

The background of the top half of the cover is a vibrant orange. It is adorned with intricate black and white decorative elements. These include large, stylized thistles, delicate swirling vines, and clusters of small, dark berries. A prominent, large black vine with sharp, thorn-like points curves across the middle of the orange section. The overall aesthetic is reminiscent of traditional Scottish textile patterns, such as tartan, but rendered in a modern, graphic style.

**Monica Germanà**

# **Scottish Women's Gothic and Fantastic Writing**

Fiction since 1978

SCOTTISH WOMEN'S GOTHIC AND  
FANTASTIC WRITING  
FICTION SINCE 1978

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Monica Germanà



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## ABBREVIATIONS

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The following abbreviations will be used in the main text and endnotes after first references:

CK	Sian Hayton, <i>Cells of Knowledge</i>
HD	Sian Hayton, <i>Hidden Daughters</i>
TLF	Sian Hayton, <i>The Last Flight</i>
SE	Sigmund Freud, <i>Standard Edition</i>

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# Chapter I

## MEET THE OTHERS: AN INTRODUCTION TO NATION, GENDER AND GENRE

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For most of our history, [. . .] our narrative tastes have been for the epic adventure, the romantic quest, the fantastic voyage, the magical mystery.<sup>1</sup>

*Veronica Hollinger*

We live in Gothic times.<sup>2</sup>

*Angela Carter*

### FOREWORD

The last two decades of the twentieth century were significantly regarded as a regenerative phase for literature produced in Scotland: the 'New Scottish Renaissance' was marked by the establishment of key authors such as Alasdair Gray, Edwin Morgan and James Kelman, and the rise of a literary avant-garde including Iain Banks, Irvine Welsh and Alan Warner. The last twenty years of the century also witnessed the development of Scottish studies as a new academic field pioneered by the critical works of Cairns Craig, Ian Duncan, Douglas Gifford and Murray Pittock, accompanied by an increased interest in Scottish women's writing explored thoroughly for the first time by Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan's *A History of Scottish Women's Writing* (1997); parallel to the scholarly effort to unveil an existing women's literary tradition, Scotland witnessed the consolidation and establishment of literary figures such as Liz Lochhead, Kathleen Jamie, Janice Galloway and, more

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recently, the emergence of important writers such as Ali Smith, A. L. Kennedy, Louise Welsh and Denise Mina, whose voices have already achieved national and international recognition.

This climate of rejuvenation has been a fertile ground for the re-born fascination with the supernatural, identified as one of the prominent trends in the literary production of the late twentieth century: 'major changes took place throughout the 1980s', when the Scottish literary production showed, 'a new kind of imaginative relationship [...] which refused to accept a simple realism of generally bleak and economically deprived urban character'.<sup>3</sup> Although fantasy has virtually never been absent from the Scottish canon, the last twenty years of the twentieth century registered a manifest 'return' to a genre temporarily overshadowed by the Scottish realism of the 1960s and 1970s, launching a new phase marked by the publication of Gray's *Lanark* (1981).

In this context, this book proposes an earlier date for the 'fantastic revival', and begins its investigation in 1978, the publication date of Emma Tennant's *The Bad Sister*. As the first critical work to bring together contemporary women's writing and the Scottish fantasy tradition, this study pioneers an in-depth investigation of largely neglected texts – Ali Smith's *Hotel World* (2001), Alice Thompson's *Pandora's Box* (1998), Alison's Fell's *The Mistress of Lilliput* (1999) – as well as offering new readings of critically acclaimed texts such as Tennant's *Two Women of London: The Strange Case of Ms Jekyll and Mrs Hyde* (1989), A. L. Kennedy's *So I Am Glad* (1995), and Kate Atkinson's *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* (1995). Underlying the broad scope of this project are the links – both explicit and implicit – established between the examined texts and the Scottish fantasy canon. Firstly, evident bonds with the Scottish tradition emerge in those texts that engage in an overt dialogue with literary precedents, in the forms of rewriting, parody or extensive transtextuality, as exemplified by Tennant's rewritings of James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) in *The Bad Sister* and *Two Women of London*. Secondly, the representative strategies discussed in relation to the four thematic areas (quests and other worlds, witches, doubles and ghosts) in the following chapters point to a distinctively Scottish blend of supernatural and psychological elements: 'Scots fantasy is inward-looking', Colin Manlove reminds us, 'concerned to discover something within'.<sup>4</sup> The Scottish supernatural does not belong in a transcendent other world, but challenges the stable boundaries of seen and unseen, real and imagined, same and other; overarching the selected texts is the deployment of four supernatural motifs as manifestations of 'otherness', pointing to the uncanny coalescence of the unfamiliar within the familiar, as theorised by Sigmund Freud in his seminal essay on 'The Uncanny' (1919). The articulation of repressed secrets and desire emerges crucially in works

