ATILIM UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
ENGLISH CULTURE AND LITERATURE DOCTORAL PROGRAM

BEYOND SEXUALITY: TRANSGENDER BODIES IN THE NOVELS OF VIRGINIA WOOLF, ANGELA CARTER AND JEANETTE WINTERSON

Dissertation

Sezgi Öztop Haner

Ankara – 2020

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Supervisor
Prof. Dr. Belgin Elbir

Ankara – 2020

ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

This is to certify that this dissertation titled "Beyond Sexuality: Transgender Bodies in the Novels of Virginia Woolf, Angela Carter and Jeanette Winterson" and prepared by Sezgi Öztop Haner meets with the committee's approval unanimously as dissertation in the field of English Language and Literature following the successful defense of the dissertation conducted on 22.01.2020.

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ÖZ

ÖZTOP HANER, Sezgi. Cinsiyetin Ötesinde: *Orlando, The Passion of New Eve ve Written on the Body* Eserlerindeki Cinsiyet Değiştiren Bedenler, Doktora Tezi, Ankara, 2020.

20. yüzyıl kadın yazarlarının romanlarındaki "transgender" anlatıcıların mevcudiyetleriyle yaratılmış olan toplumsal cinsiyet belirsizliğinin ve değişken cinsiyetin önemi bu tez çalışmasının geniş kapsamını oluşturmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, bu tez çalışması transgender anlatıcıların rolünü ve beden aracılığı ile ifade edilen sabit cinsel kimlik statüsünün eleştirisini irdelemek ve uygun bir bağlama yerleştirmek için Virginia Woolf'un *Orlando,* Angela Carter'ın *The Passion of New Eve* ve Jeanette Winterson'ın *Written on the Body* eserlerini inceler. Bu bakımdan, Virginia Woolf'un *Orlando* eseri toplumsal cinsiyet olgusunun nasıl tekrar şekillendiğini ve yeniden ifade edildiğini ve aynı zamanda bir bedenin nasıl sürekli dönüşüm içerisinde olduğunu gösterir. Sonrasında, Angela Carter'ın *The Passion of New Eve* eseri bireyin toplumsal kimliğinin nasıl sürekli değiştiğini ve nasıl dünyayı sürekli olarak tekrar şekillendirdiğini göstermektedir. Diğer taraftan, Jeanette Winterson'ın *Written on the Body* romanı anlatıcının cinsiyet ve cinsel kimliği belirtilmeden okuyucunun anlatıcının cinsiyetini tartışabilmesinin nasıl mümkün olduğunu ve metindeki cinsiyet kimliğinin eksikliği karşısında okuyucu anlatıcıya nasıl cinsel kimlik öngörebiliyor konularına dikkat çekmiştir. Böylelikle bu tez sınırlar ötesi transgender bir figürün varlığı ile toplumsal cinsiyet belirsizliğinin her bir romanda nasıl oluşturulduğunu ve bu oluşumun okuyucuların zihnindeki toplumsal cinsiyet olgusu dinamiklerini sorgulamalarını ve cinsiyet ve cinsel kimlik kategorileri üzerine tekrar düşünmelerini sağlamıştır. Ayrıca, bu tez her bir yazarın cinsiyet değiştiren bedenleri dilin belirsizliği ve zaman ve mekân algısının kopukluğu üzerinden nasıl metnin içine işlediğini göstermiştir. Aynı zamanda, bu tez her bir romandaki transgender figürün geleneksel cinsel kimlik ve toplumsal cinsiyet algısının yapılandırılması, sürdürülmesi ve yayılması hususunda etkin olan baskın söylemlerin yeniden yapılandırılmasını sağlamada gerekli bir araç olarak karşımıza çıkartıldığını göstermiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Virginia Woolf, Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson, transgender, toplumsal cinsiyet belirsizliği

ABSTRACT

ÖZTOP HANER, Sezgi. Beyond Sexuality: Transgender Bodies in the Novels of Virginia Woolf, Angela Carter and Jeanette Winterson, Ph.D. Dissertation, Ankara, 2020.

The broad concern of this dissertation is the significance of gender ambiguity and fluid sexuality created by the presence of transgender narrators in the novels of three twentieth century women novelists. Hence, this dissertation studies *Orlando* (1928) by Virginia Woolf, *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) by Angela Carter, and *Written on the Body* (1992) by Jeanette Winterson in order to examine and contextualize the role of transgender narrators and their critique of stable gender position articulated through body. In this respect, Woolf's *Orlando* shows how the novel both engages with the reformulation and rearticulation of gender and depicts a body in the process of transitioning. Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* demonstrates how the subjects are already transgendered and continuously reshaping the material world through the embodiment of the transgendered being. On the other hand, Winterson's *Written on the Body* urges the reader to consider how possible to discuss sex and sexuality of the narrator when his/her gender is never exposed and how the reader constitutes an identity for the narrator and an entrance into the text in the absence of sex. Then, this dissertation will show the way gender ambiguity is created by the existence of transgressive transgender figure in each novel, which enables the reader to interrogate gender dynamics and to reconsider the categories of sex and sexuality with alteration in mind. This dissertation will also indicate that each writer implants the transgender body throughout their examination of language's ambiguity and the disruption of spatiality and temporality. At the same time, this dissertation demonstrates how the transgender figure in each novel is functioned as an essential component for the revision of dominant discourses involved in the construction, maintenance and spread of conventional gender identities and sexualities.

Key Words: Virginia Woolf, Angela Carter, Jeanette Winterson, transgender, gender ambiguity

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The broad concern of this dissertation is the significance of gender ambiguity and fluid sexuality created by the presence of transgender narrators in the novels of three twentieth century women novelists. Hence, this dissertation studies *Orlando* (1928) by Virginia Woolf, *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) by Angela Carter, and *Written on the Body* (1992) by Jeanette Winterson in order to examine and contextualize the role of transgender narrators and their critique of stable gender position articulated through body.

This dissertation attempts to find out how the discourses of three twentieth century women novelists generate new conceptualizations of gender, sexuality, and body that transgress dualistic and essentialist conceptualizations. Therefore, these women novelists offer new ways of thinking about gender and body through the exploration of transgender identities represented in these novels. For these purposes, Woolf, Carter, and Winterson introduce "transgenderism" into their narratives to challenge the system of oppression and privilege in which binary and normative conceptions of gender exist. Accordingly, these women novelists make use of the potential of transgender narratives to open up spaces for imagining alternatively transgender subjects and transgender bodies. In the novels studied in this dissertation transgender subject positions and transgender bodies are not presented as illusions to be shattered or deviation to be avoided. Rather, the transgender narratives lead to the construction and circulation of new alternative discourses through the revision of three conventional discourses including biography, myth, and romance that contribute to the transgender visibility and agency as well as the development of trans perspective.

Accordingly, the main research questions to be dealt with during this dissertation are as follows: What is the relationship between the narrator's transgender subjectivity and the narrative structure through which the narrator's subjectivity is articulated? How does this relationship between the transgender narrator and narrative structure destabilize the conventional gender assumptions? What narrative strategies are used to convey the theme of gender's instability? In other words, to what extent does the transgender narrator in these works achieve a fluid and flexible narrative? How is a transgender subject and his/her relationship to the body involved in the

discourses of three twentieth century women novelists? How is gender instability articulated through body in each of these novels? In order to answer these questions, this dissertation will engage with the issues raised in the field of trans studies such as the definition of transgender, the possibility of realizing a transgender subjectivity, the significance of body in determining transgender subjectivity, the thematic and stylistic features of transgender narratives.

The introductory chapter attempts to engage *Orlando*, *The Passion of New Eve*, and *Written on the Body* and their respective authors in conversation with one another over time in order to highlight the historical significance of the twentieth century with regard to gender ambiguity. Evidently, Woolf's, Carter's and Winterson's manifestations of subversive transgender identities and transgender bodies in their novels are deeply influenced by the dominant modes of thinking, tendencies and social movements throughout the twentieth century, together with their own personal gender and body politics. In this sense, this introductory chapter will briefly provide the answer for the following question: what attracts these three twentieth century women novelists to provide an alternative to the essentialist conceptualization of gender? In this sense, the introductory chapter will start with examining the historical period these novels were presented in. For this aim, it will be helpful to examine what possibilities of sexual expressions were available for people and what particular sexual practices and cultural, social norms and boundaries were prescribed along with how transgender identification unsettled the prevalent understanding of gender throughout the twentieth century.

The first chapter presents the story of a transgressive figure who lives through four centuries and undergoes a sex change, revealing *Orlando*'s playful and fantastic experimentation with the conventional understanding of gender, subjectivity, sexuality, body, time and space: gender as transgendered and elusive, sexuality as fluid, subjectivity as shifting and multiple, body, time and space as felt. This chapter also demonstrates the erotic confusion concerning gender performance of cross-dressing or masquerade of femininity as well as the artifice of the body as a medium. At the same time, in the first chapter the problematization of biography and the concept of love come to the fore.

The second chapter presents that in *The Passion of New Eve*, Carter uses the novel's narrator Eve/lyn's transsexual body and transgendered mind to critique the patriarchal images of femininity as the symbols of profound feminine power, particularly, the image of the mother goddess. In addition, she introduces a post-apocalyptic United States as a commentary on the fragmentation of a country that has founded its norms and ideals on false myths, such as the Christian origin myth of Adam and Eve and the sexual difference it imposes. Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* also points out feminism's inconsistent relationship to pornography by means of the character Leilah and cinema's complicity in the distribution of myths of femininity by means of the character Tristessa. Additionally, the second chapter also draws attention to gender performativity to articulate how a gendered being comes to be the figure of cyborg. In this respect, the second chapter illustrates the transgender experience to argue that the cyborg image within an alternative discourse mediates non-normative embodiment and its reflections in the mainstream world.

In the third chapter, Winterson's writing indicates the fluidity and relativistic viewpoints of postmodern culture, in which identity, reality, time and place are constantly destabilized and liberated and narrative comes to be ruptured and unreliable. Then, this chapter illustrates how one's erotic desire finds such a complicated articulation when s/he comes close to death, liberated and unattached enough to experience and embody his/her sexuality on his/her own terms. In the third chapter, Winterson creates a gender undeclared character for whom cancerous body generates a fluid subjectivity, an intense eroticism. The third chapter also shows how Winterson undermines the heterosexist connotations that the genre of romance elicits. In the third chapter, Winterson places the encounters and relationship between the narrator and Louise in virtual reality, in a fantasy realm, which seems to assign priority to masquerade and the performative aspects of gender, subjectivity and body.

The concluding chapter indicates that the relations between how *Orlando*, *The Passion of New Eve*, and *Written on the Body* engage with the reformulation and re-articulation of gender in its respective historical period are manifold. Apparently, each of three texts presents a transgender identification and embodiment that oscillates between the poles of gender binary and portrays a body in the constant process of becoming and transitioning. In this sense, Orlando, Eve/lyn, and Winterson's unnamed

narrator start up a journey or route for new visions of the world and renewed hope for a complete recognition of transgender identification and embodiment in a heteronormative society we live.

The concluding chapter further presents that the plots of these novels revolve around these transgender characters' love for another, hence foregrounding the problematization and destabilization of compulsory heterosexuality as well as the concept of love. These novels also present an inconclusive ending, in which the narrator's future is left uncertain. At the same time, in these novels, the transgender figure serves as an essential component for the revision of a dominant discourse involved in the construction, maintenance and spread of conventional gender identities and sexualities. In this manner, Woolf takes on biography, Carter explores myths of gender and Winterson examines the heterosexual romance. These discourses are re-visioned in connection with the presence of transgender subject at their centers. Each writer also implants the transgender body throughout their examination of language's ambiguity and the disruption of spatiality and temporality. Apparently, in their novels Woolf, Carter, and Winterson create a "separate reality" that is in fact the cultural reality they are writing (Winterson, *Art Objects* 43).

CHAPTER ONE

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: THE EVOLUTION OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY

The understanding and conceptualization of gender provides means of differentiating between any biological or essential features of men and women. As a ubiquitous feature of social life, this sharp distinction between genders or the continued differentiation of women from men governs day to day life. That is, social life can be said to be greatly gendered. Nearly anything can be considered as either "feminine" or "masculine" in social life, and these oppositional gender categories are assumed to be social products or entities and thereby culturally defined and enforced.

As Judith Lorber writes in her essay "Believing is Seeing: Biology as Ideology," "The paradox of 'human nature' is that it is always a manifestation of cultural meanings, social relationships and power politcs" (578). Enacting and employing available cultural images, meanings and practices, we invest gendered patterns of behaviour and stereotypes as well as the dynamic system of gendered power relations into our social life. Then, we all contribute to the reproduction of the gendered meanings of personalities, emotions and relations of power and inequality between men and women. Thus, it is significant to examine the processes and mechanisms formulating gender as historically specific sociocultural power relations that construct the subject to ensure both the development of "normal" sexualities and the assumed continuation of heterosexuality and the gender binary.

It is apparent that gender as a historical, social and cultural entity has been formed and created by a multiplicity of forces and which has been subjected to a complicated historical transformation. In this respect, it is essential to examine the historical period these novels were presented in. For this aim, it is significant to perceive what possibilities of sexual expressions were present for individuals and what particular sexual practices, cultural and social limitations, norms and taboos were dictated together with how transgender people's subversive sexual desires and identities disrupted the dominant understanding of gender throughout the twentieth century. In this respect, each of these women novelists uses the transgender character

to point to a specific concern she had regarding the time and culture in which she was living and writing.

Several historians have characterized the turn of the nineteenth century as a significant turning point in the conceptualization of gender and sexuality (Adams 80; Katz 67). As Jonathan Katz points out in *The Invention of Heterosexuality*, it is during this time that the beliefs, mores and tastes of the white middle class had a considerable influence on public discourse and often led to stricter dichotomy in gender roles, the construction of various "perversions," and the beginning of the construction of "normal" (82). Such dichotimization supplanted the idea that sexual behaviours could be related to particular sexual types of individuals. Then, heterosexuals came to refer to people tended to be drawn to people of a different gender while homosexuals became known as people drawn toward members of their own gender.

Over the course of the early twentieth century, heterosexuality came to be equated with normal sexual development: being a "real" man and being a "real" woman. While heterosexual identity appears to be privileged, essentialist and naturalized social sexual pattern in order to promote the notion of normal, homosexual identity is characterized as an acquired or inherited pathological gender inversion that was potentially abnormal and unnatural. It is clear that the assumption of heterosexuality identifies other sexual practices as deviant or nonexistent.

In this respect, heterosexuality turns out to be inherently superior to non-heterosexuality. This understanding of heterosexuality, however, has been the subject matter of endless examination in feminist as well as queer, lesbian and gay theory. For instance, in his work James T. Sears makes a distinction between two indications of heterosexism: cultural heterosexism, which is the act of stigmatizing and disparaging non-heterosexuality in cultural institutions from the church to courthouse; and psychological heterosexism, which is an individual's internalization of this view that turns into anti-gay and lesbian bias (16).

Mostly, heterosexuality has been considered as a model for the oppression of women in a patriarchal context. By means of her conceptualization of compulsory heterosexuality, Adrienne Rich characterizes heterosexuality as a political institution that both ensures and imposes the coupling of women with men in a forcible and

subliminal manner. As a result, for Rich, compulsory heterosexuality is regarded as an ideology that prevents homoerotic attraction and expression that departs from essentialized "feminine" and "masculine" social norms and thereby foregrounds the idealization of heterosexual marriage and romance. Accordingly, women's heterosexuality is not simply an act of "preference," but a state that has been propagandized, managed, imposed and maintained by force (18-30).

In addition, Sarah Lucia Hoagland builds upon the feminist examination of heterosexuality by describing a new term, "heterosexualism," in the following manner:

> [It is] an entire way of life promoted and enforced by every formal and informal institution of the fathers's society, from religion to pornography to unpaid housework to medicine. Heterosexualism is a way of living that normalizes the dominance of one person and the subordination of another (26).

For Hoagland, understanding heterosexuality requires the examination of not only women's victimization, but also how women are described in relation to men, how gays and lesbians are characterized as deviants, how preferences of close partners for both women and men are restrained or denied by means of cultural norms to preserve a certain social order.

Hoagland further maintains that heterosexualism has been so naturalized in "Anglo-European" culture that individuals stop to consider the relations of dominance/ subordination to be wrong or problematic on the condition that it is exercised in a benevolent manner: "the 'loving' relationship between men and women, the 'protective' relationship between imperialist and the colonized, the 'peace-keeping' relationship between democracy (capitalism) and threats to democracy" (7-8). Heterosexualism, then, is relational, constructed relationally and hierarchically, which, in turn, becomes naturalized, normalized and universalized. To put it simply, in order for heterosexuality to perform as normal, it must have its abnormal: the homosexual. Likewise, as Connell states, "Masculinity and femininity are inherently relational concepts, which have meaning in relation to each other, as a social demarcation and a cultural opposition" (44). In this sense, this dichotomous understanding of gender and sexuality constructs and constitutes each other relationally.

In addition to the dominance/submission binary, Janice Raymond, a contemporary thinker, has claimed that "hetero-relations" provide men constant access to women and have generally changed the worlds of women into "hetero-reality" (3).

In a hetero-relational society, most of women's personal, economic, social, professional and political relations are described by the norms of hetero-reality that woman is for man, not man for woman. That is, woman's desire and destiny together with her essence and existence are encompassed by relations with men. In this respect, Raymond argues that heterosexuality appears to be problematic for women. She further asserts that hetero-reality and hetero-relations are based on the androgynous attraction and energy that looks for the reunion of the lost halves in relation to a universal male-female binary. Then, each social relationship requires its other half within a universal complementarity (3-14).

In "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" Judith Butler problematizes the gender dichotomy regarding the constructed nature of identity categories. She identifies identity categories as "stumbling blocks" and refers to them as "sites of necessary trouble" (308). Exposing the categories of gender as constructed and presenting the ways in which that construction is built upon compulsory heterosexuality, Butler reconceptualizes heterosexism as the "heterosexual matrix." For Butler, the heterosexual matrix designates "a grid of cultural intelligibility" through which bodies, gender identities and desires become naturalized and normalized (360). As Butler explains, heterosexuality, then, promotes itself as the "original," "true," and "authentic" expression of human sexuality and everything that falls outside of heterosexuality such as being lesbian or homosexual is nothing but "always a kind of miming" (360). Accordingly, only lesbian or homosexual representation enables us to see heterosexuality as "[…] an imitation of an imitation, a copy of a copy, for which there is no original" (362). Therefore, the process of "imitating" and "approximating" heterosexual constructs by queer identities serves to expose the constructedness of the "original." As Butler states in "Imitation and Gender Insubordination,"

> That parodic replication and resignification of heterosexual constructs within non-heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called original, but it shows that heterosexuality only constitutes itself as the original through a convincing act of repetition (362).

Ultimately, everyone's gender and sexuality together with the constructs and norms that follow, are contingent and fabricated and must be continually repeated since they never quite achieve the ideal. That is, in an attempt to naturalize itself as the

"original", heterosexuality must be perceived as an endless and compulsory repetition of itself that can only produce the "effect" of its own originality. To put it simply, for Butler, we imitate the "natural" organizers of compulsive heterosexuality, such as attitudes, behaviour, clothing, and that we internalize these heterosexual norms or patterns so that we cannot escape from their influence.

The struggle to extend gender liberation or the free production of gender identity beyond the heterosexual femininity and masculinity binary embraces centuries of unconscious conducts and conscious experimentation. In this respect, as Lillian Faderman points out in *Surpassing the Love of Men*, in the 1800s and early 1900s, the same sex attractions and experiences between women were generally regarded as romantic friendship which render lesbian identification as invisible (19). However, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the innocence of sexual or romantic friendship was faded from the forefront through the work of sexologists and the insights of science to the study of sexuality and gender as well as an increasing awareness of inversion and lesbianism.

In the late 1800s, as Newton explains in "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian," sexologists like Havelock Ellis and Richard von Krafft – Ebing identified women who acted contrary to traditional gender roles as being "mannish woman" in the 1920s, but "butch" in today's terms. Rather than offering that masculine attitude might be natural to some women, early sexologists came to the conclusion that these masculine women or female masculinity suffered a congenital disorder known as "inversion" (281-293).

More broadly, early sexologists employed the active/male versus passive/female binary as a criterion to determine what was appropriate in a binary sex/gender system and progressively moved all who were outside this system under the more generalized use of the term "inversion," a category of questionable medical value that extended to include psychological, physiological, hereditary and moral deviation. At this point, it is crucial to note that in Laura Doan and Chris Water's study, concerning sexological categories, "'sexual inversion' was initially the umbrella term for any activity that deviated from the norm" (41). Then, the notion of "inversion" was combined with the multifarious sex/gender and sexual perversion or diverse deviant activities including but not necessarily comprised of same-sex activities.

In this respect, one of the most famous representations of a self-proclaimed female invert definable by "her" masculinity is illustrated in Radclyffe Hall's novel, *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) through the Victorian character of Stephen Gordon. Stephen lives in a time in which people considers "inverts" as what Krafft-Ebing called "a male soul in a female body" (Mosse 106). This suggestion of Stephen as a "mannish lesbian" who openly appropriated and manipulated masculinity or masculine gender characteristics while remaining completely female frightens those heterosexuals surrounding her. In fact, the disruptive potential inherent in such a female invert as a challenge to gender stereotypes initiates the social fear and poses a threat to heterosexual male masculinity and gender binary.

As Alisa Soloman asserts in her article "Not Just a Passing Fancy,"

> Butches [or masculine-identified women] threaten masculinity more than they imitate it; they colonize it. Making aggression or toughness or chivalry or rebelliousness their histrionic own, butches reveal the arbitrariness with which traits are said to belong to men. Rather than copying some 'original' image of masculinity, butches point to the embarrassing fact that there is no such thing; masculinity is an artifice no matter who performs it (37).

As a queer counterpart of heterosexual male masculinity, female masculinity challenges male privilege and foregrounds the constructed nature of masculinity by disrupting the conformity with constructed representations of "originality." The gender inversion or social deviancy these masculine women express also serves to promote sexual fluidity and gender ambiguity through the transformation of the fixed notions of femininity and masculinity.

The year 1928 appears as a historical moment that makes possible the transition for the representation of deviant sexuality and gender instability. Accordingly, Woolf's *Orlando* points out the existent instability of gender in 1928 through Orlando's sex-change that subversive and deviant sexual couplings occur. Whether cross-sex or same-sex, Orlando's couplings challenge the binary logic of heterosexuality.

In addition, this fictional work is an evidence of Woolf's desire to disrupt the rigidity of the literary tradition of the Victorian era regarding genre, characterization, and temporality. In *Orlando*, Woolf introduces fantasy into biography. In doing so, Woolf blurs generic categories between fantasy, biography and history to destabilize

sex, gender and sexuality. Woolf's fantastical elements and gender or sexual deviance in *Orlando* become part of Woolf's formal experimentation. Orlando is also free to move beyond the limits of his/her body in his/her sexually inverted moment. Bluring the line between the body and culture through her fantastic experimentation, Woolf presents a temporal variation of Orlando's 400- year long life with multiple aspects of Orlando's "thousand selves" that promotes queer cultural history.

On the other hand, Carter was writing in the midst of the cultural, social and political turmoil of the sixties and seventies. At that time, there was a change towards a more liberal attitude regarding gender expressions. Gender was redefined by the sexual revolution during the 1960s and 1970s. In this respect, the concept of sexual revolution can be described as the cultural and social changes towards greater freedom and openness in sexuality. Accordingly, new discourses of gender, changes in ideas about the legitimate sex, an area that covered marriage, procreation, family and love together with new public articulations of sexual orientation manifested themselves in 1960s.

The sexual liberation movements in the 1960s including the second-wave feminist movement, the hippie movement and the gay/lesbian liberation movement struggled against gender, sex, and sexual oppression. In order to acquire fair treatment for gays, lesbians, sex variants, and women, lesbian, gay, women's liberation and Women's right organizers reconceptualized the normative value system that was empowered as science by first-wave sexologists.

As Jeffrey Weeks points out, the 1960s and 1970s were characterized by greater flexibility and the rising instability in sexual experiences, practices and norms, which enabled to disintegrate and undermine the normative relation between biology and gender (250). The growing awareness of gender's lack of fixity in biology by the mid-1960s allowed an entry point for a critique of heterosexuality as the only legitimate and natural phenomenon of an interwoven sexuality of dominant masculinity and passive femininity derived from biological difference.

In this sense, as Mary Calderone puts forward, by the late 1960s, the counter-cultural youth or hippies came to the fore to develop a new kind of masculinity which would be less aggressive and dominant and which would foster more intersubjective,

intimate sex (48-54). As the agents of hope for less sharply defined gender roles, the counter-cultural hippies tried to increase acceptance and openness towards homosexual relations and non- married sexual act. In fact, as Mary Bernstein points out, the acceptability and visibility of homosexual identity itself was to some extent an objective for the sexual liberation movement. Towards the end of the 1960s, to publicly declare the legitimacy of their same-sex desires and relationships, numerous homosexuals were beginning to "come out of closet," an expression indicating the imprisonment of the same-sex sexual desires to the private sphere, as Jeffrey Weeks states (285). Then, by the 1970s, there was a more observable and sophisticated homosexual culture or more broadly sexual expressiveness, but at the same time homophobic reaction intensified.

With the advent of the Women's Liberation Movement, known as the second wave in the early 1970s, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) is considered as one of the main theoretical frameworks of the second-wave feminism in the sense that it was both an examination of the status of women in Western culture as the perpetual Other and a radical appeal for sexual liberation.

In the context of *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir can be read as matching the process of becoming a woman with continuous objectification. Then, each stage of life presents distinct modes of objectification because women's existence in this male construction precedes essence. For Beauvoir, in the process of becoming a woman, young girls were trained to consider themselves as beautiful objects for others and they were taught that the only way to achieve individuality and a sense of wholeness was through the romantic relationship with men.

Beauvoir identified the socially constructed ideals of romantic love as a central component to suppress women within and outside the marriage. To put it in Beauvoir's words, "to love is to relinquish everything for the benefit of the master" (642). In her chapter entitled "The Woman in Love," Beauvoir further stated that romantic love carried different meanings for women and men. Men, who were independent and had other mediums for self-expression, considered love as only one feature of their being. On the other hand, women, who were largely constrained to marriage and their

reproduction function, saw love as all overwhelming and as the only purpose of their being and existence.

As Beauvoir explained in *The Second Sex*, in order to undermine the masculine social construction in which women exist, women must initially recognize it, describe it and reshape their existence within it through their own experiences. This is where consciousness-raising takes place (34). Through this reframing process of sharing experiences or more precisely by means of the consciousness-raising activities of the Second-Wave Movement, women recognized that their feelings of dependency, vulnerability, insecurity and inadequacy were not their individual flaw, but a circumstance that was socially and historically constructed.

In this respect, by the early 1970s, in *Power /Knowledge* Foucault understood second wave feminists to be at some points engaged in attacking the mechanisms of modern power relations which subject individuals to the tyranny of sexuality. Then, like many feminists, he was concerned with freeing individuals from sexuality and thus he affirmed the plurality of knowledges, bodies and pleasures (219). "The real strength of the women's liberation movement," he has expressed in "The Confession of the Flesh," "is not that of having laid claim to the specificity of their sexuality and the rights pertaining to it, but that they have actually departed from the discourse conducted within the apparatuses of sexuality" (220). Then, Women's Liberation was coming to mean not only freedom from sex roles but also freedom within sex/gender normativity and deviance paradigm in relation to the sexual revolution in the 1960s. As Robert Nye explains, this reigning norm/ deviance binary arose within first wave sexology and brought about the further exclusion of sex deviants and gender inverts. In his own words, he explains that

> unlike "first wave" sexology, which stressed the pathologies and the darker aspects of sexuality, "second wave" sexology emphasized the positive; indeed, it rescued and rehabilitated some of the sexual behaviour that the first generation had put beyond the pale of "normalcy" (329).

Apparently, second-wave sexology tends to represent a fundamental rupture with first wave sexology which confined sex/gender variants to the pathological side of the norm/ deviance binary. Then, Nye's characterization of second wave sexology seems to refuse the pathologizing of sexual variation. Turning the concept of medical pathology back against the practices of oppressive heterosexual normativity, the sexual

liberation movements in the late 1960's undermine formerly held truths about sexuality.

In this respect, liberation activists who consider biological sexuality or more precisely, sexual orientation and subjectivity as historically and socially constructed appear to be consistent with Foucault's problematization of sexuality. In this sense, Foucault's genealogy of sexuality in relation to his project of tracing the discursive history of sexual discourses illustrates how the historical construction of sexual subjectivity and orientation change with shifts in the relations of power and knowledge.

As Foucault explains in "The Confession of the Flesh," power and knowledge are interdependent in the sense that knowledge resides within power relations. What is significant about people's truth being related to their sexuality is that this truth of the individual's sexuality is one that is exposed through the intervention of discourses. The individual needs the discourses to tell one what one's sexuality refers to or who one in reality is. Then, truth is produced through power since particular disciplinary formations circulate, establish and produce knowledge. At this point, it is crucial to note that the functioning of discourse can implement the power relations (213-215).

As stated in *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault considered the history of sexuality as "a history of discourses" (69). By using the term "discourses," Foucault refers to organized bodies of knowledge. When these diverse and historically specific discourses are joined with the practice of medicine, theology, psychiatry, psychology and the other human sciences, the resulting discourses produce and transmit power with its far-reaching effects on identities, subjects, bodies and their pleasures. Operating within the interplay of knowledge and power networks, sexuality becomes the basis for sexual identities, orientations and perversions.

Concerned with the problematization of sexuality, Foucault denaturalized common assumptions related to sexuality and tried to depict sexual identity as non-essentialist: "Sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover" (103). Here, Foucault considers sexuality, not as a natural given within Freudian psychoanalytic framework, but rather culturally constituted historical

construct, rejecting the assumption that sexuality and the identities implied as a reflection of an inner essence within a person can be authoritatively described. For Foucault, it is a repressive form of power or the various apparatuses of repression that produces sex, subjectivitiy and truth. Then, Foucault argues that what is supposedly repressing sex is in fact producing it, and that there is any such thing as an original sexuality in need of liberating from acts of repression.

Foucault further demonstrates the constitution of sexual subject with particular reference to the construction of the identity category of the "homosexual." In this sense, the characterization and conceptualization of the different kinds of perversions through the discourses concerning congenital, psychological and somatic abnormal features produce the subjectivities of deviants, especially the homosexual being. In other words, the discourses come to characterize these subjectivities with particular sexual practices and arrange the different characterizations and conceptualizations of the sexual identity category until its emergence as a species (43).

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault argues that the idea of subject, like the homosexual as a subject of sexuality come to constitute the productive aspect of power which allows for resistance. In Foucauldian fashion, where power operates, resistance occurs in multiple formations (95). Then, Foucault further maintains that resistance is guaranteed by the unstable, flexible and changeable relations of power. Since resistance cannot be separated from power, Foucault's portrayal of resistance will be as "plural", "spontaneous", "irregular" and "odd" as his concept of power (96). In this respect, resistance appears as the characteristic identification of an individual who pursues his/her own life as an "ethical" questioning. As Foucault suggests, this ethical quest isn't entirely an escape from power/knowledge constructions in the form of essentialist, ontological and naturalized gender truths. Rather, it utilizes those discourses of power as the occasion for individual to resist.

Foucault's idea that an individual can transform the conditions of his/her existence in spite of the oppressive aspects of power / knowledge constructions is in fact a form of resistance in order to offer the potential of a new form of subjectivity. Accordingly, Foucault disrupts the idea that individuals as subjects of sexuality, like queer individuals must depend on the discourses of sexuality and their knowledges as

well as their relationship with power in order to understand themselves. For Foucault, individuals, especially queer individuals are free to self-fashion or reshape themselves as a form of finding out who one is not yet. More broadly, Foucault believes that an individual must seek to defamiliarize oneself with the accepted, binary conceptualization of language and what that language refers to.

1.1. An Alternative Path: Queer Disruptions of Heterosexual Binary through Performative Implications

Within the queer paradigm emerging throughout the 1990s, one can notice the strong influence of Foucault's theoretical postulations concerning the reconceptualization of sexuality and subjectivity together with his notions of power and resistance. Then, the task of denaturalizing current conceptualizations of sexuality was further developed by contemporary queer theorists.

The important event which points the formal introduction of the Queer theory movement within the academic context is identified by Teresa de Lauretis, a critical theorist, as being a conference on lesbian and gay sexualities. Stated in her article "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities," De Lauretis hoped the conference would call into question the existing discourses and practices of non-heterosexual identities as well as constructed silences and any occurrances of marginalization or oppression resulting from heterosexist assumptions. At the same time, she expected from the conference to promote language to express not only the multiple ways nonheterosexual sexualities can be framed but also how they "may be understood and imaged as forms of resistance to cultural homogenization, counteracting dominant discourses" (iii).

She also attempted to expose boundaries and wanted the reinvention of the notions of our sexualities and another way of thinking sexually, a new queered and discursive sphere. For De Lauretis, such a reinvention would provide spaces for thinking and speaking about sexuality in new, minimally essentialist and oppressive ways. Thus, as De Lauretis suggests, queer theory works to "construct another discursive horizon, another way of thinking the sexual" (iv).

Accordingly, queer scholarship seeks to redefine and destabilize normative and deviant identity categories of sexuality by emphasizing the historical variability and

performed aspect of sexualities. Then, the main task of queer theory appears to challenge the categorization of sexual and gender identities since these identities are not fixed and therefore labelling can provide false stability because of the fact that words cannot include all possibilities of gender performance concerning the arbitrary nature of identities and signifiers (Jagose 82).

In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, a queer theorist, uses gender and queer methodologies to claims that sexual identity is as a significant personal demarcation as gender. In fact, her main assumption is that language exposes implicit presumptions about the world, supports existing value systems, paves the way for the oppression of minorities and serves to strengthen those in power. Accordingly, Sedgwick argues that labelling has a normative consequences in the sense that labelling homosexual as "deviant" marginalizes homosexuality and normalizes heterosexuality.

Resistance to efforts to normalize individuals, particularly the sexual minorities is key to the emergence of "queer" sexuality. Queerness is a process, subjective and mutable. Queer does not simply refer to the opposite of normative or of straight; rather it complicates the idea of any pair of opposites.

When Sedgwick famously states that "queer is a continuing moment, movement, motive – recurrent, eddying, troublant," (xii) the idea of queer and queering has been considered as an act, a verb, an action, not a noun, a label an individual wears. Indeed, Sedgwick's theorization of queer is situated in a queer movement and a queer moment in flux and queer tends to be disruptive and violent to the normative sexualities. Notable here is that Sedgwick does not accept to frame queer as a stable subject. Based on rejecting stability, queer is a strategy intended to challenge and distort normative concepts of gender and sexuality within the hetero-homo identifications.

