



**GYNOCENTRIC READING ON VIRGINIA WOOLF'S  
*ORLANDO***

**BY**

**MISS PASITA THONGCHEUA**

**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE  
FACULTY OF LIBERAL ARTS  
THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY  
ACADEMIC YEAR 2015  
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INDEPENDENT STUDY

BY

MISS PASITA THONGCHEUA

ENTITLED

GYNOCENTRIC READING ON VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *ORLANDO*

was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Arts in English Language and Literature

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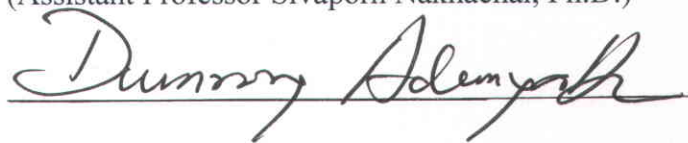
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## ABSTRACT

Elaine Showalter, the author of “Feminist Criticism in Wilderness”, is one of the second wave feminists who explores extensively female writings. Her gynocentric reading, the study of female literary works, focuses on a double-voiced discourse which presents that most of the female writings do contain both masculine and feminine characteristics. Within masculine dominance influencing women's writing styles, they, on the other hand, have their own space, ‘wild zone’, to express their own individuality that men cannot access. In this research, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* remarkably pursues what Showalter calls a double-voiced discourse and female ‘wild zone’ when looking through its complicated narratives, its challenge to conventional literary genres, and its provocative questions on sexuality. These challenging topics articulate noteworthy dimensions which uncover new ways of reading this novel.

**Keywords:** gynocentric, wild zone

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Fruitful delight, pride, and achievement are what I attain from worthy supports from my beloved people (who are declared as well as those who are not in this acknowledgement). Taking this life journey together, I would like to thank my family for all their love which has nourished me to live and fulfill my essence as I am today. My appreciations go to all professors of the Department of English Language and Literature for their endless help and advice. I would also like to express my faithful gratitude to Associate Professor Chusak Pattarakulvanit and especially Assistant Professor Dr. Sivaporn Nakhachai, my key mentors, who have infinitely paved ways for me to achieve this challenging research. Moreover, in my life so far with an eighteen-year friend, Miss Nitwadee Silkoon, there were life experiences, precious memories, and even hardships including this master degree study which we have learned and passed together. Without her, it would have been really hard to go through all struggles. Finally, this graduation is one of my priceless life stories which steers me to another phase of life.

Miss Pasita Thongcheua

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* is her most striking novel because of its complicated plots and narratives, its challenge to conventional literary genres, and its provocative questions on sexuality. This novel stands for a revelation of Woolf's concept of an androgynous mind which concerns the intermixing between male and female values when looking through Orlando's sex transformation. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf defines an androgynous mind as follows:

And I went on amateurishly to sketch a plan of the soul so that in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female... The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating... Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine...<sup>1</sup>

Woolf's definition of an androgynous mind emphasizes the combination of male and female consciousnesses. These male and female parts intermix and live together in harmony. Herbert Marder, the author of *Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf* applies Woolf's concept of an androgynous mind in *A Room of One's Own*, to discuss *Orlando* by focusing on the process of balancing a male/intellectual part and female/intuition within one person:

Women would never free their minds by imitating masculine exclusiveness. They must recognize that both sexes are present in their mind; they must conduct their lives so as to give each element expression, and to join both into a harmonious whole.

(p.107)

Marder suggests that liberating from a masculine world is not the right thing but women have to balance both male and female sides in their consciousness to bring out a harmonious mind. He points that Orlando is in the process of being an androgynous

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<sup>1</sup> *A Room of One's Own*, by Virginia Woolf. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Nov. 2014. <<https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/chapter6.html>>.

mind by balancing male and female parts in himself/herself. However, Marder indicates that Orlando's sex transformation to gain an androgynous mind would have not been completed if Shelmardine, her husband, had not come:

Orlando, and her husband Shelmardine, on the other hand, are truly androgynous, the two sexes within them almost evenly balanced. It is because of the fineness of this balance that Orlando must constantly be shifting back and forth, that is, conforming her outer sexes to changes in the inner weather.

(p.115)

Marder's statement shows that in Orlando's sex transformation scene in Chapter 3, she does not truly gain an androgynous mind, but she must have Shelmardine to help her. In chapter 5, Shelmardine's appearance is significant. Both Orlando and Shelmardine see each other inner sexes which are different from the outer ones: "'You're a woman, Shel!' she cried. 'You're a man, Orlando!' he cried." (p.252) This scene, according to Marder, creates the moment of an androgynous mind in a way that their outer sexes as well as their inner sexes fulfill each other. Shelmardine's inner and outer sexes unite with Orlando's and this union creates an androgynous mind by intermixing two sexes together. Therefore, Marder sees that an androgynous mind can occur when two sexes unite harmoniously. Makiko Minow Pinkney, the author of *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject*, however, argues that Orlando's sex transformation does not lead to androgyny but gender chaos:

Yet Orlando's androgynous disposition does not in fact emphasise the fusion of opposites. This is made startlingly clear by the fact that Nancy Topping Bazin's *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision* largely ignores *Orlando*, which offers no foothold to an argument that sees the androgynous vision as a mystical union of manic (female) and depressive (male) views of the world. . . Androgyny in *Orlando* is not a resolution of oppositions, but the throwing of both sexes into a metonymic confusion of genders.

(pp.121-22)

Unlike Marder, Pinkney contends that Orlando's sex transformation does not lead to androgynous mind at all. It is only to place two genders (man/woman) side by side but these genders do not infuse to bring out any harmony. Moreover, confusion of genders, Pinkney states, is the only thing that sex transformation can achieve. It just



uses a fantasy element to change Orlando's sex from male to female, which leads to gender confusion. Yet, Pinkney indicates that this sex transformation by fantasy is too superficial to achieve an androgynous mind because it does not balance or infuse between two sexes mentally and harmoniously.

I agree with Marder that Orlando's sex transformation does not gain an androgynous mind. As Woolf indicates that an androgynous mind is a balance of male and female consciousnesses within one person, Orlando's sex transformation shows gender separation instead. We can see quite clearly that after Orlando's turning into a woman, she behaves like a conventional woman of the Victorian society, such as getting married and having children. Hence, Orlando's sex transformation does not lead to an androgynous mind but a simple role reversal. However, I disagree with Marder's idea of Orlando's and Shelmardine's sexual intermixing. I do not think that the union between Orlando and her husband leads to an androgynous mind. First, as Woolf's concept of androgyny is to balance male and female consciousnesses within one person, we can see that Orlando and Shelmardine are not the same person. Second, according to Marder's analysis, it cannot be called Woolf's concept of an androgynous mind if a woman needs a man to become an androgyny. It is true that a woman must possess a male side within her, but it is not necessary to have a real man to help her at this point. A woman can gain an androgynous mind by herself by balancing male and female consciousnesses within her. I quite agree with Pinkney's analysis of Woolf's failure in *Orlando* to express the concept of an androgynous mind. Orlando's sex transformation, as Marder suggests, does not gain androgyny since it just shows how to behave as a man and a woman in Victorian culture. Therefore, Orlando's sex transformation is simply gender separation.

Apart from Woolf's concept of an androgynous mind, Elaine Showalter's gynocentric criticism<sup>2</sup> sheds light on deeper dimensions of Victorian sexualities as well as female narratives. My research will analyze both the narrator and characters through the narrative styles and the concept of sexuality to locate women's hidden powers within a male space in this novel. These powers, as they can be seen through Showalter's theory, prove themselves that no matter how powerful a patriarchy world

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<sup>2</sup> **Gynocentric criticism:** A branch of feminist literary theory and studies which focuses on women as writers, and distinct from feminist criticism and evaluation of male writers. The term was coined by Elaine Showalter.

is, female powers still exist within and outside it and are so forceful that a male dominant power cannot totally subdue.

Elaine Showalter, the author of “Feminist Criticism in Wilderness”, is one of the second wave feminists who explores extensively female writings. Showalter’s studies have paved a new feminist approach that puts women’s writing as the center of interpretation. This practice applies the gynocentric theory focusing on women’s experiences and values within the male dominant world and also shows their own ‘wild zone’<sup>3</sup> where they can articulate and find their freedom and individuality, as Showalter indicates:

Unlike the feminist critique, gynocritics offers many theoretical opportunities. To see women’s writings as our primary subject forces us to make the leap to a new conceptual vantage point and to redefine the nature of the theoretical problem before us.

(p.461)

Showalter divides her female writing analysis into four parts which are biology (the difference between male and female bodies which causes the difference in their writings), linguistics (the use of language by men and women), psychology (women’s inferiority within Freudian’s theory and their ways to liberate), and culture (women’s own space within and outside a male dominant world).

In ‘Women’s Writing and a Woman’s Body’ Showalter gives one example of the difference between male and female bodies which impacts their writings. In the past, such as in the Victorian period, people always believed that female physical body especially the ovary decreased their abilities to write by limiting the brain activity and creativity. Thus, female writings were inferior to male. Unlike woman’s, man’s brain was more functional because his body especially a penis enabled him to write more rationally and accurately. In Gilbert’s and Gubar’s *The Mad Woman in the Attic*, they maintain that “the text’s author is a father, a progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis.”

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<sup>3</sup> **Female ‘wild zone’:** A definition of the term “wild zone” is presented. It is a term introduced in the 1981 essay “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness,” by Elaine Showalter which designate a specifically female area of culture. She adapts an anthropological model developed by Edwin and Shirley Ardener, wherein a dominant cultural group establishes structures that exclude or ignore other groups. In this context, it means women’s space that stays out of a male dominant one. It is used to express women’s values, individuality, and powers physically and mentally that men cannot conquer.

(p.463) Thus, male phallus symbolizing accuracy and pattern is the most powerful authority for men that allows them to write rationally and formally and to become the mainstream writing of a male dominant world. Moreover, some feminist critics use the concept of 'the female body as a source of writing' to explore the functions of motherhood. They indicate that motherhood enhances intimacy with nature by nurturing or laboring, thus evoking women's imagination to write their works emotionally and sympathetically. Showalter disagrees with this concept of female body, pointing out that it relies too much on the biological body to account for female writings.

