I. Introduction to Gender Role and Androgyny, and Woolf's *Orlando*

The purpose of the research is to study the conception of androgyny in Woolf's writing and to expose the inherent dilemma regarding this conception in her books. This study can shed new light on Woolf and the controversy of her androgynous vision by exposing the fundamental dilemma regarding the concept of gender. For this, recent and past critical writings on Woolf and androgyny will be consulted. The theories of gender and history of androgyny is studied to develop theoretical frame work.

Virginia Woolf's essays and novels provide valuable insight into both her own life experiences and those of women at the beginning of the twentieth century. Her nonfiction essay, *A Room of One's Own*, published in 1928, and her fantasy fiction novel *Orlando*, which was published a year later in 1929, explore gender differences and the possibilities of androgyny. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf discusses the secondary status of the women; she declares an androgynous mind is desirable and necessary for every great artist. In *Orlando*, the main character is a man who, in the middle of the novel, changes into a woman, although s/he remains essentially the same character. *Orlando* offers a fictional ideal

embodiment of the androgyny Woolf exalts in *A Room of One's Own*. However, in *Orlando,* Woolf actually relies on stereotypical gender differences to critique the pitfalls of gender and sexual conditioning. Therefore, *Orlando* exposes Woolf's serious doubts about the potentiality of her own proposed state of androgyny, especially within the Elizabethan age and culture where Woolf places Orlando. She fails to depict an ideal androgyny and rather shows why androgyny is impossible. Cultural and social conditioning, pressures and expectations, both inner and outer, prevent Orlando from developing the androgynous mind that Woolf idealizes in *A Room of One's Own.*

Gender is vast and expanding subject. David Glover & Cora Kaplan in their book *Genders* say "according to the sixth editiion of Dr Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language (1785),* gender could refer either to the grammatical practice of classifying nouns as masculine, feminine or neuter or it could mean 'a sex'. Similarly, the verb 'to gender' means 'to produce, to beget, to breed, or to copulate" (3). They further cite; "The modern meaning of gender still bears the traces of these older historical usages. Gender continues to function as a grammatical term, as well as being a euphemism for a person's sex, though it is no longer used as a synonym for the sexual act. Yet, compared to today's complex

linguistic flux, these eighteen-century idioms seem remarkably restricted, as if cut off from the perpetual expansion of meaning that characterizes the present" (4).

According to Robert J. Stoller, "Gender identity starts with the knowledge and awareness", whether conscious or unconscious, "that one belongs to one sex and not the other, though as one develops, gender identity becomes much more complicated. So that, for example, one may sense himself as not only a male but a masculine man or a man who fantasies being a woman" (10).

Gender refers to the socio-cultural definition of man and woman, the way in which they are differentiated and assigned socially acceptable roles. These are maintained, sustained by multiple structures like family, community, society, ethnicity, and through tools like culture, language, education, media and religion. For ages we have been socialized into believing that the different categories, roles and status accorded to men and women in society is determined by biology i.e. sex, that they are natural and constant and therefore not changeable. In a way, women and their bodies are held responsible for their specific roles and subsequently their subordinate status in society. When biological determinism has been accepted as natural, there is obviously no need to address the gender inequalities and justice that exist in society. However, if biology alone

determines our roles, every woman would be cooking, washing, sewing etc. But this clearly is not the case because most professional cooks, launderers and tailors happen to be men. The roles also change with time, culture and region. Therefore, neither sex nor nature is responsible for the unjustifiable inequalities that exist between women and men. Like the inequalities that exist between class and races, inequalities between women and men are also created by cultural constructs and therefore they can be questioned, challenged and changed.

The French feminist Simone de Beauvoir, who is considered as a precursor of gender theories, had analyzed those biological determinism confines women to the sphere of reproductive and nurturing roles. She pointed out the difference between "natural and cultural sex" by saying that a "woman is not born but made" (35). This later on became the basis for gender theories. Ann Oakley who was among the first few feminists to use this concept says, "Gender is a matter of culture, it refers to the social classification of men and women into masculine and feminine"(18). In her important book *Gender trouble*, Judith Butler has argued that gender is a symbolic form of 'public action' whose recurrence allows for our recognition as desiring and desirable subjects. For Butler, "gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time,instituted in an exterior space through a

stylized repetition of acts. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence must be understood as the mundance way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (140).

Gender as an analytical tool can help clarify these elements of role differences, social relationships and the relationships of power in society, which undermines the value of those who are considered as less privileged; be it women, children or indigenous people.

Denise Riley has suggested that we think of femininity as a part, not the whole of female subjectivity, whether collective or individual: 'There are differing temporalities of 'women,' and these substitute the possibility of being 'at times a woman' for eternal difference on the one hand, or undifferentiation on the other" (6).

How to analyse and perhaps to smooth the imperiled psychic path from infancy to female adulthood has been a vexed issue for feminism ever since Mary Wollstonecraft, in "*A Vindication of the Right of Woman*" turned her readers attention to the way in which "females are made women of when they are mare children" (117). She argues that women are made, not born. She resists Jean – Jacques Rousseau's claim that femininity is an instinctive set of

sexed traits. But Wollstonecraft also, as Barbara Taylor has argued, saw the psyche as creative precisely in its capacity to Fantasize, to wish for and invent different scenarios for gender, while believing, at the same time that women were especially vulnerable to the seductive erotics of romantic narrative, and prey to dangerous and self- destructive imaginings (Taylor 103).

The ideal of Masculinity requires intense effort: a man must struggle against himself even conceiving his own body as a sort of enemy, and also against others. The differences between men and women had to be sharply emphasized and feminine traits had to be kept firmly in their proper place: in men they were a sign of weakness (Kaplan 90). At the centre of this ideal, masculinity, lay a renewed emphasis upon the perfectibility of the male body, which became an outward sign of a man's moral superiority and inner strength of character. The body was to be a locus of self- discipline and restraint, able so to concerntrate its energies that any obstacle could be surmounted, any hint of emotional weakness could be held in check. This masculine ideal was intimately connected to the growth of a commercial and industrial bourgeoise throughout Western Europe but, far from being a wishful self-portrait of one particular social class, it was a complex amalgam of beliefs and practices drawn from many sources, some old, some new.

One of the most baffling phenomena concerning human gender is androgyny, which is defined as being physically male and female in one. An androgyny is also referred to as a hermaphrodite. Many have mistakenly confused androgyny with bisexuality, which is a psychological condition. Only in rare cases humans are born with both male and female sexes. Estimates reveal that approximately 1% of the population is born with these traits. Many cultures view androgyny in a mythical sense when one of their offspring is born with this affliction, as something both to be obtained and dreaded. For example, according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica Macropedia*, "the Dogon African tribe has a myth of creation, which they believe that androgyny is assign of perfection" (240). Throughout most cultures the dominant view of gender is either male or female, not both.

This is the interpretation, especially in the western cultures according to Judeo-christian tradition, which is "the arbiter of natural" behavior of humans. Now any possibility of human gender other than male or female in this mindset is considered abnormal. Thus, the birth of androgyny in these cultures was abnormal. A child that has both sexes faced many problems. Growing and development is the first problem. But the greater problem is facing and living in a society which has its own set of values and norms, where everyone is either male or

female. In most cultures this represents a great psychological shock to the parents of the child. In past western cultures, especially Europe, these children were usually given up to the Church. In some cultures androgyny are seen as bad omens and the children are usually killed.

Different critics have given enough concern on androgyny in various ways. In the *Symposium,* Plato explains the androgynous myth. According to Plato, "at first (before humanity as we know it was formed) there existed three types of individuals. They had the shape of a ball with four legs, four eyes, two faces and two genital apparatuses. Females were made of two female sexes, male of two male sexes and androgynies of one female and one male sex. These humans defied the gods and Zeus decided to punish them by dividing them each into two parts and these new beings are the one we know today. Today's people still try to reunite with their other half" (157).

Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) in his book *Androgyny in Christinity,* says "Androgyny- unity of 'man' and 'woman', 'male' and 'female' – can not be thought of without the peculiar value of the woman. At the same time I have to note that christian thinking in general has been marked by the assumption that man has a higher position than woman, that man is the starting – point and woman the

derivative" (318). The roots of androgyny are old traditions of the return of Adam and Eve to their original androgynous state in combination with motifs of the Holy Marriage, the Mother Goddess, of Sophia the Jewish and Hellenistic Wisdom and of Anthropos the Jewish- Gnostic Man-god (traces of the return to the original Androgynous state and comparable motifs also to be found in Egypt and with Plato).

