logical argumentation” (2000, 149).

One particular icon of ambiguous theology but of great attraction to the imagination of such turn-of-the-century Russian intellectuals as Sergei Bulgakov and Vladimir Soloviev is embodied in the icon of Sophia, the Wisdom of God. The concept of Sophia as a female image of the Divine (or the Eternal Feminine) and the related philosophy of sophiology was introduced first in the writings of Soloviev and later refined and expanded by Bulgakov during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Sophia is an amalgam of mother/son, male/female and heaven and earth as she represents “God in the world,” including God’s multiple manifestations and self-revelations. As Brenda Meehan states in her article “Wisdom/Sophia, Russian Identity, and Western Feminist Theology”:

Sophia/Wisdom is continually revealing herself, continually coming into being. She is revealed not only in Scripture, but in living tradition and liturgy, in the inspiration of icon painters and other creative artists, in the unfolding wisdom of all human beings and of all creation. (1996, 162).

Sophia is the substance of the Godhead in the dyad of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Further, she is the combination of the Word made flesh and spirit. In this respect, Sophia is the female essence of God and not just a female extension or dimension of God. Ultimately, Sophia is the unfolding of a mother’s love and compassion in a world filled with sin and pain. As the second Eve, she leads the way back to paradise with her
paradoxical understanding of good and evil. As Meehan concludes: “Sophia stands in the
tension between our hallowed and sinful world. She stands ready to reveal and to be
revealed, to be with us in our theological discourses, and amid our silence in the face of
mystery” (1996, 165).

The Orthodox Theotokos (i.e., mother of God) that is celebrated in Russia,
Bulgaria and other eastern countries, emphasizes the more human and maternal aspects of
Mary unlike Western Christianity’s concept of the virgin Mary who is without sin and
defies death. In her essay “Stabat Mater,” Kristeva examines how Western Christianity’s
cult of the Virgin subjugates women. According to Kristeva, the “virgin” attribute of
Mary in Christianity is the result of a translation error where the Semitic term associated
with the socio-legal status of a young unmarried woman was substituted with the Greek
word parthenos, which relates to the physiological and psychological condition of
virginity. This alternate interpretation led to a powerful imaginary construct of a virginal
mother of God that perpetuated the Mary/Eve dichotomy which categorizes women as
either chaste virgins like Mary or seductive whores like Eve. Moreover, Kristeva points
out how the dogma of the immaculate conception, which was adopted by the Catholic
church, has resulted in an idealized perception of motherhood and femininity. As Sian
Hawthorne writes in his article “An Outlaw Ethics for the Study of Religions:
Maternality and the Dialogic Subject in Julia Kristeva’s ‘Stabat Mater’”:

Kristeva points out that this image is a ‘fantasy … of a lost territory’ that involves
‘less an idealized archaic mother than the idealization of the relationship that
binds us to her, one that cannot be localized.’ She argues that the figure of the
Virgin Mary is a fundamentally unsatisfactory and paradoxical construction –
both virgin and mother, unique (‘alone among women’) and simultaneously a
generic model for all women, that encourages them to be self-sacrificing and
submissive to male authority. Kristeva’s argument is that Mary is, in essence,
projected as a mother solely for others, and that she represents a form of
‘masculine sublimation.’ (2013, 138)
Essentially, Kristeva posits that Mary rejects the other sex (man), but ultimately sets up a third person. “The result is an immaculate conception (therefore with neither man nor sex),” says Kristeva, “of a God with whose existence a woman has indeed something to do, or condition that she acknowledge being subjected to it” (1986, 180). The idolization of the virgin Mary presents an inaccessible goal for ordinary women since the ideal woman, in this case, could only be a nun, a martyr, or (if she is married) a woman who leads a life that is dedicated to the highest sublimation alien to her body with the only realization of jouissance being through pregnancy. Therefore, the Western veneration of virgin Mary, unlike the earthier and more relatable Theotokos of Russian Orthodoxy, is akin to Freud’s psychological theory that associated women with a void that could only be filled through bearing a child, especially a son.

The mystical and spiritual elements of Russian culture are the foundation of the mythos behind the concept of a Russian soul. Orlando Figes, in his cultural history of Russia entitled Natasha's Dance, links the Western concept of a Russian soul to the early practice of Russian Orthodox asceticism (i.e. creed of resignation and withdrawal from life). The emotional experience of a Russian Orthodox service, with its musical liturgy combined with the transformational power of icons, are additional aspects of Russian culture which contribute to the idea of a Russian soul (Figes 2002, 297-299). Figes expresses that eighteenth and nineteenth century Russian life was permeated with religious rituals. This is the same pervasive feature of Russian culture that Salomé and Rilke observed among the Russian peasantry during their travels along the Volga in the late 1800s. Additionally, Figes explains how Gogol’s fiction, such as his voluminous work Dead Souls, was responsible for giving the Russian soul a messianic turn when he defined the Russian soul as a “universal spirit that would save the Christian world” (Figes
2002, 313). In short, Gogol suggested that the piety and perceived selflessness of the Russian peasantry, despite their paradoxical paganism and devout practice of Orthodox rituals, was morally superior to the materialistic and decadent culture of the West.

Salomé’s Russian journal entries reflect this same Zeitgeist about Russian culture with its less repressed, thus more communal, spirit. Ultimately, Salomé’s return trips to Russia were a “projection of home” that overcame modern boundaries of the self and national imagination (Brinker-Gabler 2014, 94). Russia provided an escape from the modernized ideals of Western life; it was a narcissistic return to the mother in order to embrace a renewed creativity. In the words of Brinker-Gabler:

The Volga land and the Russian people provided her [Salomé] with metaphors of life she desired, i.e., a life with devotion and spiritual depth. . . . She celebrates the ‘expanse’ (Weite) of the Volga landscape and the ‘silence’ (Stille) of the village that connects her with her inner depth. Russia offers her a metaphor for the ‘otherness’ she feels lodged within. Andreas-Salomé’s longing for ‘Russia’ comes from a ‘loss’ that befell her as a young woman, and which she recalls at the end of her journal as a radical ‘de-russification’ (Entrussung) caused in her youth by her teacher, the Dutch Lutheran pastor Henrik Gillot. (RR 143) Furthermore, she desires ‘another’ self from the one that had developed over many years of intellectual life in her new ‘home’ in the West. (2014, 100)

In Rodinka, Salomé also challenged the Western value of institutionalized education, or ways of knowing. She found the peasants, who lacked formal education, to be wise and attuned to the deepest and most eternal matters of life in conversation. Salomé personally related to the in-betweenness of Russian culture. In Russia, she was able to connect to the Other, or the stranger, within herself (in Kristeva’s theoretical terms). According to Salomé, the modernized West had become “off-balance, eccentric, and forgetful” (Brinker-Gabler 2014, 104). As Brinker-Gabler concludes: “Rejecting the qualification of Russia’s backwardness—i.e., rejecting a historicist construction that works toward
hegemony and exclusion—she [Salomé] turned to Russia to find a new intersection of past and future” (2014, 104).

As noted earlier in this chapter, Salomé applied modern emblematics in her writing and discourse, which allowed her to transfer nature into history and memory. In context of Kristeva’s theory, the liminal body is one that is abjected: “. . . neither subject nor object, it is neither here nor there but is everywhere because it is incorporated in the self until the self becomes aware of its presence or absence” (Sharma 2013, 113). This liminal, or nomadic state, where Salomé exists, moves on the margins and challenges central authority. In this state, differences are embraced, which results in the formation of communitas based on common humanity and equality rather than recognized hierarchy (Sharma 2013, 118-119). It was the liminality of pre-revolutionary Russian culture—closer to primary narcissism and the feminine—that Salomé incorporated within herself which lead to the development of her non-binary psychological and feminist theories (refer to Chapter Four).

Although she never travelled to Russia, Virginia Woolf was also profoundly influenced by Russian culture, chiefly through her reading of Russian novels translated into English and later through her translation of Russian literature (i.e., selected works by Dostoevsky and Tolstoy) for the Hogarth Press. Dorothy Brewster’s article entitled “The Russian Soul: An English Literary Pattern” traces the evolving perception of the Russian soul within English society. According to Brewster, translated versions of Russian works first appeared in England around 1910. During that same time, English scholars and experienced travelers, such as Maurice Baring and Stephen Graham, began to publish books about Russian culture in English. Baring’s book Landmarks, published in 1910, cast the Russian people into two major stereotypes: Lucifer and Ivan the Fool (Brewster
Stephen Graham, an Englishman who specialized in Russian pilgrimages and peasants, typecast Russians as a “blessed sort of Idiots unable to read and write, but vitally conscious of God” (Brewster 1948, 183).

As the works of Russian novelists, like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, became increasingly accessible to English readers, English attitudes toward Russian culture tended to become more positive, at least among the artistic community. While they still sensed the vast differences between the more underdeveloped Russian culture (often calling it barbaric) compared to modern English society, Russian novelists gained the respect of English critics for their ability to portray the deepest parts of the human psyche. As Rebecca West remarked after reading The Brothers Karamazov:

‘We have arrived at intimacy with a people extraordinarily like the English, in their untidiness and their inflexible conviction that there are other things in the world besides efficiency, but sweeter in their hearts, beautifully devoid of the sense of property, and beautifully troubled by consciousness that are sharp-edged like a child’s. And from this literary friendship there has sprung an immensely important comradeship of the nations which today keep civilization together.’ (qtd. in Brewster 1948, 183-184)

Others, like D.H. Lawrence, declared Dostoevsky a prophet and succinctly described Russian literature as “the phenomenal coruscations of the soul of quite commonplace people” (qtd. in Brewster 1948, 187). While Brewster does not address post-revolution Russian literature or its reception by English critics in her article, she concludes that modernist English novelists, like Virginia Woolf, were influenced by the psychological richness and the more fluid form of Russian novels.

Woolf admired Russian literature from the time that it became available to English readers in translated form. From 1920-1923, Woolf assisted with the translation of several Russian works into English, including Dostoevsky’s “Stavrogin’s Confession,” which is believed to have shaped the character of Septimus in Mrs. Dalloway (Furman
In her 1925 essay “The Russian Point of View,” which is published in *The Common Reader*, Woolf focuses on the ethos of Russian literature. Within this essay, Woolf concentrates on issues of cultural relativity, the problems inherent to the translation of literature (i.e., what is lost from the Russian language in its transition to English prose) and the concerns addressed by Russian writers that she found influential to her own writing.

It was reading the works of Dostoevsky, Chekhov, Tolstoy and Turgenev that contributed to some of Woolf’s dissatisfaction with the modern English novel, particularly with the “materialist” form that had been perfected by Bennett, Wells and Galsworthy (Rubenstein 1972, 196). Woolf noted a “Russian quality” that included self-consciousness, introspection and sensitivity to suffering that distinguished Russian novels from English ones. She further admired the open-ended literary form of the Russian novels that she believed represented the inwardness (or “soul”) of the characters. As Woolf comments:

> It is all the same to him [Dostoevsky] whether you are noble or simple, a tramp or a great lady. Whoever you are, you are the vessel of this perplexed liquid, this cloudy, yeasty, precious stuff, the soul. The soul is not restrained by barriers. It overflows, it floods, it mingles with the souls of others. The simple story of a bank clerk who could not pay for a bottle of wine spreads, before we know what is happening, into the lives of his father-in-law and the five mistresses whom his father-in-law treated abominably, and the postman’s life, and the charwoman’s, and the Princesses’ who lodged in the same block of flats; for nothing is outside Dostoevsky’s province; and when he is tired, he does not stop, he goes on. He cannot restrain himself. Out it tumbles upon us, hot, scalding, mixed, marvelous, terrible, oppressive—the human soul. (*The Common Reader* 2013, 145)

In addition to her appreciation for the psychologically complex character development and fluid structure employed by Russian novelists as expressed in “The Russian Point of View,” Woolf draws upon examples from Russian novelists that demonstrate quality
fiction in her essay “Modern Fiction.” In a diary entry just one year prior to her death, Woolf recollected the experience of her first time reading Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*:

> Always the same reality—like touching an exposed electric wire. Even so imperfectly conveyed—his rugged short cut mind—to me the most, not sympathetic, but inspiring, rousing; genius in the raw. Thus more disturbing, more ‘shocking’ [,] more of a thunderclap, even on art, even on lit.[erature], than any other writer. I remember that was my feeling about W. & Peace, read in bed at Twickenham. . . . [It was] a revelation to me. Its directness, its reality. (qtd. in Rubenstein 2009, 98)

In her article “Woolf and the Russian Point of View,” Roberta Rubenstein submits that Russian literature figured prominently into an important period of Woolf’s career as a novelist and that Russian novelists like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky enriched her imagination. As Rubenstein concludes:

> The emphasis on the ‘semi-transparent envelope’ of consciousness as well as the spiritual realism of experience, the continuity between humor and pathos, the difficulty of true communication, the problem of loneliness, and the question of life’s ultimate meaning—all important aspects of Virginia Woolf’s fiction—derived at least encouragement, if not direct inspiration, from the fertilizing impact of Russian literature on her imagination. (1972, 205-206)

In addition to its influence on Western writers, Russian culture played a role in the development of Freud’s depth psychology. Although Freud tended to suppress his own Lithuanian and Jewish roots, Freud was fascinated with the Russian temperament, or at least the stereotypes he created about the Russian character. In “The Freud Experience” chapter of her memoirs, Salomé describes how Freud was intrigued by his Russian patients’ ability to maintain a simplicity of soul while freely expressing the most difficult emotional states and complicated situations (*LB* 1991, 94). Salomé credits her own Russian background for being one of the reasons she was receptive to the study of depth psychology under Freud. From her personal encounters with all strata of Russian culture and from reading Russian literature, Salomé believed the reason for the Russians’ ability
to more clearly express deep inner truths was due to the less repressed state of their culture compared to the West. As Salomé declares:

> When I think of people I came to know in Russia, I can well understand what makes them so easy to ‘analyze’ today, and what keeps them more honest about themselves: the layers of repression have remained thinner, more flexible in their case, layers which in older cultures have been interposed between basic experience and its reflection of conscious mediated response. (LB 1991, 94)

In James Rice’s book *Freud’s Russia: National Identity in the Evolution of Psychoanalysis*, he describes how Salomé may have reinforced Freud’s existing stereotypes of the Russian people and culture. According to Rice, Salomé’s vital presence, spiritual and erotic being combined with her own Russian past provided Freud with “Russian material” (1993, 77). Despite his respect for Salomé as a student and protégé with whom he corresponded for some thirty years, Freud’s psychological theories remained androcentric and binary (refer to Chapter Three). Essentially, Freud applied his own biased Westernized observations of the Russian character and temperament in his psychoanalytic practice. For instance, in his infamous Wolf Man case, Freud over-dramatized his patient’s dreams and imposed his own theory of an alleged primal scene into the interpretation of the Wolf Man’s dreams. After three-plus years of treating Sergei (or the Wolf Man), Freud deemed his case “analysis interminable,” meaning that no significant progress was made. As reflected in more than 300 letters corresponding with Jung, Freud ultimately implied that the Russians were nationalistic and superstitious in their thinking (i.e., a herd mentality) and that their extreme ambivalence made them more difficult to treat in therapy (Rice 1993, 66 & 93-99).

Salomé embraced the ambivalence characteristic to the Russian temperament, which was manifest in her relationships with men as well as reflected in her psychological theories and fictional characters. In Victor Mazin’s article entitled “The
Femme Fatale-Lou Andreas-Salomé” published in the *European Journal of Psychoanalysis*, he posits that Salomé’s relationships with men were characterized by ambivalence. For instance, the Swedish psychoanalyst Poul Bjerre used the oxymoron “cold passion” to describe Salomé’s intimate relationships with men, which Mazin contributes to an internal conflict between Salomé’s sexual longings and her desire for intellectual recognition (2002, 4). In one of Salomé’s texts she wrote: “The more fiery the fanaticism of love, the colder the effect of its distortion—right up to fire and cold coming together as one” (qtd. in Mazin 2002, 5).

Salomé’s psychological theories, such as her “Dual Direction of Narcissism” (refer to Chapter Three), further attest to her ambivalence. Moreover, Salomé created female characters who struggled between their needs for intimacy and their demands for personal space. Salomé’s fictional characters, like herself, were often in liminal positions. For example, Salomé’s female protagonists—e.g., the characters of Hildegard in “Paradise” from *The Human Family*, Gitta from *Das Haus* and Fenitschka—often experienced tension between the demands of traditional norms for women (i.e., marriage, motherhood and domestic life) and their own desires to pursue careers or artistic endeavors. According to Salomé, the key was in continuous movement and a woman’s ability to navigate as a self in the world while remaining true to her core being. For Salomé, life was ambiguous, and women’s liberation was in choosing their own course, no matter where it may lead.
CHAPTER 3

A GENDER FLUID MODEL: NARCISSUS AS POET AND LOVER

Both Lou Andreas-Salomé and Virginia Woolf rejected the binary model of gender psychology proposed by Freud and his school that was built on sexual/anatomical differences; instead, they both portended the need to separate sex from gender in order to develop a more fluid concept that allowed for multiple ways of being for men and women, thereby acting as precursors to postmodern feminist psychologists like Julia Kristeva. As discussed in the previous chapter, Salomé identified with the Russian cultural pattern of rejecting dualism and embracing the possibilities of paradox. With a more flexible mindset than many of her Western counterparts, Salomé—the first female psychologist—developed revolutionary theories that were almost a century ahead of her historic context.

Salomé’s 1899 essay “Human Being as Woman” together with her 1921 publication entitled “The Dual Direction of Narcissism” present a psychological model for human development and gender that deviated from her mentor’s (i.e., Sigmund Freud’s) theories. Salomé offered an alternative interpretation of the Narcissus myth whereby narcissism is positively associated with the feminine. Essentially, Salomé suggests that Narcissus’ experience at the water’s edge was one of a return to the semiotic state of imagination where he recognized himself as part of, yet separate from, the external world (i.e., object permanence). At the boundary between self-discovery and self-annihilation, Narcissus ultimately plunges into the depths of his pre-symbolic imagination (i.e., unconscious) and becomes one with the natural world. With this alternate view of narcissism, Salomé challenged Freud’s intransigent model of narcissism that was based on auto-erotic love which he believed should be replaced with an
appropriate object choice in adulthood. Conversely, Salomé perceived narcissism as a source of self-affirmation, love and creative energy that engenders human hope and desire. As expressed in Ban Wang’s article “Memory, Narcissism and Sublimation: Reading Lou Andreas-Salomé’s *Freud Journal*”:

Affirmative sublimation is a self-duplication, and is the ‘living application of the gifts of nature to their own purposes’ (146). Its archetypal figure, once again, is a Narcissus who constantly re-creates a reality of his own, ‘fully evolved, standing before his own images’ (147). . . . Sublimation—the memory-based symbolic activity—is simultaneously a regression and creation—without pathology. Instead of being sunk in the fin-de-siècle world-weariness and disheartened about individual and collective imaginative creativity, we can pull ourselves up by listening carefully to Lou Andreas-Salomé, whose revitalizing voice comes as a reminder that human beings can still re-create and transform the ways we live, experience, and think. (2000, 231-233)

Contrary to the prevailing psychological theory and the mainstream feminist movement of her day, Salomé distinguished sex from gender and emphasized the importance of femininity as the creative element, or lifeblood, of any society, which was an approach to gender shared by modernist author Virginia Woolf. While there is no record of the two authors having met or influenced each other’s works, both Salomé and Woolf espoused similar concepts in their fiction and non-fiction that challenged the androcentric psychological models of their day. Similar to Salomé, Woolf believed that artists are able to fluctuate between a liminal semiotic state (accessed via memory) in the creative unconscious and the symbolic order of language (i.e., external or real world) where they express their creative ideas on paper or canvas. In a return to the semiotic through affirmative sublimation, Woolf agrees with Salomé’s position that narcissism (associated with the feminine) is not a pathology; rather, it is a source of creative inspiration. Woolf did not meet Freud in person until 1939. Ironically, Freud gave Woolf a narcissus flower during their first meeting, which she saw as a representation of his
theory that women were narcissistic and, thus, unable to reciprocate love. Woolf was initially resistant to reading Freud’s theories because she disliked his use of science (including his questionable therapeutic practices) and omission of the arts in formulating his theories about the inner world of human beings. Woolf believed that production of art, including writing, was the most effective means of exploring the creative unconscious. Conversely, Freud likened the artistic process to child’s play or daydreaming and suggested that creativity may be nothing more than a form of neurosis or a defense mechanism. While he was an avid collector of art and antiquities, Freud did not seem to consider writing, or the artistic process, culturally significant. For Woolf, however, writers were the high priestesses of consciousness, drawing upon the semiotic imaginary to produce lasting psychological relics of humankind. As detailed in Chapter Five, Woolf’s fiction was both a reflection of her own narcissism as a writer and her belief that women think through their mothers when they produce fiction, which is noticeably divergent from Freud’s patrilineal development theories. Many of her fictional characters, such as Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith (psychological doubles) in *Mrs. Dalloway*, present the deepest inner workings of the human mind through Woolf’s own imagination, showing how life and art are inextricably linked. Additionally, both Woolf and Salomé emphasize the importance of the mother in human development and show how art is able to transcend gender binaries. As a result, both authors present a fluid gender model via a mobile libido that allows for multiple ways of being in the world.

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This chapter will demonstrate Salomé’s significant contributions to gender psychology and feminism by providing a comparative analysis between her 1921 theory of narcissism and traditional interpretations of the Narcissus myth as well as by distinguishing her more positive theory of narcissism from the ideas expressed in Freud’s 1914 publication “On Narcissism.” This chapter concludes by drawing parallels between Salomé’s positive concept of narcissism and the theories of postmodern psycholinguist Julia Kristeva that re-envision Narcissus as the ultimate poet and lover, hence reiterating the need expressed by both Salomé and Woolf for widening the sphere in which female psychic space can be expressed in modern civilization.