In 'Women's Writing and Women's Language' Showalter discusses the differences between men's and women's writings in terms of language. Showalter contends that we are all subjected to 'a male-constructed language system'. When discussing the use of language, Carolyn Burke asserts that: "When a woman writes or speaks herself into existence, she is forced to speak in something like a foreign tongue, a language with which she may be personally uncomfortable." (p.465) Consequently, several feminists contend that women should produce their own female language which escapes or gets out from the male dominant language system. Showalter, however, suggests that we can study the female language through historical and anthropological perspectives. She proposes: "The concept of a women's language is not original with feminist criticism; it is very ancient and appears fluently in folklore and myth." (pp.465-66) As a language of myth or folklore, female language, therefore, is mostly about secrecy and mystery. For example, women use their language to tell secrets and make some mysterious spells or fortunes. Thus, this kind of female language is considered as unique and is not subjected to a patriarchy world as some feminists claim. However, some English and American linguists suggest that gender alone does not dictate the use of language. Styles and literary elements play a vital role in language usage. Showalter contends that:

The appropriate task for feminist criticism, I believe, is to concentrate on women's access to language, on the available lexical range from which words can be selected, on the ideological and cultural determinants of expression. The problem is not that language is insufficient to express

women's consciousness but that women have been denied the full resources of language and have been forced into silence, euphemism, or circumlocution.

(p.467)

It is thus not a question of finding or creating the female language but giving the women's access to the language of a patriarchy world. Women should use and express it as their own voices without being silenced and imprisoned. According to Showalter, even though women are trapped in a male dominant world, they should have the rights to access the male dominant language and express it independently.

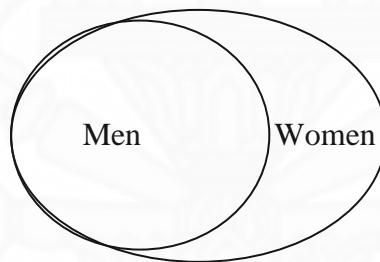
In 'Women's Writing and Woman's Psyche', Showalter examines Freudian's notion of creativity dominated by consciousnesses and biology of each sex. Freudian model claims that women's phallic absence and aimless urinating result in lack of order and direction in women writing. Unlike women, with phallus, man can create their works with pattern, order, and creativity. Phallus is, therefore, the most important element in writing. Hence, female writings are limited to fantasy and romance preoccupied with emotions. However, some feminists try to read Freudian model of writing styles differently. They assert that actually we should look at the 'pre-oedipal phase' to see how women's writings were constructed. The growth processes between boys and girls are different in a way that when boys have to distinguish their gender identity, they detach themselves from their mothers. Thus, this kind of detachment makes them alienated from their mothers and become so oppressed that their writings are emotionless and rational. While boys have to detach themselves from their mothers, it is not necessary for girls to do so. Instead, they form an intimate bond with their mothers. Thus, their writings are emotional and full of sympathy and feelings. Showalter points out this psychological reading of female writings fails to account for the historical, social, economical factors conditioning female writings:

Although psychoanalytically based on models of feminist criticism can now offer us remarkable and persuasive readings of individual texts and can highlight extraordinary similarities between women writing in a variety of cultural circumstances, they cannot explain historical change, ethnic difference, or the shaping force of generic and economic factors.

(p.469)

Therefore, Showalter suggests that we should go beyond the concept of psychoanalysis and find some theories that can best describe and examine female writings.

In 'Women's Writing and Women's Culture', Showalter proposes the concept of the 'wild zone'. Showalter explains that all women are inevitably shaped by a masculine society, but they also form their collective experiences within it: "Women's culture forms a collective experience within the cultural whole, an experience that binds women writers to each other over time and space." (p. 470) Showalter suggests that it would be more fruitful if feminist critics shift their focus on male-centered point of view to their own's. Showalter adopts Edwin Ardener's cultural model to explain men's and women's spaces:



Ardener points out that women inevitably live in a male dominant world and are influenced by them, but they have their own space, a 'wild zone', which men cannot access. This zone stays outside a male dominant space so that men cannot intrude and dictate. If we use this model to look at female writings, we can see that female characters usually have their own 'wild zone', the place which are authentic and without men. It means that women's consciousnesses are contained with the feeling that they want to liberate from a male-dominant zone and have their own individuality within their own created space. Furthermore, some radical feminists, looking at Amazon Utopia and women's intimacy with nature, suggest that the place where women can become an individualized being mostly has a strong tie to nature, as Margaret Atwood indicates in her novel, *Surfacing*. Thus, Amazon Utopia is an ideal place of the female wild zone. However, Showalter argues that it is too idealistic to think that women can be absolutely liberated from a male dominant space because, in reality, they still live with men. Yet, Showalter agrees with the concept of the female

‘wild zone’ that it really helps feminists to analyze women’s writings through female perspective and experience. This cultural gynocentric criticism can bring out female values in women’s writings that are hidden within a male dominant world and find their own ‘wild zone’ both physically and psychologically where men cannot enter. Moreover, as women live in a male dominant world and are influenced by men, Showalter suggests that we should read women’s writings as a double-voiced discourse: “Containing a “dominant” and a “muted” story. . .” (p.474) Showalter indicates from women’s point of view that they are not only a part of a male dominant history but also a part of historical creations both the male dominant world and their own worlds where men are categorized as a male dominant group and women, a muted group<sup>4</sup>. Thus, women’s writings are not pure feminine but are mixed with a male dominant world. By looking at women’s writings as a double-voiced discourse, women become the center of reading. As men consider themselves as the center and major group of the society that excludes women from their group, their writings contain only androcentric discourse.<sup>5</sup> Unlike men, women’s writings contain both male and female experiences that men do not and never have. Hence, a double-voiced discourse brings out female values and individuality that men take for granted. Showalter’s gynocentric reading brings out female strength and precious values into both men’s and women’s eyes and makes women’s writings outstanding as one part of a male history in a patriarchic world.

Sue Spaul’s and Lynne Pearce’s article “Elaine Showalter’s *Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness*, Jean Rhys’ *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing* in *Feminist Readings/Feminists Reading*” confirms Showalter’s analysis in several ways. They use Showalter’s cultural gynocentric criticism as the main theory in their analysis to examine male and female spaces. Men’s space is known as the place of social order, norm, and rationality while women’s zone is seen as being mystic, exotic, and emotional. These differences between male and female spaces bring out women’s values and privileges in a way that when women come to her ‘wild

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<sup>4</sup> **A muted group:** In Showalter’s theory, a female group is considered as a margin. It lives within a male dominant world but contains its own space (wild zone) that has individuality and other values.

<sup>5</sup> **Androcentric discourse:** Dominated by or emphasizing masculine interests or a masculine point of view.



zone' associated with a natural world, they gain their power of matriarchy that men cannot conquer. In *Wide Sargasso Sea* they conclude that: "Rhys has inverted one of the fundamental axes of patriarchal discourse. It is Rochester who experiences the lack or 'castration' traditionally associated with women." (p.112) Spaul and Pearce point out that the male character, Rochester, is castrated and powerless in women's 'wild zone' while the female character, Antoinette, gains her matriarchal power in her natural world. It is Rochester who is defeated in woman's 'wild zone'. Thus, Showalter's concept of women's 'wild zone' is useful to explore hidden female values and powers. Furthermore, Spaul and Pearce adopt Showalter's gynocentric criticism to show men's weakness which lies in their inability to understand and therefore dismissing female powers as insanity, mystery and magic:

The labeling of the two opposing realities, those of dominant and muted, male and female groups, now moves into the realms of 'sanity' and 'insanity': a classification carrying with the whole weight of Western 'scientific' judgment.

(p.110)

Spaul's and Pearce's example points out that in women's 'wild zone', men find that it is very competitive, hard, and impossible to control or dominate women who tap into powerful matriarchy in the 'wild zone'. Thus, men happen to be fearful and insecure and express their fear by categorizing women's power as weakness and flaw, using the term 'insanity' which implies that women lack reasons and are out of mind while men are rational and logical.

In Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, I use cultural gynocentric reading to explore female values and powers that are hidden in a male-dominant world. Like Spaul and Pearce, my study will examine the spaces between men and women in relation to the concept of sexuality and identity in order to locate the characters' 'wild zone' and their matriarchal power.

The following chapters of my research will look at Woolf's narrative styles and the concept of sexuality. Chapter 2, Gynocentric Reading and Narratives, will study the narrative styles in *Orlando* to find female writing forms, techniques, and female own spaces in each period. Chapter 3, Gynocentric Reading, Sexuality and Gender Roles, will analyze Orlando's sex transformation to find female own spaces

and values. It will also look at gender roles of both men and women to examine the male dominant power, female restrictions, and their own 'wild zone'. Chapter 4, Conclusion, will summarize all chapters and develop overall arguments and possible suggestions for further study.





## CHAPTER 2

### GYNOCENTRIC READING AND NARRATIVES

. . . a woman's text is not only mothered but parented; it confronts both paternal and maternal precursors and must deal with the problems and advantages of both lines of inheritance. One implication of this model is that women's fiction can be read as a double-voiced discourse, containing a "dominant" and a "muted" story, . . .

(p.474)

Showalter's double-voiced discourse provokes how to read female writings by indicating that they inevitably possess masculine and feminine narratives since all women have to live in male world and must be influenced by male dominant writings. Yet, in women's writings, the female narrative part owns what Showalter calls 'wild zone' where women reveal their feminine identity which men cannot access. In Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, Showalter's 'wild zone' endows narrative dimension. This literary work engages 'wild zone' to elaborate narrative function and hints another way of looking at its structure.

The history of biography, fundamentally, begins in various forms. Nigel Hamilton indicates in his book, *Biography: a Brief History*:

While we cannot know the answer, we do know that virtually all early societies and civilizations have sought to record themselves through *memorialization* of distinct individuals, often in poems and songs which were handed down from generation to generation. . . Tracing the "commemorative instinct" through human history, we can certainly peep into the lives of our ancestors, as social historians and archaeologists.