These traditions were used in support of positive as well as negative views of sexuality. The Jew Philo of Alexandria (First century) denounced both sexuality and mythology in favor of his rationalism and patriarchic suppositions. During the adoption of Early Christianity to Roman Society (in which it became catholic) it choose for this negative line although it tolerated and the spirituality of androgyny were nearly condemned to silence, they later reappeared (among others vary prominently with Jacob Boehme), showing the Christian ambivalence to sexuality and spirituality.

Grace Tiffany, in her book *Erotic Beasts and Social Monsters*, suggests two principal vision of androgyny in the Renaissance: mythic androgyny and satiric androgyny. According to her, "Mythic androgyny, exemplified in Shakespeare by cross-dressers, water imagery and the fluid individual identity, is essentially a positive movement towards gender transcendence and

union/integration. Satiric androgyny, exemplified in Jonson by feminized male figures and unfixed, unstable individual identities, is essentially negative; it represents gender transgression or perversion, the violation of the individual and the frustration of the movement towards stability" (137).

The Renaissance hermaphrodite was not necessarily clinically androgynous. Androgyny was then considered more a figurative phenomenon than a literal or physical condition. To be androgynous or to be a hermaphrodite was simply to partake of both genders in some manner, which did not strictly require the physical possession of both male and female genitalia. In the case of Tiresias or Orlando (Virginia Woolf), the androgyny could alternate genders either in the same or in successive lifetimes. The mythic androgyny celebrates hermaphrodites as a return to this original, integrated state. The sense of perversion or monstrosity associated with freaks of nature is replaced by a different and opposite reaction. The hermaphrodite is revered, not feared, because it is a divine movement towards notions of community, union and integration, rather than a manifestation of abnormality and deviance. Where men and women are by nature forever seeking to combine with one another, the hermaphrodite represents an achievement of non erotic sexual reintegration. In other words, to be androgynous is not

to enjoy the delights of both sexes but rather, as Androgyny tells us, to forsake such pleasures entirely.

Androgyny has often functioned as a conservative, if not a misogynic, ideal of a dual sexed imagination during Romantic period. Traditionally, androgyny is viewed as the embodiment of primordial totality and oneness, created out of fusion of opposed forces, male and female, masculine and feminine. However, necessitates by the collapse of positivistic thinking and a new interest to the intuitive and the imaginative in the nineteenth and twentieth century, particularly in the literary periods of Romanticism and Modernism, a different understanding of the androgynous creativity emerged. Androgyny has been most widely discuessed in literary criticism within the context of Romanticism. Warren Stevenson argues that "psychic androgyny [is] the only one worth writing about" (10). Since this is the type of androgyny dominant in late-eighteenth, early-nineteenth century Anglo- American culture, it is worth spending grreater critical attention on it. Dianne Long Hooeverrler argues that "this form of romantic androgyny, a merger of the masculine and feminine psychic principles, is in fact a radical metaphoric tradition of literary absorption/ cannibaliisation of woman by male poets" (xiv). According to her, "there can be no denying the fact that the English Romantic poets adhered to…an ideology of sexual

and sexist polarization, and that their use of androgyny as a psychic goal was a poetic technique designed to merge the fictional masculine and feminine in one new and redeemed being- the androgynous male poet" (xv).

Romantic and Modernist writers, in their creative literary attempts at myth-making, explore the artistic model of androgynous imagination not only to revise the traditional gender identities but also to offer new opportunities and ponder difficulties for artistic and/or personal self realization. While Romantics tend to fantasize about the power of the differently gendered "other" as a source of creative impulse, yet fearing being dethroned by its omni-potency, Modernists seek the ways to engage in borderless co-existence with the differently gendered "other," yet implicitly agonizing over the loss of self-integrity and self-identity. The dissertation offers a new theoretical understanding of the concept of androgyny by proposing to view it as an artistic trope based on a dialogue between psychologically whole gender identities of male and female.

Many today are addressing psychological androgyny in their quest to integrate themselves as a whole. This is the result of both sexes, male and female, realizing that they each have psychological characteristics of the opposite sex that are not fully developed because society

has defined the roles of women and men and the characteristics that each must manifest. Jung Singer explains the implications of psychological androgyny as follows:

> The androgyny approaches the problem by seeing that true change begins primarily within the psychic structure of the individual; those of the androgyny are mainly intrapsychic. The androgyny consciously accepts the interplay of the masculine and feminine aspects of the individual psyche. One is the compliment of the other, in the same sense that the active, probing sperm is the compliment of the waiting, yielding ovum. In conception, the two principles are combined; in the individual, the active and receptive natures coexist throughout the span of life. (15)

It is quite apparent that for males or females to mature they have to develop the attributes of the opposite sex. For example, men are beginning to see the advantage of the feminine intuitiveness and want to develop this attribute. Women also see the advantage of male logic and strive to develop this.

II. *Orlando* and *A Room of One's Own:* A Critical Review

Orlando is considered the longest and most charming love letter in literature, and is dedicated to Woolf's lover Vita Sackville-West. Woolf conceived of it 'an escaped after these serious poetic experimental books'. She wanted 'the main note' of this mock biography to be 'satire'. And the target of the satire is to include her 'own lyric vein'. 'Half laughing, half serious; with great splashes of exaggeration', the novel tells the story of Orlando, perennial heir to knole, the Sackville stately home, who at the start of the book is a young nobleman and aspiring poet of the Elizabethan period and by the close, after a few hundred years of literary, amorous and heroic adventures and encounters with nearly all the great literary canonical figures through the ages, is married, and a successful woman poet. Her poem 'The Oak Tree', hundreds of years in gestation, wins a literary prize and critical acclaim. As well as a spoof biography, then, *Orlando* may also be seen as a satirical, exploring the gender politics of poetic and artistic subjectivity across the ages.

Orlando changes sex in the middle of the novel during a tour of duty as Charles II's ambassador to Constantinople, but also further complicates gender expectations when as a man he masquerades as a woman, and

as a woman masquerades as a man. This mock biography perhaps also takes a swipe at other Bloomsbury biographical innovators such as Lytton Strachey and Vita's husband, Harold Nicolson, in a review of whose work Woolf coined her famous phrase, 'granite and rainbow'. *Orlando* is written in six chapters and mockingly sports a preface, illustration (including elaborately staged photographs) and an index. In spite of all these trimmings, there is still a strong sense that the character Orlando is a portrait of Vita Sackville-West; 'Suppose Orlando turns out to be Vita,' Woolf wrote to her, 'and it's all about you and lusts of your flesh and the lure of your mind'(428). This is the new form of biography; and Woolf boasted that she 'could revolutionize biography in a night'(429).

A Room of One's Own is based on lectures that Woolf gave to women students at Cambridge, but it reads in place like a novel, blurring boundaries between criticism and fiction. It is regarded as the first modern primer for feminist literary criticism, not least because it is also a source of many, often conflicting, and theoretical positions. *A Room of One's Own* is cited as the locus classicus for a number of important modern feminist debates concerning gender, sexuality, materialism, education, patriarchy, androgyny, subjectivity, the feminine sentence, the notion of 'Shakespeare's sister',

the canon, the body, race, class, and so on. The title alone has had enormous impact as cultural shorthand for a modern feminist agenda. It is a very readable, and accessible, work, partly because of its playful fictional style; it introduces in this reader-friendly manner some complicated critical and theoretical issues. Many works of criticism, interpretation and theory have developed from Woolf's original points in *A Room of One's Own*. Woolf developed it from two lectures given to Cambridge women students, and an essay version, on 'Women and Fiction'; and although much revised and expanded, the final version significantly retains the original's sense of a woman speaking to women.

Orland has drawn numerous criticisms from different quarters especially from feminists and queer theorists since its publication in 1928. Critics generally believe that Virginia Woolf was at the height of her writing career during this period. Though most of the critics agree in its androgynous nature and think that it is a parodic biography based on Woolf's friend and lover Vita Sackville-West, some have taken great interest in the novel's technical innovations and its exploration of the theory of literary genre, sexuality, subjectivity, multiplicity of identity and destabilization of gender.