such as Smith's *The Accidental* (2005) and Atkinson's *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* (1995).

Having established a connection with a distinctively Scottish context, the selected texts simultaneously break from the past tradition and reveal points of departure through their engagement with feminist and postmodernist discourses. In relation to gender, many of the texts, including Fell's *The Bad Box* and Hayton's trilogy, articulate feminist preoccupations with the patriarchal social/symbolic order; the constraints of heteronormativity are satirically exposed in Ellen Galford's *The Fires of Bride* (1986) and *Queendom Come* (1990), while texts such as Thompson's *Pandora's Box* radically address gender definitions. The deconstructive approach extends to broader ontological categories, unveiling a postmodernist engagement with a critical interrogation of the real: the self-reflexive spectrality of texts such as Kennedy's *So I Am Glad* and Smith's *Hotel World* marries the conventional forms and genres of Gothic fantasy with eminently postmodernist narrative strategies and preoccupations.

The transposition of traditional *topoi* to accommodate the interrogation of categorical structures underpins the overarching argument of this study; the deployment of a range of narrative, thematic and stylistic structures derived from non-realist literary precedents propels the investigation into the contentious boundaries that separate the self, the seen and familiar from the other, the invisible and unknown.

### THE OTHER NATION

Dramatic political changes from the first referendum in 1979 to the achievement of devolution in 1997 accompanied the awakening of a 'second' cultural Renaissance in Scotland: 'the profusion and eclecticism of creative talent across all genres and all three of the nation's languages has led some to speak not simply of revival', Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson commented in 1993, 'but of a new – perhaps even more real – Scottish Renaissance'.<sup>5</sup> Scottish devolution emerged in the context of centrifugal tensions and insurgences of nationalism across Europe and the world: the Balkan wars, the fragmentation and fall of the former Soviet Union and the rise of nationalist parties throughout Europe still represent the most visible symptoms of this political trend. In 1979 Julia Kristeva commented on the twilight of the nineteenth-century concept of nation after the Second World War, suggesting that the idea of nation had evolved from a nineteenth-century 'dream and reality' shaped by 'economic homogeneity', 'historical tradition' and 'linguistic unity' to a post-war unstable entity based on a globalised economic system, shared histories and multilingualism.<sup>6</sup> Kristeva's emphasis on the loss of 'homogeneity' and coherence in the late twentieth-century notion of 'nation' suggested the deployment of different parameters of identity and belonging, based on otherness and

heterogeneity, issues which Homi K. Bhabha later supported in his deconstructive discussion of national cultures: 'the very concept of homogenous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions, "organic" ethnic communities [. . .] are in a profound process of redefinition'.<sup>7</sup> Bhabha openly criticised Benedict Anderson's theoretical reading of national identities based on mutual feelings of 'sameness' and 'belonging' to an 'imagined community', 'imagined because the members of even the smallest of nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'.<sup>8</sup> Against Anderson's view that behind the birth of national identity is 'the search [. . .] for a new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together',<sup>9</sup> Bhabha drew attention to the fluctuating, unstable and dynamic boundaries of late-twentieth century cultural consciousness: 'In the *fin de siècle*, we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion'.<sup>10</sup> The focal shift from the centre – the representative nucleus of a hegemonic culture – to the periphery – the marginal communities and oppressed minorities of a larger entity – is reflective of the wider deconstructive drives of post-structuralist thought and the fall of grand narratives of postmodernist cultures. The subversion of political hierarchies and de-centring of authority has had two important effects on nation discourse: firstly, the marginal 'other' – be it the colonised subject or the smaller nation under the hegemonic power of a larger one – became the centre of investigative work on (national) identity; secondly, the interrogation of nineteenth-century 'homogenous' foundations of identity has led to a deeper investigation of the heterogeneous components of identity, integrating 'other' parameters of identity such as hybridity, migrancy and creolisation.