(p.9-10)

Hamilton sees a biography as historical life story of human beings embodying social and other conditions. Songs, poems, or other materials can be a biography as long as they are able to tell a human's life. As well as Hamilton, Hermione Lee's *Biography: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)* verifies a biography as life story in multi-forms:

Biography has gone through many centuries of change, many variants and embodiments,. . . Books or essays on biography often trace an

evolutionary graph that goes from exemplary Lives or 'hagiographies', through to the vivid realism and intimacy of 18<sup>th</sup> century portraits, to the conservative solidity of Victorian 'Lives and Letters', . . . <sup>6</sup>

With numerous forms, the major function of a biography is to narrate human's life for other people who, with whatever objectives, want to access and know that person. In *Orlando*, the Victorian conventional biography informs a crucial understanding of Woolf's time. It suggests that we look at this novel in narrative dimensions.

Known as a famous biographical writer in the Victorian period, John Middleton Murry's *Jonathan Swift: A Critical Biography* exemplifies a conventional biographical form in the Victorian time:

Jonathan Swift was born in Dublin on November 30, 1667. His father, also Jonathan, was the youngest of seven (or eight) sons of a staunch Royalist parson of Goodrich in Herefordshire who had been practically ruined in Civil War.

(p.13)

Traditional looking, this form of writing perfectly composes of what we call dryness and fact. Swift's life is narrated through the date of birth, family relatives, and his father's background. Without any emotions or the narrator's subjective attitudes, this biographical form is full of factual references to claim its reliability. However, some may argue that the biography of Jonathan Swift lets Murry's personal attitudes intrude as follows:

That does not clear up everything. It remains curious that we should know so little of Stella's father . . . From this evidence and these conjectures we must instruct as best as we can.

(p.23)

Although Murry's subjective attitudes intervenes the biographical approach, his views stay within the frame of biographical genre which sees references and facts as a center of writing. Unlike *Orlando: a Biography* where abstract consciousnesses and imagination are currently used, Murry does not add any subjective point of view but aims at finding more references to fulfill his task as a biographer. Hence, his mind

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<sup>6</sup> Lee, Hermione. *Biography: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)*. N.p.: Oxford University Press, 2009. Kindle Edition.

does not go further than being a faithful biographer who depends on references and facts.

Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: a Biography* outwardly presents itself as a conventional biography. Its title seemingly promises us that this novel is shaped by a biographical form which is chronological and factual as the Victorian conventional biography should be. However, this novel ties another narrative kind which is placed differently from the biographical one. From the broad and overall image of this writing form along with the title of this novel, *Orlando* is considered basely as a biography because Orlando's life is narrated chronologically from his childhood to the age of 36. Even Orlando's child delivery event, the biographical form appears as follows:

In other words Orlando was safely delivered of a son on Thursday, March the 20th, at three o'clock in the morning."

(p. 295)

This quotation is explicitly a biographical form which informs Orlando's period of child delivery. Like Murry's *Jonathan Swift: A Critical Biography* constructed as a traditional Victorian biography, Orlando's child birth information, conservatively, conforms to the 19<sup>th</sup> century biographical form as Lee indicates:

All the same, in mainstream biography, there was a generally stolid air to the 'Lives and Letters' of the period. They followed a formula of a lengthy chronological narrative, often, like the novels of the time, in several volumes, with extensive (but tactfully censored) extracts from letters and diaries. The stories told were of public achievement, professional challenges, friendships, travel, battles, political dilemmas, or crises of faith.<sup>7</sup>

Orlando's period of child delivery can be seen as a formula of a lengthy chronological narrative which tells Orlando's chronological life event. The concept of 'Live and Letters' of the 19<sup>th</sup> century confirms the title of this story that it pursues the biographical form as a written book with chronological life story. Moreover, in chapter 3, historical writing conforms to chronological and factual structures:

On the seventh day of his trance (Thursday, May the 10th) the first shot was fired of that terrible and bloody insurrection of which Lieutenant

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<sup>7</sup> Lee, Hermione. *Biography: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)*. N.p.: Oxford University Press, 2009. Kindle Edition.

Brigge had detected the first symptoms. The Turks rose against the Sultan, set fire to the town, and put every foreigner they could find, either to the sword or the bastinado. A few English managed to escape; but, as might have been expected, the gentlemen of the British Embassy preferred to die in defense of their red boxes, . . .

(p. 133)

Structured as a historical form, the statement uses the formal date format, Thursday, May the 10th, to suggest the formal pattern used in official documents including history. In addition, Lieutenant Brigge, a witness, is a reference which can be identified as an element of a historical form. As Lee states: "For political or historical biography, the form of the narrative may have to be steady and unsurprising, solid scaffolding for the blocks of facts.", most historical documents contain references from witnesses or other official documents to confirm that the narrated events truly happened or existed in the past as the book named *History* uses archeological documents as the reference: "Archeological evidence shows that the Korean peninsula has been inhabited since paleolithic times." (p. 5) Thus, taking witnesses as a referential source, in *Orlando*, Lieutenant Brigge is the biographer's reference to authenticate his writing as a truthful account of the insurrection. Moreover, the biographer's narrative style mostly indicates facts of the insurrection about what was happening, who fought against who, and how British people, the biography's nation which is considered as the owner of this point of view, reacted to this event. However, some may argue that this kind of writing can be also called a news report because it contains mostly a basic news report formula about what, where, who, when, and how. Still, Anderson's *Manual of General History* indicates:

History is a narration of the events which have happened among mankind, including an account of the rise and fall of nations, as well as of other great changes which have affected the political and social condition of the human race.

(p.8-9)

A history stands for the story which mostly focuses on the very important and crucial events and people that affect many people or things in one country or in a broader scale, the world. In this case, this event, the insurrection between the Turks and

Sultan, is very significant and considered as the national occurrence which must be recorded as the necessary information that people in this country or others in the future must know. A historical structure in *Orlando* has its similarity to a biographical form in terms of chronology and fact, and is placed as a sub-category of a biography as Lee displays:

Most biography moves forward and onward, sets the main figure in its context, mixes the plot with accounts of the subject's work, of historical complexities or of subsidiary characters, and uses description and observation, documentary sources, witness testimony, peripheral materials, and first-hand knowledge to construct the story.<sup>8</sup>

The biographical and historical forms with its emphasis on chronology and facts suggest a pattern of order which can be found in male writings. The narrative elements, also, include firsthand references and true witnesses to emphasize those biographical and historical reliabilities as they apparently appear in *Orlando*. In addition, Elaine Showalter's gynocentric criticism explains male and female writing styles in "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness":

In one grotesque early example of Freudian reductivism, Theodor Reik suggested that women have fewer writing blocks than men because their bodies are constructed to facilitate release: "Writing, as Freud told us at the end of his life, is connected with urinating, which physical logically is easier for a woman — they have a wider bladder."

(p. 467)

Although Showalter sees Reik's statement as a bizarre reductivism model, his claim may be positively adaptive to gynocentric reading. Female lack of phallus may be a positive value for them to create a literary work more fluid and boundaryless than men. While women's writings hold indirect and abstract forms because of their phallus absence, Reik's 'writing blocks' propose the concept of male logical and reasoning writings because of their penis possession. Hence, factual and chronological patterns of the biographical and historical forms in *Orlando* are located in male writing boundary because they consist of order and logic.

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<sup>8</sup> Lee, Hermione. *Biography: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions)*. N.p.: Oxford University Press, 2009. Kindle Edition.

Showalter's gynocentric criticism already displayed male writing zone in *Orlando* that the title and its fundamental image of this story possess the biographical and historical formats. These forms seemingly follow male traditional writings. However, *Orlando* still retains what Showalter calls female 'wild zone' to verify that female writings do contain both male and female narratives. For the narrative aspect, Judith Kegan Gardiner's article, "On Female Identity and Writing by Women" presents: ". . . women's experiences differ from men's in profound and regular ways. . . The other main explanation of female difference posits a 'female consciousness' that produces styles and structures innately different from those of the 'masculine mind.' " (p. 348) Gardiner's definitions of female experiences and consciousness are derived from Nancy Chodorow's feminism theory. Chodorow's core idea is the 'Mothering' model which suggests that women's consciousness is structured by mother-daughter bond. This relationship makes women experience their identity and thinking pattern through empathy, kindness, and nurturing. Those alliances create the sense of illogicality and irrationality because their fundamental base is led by emotions. From this origin of female consciousness, women's writing is dominated by emotional illogicality and irrationality.

In *Orlando*, the distinct narrative modes, aside from the biographical and historical writings, belong to illogical elements which are used in narrative techniques such as settings and time. First, the intervention of the past within one setting of the present time possesses an illogical model:

Orlando went on thinking. He kept looking at the grass and at the sky and trying to bethink him what a true poet, who has his verses publishes in London, would say about them. Memory, meanwhile (whose habits have already been described) kept steady before his eyes the face of Nicholas Greene, . . . So Orlando, that summer morning, offered him a variety of phrases, some plain, others figured, and Nick Greene kept shaking his head and sneering and muttering something about Glawr and Cicero and the death of poetry in our time. At length, starting his feet (it was now winter and very cold) . . .

(p. 103)



The scene at Orlando's house in winter explores Orlando's mind in details while indicating his present position. Initially, Orlando's thoughts were switched back and forth between his memory of Nick Greene and his position in the present time. It is a flashback technique that the narrator uses to put the past within a present-time scene. In *Orlando*, the narrator is subverting the biographical form not only by mingling the past with the present-time scene, but also by imaging what Orlando would have felt without any factual supports. Therefore, the narrator's flashback technique and the expression of Orlando's internal consciousness, go against the rules of a biographical writing.

Another example of the narrator's narrative technique to subvert the biographical form is in chapter 4:

"Life and a lover." Then laying her pen a side she went into her bedroom, stood in front of her mirror, and arranged her pearls about her neck . . . What woman would not have kindled to see what Orlando saw then burning in the snow — for all about the looking glass were snowy lawns, and she was like a fire, a burning bush, and the candle flames about her head were silver leaves; or again, the glass was green water, and she a mermaid, slung with pearls, a siren in a cave, singing so that oarsmen leant from their boats and fell down, down to embrace her; so dark, so bright, so hard, so soft, was she, . . . — this simile she smiled and then listened for a moment and heard only the leaves blowing and the sparrows twittering, . . .

