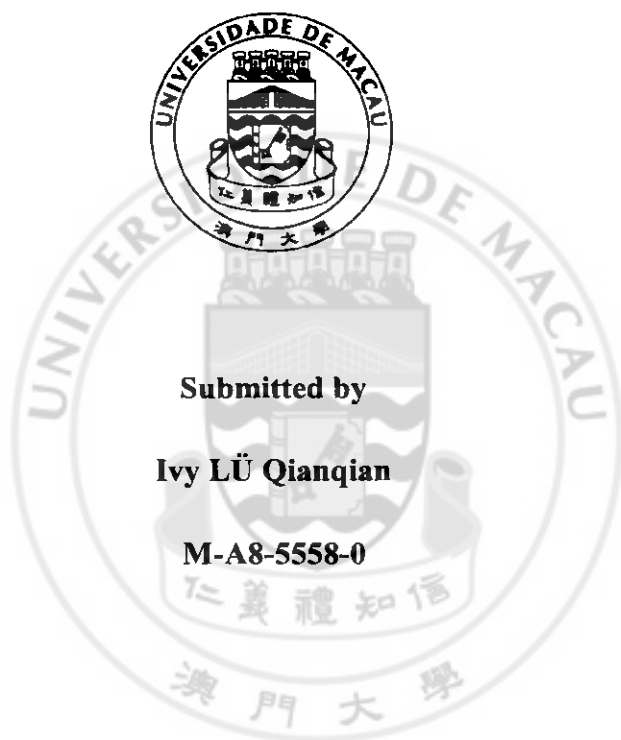


**Troubling the Female Continuum in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*
and *To the Lighthouse***



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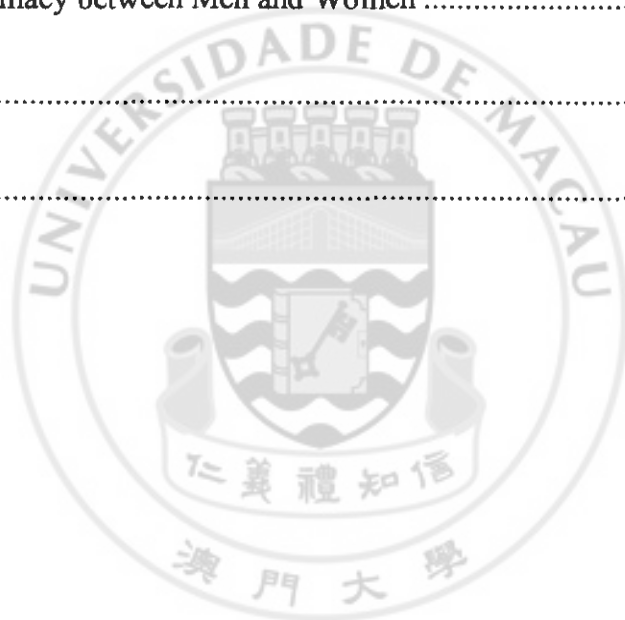
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Abstract of the Thesis

As a bisexual herself, Virginia Woolf encodes lesbian subject matters in her writings, but the readings here will go beyond lesbianism to suggest Woolf's interrogation of gender and even sex in the production of subjectivity. By first applying the concept of *lesbian continuum* proposed by Adrienne Rich, we will examine the relationship between the female characters in these two novels to see how lesbian feelings are constructed by Woolf. It is possible to find intensities between some of the female characters, represented by positive feelings such as sexual attraction, admiration, affection between mother and daughter, etc. However, in the patriarchal and heteronormative society, most of the positive feelings among the female characters are nevertheless repressed and weakened; some others are twisted into negative feelings such as jealousy, hatred, etc.

Relationship between male and female characters will also be examined to see Woolf's attitude towards issues concerning both genders. Intensities between male characters and female characters can also be found in these two novels. This kind of intensity, however, cannot be associated with lesbian continuum by Adrienne Rich, but can be explained by Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity. In the writings of Virginia Woolf, although the specific term *gender* does not appear, the

idea of gender being socially constructed and sex being gendered is implied by the idea of androgynous artist: only an androgynous mind can make a great artist. The idea of androgyny sees sex and gender as fluid traits of an individual human body, just as Butler sees gender as a process, instead of a binary division between masculinity and femininity.