Deconstructive approaches to nation and the renewed focus on cultural minorities became visible in several studies on nation and theories of national identity in Scotland in the last decade of the twentieth century. In 1935 Edwin Muir had, however, already expressed his deep concerns about the state of Scottish culture, divided at its core since the Union Treaty of 1707, a notion exemplified by the inner divisions of its national languages: 'Scotsmen feel in one language and think in another; [. . .] their emotions turn to the Scottish tongue [. . .]; and their minds to a standard English which for them is almost bare of associations other than those of the classroom'.<sup>11</sup> A schizoid reading of Scotland persisted throughout the twentieth century, with Scottish identity frequently theorised in terms of 'otherness' in relation to English hegemony: 'Englishness undoubtedly plays that role in relation to Scottishness', Jonathan Hearn wrote in 2000, 'a role arising out of a long and complex history of rivalry and interdependence'.<sup>12</sup> It has been argued, too, that such preoccupations about national identity in Scotland vanished after devolution: 'Since

the mid-1990s, there has been an increasing lack of need for us to talk about Scottish identity' Joy Hendry claimed, 'There is less and less the need to talk about it, because we can *be* it, and, more importantly, *do* it'.<sup>13</sup> Arguably, rather than relaxing anxieties about national identity, the advent of devolution and achievement of political autonomy in 1997 seemingly has shifted the emphasis from the binary Scottish/English opposition to the intrinsically heterogeneous and problematic diversity *within* Scottish culture, as remarked by Hearn: 'Scottish national identity hangs in a constellation of over-lapping and interpenetrating identities – British, Celtic, European, Western, working class, to name just a few'.<sup>14</sup>

Gender is one such factor of differentiation that threatens the foundations of national identity categories artificially and anachronistically constructed on essentialist notions of traditional 'authenticity'. In 1996 Aileen Christianson criticised Anderson's male-centred theories of nation and national identity, as she discussed the problematic position of women within such constructions of Scottish identity. Being both 'female' and 'Scottish', Christianson argued, Scottish women are inevitably relegated to the margins of a hegemonic English, male, heterosexual cultural discourse:

The question for us here is whether there are particular conjunctions and disjunctions for women in marginal societies between the marginality of our femaleness and of our nation. And whether these multi-dimensional perspectives of nation, region, gender, class and sexuality are in a perpetual state of flux, with oppositions and alliances in constantly shifting relationships within ourselves and with others.<sup>15</sup>

The question of gender shifts the emphasis on the effects that double marginalisation would have on the concept of nation: if women are to be accounted for within the centre of 'national' culture, their inclusion would simultaneously challenge the patriarchal foundations of Scottish identity. Christianson's suggestion of the need for the re-definition of Scottish national identity is crucial to the scope of this book: the works this study is concerned with point to complex issues of 'inclusion' and identity arising from the diverse geography of birth, upbringing and residence of their authors. Their partial 'belonging' to England via birth, upbringing or residence, raises more questions about nationality and marginality. Can a heterogeneous group of writers be easily described as Scottish? In what ways is 'Scottish' juxtaposed to 'English' in the context of devolution? The altering of conventional national boundaries may be a necessary step if English-born authors such as Atkinson, Elphinstone and Hayton or Scottish 'exiles' such as Fell, Smith, Spark and Tennant should be included in any discussion of Scottish writing. In 1997 Flora Alexander defined Fell and Tennant as 'Anglo-Scot' writers, suggesting that: 'Some contemporary Scottish women writers of fiction are living in England, and in several cases