(pp. 185-86)

Like the previous example, this statement has the same narrative structure. It is the scene of Orlando staying in her bedroom and dressing in front of the mirror. Her own imagination about nature and her fantasy intervene the present situation where she is standing. Although this example is slightly different from the previous one because it cannot be called flashback technique due to its imaginative details, both of them have the same narrative structure that there is an incoherent incident intervening the present situation which stands for the chronological narrative of a biographical form. The dashes in this statement also divide directly the stages between Orlando's present situation and her imagination. This punctuation confirms the boundary of the present time vs. disconnected incident that Orlando's imagination really interferes the

chronological narrative in this novel (as we consider that a biography is the fundamental genre of *Orlando*). Moreover, the narrator's limited omniscient point of view indicates an anti-biographical form. As previously indicated, a biography form needs references from the person about whom a biographer writes or other people knowing that person to verify their claims. The narrator, however, uses the limited omniscient point of view, a fictional method, which means that the narrator knows well about all of Orlando's opinions and imagination without the need of references. This limited omniscient point of view is rarely used in a biography form because of its intuitive significance. For the descriptive dimension, this quotation does well to show its narrative fluidity. Orlando's imaginative details drift back and forth like a stream floating in readers' consciousnesses. When analyzing it in the frame of gynocentric criticism, this narrative fluidity is seen as a female 'wild zone' because of its illogical and disconnected approaches when comparing to the male dominant zone (biological and historical forms) in the story. Hence, Showalter's double-voiced discourse extends the vision of reading Woolf's *Orlando* that it does possess both male and female zones within this female writing.

*Orlando*, chronologically, includes six British periods: Queen Elizabeth I, King James I, King Charles II, the Romantic, the Victorian, and the Modern. Orlando's life is among them. Relating to the title of this novel or its based genre, a biography, these British periods have to be pronounced conventionally in a form of biography as Quentin Bell's *Virginia Woolf a Biography* states: "Virginia was born on 25 January 1882, at No. 22 Hyde Park Gate." (p. 22) However, the biographical narrative does not follow its tradition:

She compared the flowers to enamel and the turf to Turkey rugs worn thin. Trees were withered hags, and sheep were grey boulders. Everything, in fact, was something else. She found the tarn on the mountain-top and almost threw herself in to seek the wisdom, . . . Then, looking down, the red hyacinth, the purple iris wrought her to cry out in ecstasy at the goodness, the beauty of nature; . . . Returning home, she saluted each star, each peak, and each watch fire as if they signaled to her alone; . . .

(pp. 143-44)



This statement is quite outstanding for anti-traditional biographical purpose. Firstly, the novel starts with the Elizabethan age with Queen Elizabeth I's presence and she acts as one influential character in the novel. Again, in chapter 1, it also suggests King James I's period, succeeding the throne of Queen Elizabeth I, with the Great Frost incident. Then, at the end of chapter 2, it indicates quite outstandingly that the era of King Charles II follows King James I: ". . . , he [Orlando] did what any other young men would have done in his place, and asked King Charles to send him as Ambassador Extraordinary to Constantinople." (p. 118) Then, comes the Romantic period, the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Considering the example above, it is when Orlando just becomes a woman and lives with the Gypsy. According to a general biographical form, when periods change or any significant incident takes place, it must come with a formal date format such as "Thursday, the eleventh of October, Nineteen Hundred and Twenty-eight" (p. 329). However, the narrator chooses to indicate the Romantic period indirectly by using its concept. According to William Wordsworth's concept of imagination of Romanticism, nature is the tool for the poet to create a literary work:

. . . Therefore am I still  
 A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
 And mountains; and of all that we behold  
 From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
 Of eye, and ear,--both what they half create,  
 And what perceive; well pleased to recognize  
 In nature and the language of the sense,  
 The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
 The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
 Of all my moral being.<sup>9</sup>

So, imagination is gained when the poet sees the beauty of nature and finally articulates the powerful feeling so that he can finally create his work. Nature acts as 'the anchor', 'the nurse', 'the guide', 'the guardian', and 'soul' to conjure the poet's authenticate imagination. Like the concept of imagination appeared in Wordsworth's poetry, *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks*

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<sup>9</sup>

*Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour. July 13, 1798.* N.p., n.d. Web. 1 June 2016. <<http://www.bartleby.com/145/ww138.html>>.

*of the Wye During a Tour. July 13, 1798*, the scenery of nature in which Orlando lives endows her with imagination. This example shows that Orlando is attracted and inspired by the beauty of nature. Orlando, finally, gets the powerful feeling by articulating her ecstatic feeling and keeps praising nature continually. Her imagination and powerful feeling straightly suggests the concept of Romanticism by showing that the poet sees nature as the inspirer of human imagination. Thus, the narrator uses Romanticism as her informal timeline can be read as a gesture against the biography form. This way of writing is elusive and does not conform to traditional biographical writings. Another evidence which supports the narrator's informal timeline indication is that the period of this example stands between the King Charles II's reign and the Victorian Age (follows afterward in chapter 5). It is doubtless that this timeline indication is the Romantic period of the Great Britain. Therefore, the example matches British chronological ages both in *Orlando* and real British history, and becomes the narrator's informal timeline indication against the biographer's formal form.

Another example of the narrator's informal timeline indication shows the same narrative structure as the previous one:

Orlando had not yet realised the invention of the steam engine, but such was her absorption in the sufferings of a being, who, though not herself, yet entirely depended on her, that she saw a railway train for the first time, . . .

(pp. 272-73)

Among the six chronological eras in *Orlando*, the Modern Age stands the last. In this statement, the narrator uses the changes and environmental circumstances to imply the Modern Age. The innovative inventions of steam engines and railway train suggest the changes. The Modern Age in Britain is often indicated by the introduction of the steam engine and railway train industries, so it is quite outstanding that in *Orlando*, the historical timeline of Orlando's life indirectly implies that she is stepping into the new era, the Modern Age. Similar to the previous example, the way the narrator uses this technique is to subvert the biographer's formal writing. As I have explained in the previous example that *Orlando* is broadly considered as a biography which stands for one of male formal writings, it is proper to write down the change from the Victorian to the Modern era by using a formal date format. However, the narrator, again,

implicitly indicates the periodical change to debunk the frame of a biography, the male-dominant writing.

Those narrative styles compose illogical and elusive elements which are considered as the major basis of female narrative. Comparing to the title of this novel, *Orlando: a Biography*, the narrator's disconnected and illogical models are fluid with fantasies and elusive techniques that undermine the traditional biographical writing. Woolf's novel enables us to understand female writing not as an expression of totally female, but to understand how women form their identity, writing, and power as Showalter says: ". . . there can be no writing or criticism outside of the dominant structure. . . women's writing. . . embodies the social, literary, and cultural heritages of both the muted and the dominant." (pp. 472-73) Therefore, this chapter pursues Showalter's gynocentric reading in order to understand the female narrative structure that consists of male dominant space and female 'wild zone'. My following chapter will analyze the concept of sexuality with Showalter's gynocentric reading. This analysis will show gender roles and highlight on female powers which question and undermine male authorities.

### CHAPTER 3

#### GYNOCENTRIC READING, SEXUALITY AND GENDER ROLES

Apart from being considered as a (mock) biography as discussed in Chapter 2, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* is also known as the novel which explores the concept of sexuality of the British masculine world. This novel uses Orlando's sex transformation to portray female restrictions, values, and gender roles through Orlando's eyes and the narrator of this novel. Considering the concept of Orlando's becoming a woman along with Showalter's gynocentric theory and the aspect of space, Orlando's process of becoming woman exposes masculine authority. The novel also criticizes marriage, the main and the most significant value of the Victorian convention as well as examines feminine physicality.

In this novel, Orlando's sex transformation allows us to expose implicit and explicit masculine and feminine values within a patriarchal society. Chronologically, I divide Orlando's sex transformation periods into three: a man, in-between man and woman, and a woman. The first thing that needs an answer is why Woolf puts this moment in this story. Orlando's moment of sex transformation, as the climax of the story, poses a strong critique against the British conventions of sexuality through its use of a fantasy setting and characterization, notably the three angels. This fantasy connotes anti-biological changes which the British convention has long adhered (in *Orlando*, sexual appearances or biological sexes are the important thing that the British convention, especially the Victorian Age, always considers). Instead, fantasy settings and characters, the three angels, suggest that the process of becoming a woman is not about biology but to make fun of the British rigid view of the impossibility of any biological sex change. Furthermore, Orlando's moment of sex transformation proposes female values and social representatives of the British society as follows:

“*Our Lady of Purity* speaks first:

“I am the guardian of the sleeping fawn; the snow is dear to me; and the moon rising; and the silver sea. With my robes I cover the speckled hen's eggs and the brindled sea shell; I cover vice and poverty. On all things frail dark or doubtful, my veil descends. . .”

Then *Our Lady of Chastity* speaks:

“I am she whose touch freezes and whose glance turns to stone. I have stayed the star in its dancing, and the wave as it falls. The highest Alps are my dwelling place; and when I walk, the lightnings flash in my hair; where my eyes fall, they kill. Rather than let Orlando wake, I will freeze him to the bone. . .”

Then *Our Lady of Modesty* speaks, so low that one can hardly hear:

“I am that men call Modesty. Virgin I am and ever shall be. Not for me the fruitful fields and the fertile vineyard. Increase is odious to me; and when the apples burgeon or the flocks breed, I run, I run; I let my mantle fall. My hair covers my eyes. I do not see. . .”

(pp. 135-36)

These angels’ names symbolize female values which men have created for women in the male dominant society. The first quality, ‘purity’, in the Victorian context, outwardly indicates that women, traditionally, should preserve their morality. Walter E. Houghton’s *The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870* states:

One, they concealed or suppressed their true convictions and their natural taste. They said the ‘right’ thing or did the ‘right’ thing: they sacrificed sincerity to propriety. . .

Finally, they refused to look at life candidly. They shut their eyes to whatever was ugly or unpleasant and pretended it didn’t exist. Conformity, moral pretension, and evasion — those are the hallmarks of Victorian hypocrisy.

(pp. 394-95)

Criticizing the Victorian morality as hypocrisy, Houghton suggests that Victorian people ignore what are immoral and see them as non-existence. This moral code, as Houghton explains, is seen as a traditional decorum of the Victorian society. Like Houghton’s definition of the Victorian morality, the angel of purity’s duty is to cover whatever is filthy and immoral and pretends to see them as moral ones. This purity of the Victorian condition dictates women to take immoral things for granted and to ignore them as the angel of purity tends to make all stains to be uninfected things. Houghton’s definition, however, does not identify the sex which follows this

Victorian hypocrisy. Based on the concept of Showalter's gynocentric criticism and the angel of purity's duty in *Orlando*, women inevitably stay in the male dominant space, so the angel of purity is one of male dominant norms which is created for women to obey. To put it another way, the angel of purity is the decorated female value in the male dominant sphere.

