

A Modernist Perspective: the Concept of Gender Identity in Woolf's *Orlando*, from the Viewpoint of S.D. Beauvoir

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ABSTRACT Gender is a socially constructed code, which considers all the behaviors, actions and roles. The first decades of the 20th century witnesses the emergence of a new phenomenon known as gender consciousness. Feminists have argued for an understanding of femininity and masculinity as culturally required concepts. Gender role theory posits that boys and girls learn the appropriate behavior from their families, and the overall culture they grow up with. De Beauvoir has drawn the borderline for the role given to women in different cultures and maintains that no biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society. She further agrees that it is civilization as a whole that produces women. At first sight, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography*, seems to be a straightforward argument for androgyny. Nevertheless, the novel is about the interchangeability of his / her experience as man and woman, following the Freudian doctrine that although the sexes are different but they intermix. The book also follows a queer discourse as it sets masculine, feminine, male and female in circulation in order to shift their binary fixity. This paper focuses on the concept of gender identity prevalent in Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography*.

INTRODUCTION

The term "Gender" is used to define all the things one says or does in order to disclose himself or herself as having been a boy or man, girl or woman sexually, socially and etc. Gender role refers to all personal and social characteristics including the clothing, speech pattern, behaviors, actions, occupations, activities, etc. Since the women have been considered as the subordinated sex, the wave of feminism has resulted in a new phenomenon known as "gender consciousness". Consequently, the women gradually have become determined to find ways to undermine such subordination. They have tried to prove that although they are different but they are not inferior. They want to prove their abilities and for this purpose, they have decided to defy the socially constructed beliefs. They have made attempts to establish equality with men, both politically and socially. Most of the feminist critics believe that the society is the main cause of imposing genders distinctions.

A person's sex is a primary state of anatomic or physiologic parameters. A person's gender is a conclusion reached in a broad sense when in-

dividual gender identity and gender role are expressed. An often-used phrase to point out the difference, it has some merit when dealing with these definitions. Sexual identity is in the perineum; gender identity is in the cerebrum. Increasingly, the more subjective sense of gender identity takes precedence in evaluating patients' needs. In instances when a discrepancy exists between sex and gender, compassion and empathy are essential to foster better understanding and an appropriate relationship between the physician and the patient. Conceptually, professionals dealing with development may fairly state that sex is biologically determined, whereas gender is culturally determined.

Proponents of social learning theory criticize biological approaches for neglecting to consider the way in which behavior is affected by social influences. Markbank and Letherby, in their book entitled *Introduction to Gender: Social Science Perspective*, Second Edition, assert:

As biological approaches assume a biological dichotomy, they are unable, according to their critics, to explain diversity among women and among men. In addition, if we look at different cultures, be that across geographical or across history, it is clear that what it means to be woman or a man differs. In fact gender roles are exceedingly changeable across societies with certain tasks being assigned to the female

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in one society and to the male in another. Social learning theory purports that women and men are products not of biology but of culture and society that boys and girls learn gender – appropriate behavior from birth as we are all surrounded by gender socialization messages from our families. (Letherby et al. 2014; Markbank et al. 2014)

Most of the feminist critics believe that the society is the main cause for constructing genders. De Beauvoir (1908-1986)¹, in *The Second Sex* (1949), claims: “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as a feminine” (De Beauvoir 1949). In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler² makes a comment in this respect and states:

If there is something right in Beauvoir’s claim that ‘one is not born, but rather becomes a woman, it follows that woman itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignation. Even when gender seems to congeal into the most reified forms, the ‘congealing’ is itself an insistent and insidious practice, sustained and regulated by various social means. (Salih 2004)

According to Butler, feminism doesn’t accept biology as a destiny, but opposing this idea, it develops an account of patriarchal culture which maintains that masculine and feminine genders would inevitably be built upon bodies (male and female) by cultural bias; it insists that being a man or a woman on the basis of being male or female is inevitably a culturally made idea and as a consequence there will be no choice, difference or resistance. Being biologically a male, and not feeling like a man, is considered as a sign indicating that “the experience of a gendered cultural identity is considered an achievement”. She rejects the “sex/gender distinction in order to argue that there is no sex that is not always already a gender” (Salih 2004).

De Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1974) has become a classic of feminist philosophy. She offers a new understanding of social relations between men and women. Her interpretation of the social construction of femininity as “Other” paves the way for the theoretical discussions of

the second wave. De Beauvoir explains subjectivity (our sense of self) through existence philosophy. Existentialism proposes that one exists first, and through one’s acts, one becomes something neither society nor organized religion should limit his or her freedom to live authentically. However, since men have claimed the category of self for themselves, women are relegated to the status of “Other”. Consequently, the category of woman has no substance except as an extension of male fantasy and fears (De Beauvoir 1974). Since all cultural representations of the world around us have been produced by men, women read themselves in terms of masculine definitions and “dream through the dreams of men”. Thus, woman is required to accept her status of the other, “making herself object” and “renouncing her autonomy”. This status of “Other” can be changed if women learn to access the subject hood they have so far been denied. Women must achieve complete economic and social equity, which will enable an inner metamorphosis to take place. When a female becomes woman, she will be a subject as man is a subject, and an “Other” to man is as much as he is “Other” to her (De Beauvoir 1974).

Theoretical Framework

Social role theory proposes that the social structure is the underlying force for the gender differences. It also proposes that the sex-differentiated behavior is driven by the division of labor between two sexes within a society. Division of labor, in turn, creates gender roles, which leads to gendered social behavior. These socially constructed gender roles are considered to be hierarchical and characterized as a male-advantaged gender hierarchy. The activities men involved in were often those that provided them with more access to resources and decision making power, rendering the former not only superior or dispositional attributes via correspondence bias, but also higher status and authority as society progressed.

As far as the question of identity and gender division is concerned, Freud’s notion of masculinity and femininity cannot be underestimated. Freud (1856-1939), unlike his pupil Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961), in later years, emphasized the point that: “it is only in the male child that we find the faithful combination of love for the one parent and simultaneous hatred for the other as

rival" (P.F. 1993)³. It is from this point that Freud makes a division between the dominance of sexes, and therefore 'self'. He insists that sexual identity had nothing to do with biology or physiology that "what constitutes masculinity and femininity is an unknown characteristic which anatomy cannot lay hold of" (P.F. 1993). In another essay, entitled "Some Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes," published in 1925, he argues that: "All human individuals, as a result of their bisexual disposition and of cross-inheritance, combine in themselves both masculine and feminine characteristics, so that pure masculinity and femininity remain theoretical constructions of uncertain content" (S.E. 1956)⁴.

Freud notices that bisexuality in hysterical women, draws attention to the dual behavior of his patients, that is, simultaneous femininity and masculinity in both men and women equally.

He recognizes the persisting self-division in a man or woman. Nevertheless, one cannot deny that he considers that women have a more prominent bisexuality than men have; this, in turn, would lead to instability. This change of attitudes in Freud is well established by Juliet Mitchell in "introduction I," a work on feminine sexuality where she maintains that Freud had come to "stand for the very uncertainty of sexual division itself" (Mitchell 1982).

Objectives

1. Investigating gender identity in Woolf's *Orlando*
2. Investigating the effect of De Beauvoir's theory on Woolf's *Orlando*

METHODOLOGY

An important issue which is discussed in the 20th century is "gender role," with an emphasis on the different attitudes towards the distinction between "gender role" and "sex". This requires that one turns to the Freudian concept of "self". On the other hand, the division in "self" has also been an important issue in the modernist literature of the 20th century and Virginia Woolf's works, in particular. Since Woolf (1882-1941) has been greatly influenced by the feminist theorists like De Beauvoir and Judith Butler, therefore a study of the latter's theory seems substantial.