they have also been educated in England so that their Scottishness may not be immediately apparent'.<sup>16</sup> When interviewed, Tennant and Fell both claimed their right to be uncompromisingly included within the Scottish literary context; while Tennant emphasised the relevance of her Scottish background to her work,<sup>17</sup> Fell's concern with nation-labels – including the hybrid 'Anglo-Scot' – reflected anxiety about categorical parameters of identity: 'The term Anglo-Scot is completely foreign [. . .]. The imagination knows no country'.<sup>18</sup> The authors' responses to questions of national identity highlight the intricate and contradictory aspects of the debate on national identity in and beyond Scotland: while outwardly retaining an ideological – if loosely based – opposition to a hegemonic English culture, inwardly, such understanding of Scottish otherness is further complicated by a growing awareness of the heterogeneity of Scottish culture. Moreover, the feelings of utopian nostalgia for a mythical, independent, self-enclosed Caledonia conceal the double-edged risks of inward parochialism and outward intolerance, as argued by Christopher Whyte:

The dangers of such a stance are that it is committed to the restoration, not only of Scotland as it was, but of relations between genders, classes, racial groups and differing sexual orientations that would be unacceptably oppressive in a modern context.<sup>19</sup>

As Whyte stipulated the necessity to discuss the two paradigms together in an analysis of contemporary Scottish culture, so have Aileen Christianson and Alison Lumsden drawn attention to the need to re-frame the paradigms of nation and gender jointly, arguing that 'there is a sense in which both denote a degree of "marginality", an exclusion from the dominant discourse of white male "Britishness"', as well as emphasising the heterogeneous culture of Scotland:<sup>20</sup> 'Now that a greater degree of autonomy has been achieved in Scotland and what many would regard as the common political goal attained, what begins to emerge is a sense, or a reminder, of Scotland's lack of homogeneity'.<sup>21</sup> If 'nation' is no longer represented by a central majority, but a growing entity spread across a number of diverse, marginal, centrifugal communities, is there such a thing as a distinctive national tradition? The deconstruction of centralised notions of 'nation', Bhabha argues, implicates the subversive redefinition of 'tradition':

The right to signify from the periphery of authorised power and privilege does not depend on the persistence of tradition; it is resourced by the power of tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are 'in the minority'.<sup>22</sup>

Within the Scottish context, Bhabha's paradigm of diversification of tradition supports a reading of tradition as the dialogue of opposing voices proposed by

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Craig: 'traditions are not the unitary voice of an organic whole but the dialectic engagement between opposing value systems which define each other precisely by their intertwined oppositions'.<sup>23</sup> Only through this organically dynamic interpretation of tradition can modern Scotland be theorised: if it is accepted that tradition is not a static corpus but an organic body, then the fluctuating borders of national identity will be open to the heterogeneous contributions of gender, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity.

The texts examined in the following chapters reflect a dynamic and variable engagement with Scottish and non-Scottish traditions and a critical position towards universal notions of belonging, roots, homeland and, more specifically, Scotland. Elphinstone's early novels, for instance, overtly establish thematic links with Scottish ballads, while *Islanders* and *The Sea Road* derive from the author's experiences in Shetland,<sup>24</sup> the crossing point of Scandinavian and Celtic worlds. To the nomadic characters of Elphinstone's fiction, however, (national) boundaries remain in a state of flux, as does the problematic home/away dichotomy. The direct influence of Celtic/Welsh traditions is also evident in Hayton's trilogy and *The Governors*, though her novels expose challenging issues of origin, thus undermining a monologic understanding of tradition and identity. Questions of belonging and self are also articulated, in different ways, by Atkinson's *Behind the Scenes at the Museum*, which interrogates notions of home(land) throughout its subversive family saga. Inspired by Sade's work and Greek mythology respectively, Thompson's *Justine* and *Pandora's Box* are also indebted to the psychological investigation typical of Scottish fantasy, and of Hogg's and Stevenson's texts in particular. The influence of Hogg and Stevenson is overtly played out in Tennant's rewritings, *The Bad Sister* and *Two Women of London*, though both novels expose the contradictory essence of Scottish identity, which Fell's *The Bad Box* also draws attention to through close references to popular Scottish tales. *The Bad Box* presents a Scotland that is both split and other: something similar happens in Kennedy's *So I Am Glad*, whose disaffected character and schizoid/fantastic projections, may be read as a statement about postmodern, post-capitalist Scottish culture. In Spark's *Symposium*, modern Scotland is distinctly 'other', its historical associations with witchcraft still haunting the metropolitan centre of London from the shadowy margins of the other nation at the end of the twentieth century; the tidal topography of the fictional island of Jacob's Rock is possessed, too, in Thompson's *Pharos*, by the knowledge of its past history of corruption, violence and death. While spectrality invests the relationship between feminine subjectivity and landscape in Barker's *O Caledonia*, it is the Scottish 'other' woman who disrupts dysfunctional middle-class English lives in Smith's *The Accidental*. Other women return to repossess modern Scotland – and expose the unauthentic foundations of national identity – in Galford's satirical novels, *The Fires of Bride* and *Queendom Come*.