The angel of chastity, on the other hand, stands for moral representatives of the British society. If we rely on her major duty, she is the act of moral punishment. From this statement, this right of punishment is valid whenever there are immoral thoughts and actions. We can see that the angel of chastity's declaration in Orlando's sex transformation scene implies moral transgression. According to Christian belief, every human body with its biological sex belongs to God, the Creator: "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;" (1Corinthian 6:19)<sup>10</sup> Any sex change is regarded as the act of sin because it degrades 'the Holy Spirit' of God. Orlando's sex transformation, hence, is a sinful act which must be punished by the angel of Chastity.

The last value of an ideal woman in the British society is sexual restriction. The angel of modesty portrays the value of celibacy. According to Christianity, every woman must preserve their virginity or chastity like Virgin Mary did. Chastity is their undeniable burden or restriction although in reality, married women definitely cannot hold this code of conduct. In *Orlando*, the angel of modesty's image is presented as being virgin. Her major role is to preserve virginity and avoid any fertility. Upholding the angel of modesty as a role model, British women have to remain virgin and pure. Alternatively, being a good woman is to legally marry and bear children. Hence, no matter what choices there are for the British women, they all belong to male authority.

However, these male authorities cannot fulfill their task of forbidding Orlando's sex transformation. The three angels' failure to stop Orlando's sex transformation suggests the protest against the Victorian sexual morality about sexuality:

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<sup>10</sup> Bible Gateway. N.p., n.d. Web. 18 Jan. 2016. <<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+6:19>>.

At this the Sisters try to cast their veils over the mouths of the trumpets so as to muffle them, but in vain, for now all trumpets blare forth together.

“Horrid Sisters, go!”

The Sisters become distracted and wail in unison, still circling and flinging their veils up and down.

(p. 136)

In this setting, also, the trumpeters participate as a ritual instrument which announces the process of Orlando's sex transformation. However, the three angels' failure and banishment can be compared to the British traditional downfall to maintain its power. Their 'distracted' action and 'wailing' clearly point out that the British tradition cannot prevent Orlando's sex transformation and is defeated finally.

Orlando's sex transformation period, interestingly, reveals an emerging attitude of indifference towards the British tradition:

The change seemed to have been accomplished painlessly and completely and in such a way that Orlando herself showed no surprise at it. Many people, taking this into account, and holding that such a change of sex is against nature, . . . It is enough for us to state the simple fact; Orlando was a man till the age of thirty; when he became a woman and has remained so ever since.

(p. 139)

Orlando's reaction towards her sex indicates how the British sexual conventions no longer have a strong hold over women. As much as Orlando's sex transformation is considered as anti-convention because of its biological impossibility, so is Orlando's indifferent reactions toward her sex transformation. As the British convention is concerned about the concept of biological sexes, it is quite impossible to change biological sex and the outer appearances, shapes and clothing. So, biological sexes are fixed and cannot be changed. Orlando's indifference of her change of biological sex, hence, is the rejection of the British norm which has been firmly established and become the conventional order. It is noteworthy that the narrator describes Orlando's sex transformation as 'the simple fact'. The word 'fact' connotes the sense of things that normally take place. So, from the narrator's point of view, Orlando's sex



transformation is a really simple thing at which we should not feel surprised. Thus, Orlando's indifference and the narrator's negation are considered as anti-convention.

Orlando's moment of sex transformation unfolds female values, social convention, and anti-British tradition in striking ways. Orlando as a woman, too, offers provocative views of looking at gender values and restrictions through Orlando's sex change. The distinctive gender restriction appears as follows:

But now Orlando was to learn how little the most tempestuous flutter of excitement avails against the iron countenance of the law; . . . The chief charges against her were (1) that she was dead, and therefore could not hold any property whatsoever; (2) that she was a woman, which amounts to much the same thing; . . .

(pp. 167-68)

The law points out quite clearly about female constraints. They compare female status of owning properties to death in a way that women do not have any rights of their own possessions because they do not exist. Natalie Zemon Davis's article, "Women on Top: Symbolic Sexual Inversion and Political Disorder in Early Modern Europe" in Babara A. Babcock's *The Reversible World*, discusses women's limitation of property: "By the eighteenth century married women in France and England had largely lost what independent legal personality they had had; they even had less legal right to make decisions about their own dowries and possessions." (p. 149) Similar to Davis' statement, the British law is a double standard which does give privileges to men while women have none. Hence, Orlando is rid of opportunities including the career and possessions she used to have when she was a man.

While the British law denies women's rights to property, the Victorian notion of marriage denies women's rights to her own self. In chapter 5, Orlando is compelled to get married to fulfill her social duty as a house wife:

Though the seat of her trouble seemed to be the left finger, she could feel herself poisoned through and through, and was forced at length to consider the most desperate of remedies, which was to yield completely and submissively to the spirit of an age, and take a husband.

(p. 243)



The concept of marriage is one of the moralistic traditions in that period. The left finger, symbolically, refers to marriage where a wedding ring is put on. This commitment is one of feminine values which the Victorian society tries to interpolate. Gladys Cuddeford's "Women and Society: *From Victorian Times to the Present Day*" confirms female value as follows: "The Victorians thought that a woman's only purpose in life was to marry and create a home and family . . . The wife was subjected to her husband, as women in general were subjected to men." (p. 25-6) The life of every Victorian woman, according to Cuddeford, was born only to be a wife (even singleness is inappropriate). This stereotyping is claimed as feminine value which, in reality, is the crucial restriction that imprisons women. Orlando, too, is facing the magnitude of Victorian feminine value, forced to find a husband and to be a good wife.

In addition, clothing, outstandingly appearing all over in this story, is one of the Victorian tools that set rules for people and the restriction for women in the aspect of gender roles. Molly Harrison's and O.M. Royston's *Picture Source Book for Social History Late Nineteenth Century* discusses the significance of female clothing in the Victorian society:

During this period women changed their shape a great deal. During the 1850s and early 1860s it was smart to wear a steel frame, or crinoline, for holding out your skirts. . . the accidents from Crinoline are, it would seem, upon the increase. Half a score at least have occurred through fire. . . One of the last we saw reported was occasioned by a dress being caught up by a cab-wheel while the wearer was crossing a street at the West End.

(p.65-6)

Crinoline at length is going out, thank goodness! but long trailing dresses are coming in, thank badness! . . . Everywhere you walk, your footsteps are impeded by the ladies, who, in Pope's phrase, "drag their slow length along" the pathway just in front of you.

(p. 66)

Harrison and Royston point out that female crinolines and their long skirts are something quite inconvenient in terms of physical movements. Their bulky clothing makes women do many things such as walking, picking things up, or even sitting

more slowly and with more difficulty than men who just wear simple trousers. So, these clothes impose physical restrictions on women. Women have to be passive by receiving male offers or helps because these female clothes limit them to do what they can independently do when they do not wear women's clothing. According to Harrison and Royston, the ideas of clothing will be extracted to bring out what Woolf tries to imply. First, the major objectives of clothing in the Victorian society from *Orlando* are:

. . . “these skirts are plaguey things to have about one's heels. Yet the stuff (flowered paduasoy) is the loveliest in the world. . . Could I, however, leap over board and swim in clothes like this? No!— Captain Nicholas Benedict Bartolus, a sea captain of distinguished aspect, who did it for her as he helped her to slice of corned beef.

(pp. 154-55)

“for women are not (judging by my own short experience of the sex) obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely appareled by nature. They can only attain these graces, without which they may enjoy none of the delights of life, by the most tedious discipline. . .

(pp. 156-57)

. . . to crack a man over the head, . . . , or draw my sword and run him through the body, . . . , or wear a coronet, . . . , or sentence a man to death . . . All I can do, once I set foot on English soil, is to pour out tea, and ask my ords how they like it.

(p. 158)

After Orlando's sex transformation, these quotations suggest the functions of clothing in dictating gender roles based on biological sexes. As the first quotation confirms Orlando's wearing a female skirt, this apparel indicates female roles for her. After turning into a biological woman, Orlando must wear female garments and has to act accordingly. Captain Nicholas, for example, confirms Orlando's female role by offering his help. His offering comes from the basic logic of clothing that Captain Nicholas performs his active role (slicing beef for Orlando) because he sees Orlando's dressing as a woman. Captain Nicholas' perception of this logic of clothing automatically makes him act as a man while Orlando has to act her feminine role

because of her female apparels. The second quotation demonstrates how clothing dictates Orlando's attitude. By nature, women do not possess those qualities or roles such as 'obedient', 'chaste', 'scented', and especially 'exquisitely appareled' because they cannot be regulated originally from humans' biological sexes as Judith Butler, a post-modern feminist, states in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*:

Significantly, if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the appearance of substance is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief.

(p.179)

Butler identifies that gender is just repetitive acts constructed and coined by societies. Gender does not transmit any true identity but is just a performative action. In this case, 'exquisitely appareled' or wearing clothes is an artificial element like those feminine roles which the Victorian convention uses to fix gender roles to humans' biological sexes. So, Orlando must perform her female roles according to the female garments she wears. The last quotation from *Orlando* also indicates the logic of gender roles by wearing garments. The phrases 'wear a coronet' and 'once I set foot on English soil' suggest that whenever you are British citizens and living in England, you must wear clothing based on your biological sex and perform gender roles of what you are wearing such as 'sentence a man to death' (masculinity) or 'pour out tea' (femininity). Clothing, at the same time, does not only create gender roles, but is also used to distinguish sexes. Inseparably, the system of gender roles occurs after clothing has categorized people's sexes. Or, to put it another way, sex identification is the first process of gender role creation. And, clothing is the thing that categorizes sexes to create fixed gender roles as in Orlando's attitude: ". . . it is clothes that wear us and not we them . . ." (p. 188) Hence, it can be concluded that the major duties of clothing are to distinguish sexes and create gender roles.

Although clothing successfully creates gender roles and mostly controls women to perform submissively to men, *Orlando* challenges the Victorian concept of clothing by deconstructing the meaning of clothing:

“forgive me for the deceit I have practised on you!” . . . he had dressed as a woman. . .