For this purpose, the author has used library and descriptive – analytical method, based on the analysis of Woolf's modernist novel, *Orlando* (1928).

OBSERVATION AND DISCUSSION

The term "gender role" refers a socially constructed code, which considers all the behaviors, actions, roles and performances of a particular sex quite relevant. The more recent definition of gender role emphasizes on the fluidity of gender; it argues that there are no rigid boundaries which categorize the term gender in a binary code, male and female. A gender study is an interdisciplinary field of study dealing with the concept of gender and its role, and its relation with other phenomena. The term "gender" denotes the cultural constitution of notions concerning femininity or masculinity and the ways in which these serve ideologically to maintain gendered identities. It represents the socially acceptable and socially acquired forms of being either male or female. It indicates that a person may have male sex and feminine attributes at the same time, in relation to the cultural norms of his society, that a female may exhibit masculine traits. Nevertheless, Judith Butler argues against the priority given to biology as an essence that underpins even the concept that gender is performative. She believes that "gender is not just a process, but it is a particular type of process, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame" (Salih 2004).

Gender criticism, like the gender studies of which it is a part, is based on the premise that, while one's sex as male or female is determined by anatomy, gender which indicates masculinity or femininity in personality traits and behavior, can be largely independent of anatomy; the latter is a social construction that is diverse, variable, and dependent on historical circumstances. Gender criticism analyzes differing conceptions of gender and their role in the writing, reception, subject matter, and evaluations of literary works. (Abrams 2005)

On the other hand, as a modernist novelist, Woolf has taken a new step in her modernist approach to the English social life. In her work entitled, *Romantic Moderns* (2010), Alexandra Harris takes an original look at the lives and work of English writers and artists from Virginia Woolf to John Piper. Harris turns her atten-

tion exclusively to the life and work of Virginia Woolf, and believes: "The modernism we know about, or think we do, was fierce and sharp-edged, all the better to scythe down the past and start all over again. During the interwar period, making things new became the mantra" (Harris 2010). Whereas high modernism wanted to lay waste to the material past in order to re-fashion it upon rational lines, romantic modernists had a soft spot for what had gone before.

They loved country churches, tea in china cups wreathed with roses, old manor houses, abandoned fishing smacks, Gypsy caravans and, just as important, the soft English rain that smudged the outlines of all these precious things. Above all, their sensibility was local. While the other modernism saw national boundaries as just one more example of pernicious Ruritanian debris, romantic moderns celebrated the way England's crinkled coast enclosed the rooted and particular. Trees, stones, bodies, walls: these were no longer the flotsam that needed to be excluded from art. They were what art was all about. (Harris 2010)

Harris's second, and trickier, task is to show how many of the people whose high modernist credentials have always seemed impeccable were actually deeply drawn to the impure forms of the past.

Another term which runs side by side with gender is the word "sex" which refers to a biological category including natural differences between female and male. Butler, has her own detailed and controversial definition of sex, which is strongly accepted by some critics and hardly rejected by others. The definition is similar to her definition of gender, sexual identity and performativity. She draws from a wide range of thinkers and writers to describe sex as Althusserian "interpellation," Austin's notion of "performative," Freudian "signification," Foucauldian "constructed," and "recitable used by Derrida" (Salih 2004). Judith Butler rejects the sex/gender distinction, and argues: "There is no sex that is not always already a gender" (Salih 2004). In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler even goes further and believes that sex is gender. The concluding idea can be briefly argued in this sentence: "Nobody exists unless it is gendered" (Salih 2004). So the reality of a material body is accepted in a case that it is framed and formed in a socially defined context. Butler believes that sex or, as she really means, sexual identity is allocated to anyone

when she or he is born. The term "allocation" justifies the idea that sexual identity is not a natural or given term. Butler accordingly discusses that "sex" is not a cause but it is rather an effect. "In *Bodies*, Butler deploys the same argument in order to reveal how the apparently natural body turns out to be a naturalized effect of discourse; she has introduced body as a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of a boundary, fixity and surface we call matter" (Salih 2004).