Influenced by evolutionary theory, particularly Darwin’s socio-cultural definitions of “male” and “female” and his descriptions of secondary sexual characteristics, prominent members of the European scientific and medical community during the 1890s reified assumptions about gender predicated on anatomical/biological differences that also reflected existing cultural mores. One particularly significant study, as referenced by Brinker-Gabler, was a metabolism theory proposed by Patrick Geddis and J. Arthur Thompson in *The Evolution of Sex* published in 1890. This 1890 study, widely recognized in Germany and elsewhere in Europe (2014, 29), was based on the nature of different male and female sexual reproductive cells, chemical reactions at the cellular level in the bodies of men and women and psycho-physiological parallels deduced from perceived male/female biological and chemical variances. Conclusions from these metabolic studies combined with prominent medical theories pertaining to brain weight and development (i.e., with female brains assumed smaller and less developed) lead to binary representations of sexually assigned gender norms competing within a hierarchical framework whereby masculine traits were considered superior to feminine traits.
The concept of *female*, considered undifferentiated (i.e., incomplete and underdeveloped), became associated with characteristics such as passivity, subordination, frugality, conservatism and receptivity; conversely, the concept of *male* became synonymous with active, entrepreneurially and biologically extravagant, progressive and innovative (Brinker-Gabler 2014, 29). These stereotypes delineated by scientific studies during the late 19th and early 20th centuries were likewise performed as social norms by men and women in the Western world. Women in the Victorian era conformed to stereotypes of chaste and virtuous “angels in the house”; they were typically restricted to private spheres of domesticity and service with the expectation of marriage and bearing several children. In contrast, Victorian men were considered *pater familias* with exclusive authority over their families and an active economic and political life outside the home. As a result, men had a recognized civic persona and enjoyed the full protection of the law and access to the public sphere.

Freud’s psychosexual development theory, constructed on a linear male model, was closely aligned with these prevailing Victorian attitudes in Western culture as well as previously mentioned evolutionary and medical theories that considered men (i.e., Western, white males) psychically, emotionally and intellectually superior to women. Dr. Samuel Slipp’s book *The Freudian Mystique: Freud, Women and Feminism* contends that Freud’s omission of the mother’s significance in the pre-oedipal phase of development and his generally pejorative views of female psychology were shaped both by the Victorian culture in which he lived as well as an ambivalent relationship with his own mother. In downplaying the role of the mother in children’s development, Freud created a more authoritative role for the father (i.e., masculine influence) whose position in the development process was idealized. As Eli Sagan states:
Victorian patriarchy created a father who was armor-plated with psychological defenses; a full-bodied authoritarian, who took his particular morality very seriously and threatened and/or delivered extreme punishment for ‘moral’ waywardness. Freud was born into a world of such fathers and such an authoritarian conception of morality. Every patriarch was an imitation Jehovah in the household: distant, demanding, castrating. (1988, 57)

When Freud did include women (i.e., femininity) in his theories, it was usually to associate them with neuroses, such as hysteria. In working as an analyst with female patients, such as his famous Dora case, Freud assumed a position of Victorian male privilege, which was reflected in his dismissal of their painful experiences (sometimes related to unwanted sexual advances by men) as hysteria. Moreover, Freud frequently underscored the lack of female individuation compared to males, which he believed lead to a less developed superego, or sense of morality, in women. In the last of his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* entitled “The Transformation of Puberty,” Freud attributed a higher propensity for developing neuroses to women than men based on an assumption that females repress their original masculinity and switch their primary erogenous zone from the clitoris to the vagina during puberty (1962, 87). Freud suggested that this shift prepared women for their primary roles in reproduction. According to Freud’s theory, a woman could only assuage her desire for a penis (i.e., penis envy), or phallic power, if she bore a male child; conversely, men could abandon the deadly dependence that the mother came to signify once they had properly identified with the father.

Freud also suggested that developmental differences were manifest through male and female narcissism, which he observed in male and female object choice. Though he

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defined the libido as unsexed in his lecture on “Femininity,” Freud posited in his 1914 essay “On Narcissism: An Introduction” that men and women display differences in the choice of love objects that reflect their narcissistic tendencies. Fundamentally, Freud believed that men were able to appropriately transfer their primary narcissism onto an overvalued female love object in adult life; however, Freud thought that women remained in a state of infantile narcissism with an insatiable appetite to be loved by male companions. Thus, Freud presented women as vain and enigmatic. Comparing women to cats, large beasts of prey, great criminals of literature and humorists, Freud projected women, and femininity, as dangerous to men by claiming that they diminish men’s egos in relationships, hence undermining the stability of dominant (“healthy”) masculine values (Kofman 1980, 37-38). Despite the alleged dangers women pose to men, Freud acknowledged that men continue to seek the figurative sustenance of the mother’s milk in future female sexual partners and/or wives. In Western tradition, this paradox has often resulted in women’s being placed into one of two categories: the seductress Eve or the Virginal Mary—the angel/whore dichotomy, which was a predominate classification of women during the Victorian era. Jea Suk Oh, in a presentation on diversity at Yale in 2005, addresses the male urge to repress the feminine:

In patriarchal systems, the masculine is threatened by an asymmetrical, irrational, wily, and uncountable power of the feminine. . . . In order to obtain the hegemony, the masculine suppresses and demonizes the feminine as the other, the abjection. Women are categorized as the human representative of the abjection: the improper, transgression, unclean, sin, evil, etc. . . .

Freud’s distrust of the feminine, with its boundless capacity for love and creativity (akin to Freud’s notion of an “oceanic feeling”), is captured in the following excerpt from his 1929 book Civilization and Its Discontents: “Women represent the interests of family and sexual life; the work of civilization has become more and more men’s business; it
confronts them [men] with ever harder tasks, compels them [men] to sublimations of
instinct which women are not easily able to achieve” (2010, 73). In this passage, Freud
indicates that women (or femininity) are a potential disruption to civic order and that
masculine values were critical for modern society to progress.

As sociologist Georg Simmel, whose exclusive Berlin salon was frequented by
Salomé in 1906, concluded in his 1902 essay “Female Culture,”: modernity—with its
divisions of labor in production and consumption—was absolutely male (Brinker-Gabler
2014, 30). Like Freud, Simmel saw no space for the feminine in modern society and
suggested that women must adapt to norms of the male experience in order to participate
in modern life (Brinker-Gabler 2014, 30). In this same vein, men were encouraged to
suppress feminine qualities that could potentially inhibit their ability to compete in the
modern era. Further, Simmel considered that a female culture, with its psychologically
more rounded and less uniform qualities (i.e., undifferentiated), could only exist outside
of social and symbolic hierarchies and not in objective reality (Brinker-Gabler 2014, 30).

In the family as well as in western society, women were relegated to a position of the
Other and denied entry into the public sphere. In the words of Simone de Beauvoir in The
Second Sex: “... she [woman] is nothing other than what man decides; she is thus called
‘the sex,’ meaning that the male sees her essentially as a sexed being; for him she is sex,
so she is it in the absolute. She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while
he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. ... She is the
Other” (2011, 31).

In response to this male-dominated culture, the mainstream feminist movement at
the turn of the twentieth century sought to achieve equal civic rights for women as well as
access for women to work in historically male-dominated professions. This fight for
equal status with men, though it greatly advanced women’s civil liberties, inadvertently gave rise to an increasing polarization within the existing binary model of sex-based gender norms that lead to further suppression of the feminine in both men and women and the ultimate reification of patriarchal values (refer to chapter One). Salomé and Woolf, unlike a majority of their feminist contemporaries, recognized the inherent limitations of the mainstream women’s movement resulting from the suppression of the feminine in individual men and women as well as within society. Both Salomé and Woolf have been labeled antifeminists by contemporary as well as posthumous critics. Salomé, often defined by the famous men with whom she was associated (i.e., Nietzsche, Rilke and Freud), has been frequently dismissed as a femme fatale and muse. German feminists like Hedwig Dohm criticized Salomé’s work for its “veiled” style that drew upon and repeated essentialist and romantic notions of femininity and sexuality (Martin 1991, 21).

Woolf, while a renowned feminist icon, has often been criticized for being elitist and out of touch. Specifically, critics such as Kate Millet have pointed out the “glorified housewives” portrayed by Woolf in her fiction and the perceived disconnect of these female characters from Woolf’s overarching feminist philosophy in *A Room of One’s Own* and *Three Guineas*. Moreover, Woolf has been accused, much like Salomé, for a “veiled” style of feminist discourse; noted critics like Elaine Showalter consider Woolf’s whimsical style of writing about feminist issues, like the literary technique employed in *A Room of One’s Own*, as evasive and ultimately undermining the female experience. Showalter also contends that Woolf’s utopian ideal of androgyny is another means of escaping feminist politics and choosing, instead, to repress femininity that she claims to uphold (Moi 1985, 12-17).
Allegations of antifeminism against Salomé and Woolf, as previously discussed, seem primarily founded on ideologically driven formalist readings of these authors’ works without consideration of relevant historical and cultural context. Both Salomé and Woolf were prescient in drawing distinctions between biological, sexual differences and performative gender norms established by societal expectations for how men and women “ought” to behave. As discussed in Chapters Four and Five, both authors used subversive literary techniques in their fiction to undermine the masculine linear authority of the narrative. Apart from her fictional works, Salomé proposed original psychological theories, including a positive theory of narcissism, which established a bisexual model of gender that permitted a role for the mother and father (masculine and feminine) in the developmental and artistic process. Similarly, Woolf promoted the idea of an intersubjective self for each man and woman in *A Room of One’s Own* that required a balance of masculine and feminine psychic space. Although Woolf’s polemic text of *Three Guineas* is more of a cultural commentary than psychological model, her treatise on how to prevent war in this work sends a message about the relevance of transcending gender binaries to improve the state of one’s own mind, one’s country and the world. The details of both authors’ gender theories, beginning with the psychological theories of Salomé, are discussed throughout the remainder of this chapter.

Before Freud’s theories relating to variances in male and female development were conceived, Salomé proposed her own theory of human development that allowed for bisexuality and mobility of the libido. In her 1899 essay “Human Being as Woman,” Salomé presented a “two-in-one” (*Doppelgeschlecht*) human development model that included an active role for the mother and that, further, embraced a combination of masculine and feminine elements. Salomé refigured the body of woman as the dynamic
interaction of two-ness (Brinker-Gabler 2014, 40). At the beginning of “Human Being as Woman,” Salomé presents a “story” that destabilized the standard narrative of procreation where women were passive recipients; in Salomé’s re-imagined account, the sperm cells are dependents looking for attachment, and the ovum, possessing the agency of preparation, allows the sperm cells entry for fertilization and further mitosis (Brinker-Gabler 2014, 24-25). Salomé’s alternative version of assumed biological fact challenged the prevailing master narratives of her day concerning male and female differentiation.

For Salomé, anatomy was not a prescription for individual destiny. Salomé’s human development theory begins with a position of symmetry between the sexes. According to Salomé, both males and females experience a “lack” of primary oneness (i.e., loss of undifferentiated narcissism). Salomé also recognized that women usually remain less differentiated (more bisexual and closer to primary narcissism) than men. As described in Salomé’s essay “Human Being as Woman,” . . . “the male element, like a tangent, splits off in pursuit of individualization and self-assertion, the female element, circle-like, appears to be more connected with an elusive all-unity or Ur- and Grundboden (primal ground)” (Brinker-Gabler 2014, 32). Unlike Freud and others in his school, however, Salomé did not view these differences between the sexes within a hierarchical or binary framework, instead, she perceived gender as a system of interplay and ongoing development within each human being. As articulated in her Freud Journal in 1912:

The masculine component in woman, the feminine in man, that everyone possesses, operates differently in individual cases, with respect to the effect of bisexuality on the whole person. It emancipates the one from his own sex, creates a disturbance of harmony, defeminizes the stamp of womanhood, effeminizes the man. Others on the contrary are only the more deeply tinged in the spiritual hue of their sex, as the bisexuality stands out in contrast to the less empty colorless background of sexuality. (1964, 189)
Both sexes, with dual origins (masculine and feminine), possess endless human potential for ways of being in the world. In this respect, the feminine becomes a site of contest—an opening from which multiple subject positions can emerge through artistic imagination, as illustrated by Salomé’s retelling of the Narcissus myth and her positive theory of narcissism.

In a gynocentric reinterpretation of the Narcissus myth in the opening of her 1921 essay “The Dual Orientation of Narcissism,” Andreas-Salomé suggests that it was not malignant self-love that lead to Narcissus’ death beside the water where he had gazed tirelessly at his reflection; rather, she understood what happened to Narcissus as a return to “one and All” in nature (hence the flower that sprung up in his stead). To Salomé, Narcissus’ experience embodied the ultimate unity of life, art, and love as he became an extension of his image in a return to nature. After all, it was not a mirror made of glass that Narcissus, son of the river god, was looking into; instead, Narcissus was enamored with his reflection in water, which is often associated with the feminine and eternal life. In Narcissus’ case, he may have also been metaphorically returning “home” through reflection (i.e., memory) since he was son of the nymph Liriope (part nature), and the river god Cephissus. Salomé described her positive idea of narcissism in The Freud Journal as follows:

Narcissus is not mirrored but becomes—gives birth to himself—and in the symbolic language of psychoanalysis does indeed come ‘from the water’ if only as a mere image, stands Narcissus, the discoverer of himself, the self-knower. (1964, 111)

The concept of narcissism that Andreas-Salomé explains above is, indeed, the young boy’s return to the place of primary narcissism—the maternal and semiotic womb of
discovery (e.g., the water surrounding the fetus in the uterus)—only this time as a speaking subject that is drawing upon the unconscious reservoir in an aesthetic sense.

In her article “In Defense of Narcissus: Lou Andreas-Salomé and Julia Kristeva,” Karla Schultz illustrates how modernist author Salomé and post-modernist Kristeva converge in resurrecting Narcissus as both the ideal lover and poet. Salomé and Kristeva further recognize narcissism as requisite to maintaining a sense of individualism. Schultz conveys Kristeva’s concern about the continuously diminishing psychic space in modernity as follows:

To be sure, the narcissistic space has always been marginal. The sanctions placed on discourses that escape our institutions have always been severe. Whether called poetic or psychotic, such discourses remain taboo or, certainly, inconsequential for a culture shaped by power and profit. In light of the strictures imposed, in light of the drowning of our particularity in a society flooding us with ready-made images and clichés, Kristeva pleads for rescuing Narcissus an idiosyncratic figure if ever there was one, a figure ex-negativo . . . that stands for our right to give ourselves up to our own images. (1994, 193)

Perhaps because her theory of narcissism was deeply influenced by her intimate relationship with the poet Rilke who lived in a constant state of psychological terror that also compelled him to write, Salomé believed that writers best illustrated positive attributes of narcissism due to their ability to articulate subjective knowledge that, while grounded in self-love, transcended individual subjectivity into words that bore witness to the human condition (Ender 2004, 18). “It is through Rilke that Salomé learned about the intertwining of narcissism, writing, and remembrance and understood the compulsion to

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In Salomé’s You Alone Are Real to Me, she describes the intense psychological trauma endured by the poet throughout his life, beginning with his entangled relationship with an overbearing mother and his difficulty with an emotionally distant father. Rilke’s relationship with Salomé was intense, and he suffered bouts of deep depression and dissociative disorder throughout his life. It was during times of psychological terror, however, that Rilke produced some of his most powerful poetry.
repeat earlier experiences that keeps the writer chained to a desk or bed,” states Ender, “sometimes to the point of almost unbearable pain” (2005, 194). As Andreas-Salomé described in her 1921 article “The Dual Orientation of Narcissism,” writers return repeatedly to look into the “hell as well as the paradise of childhood”; in doing so, writers experience the fragility that occurs at the very boundary (which Salomé often refers to as a “hyphen”) of the self: what Salomé would consider the “fertile kernel” from which the creator’s work expands. The author’s seed (idea) that is fertilized through a return to the semiotic imagination and thus expanded serves as a sensual metaphor for the process of literary creation as it shows the germination and expansion of ideas through the often agonizing artistic process. As a result, there is a changed relation between the inner and outer world, just as Narcissus mythically returned to nature in the surrender to his own image(s) in the water. When the veil of repression is lifted, there is the possibility for bodily, sensual and sexual experiences. In this respect, intense narcissistic introspection has the potential to expose, as well as mend, the writer’s psychological wounds from childhood; in turn, literature amasses the power to validate, and vicariously ameliorate, the trauma of readers who find common ground with the writers’ emotional truths. As articulated in Salomé’s essay “The Dual Direction of Narcissism”:

Without intending it so, the poet has his public within himself, with himself, and all the more so, the more completely he is accustomed to look elsewhere, wrapped up as he is in the creative process itself. . . . Similarly it is a surprising fact that the artist's involvement in his work, fully personal as it is, at the same time always completely comprehends the universal, in order to be truly realized. So what seems to be subjective comes to be the nexus of objective validity. . . . Therein it is precisely analogous to the embryo, whose growth results in displacements and pressures in the maternal body and may even cause toxins to circulate through its veins. Often the artist awakens from his abstracted state as if from a compulsion, feeling liberated to turn his thoughts where he pleases, and to return unhindered to his own personal and objective desires. (1962, 24-25)
In April 1913, Rilke wrote two poems on narcissism, which helped shape Salomé’s theory of positive narcissism. As an example, Rilke’s poem “Narcissus I” (provided below) reflects his intuitive understanding of narcissism.

Narcissus vanished. His beauty gave off incessantly the fragrance of his being, heightened like the scent from heliotrope. But for him self-seeing was the task.

Whatever escaped him he loved back in, and was borne no longer in the open breeze and closed rapely the radius of forms and eclipsed himself and could exist no more. (Rilke 1996, 59)

In his book *The Beginning of Terror: A Psychological Study of Rainer Maria Rilke’s Life and Work*, David Kleinbard explains how Rilke regarded his fragile psychological state as the catalyst for his creative work. At the same time, Rilke felt incapable of loving others and feared he may harm those who tried to love or help him (1993, 213-214).

Andreas-Salomé believed that artists had an ethical imperative to undergo these often painful narcissistic quests for self-knowledge in order to produce works that stir the collective consciousness, thereby increasing human understanding as a whole (Ender 2004, 19).

In aligning narcissism with writers, using Rilke as her “muse” in this case, Andreas-Salomé reversed the gender-based stereotype of the artist and muse (normally female), illustrating that narcissism is not automatically ascribed to any one sex. Instead, narcissism, in the artistic sense, is bisexual in nature and associated with sensuality and love, especially envisaged in the love that exists between a mother and child. As Salomé

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states in her homage to Rainer Maria Rilke entitled *You Alone Are Real to Me: Remembering Rainer Maria Rilke*:

Surely all creativity is only another name for the clash of a dual sexuality within us. But the gradations of sexuality are different and one can understand how the masculine moment in intellectual creativity is, by virtue of its freer structure, the more important and dominant one. It invests the external corporeal form with its power, whereas the female element can lead to a schism of the body and mind, as in an indescribable longing for pregnancy. (2003, 55)

With this statement, Salomé directly challenged Freud’s theory of “penis envy” that considered women culturally inferior to men based solely on the anatomical “lack” of a penis. As an alternative, Salomé presented the idea that women are not developmentally deficient; rather, they are open to multiple ways of being in the world. According to Salomé, women are a site of contest with openings where new subject positions can emerge (Brinker-Gabler 2014, 32). With this revised representation of women, Salomé introduced the concept of a feminine libido to psychological theory where the less differentiated state of the woman became a source for human potentialities. Moreover, this feminine libido had the potential to identify with Totality like the mythical Narcissus by achieving a state of “two-in-one” best reflected in the image of a mother and child (Brinker-Gabler 2014, 32). As stated in the introduction to Salomé’s *The Erotic*: “The absorption and connectedness with the (m)other is not considered in terms of drive or pleasure; rather, it is seen as an outward as well as inward folding (dual) experience of love and sociality” (2012, 41).

Virginia Woolf shared Andreas-Salomé’s view that the art of writing, as a narcissistic enterprise, had the capability to transcend gender binaries. The cornerstone of Woolf’s feminist theory, as expressed in *A Room of One’s Own* and *Three Guineas*, encourages women to write, thereby increasing the psychic space for the feminine within
civilization. Woolf was keenly aware that psychic space for women, or potential for the feminine to flourish in men or women, was oppressed in her contemporary society. In *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf focused on the challenges female authors of her day faced; they had neither the financial independence or psychological support to write (1981, 50).

According to Woolf’s (Western, but anti-imperialist) feminist theory, we “think through our mothers” (e.g., the semiotic), yet good writing is bisexual and fosters intersubjective consciousness. Woolf, like Salomé, openly disagreed with the suffragists’ divisive tendencies to create more competition with men than opportunities for women (*ROO* 1981, 99). As Woolf clearly states her position for gendered parity in *A Room of One’s Own*: “. . . it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. . . . Some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the act of creation can be accomplished” (1981, 104).

Woolf, like Salomé, perceived artistic endeavors, such as producing poetry or fiction, as sensual activities comparable to metaphorically giving birth. In that regard, both Salomé and Woolf connect art to the maternal, but they do not restrict maternal qualities solely to the female sex. While both Salomé and Woolf promote male and female unity and creativity, they have diverse methods of depicting how gender is performed within culture. In *The Human Family*, for instance, Salomé’s female characters are viewed primarily through their response to the male gaze; it is chiefly through intimate love relationships that Salomé’s female characters cautiously navigate the boundaries between self and Other that leads to their eventual creation or dissolution of the self. For example, Hans, the short-haired heroine in “Maiden’s Roundelay,” and Marfa in “The Reunion” both temporarily lose their boundaries through sexual relations with men, but later regain their sense of self and pursue their respective causes (Hans as a
human rights lawyer and Marfa as a doctor in the steppes region). Conversely, characters like Christel von Brinen surrender to the male gaze. In “Unit for ‘Men Internal,’” Christel existed as a representation of the feminine ideal (as a spectacle) for Dr. Otto. While she was cognizant of her inferior role in relation to Dr. Otto in the end, it was too late to redeem herself. Other characters, such as Hildegard in the story “Paradise,” are ambivalent in their relationships to men and caught between following traditional roles of wife and mother and becoming a “new woman.” Unlike Marfa and Hans, Hildegard chooses (albeit cautiously) to relinquish her autonomy and creative interests (i.e., embroidery and “flights of fancy”) in order to become an obedient wife. As the female protagonists in The Human Family navigate their relationships and personal boundaries, Salomé emphasizes that the key to liberation for each individual is continuous movement and negotiation of personal space within relationships without being defined by social conventions for behavior related to one’s sex.