(p. 179)

Now she opened a cupboard in which hung still many of the clothes she had worn as a young man of fashion . . . dressed in it she looked the very figure of a noble Lord. She took a turn or two before the mirror to make sure that her petticoats had not lost her the freedom of her legs, . . .

(p. 215)

Although clothing is used to distinguish sexes and create gender roles in the Victorian society, Archduke and Orlando, similarly, use it as a disguise. Their actions create the sense of de-construction of what the Victorian convention had established by convincing readers to see that clothing, on the other hand, cannot perform its role of sex identification. Archduke's and Orlando's changing into opposite sexual garments dismantle sex and gender stability. Instead of unchangeability, their disguises bring out the questions whether sex is real, clothing can really distinguish true sexes, and the concept of wearing clothes based on biological sexes to create fixed gender roles in the Victorian convention really works. Archduke's and Orlando's changing clothes provoke that sex and gender are too fluid to be stuck in one stable position. They can be easily shifted if you change your clothes. Like Archduke, Orlando's sex transformation is superficial and fluid. Her biological sex abruptly changes after she woke up. The story shows Orlando's sex transformation as a visual image when compared to Archduke's concept of changing sex that her sex can be changed easily like Archduke changes his clothes. Therefore, instead of being the symbols of sexual identification and gender role creation, clothing symbolizes the failure of the Victorian rigid gender roles determined by clothing.

The aspect of gender roles from another character in *Orlando* is also significant. Shelmerdine is a good model for analysis. As Orlando's official husband, Shelmerdine connotes gender role reflection when looking through his first appearance:

. . ., as she listened, she thought it changed to the trot of a horse's hoofs, . . . The horse was almost on her. She sat upright. Towering dark

against the yellow-slashed sky of dawn, with the plovers rising and falling about him, she saw a man on a horseback.

He started. The horse stopped.

“Madam,” the man cried, leaping to the ground, “you’re hurt!”

“I’m dead, Sir!” she replied.

A few minutes later, they became engaged.

(p. 250)

From the previous scene, Orlando’s ankle was broken, so she could not move but stayed where she was. Shelmerdine’s showing up stands for a symbol of gender role in a way that he acts as a rescuer. Broadly speaking, a man’s principal role in many societies is active or seen as a helper while most of the female role is passive. They usually get help from men. Here, Shelmerdine directly performs his masculine or active role by helping Orlando from injury. His rescuing and bringing Orlando back to her country house highlight Shelmerdine as a rescuer while Orlando remains passive and receives his help. In addition, it is not a coincidence for Shelmerdine to come and rescue injured Orlando because this man stands for a symbol of power of the Victorian convention fulfillment. Look back at the previous scene: “The rooks’ hoarse laughter was in her ears. ‘I have found my mate,’ She murmured. ‘It is the moor I am nature’s bride,’ . . . I shall dream wild dreams. My hands shall wear no wedding ring, . . .” (p. 248) This is the scene when Orlando ran into the forest and felt solitude with nature. Orlando’s ring here is the symbol of the Victorian convention of marriage. In this scene, Orlando tries to figure out the solution about marriage while strolling into the wood and finally getting injury. During Orlando’s injury, she found out that it was not necessary to get married. She can escape from this Victorian convention by becoming a part of nature; or, to put it another way, she decided not to go back but to die in nature. Nonetheless, it is Shelmerdine who brings Orlando back to the convention. Shelmerdine is the symbol of masculine role, his appearance indicates his powers of masculinity and the Victorian convention of marriage by rescuing Orlando back to order (performing a masculine role) and leading her to an engagement (the Victorian convention of marriage). Orlando’s reply to Shelmerdine that she is dead implies that she has decided not to submit to the Victorian convention. Yet, Shelmerdine fulfills the convention of marriage by becoming Orlando’s fiancé and

bridegroom in the final. Shelmerdine is the symbol of the masculine role by rescuing a passive Orlando and achieving the Victorian convention fulfillment by marrying her.

The revelations of gender roles through Orlando's sex change and other characters uncover the aspects of female values and oppressions of the British convention. As gynocentric criticism focuses on female writings by implicitly suggesting female power, Orlando as a woman is the significant representative of female power. The first consideration is the concept of space, 'wild zone'. It is when Orlando temporarily lives in the gypsy land:

. . . and here where Nature was so much larger and more powerful than in England, . . . There were mountains; there were valleys; there were streams. She climbed the mountains; roamed the valleys; sat on the banks of the streams. . . She compared the flower to enamel and the turf to Turkey rugs worn thin. . . Then, looking down, the red hyacinth, the purple iris wrought her to cry out in ecstasy at the goodness, the beauty of nature; raising her eyes again, she beheld the eagle soaring, and imagined its raptures and made them her own.

(pp. 143-44)

Here is the scene when Orlando lives in the gypsy land where nature is the major element of this place. As I analyzed the narrator's writing technique in chapter 2 that the narrator used Orlando's rambling among nature in gypsy land where she gained various kinds of imagination to connote the Romantic period, this example similarly explains the concept of Romanticism as well. Wordsworth's definition privileges nature as the most powerful medium which leads poets to gain their imagination for their literary works. In this case, Orlando is in the state of tranquility while she is rambling among nature. As Orlando praises nature and sees its great beauty, her moment of ecstasy suggests the overflow of powerful feelings. Orlando's solitude in nature is the symbol of action which brings out feminine power. As the most effective power for poets to gain imagination, nature is also women's power as well. Nature, the space where Orlando can gain her power of imagination, is a part of female 'wild zone'. In Sue Spaul's and Lynne Pearce's article "Elaine Showalter's *Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness*, Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Margaret Atwood's



*Surfacing in Feminist Readings/Feminists Reading*”, they use Showalter’s concept of female ‘wild zone’ to divide male and female spaces. Spaul and Pearce indicate that male zone contains logic, order, and reason while female zone is seen as wild, primitive, and exotic. This zone, thus, can be assumed to be associated with nature as they explain in their analysis:

Through Jamaican women’s affinity with the natural world, Jean Rhys would seem to emphasize what Levi-Strauss described as the symbolic stress between society and nature: the association of women with a more primitive, ‘uncivilized’ way of life — with all that is ‘not man’. The idea is also central to Showalter’s cultural model of gynocentric.

(p. 107)

Applying Spaul’s and Pearce’s explanation about women’s association with nature to gain their powers with *Orlando*, the nature scene in the gypsy land is seen as being exotic and primitive. It is the place of matriarchal power which gives Orlando the power of imagination:

She began to think, was Nature beautiful or cruel. . . so she went on to the nature of reality, which led her to truth, . . . Love, Friendship, and Poetry. . . since she could impart no word of them, made her long, as she had never longed before, for pen and ink . . . But she made ink from berries and wine; and finding a few margins and blank spaces in the manuscript of “The Oak Tree,” managed, by writing a kind of shorthand to describe the scenery in a long, blank verse poem, and to carry on a dialogue with herself about this Beauty and Truth concisely enough.

(p. 145)

Surrounded by nature, Orlando is so inspired with many kinds of imagination that she restarts her literary writing, ‘The Oak Tree’, which is the ‘blank verse poem’ in her manuscript. As a man, Orlando’s literary skills were rather low and he had stopped writing after Greene harshly criticized his play. Even when Orlando moved to Turkey where he occasionally spent his time among nature, he could not re-start his literary writing professionally. However, after Orlando has become a woman and lived with nature, her maternal space or ‘wild zone’ expresses its power by reviving Orlando’s literary skill which she has never had when she was a man. The overall details in this

story also confirm that Orlando would not have been successful in her literary writing if she had not stayed in the feminine space, nature. It is because after Orlando returned to England, the space of masculine dominance, she was so much oppressed by several rules and norms that she might not gain any power of imagination as she did in nature where the British power of masculinity cannot invade. Or, if Orlando had not turned to be a woman, her previous sex, a man, would not have brought literary success even though he had stayed among nature. So, in *Orlando*, nature can make its power effective on a woman, not a man. The matriarchal power, nature, brings out Orlando's power of imagination which enables her to continue her writing and win the prize at last; or, to put it another way, Orlando's solitude in nature, which is considered as a female space or 'wild zone', is an action which symbolizes her gaining power of imagination and writing.

Furthermore, Orlando's use of her country house is considered as her power which is effective and can be truly expressed:

Some way out of the difficulty there must be, she supposed, but she was still awkward in the arts of her sex, and as she could no longer knock a man over the head . . . it hurt him to think her capable of it; but that she had cheated on Loo was everything.

(pp. 182-83)

Here is the scene when the Archduke came to see Orlando at her country house where she had grown up. Orlando uses the game called Fly Loo as her treatment to defeat and chase away Archduke out of her space. London symbolizes the place of male power since it is the capital which is ruled by male authority. Traditions and laws such as a law of properties, created by men, dominate the British society and limit woman's right to be the owner of her own property. In *Orlando*, Orlando's properties were seized according to the law after she returned to England. It means that male dominance controls over women by making them under its control within the male space, London. Orlando's country house suggests her feminine power as well. Orlando had grown up and spent most of her life there. This country house is where she wants to rest or elude from many problems. It is the very first place she thinks of since she was a man. So, this house stands for Orlando's identity no matter what sex she becomes. Moreover, whether Orlando is a man or a woman, this country house



occurs in many scenes to express her identity. Relating to Orlando's ages, the house is where Orlando was born, and began to write his poem, also symbolizing his identity, where he came back after Sasha's departure, where he could release his consciousness and philosophies, where Orlando, as a woman, returns to after her sex transformation, where she gets married, where she delivers a son, where she spends her life after marriage, and, finally, where she can gather her true self. Thus, Orlando's country house and her game, Fly Loo, are feminine powers within her own space that overcomes the male authority, represented by Archduke. Showalter states:

In terms of cultural anthropology, women know what the male crescent is like, even if they have never seen it, because it becomes the subject of legend (like the wilderness). But men do not know what is in the wild.