As Sedgwick further elaborates in *Epistemology of the Closet*, queer can be characterized as "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of any ones gender, of any ones sexuality are not made (or cannot be made) to signify

monolithically" (6). Here, she promotes a highly useful idea that queer refuses all acts of monolithic signification which is fixed and static.

Rather, the term "queer" is used as a performance and performative to gesture toward imaginative and embodied rearticulations of particular bodies and selves together with their open and non-normative enactments of everyday conduct, both of which are idiosyncratic. Then, in the words of Sedgwick, as she states in *Epistemology of the Closet*, "'queer' seems to hinge much more radically and explicitly on a person's undertaking particular, performative acts of experimental self-perception and filiation" (9). Without any doubt, this queer figure is performative or performing oneself as multiply-gendered and multiply-identified at the multiple interstices of gendered, raced, classed sexually oriented identifications. At the same time, the performative enactment of oneself conjures up all that is transitive, in flux, fluid and unfixed in a manner that involves in a disruptive and critical relation to the normative and the hegemonic social order.

Such a performative disruptions of rigid binaries resonates with Butler's notion of performativity of gender, or the manner in which genders are "done" and how they can be done differently within the heterosexual discourses of power. In her article "Performativity, Precarity, and Sexual Politics," Butler states that performativity is a collection of acts, words, gestures, acceptable and normative forms of desire that bring forth the effect of an innate origin of gender on the body (i-xi). Therefore, our identities are not a product of an internal, authentic gendered essence; rather, it is in the performative acts that identity is constituted. That is, there is no subject position outside the performative act. Butler further elaborates in *Bodies that Matter* that:

> performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate 'act,' but rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names... the regulatory norms of sex work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies and, more specifically, to materialize the body's sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of consolidation of the heterosexual imperative (2).

For Butler, the performative acts of gender are not intentionally performed by the subject; rather, discursively produced by the subject, on the body, creating gender according to heterosexual regimes. Then, the performative self comes into being

through the process of reiteration of the power/discourse matrix, or more precisely regulatory norms that attempt to approximate an originality.

Likewise, as Butler states in her essay "Contingent Foundations," the subject is the active site of reinterpretation, resignification and reorganization of power relationships. At the same time, the subject comes to be the site of performing this reworking of the power/ discourse matrix with which individuals are always embedded (47). Within the network of power/ discourse, there is room to resignify, redeploy, maneuver and subvert regulatory norms by performing their failure to reflect and capture the everyday reality. Then, the succesful performative act is both authorized by normalizing discourses and it also maintains the illusion of originality and naturalization.

In fact, the aim of this illusion is to regulate identities. As a result, the effects of discourse cause to occur the illusion of an internal gender core that is written on the body to create an identity truth. However, the truth of identities is always a fabricated discursive construction. To clarify this illusion further, Butler's example of drag performances is notably useful in the sense that they have the potential to visibly express the invisible enactments of gender. Drag disturbs the inner and outer essences of the body, highlighting how the body is discursively produced and how the self is implicated in the resignification of gender norms.

At this point, it is crucial to understand the difference between performance and performativity. As Butler states in "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," performance suggests that the self acts with will and do this act of one's own volition. On the other hand, performativity is the ritualization and repetition of acts that fulfill their naturalized effects as the resultant gender expression. For example, woman as nurturer is a performatively constructed act through repetitive acts that connect nurturing to femininity to womanliness. This becomes evident when a non-nurturing woman reveals the contingency of this act and the contingent instability of categories of gender.

Apparently, Butler extends her attention to gender performance and the transgression of "natural" alignments of gender and sex; therefore, she employs "drag"

as an example of gender performativity and deliberate transgression. In *Gender Trouble* Butler states,

> The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed. But we are actually in the presence of three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: the anatomical sex, gender identity, and the gender performance. If the anatomy of the performer is already distinct from the gender of the performer, and both of those are distinct from the gender of the performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance between not only sex and the performance, but also sex and gender and performance (137).

At this point, Butler foregrounds the potential dissonance of gender identity, sexual anatomy, and gender performance within drag. In other words, drag performance confuses the performer's sexual anatomy, his or her gender identity and the gender he or she performs in order to challenge the hierarchical and segregating gender order which does not allow the overlapping of gender identities.

As in the example of drag performance, such a queer act in drag serves to disrupt naturalness through "discontinuity" which found in non-normative fabrications of gender or breaks and gaps in discursive realities, as Butler notes in *Gender Trouble* (174-180). To put it simply, drag performers disrupt the notion that heterosexuality is natural by diverging from notions of heterosexuality, challenging normative scripts of gender and sexuality. Then, Butler refers to drag performances to expose the artificiality of cultural norms and to demonstrate the instability of the "natural" category of gender through the resignification process of sex and sexuality. Accordingly, the effect of drag can be considered to expose how all gender turns out to be impersanation. Drag has the potential to indicate that no one is a man or a woman; rather, everyone is continuously "becoming" a man or a woman.

1.2. Situating Transgender Identification as A Performative Challenge of What Bodies Can Perform

In this dissertation, Butler's theory of gender performance is foregrounded both to be influential within transgender studies and to think across trans identity performance. Evidently, performances of gender also indicate gender variance in the sense that the scope of the transgender studies, as transgender scholar Susan Stryker outlines in her recent book *Transgender History*, deals with a wide range of sexual and gender varient identities and practices (19).

Stryker presents a current and concise definition in *Transgender History*: "I use [transgender] in this book to refer to people who move away from the gender they were assigned at birth, people who cross over (trans-) the boundaries constructed by their culture to define and contain that gender" (1). She further maintains, "it is the movement across a socially imposed boundary away from an unchosen starting place– rather than any particular destination or mode of transition–that best characterizes the concept of 'transgender'" (1). Such a description indicates the expansiveness of transgender as an umbrella term that can be applied to anyone who crosses, changes or rejects their sex classification assigned at birth.

In 1992, an activist Leslie Feinberg, who had transitioned from female to male, issued a call for "Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come." In the words of Feinberg, this pamphlet brought together "'gender outlaws': transvestites, transsexuals, drag queens and drag kings, cross-dressers, bulldaggers, stone butches, androgynes, diesel dykes or berdache" (206). In the 1990s, a wide array of gender-variant people came together as a community and political groups to declare the name "transgender" for themselves. Then, the multitude of trans identifications, expressions and performances has been considered to progress along a non-binary "continuum" or in a spectrum as well as in non-conformative, non-prescriptive and flexible relations to a norm, as Feinberg notes in the introduction of *Transgender Warriors* (x).

In *Second Skins*, Jay Prosser, a transgender theorist, locates transgender in an "uninhabitable space – the borderlands in between, where passing as either gender might prove a challenge, where both bathrooms are outlaw zones" (488). Similarly, Kate Bornstein, a transgender activist and a performance artist, advocates and lives in this "uninhabitable" space outside of binary thinking. As the title of her transsexual narrative *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and The Rest of Us* indicates, she is an "outlaw" and has had surgery to make her an anatomical woman, but she does not claim to be a woman. Accordingly, she declares:

> I identify as neither male nor female […] I've no idea what 'woman' feels like […] it was an unshakeable conviction that I was not a boy or a man. It was the absence of a feeling, rather than its presence, that convinced me to change my gender (4).

In fact, she considers herself living on "the borders of the gender frontier" as a fluid gender (12). The gender fluidity that Bornstein's aesthetics introduce supports

the understanding that the transsexed individual's transitioning process is a performance and the indication of contingency of gender and sex for the human being. More precisely, filmic and theatrical performances that revolve around the continuously changing body and its connotations of fluidity show what Kate Bornstein identifies as gender fluidity. However, Bornstein's concept of gender fluidity is not an equivalent to that of gender ambiguity, but rather its complement and enables us to provide a space for the gender-queer and the transsexed. As Bornstein explains in *Gender Outlaw*,

> If ambiguity is a refusal to fall within a prescribed gender code, then fluidity is the refusal to remain one gender or another. Gender fluidity is the ability to freely and knowingly become one of many of a limitless number of genders, for any length of time, at any rate of change. Gender fluidity recognizes no borders or rules of gender (52).

This does not mean that sexual identity remains undeclared or unknown. For Bornstein, sexual identity is another word for the physical expression of an individual's desire for creative self-expression and self-realization to be perceived as either male or female without the need to conform to actions that conventionally related with maleness or femaleness. This desire shows itself by various means of bodily expressions whether on film, on the streets, on stage, or other public places. To put it simply, trans-individuals perform by means of the transitioning process which resonates with what de Beauvoir means by her argument that women are not born women, but rather become women. However, transsexuals go one step further in the sense that they perform the becoming or transtioning process by their bodies.

At this point, Jay Prosser, concerned with transsexual narratives of embodiment in his book *Second Skins*, employs "transition" to refer to an "ontological condition of transsexuality" (5). In this context, the word "transition" embraces both the process of changing one's sexed body through the use of medical science and technology different from the sex assigned at birth and the process of trans individuals becoming socially accepted with their chosen gender. In his depth examination of trans personal narratives in *Second Skins*, Prosser foregrounds many examples of bodily discomfort and aims at bringing the images of material body and psychic body into postmodern discussions concerning trans people. In this respect, he provides an

explanation for the feeling of sexed embodiment which directs towards transsexual reassignment surgery.

Partially as a way to provide an explaination for the gender narratives of trans people which describe a feeling of sexed and gender embodiment, trans theorist Prosser have pointed out the psychic significance of embodiment from a perspective different from that of Butler. For Prosser, it is significant to acknowledge both personal and social materiality of the body in trans people's lives, but this recognition is mediated by narrative, which is the connection between reality and representation and materiality and discourse.

Prosser argues that the transsexual rests upon sex's materiality or materiality of the body. In the words of him, "the transsexual does not approach the body as an immaterial surround but, on the contrary, as the very 'seat' of the self" (67). Transition works to locate the individual within a habitable body without taking into account how one transitions – whether these transitions happen through non-medical changes from clothing to mannerisms or through medical changes.

Here, Prosser notes that the key component of transition is the experience of embodiment. In a similar fashion, regarding the significance of embodiment for trans people, Henry Rubin, for example, identifies transition as "repairing the link between [transsexuals'] bodies and their gender identity," where the purpose is to have a sexed body that indicates their internal "core self" (144). In relation to body modification, Jason Cromwell argues that " … transpeople have not identified with their bodies or have done so only superficially… what shifts once transition is initiated is social identity, that is, how others perceive these individuals" (106-107). Regardless of how all trans people transitions, the social recognition is crucial for trans people. Cromwell also maintains that body is of importance to trans people. Accordingly, he notes that "for [transsexuals], all things carry equal value: body, identity (spiritual as well as personal and social), and sexuality. That is the reconstruction - reassociation and reconnection with the body-whereby a transperson becomes a whole person" (201). That is, for Cromwell, it is the reunion of sexuality and subjectivity within the body that transition fulfills.

Prosser, Rubin and Cromwell focus on embodiment, transition and the body to fight against the invisibility of trans people and to indicate the material coherence within trans embodiment. Accordingly, along with Rubin and Cromwell, Prosser notes in *Second Skins* that at some point trans(sexual) embodiment points to disjuncture between constraining and compulsory heterosexuality which materializes the body with a particular sex or gender on the one hand and the felt sensations and experiences of embodiment on the other hand (42). In this sense, such a disjuncture experienced by many trans individuals between hegemonic norms and trans embodiment enables to establish intangible, incorporeal dimension of material, corporeal body in a state of ongoing movement. Then, for Prosser, the material embodiment of trans people must give prominence to internal bodily feeling or corporeal sensation, which contradicts the tangible material truth of their sex or gender.

Rather than conceptualizing trans as a material embodiment dependent upon dynamic, generative body, Butler in *Bodies that Matter* refutes this materiality by asserting that trans embodiment is premised upon an idealized, phantasmatic identification with "a promise, which taken too seriously, can culminate only in disappointment and disidentification (131). According to Butler, the process of identification is not based on an essential aspect of the subject; and thus identification is an ongoing incomplete process and never fully embodied, but only approximated (102).

Butler further elaborates that by way of the practice of identification, the body achieves a materialized status as a sexed subject. In other words, as Butler states that "the materiality of the body is framed and formed through the category of sex" (17). This means that the forms of recognizable bodies as sexed subjects occur through the social regulatory practices inherent within identification that insists on male or female subject position.

On the other hand, sexed identifications felt as natural, fixed in their material status is subject to the disruptions of uncontrollable fantasies and unconscious identifications which can cause other bodily formations different from the alleged fact of the natural body. Then, for Butler, there is no purely material body that manifests an objective truth, but a fantasized body, which radically changes how we may

interpret the body. Accordingly, the body of fantasy is not necessarily liable to a specific bodily identification.

In relation to Butler's phantasmatic bodily identifications, the theorist Elizabeth Grosz states in *Volatile Bodies* that bodies "extend the notion of physicality," since they are "centers of perspective, insight, reflection, desire and agency (xi). That is, the material meaning of body exceeds itself and it is open to variance. In so far as conventional female subjects do not escape the failure to uncritically presume female identity dependent upon genital appearance. However, there isn't a clear discursive boundary between sex and gender, so the body and its meaning are mutually generative and liable to disruption by an inherent split between the conscious and unconscious elements. The presence of the unconscious subverts coherent, conscious identities which may explain why crises of gender arises. Then, crises of gender manifest itself in the transsexual embodiment in which the supposed sexed body is at odds with the gendered psyche. In order to mend the disjunction between body and mind, transgender subject seeks sex reassignment surgery. By desiring for coherent identification, transsexual person makes the mistake of trusting the body's and sexual features' facticity. Then, as Butler points out, the sexed body is an illusion, constructed by phantasmatic identifications. At the same time, such a gender crisis in transsexual experience can be considered as reflective of the body's ultimate unpredictability and its potential to be reinscribed.

Many narratives of transition continuously highlight the deeply felt sense of being born into the wrong body. In terms of transsexual body experiences, Prosser identifies the first skin as the presurgical skin, the external wrong one. On the other hand, he describes the second skin, the body image as the authentic inner skin. By situating transsexual embodiments as external wrongness and internal authenticity, Prosser tends to attach to the essentialist notions of embodiment since he depends on the inner core of identity rather than exploring how identity is culturally, socially and psychologically shaped. Prosser places subjectivity in his notion of bodies in the sense that he traps trans subjectivities in binaries such as right versus wrong body. However, it should be clarified that transsexuality is not a resignification of the binary female and male sexes or a replication of sexual difference. In the process of changing their

anatomical sexes, transsexuals disrupt the so-called permanency of one's assigned sex or birth sex.

It is significant to realize that transsexuality embraces more than bodily experiences in the sense that trans subjectivities should be read beyond skins within their particular societal, psychic and cultural entanglements. In *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality,* Gayle Salamon suggests that bodily ego, gender, sex, and sexuality exceeds its skin. Then, she continues to assert that "an instance that phenomenological experiences of the body and the subject are individual rather than categorical situates the subject differently, temporally and socially" (49). Concerning the diversity of trans embodiments, each subject's sense of embodiment is subjective, individual and reflexive depended upon his or her experiences, time, and place.

In effect, there are countless body types and countless expressions of those bodies and the genders they represent. For example, masculine identified transgender genital females, who may be gender dysphoric or not, are identified by their lack of desire for sex change surgery or corporal manipulation. In this respect, they identify themselves in masculine terms like cross dressing in men's clothes and consciously resist against conventional femininity, or in a broader sense, gender conformity at the level of body and lived experience.

In transgendered life experience, the body turns out to be a conflicted site, where one's internal gender identity is at odds with the external social expectations of one's physical gendered appearance. Then, the transgender individual is considered to misrepresent himself or herself to others and society about their "true" identity in relation to his or her assigned birth sex, which is in fact an assumption based on the naturalized binary of male and female. At this point, Susan Stryker, a key transgender theorist, points out in "(De)subjugated knowledges:"

> Transgender people who problematize the assumed correlation of a particular biological sex with a particular social gender are often considered to make false representations of an underlying material truth, through the willful distortion of surface appearance. Their gender presentation is seen as a lie rather than as an expression of a deep, essential truth; they are "bad" by definition (9).

Not only are transgender individuals considered to be deceiving others and society but also they have brought hatred, violence and intolerance onto themselves.

In this sense, Brandon Teena is one of the obvious examples of a transgender person who was raped and murdered after having been revealed to be a biological female passing as male. As a victim of a violent crime that embraces all gendered embodiments that appear and behave in non-normative ways, Brandon Teena intends to perform masculine attributes over an essential female body. What differs him from his attackers is his awareness of his own heterosexuality as a performance. As Halberstam points out *In a Queer Time and Place*, Brandon's performance depends on a performative reiteration of "realness" or performative appropriation of the real without the transgendered person ever coming to the point of being real (52).

Brandon Teena's identification as a trans man provides interesting insights into the intricate nature of transgender identities as well as transgender bodies. As a trans man, Brandon experienced an alternative masculinity that Judith Halberstam explains in *Female Masculinity* - a process that is generally shaped not so much by resistance to the law, but by indifference to it (9). At this point, alternative masculinity serves as a means through which Brandon Teena as a trans man showed and proved that sex and gender are not fundamentally assigned at birth. Then, biologically determined constitution – "defined in terms of chromosomes (XX or XY), gonads (ovaries or testes), and genitals (the presence of a vagina or a penis – or, rather, merely the presence or absence of a penis)" as Hubbard states – is unattainable to trans individuals, but "realness" seems to be an alternative for trans people to be themselves without being identified as duplicitous (45).

Cultural norms require agreement between anatomy and identification. Trans people disrupt this order and thus they can only approximate gendered realness, a strategy for trans representation and its erasure. Here, it is important to note that power directs the effects of gendered realness at the heart of transgender issues in the sense that it urges trans people to elicit a stable, core gender identity to prove their legitimacy for trans intelligibility. The drive to position and keep steady realness by securing it to particular parts of the body coincides with its inherent slipperiness. That is to say, power demands a certain type of realness, which leaves room for ambivalence. However, the shifting, slippery, and illusive characteristic of realness and its potential to avoid the parameters of determinacy allow it to be exploited in institution, legal and social context that weaken trans identities. In other words, in spite of its power to

legitimize trans identities, the inherent flexibility of realness ultimately limits its possibilities as a strategy for resistance. In this respect, realness can be required and simultaneously refused by trans people.

In a similar fashion, because of its "perceived" lack of realness and its lack of clear categorizations of gender and gender roles within the heteronormative social structure together with its constant change and movement, the transgender body turns out to be unique in the sense that its corporeality is indefinable. As a result, most people cannot conceive of an individual being both gender simultaneously. Likewise, people have difficulty to comprehend how one can be born male and then live as a female or vice versa.

Taking Butler's argument in *Gender Trouble* regarding the implications of the body itself as a "medium" or "instrument" into consideration, the transgender body is a particularly significant one to explore. As a medium, the transgender body serves as an agency through which something can be communicated and transfered between the transgender community and mainstream society as a means to place that body into higher visibility to gain more acceptance. If approached as an instrument, the transgender body works as a channel, which brings gender fluidity or more precisely the fluidity between genders to center stage (12).

As Holly Boswell states in "The Transgender Paradigm," when mainstream society has become more open to gender variant behaviour and expression, it seems that in the transgender community sexual orientation and gender identities are becoming quite fluid. More broadly, in this community, regardless of bilogical sex, some may consider themselves as male at times, and at other times som emay consider themselves female, or some may identify somewhere in between along the spectrum of gender identity. Together with fluid gender identity, in this community, an individual's sexual orientation can be in flux or can change through erotic attraction towards different genders and gender presentations (53-57). Apparently, the fluid transgender group favors a fluid interpretation which undermines compliance with constructed images of realness or originality in the sense that gender is experienced on a continuum and as potentially flexible.

As Arlene Istar Lev states in “Gender Dysphoria,” transgender emergence is rather a new phenomenon as “the T catches up with LGB communities” (295). In such a case, transgender theory comes to be an emerging theory and it will also contribute to the theoretical framework of this sudy. In fact, putting transgender theory into words is oftentimes inconclusive and problematic. This ambiguity is due, in part, to the discursive discussion about what defines “transgender.” It is heavily accepted that the term transgender embraces the complexity, fluidity, and variability of lived gender expressions, particularly for those who choose to live and define themselves beyond or outside the socially constructed sex/gender boundaries.

Recently, Surya Monra, an academic, has portrayed the contemporary quarrel regarding trans categorization in her article entitled as “Beyond Male and Female:”

> Definitions of transgender are currently being disputed, and it is important in particular to point out that [i] many transsexuals prefer to be described as transgender, because their gender identity issues concern gender, not sexuality; [ii] many intersex people and drag kings and queens do not identify as transgender; [iii] there are, of course huge variations both within and between the groups of people discussed here under the umbrella term transgender (18).

With regard to the vast diversity that occurs in the gender/sex continuum, it will be relevant to make the distinction between transgender and transsexual. The relatively recent and novel term transgender, unlike transsexual, was historically used to resist medicalization. As David Valentine notes in *Imagining Transgender* that transgender is mostly evolved within gender communities to explain cross identification experiences of individuals. In this respect, in her publication entitled “Seventy Years in the Trenches of the Gender Wars,” Virginia Prince, an activist in the cross-dressing field, coined the term “transgenderist” which was referred to people possessing a strong sense of cross identification without surgery and hormone therapy around the 1970s (469). At that time, the transgenderist category was regarded as a state of consciousness, a lifestyle or an artful mode of gender expression. Although Prince occupied a male body, she considered herself a woman and needed this term to differentiate herself and her kind from transsexuals. Subsequently, this term transgender comes to refer to all social acts which cross the differentiation between male and female gender performance. In effect, these social acts can be done by means of drag and cross dressing or through an androgynous gender appearance that does not accept a fixed identification as either male or female, as Valentine points out (32-33).

On the other hand, as Pat Califia states in *Sex Changes*, with the publication of *The Transsexual Phenomenon* in 1966, Harry Benjamin, a prominent medical authority advocating sex reassignment surgery, popularized the term transsexual. Then, he portrayed the transsexual as someone whose gender identity appeared to be inconsistent with one's genital anatomy. As a result, the administration of sex reassignment surgery and cross-sex hormones is rationalized as a treatment for transsexual individuals (6-8). Then, transsexualism, as a medical phenomenon, implies the surgical reassignment of the body and thereby the reconfiguration of the individual to the opposite sex.

Over time, however, as Sandy Stone, an academic theorist and a performance artist, notes that the term "transgender" has come to be conceived as a fluid and flexible notion that

> includes everything not covered by our culture's narrow terms 'man' and 'woman'. A partial list of persons who might include themselves in such a definition includes transsexuals (pre, post, and no-op); transvestites; crossdressers; persons with ambiguous genitalia; persons who have chosen to perform ambiguous social genders; and persons who have chosen to perform no gender at all (qtd in Cavallaro 45).

Here, what is probably most crucial part about the term transgender is not the variety of subjectivities that it includes but rather the fluidity of the term transgender itself. In other words, transgender occurs seemingly as a fluid alternative in comparison to the stability and coherency that transsexuals explicitly seek especially when the term transsexual is employed by a medical establishment.

However, Halberstam asserts in her book *In a Queer Time and Place* that like the term "transgender", even the term "transsexual" is subjected to redefinition in the sense that transsexual is no longer pointing to a passage from one position to another. Progressively, it is becoming an active descriptor of one's identity. To put it in Halberstam words:

> transsexual is not simply the conservative medical term to transgender's transgressive vernacular; rather, both transsexuality and transgenderism shift and change in meaning as well as application in relation to each other rather than in relation to a hegemonic medical discourse (54).

These identificatory terminologies turn out to be pluralised locus of identification. For the sake of this study, the term transsexual is used generally in

reference to people who have had sex reassignment surgery, whereas the term transgender will refer to continuous change, temporality, transient fashion as well as transgressive and progressive presence for those who favor flexibility and openness on the gender continuum.

The theoretical lens through which this study is conducted will be transgender theory, which has roots in both feminist theory and queer theory. At this point, it is important to note that feminist theory, queer theory and transgender theory have all evolved together and developed within each other. Accordingly, the basic premise of queer theory is to argue against the normative identity categories which are regarded as dichotomous and reinforced by heteronormativity and institutionalized heterosexuality. At the same time, as Jagose states in her article "Feminism's queer theory," Queer theory's refusal of binary identity categories results from the "anti-identitarian" and "anti-normative" aspects of feminist theory (160). Similarly, since gendered subjectivities are not shaped in isolation from other social locuses, critical feminist and queer perspectives stimulates an intersectional approach to comprehend transgender subjectivities.

As the transgender theorists Nagoshi, Brzuzy, and Terrell assert that transgender theory transcends feminist and queer theory since it foregrounds fluidity in gender and sexual identities and points to self-constructed, embodied aspects of social identities. That is, transgender theory acknowledges gender expressions and experiences that fall across, between or beyond the heteronormative binary categories of male and female, and thus its central point tends to question "embodied" differences and to examine how such differences construct social hierarchies (405-407). In this sense, transgender theory foregrounds the significance of physical embodiment in gender and sexual identity.

With its foundation in postmodernism, Queer Theory can destabilize sex and gender and bring forth new possibilities in order to reconfigure identities and institutions by questioning heteronormativity. However, as Susan Stryker asserts in "(De)Subjugated Knowledges," Queer Theory and Queer Studies frequently fail to recognize that same-sex object choice is not the only way to be different from heterosexist cultural norms (13). As a result, these fields preserve what Stryker defines

as homonormativity: “privileging of homosexual ways of differing from heterosocial norms, and an antipathy (or at least an unthinking blindness) toward other modes of queer difference” (7). By depending only on same-sex models of resistance to heteronormativity, much of Queer Theory appears not to pay attention to the lived realities of transgendered and transsexual individuals.

In addition to the erasure of transgender people from Queer Theory, trans individuals are also mostly overlooked within lesbian and gay communities and movements. As David Valentine points out in his article “I Want to Bed with My Own Once” that lesbian and gay collective identities rely on a shared aspect of same-sex sexuality and desire seen as an orientation rather than preference. On the other hand, transgender identity originates from experiences of gender and it has nothing to do with a sexual identity (409). Since trans individuals destabilize normative categories of male and female that gay and lesbian identities rely upon, there is a continual tension regarding the inclusion of transgender individuals within the gay and lesbian communities, leading to the exclusion and invisibility of trans individuals. Additionally, different from queer theory, the theoretical orientation of transgender identity depend on the actualization of self-knowledge through the integration of physical embodiment.

This dissertation also invokes the intersectional operation between transgender recognition and technology to trace the emergence of posthuman cyborg figure as transgendered to unsettle the notion of gendered authorial agency. For this aim, Butler’s notion of performative gender can be carried out in accordance with Donna Haraway’s cyborg subjectivity and the cyborg’s performed gender accross and through binaries.

The notion of performative gender dismantles the essentialist idea that there are original gender acts, which are operations of the gender identity preordained by specific physical body. As Butler states in *Gender Trouble*, gender acts are constructed in conjunction with medical, political and social conventions in the sense that contradictory performances of gender acts as in the case of drag illustrates the malleability of heterosexual binaries and reconfigure bodily categories. Likewise, Haraway’s “artificially created” cyborg questions what if this physical body and our

identity is transformed in highly technological contemporaneousness? or more broadly what has been identified as natural for centuries? Then, the ambiguity and flexibility of gender configurations, together with the celebration of non-binaristic identities and bodies' fusion with technological innovations constitutes the relation between the notions of performative gender and cyborg. As a mixture of human and technoogy, the image of cyborg is presented as a potential disruptive feminine figure whose ambivalence promotes a fluid alternative to binary oppositions as stated by Haraway in "A Cyborg Manifesto" (150). Since the cyborg undermines the boundaries between what is essentially natural or inherent and what is constructed, the image of cyborg has significant implication for women, who are attached to myths of womanhood. Then, women writers' experimentation with new sciences and technologies in a fantastic fashion create a place for what Donna Haraway entitles a cyborg gender, which occurs as a borderline entity hovering somewhere between human and machine and woman and man.

After all, each woman writer uses the transgender figure in the process of becoming to point out a specific concern she had about the culture and time she was living and writing. These women writers engaged in an experimental aesthetic to disrupt patriarchal codes inserted into language. Therefore, they seek to revise, reinvent and re-envision not only language's complicity in the construction and dissemination of stable gender positions but also what we regard as real. In this sense, transgender identification and embodiment examined in these experimental novels show that construction of gender and sexuality come to be evolving, fluctuating performances and productions instead of essential and unchanging identity categories. In such a case, gender ambiguity and fluid sexuality come to be the production of new forms of agency, embodiment and visibility.

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CHAPTER TWO

2. VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *ORLANDO*

This chapter centers upon the evolution of gender and manifestations of the changing dynamic of gender expression in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928). The second chapter demonstrates Woolf's struggle to forge paths to the free expression of gender beyond the dichotomous conventional categories of the masculine male and the feminine female. Being positioned on the threshold of Victorian and Modern age, Woolf challenges the heteronormative assumption that conventional male and female congruence is an original truth and thus the only natural state of expression.

Woolf's *Orlando* can be regarded as contributing to show the destabilization of the naturalness of gender through the constructed states of gender, time and other organizers of compulsive heterosexuality such as attitudes, behaviour, and clothing. This chapter will also demonstrate that non-traditional gender expression and such a gender deviancy functions not only as a catalyst for the transgender subject at the heart of *Orlando* who embodies gender fluidity but also as a factor to disrupt compliance with constructed images of naturalness or originality. Additionally, this study examines how a transgender subject and his/her relationship to the body and narrative experimentation involved in the revision of biography enhance the reader's experience of continual transitioning by exposing gender as a ceaseless process and by foregrounding the text's own position as a process.

More precisely, this chapter will argue that Woolf's *Orlando* is affected by the time's fluidity as it is by Woolf's gender politics. In *Orlando,* it is the concept of time that Woolf employs as a means both to dismantle the traditional Victorian biography and to demonstrate the possibility of androgynous depiction of life in the "trans" timeline, transgendered body as well as transgender storyline.

Virginia Stephen Woolf has been positioned on the threshold of Victorian and Modern age. Woolf's lifetime (1882 to 1941) covered that remarkable gap between the Victorian and Modern periods. Raised in an upper middle class Victorian household with a domineering father and a passive mother, Woolf seems to have made a strenuous effort in both her life and her work to come to terms with the influences of her Victorian past, which had manifested itself as a concern with Victorian

conventionality, prescribed gender roles and a dependence on materialist way of life. Despite the oppressive and strict Victorian household of her father that she portrayed in "A Sketch of the Past," the years from 1897 to 1904, from the deaths of Woolf's mother and her half-sister Stella to the death of her father with their attendant roiling of emotion affected her whole life (147, 154).

In this regard, as Woolf pointed out in "A Sketch of the Past," Leslie Stephen's death in 1904 meant the end of the Victorian "tyranny" she had suffered at Hyde Park Gate (196). Following the deaths of her loved ones, Virginia saw the move from the place of imprisonment to the place of intellectual freedom. Gloomy, male-dominated atmosphere of Hyde Park Gate is replaced by intellectually stimulating atmosphere cultivated by the circle of Woolf's brother Thoby Stephen's Cambridge educated intellectuals at Gordon Square in the heart of Bloomsbury.

At first, Woolf was affected by the unconventionality of her brother's friends. In her memoir, "Old Bloomsbury," she writes that "[t]he young men [of Bloomsbury] had no 'manners' in the Hyde Park Gate sense," as "they criticised our [Virginia and her sister Vanessa's] arguments as severely as their own" (169). No longer confined by Victorian conventions, Woolf could participate in discussion, argue, and even dissent. Here, it is important to note that in Bloomsbury, she could expose the mind, not the body; she could discuss abstractions, not emotions. Among Bloomsbury companions, she also experienced an "obscure" feeling of "reassurance" in the sense that concern about appearance, attractiveness, or respectability is replaced by the "shabbiness" as a sign of "superiority," as noted in " Old Bloombury" (195).

At the same time, the Bloomsbury members seem to expand the possible meanings of conventional masculinity and femininity. In this respect, these elite circle of modernists attempted to experiment with unconventional and transgressive sexual relationships outside the parameters of legal marriage, but there were inevitable traces of the patriarchal order. For instance, as Christopher Reed notes in his article "Bloomsbury Bashing," certain members of Bloomsbury, novelist E.M. Forster, artist Duncan Grant, economist Maynard Keynes, critic and historian Lytton Strachey, were closely associated with male homosexual subjectivity as a sign of liberating androgyny. Likewise, lesbian sexuality or female homosexuality existed among

Bloomsbury women novelists such as Hope Mirrlees, Julia Strachey, Violet Dickinson, Vita Sackville – West, Virginia Woolf. However, the censorship of modernism made male and female homosexuality largely unrepresentable (72).

Initially, Woolf was blind to the homosexuality of several Bloomsbury men with whom she had a non-heterosexual, unconventional cross-sex friendship outside marriage, partly due to the emergence of more distinct male homosexual identification, and partly due to increased opportunities for women. In her memoir "Old Bloomsburry," Woolf writes:

> [I]t never occurred to me that there were buggers even now in the Stephens' sitting room at Gordon Square. It never struck me that the abstractness, the simplicity which had been so great a relief … were largely due to the fact that the majority of the young men who came there were not attracted by young women (198).

Woolf attributes the origin of her freedom and relief to her unconventional cross-sex identification between women and homosexual men. More precisely, male homosexuality among certain Bloomsbury men make possible to break down the conventions of propriety between the sexes and thus she is no longer the object of masculine gaze.

At this point, it is important to note that in "the society of buggers," she feels at ease, but at the same time she sometimes feels the strange sense of frustration. As she asserted in her memoir "Old Bloomsburry," her cross-sex interaction with her male homosexual acquaintances in Bloomsbury circle were "barren" artistically since it was "barren" linguistically. When she and Bloomsbury men had "nothing to say to each other," she came away from their interaction noticing that she "could not honestly be anything" in their reserved presence. In the presence of homosexual men, she felt like a nobody verbally and emotionally due to the lack of attraction between her and these men. For Woolf, the company of male homosexuals can make women tense and inhibited because "with buggers one cannot… show off. Something is always suppressed, held down" ("Old Bloomsbury" 199).

Her memoir, "Old Bloomsbury," presents her unconventional cross-sex interaction with male homosexuals of the Bloomsbury circle as a paradox. It both liberates and limits women. Woolf seems to state that women can and cannot be themselves around male homosexuals. What she wants is a context in which she can

"fizz up" and "show off." For Virginia Woolf, being able to show off is "one of the chief necessities of life." Yet, this desire for showing off "is not copulating, necessarily, nor altogether being in love," as she asserts in her memoir "Old Bloomsbury" (198-9). This obviously signifies a distinct cross-sex dynamic based on stimulation, excitement, and reassurance without being feminized or reduced to the level of the body as male sexual object in a typically male heterosexual manner.