Like Salomé’s fictional characters, Woolf’s characters Orlando (as a male later transformed into a female) and Mrs. Dalloway are fully cognizant of cultural gender norms, yet they openly resist these gendered expectations and integrate feminine values into patriarchal culture through producing literature, in the case of Orlando, and fostering community within the domestic sphere, in the case of Clarissa Dalloway. Woolf thus demonstrates how the female artist, as bisexual, can transcend gender norms in the public domain, whereas Salomé generally found gender reconciliation for her characters within the more private confines of erotic love. Additionally, Woolf took the theory of narcissism out of the heteronormative paradigm, especially exemplified in the character of Orlando who experienced no change in his state of mind when physically transformed into a female body, demonstrating how gender and anatomy are not at all linked. Woolf’s
extra-marital affair with Vita Sackville-West also greatly influenced her thinking and writing (*Orlando* was a narcissistic gift to Vita) about the non-binary nature of gender. While Woolf did propose androgyny as a possible resolution to gender binaries in *A Room of One’s Own*, her fiction predominately presents a bisexual gender model that includes, unlike Salomé’s fiction, same-sex desire and the potential for polymorphous gender identities. While Salomé chose to primarily focus on psychological development of female identity within heteronormative relationships where gender is in flux between individual partners and Woolf focused more on defying societal constraints for women through celebration of the female artist, both authors underscore the importance of developing a distinct identity separate from cultural norms that reify the patriarchy.

Woolf’s literature, including autobiographical writing which she termed “life writing,” also supports Salomé’s theory as presented in her essay “The Dual Orientation of Narcissism.” Woolf suffered severe bouts of mental illness throughout her lifetime that rendered her completely listless and unable to function at times. Comparable to Rilke, she refused to seek psychiatric treatment due to the intense fear that her creativity would be inhibited. Woolf regarded her writing, especially her autobiographical writings, such as those collected in *Moments of Being*, as a necessary existential endeavor, despite the pain that facing deeply repressed memories (via affirmative sublimation) often triggered. As mentioned above, Woolf believed that the production of art, especially writing, was the most effective means of exploring the depths of the unconscious mind, and she sought to heal herself and to recover her own profound sense of maternal loss through her writing. “Woolf writes here from a country of the mind where melancholia runs so deep that it casts a pall even over her writing, says Ender. “But she knows the cause of that sterility, and identifies it as intellectual detachment . . . she is trapped in the mirror of self-
analysis” (Architexts of Memory 2005, 204). Woolf drew analogies between her writing and the process of painting; by excavating the depths of her unconscious mind and tapping into her earliest memories, she was able to metaphorically paint self-portraits through a ceaseless revisiting of impressions which she associated with tracing “the pattern behind the cotton wool” (Minow-Pinkney 2007, 61). Though it often drove her to madness, Woolf believed that being prone to “flights of fancy” was positive and essential to producing works of art that could enter into the intersubjective consciousness through the readers who would be moved by her own deep-rooted experiences as shared on the pages of her diaries, letters and novels. Woolf, like Salomé, saw re-entry into the semiotic state, or the metaphorical return to the mother, as necessary to raising human consciousness and awareness. As such, Woolf, Salomé and Kristeva theoretically rescue Narcissus the poet and, in turn, promote the increase of psychic space for the feminine for the overall good of society.

Counter to Freud’s pejorative interpretation of narcissism as a solipsistic infantile stage that must be overcome through rejection of the mother (female) and establishment of a self via identification with the father (male), Salomé suggests that narcissism is an open-ended state that can healthily exist throughout one’s life. Similar to the psycholinguistic theories of Lacan and Kristeva and Woolf’s fictional representations, Salomé theorizes that human development is a fluid concept. In this respect, abjection occurs during the pre-lingual phase just prior to the infant’s differentiation from the mother (what Lacan called the “mirror stage”), which induces a narcissistic crisis due to the trauma experienced by the infant’s separation from the mother and his or her first awareness of mortality. Undergoing abjection is essential for entering into the symbolic world of language in order to communicate, which is entirely predicated on abstract
differentiation and culturally aligned with the logos of the father. It is vital to note that Salomé’s development theory, unlike Freud’s fixed binary one, is dynamic and open-ended, meaning that human beings are always in process of developing. Therefore, Salomé accounts for the complexity of human beings and memory, allowing mature adults to return to the initial site of abjection and fluctuate, as evidenced in writers, between the semiotic (i.e., mother tongue) and symbolic orders. Accordingly, the libido, as Salomé proclaimed more than a half century before Lacan and Kristeva, is dually directed and mobile so that it can paradoxically invoke both life and death instincts, thus circumventing Freud’s dual opposition of the two instincts. In showing how both language and identity are amorphous, Salomé introduces the capability for gender, as a psychological and performative construct and not an anatomical attribute, to exist apart from one’s sexual identity.

Salomé’s theory of narcissism as a positive feminine construct, which she observed in Rilke in order to refine her ideas, is one of expanding the boundaries of the self to one’s surroundings or into one’s external, objective reality. When Salomé was a child, she was shocked by the image of herself in the mirror and did not believe the mirror accurately reflected her appearance. She thought the mirror separated her too much from her surroundings by only reflecting a rigid or limited image of herself (Mazin 2002, 2). As explained by Victor Mazin in an article published in the *Journal of European Psychoanalysis*, “. . . for Salomé, narcissism presupposed not collecting oneself but rather dissolving oneself into the surroundings, self-dissemination close to de-personalization, denial of the boundaries of one’s image. Narcissism broke out from the framework of the ‘I’ and, furthermore, went beyond the boundaries of ‘love for oneself’” (2002, 2). Instead of inversion, Salomé suggests that narcissism is the overflow of one’s
internal creative energy into the external world, like the writer who delves into the
deepest crevices of his/her psyche to produce works that can then enter the human
consciousness and influence society. In these circumstances, the self is cultivated through
a process of relating to another. The relationship between the self and one’s love object,
therefore, is one of sexual interplay instead of an infatuated overvaluation of the love
object or identity fusion with the love object which leads to dissolution of the self. In fact,
Salomé conceived of sexual intercourse between a man and woman as an exchange, or
mirroring, rather than consummation. As stated by Salomé in *The Erotic*:

\[
\ldots \text{two human beings, a man and a woman, are merged into the other, becoming a suprapersonal unity by the fact that this relationship magnifies each of them to their most profound degree of autonomy – their total and everlasting ipseity. (2012, 94)}
\]

Salomé, similar to postmodern feminists like Kristeva and Iragaray, conceived of two
universals (or sexes) in the form of masculine and feminine on mediated terms. As
conveyed by Brinker-Gabler:

\[
\text{For her [Salomé], to imagine sexual difference means taking into account the mediation that is exemplified in the love between the sexes. According to Andreas- Salomé, there are ‘two modes of life’ that belong as ‘two-ness within’ to every human being from the beginning; their interplay and mediation offer continuously new venues and unlimited possibilities. (2014, 47)}
\]

Salomé’s theory of psychological development related to gender, thus, defies the
hierarchical and binary theories of Freud. Drawing upon her retelling of the Narcissus
myth, she demonstrates how men and women, regardless of their biological sex, are free
to create a space for themselves in cultural production. Moreover, she defended
Narcissus’ love as the ultimate interconnected state. For Salomé, one’s identity (or ego) is
not fixed; it is dynamic and open to multiple ways of being throughout one’s life. This
idea of positive narcissism and a flexible approach to gender (not ascribed to sex
differences) is comparable to Kristeva’s psycho-linguistic feminist theory, which was conceived several decades later. Both Salomé and Kristeva, unlike Freud, view being in love as neither an expenditure or a completion of the self. As cited in Karla Schultz’s article entitled “In Defense of Narcissus: Lou Andreas- Salomé and Julia Kristeva”:

Both Salomé and Kristeva, in their defense of primary narcissism, highlight a dimension of the psyche that is pre-oedipal and ambivalent. Born of negativity, Narcissus is a liminal figure. Perhaps he is not just a poet and lover but also – to adopt Kristeva’s notion of ‘the subject-in-process’ – the kind of subject that can be defined only momentarily and relationally. (1994, 196)

Perhaps one of the best literary examples of an expression of metonymic desire rooted in narcissism and expressed through text is Virginia Woolf’s novel Orlando. In the case of Orlando, however, Woolf rejects the typical heteronormative model in order to show that gender is performative and rooted in socially constructed norms. As previously noted, Orlando’s transformation from a male to a female body within the novel does not alter his fundamental psychological state or identity. Orlando always possessed both masculine and feminine elements, comparable to Salomé’s image of the “two-in-one,” and these masculine and feminine attributes were in a constant process of internal psychological exchange (e.g., androgynous) instead of conflict. As Kao states, “Orlando’s sex changes not only expose the way gender norms are internalized and constructed as natural, but also affirm the possibility of a "self-willed" gender performance that could transgress the boundaries of gender differences regulated by compulsory heterosexuality” (2012, 6). In using poetic and playful text, Woolf further subverts the linear narrative form and typical structure of biography in a return to the semiotic imaginary where multiple selves can evolve within an individual’s lifetime. In the last chapter of Orlando, for example, Woolf imagines a multiplicity of selves for Orlando: “For she [Orlando] had a great variety of selves to call upon, for more than we have been able to find room for,
since a biography is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have as many thousand (153)” (Kao 2012, 8). Woolf’s *Orlando*, along with several of her other fiction and non-fiction works, openly resists the binary categorization of men and women, including the heteronormative expectations for object choice. Through Woolf’s poetic use of language, which is described by Kristeva in her essay “Women’s Time” as a type of feminist revolt, Woolf employed experiential forms of writing, such as the playful language in *Orlando* and the stream-of-consciousness technique used in *Mrs. Dalloway*, to allow for the feminine to flourish alongside the masculine. As expressed by Jane Marcus:

> Writing, for Virginia Woolf, was a revolutionary act. Her alienation from British patriarchal culture and its capitalist and imperialist forms and values, was so intense that she was filled with terror and determination as she wrote. A guerrilla fighter in a Victorian skirt, she trembled with fear as she prepared her attacks, her raids on the enemy. (1981, 1)

Woolf’s literary works and Salomé’s psychological theories of positive narcissism and human development, along with the postmodern psycholinguistic theories of Julia Kristeva, transcend socially restrictive gender binaries and offer a more flexible means of expressing human potential for creativity and individual identity. Resisting the more androcentric theories of Freud and Lacan, Kristeva related the evolution of the subject (male or female individual) to the evolution of language, which disrupted the totalitarian idea that language is only signified, or imbued with meaning, within the symbolic order, which Lacan associated with the phallic “I,” or masculinity. Essentially, via introduction of the role of the mother/child dyad and the semiotic state of the Real (pre-oedipal life/death drives) in the linguistic development process, Kristeva allows for a motile libido that circumvents the male/female binary. Within the semiotic imaginary, poetic
language can emerge, thus resisting the Law of the Father that demands syntactical order and logic.

In addition to rejecting the theory that gender is binary and linked to one’s biological sex, Kristeva recognizes the importance of narcissism to the production of art and writing that has the potential to transform culture through readers’ intersubjective consciousness. Kristeva, like Salomé and Woolf before her, understands that the formation of one’s identity (especially the *more undifferentiated* woman) is not finite; it is always in process. Represented by a pre-lingual state that Kristeva called the *chora* (i.e., liminal space between the semiotic and symbolic), a child from 0-6 months of age is dominated by a chaotic mix of perceptions, feelings and narcissistic needs with no distinction between itself and its mother. This pre-oedipal stage is associated with intense pleasure without boundaries. As Ban Wang describes Salomé’s concept of affirmative sublimation when discussing her *Freud Journal*:

> Creative narcissism goes beyond self-love and breaks through the ego boundaries, dissolving the self in a selfless love of objects in the world. It suggests, Salomé writes, ‘an all-embracing state where self and external world flow together’ (1987, 166). It rejoices in a primal affective connectedness with the world, an erotic attitude toward objects as if they were beloved extensions of oneself, a giving of ‘ourselves to ecstatic involvement with someone or something’ (144). It is thus synonymous with unconscious drives, which contain the memory traces of the deepest childhood memory. (2010, 225)

Salomé’s and Woolf’s literary works and open-ended theories of gender psychology were precursors to Kristeva’s feminist psycholinguistic theory where the libido is mobile and gender is unsexed with endless possibilities for freedom through denunciation of gender and identity politics. In presenting a dynamic, bisexual model for human development rooted in language that is constantly evolving and expanding, Kristeva (like Salomé and Woolf decades earlier) allows for human beings to
metaphorically give birth to themselves and to live beyond the confines of identities contrived by social or cultural norms. By introducing the mother (via return to the semiotic stage) into the development (and creative) process, women are no longer passive recipients and are able to become, like Narcissus, speaking subjects with the capability to oscillate between the semiotic and symbolic states. With the power to create instead of just procreate, the mother figure comes to represent the site of artistic inspiration—a realm associated with the musical, the poetic, the rhythmic, and that which lacks structure and meaning prior to abjection. Kristeva, Salomé and Woolf share a positive view of narcissism as a means of increasing psychic space for the feminine and raising overall human consciousness through art. They also wrote in protest of binary theories that tended to masculinize women and, in turn, reify the patriarchy. As a result, all three of these female thinkers, two of whom conceived of ideas decades ahead of their time, have received backlash from several feminist critics who accuse them of either essentializing women or being anti-feminist. However, Kristeva’s psycholinguistic theory of development (similar to Salomé and Woolf before her), when interpreted within the context of linguistic theory, answers critics by offering a mobile libido that destabilizes the cultural norms associated with theories rooted in sexual or purely psychological identity development. Language itself is amorphous with meaning derived only through context and exchange. In this respect, Salomé and Woolf (though not formally trained linguists like Kristeva) realized that the female (especially the mother figure) represents infinite possibility instead of an atavistic dead end. Moreover, they saw sexual/gender differences as being in a state of mediation within each individual instead of at odds with one another. Human beings, like language, are always in the process of becoming
(especially women as less differentiated) and have the opportunity to become multiple “selves” within a lifetime. Kristeva’s postmodern theory and the works of Salomé and Woolf (as will be discussed in the following two chapters) rescues Narcissus from his alleged pathology and resurrects him as the ultimate poet and lover to whom we can all aspire.
CHAPTER 4
THE “NEW WOMAN” AS ARTIST AND LOVER IN THE WORKS OF LOU ANDREAS-SALOMÉ

This chapter focuses on aspects of Lou Andreas-Salomé’s fiction that reflect her representation of the feminine, as informed by her theory of narcissism, discussed in the previous chapter. Specifically, Salomé’s compilation of 10 novellas entitled The Human Family and her novel Fenitschka highlight the differences between men and women as they relate to one another in a variety of settings that emphasize the socially gendered expectations of her historical time. Through the intimate relationships between men and women portrayed in each novella, Salomé reiterates her open-ended approach to gender as characters, both male and female, navigate the boundaries between the semiotic and symbolic orders, the masculine and feminine and the self and Other. By constructing a topographical rather than a hierarchical framework for her stories, Salomé illustrates how the empty space of the feminine (occupied by either masculine or feminine and consistently oscillating between the two) emerges as the locus for the pre-oedipal imaginary where creativity is cultivated and permitted entry into the symbolic order. Hence, art and love, which are rooted in positive narcissism (associated with the feminine for Salomé), are presented as catalysts to potential reconciliation of the gender divide that has long encumbered both men and women in modern civilization.

We begin with a discussion of Salomé’s art as a reflection of her own life. From the time she was a young German girl growing up in Russia to the day of her death, Salomé refused to be defined by social conventions. Identifying with Russian “otherness,” she frequented male-dominated intellectual circles and elite salons throughout Western Europe where she was received as an intellectual equal. As noted in
Chapter Three, Salomé became a recognized protégé of Freud and the first female psychologist. Yet, today, few have heard of her outside the context of her relationships with famous men like Nietzsche, Freud and Rilke. As pointed out by Raleigh Whiting in his introduction to The Human Family, Salomé’s work has only recently been taken seriously in its own right and studied within academic circles during the past two decades (2005, ix-x). Brigid Haines, in a feminist reading of Fenitschka published in the German Life and Letters journal, explains how an overemphasis on Salomé’s biography, which is told through the men in her life, has resulted in obscuring her essays, fiction and psychoanalytic theory that are still relevant to the feminist debate today (1991, 416). As noted in the final paragraphs of this chapter, she was a woman who celebrated the feminine by delighting in being herself. She was the embodiment of positive narcissism. Salomé’s feminist theory and her concept of positive narcissism are reflected in selected novellas from The Human Family and the novella Fenitschka, which are examined throughout the proceeding pages. Following the literary analyses of Salomé’s selected novellas within the context of her psychological feminist theory, this chapter concludes with a discussion of Salomé’s contribution to postmodern feminist theory, which is linked to her identification with Russian “otherness” which allowed her to advance theories outside the confines of the prevailing Western European norms of her day.

The Human Family begins with a story entitled “Before the Awakening,” which is a double entendre for the climax of the story when Hans seduces Edith in a half-asleep state (i.e., threshold consciousness) and self-awareness is gained for both Hans and Edith following that encounter. Edith is married to Klaus who the reader learns (through an omniscient narrator on the train at the beginning of the story) is a man who appears old enough to be her father. When seduced by Hans, a young artist, Edith does not initially
resist his sexual advances during her semi-conscious state; however, Hans is not “able to lift the veil from her being” in the end (HF 2005, 20). Hans’ and Edith’s encounter is interrupted when she is fully awakened by the sound of an electric bell (representing a return to full conscious awareness) in the hotel. In the triangulation of Klaus, Edith and Hans (husband-wife-artist), Salomé places the woman in the position of the child caught between her identity with a husband perceived as a father figure (a traditional marriage) and the temptation of a passionate sexual encounter with the younger artist. Ultimately, Salomé reveals how Hans feels unsettled by shame and embarrassment related to his pursuit of an empty fantasy with Edith, yet Edith emerges from the experience without anger or regret . . . “because for her, he [Hans] has disappeared, and only her own experience loom[ed] large and strange before her” (HF 2005, 15). When Hans and Edith part at the train station, he stands by the train car hoping that she will return his gaze one last time, but she does not look back. Thus, she does not reinforce the power of the male gaze. Hans is left on the platform feeling unsettled and empty inside. Conversely, Edith has been strengthened by the experience. Thus, Salomé shows how a woman, though a housewife with less power by society’s standards, has a rich inner life and an identity that is not defined by socially inscribed gender norms.

Salomé presents the opposite of a strong female identity in “Unit for ‘Men, Internal.’” Christel von Brinken, the nurse who dies in “Unit for ‘Men, Internal,’” sacrifices her life in an attempt to fulfill an image of the idealized feminine for Dr. Otto—her unrequited love. In her posthumous confession letter to Dr. Otto, Christel acknowledges that the outwardly devoted nurse, the image of care and ascetic selflessness that the external world admired in her, was only concealing the inner void that she had first occupied with longing for Dr. Otto and later filled by becoming a “care
machine that was wound up daily” in service of her patients (HF 2005, 39). Christel’s letter, which frames the last half of the narrative and gives her the figurative last word, reveals the cultural double standard for men and women through the rigid gendered expectations that Dr. Otto imposed on Christel. In short, Christel was expected to remain the chaste, angelic figure (untouchable) while Dr. Otto was permitted to be married and have extramarital affairs with other women. Dr. Otto perpetuates the angel/whore dichotomy that confines women to sexual tropes, and Christel served as a spectacle for his gaze. As Dr. Otto’s thoughts were expressed by the narrator: “For touching there are other women in the world, with whom a fellow can get by as well as he can until he makes it into the respectable feeding grounds of marriage” (HF 2005, 25).

In her posthumous letter to Dr. Otto, the reader understands that Christel came to resent her subjugated position. For instance, she realizes that a photo of her that Dr. Otto cherished is one from her convocation where she is dressed in her white nurses uniform and her countenance is rosy and fair, which invokes images of a young, innocent maiden. Essentially, Christel gains insight into herself and understands how she is perceived unrealistically by Dr. Otto as well as by the external world. Though she succumbs to Dr. Otto’s gaze for many years, her final words demonstrate her ultimate self-knowledge. Conversely, Dr. Otto does not grow or change through the course of the narrative. While he may have realized his mistake through reading Christel’s final letter to him, the reader is not provided with assurance that he is remorseful or transformed by her words. His comment that “Christel had no home” (HF 2005, 21) when he learns of her death at the beginning of the story, in fact, was not an insightful comment about Christel’s insecurity; instead, it speaks more to his classification of Christel as “other worldly”—the chaste representation of the idealized feminine. In the end, Dr. Otto’s reification of the angel-
whore dichotomy restricted Christel’s autonomy and also impaired his own ability to have a satisfying relationship with her.

For Salomé, Christel may represent the dangers inherent to living as someone else’s image, or as an illusion, instead of cultivating an independent sense of self. As exemplified in Christel’s character, an individual who lacks self-definition, or allows himself or herself to be defined by others, is essentially dead inside (has no soul). Furthermore, Salomé suggests that when human beings stop evolving or growing psychologically, they cease to lead meaningful lives. Both Christel and Dr. Otto lose the ability to have healthy love relationships. The key for Salomé is steady movement to avoid stagnation of the self or collusion with another.