(p. 472)

Male culture dominates people, men and women, within its own space and claims itself as the center of power. Within that space, everyone must know and be influenced by masculine rules such as history, social norms, and economic situation, etc. Also, Showalter indicates that women live within the male dominant space where cultures and norms are androcentric<sup>11</sup>, so they must involve everything that is created by men. On the other hand, men cannot access female own space where feminine culture and power are contained because women form their collective experiences within their own space where men cannot enter, and bind women together timelessly. From Showalter's explanation, Orlando expresses her feminine power by using the game, Fly Loo, to defeat Archduke within her own space, the country house. Looking through male eyes, people who cheat on the game are considered as being criminals as Orlando thinks: ". . . as to cheat at Loo is the most heinous of crime, and men have been banished from the society of mankind . . ." (p.183) Orlando's point of view about cheating on Loo shows how she looks through male eyes. Orlando is accepting its logic and seeing cheating on Loo as a crime like men do. From this logic, it cannot be denied that male power dominates female attitudes because it is men who dominate the society where people, male and female, live together. Showalter's gynocentric reading indicates: ". . . but dominant groups control the forms or structure in which

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<sup>11</sup> **Androcentric discourse:** Dominated by or emphasizing masculine interests or a masculine point of view.

consciousness can be articulated. Thus muted groups must mediate their beliefs through allowable forms of dominant structures.” (p. 471). So, most of the women’s ideas have to be based on men’s structures of rule or culture because they cannot absolutely escape from male power. Yet, women, muted groups, can create their own experiences and generate their own power to be individual within or outside the male dominant world.

It is not strange that Orlando is influenced by the male dominance about the concept of cheating on Loo. It is normal to see that Orlando sees as men do, but as Showalter indicates that women can gain their own power even though most of their ideas are related to men’s, I see Orlando’s cheating on Loo as her feminine power over men. As Showalter’s main strategy for women to look through their own eyes, I, as a woman, see through my eyes that Orlando is using her feminine power over Archduke. Orlando’s cheating on Loo shows her wit to drive Archduke out of her place. Considering Orlando’s point of view from this scene, men have to use the force against their competitors to fight and get rid of them. On the other hand, Orlando uses her wit to overcome Archduke without using any forces. She gets rid of him by cheating on Loo which is considered as her powerful wit. Moreover, Orlando’s country house is her ‘wild zone’ where feminine power is most effective. As already stated that Orlando’s country house symbolizes her identity, her cheating on Loo at her own space, ‘wild zone’, increases her power over Archduke. To put it another way, Archduke’s masculine power decreases after he entered Orlando’s feminine border, the country house:

In short, he was preparing in the chivalry of his heart to forgive her . . .  
 , when she cut the matter short, as he stooped his proud head, by dropping a  
 small toad between his skin and his shirt.

(pp. 183-84)

Archduke’s action of forgiveness is his second attempt of using his masculine power after he was defeated by Orlando in the game of Loo. From his action, Archduke’s pride by using the words ‘chivalry’ and ‘proud’ implies that he places himself superior to Orlando, a woman. He claims his masculine authority by deciding to punish or to forgive other people. In this case, Archduke places himself as a judge and decides that Orlando is at fault. This logic expresses that Archduke sees Orlando

under his control and uses his masculine authority to forgive her mistake. Nonetheless, Archduke's masculine power is invalid because Orlando can still defeat him. Orlando's putting a toad in his shirt suggests her feminine power in a way that she does not submit to the man's superiority. Like her cheating on Loo, Orlando's using a toad is considered as one of her feminine powers as well. It is Orlando's wit that helps her drive out Archduke's masculine power. Moreover, Orlando's country house stands for her 'wild zone' where her power is effective. Hence, the way Archduke is defeated by Orlando twice: one from cheating on Loo and, the other, from her using a toad, is not coincident. Orlando's feminine power within her 'wild zone' is so effective that it can drive Archduke's masculine power out. Therefore, Showalter's gynocentric reading shows us quite interestingly that what men see as flaws and inferiorities are feminine powers if we look through female eyes.

Elain Showalter's gynocentric theory urges us to use female eyes to search for women's power which is as effective as male dominant power. Also, after reading Showalter's gynocentric logic, we can see how Orlando claims her power:

In justice to her, it must be said that she would infinitely have preferred a rapier. Toads are clammy things to conceal about one's person whole morning. But if rapiers are forbidden, one must have recourse to toads. Moreover toads and laughter between them sometimes do what cold steel cannot.

(p. 184)

As stated in the previous example that Orlando's using a toad is seen as her feminine power, her claiming justice also shows how she looks at this event through female eyes. Orlando's sentence states as follows: "Moreover toads and laughter between them sometimes do what cold steel cannot." (p. 184) Cold steel or a rapier symbolizes a tool for a masculine man to use for fighting against his opponents, so rapiers are considered as masculine power for fighting and self-defending. Otherwise, Orlando sees her toad as her feminine power as those steel weapons, rapiers. Like male rapiers, Orlando uses the toad as her powerful weapon to overcome Archduke. The way Orlando compares male rapiers to her use of toad refers to the sense of equality. Orlando brings out her power and claims that this feminine power is not less inferior to Archduke's masculine authority. It is powerful enough to protect her privacy and

individuality that the man tries to invade. Thus, Showalter's gynocentric theory helps us see how feminine power is brought out and convinces us to change a look of sexuality from male eyes to female vision.

Orlando's marriage with Shelmerdine also expresses feminine power. The way of looking at conventional marriage is challenged when seeing through female 'wild zone'. As marriage is the major pin of the Victorian society, Orlando's marriage breaks the Victorian convention in many ways. Superficially, the basic vision of Orlando's marriage seems to be normal in Christianity and the Victorian tradition that one man gets married with one woman. However, Woolf uses various kinds of treatment to interrupt Orlando's conventional marriage:

. . . and among the banging of innumerable doors and a sound like brass pots beating, the organ sounded, its growl coming loud and faint alternately, and Mr. Dupper, who was grown a very old man, tried now to raise his voice above the uproar and could not be heard. . . then all was quiet for a moment. . . — it might be “the jaws of death” — rang out clear, . . . and some sang aloud and others prayed and now a bird was dashed against the pane, and now there were a clap of thunder.

(pp. 261-62)

The atmosphere of Orlando's marriage mostly ruins the traditional Victorian marriage. Apparently, Orlando submits to the Victorian convention by getting married with a suitable man. However, this novel destroys what is called the conventional marriage. Their marriage is held abnormally at the Chapel in the woods where some disasters occur. This setting portrays an image of calamity. Generally, most wedding ceremonies should be performed in silence to create a respectful atmosphere for both married couples and churches symbolizing a sacred place of Christianity. Still, Orlando's marriage gets many kinds of noise such as banging doors, beating pots, and organ sounds. These noises intentionally disturb what the Victorian convention sees as one of their reverences. It is obvious that Woolf, a woman writer, attacks the Victorian convention by ruining what stands for one of the core values of this convention, marriage. The phrase “the jaws of death” from the example emphasizes the sense of calamity. Also, the following elements of Orlando's marriage which are a dashing bird, praying people, and a thunder emphasize the senses of irony and disaster

instead of blessing. Those calamities connote the attitude of this novel towards marriage that this story tends to bring out the questions: Is married life really as happy as the wonderful image of wedding ceremony? Does it bring burdens for a couple instead? These questions urge readers to view married life that, in reality, it is not as beautiful as it seems. Broadly speaking, most images of wedding ceremonies are usually full of blessing and wonderful atmospheres where a bridegroom's and a bride's families and friends join their ceremony happily. These images may convince people or even the couple to feel that their lives after marriage would be perfect like those images of wedding ceremonies. However, the disaster in Orlando's marriage satires those wonderful wedding ceremony images. Happiness is not the one and only thing which occurs in the married life like wonderful images in wedding ceremonies. Instead, the scene attacks and undermines conventional marriages at that time. Orlando's marriage sheds light on female side. The main strategy of Showalter's gynocentric reading warns us to read female novels as double-voiced reading. All women cannot elude from male authoritative space which controls them physically and mentally. The traditional Victorian marriage or male authority succeeds in its duty because Orlando's marriage is finally achieved. On the other hand, within this male dominant space, the procedures of Orlando's marriage stand for female side. Their disturbances (a dashing bird, praying people, and a thunder) urge readers to realize the other side of marriage which does not go along with male concept. If we look through the same logic by establishing something as a dominant power, those disturbances in this setting are a part of female zone as well. These calamities weave together to dismantle and turn against male conventional marriage by posing questions on the reality of married life.

Showalter indicates in *Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness*: "Nonetheless, women's culture forms a collective experience within the cultural whole, an experience that binds women writers to each other over time and space." (p. 470) Although women inevitably stay within a male dominant world where they are influenced by masculine norms, rules, and ideas about ways of life, women can form and share their experiences and powers within a male space. First, the creation of gender roles in this novel conventionally follows the concept of gender roles in the British society in reality. The idea about sexuality is based on the British male

dominant pattern of gender roles. Woolf, a female writer, stays within the male dominant space and is dominated by men's logic of gender roles. For example, Orlando's masculine image is presented through his own attitudes:

When the boy, for alas, a boy it must be — no woman could skate with such speed and vigor — swept almost on tiptoe past him, . . . no boys had those eyes which looked as if they had been fished from the bottom of the sea.

(p. 38)

This scene is when Sasha, the Russian princess, was skating before Orlando. His attitudes about Sasha are considered as sexism. Considering the sentence between the dashes, Orlando's judgment is obviously undermining women's skating ability that only men can skate 'with such speed' and 'vigor'. This quoted phrase connotes positive characteristics only for men when they are attached with the phrase 'no woman' from the example. Moreover, the word 'vigor', which means strength, really stands for a masculine character. Clearly, Orlando's judgment is undermining femininity by confirming readers that it must be a man, not a woman, who is skating pass him. Furthermore, the way Orlando looks at Sasha's appearance expresses Orlando's sexism. It occurs after Orlando felt confused about the skating person's real sex, so he tries to categorize that person's appearance with femininity to confirm that the skating person is not a real man (it turns out finally that the skating person is a woman). Orlando's expression here does not only indicate the logic of sexuality that no man, in general, has those eyes like Sasha's, but also its sentence structure is considered as a passive voice: "no boys had those eyes which looked as if they had been fished from the bottom of the sea." (p. 38) It is known that women are oppressed by men, for example, Rosalind Miles indicates in her work, *The Female Form: Women Writers And The Conquest Of The Novel*: "The man, the male, the important person, the only person who matters" (p. 132) Miles indicates that this quotation is from 1928 which was the famous phrase at that time. Men claimed their privilege as the only and very significant sex. Women, the opposite one, were treated as the more inferior sex in every way. Here, Orlando uses the passive voice to describe Sasha to suggest that Sasha, a woman, is acted on or judged by Orlando's eyes, a man. Therefore, like the British gender roles in reality, this example shows how gender



roles function in this female novel by reflecting masculinity as higher than feminine one. *Orlando* stays within male dominant logic of sexuality.