Together with her oscillating relationship with the Bloomsbury circle, one of the strongest contemporary influence on Woolf's writing process is that of a community of writers, artists, and thinkers and the ideals known as Bloomsbury. It strengthened her confidence in her rejection against Victorian mores. In addition, Bloomsbury's sense of intimacy and love of conversation account for Woolf's strong inclination for questioning and conversational tone in her works.

During the years from 1910 until 1920, there were political movements in which Woolf became involved. Even though she was a reluctant politician, she was involved in the Suffrage Movement. The Suffrage Movement brought the issue of women's vote to the foreground of public concerns, which would provide a civil right for women in the public sphere. When the Suffrage Bill was passed in 1918, Woolf confesses in her diary: "I don't feel much more important – perhaps slightly so. Its like a knighthood; might be useful to impress people one despises" (104). For Woolf, suffrage work was simply one of women's many necessities. After all, the voting right would not bring power since the suppression of women reached much further.

Her withdrawal from suffrage work would lead her to completely new and different life; that is, her marriage to Leonard Woolf. Although in "Old Bloomsburry," Woolf described her feelings about marriage as a "horrible necessity impending over us," the freedom of expression of her Bloomsbury circle led her to conclude, the "old sentimental views of marriage in which we were brought up were revolutionized" (174). At the same time, her marriage with Leonard Woolf brought interesting paradox to her life. By marrying Leonard Woolf, not only a man of a lower class, but a Jew and a politician as well, she stepped outside her Victorian upper middle class background. Her husband, Leonard Woolf, made conditions favorable for his wife to create artistically. He struggled to ease her mental discomfort, read and critiqued her works

and found and run the Hogarth Press with her. This press stimulated her artistic creativity, for it published experimental works by Woolf and other diligent writers (Meyerowitz 5).

War was also significant in shaping Woolf's life as evidenced by its frequent occurrance in her books, stories and diary entries. She had a strong feeling of dislike toward the war, which "preposterous masculine fiction" she called in a letter to Margaret Llewelyn Davies from 23 January, 1916, and lived among the "conscientious objectors" of Bloomsbury such as Lytton Strachey, Clive Bell, David Garnett, Duncan Grant (76). Likewise, she hated any kind of writing that celebrated masculine values; that is, heroism, virtue and honour. As Woolf notes in her diary, such "maritial rhetoric" was only "emotional parodies of our real feelings" (302). Accordingly, such language is inadequate to reflect the profound personal and cultural loss created by war.

Significantly, in *Three Guineas*, Woolf sees war "[…] from the bridge which connects the private house with the world of public life" (102). Thus, she rejects in "A Room of One's Own" the assumption that "this is an important book… because it deals with war" and this is an "insignificant book because it deals with the feelings of women in a drawing-room" (56). Instead, Woolf's fiction aspires to indicate the connection between the drawing- room and battlefield. Woolf insists that the experience of war penetrates everyone's consciousness in the sense that an individual need not experience the battlefield to be suffered by war. For Woolf, anyone with sufficient imagination could comprehend the realities of war and acknowledge the terror of war. She considers the terror of war as the consequence of unjust social structure and attitudes in which inequity, hierarchy and violence of the domestic, private world signified and resulted in global violence. Then, Woolf believed, as she states in *Three Guineas*, "the public and private worlds are inseparably connected... the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other" (142).

For Woolf, this is also evident in men's education. As Woolf explains in "A Room of One's Own," the education of men strengthens men's tendency toward warfare by stimulating their instinct to fight, rather than pacifying male aggression. Then, Woolf asserts that the demands of public life arouse in men

> the instinct for possession, the rage for acquisition which drives them to desire other people's fields and goods perpetually; to make frontier and flags; battleships and poison gas; to offer up their own lives and their children's lives (39).

Here, Woolf asserts that the demands of public life stimulate in men an ambition to fight and dominate. Invariably, this ambition gives rise to a desire for violence and war. Accordingly, Woolf believes that men fight to gratify their own sense of masculinity. For her, it is not the sublimation of violence but rather the suppression of women or women's inferiority that allow for the basis for the creation of civilization based on patriarchal values.

At the same time, as Woolf states in "A Room of One's Own," "the European War […] opened the doors to the average woman," not only by giving women the vote as a kind of "reward" for their efforts during the war but also by providing women the opportunity to work in professional occupations (141). Unfortunately, such rewards concerning women's so-called liberties created the "sex war," as Alex Zwerdling has put it. In this sex war, the contested territory was the female body, its intellect, its sexuality, and its natural function (216).

Paradoxically, however, Woolf states in her novel *Orlando* that the "dark garments of the female sex" provide women with a peculiar insightfulness into the expression of the human spirit (95). It is the position of women as social, political and economic "outsiders" that ensure the revelations of the female characters in Woolf's novels. That is because in *Three Guineas*, Woolf responds to the question "How to prevent war" by demanding a society of outsiders (53). Here, Woolf expresses the need or desire for a female society that promote peace and justice not violence. Clearly, Woolf privileges pacifism and thereby its protection and defense of universal common good.

As Woolf puts forward in *Three Guineas*, to be an outsider was to be a dissenter. More broadly, an outsider is born female within a dominant social system based on the father's patriarchal rule, the worship of the mother, "the procession of the sons of educated men," and the enforced "infantilization" of daughters under the complete control of particularly their fathers (69). An outsider is also torn by her paradoxical existence –particularly between her inclusion in the private patriarchal house and her exclusion from the public systems of patriarchal power. Such outsider

experiences trigger unique viewpoints, insight and experimentation that prepare the way for the situation of the outsider in Woolf's novels.

2.1. *Orlando* as A "Trans-Genre" Narrative

Woolf's historical position between her Victorian upbringing and the contemporary pressures serves as a means of affirming female creativity. At that time, she was writing under the pressures of both external and internal censorship. In addition, her male modernists' demand for "impersonality" in art led her to conceal her sexual politics under the illusion of irony, humor, exaggeration and metaphor. In this complexity of Woolf's historical position, she created a synthesis of genres that served as a means for her sexual politics (Kostkowska 22,30).

By experimenting with genre inclusively, Woolf celebrates difference and contradictions, and thus releasing herself from rigid genre divisions and expanding the novel's power of expression beyond its representational boundaries. For much of her personal and intellectual life, Woolf examined and experimented with the genre of biography.

Indeed, biography was a familiar genre to Woolf and it had a constant presence throughout her life since her childhood. Obviously, the genre of biography was a driving force in Woolf's father Sir Leslie Stephen's professional life as evidenced in his employment as an editor of *The Dictionary of National Biography* for nine years and his biographies of the prominent figures such as Samual Johnson (1878), Alexander Pope (1880), Jonathan Swift (1882), Sir James Fitzjames Stephen (1895), George Eliot (1902) and Thomas Hobbes (1904) (Parke 71).

Katherine C. Hill, a critic, interested in Woolf and biography has stated the influence of her father's literary taste on Woolf's involvement in biography and literature in general. Accordingly, Hill asserts that though Leslie Stephen could be dictator in the household, his relationship with his daughter carried many more dimensions than just that of a tyrant in the sense that he actively trained or prepared Woolf to become his "literary and intellectual heir," a plan that aroused in Woolf an interest in biographies and histories (351). Hill further contends that like Woolf, her father had progressive ideas concerning literary history that adhered to the creation of new genres that would serve to characterize effectively the vision of an age, and that

these opinions "certainly did not conflict with her [Woolf's] experimental bent, and they may have in some small way stimulated it. Stephen's entire conception of the progress of literary history is predicated on experimentation" (359). Through such an exposure to the genre of biography at a young age, Woolf was able to find room to experiment and undermine the conventions of the genre of biography her father and his contemporaries wrote. At the same time, she was also involved in the new route the genre of biography was taking through the works of some of her contemporaries in the Bloomsbury circle, especially Lytton Strachey and Harold Nicolson. In this sense, her works on biography show considerable differences from her father's work.

Although her writings on the genre of biography are numerous, two of her essays, particularly "The New Biography" (1927) and "The Art of Biography" (1939), indicate the culmination of her involvement with the new style of biographical writing. In this respect, Woolf coined the term "new biography" in her review of Harold Nicolson's *Some People* in an essay called "The New Biography" (1927) in which she notes three distinguishing features for the shift she considers as necessary in biography writing in the twentieth century. First, the new biographers had finally decreased the length of their volumes. As a result, the evidentory documents were largely deleted. Instead of material and external concerns such as verifiable facts, "distinctive" achievement and public acceptance embodied in Victorian biographies, the character traits and inner life of the subject turned out to be far more siginificant (231).

Second, the new biographer is "no longer the serious and sympathetic companion, toiling even slavishly in the footsteps of hero," but is instead equal with the subject. This equality promotes freedom that enables the new biographer to interpret. At this point, Woolf observed that these new biographers recognized their own subjectivities, which provides them both with comparative equality with their subjects and a considerable change in point of view (231-32).

Likewise, the biographer does not have to be "dominated by the idea of goodness." The Victorian attitude to impress and instruct especially to encourage intellectual, moral or spiritual improvement and the habit of covering up shortcomings and unpleasant things had led to openness and broad-mindedness. As a result, the new

biographer portrayed flawed, oppressed, excluded and credible biographical subjects to challenge Victorian hero worship, as stated in "The New Biography" (233-34).

Third, the new biographer carefully chooses the facts for inclusion, sometimes allowing a character trait to show a larger side of the personality rather than depending on the documented events of a subject's life. At this point, taking into consideration Sir Sidney Lee's epigram "The aim of biography is the truthful transmission of personality," Woolf criticizes Victorian biographers such as Lee, who followed Sir Leslie Stephen as a primary editor of *The Dictionary of National Biography* (1891), for depending upon only the facts that do not transmit personality. What Woolf wishes is to change the definition of factual and materialistic truth as unitary and objective by undertaking the hard task of uniting the "granite-like solidity" of truth with the "rainbow-like intangibility" of personality ("The New Biography" 236).

Woolf's attitude toward biography in 1927 was that it was an art, requiring the biographer's careful choice of facts and imaginative depiction of the subject's personality. At this point, Woolf employs the attachment of granite and rainbow to describe the biography's task of transmitting the elusive qualities of the subject's personality in conjunction with the concrete facts of the subject's life.

In this respect, Woolf praises the practitioners of the new biography such as Lytton Strachey, Harold Nicolson, David Cecil and others for their help to redefine biography's relationship with fact in order to properly transmit the subject's personality. As Strachey points out "uninterpreted truth is as uselass as buried gold; and art is the great interpreter" (qtd in Marcus, *Auto/Biographical Discourses* 113). In the case of Strachey's belief, the biographer makes his existence as an interpreter of facts. It should come as no surprise that Strachey's exaltation of the biographer's interpretation of facts coincides with Woolf's emphasis on the biographer's power to create: "… he sees his subject spread about him. He chooses; he synthesizes; in short, he has ceased to be the chronicler; he has become the artist" ("The New Biography" 233). Accordingly, this understanding of the biographer as artist and of the biography as a work of art points out the new biographer.

In "The New Biography," Woolf claims that Harold Nicolson's *Some People* appears to be a successful example of the potential of the new biography to transmit

the subject's personality and inner feelings. For Woolf, the new biographer believes that the "essence" of a person's character can demonstrate itself in "the tone of a voice, the turn of a head, some little phrase or anecdote picked up in passing". Accordingly, as Woolf states, his biographical subject gives the impression of being "extremely like a real human being" (231).

Thus, for Woolf, the success of Harold Nicolson's *Some People* seems to be related to his willingness to combine the arts of fiction and biography or what Woolf terms the "truth of fact and truth of fiction". More broadly, as stated in the "New Biography", Woolf was impressed by Nicolson's "method of writing about people and about himself as though they were at once real and imaginary": the book "has the substance, the reality of truth" and "the freedom, the artistry of fiction" (232). Under the influence of Harold Nicolson's *Some People,* Woolf proposes that the simultaneity of fact and fiction can be accomplished in biographical writing by means of the biographer's balance of stylistic components of fiction writing and factual components of the biographical subject's life.

However, she doubts about the combination of fact and fiction. While the "biographer's imagination is always being stimulated to use the novelist's art of arrangement, suggestion, dramatic effect to expound the private life," Nicolson still lacks the novelist's freedom from facts. Thus, "he has neither the freedom of fiction nor the substance of fact." At this point, Woolf expresses a wish for a manner that would manifest our "fictious life" that "dwells in the personality rather than the act" ("The New Biography" 235). Here, fiction represents the state of interior individual experience that is always subjective, elusive and mutable and can never be proved. Its opposite is the rejection of the existence of a world beyond the factual evidence gathered from objective observation. In this respect, biography occupies a specific site where "truth of fact and truth of fiction" constantly negates and renew one another.

After describing the successes of *Some People*, Woolf states in "The New Biography" that its "victory is definite enough to leave us asking what territory it has won for the art of biography" (234). For Woolf, Nicolson had moved biography into new territory by illustrating the potential of incorporating the art of fiction into biography.

In *Orlando: A Biography* (1928), Woolf boldly moves into this new territory, attempting to capture the "queer amalgamation of dream and reality, that perpetual marriage of granite and rainbow" which she describes in the "New Biography" (232). At this point, as a work of fiction with "biography" in its title, *Orlando* employs the genre of biography to bring the life events of Sackville- West into fiction, featuring a narrative with its trans-genre, transgender subject and trans-time story line.

In *Orlando*, this redefinition or revision of biography is done through the development of a nonlinear timeline that blurs the lines between fact and fiction, reason and imagination, fantasy and reality, revealing how these distinctions are so arbitrary as to be non-existent, like the boundaries dividing gender identity into male or female. Then, Woolf's *Orlando* is affected by time as it is by gender, and it is the nonlinear temporality that Woolf uses as a means to undermine the conventions of the traditional Victorian biography.

Regarding the structure of *Orlando*, it has also been asserted that its six chapters, preface with acknowledgements, an index of names and illustrations contributes to the impressions of a new style of biography – a "mock biography"- in which the fictional and the real are become joined. In fact, it comes to be a process which can be viewed as a reflection of the individual's inability to sometimes differentiate between what is real and what is fictional, or of the need to go beyond these boundaries. With *Orlando*'s publication, Woolf sought to "revolutionise biography in a night" (qtd. in Marcus 114).

In *Orlando,* Woolf draws on the history of Vita Sackville-West and her aristocratic family lineage as well as her family home, *Knole*, to construct a work neither wholly fiction nor biographical, but rather a fantastic mixture of the two. The narrator/biographer of *Orlando* struggles to present the truth of the subject's life but constantly stopping to think about what facts are and how one comes to know this truth, if at all, which calls to mind the tension between what Woolf calls the "granite-like solidity" of the "hard facts" and the "rainbow-like intangibility"of the "individual imagination ("The New Biography" 232). As *Orlando*'s narrator/biographer puts forward, nature starts "making us so unequally of clay and diamonds, of rainbow and granite […] providing a perfect rag-bag of odds and ends within us […] but has

contrived that the whole assortment shall be lightly stitched together by a single thread" (47). Throughout *Orlando,* the narrator/biographer tries to unite the truth of Orlando's life with the "rag-bag" chaos of his or her personality by means of a "single thread" of language not only to hold together the unrelated items but also to create the illusion of a "seamless whole" (47).

At the time of *Orlando*'s publication, Vita Sackville-West's position as the inspiration and model for Orlando would have been known in initially small circles. However, literary intersections between Woolf and Sackville-West in the genre of "new" biography date back to the publication of *Some People*, composed by Vita Sackville-West's husband Harold Nicolson and Woolf's review of *Some People* in the "New Biography." At the same time, Sackville-West's choice of Aphra Behn as a biographical subject for her work *Aphra Behn: The Incomparable Astrea* (1927) followed by the inclusion of Behn in Woolf's lectures published in "A Room of One's Own" promotes a close literary exchange between Sackville-West and Woolf as well. In fact, their personal as well as literary interaction from their first meeting at a social gathering in 1922 until Woolf's death in 1941 would last with varying degrees of intensity (Sproles 73-75).

Beyond her intimacy with Woolf, Woolf's infatuation with Vita Sackville-West as a female and a living subject of this "revolutionary" biography is significant in the sense that the genre of biography had been long dominated by its deceased "great man" ("The New Biography" 231). As a result, Woolf's determination to write about Sackville-West challenges the biographical theorist Sidney Lee's statement regarding the biographer's choice of biographical subject: "Death is a part of life and no man is fit for biography till he is dead. Living men have been made themes of biography. But the choice defies the cardinal condition of completeness… The living theme can at best be a torso, a fragment" (12). In Lee's estimation, biography has no room for living men. In case of Sackville-West as Orlando, a living woman, a "gender-bender," Woolf writes a fantastic "fragment" addressing the life of a woman.

Officially dedicated to "V. Sackville – West", Woolf blends the fictional and historical accounts of Sackville-West with her deliberate play with the temporal and formal conventions of biography. *Orlando* appears to be the result of Woolf's deep-

rooted interest in revolutionizing the biographical writing. In refusing the form of the conventional biography, Woolf refuses the standard type of a life. The mixture of fantasy and reality in *Orlando* presents an alternative form of a human lifespan that flows in new directions and is confined by the imaginative possibility instead of material or physical facts. Accordingly, Woolf's biographical subject has been alive for more than three hundred years and her subject begins life as a male and then he becomes female. In *Orlando,* Woolf frees the human experience from the trappings of the standard time and thus the conventional, chronologically- organized biography.

In the following passage from *Orlando,* Woolf attempts to demonstrate the discrepancy between two concepts of time: the regularity of the "clock time," that is chronological time, and the flow of "mind time." Here, Woolf suggests in *Orlando* that the genre of biography should concern itself with this distinction:

> An hour, once it lodges in the queer element of the human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock length; on the other hand, an hour may be accurately represented on the timepiece of the mind by one second. This extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind is less known than it should be and deserves fuller investigation (59).

For Woolf, the contrast between time on the clock and time in the mind served to illustrate the unreality and inadequacy of clock time and the significance of "the unlimited time of the mind which stretches in a flash from Shakespeare to ourselves" (*The Waves* 163). From Woolf's perspective, clock time, useful for regulating the social life, is not effective as a measurement of the inner experience. Human experience can be measured by the continuous flow of ideas in the mind, that is, by "fluid" mind time. In this sense, Orlando's sense of time's unsteady passing is also shown by his variable awareness of its passage:

> when a man has reached the age of thirty, as Orlando now had, time when he is thinking becomes inordinately long; time when he is doing becomes inordinately short. Thus Orlando gave his orders and did the business of his vast estates in a flash; but directly he was alone on the mound under the oak tree, the seconds began to round and fill until it seemed as if they would never fall (59).

Here, Orlando is aware of the continuous flow of time and the unequal divisions of the clock time. In addition, for Woolf, the true length of an hour changes dependent upon the individual's experience: "Some weeks added a century to his age, others no more than three seconds at most" (*Orlando* 59). The progression of time in the mind

is generally the progression of memory since past and future events expand our present thought. When Orlando longs for her husband who is at sea, she is intensely aware of the longevity of the present. In such a case, the time she spent with her husband in the past is contracted, only three seconds and a half (*Orlando* 59). As Woolf suggests, time is then a greatly private, personal and continuous flow which cannot be regulated by the clock time. Time is elastic; it can be expanded and contracted. Regarding the elasticity of time, Orlando feels that "in the space of three seconds and a half... she had broken her ankle, fallen in love, married Shelmerdine." As a result, life can seem to Orlando "of prodigious length. Yet even so, it went like a flash" (59).

This expanded and contracted time paves the way for the argument that there are many fluid and various flow of times and selves co-existing and clashing simultaneously within the stream of the individual's mind. As Woolf puts forward, "if there are (at a venture) seventy- six different times all ticking in the mind at once, how many different people are there not - Heaven help us - all having lodgement at one time or another in the human spirit? Some say two thousand and fifty-two" (*Orlando* 178). As the biographer- narrator explains, the multiple "selves" Orlando possesses allow for both the great variety of times she experiences through memory and various personal moods. At the same time, each of these selves signifies a different time just as Orlando's multiple selves are indeed her "true" self. Likewise, the history of Orlando's ancestors is summed up as the life of one single individual – Orlando.

Throughout *Orlando*, the proliferation of selves indicates the never-ending change an individual is exposed to. In fact, Orlando seeks his/her true self that would not manifest itself when needed: "[…] Orlando? still the Orlando she needs may not come; these selves of which we are built up, one on top of another, as plates are piled on a waiter's hand, have attachments elsewhere, sympathies, little constitutions and rights of their own" (194). At the same time, going back to the biographical subject's past, the biographer / narrator makes a list of all these selves he has managed "to find room for, since a biography is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have as many thousand" (195). However, all these selves do not meet a requirement. It is the true self that escapes from her, "compact of all the selves we have it in us to be" (196). When the true self eventually

manifests itself, Orlando becomes a whole true self to be seen in the transition that occurs: s/he is now “darkened”, “silent”, “stilled” (199).

It is also notable that the strange timeline of life experienced by Orlando calls to mind several arguments about queer temporality and its relation to biography, creating room for the instability of time and gender that occurs in the fluid flow of time. In *In a Queer Time and Place*, Halberstam points out,

> Queer subcultures produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death (2).

In *Orlando*, Woolf demonstrates these “alternative temporalities” in a chain of queer events that appear for the biography of Orlando, whose near 400 year life span covers unnatural changes in biology, culture, desire, and geography exemplified by an extremely long lifetime, spatial transition and a change of sex. In fact, Woolf’s *Orlando* undermines the genre of biography by not classifying these markers of life experience in a linear fashion and thus they are either skimped over or left out of the narrative entirely. For instance, two significant markers of life experience birth and death are missing from the novel. Orlando is introduced to readers at the age of sixteen and the novel ends in October, 1928 when it was published.

Accordingly, Orlando’s temporal progression does not work through the growth and decay of the body, but rather through its change, more precisely through the life experiences that make him ready to experience life as a woman. Then, Orlando’s change of sex disrupts the linear progression of biography and therefore time must extend to create the narrative space for a series of selves in one body.

Woolf’s reconfiguration of time as various and fluid temporalities beyond the linear progression of time sounds quite similar to what Melanie Micir, an academic, writes about queer temporality:

> Queer temporality studies critique understandings of time as a naturalized, internalized, bodily performance of the too easily accepted social scripts that govern our lives, asking us instead to recognize and resist – in our scholarly practices as in our lives—the standard, heteronormative, biologically-driven temporal organization of our world (114).

Orlando's masculine and feminine gendered lives enable him/her to experience life outside of a rigid societal time while connecting to the past and history. For instance, Orlando challenges the heteronormativity of inheritance by living later life as a woman together with the advantages of the gender privilege of a man's history. Then, Orlando's combining her masculine past with her feminine present and future serves as a challenge to a "heteronormative, biologically-driven" temporal world. In this manner, time and gender as discrete identity markers turn out to have an interwoven nature as manifested in the life and liaisons of Orlando.

Significantly, Orlando's temporal and sexual mobility in search for the meaning of life in the attempt to redefine reality as well as Woolf's mobility through her act of writing enable both Woolf and her biographical subject to transcend the boundaries of space, time and body. Nevertheless, questioning life and reality and writing about it is not sufficient. Life needs to be experienced, whereas love, time, space and body need to be felt in order to grasp meaning.

Later, the narrator/biographer shows that the only life deserving of recording is one that is provided with adventures if the subject is male and provided with love affairs if the subject is female. However, Woolf's biographical subject does not do the things a conventional biographical subject is expected to do. First of all, Orlando's change of sex leads to the indeterminacy. That is to say, Orlando's status is "in a highly ambiguous condition" since it was "uncertain whether she was alive or dead, mano r woman, Duke or nonentity" (125). From this perspective, Orlando's sexual indeterminacy will jeopardize the biographer /narrator's project in the sense that Orlando the woman refuses to participate in the life of action and adventure. Rather, she engages herself with "thought and imagination," for the biographer, which are "of no importance whatsoever." Orlando turns to writing: "she need neither fight her age, nor submit to it; she was of it, yet remained herself. Now, therefore, she could write, and write she did. She wrote. She wrote. She wrote" (154).

However, the narrator/ biographer admits reluctantly, "when we are writing the life of a woman, we may, it is agreed, waive our demand for action, and substitute love instead" (167). Therefore, the narrator/biographer expects Orlando "to think, at least of a gamekeeper (and as long as she thinks of a man, nobody objects to a woman

thinking)" (168). Yet, she refuses to engage in an affair with her gamekeeper. Here, Woolf satirizes, disrupts, and reinscribes the boundaries of narrative conventions by featuring Orlando who focuses less on fighting her age and more on writing her poem while still preserving her ambiguous identity by never fully submitting to feminine roles. Then, the biographer/narrator now condemns Orlando to a "metaphorical death" of the self: "If then, the subject of one's biography will neither love nor kill, but will only think and imagine, we may conclude that he or she is no better than a corpse and so leave her" (157). Orlando "will neither love nor kill" since at all times he/she is simultaneously a man and a woman, constantly moving beyond the bodily and mental states (157).

Orlanda's sex change occured at a seemingly random moment in the middle of a chapter but also at a crucial moment when Orlando has been made a duke and experienced a violent civil uprising. In the face of such a fantastical moment of Orlando's transformation, the narrator /biographer wishes s/he could have ended the biography and states that "Would that we might spare the reader what is to come and say to him in so many words, Orlando died and was buried" (81). However, as a biographer/narrator, s/he devoutly submits to "Truth, Candour, and Honesty, the austere Gods who keep watch and ward by the inkpot of the biographer" (81). While the biographer/narrator of *Orlando* superficially follows "the firm, if rather narrow, ground of ascertained truth", he admits that "no one has ever known exactly what took place later that night" when Orlando becomes woman. Here, he simply admits that "ascertained truth" proves deficient or lacking to capture the biographical subject Orlando's deepest self (79).

At the same time, the narrator/biographer's description and personification of three apparitions, Purity, Chastity and Modesty, which can be read as socially acceptable qualities of femininity as well, entering Orlando's chamber at the moment of Orlando's change of sex overnight is of importance. These abstractions or characteristics must leave "in haste" in an attempt to "shut out something they dare not look upon" since assertions of purity, modesty and chastity were only the conventional biographer's assertions and prevented him from penetrating the subject's deeper self or depicting the accurate selfhood.

Additionally, the truth of the female sex occurs not in chastity, modesty, and purity but in a dark, invisible sphere that has not yet been uncovered. Therefore, the act of denouncing of the veils of Chastity, Modesty, and Purity expects the revelation of Orlando's truth and the female sex. As the novel itself states, truth that unveils the dark and the shameful by "flaunt[ing] in the brutal gaze of the sun things that were better unknown and undone," and therefore reveals the fact of how unfairly woman has been behaved towards, implied in those false ideals attached to the female identity and the female body (122).

In *Orlando,* Woolf satirizes these feminine traits, by showing them in their negative forms: "Our Lady of Purity" cover "vice and poverty", so purity hinders what is bad, doubtful, ambiguous. "Our Lady of Chastity" turns things to ice and stone. "Our Lady of Modesty" […] "speaks so low that one can hardly hear" and is afraid of what is plentiful by covering her eyes with her hair (78). Here, Woolf shows that selfhood, truth, reality, gender and sex are all abstractions and cannot be presented in a certain way. Through Orlando's sex change, these abstractions prove not to have complete, unchangeable or stable nature as his/her gender identity.

For instance, Orlando him/herself invokes the help, support or inspiration of truth as s/he tries to write about love. Noticing that his/her thoughts are disturbed by plenty of figurative expressions, s/he becomes annoyed and exclaims:

> Why not say simply in so many words"— and then he would try to think for half an hour—or was it two years and a half?— how to say simply in so many words what love is. [. . .] "And if literature is not the Bride and Bedfellow of Truth, what is she? Confound it all [. . .] why say Bedfellow when one's already said Bride? Why not simply say what one means and leave it? (60-61)

Since words are not precisely fixed or determined and characterized by association, they never refer to just one thing or the same thing. Thus, each sign leads to another, which causes the multiplicity of meaning. In her essay "The Craftsmanship," Woolf remarks that words prove to be "the wildest, freest, most irresponsible, most unteachable of all things" revealing their potential to those who "pin them down to one meaning, their useful meaning, […] for it is their nature to change " (89).

In *Orlando,* Woolf also explores what words can and cannot do. As she points out in "How Should One Read a Book? (1926)," "when you attempt to reconstruct [a

vision] in words, you will find that it breaks into a thousand conflicting impressions" (136). Accordingly, she expresses her doubts and distrust concerning language's unstable nature to convey deeper reality or truth beneath the daily existence. Nevertheless, in *Orlando* Woolf hoped to capture and combine the "shimmer of reality which sometimes attaches to [her] people, as the lustre on an oyster shell" (172). Beyond the granite facts of Sackville's heritage and character, the lustre Woolf mentions is like the rainbow aspects of Sackville's personality as coloured and shifting. Then, Orlando can be read as a transformative attempt to express "queer amalgamation of dream and reality", as it depicts a subject who embodies a "queer amalgamation" of male and female while disrupting prescribed notions of language and truth ("The New Biography" 155).

2.2."The Queer Element of The Human Spirit:" Transmitting Transformative Moments of Being

In *Orlando*, Woolf combines her examination of gender as an identity category with a playful but serious critique of the genre of biography filled with fantastical events and characters, simultaneously challenging how culture categorizes literary works and individuals. In this manner, a more accurate description of *Orlando* would be to regard it as trans-gender and trans-genre in the sense that trans signifies the process of change and movement that are central to the dynamics of trans-genre and transgender identity and identification, as Pamela L. Caughie argues (508). Then, *Orlando* is more concerned with transgressing or extending across the boundaries and binaries that permeate human life. Examining *Orlanda* as a trans-genre text and Orlando as a trans-gender subject indicates the nature of their ambiguities and constant unstable variances and simultaneously foregrounds how generic and identity categories are restrictive, arbitrary and rigid.

In *Orlando*, Woolf reveals gender, like time, as constructed and this construction is dependent upon compulsory heterosexuality. Just as Woolf shows the artificiality of time throughout the novel, she demonstrates gender construction as artificial through the transformation of Orlando from male to female. At this point, Judith Butler's theories of gender and sexuality are useful in thinking about Woolf's revelation of gender roles as a restrictive and oppressive construct of society.

In “Imitation and Gender Insubordination,” Butler asserts that gender construction is dependent on a repeated imitation of “a phantasmatic ideal of heterosexual identity” (313). Simply, for Butler, we imitate ideas about clothing, behavioral traits and gestures based on a structure of compulsive heterosexuality. Those aspects of selfhood are internalized and thus we cannot escape their influence. As an example, although “Orlando had become a woman […] in ever other respect [she] remained precisely as he had been,” Orlando believes that she must situate feminine characteristics in her new body and she begins acquiring clothes, distinctive behavioral traits and gestures that render Orlando femininely gendered (83). For Woolf, gender as a construct is reinforced by society and thereby “internalized” as real. In fact, throughout *Orlando*, Woolf manipulates the heterosexual construct by unsettling the connection between sex and gender and setting free from the commitments to “truths.” To do so, Woolf can express the presence of subtext of gender construction and of the social expectations.

This study presents the term “transgender” to describe higher state of mind which possesses a sort of transparent transition, a mutable way to reflect upon or waver around ideas without restraint from arbitrary boundaries of gender, genre, reality or truth. It is this state of mind that both characterizes the uninterrupted mutability or fluidity of Orlando’s identity and frees Orlando from a strict reference to sex categories. Regarding Orlando as transgender celebrates an endless transition in the middle of sex categories instead of hanging from one ends of the division to the other. In this respect, in *Orlando*, the term transgender not only refers to the higher state of mind which enables Orlando to experience the moments of vision but it also characterizes Orlando’s subjectivity.

The distinctive component of reflecting the elusive reality of an individual’s life for Woolf is the moment of being, her conception she uses as a means of self awareness as mentioned in her memoir “A Sketch of the Past.” Towards the end of the novel, Orlando experiences his/her moment of being at the present moment, “the twelfth stroke of midnight, Thursday, the eleventh of October, Nineteen Hundred and Twenty-eight,” the date of Woolf finishing the book as well (242). This exactness in the present moment as a moving instant in time, is in fact completely artificial form forced upon what is essentially a formless as well as discontinuous flow of time. To

bring the reader's awareness to the present moment as a site of flux is then to realize an identity that is constructed and hanged between past experiences and future possibilities. At the present moment, Orlando seems completely merged with both a chain of associations from her past and her many selves, intermingling with the visions of future. Accordingly, Orlando's moment of being is clearly transgender in the sense that his/her sudden awareness of the present moment's shifting and varied composition becomes connected with his/her consciousness of his/her similarly shifting and varied revelations of a gendered self.

At this point, it will be helpful to elaborate Woolf's aesthetic investigation to differentiate between two categories of "being," or experience. In this sense, in "A Sketch of the Past," she identifies instances of exceptional, unified, and vivid experience as "moments of being." However, much of the life that is lived unconsciously, and therefore not remembered, makes up what Woolf calls "non-being" experience or "the cotton wool" of daily existence (71).

The times of non-being, then, pass with little or no memory or trace. They signifiy what Woolf calls the "cotton wool" of non-being. For Woolf, the flow of everyday experience is fraught with distraction, the rapid movement of the scattered mind, and interruption. Then, the flow of one's daily life weaves a curtain of "cotton wool" around our ordinary experiences. At this ponit, as *Orlando* would prove, imaginative speculation transforms "non-being" into "being" through the actuality and intensity of the perceptions during the periods of deep concentration and acute awareness. As Woolf writes in "A Sketch of the Past," these experiences of "heightened sensibility" are the result of temporary suspension of gender roles and performances and a subsequent involvement in a deeper, elusive self beneath the surface or beneath roles and social personas (70).

To reveal her modernist concept of life and its reality which are hidden under the visible surface, Woolf calls for a "veil," "curtain," or "mask" with its ambiguous feature that exists in the in-between space of clarity and obscurity. In "A Sketch of the Past," Woolf's description of "colour-and-sound memories" of her childhood which functions as "the blue gummy veil" adds a layer of complexity to the original memory (66). That is, Woolf's description of moment of being conveys the idea that beneath

the surface tension of life occurs a more intimate and much deeper reality where the boundaries between self and the world, between past and present she experienced as a child come to be fluid and blurred.

The image of memory that is a kind of veil, being "globular; semi-transparent" as Woolf states in "In a Sketch of the Past" appears to be reminiscent of "life" that is characterized as "a semi-transparent" veil. As Woolf explains in her essay "Modern Fiction,"

> Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? (2150)

Woolf finds moments of being in the inner workings of consciousness or in the inner experiences of the mind, beneath ordinary routinized life, in an ambiguous place rescued from visual clarity. In this sense, Woolf's essence of life appears to be vague like a "luminous halo" and ambiguous like "semi-transparent envelope." Then, as Woolf writes in "In a Sketch of the Past," the sharpened sensibility and acute awareness catch the elusive life in a veil-like mesh while "a great part of every day" is "not lived consciously" (70).