Malcolm Bradbury calls *Orlando* "a playful exercise in androgyny" (180). Nicola Thompson too, opines that

"*Orlando* is obviously an exploration of the advantages of an androgynous mind" (2). However, this concept of androgyny has been critically examined by critics like Pamela Caughie who argues that "*Orlando*'s androgyny is not a stable combination of two genders - as it is often hailed by critics to be - but is an oscillation between them-a 'refusal to choose" (qtd. in Olin-Hitt 495).

In a now infamous essay concerning the 'Woolf as feminist' debates entitled "*Virginia Woolf and the Flight Into Androgyny*," Elaine Showalter tries to reinvent and reinterpret the debate by attacking what she perceives to be a kind of general Woolf-ophilia of mid-twentieth century feminism by stating, "The concept of true androgyny – full balance and command of an emotional range that includes male and female elements – is attractive, although I suspect that like all utopian ideals androgyny lacks zest and energy" (263). Showalter finds fault with what she holds is Virginia Woolf's prescription of androgyny for social and artistic freedom, particularly Woolf's explicit defense of androgyny in her essay A Room of One's Own. Showalter's rhetoric, like many other negatively critical Woolf readings, revolves around notions of Woolf's fear, defensiveness, struggle, crisis, withdrawal, madness, exile, and the inevitable suicide. Showalter's terminology builds together to help her convey the

opinion that Woolf's androgyny is an ultimately unsuccessful, and even possibly dangerous, concept in its perceived elusiveness and passivity. Androgyny becomes a "myth that helped [Woolf] evade confrontation with her own painful femaleness and enabled her to choke and repress her anger and ambition" (264). Viewed as having surrendered to some kind of "psychic withdrawal" or escape via a sort of unsexing through both sexes, Woolf's critics use accusations varying anywhere from classicism to utopianism, from sterility to ambivalent modernism (Showalter 286). Apparently Woolf is never 'realist' nor feminist enough for critics like Showalter because, according to these negative reviews, she does not describe the struggles of 'real' women, never gives a 'realistic' political goal for women to follow, and seems to completely disengage herself from the text.

Although Lisa Rado, in a more recent look at modernist androgyny, refers to the androgyny debates as rather out-dated and over-used, she still feels compelled to present a "change [of] lens" in order to place Woolf in her "cultural moment" (139). Unfortunately for Woolf this new insight shoves her back into the same corner that previous critics had placed her after the Woolf-o-philia had apparently gotten old. Rado points her lens toward androgyny as a failed sublime because Woolf fails at her attempt to"authorize and stabilize her identity as

both a woman and a writer" and that because Woolf is focused on finding an identity through a theory of non-identity, "this goal is agonizingly difficult for Woolf to achieve" (139, 149).

Woolf problematizes cultural norms by playing with established forms of sexual identity, genre, and the Romantic notion of the 'self' in order to highlight a kind of necessary multiplicity or "androgyny" to blur the boundaries of socially constructed roles. As Rachel Bowlby puts it in Feminist Destinations, "[Woolf's] concern is more to dissect the presuppositions of received forms of representations" (15). Bowlby further argues that "...it is precisely in her insistence on the sexual inflection of all questions of historical understanding and literary representation that Woolf is a feminist writer" in so far as she "constantly associates certainty and conventionality with a complacent masculinity which she sees as setting the norms for models of individual and historical development" (15). While this 'dissection' or 'problematization' is not always freeing (quite the opposite, it is most often times complicated and riddled with uncertainty as Rado points out), it is, however, certainly not a denial of the self nor of one's sexual and social dilemma. Ambiguity offers Woolf the means to express her doubts of the common acknowledgment of a fixed universal and

essential state of being. Though it has been described as a “tedious high camp” of a novel (Showalter 291) and mere escapism by Woolf herself, I shall use Orlando to show how Woolf expresses her philosophy of ambiguity, including both ambiguity of sex as “androgyny” and ambiguity of genre in order to show her reader the complicatedness of what is generally taken for granted as natural or normal.

In defense of Virginia Woolf as a feminist writer, Toril Moi asserts that Showalter is simply frustrated that Woolf's texts cannot be pinned down and therefore appear uncommitted to a feminist stance (3). The important point here is that Woolf is practicing what she preaches: her supposed 'noncommittal' attitude projected through her art reflects her feelings toward a positive use of modernist ambiguity that refrains from overt didacticism. Moi argues that Woolf “radically undermine[s] the notion of the unitary self, the central concept of Western male humanism and one crucial to Showalter's feminism” (7). Basically, Moi believes Woolf to be the exemplary feminist because she calls into question the idea of 'Truth' as fundamental and refuses to acknowledge that she could possibly know anyone's 'real' experience because there is no such thing as a real or truthful depiction of 'woman.' Definitions of the self, of the sexes, and of societal values are ridden

with contradictions and conflicts, and Woolf displaces her reader's security by placing ambiguity front and center in all its contentious glory.

Virginia Woolf's diaries and letters show her struggle with the ambiguity she presents throughout the writing of Orlando. Woolf began devising her plan for Orlando in March of 1927 as a fantastical and satirical "escapade" after the arduous and "serious poetic experimental" works "whose form is so closely considered" – works that had become part of her signature stream-of-consciousness style among the public (104). Woolf continues her description of Orlando's conception and her need for a kind of running away or escape: "I want to kick up my heels and be off. I want to embody all those innumerable little ideas and tiny stories which flash into my mind at all seasons" (104). From her representation of the creation ("the" and not "her" because there are doubts as to whether Woolf is in control of this creation) of her flight of fancy, we can assume that Woolf did not take the beginning stage of Orlando seriously because she felt it would simply be an inside joke on a large scale.

In the same passage she states, "I think this will be great fun to write; and it will rest my head before starting the very serious, mystical poetical work which I want to come next," which refers to her next project –

the ambitious and often argued most experimental of her novels – The Waves. Writing about the ease with which she felt the pseudo-biography would develop, if it were to develop at all due to its evanescent frivolity, Woolf writes, "I might dash off a page or two now and then by way of experiment. And it is possible that the idea will evaporate. Anyhow this records the odd horrid unexpected way in which these things suddenly create themselves – one thing on top of another in about an hour" (104-105). It is interesting how she chooses her diction with emphasis on terms such as "oddity" and "horrid," "unexpected" and the idea of things "suddenly creat[ing] themselves," as though Orlando contained some life-force that could take over her own consciousness. Beginning description of a mental "take-over" is no coincidence considering that the frivolity of Orlando will later be challenged when Woolf eventually becomes consumed by her work as she also begins writing her most pivotal essay, *A Room of One's Own* , perhaps as a way to get through the underlying difficulty and ambiguity contained within both her own consciousness and in the text itself.

Six months after her first mention of the need to write something purely for fun, Woolf finally gives her hero a name and a temporality, as well as a kind of genre for the story: "One of these days . . . I shall sketch here, like a grand historical picture, the outlines of

all my friends . . . . It might be a way of writing the memoirs of one's own time during people's lifetimes. It might be a most amusing book. The question is how to do it. Vita should be Orlando, a young nobleman" (112). A couple of months later and Woolf is still stuck on this "fantasy" creation, laying down the genre and setting as "a biography beginning in the year 1500 and continuing to the present day" (114); however, Woolf has added one new dimension, another "treat," in her inclusion of her lover Vita Sackville West: Vita shall "change about from one sex to another" (115). The ambiguity and androgyny of Orlando's sex has now been officially declared, and now Woolf must further struggle with her desire for an ambiguous text when she declares about her new "biography," "I thought I could combine it with Fiction, but once the mind gets hot it can't stop" (115).

Paradoxically, "Fiction" for Woolf becomes just as intolerably dull as the boring and "stale" criticism she supplies in her critical essays, so her new blending of genres that incorporates a sense of history and biography (both supposed "Truths") with the fantastical element of fiction add new exciting directions to her writing process.