After becoming a woman, however, Orlando's attitude towards sex and gender changes. Woolf does not totally follow the British conventional sexuality which places men in the most privilege position, but she cleverly expresses another voice discourse, feminine power, through her writing as apparent in the followings:

Hail! natural desire! Hail! happiness! divine happiness! and pleasure of all sorts, flowers and wine . . . Hail, happiness! kingfisher flashing from bank to bank, and all fulfillment of natural desire, . . . dreams which splinter the whole and tear us asunder and wound us and split us apart in the night when we would sleep; but sleep, sleep so deep that all shapes are ground to dust of infinite softness, . . . Blue, like a match struck right in the ball of the innermost eye, he flies, bursts the seal of sleep; the kingfisher; so that now floods back refluent like a tide, the red, thick stream of life again; . . .

"It's a very fine boy, M'Lady," said Mrs. Banting, the midwife. In other words Orlando was safely delivered of a son on Thursday, March the 20th, at three o'clock in the morning.

(pp. 294-95)

An organ sound acts as a medium which leads to the stream of consciousness before Orlando's labor of birth. It cannot be definitely pointed out who is the owner of this stream of consciousness which is floating and disconnecting but its details express a positive mood before Orlando's successful labor. We can see that most of the details are about nature. 'Flowers', 'kingfisher', and 'soft dust' are seen as natural happiness as being described. The reason the narrator uses this kind of stream of consciousness is to reveal female power of labor. Iris M. Young in her article, "Humanism, Gynocentrism, and Feminist Politics" in *Theorizing Feminisms* states:

Gynocentric feminism finds in women's bodies and traditionally feminine activity the source of more positive values. Women's reproductive processes keep us linked with nature and the promotion of life to a greater than men's.

(p.178)



The experiences of menstruation, coitus, pregnancy, and lactation . . .  
give women a greater experience of continuity with nature.

(p. 181)

Young explains that women's reproductive processes are considered as a positive advantage which men cannot possess. Female reproductive processes, pregnancy, and even labor urge them to integrate with nature and understand the process of life better than men. Thus, the stream of consciousness before Orlando's giving birth suggests how pregnancy and reproductive processes are female positive view by associating with nature. Orlando's moment of labor shows the positive view of imagination about nature instead of seeing it as negative process. Hence, in this female voice discourse, a woman's labor with positive stream of consciousness about nature uncovers female potential power and happiness that men can never access and understand.

After looking through female eyes, there are various kinds of feminine power which men usually see as being worthless and insignificant. Finally, Orlando can express her feminine powers and defend her own 'wild zone' from masculine invasion, and it is apparent that Woolf herself also uses her writing, *Orlando*, as her 'wild zone' to gain and show her power within the male literary dominance.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

By focusing on female writings, Showalter's theory works well to bring out the concepts of feminism and sexuality in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*. In chapter 1, Showalter's gynocentric criticism focuses on female writings as the center of analysis; or it can be called gynocentric reading. When analyzing female writings as the center of interpretation, the focus shifts to female 'wild zone' where women can express their feminine powers which are hidden within male dominant worlds as Showalter says:

For some feminist critics, the wild zone, or "female space," must be address of a genuinely women-centered criticism, theory, and art, whose shared project is to bring into being the symbolic weight of female consciousness, to make the invisible visible, to make the silent speak.

(p. 472)

'The invisible' and 'the silent' Showalter referred to here are feminine powers which men see as flaws such as female intuitions and abilities associated with nature. Showalter divides her female writing analysis into four parts which are biology (the difference between male and female bodies which causes the difference in their writings), linguistics (the use of language by men and women), psychology (women's inferiority within Freudian's theory and their ways to liberate themselves), and culture (women's own space within and outside a male dominant world). The first three parts are not the essentials Showalter wants to focus because they are attached too much to the differences between biological sexes and the concept of psychoanalysis. Showalter, instead, recommends us to look at the last section which gives deeper dimensions to female writings and powers. The first section, 'Women's Writing and a Woman's Body', can be explained briefly that women's body is considered as motherhood which associates with nature. Unlike men who usually claim their power of writing by stating that masculine body, especially a penis, is the only thing which can reach the power of writing, Showalter insists that female biological body can be the source of imagination and a source of writing power. Showalter's second section, 'Women's Writing and Women's Language', shows that in the frame of language,

women are inevitably confined to the male constructed language. Showalter, thus, suggests the solution for women to express their own voices by accessing masculine language as it is rightly used by men and women, and by articulating male language in their own female ways. The third section, 'Women's Writing and Woman's Psyche', explicates the work creativity through consciousness and biology of each sex based on Freudian's criticism. Men's penis is claimed as a privilege element which leads to creativity through consciousness while women are seen as nonproductive because they have no penis. However, some feminists disagree with this claim. They, instead, suggest that we should look at the process of 'pre-oedipal phase'. It is the phase that men, as children, feel alienated to their mothers because of their biological difference. So, men's alienation is so oppressed that their writing patterns are non-emotional and become very rational. Unlike men, women, as children, do not feel alienated but intimate to their mothers. Their writing, therefore, is full of emotions and sympathy. Showalter's last section, 'Women's Writing and Women's Culture', introduces the concept of female 'wild zone' and masculine space:

But we must also understand that there can be no writing or criticism totally outside of the dominant structure; no publication is fully independent from the economic and political pressures of the male-dominated society.

(p. 472)

Showalter suggests that although women cannot elude from male dominant space, what women can do is to form their collective experiences and bind all women together. "Nonetheless, women's culture forms a collective experience within the cultural whole, an experience that binds women writers to each other over time and space." (p.470). Also, within male-dominant influences, women can express their feminine powers by creating their own 'wild zone' where men cannot enter. This zone is the space where women can bind their experiences and gain their powers such as abilities in writing and living. Therefore, owning their own 'wild zone', women can exclusively express their inexpressible secrets and feminine powers which are as powerful as masculine authorities.

Apart from Showalter's gynocentric reading, my chapter one also reviews another criticism which relates to Showalter's theory. First, Sue Spaul's and Lynne Pearce's article "Elaine Showalter's *Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness*, Jean Rhys'

*Wide Sargasso Sea* and Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing in Feminist Readings/Feminists Reading*" uses Showalter's gynocentric criticism to analyze Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*. They use the concept of space to understand female characters' powers and identities which are expressed mostly in their own space, 'wild zone'. Spaul and Pearce indicate that in Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Antoinette, a female character, gains her matriarchal power in the natural world symbolizing the place of femininity. Also, in this female 'wild zone', a male character, Rochester, is seen as being castrated and powerless.

My overall contents of chapter 2 and chapter 3 are related to the concept of sexuality. The idea of female 'wild zone' fruitfully gives the appropriate benefit when used with Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*. In the aspect of narrative, female writing functions as a double-voiced discourse. As the base genre of this novel belongs to the traditional biography, its style automatically connotes patterns of facts and orders referring to male authority. However, other writing styles challenge those conventions by using disconnected and illogical models with fantasies and elusive techniques. These illogical models belong to female 'wild zone' where female powers are most effective and, at the same time, contain two-side narratives, male and female. In chapter 3, Orlando's sex transformation provokes gender roles, female restrictions, male authorities, and feminine powers through double-voiced discourse and female 'wild zone'.

Showalter's theory and Woolf's *Orlando* challenge readers to read this female novel as double-voiced discourse and allow further arguments of this dimension. Apart from its narratives and characters, the use of historical context in the novel further explores masculine dominance over historical writing. Through the length of chronological periods in the story, masculine authorities have covered the British society from the reign of Elizabethan to the Modern era. Their powers have interpolated people's logic of gender by restricting British women within moral code, law, clothing, and so on. Undeniably, throughout the story, those dictatorships have been activated and influenced female characters, even Orlando, like Showalter explains to us that all women cannot escape from masculine zone. However, as double-voiced discourse, Showalter, too, presents that Woolf's *Orlando* does contain female 'wild zone' with its narratives and female characters. Hence, *Orlando* lets us

perceive that as long as male authorities timelessly cover people's mind-sets about sexuality, these female 'wild zones' assert their eternal existence as well. Women do possess their own individuality and power which those timeless masculinities cannot pervade.

For further explorations, Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* is astonishingly suitable for gynocentric reading as well. This novel is divided into periods (The Window, Time passes, and The Lighthouse) in the same way as the narrative structure in *Orlando*. Similarly to *Orlando*, the periods in *To the Lighthouse* illustrate spaces between masculinity and femininity when we use double-voiced discourse and Showalter's concept of female 'wild zone'. Analyzing male and female characters' streams of consciousness, their conscious and unconscious actions, and settings of this story, Showalter's gynocentric reading may uncover significances which render a new sight of female readings. In addition, two female American writers' novels, Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* and Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence*, are also relevant to Showalter's gynocentric reading. These novels contain a similar structure of how female protagonists, Edna Pontellier of *The Awakening* and Countess Ellen Olenska of *The Age of Innocence*, create their own 'wild zones'. Remarkably, in *The Awakening*, Edna tries to create her own 'wild zones', namely the sea of Grand Isle, the pigeon house, and her illegal relationships with male characters, as the symbols of her liberation from male convention. Like Edna, Ellen uses her new settlement, America and her forbidden affair with Newland Archer as her spaces of liberation. However, the endings of these novels seemingly turn against the female protagonists' 'wild zones' by questioning whether Edna's and Ellen's spaces of emancipation are truly attainable. From these unexpected results, Showalter's gynocentric reading can offer two possible readings of the story endings: either they obscurely possess any limitation which makes the protagonists' 'wild zones' invalid, or those female 'wild zones' still preserve their power of liberation even though those endings seem to destabilize them. There should be some hidden messages which only gynocentric reading can pursue. Therefore, as a post-modern theory, Showalter's gynocentric reading has endless dimensions for more practical and fruitful interpretations of numerous female works.

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