Similar to life that requires to be observable and unconcealed as the hidden reality by a "semi-transparent" veil or a "luminous halo," the truth of the female sex needs not a complete covering or simply nudeness but an ambiguous process of revelation by a veil of artifice. At the moment of sex change, Orlando's being without clothing or covering of any kind does not unconceal the truth of the female sex because her change into the female sex does not mark any difference between male and female sexuality. Through Orlando's change of sex, Woolf has indicated how arbitrary and ambiguous these categories are in the sense that the idea that Orlando could be either/neither woman or man or both woman and man breaks down the dichotomy in its entirety. In this respect, in the novel Orlando's narrator/biographer convinces us that "Orlando had become a woman – there is no denying it. But in every respect, Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity" (138). It is not surprising that neither Orlando's nudity nor her being completely clothed shows any innate essence

dependent upon the traditional notion of sexual difference. In short, the truth of a person does not rely on physical appearance, but is hidden under the facade of reality.

Following Orlando's emergence into the "present moment," 1928, his/her experience in the department store arises the flow of sensations and memories. Before Orlando's realization of his/her numerous selves, s/he begins to reflect upon how his/her experience of the sexes has changed through the years:

> Women were not nearly as roundabout in their ways, she thought, powdering herself with the greatest unconcern, as they had been when she herself first turned woman on the deck of the Enamoured Lady. [. . .] Honestly, though she was not thirty-six, she scarcely looked a day older. She looked just as pouting, as sulky, as handsome, as rosy (like a million-candled Christmas tree, Sasha had said) as she had done that day on the ice (175).

Looking at herself in a mirror as she powders her nose, Orlando thinks she looks "scarcely a day older" than on the day she had gone skating on the river with Sasha. Here, Woolf's intention is to restate Orlando's transgenderism while indicating his/her deliberate construction of his/her female identity for public view, looking at his/her female self from a distance and reinforcing the continuity of his/her transgender subjectivity over the ages. Orlando also remarks that "she" looks as good as "she" did in the first encounter with Sasha, but "she" was allegedly a "he." At that point, Orlando passes over the radical transformation that happened overnight and shows that it was not a great change at all.

At the same time, while examining some sheets she intends to buy in the department store, Orlando registers "a whiff of scent, waxen, tinted as if from pink candles" (302). This scent indicates a past moment of an underlying ambiguity of sex in addition to Orlando's current revelation of his/her own transgenderism: "[T]he scent curved like a shell round a figure – was it a boy's or was it a girl's – furred, pearled, in Russian trousers – young, slender, seductive – a girl by God! But faithless, faithless" (303). This scene suggests that the "apparation" of Sasha, Orlando's first great love, occurs in Orlando's mind. The scent forms a "shell round a figure" whose sex is again initially ambiguous. The "figure" is at first considered in relation to Orlando's original conception of Sasha. At that point, the narrator/biographer comments "Nothing is any longer one thing," emphasizing the indeterminancy inherent in the transgender subject (303).

The “scent curved like a shell” or “conch” further reminds the reader of Sasha’s connection with the “sea” and “waters.” Through the loss of Sasha, the “conch” changes into a “platform, a dais” and Sasha, “a fat, furred woman, marvellously well preserved, seductive, diademed, a Grand Duke's mistress” (303). In *Orlando,* the transformation of the “conch” and Sasha is described as a “miracle.” This transformation releases Orlando from the control of one of her “selves,” which is an essential component of becoming a true self. The miracle is accompanied by a reference to the “swing-doors” between the numerous departments of the store in the sense that Orlando enters the store on the “ground floor” and then gets into the “lift” for “the very good reason that the door stood open” (304). Here, Woolf implies that Orlando has entered the “past” again and this implication is emphasized following the “apparation” of Sasha by the statement that “she was again sunk for beneath the present moment” (304).

At the same time, the “door” which opens when the “miracle” happens, transforming the “conch” and Sasha, is apparently connected with the door which “burst open” after the ceremony during which Orlando becomes Duke and receives the Order of the Bath in Turkey. This ceremony is accompanied by Orlando’s transformation into a woman, which results in the death of her love for Sasha. Apparently, Woolf blends Orlando’s transgender body with his/her multifarious nature of de-centered subjectivity, presenting a multivalent, transgendered moment of being.

In the Elizabethan age, Orlando experiences extraordinary moments of vision again. One night, examining his verse tragedies, Orlando pauses, and, as he does so, sees “the mocking face of the lost Princess” (79). Jilted by Sasha, his first and deepest love, Orlando asks himself a million questions at once and “memory” instantly “substitutes for the face of the Princess a face of a very different sort” (79). Now, Orlando looks at “the new picture which lay on top of the old, as one lantern slide is half seen through the next” and at last recognizes that it is “the face of that rather fat, shabby man” he had seen so many years ago (80). These overlying images occur as a consequence of one of nature’s “queer tricks” – “nature, who delights in muddle and mystery” (79). In the middle of the muddle and mystery of deeper reality, it is imagination, or memory “disturbs” Orlando with “disconnected fragments” such as the face of his lost princess, but memory joins them together.

It is no coincidence that the endless overlying images and fragments existing in memory and the unconscious parallel the subject's various "selves" in harmony with different "times" or periods in the history of the subject. In this respect, Orlando wonders,

> For if there are (at a venture) seventy-six different times all ticking in the mind at once, how many different people are there not - . . . all having lodgment at one time or another in the human spirit? Some say two thousand and fifty-two. So that it is the most usual thing in the world for a person to say, directly they are alone, Orlando? (if that is one's name) meaning by that, Come, come! I'm sick to death-of this particular self. I want another.- Hence, the astonishing changes we see in our friends (308).

Here, the individual's numerous and associative "selves" imply that different individuals belong or correspond to different periods in one's history and that their emergence into present moment involved as it is with wholeness of the self as opposed to "fragmentation" of being. In addition, since the self is various, it can be assumed that gender is numerously varied.

At the same time, the reader learns from the last chapter of the book that the "jangling" of the "clock" striking one after another, is an indication that Orlando has not yet contrived "to synchronise the sixty or seventy times which beat simultaneously in every normal system so that when eleven strikes, all the rest chime in unison, and the present is neither a violent disruption nor completely forgotton in the past" (299). That is to say, Orlando is not one self but various selves which are in a disagreement. In addition, Orlando's "time-keeping" is difficult because "nothing more quickly disorders it than contact with any of the arts" (276). The "strokes" of St. Paul's announcing midnight, as Orlando waits for Sasha, correspond to the blows of the clock in the last chapter where Orlando emerges into the present time. Accordingly, for Orlando, the present is a "violent disruption" of the past, but the implication is that the present is "completely forgotton in the past" since he waits for Sasha in the 17th century.

Orlando's unimpressed reaction to his/her overnight transformation serves as an example of the transparent state of transgender mind in contrast to the narrator/biographer's dramatic bewilderment and shock. The fact that Orlando is not at all astonished by her transformation is highlighted in the sense that Orlando's process of self-perception exists in the moment in which she "looked himself up and

down in a long looking-glass, without showing any signs of discomposure" (101). Orlando is, in essence, the same; however, she re-enters the world with a renewed subjectivitiy. Here, Woolf seems to imply that the truth lies in how gender is treated discursively rather than in biological sex. In other words, as Woolf writes in "In a Sketch of the Past," one's life is not confined to one's body" or to one body (72). Then, Orlando's transgender life suggests that the transgender individual's watchword might be "I'm sick to death of this particular self. I want another," as stated in *Orlando* (308).

After all, Orlando had always appeared to be somewhat intermixed as a man and as a woman. In other words, Orlando has transformed from male to female, but the reader is reminded throughout the novel that this categorisation is arbitrary and only for "conventions sake" (89). Following the sex-change, Orlando was still "in a highly ambiguous condition" (109) in which "her sex was still in dispute" (154). Now, she is a woman and initially this transformation is ascribed simply to the clothing. Throughout the novel, clothing seems to have a determinate effect on how an individual is treated and therefore implicatively on how one acts in a particular way. Thus, the clothes help make Orlando both the man and the woman. However, ultimately the narrator/biographer withdraws this idea and states: "The difference between the sexes is, happily, one of great profundity. Clothes are but a symbol of something hid deep beneath" (109). Apparently, clothes are a testimony or expression of intrinsic nature, but not clothes turns out to be a mask over profundity. Clothes are liable to concealment or the complex interaction of dissimulation.

Regarding the performative and clothed configuration of gender and sex in *Orlando,* the narrator explains:

> In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place, and often it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness, while underneath the sex is the very opposite of what it is above. Of the complications and confusions which thus result every one has had experience (109).

By means of cross-dressing, Orlando clarifies these "complications and confusions". As a young man, Orlando clothes in accordance with "the fashion of the time" that disguises or obscures his sex and gender and confusion appears (16). Similarly, following Orlando's transformation into a woman, Orlando usually clothes as "a young man of fashion," looking "the very figure of a noble Lord" (195). While

Orlando the male is feminized by his clothes, Orlando the female is masculinized by her choice of clothes. Then, the clothings of Orlando work to disguise his/her sex.

Clothing naturalizes and performs our sexed identity, as stated in the novel: “it is clothes that wear us and not we them” (108). Since Orlando is not restricted to certain gendered performances, s/he forgets “the consciousness of her sex” (104). At this point, the sexual fluidity or gendered ambiguities offered by Woolf’s understanding of clothing appears to be true for the sexually transgressive figure of Orlando.

In relation to the ceaseless transitioning of Orlando, other occurrences in the novel suggest that these “complications and confusions” also seem to be connected to the choice of sexual object. For instance, although the male Orlando desires women, his most striking erotic obsession is centred upon another sexually transgressive figure, Sasha, the daughter of the Muscovite Ambassador and the Russian princess.

They are first introduced during the Great Frost which makes the Thames river a temporary skating rink while skating on the frozen river. When they finally meet more closely, she is remarked as “a figure, which, whether boy’s or woman’s, for the loose tunic and trousers of the Russian fashion served to disguise the sex; filled him with the highest curiosity” (37). When Orlando first encounters Sasha, she aroused in Orlando an unconscious reminder of his own inner reality. Sasha causes Orlando to see that his inner reality is liable for his outer reality and therefore, “the strongest transformation took place,” as stated in the novel (55).

The portrayal indicates an ambiguity concerning Sasha’s sex which is related to her clothes “the loose tunic and trousers of the Russian fashion” (*Orlando* 38). Similarly, in the opening lines of the novel *Orlando* puts on a similar dress after her transition: “He— for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time [Elizabethan England] did something to disguise it…” (38). At this point, Orlando’s clothes, like Sasha’s emphasize an underlying ambiguity of sex.

The narrator continues to depict the sudden shifts concerning the appearance of Sasha. When Orlando first sees Sasha’s ice-skating, he cannot perceive whether she is male or female. However, upon closer examination, “Legs, hands, carriage, were a boy’s, but no boy ever had a mouth like that… She was not a handsbreadth off. She was a woman” (38). Here, bodily configurations become fluid and movable in the

sense that Sasha's body is depicted as both womanly and boyish, blending the body of a male and a female.

The distinct bodily characteristics such as the shape of legs, hands, carriage come to the mind the assumption that the body does not always convey a truth about its sex. What these lines in *Orlando* blur is the attachment of certain bodily features to essential sex. The features which make Sasha boyish also make her more attractive to Orlando. At this point, Karen Kaviola, an academic, points out in her article that "human subjectivity is not reducible to a noncontradictory whole or consistently expressive of the sexed body" (235). Obviously, the sexed body with its incompatibility constantly redesignates to shape, adapt and deny various selves.

The use of clothing as a disguise or as the referent for one's sex serves as a means for Woolf to indicate the arbitrary labelling imposed on fluid and vaguely constituted bodies. In this sense, Orlando's use of clothing is of great importance in the sense that it allows the transgender subject to go back and forth between the poles of gender binary as well as to depict a body in the endless process of becoming.

In order to strengthen clothing's ambivalent relationship to the body, Woolf foreshadows Judith Butler's claims before the publication of *Gender Trouble* and illustrates the "gendered stylization of body" through the cross-dressing disguises (xv). Accordingly, the stylization of the body through cross-dressing undermines the assumption that particular characteristics, performances, attributes and roles naturally align with particular sexed bodies. Thus, in reconceptualizing gender as the stylization of the body, the assumption that gender is a fixed attributes of the body is undermined. As Butler describes in *Undoing Gender*, gender is "not exactly what one 'is' nor is it precisely what one 'has.' Gender is the apparatus by which the production and normalization of masculine and feminine take place..."(42) That is to say, gender is not given, fixed or essential. Rather, gender can be both reconstructed through its performance and critiqued and challenged through same means. In this sense, gender is incomplete and it requires endless alteration and becoming. Therefore, in queering gender, new, alternative genders can be found.

Similarly, the individual is not reduced to its body; the body is the site of convergence for various norms and deviations that stylize it. As Butler describes in

Gender Trouble, "[g]ender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (45). In order to be represented, gender is what the individual performs. Accordingly, English, Russian and Turkish fashions serve to unsettle gender identity instead of revealing or confirming it.

Subsequently, the narrator of *Orlando* concludes that "[b]ut these details were obscured by the extraordinary seductiveness which issued from the whole person" (37). It is clear that the text highlights seductiveness of her manner and voice as free from gender; it appears to be the uncertainty or ambiguity that Orlanda finds seductive. Therefore, it seems that what stimulates Orlando's desire is a figure of gender ambiguity.

It is also important to note that Orlando's relationship with Sasha indicate the instability of gender and sexual preference. Orlando's first view of Sasha does not produce any clue to her sex as the "loose tunic and the trousers of the Russian fashion served to disguise [it];" his second view is that Sasha is a "boy" (22). Even Sasha's name itself is ambiguous since it is used for both males and females in Russia. Conflicting gender traits of Sasha and Orlando's fascination with her indicate same sex attraction under the illusion of heterosexual binary and highlight the cultural restrictions concerning sexual attraction and the role of appropriate gender expression. At the same time, Sasha's Russian citizenship renders her unacceptable and "foreign" partner: "Very little was known of the Muscovites. In their great beards and furred hats they sat almost silent; drinking some black liquid which they spat out now and then upon the ice" (18). Outside of social construct their relationship causes social dissonance and provokes gender appropriateness, revealing both the internalized social expectations and constructed social acceptability.

Orlando's play with clothes, sex and love occurs again in other characters such as Harriet / Harry. In the latter part of the seventeenth century, the Archduchess Harriet, whom we later learn is a duke, really a man, appears as a figure of sexual ambiguity and indeterminacy and passionately pursues Orlando the man. When Orlando is a man, the Archduke dresses as a woman to win Orlando in this guise and he instinctively notices the feminine in Orlando's personality. In fact, the Archduke

undertakes two disguises. When he puts on the appropriate clothes of a woman, he turns out to be masculine in body. On the other hand, when he dons the clothes of a man, he appears to be feminine in personality. The Archduke's lack of ideal duality of human spirit makes Harriet/Harry appear or react as neither a man nor a woman. In case of the Archduke, the woman predominates over the man in contrast to the duality of spirit represented by Orlando and her husband, Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine.

Orlando appears as either man or woman or both man and woman. When Orlando wants to sail for England or to be able to write or the love of a woman, she performs the parts of man or woman well, recognizing how to make her body readable in either roles. However, "in the robe of ambiguous gender" (128), Orlando comes to be forgetful and outside of these gender codes. Throughout *Orlando*, gender appears to be a cultural performance shown to be contingent, geographically and historically in the operation of compulsory heterosexuality. Reminiscent of Butler's assumption in *Gender Trouble* that gender identity is a repetition of acts, the novel presents possibilities for gender transformation in the unpredictable, arbitrary relation of these performances and in their parodic repetitions (141).

Having slept for seven days, Orlando eventually awakens to "THE TRUTH" (138). He awakes completely naked and unclothed on his/her bed: "[Orlando] stretched himself. He rose. He stood upright in complete nakedness before us, and while the trumpets pealed Truth! Truth! we have no choice left but to confess-he was a woman" (138). The seemingly sudden, complete gender change and transition of Orlando humorously distorts the search for naked, essential, bare notions of truth in relation to Victorian notions of biography's claims to truth, candour and honesty. At the same time, in this scene of transition, nakedness and unveiling as motifs are reconsidered concerning the nature of sexuality and the constructedness of gender. Accordingly, the revelation of the truth of Orlando's sex foregrounds the instability and reversibility inscribed within the essence or the truth.

The absence of clothing and Orlando's nakedness reveal Orlando's new state. At that moment, clothing could not be used to influence or betray what the body represents. Accordingly, Orlando's sexed body at the foreground indicates what Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* states the "radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and

culturally constructed genders" (6). Orlando as a transgender subject represents an individual whose gendered identity and sexed body refuses to ally with one sex over the other. In this sense, the depictions of Orlando's body are marked by discontinuity and fragmentation. Although s/he possessed "shapely legs, the handsome body, and the well-set shoulders" of an ideal male body features, s/he also had a woman's rosy cheeks, "teeth of an exquisite and almond whiteness," and "eyes like drenched violets" (11). This depiction is further reflected by a statement that appears after Orlando's transformation from male to female: "His form combined in one the strength of a man and a woman's grace" (138). It indicates again that his/her physical change is in fact no change and that the "mixture of in her of man and woman" has revealed itself in his/her manners and physicality (*Orlando* 119). For Woolf, Orlando's gender transformation or transition comes out of nowhere and thereby Orlando's sex change is a process of continuous transition and ongoing transformation that Orlando's body takes no certain state or form.

The reader is also reminded that no change in his/her identity has actually appeared. Although Orlando has become a woman in the physical and thus legal sense, the narrator states at the time of his/her transition that Orlando had "become a woman – there is no denying it. But in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their [the male and female Orlando's] future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity." (138). This notion of gender seems to think of that of Judith Butler, who asserts in *Gender Trouble,*

> Assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of 'men' will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that 'women' will interpret only female bodies. Further, even if the sexes appear to be unproblematically binary in their morphology and constitution… there is no reason to assume that genders ought also to remain as two (10).

Woolf uncouples or disconnects the relationship between the essentialist identification of physical sex and gender, which reveal all its complications of gender. If one might assume that sex is an essential attribute of identity, the self here is a gathering of many possible sexualities. The pronouns – his, her, their – are sheltered in a single identity, a further sign of plurality, difference and disidentification inherent in identity.

After the sex change, Orlando's transition is complicated when she goes into an indeterminate state, escaping both an insurrection in Turkey and gender by fleeing and hiding with a "gipsy tribe" (140). In *Orlando*, Woolf's allusion to gypsies constitutes a discourse directed towards Sackville- West's so-called gypsy heritage. Throughout the novel, Woolf playfully refers to the family history of Sackville-West of whom Orlando is a parodic biography. As Victoria Glendinning states in her book, Victoria, Vita's mother, was the illegitimate daughter of Lord Sackville and a Spanish gypsy known as Pepita (2). When Orlando marries an illegitimate, gypsy half-breed Rosita Pepita, a Spanish dancer, this marriage echoes Lord Sackville's relationship with the real Pepita.

In the figure of the gypsy, Woolf finds a close connection with the fluid representation of gender in *Orlando*. As a floating signifier, the contested identity of the gypsies is evident from their first emergence in the British isles during the sixteenth century as the historian David Mayall states (71). That gypsy identity standed for freedom, "escape from English conventionality at the borders of English society itself" and "aberrant femininity" has been argued by literary critic Deborah Nord (190). It is also important to note that in her discussion of the figure of the gypsy, Kirstie Blair considers the gypsy as a means for unconventional lesbian desire, "blurring the boundaries between same and other, familiar and strange" (142). For Blair, the image of the gypsy "always haunted by implications of deviant sexuality, wayward femininity, and other transgressions against dominant societal standards" (144). Accordingly, in *Orlando* Woolf creates a space for unconventional same-sex attraction to exist outside the internalized heterosexual expectations. In *Orlando*, it is from this blend of stereotypes that Woolf characterizes the gypsies as exotics whose presence provides Orlando a relief from the strictures of both aristocratic society and demanding female roles whose clothing imposes the restrictions placed on female sexuality. In the gypsy community, Orlando is not concerned with the social implications of her new sex assignment for a while.

In *Orlando*, through the existence of the gypsy figure, gender has been destabilized once again in the sense that at that moment Orlando temporarily occupies the space between gender binaries in an ambiguous state between her previous life as a man and her new gender as a woman. The ambiguity is indicated in her clothing,

dressing herself "in those Turkish coats and trousers which can be worn indifferently by either sex" (140). When she leaves the Gypsies, her clothes exhibit an apparent transition; now "in the dress of a young Englishwoman of rank," she expresses that until this point, "she had scarcely given her sex a thought" and states that "perhaps the Turkish trousers, which she had hitherto worn had done something to distract her thoughts" (153). Here, the figure of gypsy points out the performative aspect of gender. Orlando defines the gender of gypsies in ambiguous terms, reflecting that "the Gypsy women, except in one or two very important particulars, differ very little from Gypsy men" (152). The implication is that the Gypsies seem to be beyond gender, offer an escape from this and they are repeatedly represented in gender-neutral terms including "the gipsies," "[a]ll the young men and women," "the elders," (148) as if both sexes performed in a perfect harmony.

In the penultimate chapter, Orlando as a woman falls in love with Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine or Shel. In the moment following this admission of love, however, "an awful suspicion rushed into both their minds simultaneously," which they both immediately begin to question the true sex of each other (252).

> 'You're a woman, Shel!' she cried.
>
> 'You're a man, Orlando!' he cried.
>
> Never was there such a scene of protestation and demontration as then took place since the world began. […]
>
> '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?' and then they must put it to the proof without more ado (Woolf, *Orlando* 252, 258)

Their inconclusive attempts to define transgender body create a space for erotic stimulation and therefore inspires transgressive, continuous sexual desire. In other words, in such moments of bodily discovery, this complication of gender has an erotic effect on Shel and Orlando, an erotic effect based on sympathetic communion through resemblance between the sexes. As stated in the novel, "For each was surprised at the quickness of the other's sympathy, and it was to each such a revelation that a woman could be as tolerant and free-spoken as a man, and a man a strange and subtle as a woman, that they had to put the matter to proof at once" (258). Then, the relationship

between Orlando and Shelmerdine quickly turns into a kind of sympathetic understanding where the partners become reflective images of one another.

At this point, they are surprised by the realization that their sex has nothing to do with their relation. Once the sex binary is rejected, gender is freed from "regulatory" powers of sex. Here, Woolf makes it clear to the reader that neither Orlando nor Shelmerdine is trapped in a socially constructed gender. Accordingly, a mutual erotic fantasy gives a definite and permanent form to the sexual empathy between Orlando and Shel. Then, this couple's high capacity for feeling empathy, sympathetic identification for their deviant sexual tendencies disrupts the boundaries of gender stereotyping and give ways to transgender identification.

In the immediate sympathetic understanding of their deviant sexual tendencies that bring Orlando and Shelmerdine together from which physical attraction is evidently lacking, Orlando and Shelmerdine realize that sexual sustenance lies outside the socially limited notions of gender. Significantly, it is in Shelmerdine's stories of his travel adventures that the fantasy of kissing a "negress" comes to the fore as a mutual fantasy and sexual empathy between Orlando and Shelmerdine:

> he went to the top of the mast in a gale; there reflected on the destiny of man; came down again; had a whiskey and soda; went on shore; was trapped by a black woman; repented; reasoned it out; read Pascal; determined to write philosophy; bought a monkey; debated the true end of life; decided in favour of Cape Horn, and so on. All this and a thousand other things she understood him to say and so when she replied, Yes, negresses are seductive, aren't they? He having told her that the supply of biscuits now gave out, he was surprised and delighted to find how well she had taken his meaning (258).

At this point, the critic Jaime Hovey points out in his article that Orlando and Shelmerdine use "negresses" as a metaphor to make a point about their perverse sexual tendencies (394). Orlando's ability to decipher Shelmerdine's implied meaning about negresses directs both Orlando and Shel to reflect on their gender identification. Shelmerdine interprets Orlando's recognition of the seductiveness of negresses as a sign of Orlando's masculine position, the intermix and ambiguities of gender and sexuality, as well as fluid, transgender identification. When Orlando echoes Shelmerdine's question, "Can it be possible you're not a woman?," behind that logic occurs an idea that Shelmerdine's transgender identification is reminiscent of Orlando's (258). It is an intermix of man and woman or a vacillation from one sex to

the other that helps him to enjoy and experience, as Orlando does, “the love of both sexes equally” (253). To be intermixed is to embrace the other or more broadly the continuous multiplicity and distinctiveness of gender identities within the self. These differences exist together in an ongoing alternation beyond the boundaries of any gendered perspective.

As Butler puts forward in *Gender Trouble*, Orlando contains several instances of “the replication of heterosexual constructs in non-heterosexual frames” (31) including Orlando’s marriage to Rosina Pepita, his/her love affair with Sasha, Orlando’s interaction with gypsies, Orlando’s cross-dressing, Orlando courting women and being courted by the Archduke /Archduchess, and lastly, Orlando’s marriage to Shelmerdine. The moments or instances, which are revealed as constructs, serve to deviate from the conventions of marriage, courtship, gendered behaviour, attire and time. In fact, all these experiences are the experiences of Orlando. Hence, Orlando embodies a transgender existence that covers many individual experiences, which are presented in a single moment. This transgender existence varies from the norm. Due to the variance from the norm, such a transgender existence acts a gap in the mainstream society’s perception of sex and gender or what it means to be male or female. In *Orlando,* Woolf attempts to apply this transgender existence of Orlando to the “universal” transgender existence of many.

Towards the end of the novel, Orlando shares an ecstatic experience. Soon after Orlando cries out “Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine!,” she hears Shelmerdine’s aeroplane approaching, as if evoked by her call. When Shel jumpts to the ground from his plane, “a single wild bird”, the “wild goose,” flies over Shel’s head (327). Here, the aeroplane is paralleled with the image of wild goose. Aeroplane flight or the sky creates a sense of unstable boundaries and borders with which we seek to control and organize the world. Then, the images of aeroplane and bird in the novel seem to suggest an idea charged with boundary crossing or unifying capacity. The idea of the effacement of borders or unifying power reminds us the experience of Orlando’s transformative and ecstatic moment at the sight of the wild goose flying overhead, suggesting an amalgamation of the multiple separate selves into a “single self, a real self” (302).

In fact, in *Orlando,* Woolf presents a similar scene pages earlier that serves as a suggestive frame for interpreting this last image. Earlier, Orlando recollects how she has always been

> Haunted! Even since I was a child. There flies the wild goose. It flies past the window out to sea. Up I jumped […] and stretched after it. But the goose flies too fast. […] Always I fling after it words like nets […] which shrivel as I've seen nets shrivel drawn on deck with only sea-weed in them. And sometimes there's an inch of silver – six words – in the bottom of the net. But never the great fish who lives in the coral groves (313).

Woolf acknowledges that the goose or fish, the self or the naked, essential truths concerning one's life will never be caught since there will always be the residue of language that both welcomes and rejects our persistent refigurations. Since Woolf earlier anticipated our attempts to make her fit in our societal demands, she always offers a sympathy, which refers to partial identification with our demands and desires, and a parody, which refuses to fix a stable and single subject position in our nets. Likewise, what transgender understanding in the novel offers is the potentiality for all gendered selves to remove gender from the inviolable and impenetrable enclosures of the sovereign self, or more precisely definitive referentiality and to instead make transgender identification something fluid, moving, and at the same time elusive.

CHAPTER THREE

3. ANGELA CARTER'S *THE PASSION of NEW EVE*[1]

This chapter focuses on Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) and how Carter extends and elaborates on Woolf's ideas of the "discursive" construction of the body, gender and sexuality together with Woolf's depiction of subjectivity as decentered and fragmented rather than whole and stable. In *Orlando,* Woolf provided a framework to explore the figure of the transgender. In this respect, conceptualizations of sex and gender moved from articulating these categories as a set of behaviours to considering them unstable representations of culturally and discursively established ideals. Then, the focus moved away from gender as an isolated category of identity to the formation of a multiplicity of more diverse genders and sexes and thereby the eradication of such socially constructed categories of "normal" sexuality and "normal" gender. Further, this chapter examines how a transgender subject and his or her relationship to the body, culture and narrative is involved in the revision of gender myths. In this sense, this chapter also discusses the degree to which such myths shaped our idealized notions of gender identity and sexuality and how language serves to promote or challenge such myths.

Throughout her writing career, Carter welcomes feminist thinking and addresses feminist issues. As she declares in her "Introduction" to the critical collection *Expletives Deleted*:

> [M]y life has been most significantly shaped by my gender […] I spent a good many years being told what I ought to think, and how I ought to behave, and how I ought to write, even, because I was a woman and men thought they had the right to tell me how to feel, but then I stopped listening to them and tried to figure it out for myself but they didn't stop talking, oh dear no. So I started answering back. How simple, not to say simplistic, this all sounds; and yet it is true (5).

Apparently, Carter's fiction is concerned with giving voice to and making space for female desire, sexuality and gender. In this respect, her narratives construct a multifarious paradigm of woman that challenges, satirizes and disempovers conventional masculine constructions of the feminine. Then, her fiction points the way

[1] Angela Carter, *The Passion of New Eve* (London: Virago, 1982). All the future references to this work will be the abbreviated title *PNE* and the page number.

towards the reconfiguration of dominant conceptualizations of sexuality and gender and the possible reconstruction of meaning, reality and identity.

As Carter states in "Notes from the Front Line," her task in her fiction is "[the] investigation of the social fictions that regulate our lives;" in part, this task is stimulated by what she calls "my own questioning of the nature of my reality as a *woman*" (69-70). Examining this question, Carter in her texts opens a discourse that critically revises and reconstructs dominant narratives of western culture together with conventional notions of gender, sexuality and subjectivity. In revising master narratives that activate and legitimate systems of domination, Carter not only recontextualizes the restrictive and limited images of gender, sexuality and identity but also creates an alternate fictional space for transformation and alternative possibilities and variations.

In order to dismantle the power of "normalizing" discourses, Carter engages in revisionary rewriting of Western myth and ideology, dominant canonical texts and cultural discourses. Then, Carter's revisionary writing performs its subversion through comprehensive intertextual referents and recontextualization, broadening the possible angles of vision. In drawing attention to the multiple potential meanings, Carter's revisions both offer the reader freedom from the constrictive authority of the sexual, social, and historical construction and frees the text and its composition from the confines of a singular history.

Carter's revisions of western myth and ideology are often disputed under the rubrics of feminism and postmodernism. More specifically, the employment of revisionary techniques in the late twentieth century fiction enables two critical approaches to involve integrally. As critical approaches, both integrally involve a critique of the systems of domination and a challenge to the foundations of Western thought and social structure as well as traditional narrative strategies. As Jane Flax elaborates in his work *Thinking Fragments*, each critical field helps to

> identify important absences, 'lacks,' and other repressions within that theory; utilize an understanding of what each theory lacks to account for why the theory fails to achieve the ends it poses for itself; and evaluate each theory's actual and potential contribution to a deeper understanding of knowledge, gender, self, power, and transitional Western culture (42).

As evident in Carter's revisionary fictions, feminism has propelled postmodernism to move toward a new direction; that is, toward the reconstruction of gender and reconsideration of its implications. In this respect, each of these critical approaches complements the other, resulting in new directions.

Feminist criticism has been concerned with revisionary practices to disrupt the patriarchal canon, or in general, the masculinist discourse. Evidently, as a feminist figure, Adrienne Rich introduced the feminist act of "re-vision" in her essay "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision." For Rich, it is

> the act of looking backward, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction… [I]t is for us more than a chapter of cultural history; it is an act of survival. Until we know the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity; it is part of her refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society (537).

According to Rich, maturity for a woman requires rejecting what has been taught about feminine gender roles and re-learning what it means to be female. Then re-vision urges Richh simultaneously to identify with the female and see life and art "with fresh eyes," with solely women's eyes. In fact, re-vision appears as a tool for interpreting experience and knowledge from a female perspective. Accordingly, her purpose was to teach women a feminist perspective in order to survive and restructure the male-dominated world.

Moreover, in *Technologies of Gender*, Teresa de Lauretis describes the project of feminism as a "radical rewriting" as well as a "rereading" of the master narratives of Western culture. In de Lauretis's terms, such rewriting "effectively inscribes the presence of a different and gendered social subject" (xi). Then, revision turns out to be a locus of integration for feminist and postmodern reading and writing practices, engaging multiple texts in subversions of and deviations from master narratives.

Carter's revisionary practices bring postmodern politics of representation together with her feminist concerns to the aesthetics of experience in relation to gender and sexuality. As postmodern feminist critic Linda Hutcheon reminds us in her work *The Politics of Postmodernism*, postmodern revision marks difference over similarity by inviting the reader to ironically play with pre-existing or residual signification or assumptions. For Hutcheon, the process of postmodern representation requires the use

of parodic modes of inscription and then subversion of conventions. This reflects the destabilization of representations and significations of cultural artifacts (49,64).

Carter's feminism lies mainly in her desire to unfold fixed and controlling representation, to break it away from gendered restrictions. In this sense, her writing uncovers the complicated impulses that situate beneath a character's surfaces, not identifying some core identity, but demonstrating the breadth of possibilities. At the same time, for Carter's feminism, acknowledging and working with profane or perverse impulses is crucial, for their refusal has generally assigned women to unsustainable positions. In her fiction, Carter repeatedly examines the results of such potential in women, what happens when the profane or the perverse is coped with and refused or perhaps indulged.

Apparently, feminism and postmodernism have become interwoven in order to refashion representation in the fiction of Angela Carter. In this way, Carter's postmodern feminist act of revision brings a different way of seeing, reading, and writing representation to both feminism and postmodernism. Then, Carter exemplifies the thought, as Jane Flax states in her work *Thinking Fragments*, "feminism's central concern with gender and its construction through postmodern voices-nonauthoritarian, open-ended, process-oriented" (3). Carter appears to work and play to progress postmodern deconstruction toward a feminist construction of an altered approach of representation, one which allows for multiplicity and difference, without which various voices – non-normative female, male, class-conscious and racial – would be silenced.

In addition to the affinity between feminism and postmodernism, Ellen G. Friedman and Miriam Fuchs suggest in their essay an interdependence between feminism and experimental writing that "in the case of twentieth-century women experimental writers… [is] an effect of the textual practice of breaking patriarchal fictional forms; the radical forms – nonlinear, non-hierarchical, and decentering – are, in themselves, a way of writing the feminine" (3). In this sense, exploding traditional aesthetic forms turns out to be a political act, its resultant narrative forms an alliance with feminist projects.