In his *Totem and Taboo* (1913), Freud argues that at the beginning of the human history, primitive people sought to master their mental conflicts by projecting them on to the environment and enshrining them in taboos and laws against incest and sexual experiences. Now, in a later stage of human development, it is our task to translate these laws back into psychology in order to understand how we have constructed our world in different ways at different cultural and historical moments.

It is worth noting that Woolf's in-depth relation to psychoanalysis is related to feminist criticism. Woolf's criticism is gender-marked and period-marked. Her writing about female desire and the relation to the Mother was a part of the question of female sexuality that was being debated in the 1920s. It is certainly relevant that from the 1970s onwards, many women writers should have felt that for female identity to be adequately explored Freudian or Freudian-oriented concepts needed to be redefined. This has made Woolf's relation to psychoanalysis as we describe it inseparable from the question of gender. The psychoanalytic interpretations of Woolf's work have in the past twenty years or so come from feminist quarters that whilst placing "madness" at the core of the work, have read it very differently, as the assertion of a certain kind of femininity; as a protest against a dominant male society.

The portrayal of Woolf as a feminist social and political commentator in the 1930s is now so familiar within Woolf studies that to observe that, according to Alice Wood, "she channeled her intellectual focus into critiquing patriarchy at this time has become something of a cliché. To her contemporaries, however, Woolf's principal works of the early 1930s did not necessarily appear any more politicized than her writing of the 1920s" (Wood 2014).

Orlando: A Biography

Orlando: A Biography, was first published on 11th October 1928 by Virginia Woolf. The novel has been influential stylistically, in the history of women's writing and gender studies. The contradictions, oppositions and absurdities of life characterize the thematic sexual ambivalences present in *Orlando*, which is the grand historical picture of Woolf's friend in real life, named Vita Sackville-West.⁵ Immediately after visiting the Sackville-West Mansion in 1924, Woolf began writing *Orlando*, and portraying Vita as Orlando, the main character of the novel, constructing the latter as an aristocratic gentleman and artist who would live, fantastically, for three and a half centuries.

The book is written in the form of a history and fantasy, dealing with the experiences of an aristocratic man who happened to live in the 16th century and live for a period of 150 years, and living the other 150 years as a woman. A narrator narrates these experiences. The protagonist experiences individual and social life both as a man and a woman, respectively. Orlando starts out as a young, wealthy nobleman who takes interest in dallying about the royal court with lovely noblewomen; he ends the novel as a deep, reflective woman. She is a part of nature, and thus, not immortal; she realizes that this self too, will die. Finally, by maturing and by reaching middle age, Orlando finds that she has gained what she was looking for: life and a lover.

In her diary, Woolf points out: "I feel the need of an escapade after these serious poetic experimental books whose form is always so closely considered. I want to kick up my heels and be off" (Minow-Pinkney 1987). Referring to the novel as an escapade, Woolf intended to find a way of masking protest against the prevailing sexual codes. Again, in another letter to Vita, Virginia Woolf wrote that *Orlando* was meant to be "Vita, only with a change about from one sex to another" (Sackville-West 1955). Ironically, to the reader's amazement, during the process of writing the work Woolf kept on communicating with Vita. In one of her letters to the latter, she wrote: "The poor wolves have been having colds in the head. I am writing at great speed. For the third time I begin a sentence, the truth is that I am so engulfed in Orlando I can think of nothing else" (Sackville-West 1955).