As reflected by Hildegard’s character in the story “Paradise,” there is the possibility for women to have feelings of ambivalence between traditional roles for women and becoming a “new woman” by modern standards. Hildegard had managed to escape a marriage that metaphorically “clipped her wings” and had returned to a comfortable state of domestic life with her mother. As Hildegard embroiders with multiple colors of silk threads in the comfort of her mother’s home, the reader is given the sense that Hildegard is at peace with herself; she is “at home.” Hildegard longs for her mother’s love and affection, but she experiences the horror of abjection when her mother attempts to arrange a second marriage for her. With her mother’s coercion, Hildegard becomes involved in a rebound relationship with a man named Dietrich who seeks to dominate her and diminishes her femininity (e.g., scorns her embroidery as a futile activity). Hildegard’s mother regards marriage as necessary to preserve Hildegard’s purity as a single woman subject to “hot blooded fantasies” like the ones she had experienced as a young single woman (HF 2005, 115).
Although Dietrich is genuinely charmed by Hildegard, he wants to possess her like her previous husband. During the scene in the woods where Hildegard begins to speak in a kind of ecstatic gibberish indicating a return to the semiotic imaginary, Dietrich is initially enchanted by it and believes he has been the “muse” responsible for Hildegard’s euphoric state. However, Dietrich realizes that she is not returning his gaze, and this narcissistic flight of fancy was not about him at all. As the narrator states:

Hildegard seemed to have forgotten she was with him. She was looking into the landscape again, and with wide, open eyes, in whose gaze, now lost to the world, the passion of her words was still resonating, she seemed to be dreaming of something that had no connection at all to him and to the real surroundings of the moment. (HF 2005, 122)

This fairy-tale moment did not last once the couple left the “enchanted forest” and returned to everyday life, or the symbolic world. When they returned from the walk in the forest, Hildegard began to work on her embroidery. When Hildegard described her embroidery as a creative outlet for her dreams, Dietrich responds that women have a tendency for hysterical behavior. Although Hildegard is furious with Dietrich’s response, she eventually acquiesces to him through silence. Dietrich sees himself as a type of savior with a mission to transform Hildegard into a “sensible happy woman.” Near the end of the story, Dietrich asks for Hildegard’s hand as a pledge to “obey” him. Hildegard does not offer her hand at that moment, but she does eventually reach out for Dietrich’s hand. This occurs at the end of the story after she imagines having a child of her own—becoming the phallic mother. As stated in the last two lines of the story: “And Hildegard slowly laid her hand in his. Reaching out over a paradise” (HF 2005, 132).

The final scene intimates that Hildegard may decide to risk a “fall” from paradise as she ominously “reaches out over paradise” to Dietrich (HF 2005, 132). Salomé implies that this union, if consummated, could ultimately lead to a profound sacrifice and loss for
Hildegard. She may permanently lose her concept of paradise (i.e., autonomy and self-knowledge), thereby precluding future imagined flights of fancy as well as her ability to produce art. Although she does find some joy in the domestic life and fantasizes about having a child, there is a deep sense of loss in the ominous language (words like “helpless” and “powerless”) used at the end of the story. As expressed by Muriel Cormican in her conclusion to Women in the Works of Lou Andreas-Salomé: Negotiating Identity:

... the ending is dispiriting precisely because it apparently offers closure. There is a sad finality to the moment in which Hildegard, in a domestic setting in which he finds her particularly alluring, gives Dietrich her hand, ‘Reaching out over paradise.’ This closing phrase, together with her sense that her flight has turned into a fall, emphasizes sacrifice and loss. (2009, 167)

Cormican adds that the character of Hildegard, with her practical choice of the traditional family at the expense of personal freedom, highlights Salomé’s belief that feminism, or the mainstream women’s movement, ushered in a period of discord, conflict and confusion for men and women trying to navigate between the more traditional norms of family life and the new identity created for women without the cultural change to support these new roles within their historical reality (2009, 167).

Other female characters in The Human Family, such as the ambiguously sexualized Hans—the feisty, cross-dressing female protagonist in “Maiden’s Roundelay”—confront the male gaze with stronger resistance. The story is set at a family hotel in Munich, Germany where the guest rooms are normally prepared in accordance with the culturally gendered norms for the male and female guests who will occupy them, including the patterns and colors of the wallpaper, the presence or absence of flowers in the rooms, etc. However, the hotel decorator is perplexed when he realizes that Hans, the main female character, will occupy the more Spartan, masculine looking room, and Alex,
the main male charter, will occupy the more effeminately decorated room. The decorator expresses his discomfort when these socially gendered norms are inverted:

The decorator up on his ladder, whose presence was excused with many words of explanation to the new arrival, had to laugh to himself: he would now really be quite in favor of having these two hotel guests exchange rooms and their belongings as well! If things kept on this way, then in this topsy-turvy world they would soon be doing the women’s rooms like those of men, and vice versa. (HF 2005, 41)

By focusing on the ostensibly insignificant details of the wallpaper and the hotel’s décor, Salomé shows how the external world is arranged in ways that reflect gendered social relations that have become ingrained within the social unconscious. With this subtle narrative detail, Salomé illustrates how gender is a performative construct and not predicated on one’s sex or anatomical difference.

Salomé further exemplifies the subversion of socially constructed gender norms through the intimate relationship that develops between Hans and Alex. At the beginning of the story, Salomé reverses the conventional male gaze as Alex vies for Hans’ attention and longs to be the object of her gaze. In allowing for the possibility of a female gaze, Salomé introduced a feminist theoretical idea that did not formally emerge until 1975 when film critic Laura Mulvey coined the term “male gaze” in her essay entitled “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” While there is no indication that Mulvey’s theory was influenced by Salomé, she draws upon some of the same concepts in presenting her theory as Salomé addressed in her earlier fictional representations of the gaze. In Mulvey’s essay, she conceived of a female gaze, yet she regarded it as simply corresponding to, or reinforcing, the male gaze where women serve as passive spectacles for men’s visual pleasure. Mulvey further connected the psychology of the male gaze in film to Freud’s concept of *scopophilia*, which is the sexual pleasure derived from looking
at someone or something. According to Mulvey, films are fundamentally produced from a heteronormative white male perspective when the movie screen projects the narcissistic desire of the privileged male that views women as sexual objects (1975, 6-18).

The imbalance of power between the male and female gaze is illustrated in the shifting boundaries between the short-haired heroine Hans and the young doctor Alex as their relationship progresses in “Maiden’s Roundelay.” When Hans becomes attracted to Alex and subsequently returns his gaze, the pair move toward more culturally expected gender norms attributed to their biological sexes. Ultimately, Hans comes to the brink of self-dissolution after a sexual encounter with Alex, which is manifest by her surrender (e.g., physically kneels as an act of submission) to Alex; likewise, Alex takes on a more dominant role and espouses the desire to teach Hans how to be more of a woman with longer hair and more feminine characteristics. However, this euphoric state that brought on a seemingly transformed version of these two individuals did not endure. Eventually, Hans is able to realize (as reflected by the hesitation and fear that Alex perceives in her eyes) that a traditional marriage to Alex would result in annihilation of herself and a loss of her life’s ambition to become a lawyer. In recognizing they can never truly know one another (Alex cannot intrude into the roundelay, or circle, of dancing girls–*HF* 2005, 60), Alex and Hans appear to go their separate ways, but remain intact as individuals.

Although Alex believes that Hans might live in loneliness her entire life, it is inferred that it is better to be alone and discover oneself (like Narcissus) than to remain unknown with another. Unlike Hildegard, whose story ends with a dark foreshadowing of descent, Hans’ story ends on a more positive note. True to Salomé’s thoughts on the value of erotic love, the couple is able to undergo the projective identification and temporary dissolution that occurs in making love and return to the reality of everyday life
with a heightened sense of self—a narcissistic connection to the All. As expressed by Salomé in *The Erotic*:

Loving, in the most serious sense of the term, means knowing someone whose colors all things must wear if they are to reach us whole, to the extent that things cease to be indifferent or frightening, cold or empty, and that even the most threatening, like the wild beasts when we enter the Garden of Eden, fall tame at our feet. In the most beautiful love songs, something of this irresistible feeling survives, as if the object of love were not only itself, but also the leaf quivering on the tree, the sunlight flaming on the water—metamorphosed into all things, and a magician that metamorphoses all things: an image split into a thousand shards though the infinity of the All, so that, wherever we go, it is always the sweet land of our birth. (2012, 66-67)

The Russian female protagonist Marfa in “The Reunion” is another female character who remains true to herself and her ideals, rejecting the patriarchal notions embodied in her former adulterous lover, Saitsev. As a doctor who practices medicine in the challenging region of the steppes, Marfa has devoted her entire life to helping the less fortunate. When in Germany for training, she reconnects with a formerly married lover and mentor whom she ingratiatingly credits for her success as a doctor. Marfa is disturbed in the perceived changes in Saitsev’s character when he degrades her honorable work as overly selfless and is only concerned with the Western comforts that his bourgeois Western life affords. Salomé contrasts Marfa’s calloused hands with those of Saitsev’s smooth hands, which represent his privileged life. When Saitsev refuses to follow Marfa’s ideal (social consciousness) and return to Russia with her, she finally realizes that she and Saitsev are “estranged from each other in their innermost selves” (*HF* 2005, 101). Although Marfa, like Hans, succumbs to the male gaze and temporarily loses herself to Saitsev during a sexual experience between them, she eventually averts her gaze from Saitsev and, in the end, never looks back. Once Marfa realizes that Saitsev sees no value in her life’s work and the cause of helping the less fortunate, the narrator
states: “. . . the longer she [Marfa] faced his gaze, the more uncertain her tone became, and she let her voice fall with the last words” (HF 2005, 99). Marfa let her hands drop to her side instead of grasping Saitsev’s hand. She emerged from the reunion intact with even stronger personal convictions.

Marfa returns to Russia without saying goodbye to Saitsev; hence, she rejected the male gaze in order to remain connected to her own grand ideas and noble work, which ultimately unites her with the world. By leaving Saitsev behind, Marfa gains freedom on two levels: from the decadence of Western modernism and from patriarchy. Saitsev realizes that Marfa has “taken flight” (HF 2005, 101). However, Saitsev is not transformed by the loss of Marfa. He remains the same shallow character whose conceit, as disconnected from humanity, is viewed as a character flaw. He does not have the capability to evolve or grow. Instead, Saitsev seeks complete comfort in life; he is extrinsically motivated and lacking the capacity to undergo the often brutal process of acquiring self-awareness (i.e., positive narcissism).

The Human Family comes full circle with three very different types of women portrayed in the final story “At One, Again, with Nature.” There is Irene, the decadent misanthrope, who lives outside the norms of humanity; Ella who is a “lively” young woman in love who desires a traditional marriage and family life; and Frau Dr. Fuhrberg who is an academic and activist involved in the mainstream feminist movement. In this story, the gaze is cast upon women by other women as they subject each other to judgement. As a young woman, Irene turned down her uncle’s proposal for marriage, yet she still went to live on his farm and became an environmentalist. Salomé portrays Irene as a miserable, barren woman who only cares about her plants and animals. Her abrasive comments and hostile disposition fill those around her with fear and dread. Though
people in the community (such as those at the local farmer’s market) view her as an
anomaly, Irene is not aware of being scrutinized by others. As Muriel Cormican notes:
“But if she [Irene] is oblivious to the gaze, if she strides around the city in a manner that
makes people notice a difference that they are unable to articulate, she does so not as a
feminist rejection of traditional women’s roles but as a rejection of human life patterns as
a whole” (2009, 128). When approached by Dr. Fuhrberg who mistook Irene’s
androgynous appearance and assertiveness as her being a part of the feminist movement,
Irene reveals that she is not engaged in the women’s movement or in any other
movement, for that matter. Moreover, when Dr. Fuhrberg notices how she openly
challenges the men at the market, Irene comments: “‘The fact that I am against men does
not by any stretch mean that I am for women’” (HF 2005, 176). Irene continues by telling
Dr. Fuhrberg: “‘...I find no appeal in what men possess. Man’s right is to take part in
everything—and I don’t care to be part of anything’”(HF 2005, 171).

In the exchange between Irene and Dr. Fuhrberg, Salomé critiques the mainstream
feminist movement and its tendency to compete with men in the public sphere instead of
increasing respect and space for the feminine, which resulted in the masculinization of
women and reification of the patriarchy that Dr. Fuhrberg and others in the movement
tried so vehemently to resist. As John Crisp expressed in the introduction to The Erotic:

Salomé stood for women’s difference rather than an idea of equality given by the
men’s world. A woman is not liberated if she becomes like a man or merely on the
level with men in a man’s world; she is masculinized. The liberated woman
feminizes the world and brings men to discover and mine the feminine sides of
themselves, which psychologically run as deep as their masculinity. (2012, ix)

By contrasting Dr. Fuhrberg with Irene, Salomé further shows that Dr. Fuhrberg,
though misguided in her methods, is at least engaged in life and attempting to be a
productive member of society. She is fighting for a cause in contrast to Irene who is
disconnected from humanity and lives without purpose. Irene is a decadent person, which is revealed through her outward appearance (i.e., frail, sickly and pale) and her actions in the story. Essentially, Salomé suggests that Irene is a “perversion” of the feminine and, due to her inability to connect with another, has no identity. In the end, Irene organically dissolves into the environment. She does not return to nature like Narcissus; there is no flower that grows in her stead. She simply disappears into the atmosphere. In the words of Muriel Cormican:

> Her extreme form of resistance makes Irene’s interpellation into a comprehensible feminine, or even human, subject position exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. By denying her relationship to others as well as their attempts to identify her, Irene rejects identity, denies her own existence, and, at the end of this novella, literally ceases to exist. (2009, 130)

Irene further exemplifies a perversion of the feminine when she is viewed in contrast to the young female character, Ella, who is often described as “lively.” Ella is in love with a young man who she intends to marry. Ella desires a traditional heteronormative relationship which includes having children and keeping a home. She embraces the love and humanity that Irene rejects. Consequently, she is subjected to the harsh judgement (or critical gaze) of Irene throughout the story. Irene diminishes love and tells Ella that love will never save people from isolation (HF 2005, 182). Through Irene’s conversations with Ella, the reader learns that Irene even keeps great art and philosophy at arm’s length; she does not like any person or thing too close to her (HF 2005, 187). Irene is also disgusted by the idea of human reproduction. In Irene’s renunciation of motherhood, Salomé shows how she lacks connection to the semiotic imaginary and, consequently, to her own humanity.

By the end of the story, Ella is able to muster the courage to confront Irene. Ella attempts to show Irene love and affection in order to draw her out, but Irene remains cold.
to Ella. She is unable to form human connections. When Ella realizes her attempts to relate to Irene on a personal level are futile, she tells her to get out of the way of the future that belongs to others, like herself. At that point, Irene voluntarily walks away from the farm and literally dissolves into the environment. Salomé suggests that Irene’s disappearance is a kind of self-effacing annihilation representing the certain end of her line. With Irene’s disappearance, Ella inherits the farm and will have a fresh start in life.

As Cormican concludes:

> The gaze emerges here then as not merely an instrument of power wielded by men but also as a tool of narcissism on the part of the object of the gaze who allows her emotional and ego sustenance to be based on the reactions of others and on their approval. In a refreshingly prickly turn, Andreas-Salomé’s depiction of Ella suggests that reproduction and gender normalcy, rather than decadence and abnormality, might qualify as the ultimate narcissism. (2009, 130)

By highlighting Irene’s decadence that lead to her artificial existence and eventual annihilation, Salomé shows how binaries (e.g., feminist/traditional, decadent/wholesome, narcissistic/selfless, etc.) can lead to extremes that lie outside of the cultural norms required for civilization to function. Thus, Salomé suggests that while some norms (on a continuum and not strictly binary) are needed to maintain social order, it is critical to achieve a balance without becoming decadent or failing to form an identity (Cormican 2009, 128-130).

The female protagonists in *The Human Family* are defined by movement as they navigate cultural expectations for their roles and associated behaviors within each story’s setting and explore the limits or potential for transcending those culturally defined boundaries as they are manifest within intimate relationships. Despite social pressures for women to either conform to traditional gender roles as wives and mothers or to join the feminist movement and become “new women” by rejecting such traditional roles,
Salomé’s female protagonists have the agency to choose their own destiny; they can
reverse the gaze, submit to it or resist it altogether (deny their own humanity like Irene).
The narrative structure of each short story, which is written from the female perspective,
shows the reader how both sexes are keenly aware of the scripts, or roles, they are
supposed to play based on socially prescribed norms. Moreover, Salomé illustrates the
power of the male gaze in creating these sex-based gender stereotypes for men and
women. While extremely powerful, Salomé demonstrates how the gaze can be
performatively destabilized via one’s response. She also suggests that there is a female
gaze, but that it lacks the same influence as the male gaze that is upheld as the cultural
standard by which both men and women are measured.

In formulating a feminist theory based on the mobility of a dually directed libido,
Salomé provides a unique position for women that is not defined in relation to men or the
male gaze. She believed that women could establish an identity without assuming
masculine identities. According to Salomé, the key is to continue evolving. As Biddy
Martin states in *Women and Modernity: The (Life)Styles of Lou Andreas-Salomé*:

> . . . Salomé argues that all forms of resistance by women, no matter how distorted
they may seem, evidence a profound underlying desire for a different process of
growth and change. The freedom to move in any direction, to try any of the
multiple ways of realizing the potential for change, for transformation and
growth, is ultimately the most important thing. (1991, 161)

While many feminists of her day considered Salomé anti-feminist in her celebration of
women’s infinite plurality, Salomé’s theory of *difference feminism*, as reflected in
relationships throughout *The Human Family*, allows for the liberation (or movement) of
both sexes. According to Salomé’s theories, as reflected in her fiction, second-wave
feminism created competition and increased friction between the sexes. By placing
gender within a topographical, bisexual framework, Salomé’s psychological feminist
theory more closely aligns with postmodern feminist theorists like Julia Kristeva. Similar to Kristeva, Salomé theorized that identity, or the libido (ungendered), is not fixed; it is fluid and consistently changing. As a result, women are not associated with lack based on the absence of a penis (as Freud theorized); instead, his concept of the fallow vagina becomes fertile ground for the creation of new forms. Moreover, both Salomé’s and Kristeva’s inclusion of the mother in the development process underscores the importance of the semiotic womb of discovery which artists draw upon for inspiration in later life as they fluctuate between the semiotic and symbolic worlds. Additionally, in contrast to the opinions of several critics, Salomé and Kristeva do not essentialize women or diminish men by allowing for the feminine to flourish. Instead, they show how the increase in feminine psychic space is beneficial to both sexes. As reflected in the characters in *The Human Family*, identity development is an individual process that is removed from one’s biological sex or gender; it is not binary or static. Furthermore, Salomé portrays heterosexual relations as a positive means of self-discovery instead of detrimental to women’s autonomy. As Biddy Martin concludes: “Salomé’s heterosexuality unites man and woman to something larger than either of them, something to which she has as an unmediated relation as he and which frees her from social convention and dependence on him” (1991, 166).

Perhaps one of the best illustrations of Salomé’s view of gender as culturally constructed is expressed in her novella *Fenitschka* which utilizes place (i.e., Paris and St. Petersburg) to reflect differences in gendered expectations for men and women. This novella is also based on Salomé’s own encounter with the German playwright, Franz Wedekind, whom she met in Paris in 1896. When Wedekind invited Salomé to his Paris apartment to continue a prolonged late night conversation they were having, he made
sexual advances toward her, which Salomé rejected. Wedekind based his famous two-part play *Lulu* (1894) on this encounter with Salomé in Paris (*Fenitchka* 1990, iii).

Wedekind’s Lulu, which was the same character later portrayed in Alan Berg’s opera *Lulu*, is not a flattering image of Salomé. Essentially, when typecast as Lulu, Salomé is reduced to a femme fatale, analogous to the stereotypical “whore” or Eve-like temptress (*Fenitchka* 1990, iii). In Wedekind’s play, the character Lulu flees to London where she falls in love with Jack the Ripper and is murdered by him. Perhaps this is how Wedekind exacted his revenge on Salomé for rejecting him and the narcissistic injury that stemmed from her refusal to surrender to the male gaze (*Binion* 1968, 183).

From a biographical perspective, the novella *Fenitchka* might serve as Salomé’s response to the androcentric rendition of her encounter with Wedekind represented in the play *Lulu*. In Salomé’s gynocentric retelling of the play *Lulu* through the novella *Fenitchka*, Wedekind is represented by the character of Max Werner, and Salomé is represented by the character of Fenia (or the more diminutive Fenitchka). By subverting the traditional *bildungsroman* pattern, Salomé shifts the narrative from the male gaze of Max as the dominant point-of-view at the beginning of the story in Paris to a pattern of dialogue between Fenia and Max toward the close of the story in St. Petersburg. This shift in narrative pattern prompted by changes in location represents the contrast in gendered norms for men and women in each of these cities. Male authority, or the patriarchy, is represented by the initial Parisian setting where Max sexually objectifies the *grisettes* and misreads Fenia’s openness as sexual interest. By disrupting Max’s narrative with the dialogue that ensues between Fenia and Max as platonic friends in St. Petersburg (the more undifferentiated “feminine” city due to its location in non-Western Russia), Salomé suggests that Max has also developed as a person by achieving new
insight and gaining more respect for women (Whiting 1999, 476-477). In learning to
care for Fenia as a human being, Max ceases to regard her as a mere sexual conquest. It is
in St. Petersburg that Fenia also finds the space she needs to pursue her teaching career
and avoids a marriage of pure convention to her lover. However, with no formal ending
to the story, it is suggested that the psychological development of both characters, to
include their gendered identities, will continue to evolve (Deiulio 2007, 93).