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What the novels examined in this book contest, in different ways, is a monolithic reading of Scotland and its national culture, past and present. Lucie Armitt suggests that 'boundaries, borders and thresholds are always key concepts for any reading of the fantastic, linking together concepts of nation and the otherworldly, bodies and the grotesque, housing and hauntings'.<sup>25</sup> As notions of (otherworldly) displacement become crucial to critical readings of identity and belonging, the function played by generic conventions will be discussed more in detail in the last section of this introduction. By drawing attention to supernatural thematic areas largely associated with the Scottish canon, these narratives simultaneously travel beyond the conventional, accepted, boundaries of set traditions to articulate deconstructive patterns of same/other differentiation in relation to gender and the real.

### THE OTHER GENDER

The critical investigation of the foundations of gender and the exploration of feminine subjectivity become of paramount importance in this critical revision of traditional motifs. The female 'other' and the consequent subordination of women in the patriarchal structures of Western thought has been the subject of much feminist theoretical work, captured by Simone de Beauvoir's claim that 'she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential',<sup>26</sup> a theoretical position foreshadowed in early feminist works such as Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938). The secondary position occupied by the female sex in the binary opposition that opposes woman to man is part of a larger set of hierarchies, which constitutes the backbone of Western civilization, 'Everywhere (where) ordering intervenes', as noted by Hélène Cixous in *The Newly Born Woman* (1976), 'where a law organizes what is thinkable by oppositions (dual, irreconcilable; or sublatale, dialectical)'.<sup>27</sup> Such binary patterns have led to a reading of the female sex as body (as opposed to mind), and madness (as opposed to reason). The aesthetic responses to the female form in Western art and culture reflect the pervasive dynamics of the controlling male gaze and the object of its voyeuristic and pleasure-driven addresses, the female body; in John Berger's words, 'Men Act and Women Appear'.<sup>28</sup> As Laura Mulvey pointed out in her crucial study of the male gaze in classic cinematography, the function of the gaze is dual: on one level, it produces pleasure; on the other, it asserts masculinity in portraying the female body as fragmented and exposed in its sole role of supporting the male hero's controlling authority: 'In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*'.<sup>29</sup> The capitalist ethos of the late twentieth-century exacerbated the commodification of women's bodies and their consequent subjection



to constant surveillance, not only by the male gaze, but also, as Susie Orbach remarked in 1988, women's own scrutinising surveillance: 'To get a man, a woman must learn to regard herself as an item, a commodity, a sex object. Much of her experience and identity depends on how she and others see her'.<sup>30</sup>

Problematically as the outer shell of the female body may present itself in relation to the aesthetic and cultural responses produced by Western art and culture, theories of its interior anatomy move discourse from production to reproduction. Limited to its biological essence by traditional medical and classic psychoanalytical discourse, the female body is paradoxically reduced to the reproductive function her organism accommodates, while its sexuality is, at the best of times, relegated to a vacuum. Notions about female sexuality (or lack of it) in Victorian Britain were exemplified by William Acton, who, in 1857 wrote that 'The majority of women (happily for them) are not very much troubled by sexual feeling of any kind. What men are habitually, women are only exceptionally'.<sup>31</sup> In his manual Acton also advised that 'Literary women are not likely to be much sought after in marriage', adding that 'great accomplishments so seldom survive the first year of married life, that ordinary men are too sensible to prefer them to a pleasant manner, a sweet temper, and a cheerful disposition'.<sup>32</sup> with regard to a man's appropriate choice of a wife, Acton, a member of the medical profession, seemed to share the views expressed in Coventry Patmore's lines, 'Her disposition is devout, / Her countenance angelical', in his famous poem *Angel in the House* (1854).<sup>33</sup> A specific kind of scopophilic discourse is attached to Patmore's celebration, one that is picked up by the anonymous 'clever unmarried woman' who, in an appendix to Acton's work, suggests that 'comeliness of form and beauty of feature ought not to be despised', though 'It is more a kind of pleasure conveyed to *the mind of the beholder* than any special personal attraction of form or figure' (my emphases).<sup>34</sup> The commentator's remarks echo Wollstonecraft's argument that 'Taught from their infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and, roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adore its prison',<sup>35</sup> and build the foundations of later feminist thought aimed to expose the patriarchal basis of ideals of feminine beauty.