Woolf allows neither time nor gender to constrain her writing. The protagonist, Orlando, ages only thirty-six years and changes gender from man to woman. Although Orlando may have been intended to be a satire or a holiday, it touches on important issues of gender. Instead of the woman insisting on parading her own femininity in order to distract attention from her masculinity, Orlando presents a woman masquerading as a man in order to disguise his / her feminine desire for other women. This is clearly indicated in the following passage, narrated by the narrator: "As all Orlando's loves had been women, now as a woman, through the culpable laggardly of the human frame to adapt itself to convention, though she herself was a woman, it was still a woman she loved" (Woolf 1995). This falls in line with what Freud had earlier pointed out regarding femininity.

The first part of the novel shows Orlando as undoubtedly a man whose masculinity is mingled with femininity. The narrator strongly states that Orlando is definitely a boy; "He - for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it" (Woolf 1995). The narrator further indicates this in the description of Orlando:

The red of his cheeks was covered with peach down; the down on the lips was only a little thicker than the down on the cheeks. Nothing disturbed the arrowy nose in its short tense flight, the hair was dark, the ears small, and fitted closely to the head. We must admit that he had eyes like drenched violets, so large that the water seemed to have brimmed in them and winded them; and a brow like a swelling of a marble dome pressed between the two blank medallion which his temples. (Woolf 1995)

Orlando's age is not the main concern in *Orlando: A Biography*; instead, what is crux here is his/her oscillation from one sex to the other. We first meet Orlando in the Elizabethan period when he has a passionate affair with a Russian princess and is determined to become a writer. We next find him in Turkey as British ambassador. Later, he is changed into a woman who continues to live throughout the 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries.

Orlando deals with the issue of androgyny. "If androgyny is a metaphor for change, a way of interpreting the self as theatrical, as role playing at sexuality, the staging of the scene of the sex change is the most theatrical moment of the novel" (Woolf 1995).

As mentioned earlier, for Butler and DeBeauvoir, feminism does not accept biology as a destiny, but opposing this idea, it develops an account of patriarchal culture, which maintains that masculine and feminine genders would inevitably be built upon bodies (male and female) by cultural bias. This is exactly what happens for Orlando.

On the other hand, the other definition, which is the more recent one for gender, is considered the fluidity of gender. Gender ambiguity is defined in a close relation to the freedom of choosing one special gender. Orlando's sex change is a very important scene for determining the answers to these questions. As Orlando wakes up a woman, she looks at her body in a full-length mirror and composedly walks to her bath. She is not at all disconcerted by her change in gender. At first, she acts no differently, either. When she travels on board the English ship, in women's clothes, she immediately begins to feel the difference. The skirts that she is wearing and the way that people react to her, make her feel and act differently.

When Orlando goes out into the night, a woman dressed as a man, she finds herself taking on traditional male mannerisms. In the sixteenth century, he wears fine clothes and serves as a courtier to his Queen; in the seventeenth century, he learns the Turkish language and adapts himself to exotic customs; in the eighteenth century, he figures out how to fit in with London society, and in the nineteenth century, he dons petticoats and finds a husband. Orlando knows he must change with each new adventure in order to survive. However, such conformity becomes oppressive to Orlando. She grows tired of changing herself to satisfy those around her. Ultimately, when she reaches maturity in the twentieth century, she resists conforming, choosing instead to exist in her own internal world. She realizes that though she has matured, as people do, she has always been the same person all along. This theme of "conforming to society" plays an important role in the novel. As Orlando grows to be an independent mind, she rejects the idea of conformity, choosing to remain however, she chooses to be.

Even after Orlando's actual sex change, he continues to switch between clothes of both genders. This motif functions in the novel to emphasize the similarities between men and women, despite the different clothes society would

have them wear. Once she has experienced what it is like to be a woman, Orlando does not want to give this up, yet she longs for the freedom she had as a man. Here, Woolf suggests that perhaps society is too rigid with regard to the roles it forces men and women to play. Because they are so alike underneath their clothes, the genders should be allowed more freedom in their actions.