In addition to the growth of Max and Fenia as individuals and their personal
negotiation of gendered identities throughout the story, Salomé explores the particular
restraints placed on female development by modernity along with modern civilization’s
tendency to favor masculine ideals. In Fenitschka, Paris is a city of spectacle and
decadence; in contrast, St. Petersburg is mystical and connected to a sense of spirituality
with more traditional norms for men and women. Ironically, Salomé shows how Fenia’s
mobility is more restricted in Paris that initially appears more open to women’s
liberation. As a Russian woman (less repressed and more feminine), Fenia is out of place
in Paris. While she participates freely in intellectual discourse with men and is highly
educated (doctoral student), she is still subjected to the power of the male gaze. When he
meets Fenia in Paris, Max thinks that her nun-like appearance in a full-length black dress
with a high collar means that she is simply masking her true sexual nature. Despite
Fenia’s superior intellect and accomplishments rare for a woman of her day, she is
reduced to a sexual object in Paris. Although Fenia also experiences challenges as an
independent woman in St. Petersburg, she is less restricted in her movements and is able
to make her own decisions (Deiulio 2007, 92-93). As Laura Deiulio comments in her
article “A Tale of Two Cities: The Metropolis in Lou Andreas-Salomé ’s Fenitschka”: 
Each city [Paris and St. Petersburg] represents a way of experiencing the modern world, one more dominated by masculine freedoms and the other still in process of developing its identity as a modern city. Each city, then, offers the characters a different forum for creating their identities as gendered subjects, and . . . it is in the supposedly more backward St. Petersburg where Fenia experiences more freedom to make decisions about her future. (2007, 87)

In St. Petersburg, Salomé creates a setting filled with nostalgic images such as a monastery, weddings, pre-Raphaelite art and traditional patriarchal families. Even Fenia’s clothes reflect her altered environment as she is dressed in more feminine attire (i.e., white dress) and appears to have softer, more feminine features when she encounters Max in St. Petersburg (Fenitschka 1990, 14-15).

As a liminal land between the eastern and western hemispheres, Russia offers a more open-ended space for exploring the self (refer to Chapter Two). In this more spiritual and harmonious setting, which Salomé believed Russia offered and often idealized in her writing, Max and Fenia are permitted the space for greater introspection and development as individuals. In St. Petersburg, Max decides that he will marry his long-time girlfriend; conversely, Fenia decides to break off the engagement with her lover in order to pursue her academic career. In this reversal of gendered expectations regarding marriage and desire, Salomé demonstrates how social norms often inevitably lead to women’s need to sacrifice to achieve their goals of personal freedom. Fenia consciously chooses an intellectual life and academic career, even within the more traditional Russian milieu. As Raleigh Whitingen concludes in his article “Lou Andreas-Salomé ’s Fenitschka and the Tradition of the ‘Bildungsroman’”:

Andreas-Salomé’s narrative develops signs of positive growth—albeit pointedly outside the vestiges of the Bildung pattern that it retains in parodied form. For as well as foregrounding the title heroine’s growth in articulating her independent resolve and her awareness of its demands and costs, Andreas-Salomé’s story also weaves into the background line of its critical dialogue with the male tradition imitations of possible male growth and insight. It shows Max, the would-be
conquering hero and mastering ‘doctor,’ departing Fenia’s room with a feeling of chagrin and respect, yet also articulating—for the reader and perhaps more so than for himself—the possibility of new male insights and stances. (1999, 477)

The story of Fenia and Max further illustrates Salomé’s theory of difference feminism in highlighting men’s and women’s divergent attitudes toward love and sex. As stated by Salomé in *The Erotic*:

> The more a woman is rooted in love, the more she has found personal fulfillment in it, the more the passive elimination of the pure and simple pleasure in sexuality is transformed into a living act, a living accomplishment, a living action. Here sensuality and chastity fulfillment and self-sanctification merge: in all woman’s greatest hours, the man is never more than Mary’s carpenter, compared with a god. It could be said that, insofar as male love is so different from hers, more active, more partial, more encumbered by the need for relief, it makes him, even within his love, more clumsy than the woman who, loving more totally and passively, seeks body and soul for a space in which to find fulfillment, and the whole content of a life to bring to fruition, to combustion: a space in which she can burn. (2012, 85-86)

Salomé’s female protagonists; like Fenia, Hans, Hildegard, Marfa and others; illustrate how love and desire may be felt more intensely by women (as less differentiated) than men, which often forces her female characters to choose between their relationships and work, which is not a choice that the male characters have to make. Salomé also suggests that women, like Fenia, are often subjected to a long historical tradition of a masochistic all-consuming passion for the man in heteronormative relationships (Martin 1991, 186).

In this respect, Salomé emphasizes that the choice to marry should be a personal decision for women and not based on the societal expectations for one’s sex. While choices in favor of female autonomy come at a price for most of her female heroines, Salomé infers that it is the consistent movement and the woman’s agency to choose that matters. For Salomé, heteronormative relationships were considered a tool for refining, and not for defining, one’s identity. While Salomé highlights the differences between men and women in love and life as they relate to each other, she also illustrates how self-knowledge is an
individual process that is acquired through making conscious choices that can be revisited and changed throughout one’s lifetime.

Essentially, Salomé shows the diversity of individuality in both men and women in her fiction as they develop and evolve (or become fragmented) as individuals through heteronormative relationships. Salomé also shows how heterosexual men and women participate in the male gaze and the role that both sexes play within that patriarchal construct. Salomé posits that a healthy relationship can only exist when neither partner (male or female) kneels to the other in complete reverence or submission, meaning that individuals should not “follow” or simply “obey” each other, including within a traditional marriage. Rather, each partner must individually kneel, or submit, to the ideal of their unity.

As another form of feminist resistance in her fiction, Salomé subverts the masculine linear structure (i.e., master narrative) of the narratives through the creation of aporetic endings to stories that are open to interpretation. This not only shows her ambivalence to fixed binaries, including gendered ones, but it emphasizes the theme of “becoming” that is central to Salomé’s fiction and pervasive in her psychological theories (refer to Chapter Three). Muriel Cormican examines how Salomé exposes the failures inherent to second-wave feminism through creation of characters that are “women in motion”; like post-modern feminist Judith Butler in Gender Trouble, Salomé demonstrates how there can be fluctuation between traditional and modern roles for men and women as women seek to define and redefine themselves (2009, 168). By creating a flexible gender model focused on individual differences, Salomé avoided the universalizing tendencies of the mainstream feminist movement of her day, which she considered a threat to the existence of female psychic space in modern civilization and
the ultimate reification of the patriarchy. As noted earlier, Salomé’s flexible gender model is closely aligned with postmodern feminist theory, such as Julia Kristeva’s psycholinguistic theory of difference feminism.

Like many of the resilient female protagonists portrayed in her fiction and true to the core of her feminist theory, Salomé continuously defied the limits of social conventions during her lifetime. In a letter written to her “first love,” the Lutheran minister Hendrik Gillot who taught Salomé Western philosophy and made it possible for her to leave Russia, Salomé expressed what could be considered her life’s philosophy:

I can neither base my life on models nor make of my life a model for anyone; instead, I will most certainly fashion my life in my own way, whatever may come of it. With that I need not represent any principle but something even more wonderful — something that resides within oneself and is warm with resounding life, something that jubilates and that wants out . . . One cannot be happier than I am because the fresh-holy-gay war that is about to begin does not frighten me; on the contrary, let it begin. We shall see whether or not the most common so-called ‘insuperable barriers’ erected by the world will turn out to be harmless chalk circles! (Martin 1991, 9)

Salomé had an early vision of living a life of the mind in the company of intellectual men, which she achieved in part when she developed a triangulated platonic relationship with the positivist philosopher Paul Ree and Nietzsche at the young age of twenty. This triangle was destabilized, however, when Nietzsche proposed marriage and Salomé refused. When Salomé married the linguistics scholar and professor Friedrich Carl Andreas in her late twenties, her marriage was also unorthodox. Salomé agreed to marry Carl Andreas with the condition that the marriage never be consummated and that she would be allowed to engage in extra-marital love affairs, which she did throughout the forty-three year marriage. Even when Salomé had extra-marital relationships, she never let the “illusion” of love consume her. Even her relationship with Rilke, assumed to be
the love of her life, only lasted four years. In her affair with Rilke, Salomé served as a pseudo-mother, therapist, and inspiration to the younger man.

Although she left Russia at age 17, Salomé continued to identify herself as “the Other,” or foreigner abroad. Salomé ’s identity was deeply influenced by the Russian culture—a place to which she returned as a consistent source of inspiration for both her art and life. As she describes pre-revolutionary Russian culture in *Looking Back: Memoirs*:

> That contradictions may be resolved peacefully within the human breast is yet another characteristic of a primitive and undifferentiated state [Russia]. But even beyond that, the Russian soul is clearly less attuned to dualism: thus what one dreams about and what one experiences tend to be less sharply divided into separate and successive realms—nor is such a clear distinction made between heaven and earth, the former less abstract, the latter less laden with a sense of guilt. (1990, 39)

While some critics accuse Salomé of over-romanticizing Russia, there is a profound biographical link between her self-identification as Russian and her life’s work that helped shape her non-binary psychological theories of the libido, gender and narcissism. As Rudolph Binion claims in his biography entitled *Frau Lou: Nietzsche’s Wayward Disciple*, Lou’s prescription for positive narcissism was also a description of herself as she attempted to renew her connection with the “All” in life (1968, 344). In this sense, Salomé ’s feminism is humanism. By allowing a return to the semiotic (i.e., mother/feminine), prior to differentiation, Salomé ’s psychology, as reflected in her writing, promotes an open-ended approach to life beyond labels where behaviors are arbitrarily assigned by society. For Salomé , freedom is a conscious choice to live an authentic life, regardless of the joy or pain that may come.

Brinker-Gabler further describes how Salomé ’s return to Russia as an adult (accompanied twice by Rilke) shows her embrace of the liminal Russian culture (in
between Europe and Asia) as well as the spiritual nature (“backwardness”) of the Russian people. In her Russian journal, Salomé critiques the modernity of the West, with its increasingly taller buildings and perceived loss of humanity, while elevating the Russian landscape and its villages/people as more feminine and closer to humanity. The Russian experience allowed Salomé to cultivate the “Other” within herself or what Kristeva might refer to as the “stranger” within1. These return trips to Russia, in context of Kristeva’s theory, were a return to the pre-oedipal and creative womb of the semiotic for Salomé. Thus, Salomé embraced her narcissism and experienced it as a creative force that allowed her to have a richer connection to the innermost part of herself as well as to humanity. As annotated in her Russian journal, Salomé describes what it meant to be Russian as: “. . . ‘the mixture of spiritedness and spontaneous, simple warmth with unprejudiced breadth and rapturous practicality, which cuts off everything sentimental as well as compulsory and, therefore, seems so wide, like all things in themselves’” (qtd. in Brinker-Gabler 2014, 96).

In conclusion, Salomé’s 1882 poem entitled “Hymn to Life,” which Nietzsche set to music, artistically expresses her life-long philosophy:

Surely, a friend loves a friend the way
That I love you, enigmatic life —
Whether I rejoiced or wept with you,
Whether you gave me joy or pain.

I love you with all your harms;
And if you must destroy me,
I wrest myself from your arms,
As a friend tears himself away from a friend’s breast.

1 Julia Kristeva, Strangers to Ourselves, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1991). In this book, Kristeva explores the notion of the foreigner (an outsider or an alien in a country or society that is not his or her own) which she relates to a person’s inner sense of being (consciousness of the self) compared to the different persona that one often projects to the outside world. Kristeva concludes that it is only through a reconciliation with our estranged selves that we can begin to treat others fairly.
I embrace you with all my strength!
Let all your flames ignite me,
Let me in the ardor of the struggle
Probe your enigma ever deeper.

To live and think millennia!
Enclose me now in both your arms:
If you have no more joy to give me —
Well then—there still remains your pain. (LB Memoirs 1991, 2)
CHAPTER 5

GENDER PERFORMATIVITY IN VIRGINIA WOOLF’S MRS. DALLOWAY AND ORLANDO

This chapter examines how Virginia Woolf’s “life-writing” and the unconventional literary forms she applied to her fiction and non-fiction reflect a “feminist philosophy of her own,” which is aligned with postmodern thought. Specifically, Woolf’s concept that gender is culturally constructed and performed by men and women within society aligns with Judith Butler’s postmodern feminist theory, which is based on the philosophy of phenomenology. Basically, Butler posits that gender is culturally constructed, internalized and performed by men and women in accordance with essentialized behaviors within a heteronormative paradigm. Butler argues that these conventional notions of gender and sexuality perpetuate the traditional domination of women by men as well as discrimination against homosexuals and transgendered persons in society. Butler is credited for the introduction of queer theory to feminism¹.

Just as Woolf opposed binary gendered representations of men and women, she resisted Freud’s binary psychological theories as well as his psychoanalytical methods, perhaps due in part to her own mental illness and distrust of mental health professionals. Essentially, Woolf believed that writers (and not scientists) were the most qualified to cull the depths of the unconscious mind, however agonizing, in order to reflect the human condition. Biographically speaking, Woolf spent most of her writing life attempting to resolve the trauma associated with the early loss of her mother, the premature death of a sister and the sexual abuse she endured from her stepbrothers as a young girl. Woolf also

struggled with ambivalent feelings toward her father, Leslie Stephen, who was a 19th century British philosopher, man of letters, and the first editor of the Dictionary of National Biography. While Virginia admired her father’s distinguished career and was his intellectual heir, she lived in fear of his tyrannical presence in the Stephen’s home. After her mother’s death, Virginia and her step-sister Vanessa bore the majority of household responsibilities and served as caretakers for Stephen toward the end of his life. As stated in Katherine Hill’s article entitled “Virginia Woolf and Leslie Stephen: History and Literary Revolution”:

So great was the emotional chaos of the Stephen family during Virginia Woolf's adolescence that she wrote, in a now much-celebrated diary entry composed a quarter of a century after her father's death, that if Stephen had lived longer ‘his life would have entirely ended mine. What would have happened? No writing, no books;—inconceivable.’ (1981, 351)

Despite his authoritarian rule over the household, Stephen allowed Virginia to be educated, which was fairly rare even for women of her class. Woolf and her father shared an acute sensitivity to language, and Woolf’s studies in literature, biography, history and other subjects provided her with the foundation necessary to become a prolific writer and literary critic.

This chapter begins with a discussion of how Woolf’s writing and her theories about the art of writing—as they appear in her diaries, essays and books like A Room of One’s Own (A Room) and Three Guineas—support Salomé ’s theory of narcissism published in her 1921 article “The Dual Orientation of Narcissism” (refer to Chapter Three). It was through Woolf’s writing, especially her use of subversive literary techniques that destabilized traditional androcentric forms of literature, that her feminist theory is revealed. While some critics, such as Elaine Showalter in A Literature of Her Own, see Woolf’s work as nothing more than the ramblings of a mad woman who was
elitist and out of touch with reality, there are many others who recognize Woolf’s significant contribution to postmodern feminist theory.

This chapter analyzes two of Woolf’s novels, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Orlando*, within the context of postmodern philosophy in order to show how Woolf was prescient in her view of gender as a socially contrived, performative construct that exists apart from one’s biological sex. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, for example, Woolf presents a pragmatic feminist philosophy based on the phenomenology of *party consciousness* that transcends the restrictions inherent to binary psychological theories rooted in sexual difference. Specifically, Woolf’s philosophy of consciousness—exemplified through intersubjective, social consciousness and the psychological doubling of the main characters in *Mrs. Dalloway*—creates a platform for the inversion of gender norms and for their performance outside of traditional expectations. In *Orlando*, Woolf uses sexual reassignment of the main character within the context of a 400-year time span to demonstrate how social norms for men and women (e.g., clothing and mannerisms) are rooted historically within culture and not inborn characteristics. In that respect, Woolf portended the postmodern feminist idea that gender is not born; rather, it is constructed and performed. To conclude this chapter, Woolf’s postmodern feminist theory, as reflected within these two novels, is compared to Julia Kristeva’s psycholinguistic feminist theory to demonstrate how Woolf employed language through the artistry of her writing to transcend gender binaries.

Woolf wrote *for* her life, meaning she felt an existential need to bear witness to the human condition through her work. Suffering from periods of mental illness

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throughout her life (psychotic breaks beginning after her mother’s death), Woolf yearned for a sense of psychological wholeness, which she attempted to find through her writing as she transferred her own psychological trauma onto the pages of her work and projected herself onto several of her characters. Her narcissism was the opposite of malignant self-love; in fact, as a socialist, Woolf endeavored to eliminate ego from her work (Marcus 1988, 81). Like the positive role of Narcissus in Salomé ’s and Kristeva’s theories (refer to Chapter Three), Woolf regarded her writing as a connection to the “All” in life via intersubjective human consciousness. For Woolf, one’s identity is established through a connection with one’s community (i.e., social consciousness). By “thinking through our mothers” (via return to the maternal semiotic), Woolf established an anti-individualistic philosophy, which she expressed in Moments of Being as follows:

   We—I mean all human beings—are connected with this: that the whole world is a work of art, that we are parts of the work of art. Hamlet or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare; there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself. (qtd. in Marcus 1988, 82)

   Woolf believed that writers were the high priestesses of consciousness.

Accordingly, she accepted her task as a writer-rememberer. In Woolf’s posthumously published essay “A Sketch of the Past,” she describes the experience of remembering as follows:

   I should make a picture that was globular: semi-transparent. I should make a picture of curved petals: of shells; of things that were semi-transparent; I should make curved shapes, showing the light through, but not giving a clear outline. Everything would be large and dim; and what was seen would at the same time be heard; sounds would come through this petal or leaf-sounds indistinguishable from sights. (Moments of Being 1985, 66)

According to Evelyne Ender’s Architexts of Memory, art gains its existential value from the forms it provides to human experience (2005, 201). In this respect, Woolf produced
literature that provided an authentic relation to existence—the experience of “being in the world.” As Enders concludes: “Remembrance of the kind practiced by Dichters [writers] is then an ethical act, because it shows a more authentic relation to existence than that which is granted to ordinary individuals, for whom memory is essentially a practical tool” (2005, 202). As a writer-rememberer, Woolf felt obligated to access her most painful memories in order to describe the Real of life to her readers. “Participating in the collective sublime of Woolf’s narrative voice,” says Marcus, “we share her dangerous mission, become co-conspirators against culture. In redeeming our own past we become our own redeemers” (1988, 83).

Since Woolf’s memories were, in theory, retrieved at the border of the semiotic and symbolic (liminal space of imagination or Kristeva’s concept of the chora), she writes from a consciously ungendered place where linear time does not exist. In Moments of Being, Woolf described her memories as being received like “shocks” (Heine 2014, 45). Some scholars compare Woolf’s description of memory to Freud’s characterization of trauma in Beyond the Pleasure Principle (Heine 2014, 45). Regardless, Woolf’s philosophy, which she develops through stream-of-consciousness literary style in Mrs. Dalloway, tunnels behind the “cotton wool” of characters to reveal the social conditions and the collective unconscious of her time. Consequently, Clarissa’s party may come to represent her (and Woolf’s) narcissistic gift (i.e., artistic production) to an alienated and fragmented post-war English society. As reflected in the analysis that follows, Mrs. Dalloway further illustrates Woolf’s non-binary approach to gender as the party hostess (associated with the feminine) is permitted to flourish within Western patriarchal middle-class society.
By employing a stream-of-consciousness literary form in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf invokes temporal disorder and subverts the traditional linear authority inherent to master narratives. Moreover, as noted by Molly Hoff in her article “The Pseudo-Homeric World of Mrs. Dalloway,” Woolf undermines the purely masculine approach of Homer’s *Odyssey* and Joyce’s *Ulysses* in the character of Clarissa Dalloway who goes about London in the hours before her party. As Hoff states: “Virginia Woolf . . . draws on Homeric narrative, eroticizes it, and at the same time makes repeated allusion to Joyce’s *Ulysses* (Richter) to show that she is departing from his ‘big hard book’” (Pearce 60) while criticizing him as well” (1999, 190). In Kristeva’s essay “Woman’s Time,” she describes the female narrative as a circular form of narration with repetitions and silences. Kristeva further explains how the female subject is always in process, with the best period of self-expression for women being the semiotic stage when the subject is alone with the mother (Bakay 2015, 142). In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf transmits the story through the minds of characters whose identities are in flux as they weave from past to present revealing a multiplicity of consciousness and identities. As Kathryn Stelmach conveys:

She [Woolf] smoothly weaves in and out of consciousness of all her characters, erasing the distinction between speech and thought through her use of free indirect discourse, blurring the boundaries between the individual and the community, and dissolving the doors but retaining the framed threshold as a site of liminal revelation. (2006, 308)

As the only still frame in the novel, the party captures the connection between individuals who have been engrossed in their separate lives until the time of the party. In this respect, Clarissa Dalloway’s party functions as a literary device to represent intersubjective consciousness where the self and Other are in a reciprocal relationship. To develop an authentic self, Woolf suggested that one must be *apart from the world* while
still being part of the world; in that sense, consciousness is formed through a kind of social intercourse. Christopher Ames, in his book Life of the Party: Festive Vision in Modern Fiction, says of Woolf’s party consciousness: “The party spirit has the power to overcome the separateness of selves and in so doing suspend the traditional boundaries of self, place, and time that form the realistic set of coordinates which, during most of the novel, orient memories and reveries” (1991, 93). Thus, identity (or the libido) is not fixed; it is fluid and dynamic. Throughout Woolf’s works, the motif of communication with the Other as the only true source of authentic self-knowledge and identity formation is prevalent. “To be is to be with others, Mark Hussey says of Woolf’s philosophy, just as it is to be in time and to ‘live’ a body. It is in relationships with others that the possibilities and limitations of human being are realized, and it is against the background of others that individual identity stands out” (1986, 46). Woolf describes the inextricably linked nature of the self and Other to consciousness and the construction of meaning in her book On Being Ill as follows:

Human beings do not go hand in hand the whole stretch of the way. There is a virgin forest in each; a snowfield where even the print of birds’ feet is unknown. Here we go alone, and like it better so. Always to have sympathy, always to be accompanied, always to be understood would be intolerable. But in health the genial pretense must be kept up and the effort renewed—to communicate, to civilize, to share, to cultivate the desert, educate the native, to work together by day and night to sport. (2012, 12)

As indicated in the passage from On Being Ill, Woolf believed that a dialogical community centered on an ethos of care was crucial to providing the framework for individual (masculine and feminine) and collective freedom of consciousness to flourish. Clarissa Dalloway engendered such a dialogical community through her party where vitality thrived, even when death (i.e., news of Septimus’ suicide) encroached upon the festivity. Within this non-linear, creative setting that exists at the threshold of
consciousness (where male and female genders are oscillating), Woolf is able to illustrate how the dichotomies of life, such as sanity/insanity and life/death, exist side-by-side.