In her introduction to *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* (1990), Carter considers her literary constructions "in terms of the domestic arts," a culinary creation that uses whatever is at hand to experiment with the flavors that may result pleasing but at the same time surprising. For Carter, writing requires to take a little of and a pinch of already existing texts and thus creating differing affects that put a spotlight on her feminst concerns. At the same time, despite differences in focus and technique, her texts contain the predominant use of intertextuality, drawing from and embracing not only Western European Culture, but also American and Japanese. In doing so, Carter's narrative foregrounds repeated instances of confining gender roles that overlap and strenghthen each other and their implications. Then, its focus does not progress but expands.

A writer is undoubtedly the product of his or her times. Carter's experiences in the turbulent sixties were important to her development as a writer. In "Notes from the Front Line," Carter describes the 1960s and 1970s as crucial decades for her development: "primarily through my sexual and emotional life … I was radicalised … I found myself, as I grew older, increasingly writing about sexuality and its manifestations in human practice" (39). Evidently, her novels from the sixties and early seventies such as *Shadow Dance* (1966), *Several Perceptions* (1968) and *Love* (1971) present symptoms of the sexual revolution's potential for liberation and victimization by powerful male figures. Increasingly fantastical, her novels of the 1970s such as *The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr. Hoffman* (1972), *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) and *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) practice magical realism and revisionary impulses and demonstrate both parodic and sympathetic involvement with women's sexual and social equality and their culture and consciousness raising. Her novels from the 1980s assume women's sexual liberation and still engage in social and sexual constructions and relationships by focusing more on a carnivalesque play. Almost without exception her writing derives from this feminist radicalization, connecting material world with gender relationships.

During her lifetime, Angela Carter was prolific in the sense that she completed nine novels, three collections of short stories, a non-fiction study of pornography of Marquis de Sade together with numerous essays and several scripts for radio plays. Moreover, it should be noted that as an editor, Carter became involved in the

reconstruction of a female mythology. She edited *Wayward Girls and Wicked Women: An Antology of Stories* for Virago in 1986, *The Virago Book of Fairy Tales* in 1990. The compilation of these collections of stories by and about women were regarded by Carter as part of "a wish to claim to a fair share of the future by staking my claim to my share of the past" (Introduction, *Virago Book of Fairy Tales* xvi). Additionally, Carter's career is not limited by generic constraints including criticism, journalism, and drama – stage, radio, and cinema in addition to her fiction.

From the 1960s onwards, very discernable occurrences enabled Carter's life to proceed such as the legalization of the birth control pill that enabled her to undergo pregnancy- free sex, the post-war economy that accepted her into the workplace, the improvement in British higher education that increased registration in Oxford and other schools, the burgeoning women's movement that authorized her to give up an early marriage for universtiy and later for Japan.

Her ideas about what fiction should do seem to be indebted to her years as a student of medieval poetics, a poetics that considers the critical activity of reading as fundamental for the intellectual development, and for which close reading, interpretation, creative revisions generate the new text. In a similar fashion, Carter writes in her essay entitled "Notes from the Front Line" that "[r]eading is just as creative an activity as writing and most intellectual development depends upon new readings of old texts" (69). She referred to reading being as creative as writing and states how the new interpretations of old texts are essential for a new intellectual development.

As Carter states in her interview with Haffenden, she uses "a wide number of references because of tending to regard all of western Europe as a great scrap-yard from which you can assemble all sorts of new vehicles" (92). Here, Carter is concerned with the processes by which texts as symptoms are made to signify and thus they are essentially dismantling and are open to revision or reconceptualization. More broadly, as Carter likes to say in "Notes from the Front Line", she pours "new wine in old bottles" (69). At this point, Carter's revisionary narratives illustrate how rewarding it can be to re-read and re-write the stories of our past from our positions in the present. In other words, she demonstrates how it is possible to regard written narratives as

contemporary folklore and alterable interpretive constructions. Here, what she intends to invoke is that rewriting can operate a transformation of pre-existing assumptions and culturally constructed realities or mythic texts that regulate our social and sexual relations.

Carter sees Western thought and its social and cultural values constructed out of and built upon "lies" or a series of myths and falsehoods as she states in "Notes from the Front Line" (38). Carter's use of myth, therefore, functions as a subversion and revision of those myths that would restrict human freedom. In an interview with Anna Katsavos, Carter defines myth "in the sense that Roland Barthes uses it in *Mythologies* – ideas, images, stories that we tend to take on trust without thinking what they really mean…" (12). Once the definition of myth broadens to include "ideas, images, stories", every product of human consciousness can be subjected to revision. Thus, her aim is essentially to both expose and battle against the self-constructedness and falsity of the myths. In such a case, as she expresses in "Notes from the Front Line", she is "in the demythologising business". Since myth, as Carter argues in *The Sadeian Woman*, "deals in false universals, to dull the pain of particular circumstances," Carter's commitment to demythologizing indicates a resistance towards universal essences, distinctions or generalizations particularly in connection with gendered experiences (5).

Carter's self-defined demythologizing practice contains the exposure of mythic stereotypes that make absolutes of male and female bodies, such as the essentialist, stereotypical representation of the gendered female roles or notions (e.g. nurturing, passive mother, virginal victim, immoral seductress, the whore, the goddess, the eternal feminine) together with the essentialist view of female reproduction or passivity in sex. As she explains in the "Polemical Preface" of *The Sadeian Woman,* Carter views these mythic versions of women or more broadly all female iconography as "consolatory nonsense" that are used as a means to both oppress women and promote victimization and personality fragmentation. In *The Sadeian Woman*, Carter also identifies the universalizing and mythologizing of such prevailing images of femininity and female experience as a "clever confidence trick" that universalizes female acquiescence and male aspiration (12). For Carter, the confidence trick

designed to hide the realities of female subjectivity, sexuality and experience under a blanket of myth.

It is also important to note that Carter connects these "false universals" of sexuality, or more specifically, the mythic depictions of femininity with pornography. Drawing attention to the relationship between sexuality and power as depicted disturbingly and forcefully in pornography, Carter asserts in *The Sadeian Woman* that such

> sexual relations between men and women always render explicit the nature of social relations in the society in which they take place and, if described explicitly, will form a critique of those relations, even if that is not and never has been the intention of the pornographer (20).

Carter believes that the sexual liaisons depicted in pornography appear to be the pornographic representations of violence. Then, the erotic violence and domination inherent in pornography tend to be an indication of male dominance and female subordination. At this point, Carter's argument stated in *The Sadeian Woman* is that by refusing or ignoring the social context in which such sexual acts take place, "pornography reinforces the false universals of sexual archetypes" (16). As a result, sexual archetypes attempt to efface the fact of individuality capable of desiring and acting in their own right and reduce the body to its most elemental function.

Carter also examines the role of pornography in society, stating in *The Sadeian Woman* that when it "reinforce[s] the prevailing system of values and ideas in a given society, it is tolerated; and when it does not, it is banned" (18). For Carter, pornography is tolerated because it supports a hegemonic society which has developed a "more liberal attitude to masturbation," which, being established a ground for the patriarchal fantasy of "desirable virgin" inherent in an oppressive system (18-19).

While Carter criticizes the imprisoning and male-dominated pornography, she strives to reappropriate pornography as a productive site for feminist involvement. At this point, Carter coined the oxymoronic term of the "moral pornographer" in *The Sadeian Woman* to refer to the role of an artist who uses pornographic stereotypes of dominance and submission both to satirize gender relations and to humanize and regenerate sexuality, female desire and experience.

More broadly, the kind of writing that Carter expresses in *The Sadeian Woman,* "moral pornography" exemplifies the link between the sexual desire and real world concerns. For Carter, pornography, in its traditional forms, is characterized by its removal from materialist realities and its lack of literary devices. In a traditional sense, pornography is not a fine art, rather it stimulates sexual excitement. Then, the lack of materialist grounding in pornography provides the mythologizing power of universalizing discourse.

When Carter expresses the need for "moral pornography" in *The Sadeian Woman*, she calls for a kind of writing that offers a bridge between the sexual desire and materiality. For pornography to be in the service of women, it needs to put an end to its pretense of sexuality and flesh as occuring outside of the world. At this point, the task of pornographic discourse is to demythologize sexuality and gender as Carter states in *The Sadeian Woman*. In such a case, she can find a way of exploring different configurations of female sexuality, but at the same time she draws attention to the instable nature of the flesh.

"A moral pornographer," for Carter, is the one who "might use pornography as a critique of the current relations between the sexes" (19). Then, the moral pornographer has the power to change the way we think about relations between the sexes. In *The Sadeian Woman,* she further characterizes the moral pornographer as a "sexual guerilla" whose art can disrupt and overturn our most basic notions of the relations between the sexes.

For Carter, in the hands of a moral pornographer, pornography can be in the service of women. Accordingly, she claims that the business of moral pornographer "would be the total demystification of the flesh and the subsequent revelation, through the infinite modulations of the sexual act, of the real relations of man and his kind" (19). At this point, the moral pornographer creates a discourse to demythologize the reproductive female body in order to emphasize the mind.

As Carter states in *The Sadeian Woman*, "[s]uch a pornographer would not be the enemy of women, perhaps because he might begin to penetrate to the heart of the contempt for women that distorts our culture even as he entered the realms of true obscenity as he describes it" (20). Apparently, this "penetration" of the politics and

ideologies which denigrate and oppress women cannot be done from a position that is outside. Instead, one must enter the very realm to undo the structures that confine and restrict women's lives. Then, the reality of lived experiences will be set free. At the same time, Carter's proposal presents obscenity or more specifically her recontextualizations of obscene images as a powerful device that can be used in the service of female sexuality to transgress, and in so doing expand the boundaries of sexualized discourse.

Used correctly, pornography can serve transgressive and liberatory ends. As Ellen Willis states in her article "Feminism, Moralism, and Pornography",

> [i]nsofar as pornography glorifies male supremacy and sexual alienation, it is deeply reactionary. But in rejecting sexual repression and hypocrisy—which have inflicted even more damage on women than on men—it expresses a radical impulse (464).

In case of Carter, she refuses sexual repression by overstating the darkest desires of her protagonists, but she also critiques human sexuality by illustrating it as inherently violent and ultimately unfulfilling. Nevertheless, there is a humorous irony in her often grotesque sexual representations. Then, Carter's use of characteristically and sexually "perverse" figures open spaces for recasting a transgressive female heterosexuality through a formulation of the transgendered characterization.

Written around the same time as *The Sadeian Woman*, Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) can be considered as an explicit attempt to write "moral pornography". In *The Passion of New Eve*, Carter works within the pornographic to revision mythic representations of woman as Biblical Eve, Mother, Nature, screen icon, sacred virgin and profane whore.

At the same time, Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* is written at a moment when feminist activism known as the Women's Liberation Movement came to a climax. At the time of Carter's writing, many feminist attempted to provide a space for a new iconography by restoring or refiguring female archetypal / mythic figures as positive images of female strength. Then, the so-called sexual revolution of the 1970s leaves its trace in *The Passion of New Eve* which operates to challenge the mythic construction of self, specifically archetypal feminine.

In a 1985 interview with John Haffenden, Carter believed that *The Passion of New Eve*, among many other things, is "about the cultural production of femininity" as well as "quite a careful and elaborate discussion of femininity as a commodity" (86). Indeed, in the novel, Carter revises Freud's argument in his essay "On Femininity," (1933) according to which feminine sexual development evolves from a normative, male model. That is to say, Carter reverses and rewrites this phallocentric scenario by completely reconstructing a female from a male body, but at the same time implying the desirability of a fusion between the sexes, constructing a more transgender identification.

3.1."I Never Knew A Girl More Slave to Style": Leilah

One of the mythic images of the feminine in the novel is created by Leilah, the black erotic dancer and the mythic embodiment of woman as temptress who seductively leads Evelyn, the young and handsome English man into the Gothic "geometric labyrinth of the city" (21) until they reach her apartment and become lovers. Within this city, New York, the shifting grotesque exhibition of the dark part of Bakhtinian carnival; that is, rape, murder, plundering and prostitution, goes across Evelyn's path. Accordingly, in the novel there is a fusion between the body of woman and that of the city.

Moreover, in *The Passion of New Eve*, the postmodern fantastic symbol of the mirror and its "mirrorings" of identity exist as a gateway to the double or split psyche, and more importantly, to the performative embodiment of femininity. It is through the mirror that Leilah, as an image of seductive woman, transforms herself into an icon of Evelyn's male fantasy, an object of desire as well as an object of consumption for male gaze. This transformation occurs as a nightly ritual in which Leilah puts on the clothings of seductive femininity – exotic furs, fetishist boots, and lipsticked nipples:

> Her beauty was an accession. She arrived at it by a conscious effort. She became absorbed in the contemplation of the figure in the mirror but she did not seem to me to apprehend the person in the mirror as, in any degree, herself. […] she brought into being a Leilah who lived only in the not-world of the mirror and then became her own reflection (28).

The mirror that refracts Leilah into the objectified other is also the mirror of the male gaze. Then, Leilah has shaped herself through the mirror, thereby depriving

herself of her own sense of subjectivity, which brings about both her split subjectivity and her objectification. Leilah sells herself as the image of desire to make a living. However, becoming a reflection of an imagery image of ideally sexual woman, she loses her human status.

In her feminist revision of pornographic conventions, Carter parodies pornographic language, judging the essentialism of the pornography which reduces the self to the suffering body for male consumption. At the climax of their erotic pursuit, Evelyn notes:

> All my existence was now gone away into my tumescence; I was nothing but cock and I dropped down upon her like, I suppose, a bird of prey, although my prey, throughout the pursuit, had played the hunter. My full-fleshed and voracious beak tore open the poisoned wound of love between her thighs (Carter, *PNE* 25).

One of the recognizable conventions of pornographic discourse is to substitute a wide range of metaphors for parts of the body. In her appropriation of pornographic language, Carter exposes the dehumanizing nature of sexual violence at the core of the relationship between Evelyn and Leilah. Likewise, Evelyn's aggressive language reveals his violent desire that turns them into inhuman and grotesque.

It is also apparent that Evelyn sees his prey through the filter of his masculine gender position in the pornographic discourse as a "succubus," (Carter, *PNE* 27) the insatiable whore. Eve/lyn depicts, "Sometimes when I was exhausted and she was not, still riven by her carnal curiosity, she would clamber on top of me in the middle of the night […] and thrust my limp cock inside herself […] I would […] remember the myth of the succubus, the devils in female form who come by night to seduce the saints" (Carter, *PNE* 27). Here, rather than a victim of pornography, Leilah can be viewed as the "agent" of sexual violence who exercises sexual autonomy in an aggressive way. However, Leilah's transgressive exhibition of her sexual desire will be punished by a violent domination of Leilah by Evelyn.

Transformed by Evelyn into an archetype, Leilah appears to be his negative opposite: American (and rather Third World), not British; black, not white; sexual, not intellectual; gabbling, not eloquent. In Evelyn's narration, these signs of otherness in Leilah constitute nonhumanity. Its most obivous way is animality, enacted by the repeated animal metaphors that describe her. In the first striptease series, for example,

she is likened to “a strange, bird-like creature, plumed with furs, not a flying thing, nor a running thing, nor a creeping thing, not flesh nor fowl, some in-between thing” (Carter, *PNE* 17). She is rather a creature or thing.

Significantly, Evelyn’s insensitiveness toward women covers the language as well. He has difficulty in understanding Leilah’s speech. Being familiar with the phallogocentric order, Evelyn is confused by feminine speech that is “a wordless song,” (21) and by sentences not ordered. Therefore, Leilah sounds to Evelyn “more like a demented bird than a woman” (19). As Evelyn remarks, “her argot or patios was infinitely strange to me, I could hardly understand a word she said” (26).

As his assessment of Leilah’s gibbering utterance indicates, Evelyn merges animality with racial otherness, presenting Leilah’s blackness as a second aspect of her nonhumanity. He interprets Leilah’s blackness as a complete negativity: “She was black as my shadow and I made her lie on her back and parted her legs like a doctor in order to examine more closely the exquisite negative of her sex” (23). Blackness makes her an absence, shadowy in contrast with Evelyn’s white, solid, masculine appearence: “her skin was matt, lustreless and far too soft, so that she seemed to melt in my embraces” (14-15). Then, rendering Leilah as a nonhuman other is his strategy for denying her a voice and justifying his violence and neglect toward her.

In fact, such a dehumanizing objectification of Leilah feeds Evelyn’s desire for exotic otherness. In this respect, he assigns an irresistable power to her nonhumanity. At the same time, he is powerless to resist her charms. Evelyn’s process of dehumanization is consistent with physical violence as well. Leilah’s archetypal quality that Evelyn assigns to her stimulates and justifies his abuse: “she had something of the awful delicacy of those china ornaments that invite you to smash them, because they are so fragile” (26). It seems difficult to bring together Leilah’s own desires since the narrator, Evelyn, never asked her about her own desires. At one point in the novel Evelyn considers and the questions exist only in retrospect: “What could she have seen in me? “She must have liked my tender pallor and my blue eyes and my English accent she found so hard to follow… God knows what else she could have liked, except the victim’s role” (27).

However, when Evelyn extemporaneously refers to the punishments he would imposed upon her, his expression seems to exclude the possibility of a mutual sexual gratification gained through inflicting or receiving pain. For instance, he often ties her to the bed and leaves her alone all day. When he comes home, he finds Leilah with the stoned, unthinking passivity he assigned to her:

> [S]he had never made the least effort to free herself. She seemed to me a born victim and, if she submitted to the beatings and the degradations with a curious, ironic laugh that no longer tinkled—for I'd beaten the wind-bells out of her, I'd done that much—then isn't irony the victim's only weapon? (24).

She appears to be incompetent to resist. The only sympton of her possible discontent is most likely her unreadable laughter. To believe Leilah a "born victim" corresponds with Evelyn's purpose because this belief relieves him of any responsibility for her suffering.

When Leilah puts on dress for work, she appears as a distinct other being. Now, she is a gathering of glittering, seductive objects:

> Applying the rouge to her nether lips and the purple or peony or scarlet grease to her mouth and nipples; powders and unguents all the colours of the rainbow went on to the skin in the sockets of her eyes; with the manual dexterity of an assembler of precision instruments, she glued on the fringe of false eyelashes. The topiary of her hair she would sometimes thread with beads or dust with glinting bronze powder she also applied to her pubic mound… Her dresses were rags of chiffon or of slimy, synthetic fabrics or harsh- textured, knitted, metallic stuff—gold and silver and copper. Her stockings were made of black, or purple, or scarlet mesh; her vertiginous shoes combinations of shiny leathers dyed green, pink, purple or orange. She walked in technicolor (25).

In this instant of self-objectification, Leilah is no more Evelyn's thing. The act of dressing for work is her only realm of agency. In fact, this kind of agency is complicated. Transforming herself into an aesthetic object, she dehumanizes and commodifies herself, even if she employs creative authority. As Laura Mulvey explains in her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Leilah's self-commodification associates her with the enforced female exhibitionism in relation to cinema, the principles of which conventionally sign sexual difference in the shape of "woman as image, man as bearer of the look" (10).

Likewise, in his depiction of dressing scene, as Mulvey describes, Evelyn, in a casual manner, resorts to the "scopophilic pleasure of male gaze," (13) as evident in Evelyn's utterance, "I used to adore to watch her dressing herself" (24). When Evelyn

lies on the bed, he considers her preparations as “an inversion of the ritual disrobing to which she would later submit her body;” in other words, as a performance staged for his own sexual pleasure (26).

Her position as an object of male desire is further reinforced by her ritualistic make-up scene. In front of the mirror, she creates the “edifice” (29) of her womanhood from a great “assemblage of […] paraphernalia that only emphasized the black plush flanks and crimson slit beneath” (30). By painting both her face and body, Leilah exists for sexual pleasure and desire. Then, she both imitates and conforms to the image of porn icon in traditional heterosexual pornography.

However, he also accepts to lose his control over Leilah in these moments. Her elaborate makeup turns out to be the construction of another self: “Leilah invoked this formal other with a gravity and ritual that recalled witchcraft; she brought into being a Leilah who lived only in the not-world of the mirror and then became her own reflection” (24). When Leilah finishes her makeup, she is completely transformed: “My Leilah was now wholly the other one… the mirror bestowed a grace upon her, now she was her own mistress” (24). Then, Leilah’s act of dressing and makeup exposes her capability for self-authorship. At one point in the novel, Evelyn remarks that “I never knew a girl more a slave to style” (27). This statement serves first to reduce the complexity and originality of her self-construction to a superficial obsession with fashion and second to strengthen the role of racialized gendered subjugation in his mind that she is born to perform. In such a case, Evelyn would rather consider Leilah as a slave to his desire rather than her own aesthetic.

By changing her appearance through her play with masquerade, Leilah intentionally plays with the feminine role and thereby assumes a measure of authority over the masculine symbolic system which surrounds her. In this sense, Leilah’s apparent passivity conceals her conscious use of the symbol sysyem. Accordingly, she “systematically carnalised herself and became dressed meat” (31). As John Berger, a critic, suggests, women are culturally conditioned to be conscious of their own appearances, used to being desirable to men as the object of the gaze:

> A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself. Whilst she is walking across a room

> or whilst she is weeping at the death of her father, she can scarcely avoid envisaging herself walking or weeping (46).

Accordingly, Evelyn looks at Leilah as if looking into a jaggedly cracked mirror: “So, together, we entered the same reverie, the self-created, self-perpetuating, solipsistic world of the woman watching herself being watched in a mirror that seemed to have split apart under the strain of supporting her world” (30). Here, the mirror indicates both Leilah turning herself into a commodity and Evelyn acting as a spectator. However, Evelyn remained trapped or imprisoned both within the “solipsistic world” reflected and and constructed in the mirror and the artifice of femininity Leilah represents.

Evidently, Leilah demonstrates her subjectivity or agency as a performance, commodity and masquerade, fashioning an edifice of feminine splendor that mimics, but never quite carry out, Evelyn’s ideal woman. At this point, Leilah’s femininity as an imitation of male desire illustrates Judith Halberstam’s term “automating gender” which renders femininity as automation, a masquerade. In other words, Leilah serves as an example of Halberstam’s notion of “gender as automated and intelligent, as a mechanism or structure capable of achieving some kind of autonomy from both biological sex and a rationalistic tradition” (“Automating” 456). Although her subjectivity is rejected by Evelyn and by the hegemonic discourses Evelyn insistently refers to Leilah, she emphasizes the seductive but disturbing power of the willingly artificial woman.

Carter establishes this dichotomous relationship between Leilah and Evelyn to show the gender constructs or more specifically the artifice of femininity that need to be reconstructed. In order to demythologize the construction of femininity, Carter shows different versions of femininity through Leilah. Firstly, Leilah reappears as Sophia, Evelyn’s guardian in the city of Beulah, who “look[s] like a woman who has never seen a mirror in all her life, not once exposed herself to those looking glasses that betray women into nakedness” (54). The girl, Sophia, turns out to be the opposite “other” from Leilah and Evelyn feels frightened by her presence and mothering.

Towards the end of the novel, Leilah is transformed into Lilith, who Eve/lyn learns is the daughter of the Great Mother, appears now as distinctly different from Leilah in New York. At this point, Eve/lyn wonders, “Had that gorgeous piece of flesh

and acquiescence been all the time a show, an imitation, an illusion?" (172). This is consistent with Butler's notion that the "reality" of gender is not fixed. Butler argues that "in such perceptions in which an ostensible reality is coupled with an unreality, we think we know what the reality is, and take the secondary appearance of gender to be mere artifice, play, falsehood, and illusion" (*Gender Trouble* xxii). As a process of transformation and illusion, the transmutation from one state to other, or the multiplicity and fluidity of being as well as the unstability of woman manifest itself through one of the "alchemical" figures, Leilah. In this respect, with a hint of the deceitful aspects of alchemy, the novel simultaneously commences an ultimately failed search for the archetypal/ mythic feminine.

Accordingly, Lilith plays a double role in the sense that Lilith disguised herself as Leilah in New York. Lilith explains that she called herself Leilah "in order to conceal the nature of my symbolism. If the temptress displays her nature, the seducee is put on his guard" (174). Here, Lilith's act of turning to symbolism foregrounds the performativity of gender itself. Leilah moves back and forth across the border of "female" performance. Her performative behaviours result in the destabilization of gender roles which allows for self-transformation.

With the name Lilith, Carter tends to invoke the mythical first wife of Adam who precedes Eve. Then, Carter makes use of the mythical Lilith, the first woman. In the novel, Lilith explains that the function of such a being is to " 'interpret and convey messages to the gods from men and to men from the gods, prayers and sacrifices from the one and commands and rewards from the other.' That's how Plato, for one, defined us" (175). Here, Lilith is depicted as a transitional figure, but she redefines herself as a rebellious and insubordinate figure.

Additionally, the ambiguity of Lilith's identity foregrounds the tension between myth and history. Accordingly, Lilith informs Eve/lyn that history has superceded myth and the "Priestesses of Cybele… have turned into storm-troopers" (173). She further gives Eve/lyn the news:

> when there was a consensus agreement on the nature of the symbolic manifestations of the spirit, no doubt Divine Virgins, Sacred Harlots and Virgin Mothers served a useful function; but the gods are all dead, there's a good deal of redundancy in the spirit world (175).

Towards the end of the novel, mythic archetypes have become redundant. At this point, Carter's objective is to desacralize myths of heaven, eternity, and deities, or at least to entirely give up religious myths. In this way, Carter's women in the novel reject the fate of their mythical counterparts in Bible in their denial of patriarchal norms and their positions of self-government at the end of the novel. Although Lilith says that she has replaced myth for history, she embodies both myth and history. As an intermediate figure, Lilith inhabits the in-between space which enables transformation and destabilization. Throughout the novel, Carter allows for a middle way between history and myth through illusion.

3.2.A "Sacred Monster": The Monstrous Mother Figure

In a parodic fashion, *The Passion of New Eve* presents Evelyn's captivity in an underground city of women ruled by the Great Mother, a literal and frigtening manifestation of man's fear of woman. In *The Passion of New Eve*, the Mother-goddess figure, a symbol of femininity represents the construction of myths of woman in general and the mythic image of motherhood in particular. Mother, the giant woman prophet, who is depicted as "her own mythological artefact," (60) manifests man's dread of women and will inflict vengeance upon Evelyn for a thoughtless and unfeeling way in which he behaved towards Leilah. In such a case, Mother, "a great scientist who makes extraordinary experiments," (49) will castrate him.

Mother is apparently an archetypal Great Mother, with all the implications of fertility, nourishment in the sense that her multiple breasts is available to suckle an infant. In fact, Mother herself and her body is the outcome of extensive reshaping and reworking. At this point, the agency Mother shows in transforming herself is worth noting. She has transformed herself physically by transplanting multiple breasts onto her chest: "Mother has made herself into an incarnated deity; she has quite transformed her flesh, she has undergone a painful metamorphosis of the entire body and become the abstraction of a natural principle" (49). However, as Erich Neumann, in *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*, remarks that

> the elementary character of the Archetypal Feminine is far from containing only positive features. Just as the Great Mother can be terrible as well as good, so the Archetypal Feminine is not only a giver and protector of life but, as container, also holds fast and takes back; she is the goddess of life and death at once (45).

Apparently, Mother herself is a blend of opposite poles: human/goddess, natural/unnatural. Mother is both a self-constructed deity and human. As "an abstraction of a natural principle," she is both natural and unnatural. With her multiple breasts, Mother symbolizes the natural process of motherhood and reproduction, on the other hand; with her unnatural number of breasts, she made herself unnatural in the sense that she incarnates mythic and distorted notion of motherhood. Likewise, Evelyn refers to her as both "the fearful, archaic thing at the core of this unnatural helix" (58) and "a piece of pure nature, she was earth, she was fructification" (60).

Mother's contradictory nature is reflected in all her works. In fact, the contradiction is at the heart of the novel. The existence of contrarieties make boundaries unclear to reveal the novel's transformative plot. As Haraway suggests in "A Manifesto for Cyborgs," "There is no drive in cyborgs to produce total theory, but there is an intimate experience of boundaries, their construction and deconstruction" (223). In this respect, Mother in the novel arouses curiosity as she is self-created cyborg and has exerted herself to deliberately assume a posthuman body in order to enact a radical gender disruption.

In relation to the cyborgian rhetoric inherent in the novel, the underground city of Beulah where Mother lives with her devoted female followers is the place "where contrarieties are equally true… where contrarieties exist together" (48). Then, the contradiction, which most characterizes Beulah is its scientific, technological, realist form of magic through which Evelyn is transformed by two months of intensive plastic surgery and psychological conditioning:

> Beulah. . . has an unimpeachable quality of realism. But it is a triumph of science and hardly anything about it is natural, as if magic, there, masquerades as surgery in order to gain credence in a secular age (49).

Mother and Evelyn's transformation in association with Beulah is arranged in this magic masquerading as realism. This quotation helps to identify the contradictory blend of science and magic through Evelyn's forcefully castration, her surgical sex-change and her subsequent reassignment as a woman. Accordingly, metaphors of human physical processes and of the body describe a space, Beulah, which is apparently gendered. In Beulah, the female principle has suppressed the male reality by suggesting the female body, primarily the figure of womb of Mother.

At the same time, as the integral principle of the cyborgian space, contradiction characterizes Beulah with its scientific, technological and realist form of magic. Then, Beulah sounds similar to Donna Haraway's definition of the cyborg world: "It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence… A cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of… permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints" (151). In the novel Beulah comes to be a contradictory and paradoxical type of the city of women and therefore based on a similarity to a womb. As Evelyn says, "Beulah lies in the interior, in the inward part of the earth" (47). Then, Beulah turns out to be the ideal place where the ceremonial act of re-birth and death will be performed. The underground location of Beulah seems to be labyrinth, complex, fragmentary, multivocal and self-reflexive, "complicated mix of mythology and technology," (48) buy here technology appears to be more similar to a kind of magic.

Supported and surrounded by a group of women in Beulah, Mother embodies a position of mythological, technological and religious worship. She is, simultaneously, "the hand-carved figurehead of her own, self-constructed theology… a sacred monster," (58-59) an expert and a scientist in sexual surgery and manipulation. Beyond doubt posthuman in her unnatural physical appearance, Mother is "breasted like a sow - she possessed two tiers of nipples, the result… of a strenuous programme of grafting" (59).

Depicting Mother as a massive woman with "gigantic limbs" and "ponderous feet", as Gregory Rubinson states, Carter emphasizes the "grotesqueness and artificiality of Mother in part to draw attention to the artificiality of the figure she replaces – the traditional white male, patriarchal, bearded, and vengeful god of Judaism and Christianity" (725). Obviously, Mother embodies excessively grotesque femaleness. Through her excessiveness and monstrosity, Carter playfully underlines both the contradictory gender ideals and its constructedness. With her multiple breast, she is not nurturing but more castrating, powerful and creative. Accordingly, in both scientific and religious aspects, Mother appears to be the new godhead of authoritarian matriarchal rule that takes its prompt from the oppresive patriarchal rule of the past.

It is also worth noting that Carter embraces notions of both the grotesque and the abject. Mother's body is non-ideal in its excesses what Julia Kristeva refers to as the "abject." In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva further defines the "abject" as a site of liberation which "disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4). For Kristeva, the abject is placed in relation to the notion of uncanny. Accordingly, in the novel Evelyn recognizes at one time that Mother essentially embodies the definition of the uncanny: "when I saw her, I knew I had come home; yet a desolating strangeness overwhelmed me" (58). This draws connection with Kristeva's notion of the uncanny, as she states in *Strangers to Ourselves*: "[B]y recognizing our uncanny strangeness we shall neither suffer from it nor enjoy it from the outside. The foreigner is within me, hence we are all foreigners" (192). Then, Carter uses Mother not only to exemplify interrelated notions of the grotesque, the uncanny, and the abject but also to satirize them.

When Mother speaks, she calls upon a "hieratic locution" that she has "adopted in her role as goddess" (65). Then, she performs quasi-religious pronouncements and invocations of myth, shouting at one point, "I am the Great Parricide, I am the Castratrix of the Phallocentric Universe, I am Mama, Mama, Mama" (67). Carter further writes in the novel that Mother's "statuesque and perfect immobility implied the willed repose of the greatest imaginable physical strength" (59). However, this strength will not only be used to corrupt Eve/lyn throughout the novel, but it will also unavoidably be revealed as an illusion.

Moreover, in the novel's role-reversed rape, Evelyn is forced by Mother to "reintegrate the primal form" (64). This rape scene playfully revises gender roles in the sense that this process tends both to undermine rape's construction of its victim as feminine and to invert masculine sexuality and power. "I caught one glimpse of her gaping vagina as I went down; it looked like the crater of a volcano on the point of eruption. […] Then her Virginia-smoked ham of a fist grasped my shrinking sex; when it went all the way in, Mother howled and so did I. So I was unceremoniously raped" (64). Together with the ambivalent feelings experienced by the man after seeing the woman's genital organ, especially his mother, in the act of inverting the Freudian Oedipal script, Oedipus/ Evelyn is raped by Mother who thus embodies the exact opposite of the traditional characteristics of motherhood.

In this respect, the rape tends to match Mother with her own powerful icon of femininity as it feminizes Evelyn. If this sexist representation of Mother exercises control or power, she joins Evelyn in her parody, expanding another gender norm as she becomes "too much mother, a femaleness too vast, too gross for [Evelyn's] imagination to contain" (66). Through their excessiveness, both Mother and Evelyn expose the absurdity of both the patriarchal plans of gender enforcement and those feminist acts that maintain the gender binary and appreciate its poles. In fact, the rape simultaneously feminizes and masculinizes Mother. Paradoxically, she unites masculinity into her excessive femininity, indicating an ambiguous and unnatural gender position.

Towards the end of the novel, as her own mythological artefact, Mother goes mad, a relevant illustration of the mythical status of a particular idea of motherhood and the necessity for the demystification of one of the most ingrained myths in Western culture. Hence, Mother ends up as a shrunken, weakened old woman who has herself perceived her time is over. However, before this downfall which reveals her powers as transitory and as illusory and insubstantial as those behind patriarchal desires and myths, Mother is placed as a figure both representing and parodying myths.

3.3."The Perfect Man's Woman": Tristessa de St Ange

In this assemblage of constructed women, *The Passion of New Eve*'s Tristessa emerges as the greatest success or the biggest failure depending on one's perspective of feminine self-authorship. Tristessa, the legendary and iconic film star of Old Hollywood, exists in the novel as another mythical representative of femininity. In fact, Tristessa, a biological man, masquerades as a woman, that is a female impersonator who came to be "the perfect man's woman! He had made himself the shrine of his own desires" (129). Ironically, as a man Tristessa can be a desiring subject in the phallogocentric order, but chooses to become a veilled object of desire.