While ambiguity often induces feelings of uncertainty and therefore creates anxiety, Woolf finds this ambiguity more freeing and pacifies herself with

thoughts of writing *Orlando*. The masculine tone of the beginning succumbs to an eventual femininity that overtakes Orlando when the biographer/narrator continues in the assessment of Orlando's awkward years and describes him as clumsy, solitary, and given to feminine fits of passion as he "sighed profoundly, and flung himself...on the earth at the foot of the oak tree" (15). Comically, the biographer defends his own diction such as "passionate" and his use of words such as "profoundly" and "flung" in an aside that stresses that Orlando's movements were indeed so passionate as to "deserve the word" (15); however, it is difficult to bolster such a defense when it is followed by the statement, "[Orlando] felt the need for something which he could attach his floating heart to; the heart that tugged at his side; the heart that seemed filled with spiced and amorous gales every evening about this time when he walked out" (15). It seems as though the biographer/narrator falls prey to the need for metaphorical and emotional language while describing his object of interest, which further problematizes Orlando as a sexed being because the biographer/narrator's gaze further feminizes Orlando.

The reader's attention is placed on Orlando's ambiguous Elizabethan clothing, his "crimson breeches, lace collar, waistcoat of taffeta, and shoes with rosettes on them" (16). Maria Di Battista emphasizes the

importance of clothing ambiguity at the beginning of the text when she asserts that the biographer's statement concerning 'the fashion of the time' and its disguising one's sex pays tribute to the convention of transvestitism common to Shakespearean comic romances, and she agrees that “the certitude of Orlando's sexual identity is immediately qualified even as it is asserted” (116). Orlando's Elizabethan male 'costume' appears stereotypically effeminate yet acceptable because of Orlando's placement in time, and this placement will become challenging later in the novel when Orlando becomes a woman during the Seventeenth century – a century known for its reliance on a sense of reasonableness and logic.

Woolf wants her readers to contemplate this “simple fact” so as to draw attention to the 'real' 'fact' that sex is indeed no fact, as is expressed in the mystical change of Orlando. As Suzanne Young explains, “[Woolf] exploit[s] the confusion between sexual and social characteristics evident in...social discourse for parodic and political ends.... Woolf present[s] female sexual identity as a social process that is shaped by, rather than defined in, contemporary popular discourse on sexuality” (169).

Orlando is stuck with the dilemma of finding some sort of identity to latch on to in order to survive in

English society. Although Sandra Gilbert declares in her article “Costumes of the Mind” that unlike the works of Joyce and Eliot, Woolf has created a character that contains “the best of both sexes in a happy multiform which [Orlando] herself has chosen” (405). Zileli states, “Woolf seems to be mocking the two sexes; however, actually Woolf is mocking...these everlasting distinctions between what is masculine and what is feminine because gender restrictions form artificial boundaries for both sexes” (207). In A Room of One's Own Woolf asserts, “It was absurd to blame any class or any sex, as a whole. Great bodies of people are never responsible for what they do. They are driven by instincts which are not within their control” (49).

In Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy Jane Marcus argues that Orlando is a brilliant mockery of English patriarchy precisely because “one must first master the form in order to deconstruct it” (10). Rachel Bowlby claims, “Orlando tells the story of how a young man becomes a woman; but how, as a woman, she is forever vacillating between the sexes, as if femininity is an inherently unstable position, or as if its very condition is that of putting on and off the identities of one or the other sex” (51). Jane Marcus suggests that instead of an androgyny in which both sexes play an equal part, “Woolf’s feeling for sexual difference privileges the

female” and continues “when [Woolf] says ‘the book has somehow to be adapted to the body; she means the female body”. Marcus therefore suggests, to some extent, that Woolf’s androgyny is not only biased towards the female, its conceptual space is essentially lesbian” (29).

III. Woolf's Views on Androgyny in *A Room of One's Own* and Its Failure in *Orlando*

Barbara Fassler concludes that by 1918 Woolf and the rest of the Bloomsbury group had read Ellis and Carpenter and other scientific literature on sexual theory; all shared the common belief that to be artistic one must have the unique combination of masculine and feminine elements found in hermaphrodites and homosexuals? (Fassler 250). Yet Woolf believed androgyny was obtainable and should be desirable to all individuals, especially artists. Woolf describes her own concept of androgyny in *A Room of One's Own:* 'in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man's brain, the man predominates over the woman and in the woman's brain, the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating. If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties.' (A Room… 98)

Woolf's vague terms spiritually co-operating, intercourse, and fusion have caused critics to argue the specifics of her concept (A Room of...98). Early critics seem less concerned with the niceties of Woolf's

androgynous vision; most of these early critics define androgyny, as used by Woolf, as an ideal but vague mixture of masculine and feminine qualities combined to form a universal perspective, free from the hindrances and biases of gender. However, while Woolf exalted artistic androgyny, she did not support physical or social androgyny. Instead, she fortifies sex differences between men and women: 'this creative power [of women] differs greatly from the creative power of men. It would be a thousand pities if women wrote like men, or lived like men, or looked like men, for if the two sexes are quite inadequate, considering the vastness and variety of the world, how should we manage with only one? Ought not education to bring out and fortify the differences rather than the similarities?' (A Room… 87).

Hence, in *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf calls for an androgynous spirit or mind, a mind unconscious of its own sex as it is creating, while she celebrates what she sees as the inherent social, cultural, and biological differences between men and women. While Woolf argues artists should strive for artistic androgyny, she acknowledged the limitations of androgyny in daily life.

Critics have had mixed reactions to Woolf's ideas. In the 1970s, Carolyn Heilbrun hailed Woolf as the prophet of sexual liberation and the messenger of an enlightened androgynous vision (115). Heilbrun and many

other critics argued that Woolf's androgyny could free women from sexual roles and stereotypes that prevented artistic and personal growth. Writing at the same time, critics Nancy Topping Bazin and Elaine Showalter analyze Woolf's androgyny from a more critical perspective. Showalter argues that Woolf's discussion of androgyny in *A Room of One's Own* reveals a halfhearted rebel constructing a myth that helped her evade confrontation with her own painful femaleness and enabled her to choke and repress her anger and ambition (264). Showalter sees Woolf's concept of androgyny as detrimental to the individuality of women.

Marilyn Farwell and other modern critics have attempted to reevaluate Woolf's concept in an effort to pinpoint whether she defines androgyny as a balance of masculine and feminine traits or a fusion of them. Farwell argues that Woolf's concept of androgyny fuses the genders, making masculine characteristics universal at the expense of feminine virtues; hence, when Woolf calls for androgyny, Farwell agrees that Woolf is saying women need to become more like men. In 1997, Lisa Rado agreed that Woolf used the powerful image of the androgyny in order to generate creative inspiration and artistic authority she felt she lacked and thereby escapes the perceived vulnerability of the female artist; hence, Rado also argues Woolf's strategy of empowerment

was based on the repression of her female identity. While some critics insist Woolf's androgyny is detrimental to a woman's identity (148). While some critics insist Woolf’s androgyny is detrimental to a woman’s identity, other critics argue that Woolf's androgyny is about the equality of women.

Rado notes that recent trends in criticism have transformed Woolf in the past decade: No longer the powerful and enlightened prophet or the confused and reluctant rebel, Woolf has now been labeled the subversive, even deconstructive feminist (148). For example, “feminist critic Frances Restuccia argues Woolf's androgyny is merely a curtain draped over the more subversive defense of female difference"(qtd. in Rado 164). Toril Moi argues that “Woolf concept has deconstructionist undertones, including a deeply skeptical attitude to the male-humanist concept of an essential human identity"(qtd. in Rado 164). These recent critics see Woolf's androgyny as a groundbreaking and subversive guise.

Some critics have established, however, that Woolf never intended physical or social androgyny. Nathaniel Brown focuses on Woolf's frequent use of the term double soul to argue that Woolf did not desire an outward mixture of masculine or feminine qualities but the spiritual development of two unique souls, one manly and

one womanly. Therefore, an individual could function mentally from either side of the spectrum, but the idea of separateness is still intact.

When analyzing Woolf's ideas about androgyny, considering *A Room of One's Own* alone leads to more questions than answers. As much as critics argue about it, Woolf never fully defines her idea. Perhaps Woolf's androgyny was as vague a concept to her as her concept remains to us. However, because *Orlando* was written around the same time as *A Room of One's Own,* and the novel deals with many of the same ideas, it is safe to assume that one can illuminate the other. Although Woolf's *Orlando* is not as popular as *A Room of One's Own*, it is certainly an equally intense consideration of gender; after all, Orlando is a man who in mid-novel changes into a woman.