Late twentieth-century feminists such as Angela Carter and Germaine Greer became perhaps the most vocal critics of views of womanhood as the synthesis of angelic femininity and reproductive fertility: 'the womb is', Carter argued in *The Sadeian Woman*, 'an organ like any other organ, more useful than the appendix, less useful than the colon but not much use to you at all if you do not wish to utilise its sole function, that of bearing children'.<sup>36</sup> In comparing the two Sadeian women, Justine ('the holy virgin') and Juliette ('the profane whore'), Carter advocated the 'secularisation' of woman through the implicit 'death of the goddess'. In her polemical work *The Female Eunuch* (1970) Greer had reached similar conclusions, when she discussed the fallacy of



biological essentialism in gender constructs: 'of forty-eight chromosomes only one is different: on this difference we base a complete separation of male and female, pretending as it were that all forty-eight were different'.<sup>37</sup>

Second-wave feminism has produced, however, other readings of female body and sexuality as site/methodology of subversive resistance to Western phallogocentrism. In *This Sex Which is Not One* (1977) Luce Irigaray articulated a critique of previous readings of female sexuality in terms of passivity and 'lack', as theorised by Sigmund Freud's famous lecture on 'Some psychological consequences of the anatomical distinction between the sexes' (1925),<sup>38</sup> arguing for a more comprehensive understanding of the complex bisexuality that the female body presents. The re-appropriation of the female body, and, in particular, the maternal space, became central to the work of Julia Kristeva, who placed the maternal back in the centre of linguistic discourse, establishing a link between the semiotic level of language, which roughly corresponds to Jacques Lacan's 'imaginary' stage and precedes the symbolic order, and the notion of '*chora*', 'a non-expressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated'.<sup>39</sup> The *chora*'s 'rhythmic space' between the maternal and the infant's body is, as Marilyn Edelstein emphasises, 'womb-like', and, simultaneously, exceeding the feminine/masculine dichotomy, referring instead to a pre-Oedipal state of undifferentiated sex.<sup>40</sup> Kristeva's theory of language draws attention to the disruptive subversiveness of semiotic linguistic patterns that emerge in poetic language and are reminiscent of that pre-symbolic stage; 'more archaic' and 'unconsciously driven', as Noëlle McAfee explains, the semiotic is a 'ravenous mode of signifying': 'When it seeps out in signification, as it does in avant-garde poetry, it disrupts the more orderly, symbolic effort of communication'.<sup>41</sup> In her reworking of binary oppositions, Kristeva reached conclusions which, while exposing woman's intrinsic otherness in a patriarchal system of signification, also replaced old categories with new ones: 'Femininity is exactly this lunar form, in the way that the moon is the inverse of the sun of our identity'; woman's role is, according to Kristeva, the embodiment of 'strangeness', but also 'to be on guard and contestatory'.<sup>42</sup>

In the first half of the twentieth century Woolf had already interrogated the difficult affiliations between women and patriarchal language, suggesting:

it is still true that before a woman can write exactly as she wishes to write, she has many difficulties to face. To begin with, there is the technical difficulty – so simple, apparently; in reality, so baffling – that the very form of the sentence does not fit her. It is a sentence made by men; it is too loose, too heavy, too pompous for a woman's use.<sup>43</sup>

The notion of women's otherness implies the inadequacy of normative language to accommodate feminine writing and subjectivity. Cixous's notion