Tristessa's only function seems to be as a symbol of suffering since she has "no ontological status, only an iconographic one" (129). Therefore, as stated in the novel, Tristessa is "famous for her silences" (105). Then, Tristessa's silent suffering can be culturally equated with femininity. As a sorrowful and tortured heroine in her movie, Tristessa is a "crucifiction" (9), a fiction or an icon of suffering. Accordingly, the roles

Tristessa plays and the public image or personality she presents to the world render Tristessa and her stage name “de St Anges” as Carter’s allegory. Then, Tristessa exemplifies woman’s connection with sacrifical suffering and identity as lack, a myth Carter sees distributed widely in populer culture, particularly in films.

In his youth, Evelyn is fascinated with Tristessa’s ubiquitous image, the screen idol since she belongs to the realm of male ideals and fantasy. As Evelyn remembers, “[…]I myself had loved Tristessa out of pure innocence when I was a little boy and the sculptural flare of her nostrils haunted my pubescent dreams. The wall of my cubicle at school had been plated with her photographs” (6). Apparently, the image of Tristessa occupied his world and as a young and innocent boy, he had come to think of Tristessa as natural and a real woman.

At first, Evelyn keeps only a nostalgic fascination with Tristessa. However, Tristessa’s ubiquitous image haunts every step of Evelyn: Her suffering and passivity as the screen heroine or the screen goddess in films arouse Evelyn’s sadistic sexual desire and pleasure as a boy. Following the surgery that changes Evelyn into a woman, New Eve is forced to watch Tristessa’s films at Beulah as an essential element of her brain-conditioning. After two months of “psycho- surgery,” Tristessa herself appears on the scene long enough for Evelyn to fall in love, marry and have a sexual union with her before Tristessa is shot to death and Evelyn must continue his/her adventure alone.

Later, as Evelyn states, the public’s desire for Tristessa and her image in Evelyn’s mind begin to shatter when she no longer embodies the image of a romantically constructed conventional woman. The public becomes disillusioned with her image: “she herself began to go out of fashion for, however hard they tried to force her into the mold, she had nothing whatever in common with the girl next door” (7). Unknown to the public, the reason Tristessa looks like the “girl next door” is in fact under all the clothes, make-up and hair. That is, she becomes all image or all appearance. As an artificial screen image, Tristessa is peculiarly insubstantial and bodiless as if “the camera had stolen, not the soul, but her body and left behind a presence like an abscence that lived” (123). Tristessa is just an apparition of suffering, not real.

Evelyn further states that after he sends Tristessa an "ink-stained, ill-spelt love letter," (6) MGM studios reply by sending him two pictures of Tristessa, the implications of the second picture opposes the image of Tristessa in Evelyn's imagination. The first picture of Tristessa – "a still from *The Fall of the House of Usher*, she, ethereal in her shroud, just risen from her coffin" (6) – affirms Evelyn's fantasy about her. However, the second picture is a publicity shot of her in trousers and sweater swinging a golf club. This conflict between Tristessa as Madeline Usher and Tristessa as a golfer bring about confusion and doubt regarding her real identity and by implication Evelyn's own real identity.

In an interview with John Haffenden, Carter describes her conceptualization of Tristessa's character: "I created this person in order to say something quite specific about the cultural production of femininity […] as commodity, of Hollywood producing illusions as tangible commodities" (85). The femininity that Carter see Hollywood film industry is the one built upon gloomy suffering and sexual masochism. In this respect, Tristessa, as an idol of screen and stage, plays an essential role in sustaining and propagating the myth of Woman as sexual suffering, playing the primary position in film translations of *Wuthering Heights*, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, and *Emma Bovary*, among others.

As Carter states in "Nothing Sacred," the film industry as "an imaginary brothel" (182) where myths of femininity are sold is essential to maintain male desire and fantasy. The mind of Evelyn is tempted by "the phenomenon of persistence of vision" (5) which maintains the simulacrum of the female form for the purpose of depicting the images of the feminine constructed as the artefacts of patriarchal culture. Accordingly, Evelyn regards Tristessa as "a sleeping beauty who could never die since she had never lived" (119). Then, Tristessa will live forever as long as there is "persistence of vision" and the "innumerable spools of celluloid" (119) to project her image. In fact, this artificially constructed Hollywood figure is created and maintained through performativity. As Judith Butler explains in *Gender Trouble*, daily performative "acts, gestures and enactments" (173) weaken the existence of essential identity, and therefore "the inner truth of gender is a fabrication […] true gender is a fantasy inscribed on the surface of bodies" (174). Butler's statement suggests that there

is no origin for authentic gender identity. Instead, ambiguities and uncertainties abound in all individuals.

Carter's novel seems to affirm Butler's assertion in her interview with Peter Osborne and Lynne Segal that no absolute "true gender" can ever really exist and as such that, performative acts attain their power through "subversive repetition" (33). As a subversive re-enactment of femininity, Tristessa ironically reveals him/herself towards the end of the novel as a man. At this point, Evelyn's most significant moment of epiphany happens when she sees Tristessa's image of femininity imposed on a male body: "[o]ut of the vestigial garment sprang the rude, red-purple insignia of maleness, the secret core of Tristessa's sorrow, the source of her enigma, of her shame" (128). Evelyn realizes that Tristessa was "the perfect man's woman!". That is, Tristessa is anatomically male who has masqueraded as a woman through skillful appropriation and publication of the signifiers of femininity.

Regarding the performative nature of gender, clearer insights come to the fore. Once the newly female Eve escapes from the matriarchy of Beulah where she is degraded, castrated and surgically transformed into a woman, Eve falls into the hands of "Masculinity incarnate," Zero, who enslaves, abuses and rapes her (104). In the novel, the stereotyped "phallic" image of masculinity comes to be Zero, whose name signifies his complete voidness. As Elaine Jordan comments in "Enthralment: Angela Carter's Speculative Fictions", Zero is "the sign for nothing" and "satirizes the power of the phallus, which Carter suggests is an arbitrary sign" (36).

In the face of periodic sexual assaults from Zero, Eve must learn to perform like a woman or the suspicious Zero will kill her. At that point, Eve undergoes a new realization regarding the false universals of masculinity as femininity, or more precisely the social constructedness of femininity through men's erotic pleasure in women's suffering: "[A]lthough I was a woman, I was now also passing for a woman, but then, many women born spend their whole lives in just such imitations" (101).

Apparently, Eve/lyn builds a career from "passing" as a woman. The notion of "passing" resonates as a linking point for contrasting discourses of real versus artificial. To pass is to be recognized as normal within one's dominant cultural setting or rather, because a distinctive characteristic of normality is its capability to go

unnoticed, to pass is not to be recognized as abnormal. It refers to a queer person's capability to appear straight with no deviations in a heteronormative context. As Sandy Stone states in "The Empire Writes Back", the highest or culminating point of passing is invisibility: a body that passes as female is regarded to be female; on the other hand, a body that fails to pass a female is regarded to be abnormal, artificial noticed by its deviation from an established pattern of behaviour or cultural imperatives and therefore vulnerable to being "read" (14-16). To pass as properly gendered, as straight requires the need to submit or at least pretend to submit.

Although physically a woman, Eve must have the apparatus needed for the femininity to "pass" in the phallocentric order. Then, from Zero's harem of enslaved women, Eve takes her hint and she passively conforms to abuse and humiliation in order to survive. Accordingly, Eve learns survival through her passive obedience. In the "deathly and annihilating circle of Zero," women are positioned in a pre-language state and a lower evolutionary stage in comparison to men (Carter, *PNE* 100). On the other hand, as a poet Zero himself usurps and abandons the realm of language on his own terms. By the end of her time in the world of Zero, Eve states, "I had become almost the thing I was" (107). Her experiences of suffering and existential, sexual degradation at the hands of a man prepare Eve to fully perceive the femininity embodied by the biologically male Tristessa, a man in a convincing drag.

At this point, Eve/lyn's earlier statement that in her films Tristessa appeared "as if your essence were hung up in a closet like a dress too good to be worn and you were reduced to going out in only your appearance" attains more resonance (72). With "no ontological status" it is Tristessa's actions and behaviour that constitute his identity (Carter, *PNE* 129). As Judith Butler argues in *Gender Trouble*, gender is not a given ontological status, rather it should be considered as a condition of "becoming" and thereby it is performatively constructed that conceals its genesis (140). Then, Butler's assertion that gender and biological body are not inextricably related, an argument that resonates with gender- bending performance of Tristessa.

Through our performativities, we have the potential to reinvent ourselves and rearticulate our identities. Then, performativity achieves its aim by means of reiteration or replication of a series of behavioural norms, as Butler states in *Bodies*

That Matter (12). Accordingly, all behaviour whether normative heterosexual behaviour or not depends on mimicry in the sense that normative gender practice is regulated by the logic of camouflage. In this sense, gender comes close to a notion of drag, a position that is acted out and assumed within the logic of compliance with some accepted norms. By making this commentary, in *Bodies That Matter*, Butler destabilizes the hegemony of heterosexuality:

> To claim that all gender is like drag, or is drag, is to suggest that 'imitation' is at the heart of the heterosexual project and its gender binarisms, that drag is not a secondary imitation that presupposes a prior and original gender, but that hegemonic heterosexuality is itself a constant and repeated effort to imitate its own idealizations (125).

Through its citational repetitive nature, performativity offers a mode of questioning and challenging such social structures and cultural practices. As Marc Augé has pointed out, in an age of "fictional worlds," where fantasy enables identities to be discarded and assumed and where self-realization usually acts in conformity with screen figures drawn from Hollywood, the whole notion of identity, then, deserves to be perceived as multiple and seemingly contradictory modes of individual expression (78). Indeed, such tactics, or more precisely performative gestures and acts can be regarded as a defensive mechanism that enables Tristessa to survive or operate within a multi-faceted, instable world.

In this respect, Eve/lyn suddenly realizes what Tristessa has known from the beginning: "Once the essence was achieved, the appearance could take care of itself" (Carter, *PNE* 141). In the light of Butler's development of performativity as noted in "Imagination and Gender Insubordination," Tristessa's wilful performance of femininity enacts a kind of "impersonation" or "approximation" apparent in all gender (137). Even though Tristessa's anatomy had made impossible the authentic experience of being a woman, as a female impersonator, he was able to remain as the desired icon of femininity through the convincingness of her performance as well as through the convincing illusion of male essence.

In such a case, the masculine construction of the feminine Tristessa supplies turns out to be the illusion. Accordingly, in the novel Tristessa renders herself as "an illusion in a void" that will disappear just as Hollywood film industry goes on to embody and replicate such a portrayal of female identity over and over again until she

has become fossilized and female subjectivity, autonomy and imagination are eradicated by it (121). As evidenced by Carter's remark in the novel, Tristessa is "the grand abstraction of desire [with] no ontological status, only an iconographic one" (129). She is "an anti-being" (129). She is regarded as nearly nonexistent.

At the same time, Tristessa, with his "ineradicable maleness," has always rejected his masculinity, and his camouflage of his genitals in his anus is regarded by Lilith as "the uroborus, the perfect circle, the vicious circle, the dead end" (Carter, *PNE* 78,173). However, Tristessa fails in his obsession of his concealment of his masculinity. Later, in the novel, psychologically and surgically feminized Eve/lyn encounters in person the aging Tristessa and witnesses her unmasking as a female impersonator who has successfully camouflaged his male sex throughout his/her Hollywood career.

As a focus of all contradictions in the narrative, Tristessa's body demonstrates both female and male features. Therefore, Tristessa expresses Eve/lyn's deep dissociation while making it more definite. In fact, this deep dissociation does not affect the gender of the character, but it is reflected and repeated in two sexes coexisting in the same body. As a "trans" woman, Tristessa indicates the conflict inherent in the physical contiguity of two sexes. In Tristessa's celluloid representation of masculine erotic fantasies of femininity, s/he, both/neither male/female, has inhabited both genders.

What does Carter achieve with this twist? Apparently, Tristessa, a commonly called "man pretending to be a woman," exposes the patriarchal constructions of cultural ideals of femininity (Carter, *PNE* 141). The unmasking of this icon of suffering femininity is regarded as the project of feminist demythologization. According to Christina Britzolakis, its exposure attaches the novel to the late 1970s, when demythologization was an inspiring project. For her, Tristessa, the "transvestite," unmasks the illusory aspect of the femininity she embodies (45). In fact, to view Tristessa as a transvestite reduces her femininity to the choices of clothes or to a sexual fetish instead of identifying it as a gender identity. Likewise, Merja Makinen asserts that Tristessa's role is to indicate that "passive femininity is nothing but a male creation" (157). On the other hand, Joanna Trevanna renders Tristessa's

"impersonation of a woman" as the reflection of a desirous "latent male subjectivity" (273).

Interpreting a trans woman, Tristessa, as a "man pretending to be a woman" is a deliberate task undertaken from the privileged status of masculinity. Such an interpretation is also consistent with transphobic discourse which asserts that Tristessa is really a man, not the woman she pretends to be; that her gender expression is a deceptive act not a true, authentic, legal identification. In the same vein, Janice Raymond states in her book *The Transsexual Empire*, "all transsexuals rape women's bodies" (232). This particularly marginal statement refer to a broad generalization in the sense that trans womanhood are not tolerable and acceptable since they distort and steal something that belongs to women.

In many aspects, *The Passion of New Eve* tends to stimulate the reading of trans womanhood as deception. The disclosure of Tristessa's gender history is presented as a secret around which the novel moves from its opening pages. After the novel reveals Tristessa's physical gender, Eve/lyn attempts to refer to Tristessa as male. Although Eve/lyn muses that "He, she – neither will do for you Tristessa," his fluctuation overlooks the fact that the pronoun "she" has performed well for decades (178).

In fact, taking Julia Serano's coinage of the term "misgendering" into consideration, Eve/lyn tends to misgender Tristessa by refering to her as male. In this sense, Eve/lyn makes gender judgements which results in misgendering Tristessa delibaretely because Tristessa's anatomy contrasts with normative expectations of women in society. Concerning the effect of misgendering, Eve/lyn has designated a gender for Tristessa rather than allowing her to designate it for herself. Then, Evelyn's shift to masculine pronouns negates the gender Tristessa has spend much time constructing. Obviously, misgendering rejects the legitimacy of both Tristessa's trans gender identity in particular and individuals' own designations of their genders in general (Serano 268-269).

Worse than the deliberate misgendering, however, is Evelyn's charging Tristessa, the transgender woman with misogyny, an act of hostility towards someone who is "really a woman." Then, Evelyn considers "How much he must have both loved and hated women, to let Tristessa be so beautiful and make her suffer so!" (Carter,

PNE 141). From Evelyn's point of view, trans womanhood creates a male fetish, considered as a deviant sexual desire: "That was why he had been the perfect man's woman! He had made himself the shrine of his own desires, had made of himself the only woman he could have loved!" (125). Accordingly, Evelyn's assessment of Tristessa reflects the rejection of trans femininity.

Interestingly, throughout the novel, transphobia is expressed by another trans woman. It is Evelyn who really was a man transformed into a woman against her will and quasi-magically. After transition, it is Evelyn again, viewing her female body as an other to be looked at desirously rather than a self to live with: "I had become my own masturbatory fantasy… The cock in my head, still, twitched at the sight of myself" (71). Then, Carter's choice to center her narrative on Evelyn could be interpreted as a means to challenge essentialist, exclusionary aspects of the second-wave feminism that enlighten Carter's oeuvre.

Evelyn's continual misinterpretation of trans femininity is indicated by the obvious physical violence imposed on Tristessa in the moment of the public disclosure of Tristessa's physical gender identity. In the hard task of not passing, Tristessa, who is blamed for artifice and deception, experiences negative repercussions of violence. Then, Tristessa's carefully designated artificial femininity is unmasked with breathtaking cruelty. In fact, Zero does not consider that Eve/lyn has ever been anything other than a woman, or Eve/lyn does not think that Tristessa's femininity might be flexible enough to contain a male genitalia and that trans woman might be charmed by a woman. When Eve/lyn and Zero draw close to the account of trans femininity as deception, both will not allow Tristessa to pass as a real woman or to be the woman she feels and desires.

Zero, a patriarchy personified, who assumes authority over females due to his maleness with eight wives including Evelyn, is determined to enact violent retribution on Tristessa, whom he accuses of the failure of his reproductive attempts. Ironically, in the novel, this reproductive function will be fulfilled by Eve and Tristessa. At the peak of his hatred against Tristessa, when Zero finds out the true nature of Tristessa's sex and while he is completely unaware of Evelyn's transgender identification, Zero

forces Tristessa to act out "an arid pastoral" with Eve/lyn, the transgender, equipped in the double drag of male garb (Carter, *PNE* 132).

As the reader is reminded through the narrative voice of Eve/lyn, the sexual union between Tristessa and Eve/lyn is sealed by mock marriage, as stated in the novel, "the formal conclusion of pastoral" (133). However, Eve/lyn is the only performer in this enforced celebration of heteronormativity and is conscious of the implied gender ironies at the heart of the wedding scene. Seeing her own image as a "Baudelairean dandy," Eve/lyn arrives at a judgement that "this masquerade was more than skin deep (132). Under the mask of maleness I wore another mask of femaleness but a mask that now I never would be able to remove, no matter how hard I tried, although I was a boy disguised as a girl and now disguised as a boy again […]" (132).

This wedding scene turns out to perform a double drag. As stated in the novel, "it was a double wedding – both were the bride, both the groom in this ceremony" (135). Through their performance of the double drag, Evelyn and Tristessa highlights the reality that all gender is ultimately imitation and that boundaries such as male-female divide, opposite sex, and other side are continually blurred. Then, through the doubling of disguises, the notions of masculine and feminine appear to be meaningless. Likewise, gender and sexuality turn out to be mixed up.

Subsequently, Eve/lyn's sexual union with Tristessa results in Eve/lyn's pregnancy. At this point, Carter's sense of irony becomes apparent if the reader remembers that both the marriage and succeeding parenthood would not have been possible without the help of castrating Mother or Zero's physical and psychological violence. In this sense, pregnant Eve/lyn represents the appearance of naturalness and realness that is the criterion of Butler's notion of gender performance, which is based on her "performative gender." Then, the pregnancy of Carter's transgender character turns out to be the naturalized effect produced by the mechanisms of hegemonic culture and gender ideology, as Butler states in *Bodies That Matter* (121-123).

At the same time, Eve/lyn's pregnancy tends to be the reproductive success that Zero failed. Through this forced sexual intercourse, Tristessa discovers his masculinity, holding and exercising the potentiality to father a child. Accordingly, this queer couple takes for granted the function of generating a promise of new life. Then,

Eve/lyn and Tristessa conceive their child "in the heart of that gigantic metaphor for sterility" and "on the star-spangled banner" (Carter, *PNE* 146). Here, the landscape of desert with its sterility and infertility and national symbol blend into a new, fertile, but queer national image.

In the middle of the desert's "irrational and absurd beauty," Evelyn and Tristessa blend tenderly into "single self," masculine and feminine, "out of these fathomless kisses and [their] interpenetrating, undifferentiated sex" (144, 148). In creating one single self by sexual union with Tristessa, Eve/lyn exults, "I know who we are, we are Tiresias" (146). Similar to Woolf's invocation of Tiresias in its indirect reference to the myths of Tiresias's sex change in *Orlando,* Carter plays with the figure of Tiresias in *The Passion of New Eve*.

More precisely, they are one between two beings and each of them has undertaken masculine and feminine being. In their erotic union of opposites, finally they make sensual love which generate "the great Platonic hermaphrodite […] the whole and perfect being," the sign of transcendental unity and "the concentrated essense of being" (148). This union between Eve/lyn and Tristessa represents the fleshly, sensual touch shared by ambiguously gendered lovers as a means to destabilize the arbitrary disjunction between self and other, male and female.

Additionally, this moment of sexual union creates a sense of reality in relation to time. The erotic passion seems to stop time; that is, the erotic clock: "The erotic clock halts all clocks" (148). However, with the exception of Evelyn, all the mythic figures in the novel try to escape time and all fail. Tristesse acknowledges that his self-construction as the manifestation of femininity is done with the desire of stopping time, "that I should not die" (137). However, he fails and dies.

Likewise, Mother, who is "her own mythological artefact," desires to "kill time and live forever" (60, 53). However, Mother concludes her path as a blind old woman, wandering by the shore of a sea. Mother just replaces phallocentricity with gynocentricity in the sense that she still entraps within the oppressive influence of mythology. Evidently, Mother fails in her obsessive task.

Similarly, Zero's attempts to stave off history are related to his obsession with destroying Tristessa, but as the archetype of masculinity he fails to recover his potency.

All these attempts of these false universals carry on the assumption that identity can be complete and whole, whether it be feminine incarnation, maternity incarnate, masculine incarnation or Mother's task to create a totally self-constructed being in Eve/lyn, hermaphrodic incarnation. However, identity is permanently unreliable, mutable, and transient; therefore, the self avoids our attempts at wholeness, the ideal. Then, the best one can do is to embrace the self by welcoming the other.

It is the only passion as erotic love between Eve/lyn and Tristessa that appears to have the potential to stop time just for a moment. This key moment of sexual love offers the possibility of freedom from false universals. Apparently, in the novel Carter envisions new type of love that might be found in a future setting where the coupling of Eve/lyn and Tristessa has uncreated the "social fiction" of gender, where "flesh is a function of enchantment" and "uncreates the world" (148). That is to say, disconnected from the disguises of masculinity and femininity that one chooses to wear, Eve/lyn realizes that she is not a guest in her own flesh any longer. Rather, flesh can be "a function of enchantment" (Carter, *PNE* 143). Then, sexually awakened Eve/lyn acknowledges that "Neither as man nor woman had I understood before the unique consolation of the flesh" (150). Ironically, only as a person experiencing fluid transition between man and woman, Eve/lyn comes to understand how the body operates as a physical example for a constant becoming and fluidity between genders.

Additionally, through multiple masks and multiple divided selves, both Eve/lyn and Tristessa contain inner emptiness or lack in the center of their multiplicitous: "The abyss on which her eyes open, ah! It is the abyss of myself, of emptiness, of inward void. I, she, we are outside history. We are beings without a history, we are mysteriously twinned by our synthetic life" (125). Obviously, the abyss manifests itself in Eve/lyn and Tristessa who exist somewhere between genders and thereby create the fusion of opposites. However, the images of fusion such as the non-operative transsexual, the passing woman, the transgendered individual, the cross-dresser create gaps between culturally constructed labels of male and female.

3.4.“Man-Made Masterpiece of Skin and Bone”: Eve/lyn as a Transgender Cyborg

In *The Passion of New Eve*, Carter evidently anticipates Donna Haraway’s figure of the “cyborg.” In “A Cyborg Manifesto,” Haraway presents the image of cyborg as an “ironic political myth,” namely, a “political – fictional tool,” which is about “transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work” (152,154). Then, the cyborg turns out to be a site of various border crossings and a locus for hybridity where the relation between the self and the other are rearranged. The ambiguity which identifies Eve/lyn can also be examined in the light of Haraway’s cyborg theory, considering that “the cyborgs populating feminist science fiction make very problematic the statuses of man or woman, human, artefact, member of a race, individual entity, or body” (178).

In the novel, Carter undermines male narratives of origin and creation by having the Mother figure create another woman from a male body. Following Eve/lyn’s transformation from male into female, Eve/lyn feels immersed in an ontological emptiness:

> I know nothing. I am a tabula erase, a blank sheet of paper, an unhatched egg. I have not yet become a woman, although I possess a woman’s shape. Not a woman, no; both more and less than a real woman. Now I am a being as monstrous as Mother herself; but I cannot bring myself to think of that. Eve remains wilfully in the state of innocence that precedes the fall (83).

In her ambiguity concerning who and what she is, Eve/lyn cannot continue for a long time in the realm or period before the Fall because we are inevitably fallen and live in a world after the Fall. In “A Cyborg Manifesto,” Haraway’s comments on her concept of “cyborg writing” can be relevant to Eve/lyn’s dilemma:

> [C]yborg writing must not be about the Fall, the imagination of a once-upon-a-time wholeness […] Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other (175).

One of the most significant purposes of cyborg writing for Haraway is about how it is able to “reverse and displace the hierarchical duslisms of naturalized identities” (175). Integral to this task is the “retelling” of “origin stories”, through which “cyborg authors subvert the central myths of origin of Western culture”

(Haraway 175). In fact, Eve/lyn's desire to continue in "the state of innocence that precedes the fall" is merely a suspension of the second Fall she will unavoidably experience at Zero's hands (Carter, *PNE* 83). Carter's subversive commitment to myth of creation and the myth of Fall reveals their masculinist tendency and introduces new scenarios from which Eve/lyn's child, called the "Messiah of the Antithesis," will be born (67).

In the novel, Carter seems to provide dramatic illustration for Haraway's notions, denaturalizing and displacing deeply interrelated "phallogocentric origin stories," as stated in "A Cyborg Manifesto" (175). However, in the novel, the imagery of cyborg is ideally adapted for dismantling the mythic construction of the archetype of motherhood, masculinity and femininity. As Lucie Armitt puts forward in *Theorising the Fantastic*, the cyborg "embodies its challenge to binary oppositions, being a creation whose hybridity represents the fusion and confusion of pre-existing dichotomies, including those surrounding race, gender, sexuality and class" (9). As a potential transgender cyborg, Eve/lyn serves as a challenge to myths of creation and origin or mythic construction of self, coming out of the womblike cave as a reincarnated survivor.

As a technological success, following two months of psychological programming and surgery, Eve/lyn looks at her new female body in the mirror for the first time. Despite all the technologies used to transform Eve/lyn into a "real" woman, there is still a suspicion inside her, which appears unexpectedly. As s/he exclaims, "I was the object of all the unfocused desires that had ever existed in my head. I had become my own masturbatory fantasy. And – how can I put it – the cock in my head, still, twiched at the sight of myself" (Carter, *PNE* 75). Indeed, through the metamorphic figure, Eve/lyn, Carter seems to examine the simultaneous cultural, technological and scientific construction of Eve/lyn as a transgender cyborg. In fact, Carter changes the myth of the hermaphrodite into a potential transgender cyborg figure as a cultural site where the myth can be challenged.

As Haraway points out in "A Cyborg Manifesto," the cyborg, a "cybernetic organism," in its most acceptable interpretation, carries physically and culturally hybrid features with its inclusion of technological and human components or the

transformation of the body by medicine and science as well as the cyborg's indeterminate, ambiguous state as male or female as in the case of Eve/lyn (175).

As the notion of the human/machine blend of cyborg identification posed by Haraway challenges the ontological dualisms of the organic/ machinic, male/female, nature/culture that describe, among other things, our bodies. As Haraway states, "cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves" (100). Then, Eve/lyn represents the manifestation that, since the cyborg imagery intermingles and reconfigures the ontological dualisms, s/he embodies the fluid, partial notion of sexual embodiment. The liberating potential of cyborg put the unifying aspect of gender identity into dilemma, revealing hybridity and ambiguity of gender manifestations based on technological and scientific advances, which provided a shift in gender performances and roles. Specifically, the scene of Eve/lyn and Tristessa's sexual intercourse moves in the ceaseless excess of bodily and sexual configurations. Eve/lyn's cyborg body is paired with another body, and thereby it realizes endless multiplicity beyond sexuality since their body does not appear as an ontologically stable presence, rather as an assemblage of arbitrary and confusing parts. Then, this sexual union demonstrates permeability and penetrability of the cyborg body.

Haraway's words in "A Cyborg Manifesto" provides a suitable commentary for the ending of *The Passion of New Eve*: "We require regeneration, not rebirth, and the possibilities for our reconstitution include the utopian dream of the hope for a monstrous world without gender" (38). In fact, the inconclusive conclusion of the novel simultaneously reflects the ambiguity of *Orlando*'s conclusion and foreshadows the fantastic conclusion of *Written on the Body*. Towards the end of the novel, the reader witnesses Eve/lyn embarking on a journey on water in the sense that the ending of the novel seems to be placed on a continuum of ambiguity and uncertainty while hovering for "a fresh iconography" to arise (174). In this sense, such a conclusion contributes to a world or a world- making where sexuality is multi-dimensional, fluid, and flexible and where cyborg gender offers numerous possibilities for gender expression to live and desire beyond compulsory gender norms.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. JEANETTE WINTERSON'S *WRITTEN ON THE BODY*[2]

This chapter will draw attention to Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body* (1994) and how she formulates her social critique regarding issues such as gender, sexuality, desire, and the body. However, this study moves beyond simply demonstrating how *Orlando, The Passion of New Eve* and *Written on the Body* undermine the oppositional category of gender since the theories of sex and sexuality cannot be restrained by the category of gender. At this point, Winterson's *Written on the Body* implicitly asks the question and urges the reader to consider how possible to discuss sex and sexuality of the narrator when his/her gender is never exposed and how the reader constitutes an identity for the narrator and an entrance into the text in the absence of sex.

In fact, such a gender-undeclared, nameless narrator of *Written on the Body*, together with the trans narrators of *Orlando* and *The Passion of New Eve*, enables the reader to interrogate gender dynamics and to reconsider the categories of sex and sexuality with alteration in mind. Then, the driving promise of Winterson's love-driven novel is the possibility of living with freedom in gender, sexuality, desire and identity in diverse forms.

More precisely, this chapter will demonstrate that *Written on the Body* can be considered as an example of how transgender or gender variant identities can have the freedom in choosing to live with no assigned sex and gender identities while still experiencing and writing the body in a meaningful way. It is also important to note that this chapter offers the reading of the narrator as being unstably gendered or more specifically transgendered rather than reading the narrator as being ungendered.

Playful experimentation with notions of sex, sexuality, gender, body and desire as a freedom of choice and as excess that elicits subversive sexual and identity practices is something Winterson is very adept at. In this respect, Winterson shares with Woolf and Carter a complex view of sexuality as well as a mode of narration that is highly experimental. Specifically, Winterson works stylistically and intertextually

[2] Jeanette Winterson, *Written on the Body* (New York: Vintage, 1992). All the future references to this work will be abbreviated title *Written* and the page number.

with Virginia Woolf in *Written on the Body*. Under the influence of Woolf, Winterson replaces Woolf's transgendered lover with a decidedly gender-neutral lover. In doing so, Woolf and Winterson indicate that gender is unrelated to love or more broadly there are no boundaries in love. Accordingly, the struggle of the unnamed and non-gendered first person narrator with an undefined body throughout Winterson's *Written on the Body* in order to articulate a postmodern conceptions of love and romance creates a space to celebrate ceaseless ambiguity and fluidity as a means of unsettling gender and sexual categorization.

Reminiscent of Woolf's and Carter's revisionary strategies employed in their novels, this chapter also presents Winterson's revision of the romance genre in an attempt to incorporate more possibilities and variancies into a multivalent relationship of desire, love, the body, gender and sexuality as well as to demonstrate life how it could be rather than as it is.

This chapter argues that *Written on the Body* is evidently reconstructive or revisionary in the sense that it not only revisions the genre of romance in order to restore the significance of love in the postmodern skepticism but also revisions how these overarching categories of gender, sexuality and language should be established outside of binary limitations to interpret lived experience and the postmodern condition.

4.1.The Critical Reception of Jeanette Winterson's *Written on The Body*

When Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body* was published in 1992, it caused a strong reaction. Winterson had created an unnamed and gender-undeclared first-person narrator in the novel who sustained a love affair without definitively revealing his/her gendered identity. Reading this novel appears to be a confusing experience since the socially gendered reader tends to consider sex as a significant clue for the interpretation of literary texts. More specifically, it is in the act of reading and interpretation that the reader reflects his/her expectations – based on dominant social beliefs, ideas, and values – on literary characters. Accordingly, the reader's desire to discern the narrator's sex must depend on assumptions built on deceptive gender stereotypes or essentialized reading of gender as Gregory Rubinson points out in his book entitled *The Fiction of Rushdie, Barnes, Winterson and Carter* (129). As

Rubinson states, successive misinterpretation of the novel tends to be the result of "essentialized" or "strereotypical" readings of gender (130).

In order to reveal the crucial piece of the narrative puzzle, most critics and reviewers identify the narrator as a woman not only because of their interpretation of hints uncovered in the novel but also because of their association of the narrator with Winterson's own self-acknowledged identity as a lesbian. In her article, "Other Sexes: Rewriting Difference from Woolf to Winterson," Andrea Harris suggests that Winterson's public sexual identity could be regarded as "extratextual reasons for reading the narrator's gender as female" since "Winterson discusses her lesbianism as well as the autobiographical nature of all her texts… in interviews" (144). In her book *Following Djuna*, Carolyn Allen further elaborates this idea by stating that readers rely on the author's identity to understand a text and that "Winterson's self-identification as a lesbian… drives the decision to imagine "I" as Louise's woman lover" (48). However, Winterson ironically condemns this tendency to associate the author with his/her work. In her essay "Writer, Reader, Words" in *Art Objects*, Winterson notes:

> It seems to me that the intersection between a writer's life and a writer's work is irrelevant to the reader. The reader is not being offered a chunk of the writer or a direct insight into the writer's mind, the reader is being offered a separate reality (27).

Here, Winterson points out resisting descriptions and categories and does not approve of her novels to be read based on her public sexual identity.

In fact, *Written on the Body* actually gained the 1994 Lambda Book Report Prize for the best lesbian novel of the year. At the same time, Winterson is conventionally regarded as a spokesperson for lesbian representation partly because of *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* being her first semiautobiographical novel that depicts the coming out process of a character named Jeanette. However, such an award or Winterson's public image does not make the sexual or gender identity of the narrator an assured fact.

Although most critics share the same opinion about the narrator's being female in order to claim the novel for feminist and lesbian concerns, the only evidence to support this assumption is highly questionable and generally conveys hetero-normative and stereotypical judgements in their act of reading. Also, it does not make

sense to assign a gender to the narrator in the absence of a body never described or gendered to witness.

For instance, Ute Kauer in "Narration and Gender: The Role of the First Person Narrator in Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body*" proposes that the narrator's "point of view is clearly a female one" and that male identifications in the novel occurs as disguise that are obviously planned or calculated to be seen as clues implying maleness (50). Stating that the narrator feels a great deal of solidarity with women, Kauer asserts that this compassion for the "emotional status of woman" demonstrates that the narrator closely associates and empathizes himself/herself with women rather than with men (49). Then, Kauer argues that since the narrator cannot withhold her compassion from women, she "thus counteracts the design to keep her own gender undeclared" (49). Kauer's interpretation raises such a question: Is it really beyond the realm of possibility for a man to be compassionate? Although Kauer's article gives valuable insights concerning the narrator's general unreliability, it is weakened by its essentialist and binary judgements about gender.