The Feminization of *Orlando:*

Orlando is not androgynous because she does not reach a "more whole and complete self" in her combination of masculine and feminine traits. In fact, Orlando does not retain most masculine characteristics naturally; Orlando consciously assumes masculine characteristics when she is a woman in order to maintain the freedoms and privileges of a man. Moore is incorrect in her assumption that Orlando is "undoubtedly Woolf's image of a perfectly androgynous human being," because Orlando becomes more

and more stereotypically feminine as the novel progresses (47).

Rather than reaching an androgynous apex, Orlando becomes more and more feminine the longer she is a woman. The biographer tells us that Orlando's modesty as to her writing, her vanity as to her person, her fears for her safety all seem to hint that what was said a short time ago about there being no change in Orlando the man and Orlando the woman was ceasing to be altogether true. She was becoming a little more modest, as women are, of her brains, and a little more vain, as women are, of her person (187) .

Woolf critiques gender as socially and culturally prescribed to limit an individual's self-concept and behavior, and especially limiting to a woman's freedom to obtain life and love outside of traditional feminine roles. Hence, androgyny is impossible within a repressive society that enforces strict sex roles. Many critics argue that Orlando's change from male to female gives her an androgynous perspective because Orlando then has been both sexes. These critics argue that Orlando transcends into androgyny with the sex change. Hermione Lee argues that when Orlando becomes a woman, she is "set free from the histories of repressions and limitations" (520). Avrom Fleishman argues that the change in Orlando from male to female is a "spiritual movement from repression

to freedom" (148). What these critics fail to acknowledge is that Orlando is much more restricted as a woman, both inwardly and outwardly, in a multitude of ways. Because these critic's arguments hinge on Orlando's newfound freedom as an androgyny, it is first important to note exactly how much more restricted Orlando becomes as a woman. Woolf critiques the social and cultural mores of an era that repressed the social advancement of women.

Orlando's narrator mimics the voice of a nineteenth-century male biographer who holds traditional beliefs of the inferiority of women. Orlando awakens as a woman in the 18th century, during the age of the Enlightenment. Historically, the Enlightenment was a period of general social advancement promoting ideas of freedom and equality. Women were gaining more freedom than ever before, especially in male dominated fields such as writing. However, the Enlightenment's slogan of "free and equal" did not apply to women in many aspects. While a few women such as Mary Wollstonecraft protested the idea that women were by nature inferior to men, most women were still limited to the areas of home and family; women were generally still expected to be submissive and dependent. Orlando endures the many traditional restrictions placed on women of this time period, allowing Woolf to expose the era of the Enlightenment as not so enlightened after all. For example, Woolf even

focuses on the small details of feminine dress to show how Orlando is more restricted as a woman. Unlike the comfortable knee breeches Orlando wears as a man, the female Orlando must wear "proper ladylike" clothing uncomfortable, stuffy dresses. While sitting on the deck of the Enamored Lady, Orlando finds her skirts to be "plaguy things to have about one's heels" (154). When Orlando realizes she could not swim in the bulky dress, a "gloom falls over her" because she would have to depend upon the protection of a man to survive a shipwreck. In the nineteenth century, Orlando feels "dragged down by the weight of the crinoline which she submissively adopted" (244). Crinolines were popularized in the late nineteenth century by Eugenie, the Empress of France, and remained in vogue among fashionable women in the West for several decades. The crinoline was a full skirt or underskirt made of stiff fabric and an underframing of wire hoops. Some crinolines ranged from twelve to fifteen feet in diameter. Although crinolines were fashionable and ladylike, a woman was burdened with their excessive weight, and her movements were significantly restricted.

Orlando's thick skirts collect damp leaves and straw when she attempts to stroll in her garden, and her thin shoes are "quickly soaked and mud-caked" (245). Continuous references to the restrictions imposed by Orlando's feminine clothing continue the theme that

Orlando is outwardly hindered as a woman and trapped in the prescribed "feminine" garb. Furthermore, Orlando is not "set free" as a woman since she cannot appear in public without a male escort. As a man, Orlando enjoyed the freedom to come and go as he pleased; he often spent late nights in ale houses in the company of strangers and promiscuous women. Upon becoming a woman, Orlando must repeatedly remind herself that "ladies are not supposed to walk in public places alone" (191). When the female Orlando does venture out alone, she is soon forced under the "protection" of the Archduke's arm because she does not want to be "gravely discommoded by the pressures of the crowd" (191). In the park, she walks "timid," "faltering," and "apprehensive" lest someone should see her walk alone (247). The female Orlando is more restricted as a woman because she has lost the freedom and confidence she had as a man to travel alone in public. Orlando conforms to these social expectations of her sex not only because that is what is expected of her but also out of convenience. The Archduke's escort provides her an amount of ease and protection in public which she never needed as a man.

Orlando is also more restricted as a woman because she cannot reject courting rituals like she did as a man. The male Orlando had many lovers whom he often bluntly rejected, including Sukey, Clorinda, Favilla, and

Euphrosyne. As a woman, Orlando must entertain the company of her suitor the Archduke as is expected of a polite lady, even though she does not return his affection or enjoy his company. Orlando begrudgingly asks, "What's the good of being a fine young woman in the prime of my life […] if I have to pass all my mornings watching blue bottles with an Archduke?" (182). Although she resents the Archduke's courting, she nonetheless succumbs to the ritual. Instead of rejecting the Archduke outright, Orlando must do the "ladylike" thing and attempt to gain the Archduke's disfavor subtly; she cheats at a game of Loo knowing the sportsmanlike Archduke would find her cheating at play despicable and reject her as a lover. Thus Orlando finds courting rituals more tedious and restrictive as a woman. Orlando is also subject to restrictions and limitations in that she feels the overwhelming pressure to take a husband, although she does not want to marry. Orlando realizes that contemporary thought proclaimed that it is "by the gleam on her wedding ring that she would be assigned her station among the angels" (241). In other words, she must answer to the nineteenth- century expectation that a woman's life revolve around her role as wife and homemaker. She realizes that, as a woman, her morality will be measured by her submission to her husband. Orlando's conformity may mean nothing more to her than a

ring on her finger a symbol of her willingness to follow the rules but she nonetheless conforms to the new restriction and takes a husband. Her intelligence is less respected; many restrictions were placed on the formal education of women at this time, an issue Woolf also addresses in *A Room of One's Own*. Woolf shows how Orlando would not have been educated as a woman as she had been educated as a man. When Orlando realizes this, she calls poverty and ignorance "the dark garments of the female sex," because without the guidance and support of a man most women were indeed ignorant and poor. Orlando concludes, “Ignorant and poor as we are compared to the other sex […] they debar us even from a knowledge of the alphabet”(159). The female Orlando resents the restrictions placed on the education of women, as well as society's attempt to subdue women by fostering women's dependence upon men. Hence, Woolf does not make Orlando “free from the histories of repressions and limitations”, but instead displays how these repressions and limitations are suddenly thrust upon her (Lee 520).

Likewise, Orlando is more restricted as a woman because she must refrain from unbecoming or “manly” displays of physical strength such as fighting and sporting. Orlando enjoys many physical activities as a man. The male Orlando jousts and slices at the severed head of a Moor as it swings from the rafters. When

Orlando first becomes a woman, she still drinks and rides like a man and is still as" bold and active as a man" (190). However, she slowly succumbs to the stereotype of feminine passivity because, as a woman, she is expected to behave as a lady. While assuming the expected prim air of a gentlewoman, Orlando regrets that she can no longer "crack a man over the head, or tell him he lies in his teeth, or draw [her] sword and run him through the body […] sentence a man to death, lead an army" (158).

Orlando realizes that social expectations prevent women from holding positions of power and from physical displays of courage and strength that are encouraged and expected in men. She also sees that she can no longer protect herself as a woman, so she must rely on the protection of honorable men. Consequently, Orlando's lack of exercise as a woman has a negative effect on her health. While walking in her garden she notices that her muscles "had lost their pliancy" from the lack of use since becoming a woman (245). Social restrictions prohibit Orlando from engaging in her past activities of physical exertion because they are traditionally masculine behaviors and activities; these restrictions atrophy Orlando's physical strength. Unlike the male Orlando who openly ventures for both love and sensual pleasure the female Orlando cannot actively pursue what she seeks life and a lover because a woman is expected to

be passive and submissive. In her desire to find “life and a lover”, Orlando dresses as a man and even propositions a prostitute named Nell. Orlando dons masculine clothing and pretends to be a man when she searches for love, adventure, and sensual pleasures because only in a man such activities are acceptable.