As a woman in the 19th century, Orlando finds herself, of all the centuries she has lived in, least in sympathy with "the spirit of the age" (Woolf 1995). These are at the most imperative in relation to sex and sexual identity. Marder believes that the book, at the first sight, seems to be a straightforward argument for androgyny. Orlando's story is about his / her experience as woman and man. Although sexes are different, but they are inclined to intermix incessantly. In every human being, a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place. Gender distinctions are only held up in order to be knocked down. The irony here is that: "Orlando was a woman – Lord Palmerston had just proved it. Moreover, when we are writing the life of a woman, we may, waive our demand for action, and substitute love instead. Love, the poet has said, is woman's whole existence" (Marder 1965). Although his / her sex differs from century to century, but one cannot ignore her fixed attitude towards love; ironically Orlando herself is able to recognize her feminine attributes. Ironically as a woman, she is endowed with a tendency for love, even love for the same sex. The biographer states:

And as all Orlando's loves had been women, now, through the culpable laggardly of the human frame to adapt itself to convention, though she herself was a woman, it was still a woman she loved; and if the consciousness of being of the same sex had any effect at all, it was to quicken and deepen those feelings, which she had had as a man. For now, a thousand hints and mysteries became plain to her that were then dark. Now, the obscurity, which divides the sexes, was removed (Woolf 1995).

Orlando's beauty as both a man and a woman is associated with Freudian concept of femininity, which is treated, by the latter, as a veil to cloak the narcissistic wound of castration. In his "Femininity" (1933), Freud states: "Thus we attribute a larger amount of narcissism to femininity, which also affects women's choice of object,

so that to be loved is a stronger need for them than to love. The women are bound to value their charms more highly as a late compensation for their original sexual inferiority" (P.F. 1992).

The narrator also believes that "the difference between the sexes is, happily, one of great profundity. Clothes are but a symbol of something hid beneath". This reminds us of what De Beauvoir considers about societal gender role. The biographer insists that it is possible that there are so many people at once in one's spirit and as a result; it is very normal that our main character, Orlando asserts: "Come on! I'm sick to death of this particular self. I want another" (Woolf 1995). In Orlando's case so many selves are found some of which are named such as the young 'boy who cut the nigger's head', the one on the hill, the one who saw the poet in the kitchen, the one who attracted the Queen, or the other one who fell in love with Sasha. The young ambassador, the soldier, the traveler, the gipsy, the fine lady, the girl in love with literature and life, the woman who married Shel, or so many other ones which can be named separately while all belong to the same spirit. All these beings which the biographer calls 'selves' are actually different sides of the same psyche, or in other word different archetypes of one Self, the one consists of all these parts and has a controlling power over them and shapes them to make one whole.

What appeared certain was that the one she needed most kept aloof, for she was changing her selves as quickly as she drove – there was a new one at every corner- as happens when the unconscious self, which is the uppermost, and has the power to desire, wishes to be nothing but one self. This is what some people call the true self, and it is, they say, compact of all the selves we have it in us to be; commanded and locked up by the Captain self, the Key self, which amalgamates and controls them all. Orlando was certainly seeking this self as the reader can judge. (Woolf 1995)

For Orlando, the masculine activities seem to be great; however she feels pity for men stating: "I shall never be able to crack a man over the head, or tell him he lies in his teeth, or draw my sword and run him through the body, or sit among my peers, or wear a coronet, or walk in procession, or sentence a man to death, or lead an army, or prance down Whitehall on a charger, or wear seventy-two different medals on my

breast" (Woolf 1995). Suddenly she perceives how low is her opinion of the other sex. "To fall from a mast-head because you see a woman's ankle; to dress up like a Guy Fawkes and parade the streets, so that women may praise you; to deny a woman teaching lest she may laugh at you; to be the slave of frailest chit in petticoats, and yet to go about as if you were the lord of creation – Heaven!" (Woolf 1995).