Similarly, in her chapter "A Feminist Ethics of Love" in *Other Sexes: Rewriting Difference from Woolf to Winterson*, Andrea Harris comes to the conclusion that Winterson's indeterminately gendered narrator must be a woman and that Winterson's novel can be read as claiming "universality for a feminine and lesbian subject position" (130). Accordingly, Harris interprets Winterson's novel as being about the rejection and recovery of the feminine in representation and language, the ethical consequences of desiring and loving the other, and the coming together of the self and the other (130). However, towards the end of the chapter, Harris begins to question the stress attached to the feminine, recognizing that

> I am tempted to say that, like Bernard, the narrator moves from the masculine to the feminine end of the gender spectrum. Yet, when the other characters analyzed here - […] – are also considered, the very fluidity of their sex/gender identifications throws into question the metaphor of a gender spectrum (147).

Apparently, the reading of *Written on the Body* from the literary critic Andrea Harris provides significant insights into the ways in which Winterson is deliberately playing with notions of identity, sexual politics, and the stereotypes about masculinity and femininity. It is evident that while the narrator cannot be associated with one

gender in exclusion of the other, the narrator does not escape genders by moving each end of the spectrum.

While most critics think of the narrator as a woman, this assertion is troubled by a few critics who have considered the narrator as a male and the love affair at the heart of the novel heterosexual. For instance, in his review of the novel, Walter Kendrick identifies the narrator as male because of the way in which the narrator "broadcasts his current affairs without hesitation, even to near-strangers […] it's difficult to imagine that such a love is not heterosexual" (131). At one point in the novel, the narrator takes on a familiar masculine stance and at another point presents a key male stereotype or a cliche of masculinity. However, Winterson is not unconsciously falling into a heterosexist and patriarchal trajectory. For Winterson, these stereotypes of femininity and masculinity are possible to subvert but impossible to ignore since they are written on the body, on the body of the text, on the bodies in the text.

On the other hand, other critics have read Winterson's refusal to identify the narrator as male or female as an indication of a future free from gender as a restrictive identity category. Accordingly, at the beginning of her article, "Narration and Gender: the Role of the First-Person Narrator in Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body*," Ute Kauer considers the narrator as "attempt[ing] to erase all gender specifics by denying us the information about his or her gender, by wearing the mask of a gender-free persona" (41). For Kauer, Winterson tends to erase gender rather than blending male and female. Kauer also finds that the absence of information about the narrator such as name, age, gender appears to be an ironic mask.

Likewise, in his article, "Bonded by Language: Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body*," Brian Finney regards the narrator as "device [that] allows Winterson to escape from the binary determinations of a heterosexual representation of human behavior" (4). He also questions critics who have assigned a gender to the narrator since they make use of the stereotypes that take part in gender construction. Then, Finney has insisted on the fruitlessness of such attempts and considered the nondisclosure of the narrator's gender as a "gimmick" of the novel (24).

4.2.Postmodern Interpretations of New Figures of Subjectivity

However, considering *Written on the Body*'s narrator as gendered either female or male, or in the opposite way, as fashioned toward a gender-free future disregards the complication of Winterson's novel and the possibility of the narrator occuring between these two dominant assumptions. With neither name nor gender, the ambiguously gendered narrator in the novel turns out to be a force of disruption that enables Winterson to dig up the tensions and dilemmas in the politics of desire and the multi-faceted identity constructions. Accordingly, Winterson tends to undermine gender and sexual norms not by erasing gender from the narrator, but by offering the endless possibilities for identity and desire that reveal the limits and artifices of such constructions.

Notably, this tendency is postmodern in the sense that Winterson attempts to problematize and even undermine accepted frames of reality, establishing a queer space in which the notions of the body (concerning gender and sexuality) and the text (as fiction or history) change, multiply, and contradict one another. Pursuing the footsteps of Woolf and Carter, Winterson forces a recognition that sex and gender do not necessarily move along heteronormative lines of masculine and feminine. Like Orlando and Evelyn, the narrator of *Written on the Body* presumes and subsequently deals with numerous masks of gendered attitudes or behaviours, proving the refrain within the novel "It's the cliches that cause the trouble" (10). Opening up a play of sexual and gender identities throughout the novel, Winterson's narrator appears to embody the concept of transgender in terms of body, sexuality and gender. More precisely, the narrator problematizes the relation between sex and identity. Accordingly, s/he enables the creation of new rubrics which reflect both fluid manifestations of gender and infinite fluidity of subjectivity.

Apparently, the narrator not only performs the conventional definition of transgender, one whose sex and gender are not in full alignment, calling attention to the fluidity of gender, but s/he also fulfills more recent notions of transgender that intersect with postmodern concept of subjectivity. In examining the concept of transgender together with heteronormative categories of sex and gender, the question

of what happens to individuals who are not appropriate to normative categories of sex and gender arises.

At this point, the transgender theorist Jay Prosser refers to transgender as being "a wavering around transition – or rather a transformation of transition into a new identity," which identifies the notion of contemporary transgender (169). Then, Winterson's narrator lends him/herself to a transgendered reading since his/her entire subjectivity, not just gender, is in a constant state of transition and therefore manifests the idea of the postmodern subjectivity characterized by instability, continual repositioning and the inevitable de-centeredness. This slippery and dissolved nature of individual subjectivity also reflects Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston's description of the posthuman:

> Unlike the human subject-to-be (Lacan's 'I' hommelette), who sees his own mirror image and fixed gender identity discrete and sovereign before him in a way that will forever exceed him, the posthuman becoming-subject vibrates across and among an assemblage of semi-autonomous collectivities it knows it can never either be coextensive with nor altogether separate from (14).

As Halberstam and Livingston point out, the posthuman as being celebratory about the destabilization of restrictive human boundaries, especially those involving gender and sexuality also explains tha narrator's relationship with heteronormative gender categories and stereotypes s/he borrows from.

Winterson's narrator appears to be postmodernly posthuman in the sense that s/he embodies the multiple, self-contradictory and ambiguous selves of the posthuman. Then, the disruption of subjectivity that the postmodernly posthuman self enacts calls into question normative definitions of what it means to be human. Similar to Carter's engagement with Donna Haraway's vision of the cyborg, Winterson's narrator tends to evoke a bind of cyborgian image which has the potential to be reconceptualized, appropriated, transformed to enable us to articulate new figures of subjectivity and to reconsider the role of culture, science and technology in a postmodern age.

At one point, the narrator's lover, Louise, says about the narrator's appearance: "You were the most beautiful creature male or female I had ever seen," and a few moments later continues, " You can't see what I see. […] You are a pool of clear water where the light plays," avoiding the possibility of describing the narrator's relation to a particular cultural norm of human beauty (Winterson, *Written* 84-85). Both

statements present the narrator's physical existence as a transitional state in the sense that the narrator is an unspecified and indefinite "creature" at first and later characterized as a puddle that changes appearance and essence with the sunlight. Most notably, at another point, the narrator identifies him/herself as "unreconstructed" (97). The narrator's process of self- construction or reconstruction is permanently incomplete and Winterson's narrator thus portrays a postmodern and posthuman trans subjectivity. In a provisional state, the narrator fluctuates within the confines of the gender binary in an attempt to exist in spite of them.

Winterson further combines this destabilization of gender and subjectivity, which she grounds in the transgender body, with a similar destabilization of how language and discourse involve in their construction, invoking the idea of grafting to convey this combination. Accordingly, in Winterson's another novel, *Sexing the Cherry* (1990), the art of grafting appears as a central trope for the benefits and diversity to be found in the synthesis of objects. In presenting a more detailed explanation about the art of grafting, one of the characters in the novel Jordan states that

> Grafting is the means whereby a plant, perhaps tender or uncertain, is fused into a hardier member of its strain, and so the two take advantage of each other and produce a third kind, without seed or parent. In this way fruits have been made resistant to disease and certain plants have learned to grow where previously they could not (84).

Since Nicolas / Jordan is tender and uncertain, and he struggles to learn how to live in a phallogocentric and heteronormative society, Winterson brings to mind throughtout the novel *Sexing the Cherry* that Nicolas / Jordan will only become unyielding to the diseases of those ideologies after he has been "grafted on to something better and stronger" (86) and transformed into a "third kind" (84). In this respect, Nicolas / Jordan's desire to be free from the forcible and regulatory ideals of sex and gender or more broadly social domain is dependent on Jordan's capability to graft femininity onto himself and to naturalized his trans subjectivity.

Similarly, it is significant to note that grafting is also a central metaphor in Derrida's theory regarding the act of textual inscription as stated in *Dissemination*:

> To write means to graft. It's the same word. The saying of the thing is restored to its being-grafted. The graft is not something that happens to the properness of the thing. There is no more any thing than there is any original text (389).

Derrida's theory of grafting, instead of draining texts of their meaning, proliferates their meanings and releases texts from stability, giving way to the play of intertextuality and to the constant play of signification. Accordingly, it is most likely no coincidence that Winterson employs the art of grafting in *Sexing the Cherry* and extends it in *Written on the Body* both to examine the potentialities of dismantling the rigidity of borders and combining objects, one onto the other, to the advantage of both and to foreground their inherent intertextuality and the play of gender, language and discourse.

In *Written on the Body*, Winterson conceptualizes this eradication of clichés about gender and language within an extended reflection on the discourse of love, depicting a portrait of love's conflicted and complicated relationship to the postmodern condition. The reason for conceptualizing these implications can be glimpsed in Winterson's interview with Mark Marvel, when she notes:

> I mean, for me a love story is a love story. I don't care what the genders are if it's powerful enough. And I don't think love should be a gender-bound operation. It's probably one of the few things in life that rises above all those kinds of oppositions – black and white, male and female, homosexual and heterosexual. […] And fiction recognizes this. It builds bridges between people who would normally be separate (165).

From this perspective, *Written on the Body* can be considered as fiction building bridges between readers who see the world from a queer point of view and those who don't. Then, Winterson strongly points out the strength of love and believes in its capability to deviate from the gender-bound heterosexual norm through the narrator's ungendered and invisible body and through the total absence of personal pronouns, gender designation and physical description pertaining to the character of the narrator.

4.3."Love is a Word Screaming for Redefinition": A Brief History of Ideals of Romantic Love

In their essay "Women of the World Unite" (1968) Carol Hanisch and Elizabeth Sutherland wrote, " 'Love' is a word screaming for redefinition. In sexual relationships, it often means dependency, it's a weapon for control, it's someone making an object out of someone else in order to satisfy ego and security needs" (5). As a "weapon" of male supremacy, romantic love is socially and historically

constructed ideal and specific to time, place and culture of given era which shapes and informs expected attitudes and expectations of romantic love. In this respect, it seems to be essential to take the historical and philosophical examination of romantic love into consideration.

For centuries, philosophers have tried to comprehend the aims of sexual and emotional intimacy. Histories of philosophical explorations of love generally start with Plato who presents an intellectual concept of love; that is, love of eternal types of beauty, goodness and wisdom as a means for self-realization. In this sense, Plato's concept of love appears to move far beyond interpersonal love and points to Eros, who refers to the earliest concept of love in the Western history as a driving force in the pursuit of otherworldly perfection, goodness and beauty.

Throughout the Western history, devotion to the ideal of perfection has plagued humanity and come to be detrimental to emotional life and all creative effort. For Plato, love is rational and non-sexual, removed from emotions and feelings, a kind of intellectual detachment from the human world.

However, through the rise of Christianity, understandings of love operated as an immanence and transcendence. During the medieval period, the concept of courtly love is said to have developed from the conflict between Christian religious ideals and love between individuals for each other. As Simon May states in *Love: A History*, in courtly love women are viewed as representing virtue of purity that offers men a path to salvation (121). Then, what one finds in the practice of courtly love is the intensity of passion and sexual desire as well as the idealizatiom of the beloved, as Irvin Singer points out in *The Nature of Love: Courtly and Romantic* (23). Accordingly, the idealist tradition starts with Plato, goes through Christianity, comes out as courtly love and subsequently turns out to be Romanticism in the 18th century. The rise of romanticism was not a triumph for women. Rather, men used love as a tool to dominate and subordinate women.

Regarding the women's subservient status in society, Mary Wollstonecraft advances a criticism on love in her well-known text, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Then, she writes, women "were made to be loved, and must not aim at respect," (34) they were "only anxious to inspire love" (7) without a medium to

exercise their potential to reason. Accordingly, love renders women objects. Wollstonecraft identified romantic love as transitory, illusory, and irrational sentiment.

Another pioneering text for feminist responses to love was Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949). In her chapter entitled "The Woman in Love," Beauvoir asserted that the word love "has by no means the same sense for both sexes (642). For Beauvoir, the problem is the subject-object division, which prevents men and women from acquiring a sense of mutual subjectivity. Then, she explains that men never completely give up themselves to a woman; "even on their knees before a mistress, what they still want is to take possession of her; at the very heart of their lives they remain sovereign subjects […]. For woman, on the contrary, to love is to relinquish everything for the benefit of a master" (642). As Beauvoir states, the cause of the subject-object division originates not in the biologically prescribed gender roles but in the "difference in their situations," such as sexist and patriarchal structures that maintain women's dependence (643). Then, the woman tries to fuse herself with the sovereign subject, hoping that "he will give her at once possession of herself and of the universe he represents" (636). However, in this love affair woman cannot acquire subjectivity through love, nor can she realize a real intersubjective love between herself and himself. Apparently, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and her individual search for viable and liberated romantic love created a significant turning point in both feminist thinking and the characterization of romantic love as problematic for women.

By the late 1960s, in the name of women's movement, the feminist revival emerged in full force in the sense that anything that was formerly regarded as natural such as love, heterosexuality, the family, prescribed gender roles and so forth turned out to be an object of feminist scrutiny. Within the context of feminist thinking, love was frequently speculated on the basis of heterosexual relationships. In some cases, trans women, bisexual and lesbian were excluded from the debate around marriage, love and the family. However, in a particular strand of feminist thinking, non-heterosexual relationships tended to be liberating as an equal site of self-expression, freed from the dangerous dynamics of heterosexuality.

Following the decline of the second wave feminism, by the 1980s, the focus tends to be on sexuality and sexual pleasure rather than love, but the critical examination of love generated by feminist thinkers from Wollstonecraft onward continues to be essentially unchanged. That is, heterosexual woman becomes a victim of a construction of love, which is basically a patriarchal illusion.

The representation of love in the current conjuncture makes the sexual relationships possible with all their configurations, including heterosexual, transgender, queer, married, unmarried, temporary, cohabitating and so forth. In this sense, in favor of difference and diversity of experience rather than similarity, non-heterosexual sexual practice has become a signifier for the unifying force of love, which provides the equal access to love, regardless of sex or sexual orientation.

In *A Vindication of Love*, Christina Nehring suggests that "romantic love needs to be reinvented for our time" (10). In relation to the reinvention of love, the concept of love is not a monolithic experience, but a subjective one, open to reimage its potentialities even though a great amount of attention has been drawn to interpret, theorize and problematize love.

Accordingly, Winterson's *Written on the Body* is an attempt to reformulate and redefine cliched and heterosexist ideas about love and the ways we institutionalize, commodify and categorize it. In fact, in the novel love also provides a relational framework to consider how responsible, ethical and attentive we are to think of others in their own terms; or more broadly, to see painful situations or life from another's perspective empathetically. Accordingly, it celebrates the notion of love as an exchange, a mutuality and a relation. Ultimately, Winterson's protagonist arrives at this position, but the novel must first illustrate some destructive force of love in its complexity and specificity.

4.4."It's The Clichés That Cause The Trouble:" An Ambivalent Play with Language and Discourse

Written on the Body is its gender-undeclared narrator's account of his/her troubled love affair with Louise. In fact, Louise is married to a cancer specialist, Elgin, whom she has decided to abandon for the narrator, and then Elgin tells the narrator Louise's secret, which is that she has cancer. Shortly thereafter, he guarantees the

narrator the best care for his wife only if the narrator accepts to leave Louise; the narrator does the agreement with Elgin. The narrator who has had several romantic affairs with both men and women, hopes this affair to be different in the sense that s/he wants to shatter the clichés of the discourse of love. After all, *Written on the Body* is primarily a collection and revision of the narrator's memories, reflections, and lamentations on love and loss, much of which is closely and erotically attached to the body.

Throughout the novel, the narrator of *Written on the Body* enables readers to remember that "It's the clichés that cause the trouble," (10) and the novel is, partly, an exercise in dismantling the clichés on which the language of love or the discourse of romance so often depends. More precisely, as part of the narrator's effort to convey his/her love to Louise, s/he undermines the tradition of the romance narrative and its emphasis on marriage and the notion of controllable normative body as decidedly related to heterosexuality and the belief in monogamy and procreation by exposing the clichés surrounding the romantic love.

The narrator worriedly initiates his/her speculation over love early in the novel: "A precise emotion seeks a precise expression. If what I feel is not precise then should I call it love?" (10) As culturally prescribed scripts, clichés in their imprecision have been attached to numerous former love affairs and therefore they present "the diluted version, the sloppy language, the insignificant gestures," which seem to be reassuring as stated within the novel. In fact, clichés trivialize and mask individual experience by generalizing it and they deride and numb feeling by obscuring sexuality (Winterson, *Written* 10).

The prevalent portrayal of love is that it is a precise emotion conveyed by such metaphors as love letters, red hearts, flowers, marriage ceremonies and the endlessly repeated romantic cliche "I love you." Such a portrayal of an orderly love in appearance is constructed to position parameters around an elusive emotion that floats across the boundaries of gender, sexuality, and constructed norms of propriety. Throughout the novel, the narrator recognizes that this portrayal of love is false. Then, the central concern of *Written on the Body* is to demonstrate how language is used to

construct an illusory sense of reality, together with false images of gender and sexuality and the unavoidable presence of clichés.

Within the novel, language appears to be a controlling presence in the narrator's life. Rather than merely expressing thoughts and depicting relationships, language is blended into the narrator's perceptions and the way the narrator depicts his/her life. Operating almost literally, the language threatens to distort the narrator's existence and sanity. Since *Written on the Body* calls for a language rooted in and deeply structured by experiences of the fragmented, fluid and multiple body and mind, the main force of the narrator's critique falls on clichés or empty language.

Rather than simply writing a romance, which is itself a cliché, Winterson questions the word packages we have tended to believe in and say reflexively. However, the novel stimulates us to be reflective with the words we prefer since being unreflective with words is to be involved in and maintain a system that restricts and rejects its subjects. In fact, *Written on the Body* wrestles with how to discuss love without clichés while criticizing and reflecting upon them. On the novel's opening page, the narrator meditates upon the clichéd phrases, drawing our attention toward our desperate dependence on familiar words: "I love you." Then, the narrator wonders, "Why is it that the most unoriginal thing we can say to one another is still the thing we long to hear?" (9) Here, the narrator directly displays its problematics as quotation, identifying this expression as the most clichéd and the most unoriginal of all expressions.

However, in the novel the desire to say the original utterance of this quotation works to reconfigure the problematics of the quotation to promote that we bring endlessly repeated quotation and the private expression that we long to hear into juxtaposition. That is, we can create new meanings through reconfiguring or revising the established patterns of meaning we find in the sources we quote.

Likewise, in Winterson's *Art and Lies,* Sappho echoes this sentiment:

> You see, I have to be aware of shallowness, a cliche of response, not mine but everyone else's, is this how I really feel? How shall I know that these lines are my own, and not a borrowed text? […] It will not be enough to say I love you. I know you have heard it before (139).

In case of Sappho and the narrator, this clichéd expression is mandated as the ultimate expression of love. In fact, it is only a quotation uttered by others and not unique to their respective love affair. At the same time, the passage presents the problem of cliché and practices of love. In fact, the problem of cliché seems to result from the tension between its overuse and its usefulness: how can individuals gain access or understanding the idea of love or give it reliability when it has overused?

However, the narrator notices that it will not be ignored since "when you say it and when I say it we speak like savages who have found three words and worship them" (9). Although love itself has mostly become cliché, Winterson indicates that in certain situations and incarnations it can still effectively depict emotions. The emotion is central, primary, and "savage". It seems new each time we encounter it and it deserves "worship." Then, we recognize the joy of love. Simultaneously, the narrator presents us the pain of loss through the inclusion of a passage from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*:

> CALIBAN: You taught me language and my profit on't is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you For learning me your language (9).

Here, Caliban reminds us the evasiveness of language in evaluating or describing love. As Caliban states, entrance into the master's language is always painful, an act that requires loss. Like Caliban, the narrator recognizes that s/he had worshipped a hollow phrase and s/he had put his/her trust in a system meant to obstruct and mask desire conceived as empowering or explosive possibility.

Accordingly, the discourse of love appears to be an example of master narrative which is a precarious, constricting and inadequate system that tends to explain cultural phenomena with regard to a single, unifying truth or principle to enforce an order in individual experience or perception. In this respect, Winterson's *Written on the Body* seems fitted for the postmodernist novelistic discourse, a discourse that depends upon the notion of "incredulity toward metanarratives" as Lyotard states in the *Postmodern Condition* (xxiv). For Lyotard, the master narratives no longer keep their unquestioned position as the only source for legitimizing knowledge. Rather, master narratives are giving way to a profusion of Lyotard's theory of contingent, multiple, shifting narratives and thereby become available to create a platform for new forms of

knowledge. The increasing possibility for new kinds of knowledge and new kinds of narrative allow for the construction of multiple truths. Then, Winterson refuses to abandon the discourse of love altogether; rather, she presents her narrator's effort to revise the language of love or romance in the spirit of postmodernism.

From the beginning of his/her story, the narrator asserts, "[Love] will not stay still, stay silent, be good, be modest, be seen and not heard, no" (9). Likewwise, in her essay "Postmodern Love," Catherine Belsey describes "postmodern love" as "at once endlessly pursued and ceaselessly suspected." For Belsey, "[Love] cannot speak, and yet it seems that it never ceases to speak, and yet it seems that it never ceases to speak in late twentieth century Western culture" (685). Apparently, the narrator registers uneasy relation of a critical suspicion of love and a continuous desire for love. Such a conflicted oscillation between incredulity and insight toward love accounts for the constant "play" of language that is central to the novel.

In fact, the love plot is itself a play of language that repeatedly enacts according to a series of clichés. These clichés introduce an idea that will haunt the narrator throughout the novel. Even though "love demands expression," as stated in the novel, it is generally expressed by means of clichés or in self-deceiving platitudes (9). Therefore, the narrator's enormous effort to achieve the expression required by her love for Louise cannot evade the clichés of the love plot or romantic narrative.

When the narrator says, "I had done to death the candles and champagne, the roses, the dawn breakfasts, the transatlantic telephone calls and the impulsive plane rides." (21) this statement demonstrates the power of discourse to enact what it pretends to portray, the scene of masculinity or the image of playboy in the reader's mind. The following sentence, "I had done all of that to escape cocoa and hot water bottles," (21) conjures up the cliché of great sadness associated with disappointment in love that enacts the scene of femininity especially considering the relation between menstrual cramps and hot water bottles. The shift from male to female, however temporarrily, and the specific shift that the narrator states above, from "candles and champagne" to "cocoa and hot water bottles" result in the narrator's repositioning herself / himself in a different cliché. Placing love at the center of postmodern world, Winterson rescripts or revisions conventional narrative formulations of love from

which Winterson takes the clues and challenges the language used to establish heterosexual and androcentric parameters surrounding romantic love.

The narrator, of unidentified gender, has been sexually involved in a plethora of characters and each character is constructed in a different way. For example, the narrator's love affair with Bathsheba, a married woman, was covered with lies and secrecy. The narrator remarks,

> We sank lower and lower in our love-lined lead-lined coffin. Telling the truth, she said, was a luxury we could not afford and so lying became a virtue, an economy we had to practise. Telling the truth was hurtful and so lying became a good deed (16).

The narrator's unusually excessive desire for married women shows that most of his/her love affairs break convention and stand outside societal values. When the narrator tries to maintain the union, he/she constantly finds himself/herself in untenable conditions such as the secrecy and the duplicity.

After the failed whirlwind romance with Bathsheba, the narrator settles into a mundane life with Jacqueline in which the narrator admits that she does not love Jacqueline: "I considered her. I didn't love her and I didn't want to love her. I didn't desire her and I couldn't imagine desiring her" (26). In order to show passionless boredom and the banality of domestic life in the relationship with Jacqueline, the narrator says, "I became an apostle of ordinariness" (27). The narrator tries repeatedly to convince her/himself that the state of being indifferent s/he frequently experiences regarding their relationship is the way one is supposed to feel when one is settled into ordinariness. As the narrator states, "… passion is for holidays, not homecoming" (27). The narrator does not lay aside the world of "simple and ordinary" since it keeps the narrator from leaping into and out from relationships with married women.

After Bathsheba, the narrator goes through a stage of ordinariness. Jacqueline is depicted as somewhat of a compromise to settle down. From the moment that Louise enters the narrator's life, the narrator thinks about Jacqueline and reflects, "I can't have it all my own way, relationships are about compromise. Give and take. Maybe I don't want to stay in but she wants me to stay in. I should be glad to do that. It will make us stronger and sweeter" (31). In fact, this entire thought is made out of one cliché after another, and it is easy to say that the narrator "should" be pleased; however, the

romantic script the narrator leaps that prescribes or dictates the way compromise is supposed to work is not definite. That is, the "should" does not work, and no matter how tha narrator deals with it, s/he is not going to be glad in this relationship that restrains him/her from Louise. Since the romantic clichés have to do with the prescribed behaviours and predetermined expectations of romance, the narrator is forced to settle unhappily with Jacqueline or to attempt to move beyond the cliché in order to find fulfilling love.

In additon, the narrator's breakup with Jacqueline indicates the failure of the romantic script in real life. When s/he waits for Jacqueline to finish work at the zoo in order to confess the love affair with Louise, the narrator recognizes, "I wanted to hide behind the Perspex elephant, jump out at her and say, 'Let's go for dinner.' I am often beset by such romantic follies. I use them as ways out of real situtions" (Winterson, *Written* 55) A scheme to forget about the real problem and go out to dinner is an example of being unable to follow a cliché to avoid the harsh reality that the narrator finally confesses the truth to Jacqueline. At this point, s/he rebukes himself/herself for hurting her, but the narrator's thoughts imply that s/he holds the authority in their relationship, knowing Jacqueline is impotent and vulnerable, for there is nothing Jacqueline can do to prevent the narrator and Louise from being together:

> I mumbled something about yes as usual but things had changed. THINGS HAD CHANGED, what an arsehole comment, I had changed things. Things don't change, they're not like the seasons moving on a diurnal round. People change things. There are victims of change but not victims of things (56).

Trying to defend his/her attitude toward Jacqueline, the narrator wonders why he/she "collude[s] in this mis-use of language" and hopes that he/she could "interpret [his/her] actions in plain English" (56). Even after the narrator blames her/himself for not simply coming clean with Jacqueline, s/he continues to be intentionally elusive. Then, the narrator constantly interrupts the narrative with half-truths, untruths, and games. The narrator also blames the cliché, acknowledging that it is futile, nothing more than an effort to make the guilty person feel a little better when hurting the other person. In fact, all that the cliché or the romantic script does in this context results in a "mis-use of language" rather than revealing any kind of truth or relief.

Later in the novel, the narrator shows contempt for this misuse of language in a depiction of the bar that s/he works at after leaving Louise: The narrator states, "[a]

supper bar designed for the nouveau refugees who thought that fish and chips were too working class. We served pommes frites with Dover sole that had never seen a cliff" (106). Mumbling that "things have changed" is just as easy as naming fish and chips "pommes frites with Dover sole" (106). Each is meaningless, inflated descriptions, just deceptive appearances of something different or something more important than it is and the narrator seems to feel pity for the person who admits as a satisfactory truth. Just as "nouveauu refugee" is a disguised euphemism for a pretentious person who seeks advancement to a higher social class, the misuse of language becomes a dangerous means for separating oneself from agency and responsibility in a relationship or in the marketplace while at the same time making it difficult to express oneself clearly.

Winterson further points out the flaws concerning the cliché. After the narrator confesses his/her love affair with Louise to Jacqueline, Louise turns out to be the catalyst for the infidelity and the abjection. It is her exotic, idealized, objectified presence together with her unpredictable and recalcitrant body that both lures the narrator away from Jacqueline and entices the narrator into the promise of something different and new in relation to the violation of boundaries. While the narrator portrays Louise's presence in the domestic setting as sexually arousing and seductive, there is the feeling that in the demanding presence of Louise even the most boring of domestic routines would be stimulating. As the narrator remarks, "Yes we are and I do like to pass the day with you in serious and inconsequential chatter. I wouldn't mind washing up beside you, dusting beside you, reading the back half of the paper while you read the front" (Winterson, *Written* 38). Here, the point is that the appeal of the unfamiliar will yield to a desire for the expected, the normal. That is, the seductive presence of Louise will enable the narrator to redescribe the domestic setting and the predictability or certainty that the narrator connects with both infidelity and marriage.

At the same time, infidelity can be related to Kristeva's concept of the abject through Jacqueline's reaction to the love affair and the ways in which it reveals the narrator's failed domestic life. When the love affair between the narrator and Louise is exposed, Jacqueline excludes the narrator from their apartment. Upon coming back the following day, the narrator notices that the apartment has been damaged. At this point, Jacqueline reconstructs the domestic space as an abject space that depicts the

ruin that infidelity has brought. As the narrator states, "[t]he room looked like a chicken shed. There were feathers everywhere, the pillows had been ripped, the duvet gutted and emptied. She had torn the drawers from their chests and tipped the contents about like any good burglar" (70). In the strict sense, Jacqueline has torn apart the interior out of their bedroom, out of their domestic space. Most notably, she has also surprised the narrator by not being the naturalized image or ideal of feminine respectability that she appeared as: "The worm in the bud. That's right, most buds do have worms but what about the ones that turn? I thought Jacqueline would have crept away as quietly as she had crept in" (71). Jacqueline does what is impossible to imagine in the sense that the domestic space turns into an abject space that "does not respect borders, positions, rules" and that "disturbs identity, system, order" as Kristava puts forward in "*The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*" (4).

Jacqueline's attitude does not act in conformity with the rules of the domestic order that the narrator had disliked but had also depended upon. After the narrator ends his/her love affair with Jacqueline in order to be with Louise, s/he comes home to complete destruction:

> [t]he walls [of his/her flat] were covered in heavy felt-tip pen. It was Jacqueline's handwriting. There was a long list of her attributes over the bath. A longer list of my disabilities over the sink. Pasted like an acid-house frieze around the ceiling was Jacqueline's name over and over again. Jacqueline colliding with Jacqueline. An endless cloning of Jacquelines in black ink. [. . .] Staring blearily back at the bathroom door I saw it had SHIT daubed across it. The word and the matter. That explained the smell (70).

Obviously, it is her act of writing that defaces the walls and doors of the apartment with. Through her writing, she also finds a means of expression for her profound heartbreak. It is also important to note that Jacqueline "clones" herself; in a literal sense, she creates herself and asserts her presence within the walls of the apartment by writing her name. At the same time, her act of smearing her bodily waste on the walls reveals the extent of her passion toward the narrator as well as such bodily waste tends to represent the redefining of the domestic space as unsafe, unclean, and something that is threatened by the violation of borders through infidelity.

Seeing this ruin, the narrator ponders how s/he came to this point and ends up denouncing the romantic script or cliché:

> The wise old hands who advocate a sensible route, not too much passion, not too much sex, plenty of greens and an early night, don't recognise this [what happened with Jacqueline] as a possible ending. In their world good manners and good sense prevail. […]It's not in their rule book even though it happens again and again. Settle down, feet under the table. She's a nice girl, he's a nice boy. It's the clichés that cause the trouble (71).

The narrator's critical description of "[t]he wise old hands" is apparently ironic in the sense that the ideas are obviously "old," while at the same time they are not at all "wise". Then, "the wise old hands" turn to "their rule book" that is completely detached from the discourse of love. In case of the narrator's failed relationship of Jacqueline, s/he tries to rely on the "rule book" accompanying love that prescribes a good boy and a good girl to settle down in a domestic simplicity. However, the insistent call of desire as a transformative, unruly emotion interrupts, exposing the impossibility of controlling such a feeling within and despite of the demands of cliché.

4.5."And So The Word Was Made Flesh:" Postmodern Configurations of Love, Desire and The Body through Romantic and Scientific Narratives

Just as the previously stated within *Written on the Body*, "rule book" could not at all prescribe and provide all of the configurations of desire, neither can the "charm" of marriage (78). More precisely, throughout the novel, women abandon their husbands or partners in favor of a relationship with the narrator. Tired of the predictable performance of the marriage, the narrator notices that love is in need of new expressions and conceptualizations. Then, the narrator mocks heterosexual and normative pressures of marriage and states, "I've been through a lot of marriages. Not down the aisle but always up the stairs. I began to realize I was hearing the same story every time" (13). The narrator views marriage as the traditional romantic scripts that are socially viewed and constructed. For the narrator, marriage turns out to be the domestication and normalization of love. In fact, in the novel it's a conclusion depended upon observations of the "self-satisfaction" and "tightness" of the married together with the hypocrisy of bored partners who break promises (13).

The first encounter with Louise is the time when the narrator notices that a satisfying love is possible only with her. In the representation of this love affair between the narrator and Louise, there is a very thin border between romance and reality and Winterson intentionally plays with this distinction. For instance, unlike the

traditional romance heroine who is usually tempted or involved into a love affair, Louise employs a trick to get to know the narrator. Similar to the "old trick" of Lady Hamilton who knew well how to attract Admiral Nelson's attention, Louise fabricates a car problem that occurs in front of the narrator's apartment (85). Hence, it is from the very beginning of their relationship that Louise turns out to be the initiator of both action and passion. In the novel, Louise reveals that their encounter was not by accident (68). After seeing the narrator in a park and even following the narrator to his/her apartment, Louise was captivated by the narrator. To a certain extent, Louise removes choice from the narrator, urging his/her to the encounter between them. Of course, the narrator is not completely without the choice. One could say, however, that Louise sets her borders and puts her husband Elgin and the narrator in the positions she chooses for them. As an example, after the narrator hits Jacqueline and dispatches her on her own way, s/he says sorry to Louise, and she reacts as follows: " 'You didn't hit me.' She turned to me, her full lips in a long straight line. 'If you ever do hit me I shall leave you'" (87). In much the same way, when Louise decides to leave her husband Elgin, she states: "I'm going to leave him because my love for you makes any other life a lie" (98). Louise does not accept to hide her love affair from Elgin. She first informs Elgin that she will willingly meet the narrator and will always be open to Elgin regarding the direction of their relationship. Louise's certainty, openness and absoluteness about what she was doing contributes to the possibility of Louise and the narrator's love as the embodiment of the blank page, pure and without restraint. While the narrator is constantly wavering, it is Louise's passion and action that correspond with her thoughts.

It is apparent from the ingenious way that the narrator describes Louise that she is different from the narrator's previous partners. For example, the narrator's construction of Louise in terms of "a Victorian heroine (29)," "a heroine from a Gothic novel (49)" or "Pre-Raphaelite heroine" in relation to Emma Bovary (17) and Anna Karenina (75) can be considered as a modern incarnation or characterization of past literary traditions, especially from the nineteenth century. In fact, Louise holds an inconsistent place throughout the novel as a heroine and as an adulteress and the narrator tends to make Louise surpass this literary tradition by making adultery eternal and with no importance. As the narrator states, "I'd always been fond of Vronsky but

I don't believe in living out literature" (75) admitting the existence of or truth of the literary traditions of romance and infidelity but proposing that there is a way to liberate the narrator and Louise from the same fate.