Orlando's Conformity to Gender Role

Woolf shows how Orlando resigns herself to cultural and social expectations about gender and sexuality that her choices reflect what is traditionally expected from her gender role. When Orlando first becomes a woman, she appears defiant and strong willed. Before she reaches the coast of England, Orlando decides that no matter how much comfort, wealth, and power she may find at home if it meant conventionality, meant slavery, meant deceit, meant denying her love, fettering her limbs, pursing her lips, and restraining her tongue, then she would turn about with the ship and set sail once more for the gypsies. However, once Orlando returns home, she slowly succumbs to every condition she so heartily rejected while on the deck of the Enamored Lady.

First of all, Orlando conforms to convention by settling into domesticity, marrying, and having a child. The biographer says that by marrying Shelmerdine, Orlando performs “a deep obeisance to the spirit of the age” (265). In other words, Orlando conforms to her designated

role as wife and homemaker. Orlando also conforms to her gender role in her commitment to the male dominated field of writing. As a man, Orlando is a prolific writer who never considers his position; the female Orlando must consider her sex when writing. The narrator reveals contemporary intellectual expectations placed on women: "As long as she thinks of a man nobody objects to a woman thinking […] she will write him a little note […] and as long as she writes little notes nobody objects to a woman writing either" (268). Orlando realizes that society frowns on an unmarried lady writing, so Orlando feels more and more pressure to marry. While unmarried, Orlando can “think of nothing” to write about but “corruption and death” and she feels “poisoned through and through" (243). Orlando's problem is her aching ring finger on her left hand, which is absent a wedding ring. Woolf exaggerates the restrictions placed on Orlando, as a single woman writer, to suggest how nineteenth-century women often succumbed to the social institution of marriage as a necessary step toward fulfilling personal goals. By making Orlando physically and mentally incapable of writing without a husband, Woolf satirizes society's power over a woman's mentality. Woolf also satirizes the notion that a woman obtains her creativity solely through her role as wife and homemaker, an idea she attacks more directly in *A Room of One's Own*.

Orlando sadly resigns to cultural and social expectations about gender and sexuality, not happily or readily. She tries to avoid an unwanted marriage by simply buying a wedding ring for her aching ring finger; however, “the tingling persisted more violently, more indignantly than ever” (243). Although marriage is against her natural temperament, Orlando is “forced at length to consider the most desperate of remedies, which [is] to yield completely and submissively to the spirit of the age, and take a husband” (243). Orlando does not seek a husband because she wants one; she merely needs to fulfill the necessary requirements for writing. In fact, she is embittered that her desire for a "lover" rather than a husband is unacceptable for a lady, she cries for "Life! A Lover Not Life! A Husband" (244). Orlando finds marriage distasteful and the “indissolubility of bodies is repugnant to her sense of decency and sanitation” (242). Nonetheless, she succumbs to these pressures and takes a husband. Orlando also fulfills her stereotypical role as a mother when she gives birth to a son. However, much like her marriage to Shel, Orlando's motherhood seems one of many social obeisance, because a mother-child relationship is never displayed. Orlando's motherhood appears to have little significance or psychological impact on her. In fact, after she has her son, the child is rarely mentioned again, and even then

the child is alluded to only briefly.

Furthermore, some critics argue that the marriage of Orlando and Shel represents the androgynous union of male and female, and Orlando becomes a great artist because she is then an androgynous whole. Yet after marrying Shel, Orlando sits down to write and waits for a flood of inspiration, and “to her enormous surprise, there was no explosion” (264). Orlando struggles with her poem as a woman the same as she did as a man, and she struggles with the poem after marrying Shel the same as she had before marrying. Her comfort in marrying Shel is not that she finally feels complete or androgynous; she is simply content that she has met social expectations that she should marry. As a married lady, she can write with society's approval. She eventually receives acclaim for her poem, "The Oak Tree," but only after centuries of revision. There is no implication that her success comes from her marriage to Shel or from the fact she was once a man and now a woman. The poem remains a symbol of what is constant about Orlando throughout the novel, her love of nature and poetry. Her success as a writer is not justified as the culmination of an androgynous vision, such that Woolf deems necessary to every great artist in *A Room of One's Own*.

After the change of sex, Orlando makes a conscious decision to behave as she is expected to behave as a

woman; when the Archduke cries in front of her, she knows “women should be shocked when men display emotion in their [women's] presence, and so, shocked she was” (180).

The characterization of Orlando's husband also addresses gender stereotypes. Shel is a man whom Orlando finds “as strange and subtle as a woman” (258). Woolf uses Orlando and Shel's union to mock the stereotypical characteristics of men and women associate with each other. Shel has qualities Orlando deems feminine, and Orlando has qualities Shel deems masculine. Because both characters live within the confines of sexual stereotypes, neither Orlando nor Shel understands or trusts their empathy: "Are you positive you aren't a man?" he would ask anxiously, and she would echo, "Can it be possible you're not a woman?" For each was so surprised at the quickness of the other's sympathy, and it was to each a revelation that a woman could be as tolerant and free-spoken as a man, and a man as strange and subtle as a woman. Orlando's Feminine Identity conforms to the feminine gender role, and her gender identity does not remain androgynous. Critic Phyllis Rose is correct in her assessment that Woolf shows in Orlando how the cultural endorsement of one sex over the other, “conditions our behaviors and limits our responses” (176). In Orlando, Woolf suggests that an individual becomes what society makes him/her and, in particular,

that social assumptions about gender and sexuality what is fitting for a man and what is becoming for a woman confine an individual's identity. While Orlando's physical sex change is instantaneous, Orlando's mental transformation from male to female is not sudden. Individuals cling to what they know, and in Orlando's case, that is the mindset of a man. After Orlando becomes a woman, she only knows how to think and behave like a man. For example, she still straddles a horse like a man instead of riding sidesaddle, and she courageously adventures with the gypsies.

However, Orlando soon begins to lose these masculine characteristics as she internalizes stereotypical ideas about femininity. When Orlando returns to England soon after becoming a woman, she still has the perspective of a man. She repeatedly has to modify her actions and thinking from stereotypical masculine to stereotypical feminine types of expression. When seeing her homeland once again, Orlando feels the urge to cry, but she restrains her tears because she has been socially conditioned that men should not cry. When Orlando reminds herself that she is now a woman, and “remembering that it is becoming a woman to weep, she let them flow” (165). Orlando begins to admit and display her weaknesses more freely as a woman because it is expected and even becoming that a woman behave as weak and emotional.

In the process of conforming to her gender role, however, Orlando's gender identity becomes more feminine as she takes on feminine mannerisms. After returning to England, she awakes to find that “something had happened during the night to give her a push towards the female sex, for she was speaking more as a woman speaks than as a man” (159). Orlando loses her masculine prowess; on her way to London, she “start[s] and suppress[es] a cry when the horses gallop faster than she liked” (187). Orlando begins to feel, react, and think like a frail and sheltered woman. Many critics who argue for androgyny point out that Orlando takes on what appears to be a more androgynous outlook when she first becomes a woman. On the deck of the Enamored Lady Orlando thinks about the sexes, and "for the time being she seems to vacillate; she [is] a man; she [is] a woman; she kn[ows] the secrets, shar[es] the weaknesses of each” (158). Orlando “pitted one sex against the other”, and because she finds fault in both sexes, she is “not sure to which [sex] she belong[s]” (159). However, Orlando does not question which sex she belongs to because she feels that she has the mentality of both. The female Orlando may know the “secrets” of being a man, but she disassociates herself from the male sex: Orlando “was horrified to perceive how low an opinion she was forming of the other sex, the manly, to which it had once been her pride to belong”

(158). When Orlando returns to England the next morning, she arranges her feminine draperies “with the greatest decorum about her ankles”, and immediately begins to reflect on the plight of her own sex women (159). The narrator confirms what has already become clear: "Something had happened during the night to give her a push towards the female sex" (159). Orlando decides she is glad to be a woman because she does not have to contend with manly duties such as fighting and ruling; as a woman she can indulge herself in the womanly sphere of existence “contemplation, solitude, and love” (160). Orlando does not take on an androgynous perspective; her thinking remains within the stereotypical parameters of what is masculine and what is feminine.