Woolf further portrays the paradoxical nature of life through the literary technique of psychological doubles, as illustrated by the characters of Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith. Clarissa Dalloway has an almost manic energy and zest for life as she goes about London completing last minute tasks for her party; Septimus, on the other hand, is depressive, withdrawn and resigned to life. Additionally, Woolf uses the technique of doubles in her depiction of other party guests. There was Clarissa’s former lover, Peter Walsh, who represented Clarissa’s youth and spirited sense of adventure alongside her refined and conservative husband, Richard Dalloway, who personified Clarissa’s more conventional self. These dualities are merged seamlessly at the party, which is one way that Clarissa Dalloway seems to maintain her own balance. At one point, Clarissa Dalloway is panic stricken that her party is a failure. Failure, to Clarissa, is silence and a lack of communion among the guests. When she sees Ralph Lyon beat the curtain back and go on conversing, however, she is convinced her party is a success.

Clarissa Dalloway brings the party to life as she steps outside her own conventional reality. It is at the party that the reader learns of Clarissa Dalloway’s intimate affairs, including the one with Sally Seaton. Clarissa Dalloway, as conventional as she seems outwardly, has essentially subverted her sensual self in order to keep societal norms and herself intact. The party creates a stage for her to live (or to relive) these various parts of herself. While doing “women’s work” (hosting the party with all the domestic chores required), Clarissa Dalloway is also single handedly controlling the tone and success of the party. She does this apart from her husband and his reputation. Consequently, Clarissa Dalloway carries out the androgynous vision that Woolf
prescribes in *A Room*. With the party, Woolf creates a setting where a woman’s world (i.e., the feminine) is valued. Clarissa Dalloway has a room of her own at her party. In this sense, Woolf challenges the prevailing masculine values in English society that she described in *A Room* as follows:

Yet it is the masculine values that prevail. Speaking crudely, football and sport are ‘important’ the worship of fashion, the buying of clothes ‘trivial.’ And these values are inevitably transferred from life to fiction. This is an important book, the critic assumes, because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing room. A scene in a battlefield is more important than a scene in the shop—everywhere and much more subtly the difference of value persists. (1981, 73-74)

Clarissa Dalloway’s party, with all its domestic preparation, was the central theme and of paramount importance in the novel. At the party, it is Clarissa who takes the spotlight; she is transfixed in an evening gown at the top of her staircase like a Madonna figure. It is her presence that gives life to an otherwise destitute evening in post-war London.

Clarissa Dalloway; while regarded by some critics as a shallow, glorified housewife⁴; is a self-aware hostess who is offering herself as a gift to forge communal connections (her existential project). Accordingly, Clarissa Dalloway’s ability to construct a community has an artistic quality. She produces and controls her event-art in ways that art is traditionally generated, yet her parties destabilize traditional boundaries as well as challenge conventional ideas typical to English culture in her day: “. . . a Dalloway party creates a mode of being seen as fundamentally separate from mundane life . . . . Like a conventional drama, her party distorts the forms of everyday life to reveal a truth she believes to be more profound and important. Her art is both false and true; it is life, but life transformed” (Littleton 1995, 42). By creating an alternate reality through

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stream-of-consciousness writing that reveals the innermost thoughts and feelings of Clarissa Dalloway, Woolf exposes her reader to a world where women, and not only men, could raise human consciousness through artistic endeavors. Woolf endowed Clarissa Dalloway with the financial means and freedom to have a party; in turn, Clarissa Dalloway created an environment where men and women were unified and engaged in dialogue, despite their differing political backgrounds or personal interests. Through this modernist party, Woolf further suggests that art has the power to engender a reality that transcends even the very artist who created it. In a century crippled by trauma to the human imagination, social consciousness was more critical to informing one’s personal identity than ever (Ambrosio lecture series).

In creating meaning for herself despite the anguish of certain finitude, Clarissa Dalloway exemplifies several aspects of the existential heroic ideal, which Woolf portrays as distinctively achieved through a female counterpart to the typically gendered masculine war hero (in this case, Septimus). Woolf’s bisexual worldview, embodied in the character of Clarissa Dalloway, is expressed in *A Room* as follows:

> . . . if we [women] have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think; if we escape a little from the common sitting room and see human beings not always in relation to each other but in relation to reality; and the sky, too, and the trees or whatever it may be in themselves; . . . for no human being should shut out the view; if we face the fact, for it is a fact, that there is no arm to cling to, but we go alone and that our relation is to the world of reality and not to the world of men and women, then the opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare’s sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down. (1981, 113-114)

Woolf’s phenomenological approach to gender, as reflected in the passage above, was ahead of her historic time and closely aligned with the tenets of postmodern feminist theory, as discussed at the close of this chapter. The character of Clarissa Dalloway, in addition to demonstrating the female heroic and authentic female identity, underscores
Woolf’s ideal world where individuals, despite their gendered representations or sexual orientation, have the freedom to shape their realities. Like the praxis exhibited by Clarissa Dalloway in hosting the party (her artistic endeavor), Woolf encourages women to perform in accordance to their person and not in accordance with gender norms prescribed by society. In A Room, for example, Woolf says that “… it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or a woman pure and simple” (1981, 104). While Woolf used the word androgyny as a potential resolution to avoid sex-conscious writing, most critics concur that her use of the term androgyny was figurative in this case. Basically, Woolf indicates that writers should avoid the cultural norms ascribed to men and women when they write (should not be conscious of them); instead, writing should draw upon both the masculine and feminine elements oscillating within each writer. Like Salomé, Woolf viewed writing as a bisexual activity due to the writer’s return to the pre-defined maternal space where their works originate. As Iraj Montashery conveys in her article “Virginia Woolf and the Exploration of the Third Gender”:

Virginia Woolf refuses the ‘either/or’ logic of dichotomous models by offering a space which includes the advantages of both the symbolic and the semiotic, which in turn introduces the new logic of ‘both/and’. This space fuses masculine and feminine identities. It is speech and pleasure, textuality and sexuality, sameness and difference. It is a space for both men and women; but arguably and preferably, it is a space the feminine may occupy without being silenced by masculinity, simply because it escapes the old binary opposition between masculinity and femininity. (2013, 9)

In Mrs. Dalloway, Woolf structures a world where typically underrated feminine values flourish into heroic qualities. As a physically frail, middle-class woman in London society, Clarissa Dalloway was cast in the traditional role of wife and mother and further defined by her husband’s elite political position in society. With a consciousness that cuts through perception like a knife (achieving phallic power), Clarissa Dalloway is keenly
aware of the deadly threats to her identity: “She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of the them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa anymore; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway” (MD 2013, 52). However, Woolf demonstrates that there was much more substance to Clarissa Dalloway than how the gaze of the Other (English patriarchal society) portrayed her. Although both her long-time admirer, Peter Walsh, and her husband, Richard Dalloway, view her as a snobbish, foolish, and childish woman who wastes time throwing frolicsome parties (MD 2013, 142), Clarissa rejects their definitions of her and, instead, sees her parties as life affirming by creating a community in an isolated and fragmented post-war world. It was her heroic offering, as a god-like artisan, to combine and create; by forging party consciousness, Clarissa Dalloway essentially fosters a dialogical community that increases the female psychic space in civilization.

Woolf, via staging Clarissa’s party, allowed gender performativity to be reordered into a new feminist reality. For example, Septimus Smith initially chose to enlist in the military to prove his masculinity, which ultimately resulted in his split psyche and death. Peter Walsh, constantly flipping the blade of his pocket knife to “prove his masculinity” in the presence of Clarissa is presented as a weak personality as he constantly diffuses his identity through relationships with passive women. Richard Dalloway, a middle-class white male, is perceived as bland and seems overshadowed by the strong artistic and unconventional presence of his wife, Clarissa. In the end, it is Clarissa, possessing the power to create life through art, who is portrayed as a fully developed human being. She progresses from the “this and that” that Others in society define her as at the beginning of the novel to the figure transfixed at the top of the stairs as she returns to her guests after a
self-preserving period of reflection about Septimus’ death. The final words of the novel reveal her fully realized status of being in the world that is witnessed by Peter as he expresses: “It is Clarissa, he said. For there she was” (MD 2013, 200). As Littleton concludes of Clarissa’s transcendence of her gendered identity:

> By creating a viable heroine with many intellectual attributes ascribed solely to men, Woolf destabilizes gender boundaries. Clarissa’s talents derive, moreover, from her social femininity, presenting an alternative to male-identified utilitarian ideology . . . Woolf’s novel attempts to uncover a female intellectual inheritance. . . . Just as Clarissa’s intuitive completion of Septimus’ suicide rescues the act from the oblivion to which it might have otherwise have been consigned, so Woolf’s creation rescues Clarissa . . . from the same oblivion, at the same time serving to erase the isolation felt by women artists excluded from the male intellectual tradition. (1995, 53)

In hosting the party, Clarissa Dalloway effectively moves beyond a world of constricting binaries by allowing diverse individuals with divergent opinions and worldviews to converse under one roof; this was in stark contrast to the political and governmental discussions in Britain that primarily took place among wealthy white men in that day. This same social consciousness is illustrated by Clarissa Dalloway’s transcendence of gender binaries where everyone, no matter their sex/gender assignment or social status, could partake in conversation. Related to Woolf’s feminist theory, unlike the mainstream feminist movement of her day, Woolf believed that women should converse with, instead of openly attack, the patriarchy. Instead of women actively competing against men for entry into the public sphere, moreover, Woolf believed that women’s producing art (associated with the feminine and private sphere) could increase the significance of the private sphere and, consequently, allow for the feminine to flourish alongside masculine values in civilization.

Woolf’s novel Orlando is another example of her pluralistic approach to gender as well as her view of art (or writing) as a means to achieve female liberation. Through
the literary device of sexual reassignment to the novel’s protagonist, Woolf set the stage for a gender-based study within a historical and feminist context. In her article “The Flight of the Word: Narcissism and the Masquerade of Writing in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando,*” Ellen Carol Jones declares: “Orlando stylistically performs the impact of history and identity and on textuality its textstyles and Orlando’s sexstyles shifting in the gale of history . . . *Orlando* inverts but also deconstructs the process of bourgeois myth formation by questioning the very role of metaphor, of figuraiity, in the production of sex and text” (1994, 156). Moreover, *Orlando,* based on Vita Sackville-West (Woolf’s lover from the mid-1920s-1929), is a biography of desire where the protagonist is a love object brought to life by the author.

While there are certain biographical parallels between the story of Orlando and Woolf’s lover Vita Sackville-West, *Orlando* is a polemic text regarding the status of women in English society throughout history, including the plight of female writers in the West. By dressing and undressing Orlando, Woolf exposes the truth about the suppression of women’s writing as well as other means of female oppression, such as lack of property ownership rights, throughout previous ages (400 year time span, beginning with the Elizabethan era). Moreover, by Orlando’s being a twentieth-century female at the end of the novel, Woolf is prescient in unmanning the modernist woman.

As Adam Parkes concludes:

Woolf’s Orlando, a fictional portrait of her aristocratic friend Vita Sackville-West, mocks all normative sex and gender codes, destabilizing the very grounds on which sexological as well as legal conventions were founded. *Orlando* propels its readers into a realm of the imagination, a region of seeming fantasy. But *Orlando* is no aesthete’s evasion of unpleasant reality. On the contrary, Woolf transforms reality, and history, into a theatre of seemingly infinite, protean possibility, which prompts another series of questions: What is gender? What is sexuality? (1994, 436)
Orlando begins with the masculine pronoun “he” when the biographer (as narrator) states: “He—for there could be no doubt about his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it—was in the act of slicing the head of a Moor which swung from the rafters” (1928, 13). Despite a “disguised” masculinity due to the clothing of the time, Woolf immediately associates the male protagonist with violence and aggression, which are gendered traits culturally assigned to the male sex. Simultaneously, Woolf establishes the patriarchal lineage of the sixteenth-century teenage protagonist. Orlando comes from a long line of “hunter/gatherer” and warrior prototypes. As the narrator conveys, “Orlando’s father, or perhaps his grandfather, had struck it from the shoulders of a vast Pagan who had started up under the moon in the barbarian fields of Africa; and now it swung, gently, perpetually, in the breeze which never ceased blowing through the attic rooms of the gigantic house of the lord who had slain him” (1928, 13). Thus, with the sword as a phallic symbol and the reference to fathers, the patriarchal lineage of Orlando, as a male in sixteenth-century English society, is established. By beginning the novel with Orlando as male instead of a female character (transformed into a female in the middle of the novel), perhaps Woolf is signifying that the patriarchy, as dominant and more powerful, has the historical first word. As Woolf points out in *A Room*, women were virtually non-existent (i.e., Anonymous) in early British society (1981, 51).

Orlando is aware of differences between the sexes, including anatomical differences. For instance, when referring to his first encounter with the Russian princess Sasha, Orlando expresses: “Legs, hands, carriage, were a boy’s, but no boy ever had a mouth like that; no boy had those breasts; no boy had those eyes which looked as if they had been fished from the bottom of the sea” (1928, 38). Indeed, Orlando quickly falls in
love with Sasha, and he experiences a strong heterosexual desire, with slight homoerotic overtones, for the opposite sex. When he is later duped by Sasha, he categorizes her in patriarchal terms as an Eve-like temptress—the ultimate deceiver who lead to the downfall of mankind. As the narrator states: “Standing knee-deep in water he [Orlando] hurled at the faithless woman all the insults that have ever been the lot of her sex. Faithless, mutable, fickle, he called her; devil adulteress, deceiver . . .” (1928, 64).

Woolf also shows how men can be subjected to culturally constructed norms, even within the patriarchy. For instance, Orlando struggles to write poetry within the male symbolic order. Initially, he struggles with the “truth” of metaphor, the truth of poetry and the aesthetic ideal in general. Crafting “The Oak Tree” poem is difficult for him. Orlando’s struggle with figurative language is evident in the following passage:

‘Another metaphor, by Jupiter!’ he would exclaim as he said this . . . ‘And what’s the point of it?’ he would ask himself. ‘Why not say simply in so many words – and then he would try to think for half an hour – or was it two years and a half? – how to say simply in so many words what love is. . . . ‘Why not simply say what one means and leave it?’ (1928, 101)

The above passage represents the differences that exist between the semiotic and symbolic orders, between the masculine and the feminine. Grounded in the symbolic order as a man, Orlando becomes frustrated and concludes that both poetry and metaphor are “utterly false.” As a female character, Orlando changes linguistically. Her babbling, nonsensical mode of talking to her husband and the numerous ellipses in her narrative pattern represent the semiotic and polymorphic patterns associated with feminine speech. As Paula Rabinowitz states: “. . . her [Orlando’s] speech becomes gibberish when she is with her husband; her activities consist of endless reverie, interrupted by spurts of frenzy as s/he writes and writes and writes . . . Oscillating between fluid voices, it never gets anywhere” (1928, 91).
Orlando also encountered difficulty in trying to get his work published as both a male and female in the novel, which was Woolf’s commentary on the enormous amount of power and influence that some publishers and critics had over artists. Nick Greene, a proponent of the male literary canon, nearly discouraged Orlando from writing altogether. As the narrator conveys: “Memory, meanwhile kept steady before his eyes the face of Nicholas Greene, as if that sardonic, loose-lipped man, treacherous as he had proved himself, were the Muse in person, and it was him that Orlando must do homage” (1928, 103). In “Some Theories of One’s Own: Orlando and the Novel,” Nicola Thompson states:

In Orlando the literary establishment is identified with Nick Greene, also the arch villain in A Room of One’s Own. . . . Nick Greene is unable to cope with the flux of instability of the present. Instead, he can only praise writers when they are dead and able to be classified and categorized. Greene wields enormous power—he can either reject Orlando’s work and satirize him publicly, or publish it for her to win a prize. But either way he is intensely inhibiting to Orlando’s creative powers . . . . (1993, 310-311)

Greene favors the literary tradition that is associated with the formulaic work of white, male authors who comprise the literary canon throughout history. Even beyond conventional gender constraints, those in Greene’s critical camp formed stylistic literary prototypes to which authors had to comply in order to be published, which prohibited original thought and creativity.

Orlando’s sex change in the novel did not change his inner psychological state, yet it changed his relation to the outside world as he faced new cultural norms based on his female sex. As Woolf states through the narrator in Orlando:

Orlando became 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 the future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity. Their faces remained, as their portraits prove, practically the same. His memory – but in future we must for conventions sake, say ‘her’ for ‘his,’ and ‘she’ for ‘he’ – her memory then, went
back through all the events of her past life without encountering any obstacle. (1928, 138)

Even prior to the sex change, Orlando exhibited feminine qualities in both his fashion sense and his display of emotion. For instance, the narrator states:

That men cry frequently and as unreasonably as women, Orlando knew from her own experience as a man; but she was beginning to be aware that women should be shocked when men display emotion in their presence, and so, shocked she was. (1928, 180)

Thus, Woolf posits that gender markers, represented through clothing and emotional expectations, are created by social conventions (i.e., performative). When Orlando changes sex biologically, the alterations that come with that transformation are imposed upon her by the outside world; they are not innately internal differences. Additionally, sex and gender are separate constructs. Regardless, it is at this time of sexual reassignment that the novel takes on a more serious didactic tone and moves toward a more feminist message.

As a woman, Orlando is automatically treated in accordance with social conventions for how women “ought” to behave. She is stripped of her pride and her possessions when she returns to England as a woman. She experiences the oppression that comes with her new sexual identification, especially those imposed on Victorian women. The narrator describes the antagonism she faces as a woman: “(1) that she was dead, and therefore could not hold any property whatsoever; (2) that she was a woman, which amounts to the same thing . . .” (1928, 168). With the courts attempt to confiscate her home, Orlando has no room of her own as a female citizen, or as an artist, in a man’s world. As Beth Boehm projects:

It is not, after all, insignificant that the gigantic house in whose attic Orlando slashes at the shrunken head has 365 rooms and 52 staircases, emphasizing both space and time available historically to wealthy men for the production of art, nor
is it coincidental that the female Orlando stands to lose those rooms in the eighteenth century as a result of patrilineal inheritance laws. (1992, 199)

In this sense, the female Orlando comes to represent the “madwoman in the attic” of Gilbert and Gubar⁴, except that she is not even provided so much as an attic. Instead, the female protagonist is out of paper and wary of her manuscripts. She hides her manuscript in her bosom, for the “spirit of the age” did not look kindly upon female artists. However, Orlando defies this convention; she refuses to give up her writing.

Orlando, by something as simple as changing clothes, transcends the gender markers of her times. As Susan Okin comments:

She [Orlando] discovers that virtually all of the allegedly significant and ‘natural’ differences between the sexes result from the different rights and privileges that accrue to each, the different modes of dress. Not surprisingly, she finds the nineteenth century the most trying to be a woman – with fifteen to twenty children expected her, and twenty yards of fabric in her skirts. No wonder, at this point in the story, she takes to living her life partly as a woman and partly, by cross-dressing several times in a typical day, as a man. (1996, 35)

Via fashion, Orlando’s outward appearance, so easily transformed through cross-dressing, represents Orlando’s bisexual identity. Essentially, Orlando is clothed by her society, yet Woolf reiterates that “clothes are but a symbol of something hid deep beneath” (1928, 188). While Orlando’s biological sex is female in the latter portion of the novel, she can still dress and think in the fashion of a man. Both sexes are merged within her psyche. As the narrator points out:

For it was this mixture in her of man and woman, one being uppermost and then the other, that often gave her conduct an unexpected turn. The curious of her own sex would argue now, for example, if Orlando was a woman, did she never take more than ten minutes to dress? And were her clothes rather at random, and sometimes worn rather shabby? And then they would say, still, she has none of the formality of a man, or a man’s love of power. She is excessively tender-hearted. She could not endure to see a donkey beaten or a kitten drowned. Yet

again, they noted, she detested household matters, was up at dawn and out among
the fields in summer before the sun had risen. (1928, 189)

In this same passage, Woolf continues with a list of stereotypical molds that Orlando
does not fit into because she is an unconventional woman with her own identity. Woolf
says of her ambiguous gender: “Whether, then, Orlando was most man or woman, it is
difficult to say and cannot now be decided” (1928, 190). From a theoretical standpoint,
Orlando, as an artist, exists in a liminal place (i.e., Kristeva’s *chora*) where gender is
consistently fluctuating (masculine and feminine) within. Moreover, Orlando’s marriage
to Shelmerdine, beyond fulfilling the Victorian role-expectation of marriage for women,
is a portrait of Woolf’s idea of androgyny. Herbert Marder states: “Orlando and her
husband Shelmerdine . . . are truly androgynous, the two sexes within them almost evenly
balanced” (1968, 115).

The marriage of Orlando and Shelmerdine can be compared to Orlando’s poem in
the novel – “The Oak Tree.” In “‘A Single Self’: A Jungian Interpretation of Virginia
Woolf’s *Orlando,*” Clifton Snider posits:

‘The Oak Tree,’ the poem and the actual tree itself, is perhaps the most important
symbol, apart from Orlando herself, in the novel. As a work of art, it is a product
of the unconscious shaped by the conscious mind. As a tree, it stands for
*coniunctio*, the joining of opposites. J.E. Cirlot points out that Jung maintains that
the tree ‘has a symbolic, bisexual nature, as can be seen in the fact that, in Latin,
the endings of the names of trees are masculine even though their gender is
feminine. Indeed, Woolf, referring to ‘The Oak Tree’ likens ‘writing poetry’ to
‘the intercourse of lovers.’ The successful completion of the poem represents that
Orlando has, for the time being, reached that union of opposites, of anima/animus,
of the Self. Because of this fusion of the contrasexual, she has become
androgynous, her mind and psyche, to use Woolf’s own words ‘fully fertilized,’
able to use ‘all of its faculties.’ (1979, 268)

As noted earlier in this chapter, Woolf’s use of the term *androgyyny* was more figurative
and did not mean unsexed or gender neutral; rather, Woolf’s use of androgyny is like
Salomé’s “two-in-one” concept representing the bisexual mind of the artist (refer to
Chapter Three). Moreover, Woolf is making a statement about the female artist. When Orlando finishes her poem as a woman toward the end of the novel, she metaphorically gives birth to fiction, and the matriarchy is established. In “Crossings: Reading Orlando,” Rabinowitz writes:

Orlando’s writings can only be read seriously after she has become a woman, after she has been forced by lack of paper to rewrite her manuscript. The text she carries with her back to England becomes a palimpsest, written ‘under erasure,’ like the colonized, like the feminized. . . yet the writing achieves critical acclaim after Orlando has become a woman. Literature comes from the outskirts of the empire. It comes, quite literally, out of the skirts, bursting through Orlando’s encased bodice under which she has cloaked her manuscript. The writer’s imagination may be imperial, stretching to the edges of the charted world but the imperialist cannot be a writer. The power of writing is that it resists history. (1988, 90-91)

Thus, motherhood is a redeeming quality for women when viewed from this aesthetic perspective. Perhaps that is what Woolf saw as her answer to her own struggles with being childless. Not permitted to have children because of her mental instability, Woolf vicariously gave parturition to fiction.