Once she boards the ship, she thinks of her femininity and thanks God for being a woman, and not a man; as a result, she can fully enjoy the great deep feeling provoked by love: "Better it is, she thought, to be clothed with poverty and ignorance, which are the dark garments of the female sex; better to leave the rule and discipline of the world to others; better to quit the martial ambition, the love of power, and all the other manly desires if so one can more fully enjoy the most exalted raptures known to human spirit, which are, she said aloud, as her habit was when deeply moved, 'contemplation, solitude, love. Praise God I'm a woman'" (Woolf 1995).

The narrator calls the reader's attention to some examples of changes in Orlando; these changes include looking at the mirror for long, crying when the horses galloped quickly, being more modest about her writing and proud in herself at the same time and fearing for her safety which are all some feminine characteristics; "the change of clothes had, some philosophers will say, much to do with it. Vein trifles as they seem, clothes have, they say, more important offices than merely to keep us warm. They change our view of the world and the world's view of us" (Woolf 1995).

It is as a woman that Orlando feels that she is trapped in a patriarchal society where men assume themselves superior to women. So it is here that she thinks that she needs a supportive power to lean on, and to seek protection; "She might, indeed, have found herself gravely discommoded by the pressure of the crowd – she had forgotten that ladies are not supposed to walk in public places alone – had not a tall gentleman stopped and offered her the protection of his arm" (Woolf 1995).

CONCLUSION

The year Woolf wrote the novel *Orlando: A Biography*, was a year when universal suffrage was granted to women regardless of their age or

marital status; it was a time when inequality persisted in Woolf's contemporary society. It is worth noting that Woolf's attitude towards the plight of women is a part of her activity in the field of feminist criticism. She is mainly concerned with the gender issues and the complication it has caused in the male dominated societies. Her writing about female desire and the relation to the Mother was a part of the question of female sexuality that was being debated in the 1920s.

The difference between the genders is a dominant theme in *Orlando: A Biography*. When the male Orlando wakes up and finds herself a female, she is not at all disconcerted by the change in her gender. Initially, she feels no difference between what she is and what she has been earlier, but as time passes society makes her conscious about her role as a woman. This falls in line with what Woolf intends to show; that gender roles are not biological but societal. This falls in line with De Beauvoir's idea on gender role; she prefers to consider gender as a fluid and variable attribute which can be differed in various contexts and times rather than being a rigidly fixed and unchangeable one in different times and places. It also justifies, that one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.

The novel, *Orlando: A Biography*, does not only display the division in gender role and identity crisis, it also depicts a sense of history as it is assumed by a modernist novelist like Virginia Woolf.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Woolf's writing about female desire and the relation to the Mother was a part of the question of female sexuality that was being debated in the 1920s. It is certainly relevant that from the 1970s onwards, many women writers should have felt that for female identity to be adequately explored Freudian or Freudian-oriented concepts needed to be redefined. This has made Woolf's relation to psychoanalysis as we describe it inseparable from the question of gender.

What is most fascinating here is the fact that Woolf's *Orlando* was, for Woolf, a game of sorts – a lighter satire and departure from her more rigid works; it is incredibly important and speaks seriously, though fantastically, covering a range of time period from Elizabethan to the early 20th Century, particularly in terms of the literary arts

in any given movement, will be fascinating for serious readers, but the beautiful and sensuous prose as well as the unusual topic and uninhibited re-imagining of reality and time make this work unique. Today gender differences and gender role is still a predominant topic in many literary works throughout the world, and it can be further reconsidered in order to remove the bias persisting in different societies.

NOTES

1. Simone De Beauvoir, the French feminist
2. The Contemporary American Feminist
3. The abbreviated form P.F. represents The Penguin Freud Library, Vols. 1-15, published between 1990 and 1993.
4. The abbreviated form S.E. represents *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vols. 1-23, published between 1953 and 1974.
5. Vita Sackville-West, a close friend with whom it was believed that Woolf had affairs, with the complicity of both their husband.

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