When Orlando enters the nineteenth century, the separation between the sexes becomes more severe because English culture was becoming more repressive. Orlando no longer feels safe or comfortable disguising herself as a man; she is “forced to acknowledge that times were changed”, and she no longer lives in an age when one could “say what one liked and wear knee- breeches or skirts as the fancy took one” (231). In the article “Costumes of the Mind: Transvestitism as a Metaphor in Modern Literature”, Sandra Gilbert argues that Orlando is an androgynous utopia because Orlando is "an eternally living doll whose wardrobe of costume selves enables her

to transcend the constraints of flesh and history" (208). However, Orlando eventually loses her freedom to dress as a woman or man as she pleases. In the nineteenth century, Orlando wears men's breeches into public and suddenly feels inappropriate and ashamed: she never ceased blushing till she reached her country house.

Orlando abandons masculine dress not only because of growing repression of Victorian society but also because she has internalized femininity; she begins to feel improper and even unnatural in men's clothing. Orlando is forced into a feminine mold which proves more restrictive than her life as a man; hence, she does not escape into androgyny on a physical or social level, and she does not experience a personal movement from repression to freedom, but just the opposite. Orlando's gender identity becomes more stereotypically feminine in other ways as well. For example, she becomes more modest about her writing, a traditionally male dominated field. Critic J.B. Batchelor argues that “the change in Orlando from male to female creates an androgynous mind that makes Orlando better suited for writing” (172). However, the female Orlando's writing is more restricted. The biographer tells us that the female Orlando is becoming “a little more modest as women are, of her brains” (187). While in London, Orlando modestly hid her manuscripts when interrupted, because a woman who writes would not

appear appropriately submissive and ladylike. Furthermore, because of the restrictions placed on the education of women, the female Orlando realizes her writing will be less respected. Because she is not given the same amount of intellectual respect as a man, she begins to feel more modest about her ability simply because she is a woman. Orlando also internalizes stereotypical ideas of femininity when she becomes more vain about her looks. The male Orlando has no primping rituals; he never considers his physical attractiveness when searching for romance. When the female Orlando decides to search for a lover, she "arrange[s] her pearls about her neck", changes her dress, and uses "a dash of powder […] it might become her" (185). The female Orlando realizes that her appearance is now more important in attracting a suitor. Furthermore, she begins to feel vain about her looks; she smiles at her own beauty in the mirror and realizes that she is "loveliness incarnate" (186). The biographer tells us that Orlando is, in fact, becoming "a little more vain, as women are, of her person" (187). At the department store, Orlando takes out a looking glass and a powder puff; she unconsciously takes on even the ultimate feminine ritual of powdering her nose in public.

Orlando also internalizes stereotypical ideas of femininity when she becomes more fearful for her safety.

As a man Orlando is robust and confident; even in the company of strangers and wantons, he never expresses fear for his safety. The female Orlando does not have the same confidence; she becomes “nervous lest there should be robbers behind the wainscot”, and she is “afraid, for the first time in her life, of ghosts in the corridors” (245).

Woolf also displays the power of society to inhibit sexual orientation through the Archduke. The Archduke falls in love with the male Orlando after seeing a portrait of him. The Archduke dresses as a woman to meet and display his romantic interest in Orlando; because same sex attraction would not be acceptable to express, the Archduke outwardly transforms himself from male to female, from Archduke to Archduchess. In a meeting between Orlando and the Archduchess, Orlando is overcome with passion from her attentions. When Orlando becomes a woman, the Archduke confesses that he has been a man all along. Only when the Archduke and Orlando are of the opposite sex (truly or supposedly) can romantic attraction be expressed. Here Woolf displays how social taboo does not dictate a person's romantic feelings, but it may dictate the expression of those emotions. Woolf rejects the unqualified heterosexual assumption that men are to desire women and women are to desire men by showing that even Orlando's sex and gender do not control

his/her romantic inclinations. Woolf depicts Orlando's romantic attraction as individualized and independent of sex or gender. As a man, Orlando loves Sasha; after Orlando becomes a woman, she realizes "it is still a woman she love[s]" (161). Orlando is haunted by the "ghost" of Sasha even after marrying Shelmerdine; she cries for "Sasha the lost, Sasha the memory" (163). As a woman, Orlando feels even more "rapt and enchanted" by Sasha: Orlando's affection for her "gain[s] in beauty what it los[es] in falsity" (161). Hence, Woolf suggests that love and romantic desire are not predetermined by an individual's sex or gender. In fact, she suggests a special empathy and intimacy between members of the same sex because there is not the barrier of sexual difference.

Nonetheless, social expectations prevent the female Orlando from expressing romantic desires toward other women, just as Orlando the man would not have expressed his attraction for Sasha if she had been a prince instead of a princess. Although Orlando dresses as a man and propositions the prostitute Nell, she cannot act on the attraction she feels toward Nell's "charm of ease and seduction of beauty" (218). Before any physical encounter with Nell takes place, Orlando drops her masculine disguise and admits in the "strangest torment of anger, merriment, and pity" that she is a woman (217) . Orlando,

being a woman herself, recognizes Nell's pathetic attempts to cater to the male ego. Although Orlando is attracted to Nell, the dynamics of the male propositioner/female prostitute are false and dissatisfying for Orlando; she cannot conceivably continue the masquerade much further or in good conscience continue to lie about her sex. She also feels empathy toward Nell's situation which she would have been unable to feel as a man. Furthermore, any sexual encounter between the two women would be taboo. Likewise, as soon as Nell realizes Orlando is a woman, the matter of romance is out of the question: “her manner chang[es] and she drop[s] her plaintive, appealing ways” (218). Woolf shows how sexual desire is confined by the conditioning of sex roles, allowing only narrow and fixed expressions of an individual's desires.

Orlando is expected to become "mated" with a member of the opposite sex, so she soon takes a husband (246). Hence, her search for a mate is marked by the stereotypical thought patterns of compulsory heterosexuality. Critic Nathaniel Brown argues that Orlando and Shelmerdine are two complimentary halves that come together to make a whole, which mirrors Shelley's idea of androgyny, or the "double soul"(one male and one female)in a single individual. Brown explains that Shelmerdine is a caricature of Shelly; Shelmerdine knows

Shelly’s “entire works […] by heart” (261). Shelmerdine recites poetry to Orlando, and even bears a close physical resemblance to Shelly. Brown contends that the connections between Shelmerdine and Shelly show that Woolf intends Orlando and Shelmerdine's marriage to be the perfect androgynous union in the spirit of Shelly’s “double soul”.However, if Orlando and Shelmerdine's union represents the perfection of the double soul, then many questions remain unanswered. It is important to remember that Orlando does not want this union. Orlando judges her own womanhood by society's definition of her gender role; after marrying Shelmerdine, she proclaims, "I am a woman […] a real woman, at last” (253). Orlando succumbs to the role of wife merely to fulfill social expectations of her sex. After marrying Shelmerdine, she is “extremely anxious to be informed whether the steps she had taken in the matter of getting engaged to Shelmerdine and marrying him” met with the approval of “the spirit of the age” (264). Furthermore, Orlando has no Utopian vision of herself or of her marriage to Shelmerdine; she even questions the validity of the marriage. Orlando feels depressed and lonely after taking Shelmerdine as her husband. Orlando has her doubts about her marriage to Shel, who she calls "a rash, ridiculous man, always sailing, so uselessly, round Cape Horn" (327). Orlando is filled with uncertainty: […] she could not deny that she

had her doubts. She was married, true; but if one's husband was always sailing around Cape Horn, was it marriage? If one liked him, was it marriage? If one liked other people, was it marriage? And finally, if one wished, more than anything in the whole world, to write poetry, was it marriage? She had her doubts (328).

Aileen Pippett fails to recognize Orlando's alienation from her husband when she argues that Orlando and Shel are "two parts of one personality" (262). In fact, although Orlando has fulfilled her role as wife and "there was the wedding ring on her finger to prove it ," the narrator insinuates her marriage to Shel is little more than perfunctory (263). Critic Hermione Lee also fails to address Orlando's doubts about her marriage and her subsequent feelings of uncertainty when she assumes that Orlando's marriage to Shel is a "free adventure rather than a domestic bondage" (520).