As mentioned earlier, Orlando was also an extended love letter to Vita-Sackville West, which means that Orlando breaks from the traditional heterosexual love stories throughout history in order to express same-sex (lesbian) desire. Carolyn Heilbrun calls Orlando a “marvelous jeu d’esprit,” a love letter to Vita (1983, 237). Ellen Hawkes adds:

Woolf admitted from the very beginning that what she most enjoyed in writing Orlando was the opportunity to come to understand her friend by ‘creating her.’ As she wrote in a letter to Sackville-West, ‘it’s all about you and the lust of your flesh and the lure of your mind . . . . I should like to untwine and twist again some very odd, incongruous strands in you.’ And, when she was composing the final pages of the book, she again wrote to Vita Sackville-West, ‘By the way, do you think that I know you? Intimately? A question I shall ask myself tomorrow morning—you are driving down to Knole [in Orlando] and as you go, you exhibit the most profound and secret side of your character. (1981, 54)
In writing *Orlando*, Woolf constructs a love object out of language. As Ellen Carol Jones proclaims: “Invoking *Orlando*/Orlando into being, Woolf invokes a love object out of language, an object through which she narcissistically inscribes her incorporating herself most fully in her creation. Unconscious desire is emptied of its specific representations by becoming the object of its own inscription” (1994, 112). Further, *Orlando* illustrates Woolf’s theory of women “thinking back through their mothers” when they write. Since Vita was an oedipal attachment⁵ as well as a love object for Woolf, the creation of *Orlando* is grounded in the semiotic imaginary as Woolf returns to the *jouissance* of the mother and projects female desire through writing.

Woolf’s feminist theory, reflected in the themes and subversive literary forms employed in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Orlando*, is aligned with postmodern feminism’s antieessentialist views of gender and its rejection of the Western ideal of universal grand narratives. As previously noted, Woolf seemed to write from a place that Kristeva called the *chora* where—... “rapture and articulations (rhythm) precedes evidence, verisimilitude, spatiality and temporality” (Bakay 2015, 143). Within the *chora*, which is associated with the maternal body, masculine and feminine elements reside in a pre-symbolic state that is not yet dominated by the phallus (Bakay 2015, 143). Related to writing, the stream-of-consciousness technique in *Mrs. Dalloway* and the ellipses and dashes used in *Orlando* come to represent the ambiguous, feminine space of a *subject-in-process* within language where gender and sexuality are not yet defined. By crafting fiction within this fluid space of the imaginary, Woolf often blurred the boundaries

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⁵ Adam Parkes, whose article is cited in the Reference List, notes: Of Sackville-West, Woolf wrote that she “lavishes on me the maternal protection which, for some reason, is what I have always wished from everyone” (Diary 3:52). Sackville-West said in turn she felt “extraordinarily protective” toward Woolf, who had “a sweet and childlike nature” (Moore 350-51).
between characters as well as between the past and present, which allowed for the
tersubjective party consciousness illustrated in Clarissa Dalloway’s party to develop.

Catherine Driscoll, in her article “The Woman in Process: Deleuze, Kristeva and Feminism,” asserts that Woolf’s concept of identity (reflected in her fiction and non-fiction) is one of assemblage. According to Driscoll, through Woolf’s use of assemblage, she developed a non-hierarchical model for gender that was even less predictable and more polymorphous than postmodern concepts. Moreover, Driscoll draws connections between Woolf’s concept of assemblage and the philosophy of nomadic culture discussed in Deleuze’s and Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus, which is a state of things that ceaselessly change, a matter-flow in which no anchoring point or center or reference is assignable (Driscoll 2000, 82-83). As described in the foreword of A Thousand Plateaus:

‘Nomad thought’ does not immure itself in the edifice of an ordered interiority; it moves freely in an element of exteriority. It does not repose on identity; it rides difference. It does not respect the artificial division between the three domains of representation, subject, concept and being; it replaces restrictive analogy with a conductivity that knows no bounds. The concepts it creates do not merely reflect the eternal form of a legislating subject, to the extent that they can be said to have one, is only secondary. They do not reflect upon the world but are immersed in the changing state of things. (1987, xii)

While some feminists, such as Simone de Beauvoir, criticize Woolf’s fiction for its lack of an anchor, or having no real center to her novels, I believe Woolf uses the ambiguity of language—with its silences and repetitions—to reflect the fragility of life. Woolf was deeply concerned with the breakdown of communication that she saw as leading to alienation of individuals in their communities. In order to fully communicate, Woolf strove to express human emotion through the interrelation of her characters.

By speaking from the space of the feminine—a place of repressed erotic desire—Woolf’s feminist theory can be linked to the tradition of French postmodern feminists,
such as Cixous, who first coined the term écriture féminine and asserted: “woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies” (1976, 875). Woolf, nearly 60 years prior to third-wave feminists such as Cixous, Kristeva and Irigaray, foresaw the importance of language for the psychic understanding of the self. Instead of competing for space within the public sphere dominated by the patriarchy, Woolf shows how women can take up their own space at the boundary of the semiotic and symbolic order in order to reaffirm their understanding of the world and claim their space within it. In this way, art becomes the means by which men and women can transcend the binary limitations placed upon them by modern society. Writing from a narcissistic space prior to the application of binary gender markers, Woolf produced Mrs. Dalloway and Orlando within a chora of linguistic ambiguity reinforced by metaphor. As Ellen Carol Jones concludes:

Love in the feminine, that is, love not founded in structures of patriarchal power, would entail ‘dissipation of the glance within itself,’ fusion and permutation of the one and the other, neither seeing or seen, neither subject or object” (Tales 112). . . To write her desire, to incorporate herself most fully in her creation, the woman writer creates a work of art that prevents desire from settling into patriarchally constituted, definitive meanings; unconscious desire is emptied of its specific representations by becoming the object of its own inscription. (1994, 171)

In return to the mother as the site of artistic creation, as Salomé and Kristeva understood, Woolf accesses primal memories that shatter logical form and retrieves the “‘ultimate language of a jouissance at the far limits of repression, whence bodies, identities, and signs are begotten’” (Jones 1994, 172). With the image of the wild goose at the close of Orlando, Woolf suggests that language and meaning are slippery. As Saussure proposed,
the relationship between a sign (semiotics) and the thing itself is an arbitrary one. In context of psycholinguistic theory, like Kristeva’s, the wild goose at the end of *Orlando* reminds the reader that the meaning of texts, rooted in language, cannot be pinned down. The world is open to interpretation, and human beings, regardless of their sex or gender, have the agency to create their own meaning in life.

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CHAPTER 6

SALOMÉ’S AND WOOLF’S PRESCIENT VISIONS OF FEMINISM

Lou Andreas-Salomé and Virginia Woolf were prescient in viewing sex and gender as distinct constructs, which allowed them to create non-binary feminist theories closely aligned with the tenets of postmodern feminism. As detailed in Chapter One, the first- and second-wave feminist movements were based on liberal, or equality, feminism which tended to classify women as a single homogenous group. Consequently, women were encouraged to “assimilate” to the prevailing masculine values characteristic to Western society. In the quest for equality, American and Western European women were encouraged to behave more like men and suppress traits associated with the feminine, such as empathy, in order to succeed. Moreover, liberal feminism often emphasized the public sphere at the expense of private life. Postmodern feminism (beginning in the 1990s), as noted in Chapter One, deconstructed sex/gender identity by focusing on gender differences within individuals.

We begin this chapter with a brief explanation of postmodernism in order to provide context for the discussion of Salomé’s and Woolf’s theories of difference feminism as they relate to postmodern feminist theory. The basis of Salomé’s feminist theory is then presented with supporting examples from her fiction and non-fiction, which is followed by a discussion of Virginia Woolf’s feminist theory as presented in A Room of One’s Own (A Room) and Three Guineas. By proposing feminist theories based on difference instead of absolute sameness that lead to the essentialism of women during first- and second-wave feminism, Salomé and Woolf allow women to take up multiple positions as the Other in the liminal space located at the boundary of the semiotic and symbolic orders. Consequently, Salomé’s and Woolf’s feminist theories permit women to
become speaking subjects through expressing their own desires. As discussed previously in Chapters Four and Five, both Salomé and Woolf challenged the legitimacy of metanarratives (“grand narratives”) in order to destabilize the patriarchy. Thus, it is through art and relationships (interpersonal or with the world) that Salomé and Woolf realized liberation for women.

Jean-François Lyotard, in his 1979 book The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, asserts that postmodern culture brought an end to “grand narratives” or “metanarratives,” which were typical to the Enlightenment era and modernity. In one important passage, Lyotard states:

I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it. To the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it. The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements—narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on [...] Where, after the metanarratives, can legitimacy reside? (1979, xxiv-xxv)

As reflected in the passage above, postmodernism rejected the notion of universal “truth” and questioned the confines of human reason. Narrative patterns, such as texts associated with Western Enlightenment philosophy, Marxism, epic literature (with masculine heroes) and religious doctrine were no longer considered powerful sources of authority. Consequently, the postmodern period challenged the foundation of historical knowledge and the binary oppositions upon which reality was based in Western society. Simultaneously, philosophies such as Ludwig Wittgenstein’s language games
emphasized the subjective nature of language with its constantly shifting signifiers and contextual meanings.

Salomé and Woolf, as foremothers of postmodern feminist thought, proposed that men and women both develop along different psycholinguistic lines and that women are likewise nuanced. With a dually directed, instead of a fixed libido, Salomé and Woolf conceived human development as a dynamic process opposed to Freud’s static and patrilineal process where women advanced along masculine lines and were primarily defined by the “lack” of phallic power—i.e., the Other and inferior sex. By proposing a feminism defined by difference, Salomé and Woolf rejected the contemporary mainstream feminist movement’s notion of the “universal woman,” which essentialized both men and women. Instead, Salomé and Woolf (like Kristeva) considered woman as a subject-in-process existing at the border of the semiotic and symbolic orders. By positioning women’s identity within the volatility of language, with its constantly shifting signifiers, Salomé and Woolf allowed women the freedom to evolve and to develop multiple representations. In this context, women no longer served as mirrors to reflect men, or the symbolic order, which only reified the patriarchy. By placing women’s development in the “space between” (what Kristeva termed the chora), women as well as male/female artists, who actively work within this same liminal space, are able to affirmatively sublimate creative impulses (like Narcissus) that embrace the chaotic energy of the maternal body and the pleasurable rupture of sense and nonsense (Zakin 2011).

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In her article “The ‘‘Difference’’ of Postmodernism,” Teresa Ebert explains how the woman’s paradoxical position as the Other and her identity are reconciled by the “gynesis” of postmodernism:

The inscription of (ludic) postmodern difference is what Jardine calls ‘gynesis—the putting into discourse of woman’ as that space of the other, of the excluded. But the woman inscribed by poststructuralism, according to Jardine, is ‘neither a person nor a thing, but a horizon . . . a reading effect, a woman-in-effect that is never stable . . .’. She is the unrepresentable excess, the trope, for all that is excluded, unknowable, and other in phallogocentric discourse. (1991, 894)

Instead of remaining invisible (i.e., unrepresented in language) as the Other within the logocentric, masculine space of the symbolic order, women can figuratively “write themselves” into existence at the border of the semiotic and symbolic orders. It is through gynocentric rewriting, like Salomé’s revision of Freud’s theory of narcissism, that women can obtain their own identity. By drawing upon relevant examples from Salomé’s and Woolf’s fiction and nonfiction, the following paragraphs demonstrate how these two thinkers and writers, aligned with postmodern thought, through their development of feminist theories that illustrate how art and writing are able to transcend culturally constructed sexual identities and gender binaries.

Perhaps it was Salomé’s own cultural in-betweenness and her identification with Russian “otherness” that allowed her to conceive an open-ended gender model, such as the one outlined in her 1899 essay “Human Being as Woman.” In this essay, as previously discussed, Salomé developed an image of woman as less differentiated than man without assigning value judgements that essentialized women. Brinker-Gabler, in her book Image in Outline: Reading Lou Andreas-Salomé, explains how Salomé utilized emblematic discourse to elucidate how males and females, like two separate worlds, undergo two modes of ontological becoming (2014, 32). As Brinker-Gabler states:
She [Salomé] graphically presents, in ‘as-if’ mode, two distinctive elements: female and male. (The German language makes no distinction between the English ‘feminine’ and ‘female.’) As the male element, like a tangent, splits off in pursuit of individualization and self-assertion, the female element, circle-like, appears to be more connected with an elusive all-unity or Ur- and Grundboden (primal ground). (2014, 32-33)

Salomé further suggested that there was a “two-ness” within each human being (i.e., masculine and feminine) resulting from the active participation of both the mother and father in procreation (refer to Chapter Three). Since both sexes are beyond one-ness, Salomé suggests that both sexes, and not just the woman, exhibit lack. However, it is the woman, in the less differentiated state, that continues in a perpetual state of becoming since she exists outside of the symbolic order. Therefore, according to Salomé, while men depend on women to shape their identities, women remain closer to primal unity—i.e., narcissism associated with the maternal or semiotic (Brinker-Gabler 2014, 40-41).

By re-envisioning Freud’s Oedipal complex within a non-hierarchical framework, Salomé incorporated the mother into the development process, which allows (unlike Freud) for daughters to continue to develop and evolve. Biddy Martin cites an excerpt from Salomé’s 1914 essay entitled “Woman as Type,” which highlights her theory of the daughter’s difference from that of the son in the development process:

> [Woman is able] to experience what is most vital as most sublimated. This mentalizing, idealizing, draws its spontaneity from the fact that, in the transferences of love, their point of departure remains more palpably present for the feminine-unitary nature throughout life. . . . The individual [beloved] person in all his factuality becomes for her so to say transparent in all directions, a

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2 In her book Polylogue (1977), Julia Kristeva analyzes various signifying practices such as language, discourse, literature and painting, and examines the approaches taken to them in some disciplines that have charted the course of symbolicity (linguistics, semiotics, epistemology, and psychoanalysis). In her chapter entitled "The Subject in Process", Kristeva revisits Lacanian psychoanalytic theory in order to relate the evolution of the subject to the evolution of language.
diaphane with human contour through which the fullness of the whole gleams, unbroken and unforgotten. (qtd. in Martin 1991, 221)

In Salomé’s alternate account of the Oedipal complex, men are required to suppress more of their primary narcissism in order to ultimately identify with the father, which forces them to separate mind and body, intellect and Eros, rational and irrational, ethics and love. Women, on the other hand, remain closer to the All (the maternal/semiotic), thus more able to embrace paradox (Martin 1991, 220-221). For Salomé, the mother represented ultimate unity that combined the feminine capacity to give and the masculine capacity to create, protect and lead (Martin 1991, 221).

In *The Erotic*, published in 1910, Salomé destabilized traditional metaphysics and reversed the priority of identity and difference by illustrating how a dually directed libido allows for dualities, such as male/female and masculine/feminine to co-exist. Through an innovative insight in *The Erotic*, Salomé indicates that it is through sexual relations between men and women (as opposites) that self-knowledge is gained instead of the hypothetical consummation of two halves that would lead to the dissolution of both individuals (2012, 94). In *The Freud Journal*, Salomé thinks of the opposite sexes as basic constituents of all life with sexual intercourse between a man and woman having the capacity to stimulate the recollection of innate bisexuality in both the man and woman (*FJ* 1964, 60).

Moreover, Salomé viewed the mother-child dyad as the ultimate representation of love and totality with the one (i.e., child) contained within the m(o)ther (*Erotic* 2012, 84-85). In this same vein, Salomé posited that artists (as later expanded in her 1921 theory on narcissism) also represent the unity of dualities within. As she states in *The Erotic*:

The further we descend into the deep layers of our being, the more fertile connection of duality in the form of unity, of unity in the form of duality, is
revealed; more than anywhere, therefore, in the creative activities of the mind—as if they needed to excavate, to draw from the most remote generations, that which is required to impregnate them, to order them according to such a duality, so that they may bring an autonomous life into the world. Which is why we so readily observe the relative frequency of bisexuality in artists, as, more generally, in any manifestation of genius: a state of permanent engendering, which has become, so to speak, fixed. (2012, 92)

By investing the maternal, or creative semiotic space, with the power to both procreate and create art, Salomé shows how the feminine is a positive force, instead of a deadly threat, to civilization. Salomé believed that women, as less repressed and more narcissistic, were closer to the unity of life. During an evening discussion with Tausk regarding the decline of Western culture due to its emphasis on intellect that suppressed intuition, Salomé recorded her thoughts on the value of female psychic space and narcissism as follows:

Woman—the fortunate animal: really just as prone to regressive narcissism as the neurotic, not really undifferentiated like animals, but a regressive without a neurosis. For a neurotic, the wish to become a woman would really mean the wish to become healthy. And it is always a wish to be happy. Only in womankind is sexuality no surrender of the ego boundary, no schism; it abides as the homeland of personality, which can still include all the sublimations of spirit without losing itself. (FJ 1964, 118)

As evidenced in this passage and her positive concept of narcissism, Salomé’s feminist theory was predicated on the idea that there can be multiple representations of men and women as they relate to one another. It is through a system of gendered exchange, and not polarization, that men and women gain greater self-awareness.

As discussed in Chapter Four, Salomé’s female protagonists, such as those portrayed in *The Human Family* and *Fenitschka*, reflect her feminist theory, which incorporates an open-ended approach to gender and sexual identity. Just like the negative (or unrepresented) Narcissus, defined through his own images and forms (refer to Chapter Three), Salomé allows for women to become speaking subjects by adopting
positions that exist both inside and outside the symbolic order (i.e., the chora). As Brinker-Gabler concludes:

As early as her Russian journal, her [Salomé’s] work focuses on a break with the narrow, rational self-understanding of the materiality of memory and cognition in favor of a continuous expansion of the self towards a ‘contradictory identity’ i.e. a space that has […] room yet for all oppositions, for contradictions, for jest, frolic, play and ease, and for many dangerous things.’ (2014, 146)

Salomé’s characters, especially her female protagonists, were diverse and continuously in motion, which reflects their constant becoming and resistance to static development. As detailed in Chapter Four, Salomé’s fictional settings, from the choice of wallpaper used in hotel rooms to the geographical location of characters (like Fenitschka in Paris), illustrate culturally contrived norms that are embedded in patriarchal cultures which prevent women’s progress. Through the intimate relationships of male and female characters in her novellas, such as those in The Human Family and Fenistchka, Salomé illustrates how men and women have the agency to choose (i.e., gender is performative) how they participate in or respond to cultural stereotypes or the male gaze.

Salomé also demonstrates her own resistance to the patriarchy in her subversion of narrative form. With aporetic endings to several of her narratives, like the ambiguous fate of Hildegard at the close of the story “Paradise” in The Human Family (refer to Chapter Four), Salomé suggests that life does not always progress in a linear fashion. There is ambivalence along with the possibility of setbacks and losses. Moreover, Salomé’s characters, as pointed out by Muriel Cormican, consistently negotiate their identity as her narratives move in a zigzag fashion between the characters’ internal and external worlds. As Cormican adds:

If there is a constant in Andreas-Salomé’s depiction of women, then this constant is, paradoxically, that there is no constant. Whereas her representation of women’s identity negotiations frequently involves what might be seen as uniform
conflict between an ingrained desire to submit and an instinctive drive toward self-sufficiency and self-fulfillment, the process of results of negotiation are anything but uniform. (2009, 5)

The individual lives of Salomé’s female protagonists are multi-dimensional and have the capacity to evolve, or regress, throughout their lives (i.e., ascent and descent). As mentioned in Chapter Four, Salomé’s female characters are often conflicted in choosing between the traditional roles of women in society or becoming a “new woman” modeled after the mainstream feminist movement’s ideal of a liberated woman. Salomé did not agree with the mainstream feminist movement precisely because she thought there was no room for movement or individual choice. Salomé did not believe that feminism should force women to reject motherhood or to conform to an image that was not her own. For Salomé, women could only be free when they created a life according to their own image, or from their own imagination. Identity is gained in the act of creation (e.g., production of art) itself.