The narrator is also constructed Louise in terms of the essentialist images of nature such as the earth, the oceon, trees, the moon. This essentialized images of Louise as nature indicate a nostalgia that Rita Felski in her article "The Gender of Modernity" suggests was prevalent in the depictions of women in the late nineteenth century that simultaneously present images of progress and rationality and a desire for the past, for what was lost in the process (147). At the same time, throughout the novel Winterson tries to attract our attention to the "mouldiness" of past loves, past lives and past literary traditions that are difficult to escape (81).

In addition to the essentialized images of Louise as nature, Louise may be connected with the revival of nature and its unpredictability. Such an unpredictable state of nature is especially existing during the moments of close sexual connection and desire where the borders between the lovers become vague.

At the same time, the narrator tends to construct Louise as abject, ironically giving an indication of her cancerous body in advance. Louise often turns out to be an abject figure in the narrator's depictions – uncontrollable, unpredictable, moody, exploding. In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva explains the process of abjection:

> There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated (1).

Winterson presents Louise's unpredictable, recalcitrant abject body as a means to lead the narrator to realize that to attempt to reconstruct Louise means reconstructing him/herself. Louise resists trying to be reconstructed or read because of her abject body. It is at this point that the narrator learns from Elgin that Louise has been diagnosed with leukaemia and her cancerous body begins to abject the narrator. Then, the narrator unwillingly acknowledges in an attempt to depict the feeling of having the ground remove from under his/her feet:

> Two hundred miles from the surface of the earth there is no gravity. You are stretching slowly slowly, getting longer, your joints are slipping away from

> their usual places. … You will break up bone by bone, fractured from who you are… the centre cannot hold (100-1).

After learning Louise's cancer, the narrator against Louise's wishes has decided to leave Louise with Elgin, believing that sending her back to Elgin, a doctor and a cancer speacialist, is the only way to save her. After being separated from Louise, the narrator eventually realizes that this was the wrong decision. Here, the narrator's remorse indicates his/her own questioning attitude concerning the medical establishment and its authority in determining who lives or dies and who is sick and healthy.

In order to cope with the feeling of losing Louise and to refuse the abjection of the abject, the narrator engages into medical texts and states:

> I became obsessed with anatomy. If I could not put Louise out of my mind I would drown myself in her. Within the clinical language, through the dispassionate view of the sucking, sweating, greedy, defecating self, I found a love-poem to Louise. I would go on knowing her more intimately than the skin, hair and voice that I craved. I would have her plasma, her spleen, her synovial fluid. I would recognize her even when her body had long since fallen away (111).

The narrator has constructed Louise as a container of the ideal. Accordingly, the narrator uses the medical terminology or medical discourse as a language of love in order to express the transient state of the flesh and the eternal presence of the beloved object. The narrator dwells poetically on any part of Louise that makes up her being, regardless of how unpleasant and undesirable "sucking, sweating, greedy, defecating" they may be. Here, Winterson shows that the language of science or anatomy does not have to be restricted within medical diagnoses or textbook descriptions and that the discourse of science can serve as a medieum for trying to understand the discourse of love which is always unquantifiable.

However, in the course of reflecting upon the medical texts, the narrator realizes the inadequacy of "dispassionate" medical language to describe the narrator's passion for Louise and his/her experience of Louise's body:

> I can't enter you in clothes that won't show the stains, my hands full of tools to record and analyze. If I come to you with a torch and notebook, a medical diagram and a cloth to mop up the mess, I'll have you bagged neat and tidy. I'll store you in plastic like chicken livers. Womb, gut, brain, neatly labeled and returned. Is that how to know another human being? (120)

Here, this passage serves to critique the adequacy of medical language and its controlling and prescriptive descriptions to know the body. The idea that the narrator cannot penetrate into Louise's body without becoming stained in a sense indicates objectivity and dispassion science asserts in an attempt to understand the body.

Later, the narrator states more precisely the division between medical terminology and what it actually presents in the following lines: "Frontal bone, Palatine bone, nasal bones, lacrimal bones, cheekbones, maxilla, vomer, inferior conchae, mandible. Those are my shields, those are my blankets, those words don't remind me of your face" (132). Obviously, the medical discourse constructs a kind of shield that protects the narrator from the pain of loss that is now related with Louise's body. More importantly, the futile attempt of science to know or more precisely to categorize the body is evident in the sense that the individual becomes lost. Accordingly, when the narrator states, "[y]ou are what I know," (120) this is a knowledge stemmed from feelings and emotion, which science cannot fulfill.

It is also worth noting that there are some constraints within the text and its handling of disease. Different from other types of cancer, Leukemia has less visible signs which illuminates the unsettled nature of health and life. As Susan Sontag shows in *Illness as Metaphor*, "Leukemia [is] – the 'white' or TB – like form of the disease, for which no mutilated surgery can be proposed – not of the stomach or breast cancer" (18). The invisible state of leukemia enables the narrator to maintain his/her portrayal of Louise as ideal without having to harmonize this idealization with visible signs and effects of cancer. At the same time, Louise is not available in the novel for most of the time she has been diagnosed with leukemia, this enables the narrator to keep away from the physical realities of the illness and the treatments it requires.

The middle section of *Written on the Body*, labeled "The Cells, Tissues, Systems and Cavities of the Body," presents the narrator's reflections upon scientific discourse and Louise's body. The narrator relates various medical passages to Louise, forming an imaginative examination or more precisely poetic interpretations of Louise's body from cells to senses through her disease.

In an effort to create a love poem to Louise from a discussion of her leukemia, or her leukemic body, Winterson uses the medical language of "bruises," "arteries," "blood vessels," "capillaries" as a means to tell a narrative of passion or love:

> The leukaemic body hurts easily. I could not be rough with you now, making you cry out with pleasure close to pain. We've bruised each other, broken the capillaries shot with blood. Tubes hair-thin intervening between arteries and veins, those ramified blood vessels that write the body's longing. You used to flush with desire. That was when we were in control, our bodies conspirators in our pleasure (124).

More precisely, identifying bruises and broken capillaries as a sign of the narrator's desire, the narrator attempts to find an alternative way of expressing his/her love. At the same time, exploring a leukemic body or more broadly a sick body, Winterson celebrates what patriarchal society tends to conceal, that to which it is vulnerable. For Winterson, the sick body suggests more than what it is stigmatized or compartmentalized by the medical discourse.

In his exploration of scientific discourse and the body, Gregory J. Rubinson regards such an example of the narrator finding passion in the pages of a medical textbook as a "[confrontation] of the limitations of science as a source of knowledge, as a promise of salvation, and as a 'naturalizer' of gender biases" (128). Regarding the validity of scientific knowledge, Rubinson further states that "Winterson demonstrates that scientific discourses are forms of story" (128). One way that Winterson indicates the constructed, definitive, impersonal nature of strictly technical and scientific discourse is when the narrator starts spending time at the hospital to be near the cancer patients and to better understand what Louise might soon experience. At this point, in the novel a cancer speacialist admits the limitations of scientific knowledge and the ineffectuality of medical technology: "'How little we know. It's the late twentieth century and what are the tools of our trade? Knives, saws, needles and chemicals. I've no time for alternative medicine but I can see why it's attractive'" (150).

Even Elgin demonstrates the inadequacy of scientific discourse: "Cancer is an unpredictable condition. It is the body turning upon itself. We don't understand that yet. We know what happens but not why it happens or how to stop it" (105). It is also important to note that in case of Elgin, Louise's cancerous body turns out to be a means for a gendered power structure. It is ultimately exposed that the medical treatments

Elgin offers for Louise turned out to be a false construct or false cure created by Elgin to oppress and control his wife and her body in accordance with cultural gender norms.

In the novel, Elgin appears as the voice of the scientific community and his depiction and apparent flaws present an enlightening view of the failings of the scientific discourse as the only place to find truth. As Heather Nunn argues in "Anatomy of Horror, Melancholy and Love" that

> Elgin belongs to Kristeva's industrial technocratic society where the individual, dispossessed of any amatory code, is deprived of a psychic space through which the idealizing aspect of love may be expressed and his study of carcinoma through gene therapy as 'a sexy medicine' aligns him with the postmodern surface desire of virtual reality (22).

Obviously, Elgin is involved deeply or wholly in a virtual world, a world that postmodern society appreciates. However, Winterson regards such a virtual world as profoundly troubling. In fact, virtual reality is in the field of science and Elgin demonstrates that this is not a world that can contain or house real human connections.

As stated in the novel, Elgin "used computer simulations to mimic the effects of rapidly multiplying rogue cells. He saw gene therapy as the likeliest way out for a body besieged by itself. It was very sexy medicine" (66). Such a virtual science is tricky in several ways. For instance, although Elgin is working to understand and cure cancer, he has not seen a patient from the real life for years. All of his work seems to be virtual. For Louise, Elgin "'can no longer wrap a Band-Aid around a cut finger but he can tell you everything there is to know about cancer. Everything except what causes it and how to cure it'" (67). Ironically, Winterson points out that curing disease turns out to be nothing more than working with computer models, and ultimately there are no cures, no answers. Elgin can only exert control and find answers in his computer games "HOSPITAL" (29) and "LABORATORY" (104) and simulations which only provide fictionalized alternatives, but in the virtual world, his actions does not bring real consequences. Then, he has control and power over science, but what Elgin lacks is control over feelings.

Winterson further challenges the authority of the scientific knowledge when the narrator recognizes the attempt made by the political and medical establishment to categorize individuals, their lives and bodies into controllable units and into the inscriptive and penetrable body surface that satisfies cultural expectations. Then, the

narrator reflects upon doctors: “The biology of metastasis is what doctors don’t understand. They are not conditioned to understand it. […] In doctor – think the body series of bits to be isolated and treated as necessary, that the body in its very disease may act as a whole is an unsettling concept” (175). Here, Winterson presents the notion of wholeness, connectedness and integrity of female body rather than categorizing or isolating different parts of the female body or dissecting it.

In *Written on the Body*, Winterson dismantles inflexible boundaries and stable gendered identities that objectify the body to develop a concept of the body that is fluid and changeable. However, this wholeness or more precisely mutual recognition, reading and translating of the body emphasizes the interaction of body parts between two bodies or within one body not depending on stable selves or body surfaces. Then, the concept of postmodern body Winterson develops is quite similar to virtual reality in the sense that what appeared to be immovable and solid turns out to be fluid and changeable.

In unsettling the discourses of love, science, romance and marriage by means of an emphasis on inherently ambiguous nature of language, the narrator challenges how the body has been earlier expressed and conceptualized, exposing the heteronormative values inherent in these discourses. More precisely, by creating a narrator who undermines personal identity through the misuse of gender categories and desire regulated by heteronormativity, Winterson undermines authoritative discourses that construct the ideology of the physical body. Examining Winterson’s strategy to employ a variety of discourses and genres throughout the novel, Rubinson argues in “Body Languages” that the material body is constructed and interpreted through scientific, cultural and political constructions:

> Discourses of the body are deeply enmeshed in power claims—for science, religion, political freedom, human agency, and artistic integrity among others. With the body presenting such a significant site for claims about gender, power, knowledge, truth, the self, and language in both feminist and postmodern theory, it becomes more and more necessary to develop new strategies for presenting alternatives to representations of the body that are complicit in oppressive power dynamics (e.g., between the sexes) or that easily lend themselves to the institution of such power dynamics (228).

Thus, the narrator uses language as a means to reconfigure and revision modes of representation in relation to the body, restoring the body from passivity and

regaining some agency for it, especially for its role and centrality in fulfilling love and desire. Accordingly, Winterson's reconfiguration of the body points to Halberstam and Livingston's notion of the "posthuman" body: "Posthuman bodies are not slaves to masterdiscourses but emerge at nodes where bodies, bodies of discourse, and discourses of bodies intersect to foreclose any easy distinction between actor and stage, between sender/receiver, channel, code, message, context" (2). Accordingly, Winterson's *Written on the Body* turns out to be the counter narrative of love that foregrounds the transgender body emerging through the breaks of these masterdiscourses and exposing the variability beyond the binary divisions.

While Winterson revisions the overused language of love, she also revisions conventional discourses of body by blending the body with language. Accordingly, the narrator constantly identifies his/her body together with Louise's as different kinds of texts, examining how one can know the body as various texts rather than through various texts. In the course of the love affair, Louise's body appears as a map, a scroll and a book: "Louise, in this single bed, between these garish sheets, I will find a map as likely as any treasure hunt," (20) "Be patient and go with nimble feet dropping your body like a scroll," (178) and "When I try to read it's you I'm reading" (15). Consecutively, the narrator's body is also visualized textually when s/he and Louise interact with one another: "I like to keep my body rolled up away from prying eyes. Never unfold too much, tell the whole story. I didn't know that Louise would have reading hands. She has translated me into her own book" (89) as well as "Your hand prints are all over my body. Your flesh is my flesh. You deciphered me and now I am plain to read" (106).

As the narrator dwells on the body, the narrator describes "scars" found between Louise's thighs and inside her mouth. Then, the narrator states that scars on the body "leave signs for those who care to look. I care to look" (117). Apparently, Louise's body is there for the act of reading and translating. Then, Louise's scars stimulate close reading and resignification. As the narrator points out, some scars on the body leave "a secret code only visible in certain lights. …[T]he palimpsest is so heavily worked that the letters feel like braille" (89). It is through this reconfiguration of the body as a text that the distinction between "body" and "text" becomes vague. The body is not any longer the object of inscription and thus it finds its own expression.

At the same time, this trope expressing resemblance of the text of this code written on the body to the letters of Braille text is crucial since Brailla is both a language that demands touching to grant meaning and it does not have linguistic gender markers, as Susan Lanser states in her argument regarding the inclusion of sex and gender in narratological inquiry (91). By means of the act of touching shared by the narrator and Louise, the narrator's unspecified gender turns out to be unremarkable since they use a language in which gender does not occur. Then, the body is conceieved of as a text of sensation not a text of language.

In addition, through the sense of touch or more metaphorically textual touching, the boundary between subject and object can be disrupted, thus dissolving the binary in the conventional construction of gender identity. In this sense, Grosz uses the example of touching hands in order to indicate the quality of being vague regarding the distinction between touching and being touched:

> My left [or right] hand has the double sensation of being both the object and the subject of the touch. [...] each hand is in the ambiguous position of being capable of taking up the positions of either the toucher or the touched. If the double sensation makes it clear that at least in the case of tactile perception, the subject is implicated in its objects and its objects are at least partially constitutive of the subject (100-101).

Such a bodily language of love welcomes the fluid and penetrable boundaries between two lovers through an act of textual touching in the novel: "Let's hurry and invent our own phrases. So that everywhere and always we can continue to embrace [. . .] We shall pass imperceptibly through every barrier, unharmed, to find each other" (215). Then, the image of textual touching both epitomizes Winterson's revision of language considering its connection to the ceaselessly transitioning transgender body and undermines boundaries erected between self and other and male and female by demonstrating their construction.

Promoting the transgender body, Winterson gives the word a body and thereby the body gains variety and dimension. Similar to any text, the narrator's transgender body is featured in the course of becoming like an uncompleted text that is still being written, reinforcing the narrator's fluid and transitionary state and the process of his/her self-construction throughout the novel. At this point, in *Undoing Gender*, Judith Butler explores a connection between revising reality and new modes of

embodiment as becoming in relation to transgender, transsexual, drag, butch and femme people who:

> make us not only question what is real, and what "must" be but they also show us how the norms that govern contemporary notions of reality can be questioned and how new modes of reality can become instituted. These practices of instituting new modes of realitytake place in part through the scene of embodiment, where the body is not understood as a static and accomplished fact, but as an aging process, a mode of becoming that, in becoming otherwise, exceeds the norm, reworks the norm, and makes us see how realities to which we thought we were confined are not written in stone (29).

This ceaseless mode of becoming illustrated by the narrator's transgender subjectivity and body thus serves to question society's norms that conduct the appearance of being "real" human and the obligatorily dictated ideals of what bodies should be like. Then, the notions of body and subjectivity as constantly flowing and becoming is presented as a positive mode of being.

At one point in the novel, the narrator states, "Love is the one thing stronger than desire and the only proper reason to resist temptation" (78). This statement implies that the narrator must realize the importance of the body as other than objects for desire, conquest and sexual satisfaction. In fact, the narrator gains this understanding about love and the body in the wilds of Yorkshire, where the narrator encounters Gail Right, an older woman who is the narrator's boss in the wine bar during his/her voluntary exile from Louise. Gail is remarkably attracted to the narrator, but the narrator does not experience the same. However, they develop a friendship and Gail serves as a honest voice since she has no reason to speak in contrary fashion. Accordingly, Gail has both wisdom and insight and attempts to tell the narrator what she thinks of the narrator's situation. At this point, the narrator has nothing to lose, and thus takes her seriously. Then, Gail states, "You made a mistake. […] You shouldn't have run out on her" (158). At first, the narrator is shocked and bewildered by Gail's accusing statement. The narrator had never before considered his/her leaving Louise as "running out," for in his/her thought, s/he only did what was eventually right for Louise at the sacrifice of his/her own happiness. Then, the narrator reacts, "Hadn't I sacrificed myself for her? Offered my life for her life? (159) Then, Gail continues to give insight through her accusation: "She wasn't a child. … You didn't give her a chance to say what she wanted. You left" (159). Gail later presents the final insight

"… you tried to [invent her]. … She wasn't yours for the making'" (160). For Gail, the narrator has no right to invent Louise as the object of his/her fantasy with authority. Abandoning his/her pride, the narrator finally lets doubt to enter into his/her brain, creating a path for revision of his/her responsibility. Gail persuades the narrator to go back to London to find Louise and to be able to reconnect with memories of Louise. During his/her stay in London, the narrator gets in touch with Elgin's clinic in Switzerland, Elgin himself, Louise's mother and grandmother, but she makes no success to find Louise. The narrator begins to lose all his/her hope, for she now recognizes what s/he did when s/he decided to leave Louise in Elgin's care and that, due to his/her actions, s/he might never see or hear from Louise again.

Then, the narrator reflects,

> Why didn't I hear you when you told me you wouldn't go back to Elgin? Why didn't I see your serious face?... Time has exposed to me a certain stickiness at the centre. What were my heroics and sacrifices really about? Your pig-headedness or my own?... Louise, stars in your eyes, my own constellation. I was following you faithfully but I looked down. You took me out beyond the house, over the roofs, way past commonsense and good behaviour. No compromise. I should have trusted you but I lose my nerve (187).

A second reference to the "centre" towards the conclusion of the novel or more specifically such a postmodern revision of Yeats rebuilds Yeats' mourning and points to a new reality regarding the coordinating quality of the "centre." Here, the narrator exposes that while we have the knowledge that the "centre cannot hold," it is however distinguished by "a certian stickiness"- an inclination to hold when things fall apart. In this passage, the narrator notices that she has again held to the centre of the convention of the lover's "heroics and sacrifices" and that s/he demonstrates a new alternative that can hold both the narrator's new knowledge and Louise's knowledge. Then, the novel forces us to recognize that while centers cannot hold, convention holds them; we can involve in this process by trying to "see" and "hear" more precisely and choosing contingent, multiple, shifting centres of meaning to create new realities.

In the end of the novel, the narrator's efforts seem to pay off in the sense that Louise reappears. Louise's reappearance at the end that could be taken as virtual reality and that is formulated as a beginning since it is the narrator's second chance at love and life and it is an attempt at togetherness and wholeness. Then, the process of

becoming and re-becoming or re-orienting enables the narrator to become loose in the open fields with the unfolding of possibilities.

Winterson promotes the power of desire and imagination against accepted societal, concrete frames of reality she identifies as deadening. Accordingly, the love affair between Louise and the narrator seems to enter a virtual reality where what the narrator desires can be found, but never had. As Jean Baudrillard observes in "The Ecstasy of Communication" that in the postmodern era, technological and scientific advances virtualize what is real and threaten to make the body and material reality superfluous. Baudrillard further asserts that as a result of virtual reality, individuals become "terminal[s] of multiple networks," taking part in all the activities of life by means of virtual reality. Eventually, Baudrillard contends that "what's left appears only as a large useless body, deserted and condemned" (129).

Employing the vocabulary of virtual reality technologies of postmodernity, the narrator of *Written on the Body* suggests that teledildonics; that is virtual sexual relation, allowing an individual to have sex alone through the manipulations of a machine, appear to be inhuman and emotionally impotent and unimaginative. In this respect, the narrator states, "I'd rather hold you in my arms and walk through the damp of a real English meadow in real English rain. […] No, I don't want to smash the machines but neither do I want the machines to smash me" (97-98). Here, Winterson points to tension between the capabilities and innovations of new technologies and their potential negative impact on the world. In the face of current technologies of Virtual Reality, Winterson's inclination toward the material body in order for love to be expressed has an apparent nostalgic appeal for the romanticized earlier time uncomplicated by technology and postmodernity in agreement with Winterson's reverence for the modernists, particularly Woolf.

Winterson's *Written on the Body* reveals how the presence of transgender body gives way to the development of queer time within postmodernism. As Halberstam points out in "Queer Temporality and Postmodern Geographies," such a convergence of queer time, place and the transgender body creates "a queer temporality that is at once indefinite and virtual but also forceful, resilient and undeniable" (11). The most notable occuring is the novel's concluding scene in which the unfolding of possibilities

is latent in queer time and space. This real or imagined physical connection with Louise leads to endless celebration for the narrator.

In the conclusion of *Written on the Body*, the postmodern love story starts. Time, space, identity and reality are each granted as unconfined and unlimited, penetrating or flowing each other's boundaries in a constant transitioning. The narrator finds the global space in his/her worn-out room, and the present is shown to be as perpetual and indefinite as the space where s/he finds him/herself. That is, the narrator realizes a place and time outside of locales and time periods imposed by heterosexual and androcentric values. Essentially, the ending of *Written on the Body* confuses time and reality. We are unable to unravel the novel's narrative discourse to provide a stable interpretation. Two different interpretations seem possible. We know that the narrator, coming back from the search for Louise in London, returns to his/her cabin, where Gail Right waits for. The narrator notices the "fresh flowers on the table. Fresh flowers and a table-cloth. New curtains in the ragged window. My heart sank. Gail must be moving in" (188). After that, another instance occurs: "From the kitchen door Louise's face" (190). If we read this scene as a real occurrance, we must suppose that the narrative discourse begins following Louise's death. However, if we read this event as one of the narrator's fantasies, the occasion for the narration is Louise's continuing absence, not her death. Both interpretations are supported by the narrative discourse which combines lived and represented experience occuring in the real world or in the world of imagination.

In the freedom of virtual reality, we are again unsure and confused considering the conclusion of the novel. Then, the freedom of virtual reality that Winterson's characters in the novel are able to explore tends to be spatial, temporal as well as corporeal freedom. At this point, Winterson draws clear links between the spatial and temporal freedom and a similar freedom from the restrictions of categories concerning gender and sexuality. One of the ways that Winterson makes this apparent is that the characters are able to move effortlessly across both space and time, freed from the temporal categories in the same way they are able to perform gender. Just as the characters experience fluid, non-dichotomous and changing gender and sexual orientation, they also experience multiple, non-linear and fluid temporalities by means of the permeability of the transgender body.

Regarding the permeability of artificially constructed boundaries, Winterson also gives a special emphasis to the power of the present and its containment of the past and present. Reflecting Woolf's featuring of the shifting and multifarious present moment at the concluding scene of *Orlando*, Winterson features transformative potential and its inevitable formlessness, transcience and contingency of the present moment since the present cannot be measured and therefore it appears as an absence. The transformative and urgent potentiality of the time spend between the narrator and Louise once again highlights the power of the present in the following lines:

> The time we had we used. Those brief days and briefer hours were small offerings to a god who would not be appeased by burning flesh. We consumed each other and went hungry again. There were patches of relief, moments of tranquility as still as an artificial lake, but always behind us the roaring tide. (20)

Here, they envision unconventional experience and measurement of time.

Reading *Written on the Body* is similar to a virtual world, a world where we assume multiple identities, deconstruct and reconstruct our selves and others. Winterson's virtual reality demands us to self-consciously undertake responsibility for our own stories as they are interwoven with others' stories. Although *Written on the Body* depends on mutual recognition, it is queer in its refusal to determine the narrator's gender, sexuality, class and race and its refusal to determine the border of the body, dead or alive and therefore its refusal of the diseased body as something presented to the sight or view. Then, we become lost in the virtual reality of the novel.

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CONCLUSION

The general point of departure for this dissertation can be considered the shifts in women's prescribed roles and social status in the social hierarchy which came about throughout the 1920s, the period following the Great War. In fact, these shifts coincided with and made possible formal shifts in the twentieth century women's writing. A change in social perspective brings about a change in the literary perspective.

To be more precise, women writers are able to write about different subject matters in a different manner from men. In this sense, women's writing come to be an embodiment of a woman's perspective on women's experiences and values, particularly women's unrecorded experiences of body, sexuality and desire. When women attempt to reinforce a literary tradition of their own, they create a type of sentence that encourages them to inquire the unexploited realms of women's body and sexuality.

Without attempting to essentialize or generalize women's writing, this dissertation posits particular features of women's writing of the twentieth century such as the blurring and crossing gender and generic boundaries that enable women to navigate a genre or a conventional discourse that has been examined through a traditional framework constituted and advanced specifically by men. Then, women's writing of the twentieth century offer an alternative discourse that challenges the traditional perception of the literary tradition as masculinist and how women are positioned within that tradition.

The main concern of this dissertation is the significance of gender ambiguity, fluid sexuality and volatile bodies created by the presence of transgender identification and embodiment. More broadly, this dissertation examines experimentation with gender and narrative form in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* and Jeanette Winterson's *Written on the Body*. These novels attempt to work beyond any sense of gender and use experimental narrative forms that defy association with either masculine or feminine modes of communiction. As a constant motif in the twentieth century women's writing, such an experimentation and play with language allows the reader to experience the instability of transgender identification

by further disturbing the reader's already unstable relationship with the author, language, narrator and the text.

In this respect, this dissertation argues that the transgender narrator helps to underline the fluid relationship between the author, text and the reader through a consideration of each experimental text's main thematic concerns about gender and decentered subject position and how these concerns are underlined by the novel's transgendered narrator. Accordingly, the transgendered narrators of *Orlando*, *The Passion of New Eve*, and *Written on the Body* illustrate the inherent instability of the text and its meaning through their disruption of gender binary and the resultant manifestation of gender in the continual process of becoming and transitioning as an incomplete and unstable category of identity. Then, each experimental novel explored in this dissertation comes to be a direct challenge to rigid constructs, hegemonies, hierarchies and supposed stable realities of the traditional literary canon.

The main argument uniting these twentieth century women novelists is that they formulate new configurations of gender, sexuality and body through the exploration of transgender embodiment and identification represented in these novels. At the same time, a common thread among the novels is the juxtaposition of the constructedness of the idea of femininity as a masquerade with the artifice of the body as a medium. Similar to performative acts of gender in tandem with the movement and fluidity of the body, another common thread among the novels is the conceptualization of love as another performance.

For this aim, these women novelists both present alternative discourses and search for formerly neglected spaces of existence through the revision of three conventional discourses including biography, myth and romance. In this respect, what distinguishes women's writing from male-centered literary tradition is their emphasis on the gender ambiguity, fluid sexuality and volatile bodies created by potential transgender narrators.

Such a transgender existence acts a gap in the mainstream society's perception of sex and gender or what it means to be male or female. That is to say, cultural norms require agreement between anatomy and identification. However, transgender identification disrupts this order and thus they can only approximate gendered realness

within the heteronormative social structure. Due to the illusive characteristic of realness, people cannot conceive of an individual being either/neither woman or man or both gender simultaneously. It is precisely the notion of dissonance among an individual's gender identity, sexual anatomy and gender performance that these novels centers upon. Such a discontinuity can be found in non-normative fabrications of gender. Accordingly, transgender embodiment and identification not only signify the process of change and movement but also indicate the nature of their ambiguities and constant unstable variances, which are central to the dynamics of trans-genre and transgender subject position.

In this respect, in *Orlando,* traditionally conceived gender and the conventions of the genre of biographical fiction are problematized. As Jacqeline Rose points out in *Sexuality in the Field of Vision*, "[t]he fixing of language and the fixing of sexual identity go hand in hand; they rely on each other and share the same forms of instability and risk" (228). Accordingly, Woolf revolutionizes the premise of the author as objective reporter of the past and the premise of stable gender identity. In Woolf's *Orlando*, sex and gender are presented as remaining in a constant "process of fabrication" (175) in the sense that language, identity, sexuality and clothing are closely interwoven and mask the truth of Orlando's sex.

Images of transgender embodiment represented in the novels are not monolithic, rather they indicates the changing, dynamic and multifaceted representations of transgender identification in twentieth-century literature. In this dissertation, embodiment comes to be Woolf's fictional device to illustrate sexual, artistic and bodily multiplicities in a single character. Intentionally destabilizing gender binaries with non-conformist practices of clothing and behaviour, Orlando performs transgender embodiment by rejecting expressions that restrict subject positions to either male or female.

Instead, Orlando comes to be both male and female, neither male nor female simultaneously. Then, Orlando represents gender fluidity and sexual ambiguity through non-conformist manners of clothing, sometimes through the performance of cross-dressing to appear as manly or womanly. When clothing naturalizes one's sexed identity by signifying as man or woman, sexual confusion concerning how that body

performs under the clothing comes to the fore. Clothing suggests a manner of shaping the body. In such a way, the body turns out to be a type of performative text. Then, a singular body embodies multiplicity of artistic expressions and signification. After all, Woolf's *Orlando* can be regarded as contributing to show the destabilization of the naturalness of gender through the constructed states of gender, time and other organizers of compulsive heterosexuality such as attitudes, behaviour, and clothing.

Like Woolf's *Orlando*, Carter in *The Passion of New Eve* opens a discourse that critically reconstructs and revises master narratives of Western culture together with conventional notions of gender, sexuality and subjectivity. In this sense, she formulates that, basically, gender is an illusion or sexual masquerade, and learned imitative gender performance, not only veils sexual difference but also suppresses the varied manifestations of sexual desire. As Carter states in *The Sadeian Woman*,

> There is the unarguable fact of sexual differentiation; but, separate from it and only partially derived from it, are the behavioural modes of masculine and feminine, which are culturally defined variables translated in the language of common usage to the status of universals (7).

In the light of this assertion, Carter's aim in this novel is to revise and undermine what she regards as the false "universals" of archetype of masculinity, femininity and motherhood. Questioning the conventional notion of gender as a biologically prescribed essence, Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* follows the transgender embodiment articulated in Woolf's *Orlando*. Similar to *Orlando*, Carter's novel blurs categorical distinctions of male and female, and therefore challenges the truthfulness of the appearance of one's gender.

In *The Passion of New Eve*, Carter combines her use of fantasy and eroticism with her critique of the reality constructed by the "social fictions" of the culture reminiscent of Woolf's subversive experimentation with gendered meanings, sexuality and genre conventions. Carter's fantasy includes largely traditional Western myths and symbols. Likewise, *Orlando* is a fantasy novel in the sense that Orlando lives for centuries and Orlando's poem entitled "The Oak Tree" comes to life in Orlando's body, which signifies reproduction together with Orlando's sex change.

Similar to Woolf and Carter, Winterson employs fantasy and eroticism to construct a strong woman out of love who crosses the boundaries of traditional gender

roles. Woolf's *Orlando*, Carter's *The Passion of New Eve*, and Winterson's *Written on the Body* present the dichotomy between realism and fantasy which finds its expression in the revision of narrative modes such as biography, myth and romance. In these novels, fantasy operates as the critique of the real and has the potential to reflect new realities and alternative experiences, anticipating social change.

It is also important to note that Carter's experimentation with new sciences and technologies in a fantastic fashion creates a place for a different kind of agency; that is, transgender cyborg identification. The figure of cyborg embodies its challenge to dialectical opposites such as real and fantasy, technology and culture, subject and object. Such a dialectical conflict between real and fantasy forces us to question the validity of the original. As a hybrid combination of flesh and machine, culture and science, fiction and reality, the cyborg represents the fusion and confusion of pre-existing dichotomies. This confusion creates a productive space to examine changing fantasies of sexuality and technology and performance of gender that crosses boundaries. Accordingly, in *The Passion of New Eve*, Eve/lyn suggests the multiple possibilities of gender expression and the potentials of desiring and living beyond compulsory gender norms.

Winterson operates from a point that art comes to be the manifestation of the human imagination. It is a site of liberation and confusion, and the individual is for a moment free from the boundaries of sex and gender, text and body, and time and history. In fact, Winterson experiments with queer politics which appears to depend upon reconsidering the sexual identity by rejecting to act in accordance with any fixed sexual identity. In this respect, like Woolf and Carter, Winterson challenges the credibility of what we consistently identify as "reality" and "truth."

Creating a fantastical space in *Written on the Body*, Winterson constructs fantastic alternatives for the genre of romance. Accordingly, she illustrates how one's erotic desire find such a complicated articulation when s/he comes close to death, liberated and unattached enough to experience and embody his/her sexuality on his/her own terms. Then, Winterson creates a gender undeclared character for whom cancerous body generates a fluid subjectivity, an intense eroticism. Specifically, the fusion of the narrator's body with Louise's cancerous body reflects a sense of fluidity

and mutuality. Additionally, Winterson regards Woolf as a great influence and inspiration in relation to emotionally and psychologically traumatized woman, her heightened desires as a potential site of abjection and boundary crossing together with Woolf's textual experimentation.

The circle of these twentieth century women novelists exhibits thought-provoking connections regarding the reconceptualisation of love and queering of desire for a transgendered, elusive other. Accordingly, *Orlando*, *The Passion of New Eve*, and *Written on the Body* show the strength of experimental narrative to represent continually circulating erotic desire, transgressive power of rapturous memory and embodiment in daring and new way.

At the same time, through the potential presence of elusive, transgendered other, each novelist attempts to transgress the boundaries of sexuality, gender, body and desire with their rejection of the privilege of language and their liberation from identity politics and unified aspect of the subjectivity as well as the queering of the conventions of time and space.

The mainstream society tends to be making progress toward a better recognition of gender ambiguity and sexual fluidity with its multiplicity. However, as Butler warns in *Gender Trouble*, "we have a description of a self that takes place in a language that is already going on, that is already saturated with norms, that predisposes us as we seek to speak of ourselves" (69). At this point in history, the unavoidability of pre-determined notions of gender and sexuality and the discourses bordering them are to a very great extent a weakening determinent in progression towards a complete recognition of the transgender identification and embodiment in a heteronormative society in which we still live.

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