In fact, Orlando's marriage to Shel is in way, a domestic bondage for her. When the clock strikes ten on October 11, 1928, Orlando is awakened to a new sense of time and self; however, there is “no time now for reflections; Orlando was terribly late already” (299). Orlando ignores her sudden epiphany of time and self and instead tends to monotonous domestic duties; she goes shopping for household items. She shops absent-mindedly, reads her list in “a curious stiff voice”, and has

distracting visions of Sasha (300). Although she repeatedly consults her shopping list to do exactly “as the list bade her”, she is too distracted to search for the items (301). Orlando eventually “los[es] her shopping list and starts home without the sardines, the bath salts, or the boots” for her son (306). She resigns herself to the role of wife and homemaker but in her distraction reveals an underlying distaste for and neglect of domestic duties. Orlando never shows an androgynous vision in that the last chapters of the novel center around her as a befuddled, domesticated wife, alone and talking “nonsense aloud” to herself in Park Lane because her husband is out to sea (288). Orlando settles into domestic conformity and finds much about being a woman dissatisfying. Beverly Ann Schlack is incorrect in her argument that “Orlando is completely fulfilled as a woman by her marriage, motherhood, and artistic androgyny” (89). Orlando has many negative feelings about being a woman, when thinking about crinolines, basinettes, and other female “secrets”, Orlando feels “the most exquisite iteration of modesty and shame imaginable” (236). The biographer tells us that the spirit of the nineteenth century "took her and broke her" (244).

Subdued by the restrictions placed on her sex, Orlando abandons all masculine passions. She waits

patiently for Shel to return from Cape Horn while she enforces upon herself the fact that "it is not articles by Nick Greene or John Donne nor eight-hour bills nor covenants nor factory acts that matter; it is something useless, sudden, violent; something that costs a life" (287). Orlando removes herself from the "masculine" world of writing, politics, and career and instead concerns herself with the small, "feminine" things in life. Of course, her visions seem to her like a surge in self-understanding and artistic imagination. She realizes that what matters to her as a domesticated woman is “something rash, ridiculous, ‘like my hyacinth, husband I mean, Bonthrop, a toy boat on the Serpentine, its ecstasy” (287”. Orlando's submission “costs a life” in that her new devotion to what should matter to her as a woman as a wife and homemaker requires that she loses her past values; she abandons the masculine sphere of social and political consciousness (the male Orlando was a Duke and an Ambassador) in exchange for "useless" observations, such as the appraisal of a toy boat, as would be expected from an ignorant and complaisant woman. Of course, Orlando assumes that these "feminine" mental processes are leading her toward a positive recognition of her true self. Unfortunately, Orlando succumbs to the historical stereotyped visions of man as the "One" and woman as the "Other," or the emotional, inferior sex.

At the end of the novel, Orlando ultimately negates the importance of her writing when she allows her prized possession, her book, to lie unburied and disheveled on the ground. She conforms to expectations placed on her as a woman, and in the process she loses even her will to live; rather than marry, Orlando feels it would be a comfort "to lie down, never, never to get up again" (245). She reflects, "I have sought happiness through many ages and not found it; fame and missed it; love and not known it; life, and behold, death is better" (248).While spending time with Shelmerdine, often "the desire for death would overcome her"; the biographer explains that when Orlando calls Shel by his middle name, Bonthrop, she really means, "I'm dead" (259). Hence, after she completely surrenders to her expected role as a woman, she often feels depressed and dissatisfied. Orlando mourns repeatedly for the loss of Nell, Kit, and Sasha female lovers and friends. While she only laughs at memories of Harry the Archduke, at the thought of Nell, Kit, and Sasha, Orlando becomes "sunk in gloom, tears actually shaped themselves and she had long given over crying" (311). In her present conformity, Orlando will never experience the past adventures in which she fell in love with the Russian princess and entertained the company of bawdy prostitutes. She has been forced to give up such adventures and companionship long before. Years

after Sasha's rejection, Orlando has visions of her and cries "Faithless! Oh, Sasha!" (303). Orlando has no hope of recovering Sasha, or even Nell or Kit but she still clings to thoughts and images of her past love and lost companions, thoughts that accentuate her present unhappiness. Therefore, the numerous critics, including Avrom Fleishman, who argue that the novel has an Utopian ending fail to address Orlando's yearning for the past.

Paying close attention to the descriptive language near the end of the novel reinforces the idea that Orlando is headed toward total patriarchal indoctrination. When Shel's airplane hovers over Orlando's head, she bares her breasts to the bright shining moon, a feminine planet, so that her pearls tokens of her femininity "glowed like the eggs of some vast moon-spiders around her neck" (329). Orlando and Shel's reunion is laden with images of female fertility and submission; Shel "hovers" over Orlando. Her pearls "burnt like a phosphorescent flare in the darkness", more or less guiding Shel home to his submissive, conventional wife (329). Howard Harper is incorrect in his assessment that Orlando is an androgynous woman "who is in full command of her personality and heritage at the end" (202). On the contrary, with the flight of the goose at the end, the meaning of life still eludes Orlando. Because she is a man who becomes a woman, Orlando can

clearly see the inferior position of women. She remains unfulfilled as an individual, and in the end she appears trapped in the conventional lifestyle of a typical nineteenth-century woman. Through Orlando's final predicament, Woolf displays the negative impact of social and cultural conditioning of gender roles.

IV. Failure of Androgyny

Woolf's concept of androgyny fuses the genders, making masculine characteristics universal at the expense of feminine virtues. When analyzing Woolf's idea about androgyny, considering *A Room of One's Own,* alone leads to more questions than answers. While Woolf exalted artistic androgyny, she does not supports physical or social androgyny. Instead, she fortifies sex differences between men and women. Woolf's androgyny is merely a curtain draped over the more subversive defense of female difference.

In *Orlando*, we can see the failure of androgyny proposed by Woolf in *A Room of One's Own.* Orlando is more feminized rather than androgynous at the end of the novel. Orlando is much more restricted as a woman, both inwardly and outwardly. As a man, Orlando enjoyes the freedom to come and go as he pleased, he often spends late nights in ale house in the company of strangers and promiscuous women. Upon becoming a woman, Orlando must repeatedly remind herself that ladies are not supposed to walk in public places alone. She is soon forced under the protection of the Archduke's arm because she has lost the freedom and confidence she had as a man. The female Orlando resents the restrictions placed on the education of women, as well as society's attempt to subdue woman by fostering women's dependence upon men. Woolf does not

make Orlando free from the histories of repressions and limitations, but instead displays how these repressions and limitations are suddenly thrust upon her. When Orlando becomes a woman, she still drinks and rides like a man and is still as bold and active as a man. However, she slowly succumbs to the stereotype of feminine passivity because, as a woman, she is expected to behave as a lady. Unlike the male Orlando who openly ventures for both love and sensual pleasure, the female Orlando cannot actively pursue what she seeks life and a lover because a woman is expected to be passive and submissive. Orlando abandons masculine dress not only because of growing repression of Victorian society but also because she has internalized feminity. Orlando is forced into a feminine mold which proves more restrictive than her life as a man. Hence, she does not escape into androgyny in a physical or social level, and she does not experience a personal movement from repression to freedom, but just the opposite.

Orlando struggles with her poem as a woman the same as she did as a man, and she struggles with the poem after marrying Shelmerdine, is not that she finally feels complete or androgynous. Her success as a writer is not justified as the culmination of an androgynous vision, such that Woolf dreams necessary to every great artist in *A Room of One's Own.* In *A Room of One's Own,* Woolf calls

for an androgynous spirit or mind, a mind unconscious of its own sex as it is creating, while she celebrates what she sees as the inherent social, cultural and biological differences between men and women. While Woolf argues artists should strive for artistic androgyny, she acknowledged the limitations of androgyny in daily life.

Therefore, *Orlando* reveals Woolf's serious doubt about the potentiality of her own proposed state of androgyny, especially within the English age and culture where Woolf places Orlando. In *Orlando*, Woolf does not depict an ideal androgyny but actually shows why androgyny is impossible.

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