Virginia Woolf, like Salomé, opposed the ressentiment that she saw as defining the mainstream feminist movement. In her major publications of feminist theory, *A Room of One’s Own* and *Three Guineas*, Woolf focused on inclusion of the feminine through women’s writing and within dialogical communities that resisted binary thinking. In *Three Guineas*, Woolf also drew parallels between the patriarchal oppression of women, or the Other, in Britain and the fascist ideology that was on the rise in Western Europe at the time she was writing the book. As the narrator states in *Three Guineas*:

> A common interest unites us; it is one world, one life. How essential it is that we should realise that unity the dead bodies, the ruined houses prove. For such will be our ruin if you in the immensity of your public abstractions forget the private figure, or if we in the intensity of our private emotions forget the public world. Both houses will be ruined, the public and private, the material and the spiritual, for they are inseparably connected. (1938, 142-143)
Like the Bloomsbury group of which she was a prominent member, Woolf’s feminism was a fight for “civilization” (Froula 2005, 26). Contrary to Freud’s premise in *Civilization and its Discontents* (refer to Chapter Three), Woolf believed that modern Western civilization could be vastly enhanced with the increase of female psychic space. Woolf believed this could be achieved when women harnessed the creative energy of the maternal (i.e., semiotic imaginary) and wrote fiction or when they carved out a place of their own, and not one defined by men, within the public or private domains. As Christine Froula states in her book *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avante-garde*:

> As *Room* urges a woman to write in ‘freedom’ instead of ‘resenting the treatment of her sex and pleading for its rights,’ *Three Guineas*’ heuristic bonfire illumines ‘men and women working together for the same cause’: to fight for Europe’s democratic principles and institutions against totalitarian threats within and without; and to advance Europe beyond ‘half-civilized barbarism’ toward universal economic, cultural and social rights, democratic institutions and peace. (2005, 28)

Woolf’s experimental forms of writing, such as those employed in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Orlando*, demonstrate how the patriarchy can be destabilized through women’s writing, which is also a leitmotif in *A Room*. While some literary critics, like Elaine Showalter, accuse Woolf of being anti-feminist due to a perceived personal detachment from her own writing and her whimsical writing style in *A Room*, Toril Moi posits that Woolf’s changing perspectives and free play of signifiers in *A Room* illustrate her rejection of “. . . metaphysical essentialism underlying patriarchal ideology, which hails God, the Father or the phallus as its transcendental signified” (1985, 9). Most importantly, instead of blaming the male sex for female oppression, Woolf protests patriarchy within language itself—both male and female—through written text and discourse.

In *Matricide in Language: Writing Theory in Kristeva and Woolf*, Miglena Nikolchina posits that Woolf is an abjected author who rehabilitates the maternal in her
writing, which produces a speaking subject—“horrified, persecuted, mournful and therefore creative” (2004, 5). Miglena Nikolchina further describes the position from which Woolf writes as follows:

As abject, Think, semiotic, chora, the maternal void shakes and pulverizes meanings it shatters and produces them. Yet it also opens a bifurcating path for the gendered speaking being and presents and lures of specific hazards for the feminine positioning in language. (2004, 5)

By reclaiming this space of primary narcissism, which is the feminine Other (i.e., the “Society of Outsiders” in Three Guineas), Woolf stages a revolt against the patriarchy’s suppression of the female aesthetic. Related to A Room, Woolf seeks liberation for women through writing a “female body” of literature. As the narrator peruses the shelves of the British library in A Room, the reader realizes the disparate representation of female authors compared to male authors. When the narrator does find women’s literature on the shelves, it tends to mimic the linear narrative forms associated with the masculine symbolic order (i.e., Law of the Father). Additionally, many of the publications by male authors depicted women as sexualized tropes or as generally inferior to male characters (ROO 1981, 28-29).

Woolf believed that women (or anyone in the imagined position of Other) held the power to transform society through art and writing, which transcended gender binaries. In addition to the increase of women’s writing in general, A Room underscores the importance of writing from a position of difference. Woolf stressed the importance of avoiding sex-conscious writing when she stated that all good writing is androgynous (ROO 1981, 98). Woolf’s use of the term androgyny, as explained in Chapter Five, was more figurative and closer to the concept of the bisexual artist. Some critics also contend that Woolf’s use of androgyny was a mask for her expression of same-sex desire in A
Women’s writing is described by the narrator in *A Room* as follows:

. . . I have said that a woman writing thinks back through her mother. Again if one is a woman one is often surprised by a sudden splitting of the consciousness, say in walking down Whitehall, when from being the natural inheritor of that civilisation, she becomes, on the contrary, outside of it, alien and critical. Clearly the mind is always altering its focus, and bringing the world into different perspectives. But some of these states of mind seem, even if adopted spontaneously, to be less comfortable than others. In order to keep oneself continuing in them one is unconsciously holding something back, and gradually the repression becomes an effort. But there may be some state of mind in which one could continue without effort because nothing is required to be held back. (1981, 97)

In this passage, Woolf (like Salomé and Kristeva) indicates that the feminine cannot be suppressed in the creative process. Like Salomé, Woolf also stresses the importance of the mother in the aesthetic process. Woolf follows the above passage in *A Room* with an image of a man and woman getting into a taxi cab together, which represents a concept similar to Salomé’s “two-ness within” each human being, or the bisexual artist that resides in the pre-oedipal semiotic space where art is originated.

Woolf’s own writing (as discussed in Chapter Five) is characterized by disruptive elements that upset the social order. “When a woman comes to write […],” says Woolf, “she will find that she is perpetually wishing to alter the established values—to make serious what appears insignificant to a man, and trivial what is to him important” (“Women and Fiction,” 1958, 81). In *Mrs. Dalloway*, for instance, Woolf shows how a middle-class housewife hosts a party (considered trivial by her husband) that is critical to creating a sense of community through the increase of female psychic space in a fragmented post-war society. For Woolf, the purpose of women’s writing was to convey the reality of their lived experiences and desires. For example, in *A Room*, Woolf says of Mary Carmichael’s fiction: “She mastered the first great lesson; she wrote as a woman,
but as a woman who has forgotten that she is a woman, so that her pages were full of that curious sexual quality which comes only when sex is unconscious of itself” (1981, 93). Related to postmodern feminist theory, Woolf’s call for a revolution in women’s writing is similar to Hélène Cixous’ concept of Écriture feminine, or feminine writing. In the words of Cixous in her essay entitled “The Laugh of the Medusa”:

A feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive. It is volcanic; as it is written it brings about an upheaval of the old property crust, carrier of masculine investments; there's no other way. There's no room for her if she's not a he. If she's a her-she, it's in order to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the "truth" with laughter. (1976, 888)

Woolf, like Cixous’s theory some sixty years later, realized that revolutionary writing was produced within a liminal space both inside and outside the symbolic order, or patriarchy. Woolf further believed that the ultimate purpose of literature, as a reflection of life, was to raise the social consciousness of humankind. But this could only be accomplished if authors produced literature that projected the Real of life to its readers. That meant that the feminine must be represented alongside the masculine. Woolf’s feminist theory also allowed for same-sex desire, which further defied the social norms of her day.

As discussed in Chapter Five, Woolf conceived of sex and gender identities as constructed within language, which is amorphous and fluid. Consequently, gender and sex are performative and constantly changing with the potential for multiple ways of being in the world. For instance, in Woolf’s novel Orlando, she illustrates how a sex change in the main character does not alter the fundamental state of the character’s being; however, Orlando (as a woman closer to the maternal semiotic state) is finally able to revise and publish her poem “The Oak Tree” at the end of the novel. A Room concludes
with Woolf’s concept of intersubjective consciousness invoked through writing (from the position of the Other) without the consciousness of one’s sex:

. . . if we have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think; if we escape a little from the common sitting room and see human beings not always in their relation to each other but in relation to reality; and the sky, too, and the trees or whatever it may be in themselves; if we look past Milton’s bogey, for no human being should shut out the view; if we face the fact, for it is a fact, that there is no arm to cling to, but that we go alone and that our relation is to the world of reality and not only to the world of men and women, then the opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare’s sister will put on the body which she has so often laid down. (1981, 114)

In addition to having the courage to write authentically, however, Woolf realized that women required the material means and intellectual freedom to be creative – a “room of one’s own and five-hundred pounds a year” (ROO 1981, 4). Three Guineas, with its more polemic tone, addresses the types of cultural changes required for the feminine to flourish alongside the masculine in modern civilization.

In Three Guineas, Woolf suggests that social justice, as it relates to feminism, can only occur from the “outside-in,” meaning that women should work to legitimize their own space (as the Other) and not compete for masculine space, which would only reify the patriarchy. Woolf contends that women should resist being defined by men; instead, they should advocate for the following: 1) access to quality public education that includes subjects of interest to women (e.g., liberal arts); 2) equal pay for women’s work, including compensation by the State for unrecognized domestic work; and development of professions that valued the feminine and not just the masculine in the public sphere. As Woolf declares in Three Guineas:

It follows that an outsider must make it her business to press for a living wage in all the professions now open to her sex; further that she must create new professions in which she can earn the right to an independent opinion. Therefore she must bind herself to press for a money wage for the unpaid worker in her own class – the daughters and sisters of educated men who, as biographies have shown
us, are now paid on the truck system, with food, lodging and pittance of forty pounds a year. But above all she must press for a wage to be paid by the State legally to the mothers of educated men. The importance of this to our common fight is immeasurable; for it is the most effective way in which we can ensure that the large and very honourable class of married women shall have a mind and a will of their own, with which, if his mind and will are good in her eyes, to support her husband, if bad to resist him, in any case to cease to be ‘his’ woman and to be her self. (1938, 110)

Woolf acknowledges that such cultural changes can only occur if men and women work together to reinterpret, or deconstruct, the language that confined men and women to the socially ascribed norms that drive their behaviors. Further, women (or those marginalized as the Other) must actively resist being defined by the patriarchy. As Victoria Middleton conveys in her article “Three Guineas: Subversion and Survival in the Professions”:

In *Three Guineas* Woolf writes from the border between the dominant, patriarchal ideology and the zone of women’s ‘muted’ experience. In publicly declaring her status ‘outside’ the dominant tradition, Woolf is drawing attention to the existence of another overlapping tradition. *Three Guineas* gives us a model of the revisionary process, demonstrating how written texts and signs have different meanings for different readers, women and men, who listen and speak differently—but together. The ellipses will be filled in, the censored words uttered. This does not mean that desire can be permanently fulfilled and otherness overcome. But men and women scholars, readers and writers need not be adversaries. (1982, 415)

Just as writing involves the collaboration of male and female minds (or semiotic and symbolic orders), Woolf indicates that a patriarchal culture can only be effectively transformed through a dialogical community that respects the foreigner, or the Other. When Woolf answers the question of how to prevent war at the conclusion of *Three Guineas*, she proposes the value of inclusive communities. In a statement that sounds similar to a declaration of human rights, the narrator states:

. . . we [women] can best help you to prevent war not by repeating your words and following your methods but by finding new words and creating new methods. We can best help you prevent war not by joining your society but by remaining
outside your society but in cooperation with its aim. That aim is the same for us both. It is to assert ‘the rights of all – all men and women – to the respect in their persons of the great principles of Justice and Equality and Liberty.’ (1938, 143-144)

According to Woolf, women (i.e., the “Society of Outsiders”) have never known the power resulting from ownership of property or control of another. As the narrator conveys: “As a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world” (1938, 109). This statement challenges the boundaries that feed imperialistic and xenophobic ideologies as well as the patriarchy. By increasing the female psychic space, through women’s literature or dialogue between men and women, Woolf believed that society as a whole could become less violent and more harmonious.

As discussed in Chapter One, both Salomé and Woolf were decades ahead of their historic realities in conceiving of feminist theories where art and human relations (i.e., dialogical communities and interpersonal relationships) could help remediate some of the issues underlying the mainstream feminist movements with their universalizing tendencies that excluded lower-class women and women of color and that further increased enmity between the sexes. Two of the primary challenges with postmodern feminist theory are its disconnect between theory and praxis and its tendency toward dilution of meaning through theories founded on the destabilization of language. Subverting the symbolic order or patriarchal language through women’s writing, as suggested in Chapter One, challenges the patriarchy, but it does not necessarily eliminate its domination of the Other. The Conclusion that follows provides some practical ideas for present-day applications of Salomé ’s and Woolf’s feminist theories.
CONCLUSION

A PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE FUTURE OF FEMINISM

Patriarchy is a binary psychological construct that continues to place greater value on masculine traits (e.g., power, control, rationality, and extreme competitiveness) while suppressing qualities associated with femininity (e.g., compassion, emotional expression and nurturing). As a result, most countries within the Western world continue to emphasize the importance of masculine traits (“strong men”) in their leaders and among their citizenry as they vie for power on the global stage. Transformation will only come about in a society that allows for men, women and transgendered persons to become fully integrated human beings within society, which will only occur when the feminine is allowed to flourish alongside the masculine in Western civilization.

So how can this be practically achieved? For Salomé, the answer was in writing, as a bisexual process, and through establishing intimate interpersonal relations. For Woolf, the hope for a less fragmented and more open civilization was accomplished through art, such as writing, that increased social consciousness along with the creation of dialogical communities where women, or everyone in the position of the Other, participate in conversations that shape social values. After all, one of the mainstream feminist movement’s greatest failings was the exclusion of the Other within its own movement that struggled for equality and liberation—the lower-class, black and brown women, homosexuals, transgendered persons, etc.

I believe that the conclusions reached by Salomé and Woolf are still valid in today’s complex global community where individuals are highly isolated and communicate through filters—text messaging, social media, emails, etc. In my opinion, it
is even more critical that feminism take the lead in elevating the level of human consciousness while working toward increased acceptance of the foreigner, including the foreigner within (using Kristeva’s terms). Like most movements for social justice, implementation starts at the individual- or micro-level, in this case the family unit or the home. In this respect, lasting social change can only take place through a “bottom-up” instead of a “top-down” approach where cultural modifications are incremental over an extended period of time.

Kelly Oliver’s book entitled *The Colonization of Psychic Space, A Psychoanalytic Social Theory of Oppression* draws upon the works of Kristeva to discuss how psychic space is weaponized by oppressors, especially as it relates to the patriarchy’s repression of female psychic space in Western civilization. Kristeva posits that modern culture is suffering from a lack of sublimation, or the ability to idealize, which has resulted in a “sickness of imagination” (Oliver 2004, 133). Specifically, the balance between narcissism and idealization has been thrown off by the culture of the spectacle leaving us cut off from our affects and unable to love ourselves or others (Oliver 2004, 133). Oliver explains Kristeva’s position that women, or anyone in the position of the Other, must revolt against the repression of female psychic space in order to become the creators of social codes and thus of their own meaning in life. This requires that women develop strong social bonds, including identification of role models which can inspire them to become “women of genius” (Oliver 2004, 159). Female genius also includes ordinary events that manifest as extraordinary. As an example, women’s relationships to the materiality of everyday life (e.g., giving birth) can be viewed as extraordinarily meaningful within supportive communities where the role of the mother is valued.
Kristeva also provides examples of female genius in the writing of biographies (of women’s experiences) and poetry (Oliver 2004, 160), which relates back to Salome’s and Woolf’s suggestions for increasing female psychic space in civilization.

Along these same lines, Nevitt Sanford’s book entitled *Self & Society: Social Change and Individual Development* is a research-backed study that offers practical solutions for shaping psychologically healthier communities. Relevant to this paper, Sanford examines the adverse impact that inhibiting creativity in children, especially in young men, has on societies. In a chapter entitled “Creativity and Conformity,” Sanford discusses how parents, school systems and workplaces in Western civilization reinforce suppression of the feminine, especially in men. Women also feel anxious about expressing feminine traits that make them vulnerable, or less successful, within social institutions that are dominated by the patriarchy. “This kind of all-out masculinity is anti-intellectual, anti-artistic, antiregressive, because activity in any of these spheres might be perceived as a giveaway of the repressed activity,” says Sanford. “It is not difficult to see how a person who is caught up in a conflict of the kind we are talking about will be characterized by narrowness of consciousness, rigidity of thought and action, and a tendency to reduce everything to a few simple categories—such as weak versus strong” (Sanford 2017, 226). After discussing the problem and subsequent risks of inhibiting imagination (associated with the feminine) in society, Sanford offers some practical solutions for altering the social consciousness in order to increase the female psychic space.

In short, Sanford suggests that creative potential must be nurtured in every child from an early age (i.e., parents that encourage emotional and artistic expression in boys
and girls) so that workplaces can then offer creative work for employees who have developed with a creative disposition. According to several scientific and psychological studies presented by Sanford, creative people routinely exhibit the most highly developed human characteristics and demonstrate more emotional intelligence and intellectual curiosity as a whole. By fostering creativity, therefore, societies benefit from increased innovation that is otherwise prohibited when men and women have repressed femininity by conforming to the androcentric norms of capitalist, patriarchal society. Further, since creative people are ordinarily more collaborative and focused on inclusion, according to Sanford, communities would likely experience less violent crimes like rape and sexual assault if humans lived within more creative (i.e., less repressed) environments.

I conclude this chapter with some practical steps provided by Drew Serres from the group Organizing Change. The actions and associated steps that follow, which were part of Serres’ post entitled “Why Patriarchy Persists (and How We Can Change It),” are adapted in part from the theories of postmodern feminist bell hooks. Further, I have integrated my own thoughts with Serres’ ideas, which are consolidated and condensed in the table that follows.

Table 2. Actions to Eliminate the Patriarchy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Details Related to each Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action 1</strong></td>
<td>▪ Create a culture that holds young men accountable for their language and actions; this includes a loving, supportive environment where expression of emotions are encouraged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate Young Men</td>
<td>▪ Teach boys and men how to authentically communicate their emotions and listen empathetically to others instead of concealing (or repressing) their feelings.</td>
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<td><strong>Action 2</strong></td>
<td>▪ Train men to be proactive in addressing patriarchy by encouraging men to challenge other men on their patriarchal ideas and behaviors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men Hold Other Men Accountable</td>
<td>▪ If men standby and let other men perpetuate patriarchal behaviors, then the cycle of oppression will only continue.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Action 3</strong></td>
<td>▪ Support a spectrum of ideas for what a “real man” looks like, such as compassionate, respectful and responsible.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create Revised</td>
<td>▪ Stop holding up “macho” or the “tough, silent type” as the gold standard for maleness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>Details Related to each Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Image of Manliness</td>
<td>Proliferate this revised image of manliness through mass media in order to alter the social consciousness.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action 4 Involve Everyone</td>
<td>Reframe patriarchy as an issue for everyone.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>As bell hooks quotes, “patriarchy has no gender”; thus, it’s going to take everyone, and not just women, to combat it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action 5 Create New Vision of Nuclear Family</td>
<td>End the concept that the traditional nuclear family (man, woman and child or children – heteronormative standard) is the ideal.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Accept and encourage loving, compassionate families of any style and form.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action 6 Define Sexual Consent</td>
<td>Advocate for a definition of consent based on yes rather than no.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jaclyn Friedman and Jessica Valenti’s anthology <em>Yes Means Yes: Visions of Female Sexual Power and A World Without Rape</em> reframes sexual consent to be affirmed with “yes means yes!” so that it is given freely and enthusiastically, rather than through assumptions based on silence or passivity.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men need to feel empowered to say no as well.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Men and women need to be able to effectively talk to their partners about sex and actively listen to their partners’ responses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action 7 Comprehensive Sex Education</td>
<td>Implement comprehensive sex education in all schools.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cara Kulwicki, in her essay in <em>Yes Means Yes</em>, suggests that we must teach that sex is more than heterosexual intercourse and that it should be consensual and pleasurable for all participants.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>If more men have knowledge of how to talk about consent, contraception, and sex in general, and understand what rape actually is, then there is increased potential for healthy relationships.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action 8 Collective Accountability Systems</td>
<td>Create collective accountability systems for handling sexual violence.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The current criminal justice system exacerbates injustices based on race, sexual orientation, and ability. Thus, we need an alternate system that provides survivors the choice of whether to pursue the current legal system or a framework based on community accountability.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cristina Meztli Tzintzun, in her essay in <em>Yes Means Yes</em>, suggests that we need collective accountability based on love, support, forgiveness, transformation, and consequence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action 9 Political Action</td>
<td>Many conservative politicians try to say their policies are not a war on women, but the record levels of legislation limiting women’s rights and the impact proves otherwise.</td>
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<td>Keep up the pressure against regressive policies and highlight the implications of this conservative war that attempts to prevent women from owning their own bodies and prohibits them from controlling their own lives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action 10 Hold Media Accountable</td>
<td>Hold the media accountable, including the movie industry and social media.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Work toward preventing media’s focus on the dominant culture and their reification of tropes like victim blaming in cases of sexual violence cases.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Produce media that is more inclusive of the Other and reflects the diverse relationships and backgrounds of its audience.</td>
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Patriarchy is often distorted and reduced to an idea of men’s oppression of women, or the Other. However, both men and women are inhibited, and even damaged, by the patriarchy. At the most practical level, patriarchy is the suppression of femininity in favor of more masculine traits, which have been reified (and performed) by men and women in Western civilization for generations. Thus, most men are conditioned to unconsciously participate in patriarchy. Since patriarchy began with male privilege, it is an anthropomorphized (mostly white, middle class male) concept that women inadvertently reified during the first and second waves of mainstream feminism. Patriarchy is unlikely to be defeated through direct attacks since it is a systemic problem that must be addressed through lasting cultural transformation. As Woolf realized and espoused in *Three Guineas*, the end of patriarchy will result in a better society—one with increased unity and creativity and with less violence, isolation and fragmentation.

These ideas for putting Salomé’s and Woolf’s feminist theories into practice are in no way exhaustive. As we move into the fourth wave of feminism, which has mostly occurred in cyberspace (e.g., #MeToo movement on Twitter), there are several questions that merit further inquiry. The following are just a few examples of questions that were not able to be addressed within this paper, but that I believe are worthy of further consideration: 1) What effect does cyberspace—with platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, etc.—have on feminist discourse with the real-time deconstruction of language within a somewhat ungendered space? 2) How will feminist movements like #MeToo include lower-class or third-world women who may lack computer skills or be entirely disconnected from the online global community? 3) How will the prevention of
sexual harassment transition from a type of online reporting system (#MeToo) to a serious conversation about sexual harassment along with tools implemented in the workplace and other institutions that identify and eliminate the patriarchal roots of sexual objectification and deviance?

4) How will parents and teachers learn to raise and mentor boys and girls who are healthy, full-integrated human beings able to appropriately express a full range of emotions (less repressed and more fully developed human beings)?

5) How will preventing sexual harassment in the workplace be addressed without increasing men’s fear of working with or mentoring women?

6) How can feminism be rebranded as a humanism so that it includes everybody, thus becoming more effective and less stigmatizing to men who participate in the patriarchy?

and 7) How can mass media (television, podcasts, social media, etc.), with its global presence, become a catalyst for positive change and work toward the elimination of the patriarchy in the Western world?
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