

The Role of Androgyny and Performativity
In the Novels of Virginia Woolf: *Orlando* & *Mrs. Dalloway*

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Abstract

The social roles of male and female are constituted through gender. The body always creates the values and meanings by the performance of social acts. Thus gender is not a fixed phenomenon. It is constantly changing, altering and creating new formations. The notion of androgyny is used to question gender classification. It blends female and male traits and makes a unification of both genders. By creating androgynous minds in her novels, Virginia Woolf questions the social classification of gender and the discrimination between men and women. Her androgynous characters create their social identity through the social performance which resembles Butler's concept of performativity where gender is formed on the surface of the body. The thesis explores these concepts through a reading of Virginia Woolf's novels *Orlando* (1928) and *Mrs Dalloway* (1925).

Introduction

Before talking about sexual normativity and sexual orientation, it is important to talk about sex and gender. Sex and gender are two different categories where sex is anatomical and biological and gender is seen to be socially constructed. Sex is determined by the reproductive organs of the human body. When a child is born, its sex can be either male or female based on the sexual organ. Sex is thus a biological attribution. The body is sexed but gender is culturally constructed. Butler challenges this sex-gender binary, as both these categories are constructed and neither is static. It is continuously changing according to the cultural interpretation. The female body becomes the centre of the cultural construction of the gendered woman. Butler argues in 'Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's Second Sex' that 'female' is often seen as a self-identical and fixed natural corporeal fact (Butler, 2). On the other hand, 'woman' can be seen to be comprised of various cultural modes. Irrespective of whether we identify the sex as man or woman, gender is an ongoing and changing cultural fact. One can be born as a female but to become a woman she has to go through the interpretation and appropriation of the culture. Since Simone de Beauvoir has popularly mentioned, 'One is not born as a woman, one becomes a woman'; so gender is always about 'becoming'. It is an ongoing process of cultivating social norms. Gender is not self-identical as sex. It is like a movement of embodying different interpretation of the culture. Simone de Beauvoir has mentioned that the body only 'exists' but one 'becomes' one's gender. Butler has mentioned that a body can have two different interpretations. One is culturally constructed and another is material reality which is already defined by the social context.

But there is a debate between whether gender happens or it is a choice we make and later realize. People can choose gender from the parameters which are already culturally constructed. According to Butler, 'the verb 'become' contains a consequential ambiguity. Not only are we culturally constructed, but in some sense we construct ourselves' (Beauvoir, 3). Sartre has also said that the body is coexistent with personal identity. By surpassing the body, one is not actually going beyond it as the body is constituted through the cultural parameters. 'The body is not

a static or self-identical phenomenon, but a mode of intentionality, a directional force and mode of desire (Beauvoir , 5) . So, becoming a gender is actually a mindful process even though at the same time it is impulsive. But the choice is an active choice of the person to live and wear a certain kind of body . The mind body dualism was proposed by Rene Decartes . He said that the body and the mind are separated from each other . The body is organic and the mind can think , contemplate , imagine . The existence of the body is proved, according to Descartes, by the fact that it can feel when it is hurt and so, it has a sensation . It can be extended, divisible whereas the mind is non extendable and non divisible . The existence of the mind is proved by the fact that it can doubt and perceive . Since it cannot be doubted that the mind is doubting , the mind also has an existence . ‘A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also imagines and has sensory perceptions’ (Duncan,3)

To the construction of a gendered self, Butler has added the notion of performativity. This is the task through which a gender is formed . It is a constant and repetitive act or the performing of social norms and cultural aspects that determine gender and therefore, it gradually builds the gender identity. Butler thus negates the mind-body binary and the distinction between inner and outer self. She thinks that this distinction is illusory. She also thinks that gender norms cannot be internalized. The notion of performativity questions heterosexual normativity . It combines gender and sex and sees the body as the medium through which the cultural aspects are interpreted and reversed. And it is through the repetition that the body acquires a certain gender. Butler uses Foucault to clarify her ideas. Foucault says, ‘the body is the inscribed surface of the events’ (Butler , 129) . The body exists as a priori before the stable inscription .Performativity is constantly making us male or female. It is a continuous process. It emphasizes Simone de Beauvoir’s notion of becoming. The process is always incomplete. The boys and girls are asked by the society to perform in a certain way. The body gradually becomes habituated to perform in a certain way and therefore , at a certain time the person will not be able not to do otherwise. Butler defines performativity as the repeated action of socially constructed norms .This action is not static. It depends on the time and the cultural and social dimension. Therefore, gender is enacted on the historiography of the body and which it constructs. Consequently, there is a possibility of the reversal of such cultural aspects suggesting that ‘Gender can be neither true nor

false , neither real or apparent , neither original nor derived . As credible bearers of those attributes, however, genders can also be rendered as thoroughly and radically incredible' (Butler, 141).

The concept of androgyny can be applied to this debate between sex and gender and seen as the foundation for the mixing together of masculine and feminine traits in the human mind. Both masculine and feminine qualities intermix and create a gender-neutral state of mind. An androgynous mind does not differentiate between two different sexes. It is not sexless mind rather it represents the intermingling of two different genders. It is while tracing women's contribution in history and literature that Virginia Woolf proposed the idea of an androgynous vision as the sphere for creating art , be it written by, for and about women. She thinks that it was lack of education and economic independence that had led to keeping women writers outside the sphere of literary history. Many of them were unrecognized due to misogynist social condition and patriarchal repression did not encourage them to write. Written in 1928, Virginia Woolf *A Room of One's Own* examines the relation between women and fiction. It is while discussing this issue, that she proposes the idea of androgyny, where a person needs to think beyond the heterosexual category of men and women to produce art beyond the social boundary of gender. By creating an imaginary character like Judith Shakespeare, who is characterized as Shakespeare's sister , Virginia Woolf has pointed to the fact that in spite of being naturally talented and extraordinary , a woman in Shakespeare's time would not get access to education or the opportunity to explore imaginary visions. Writing thus remained male-dominated, and women were portrayed as inferior to men in male writer's writing. By giving examples of female writers like Aphra Ben , Jane Austen , George Eliot , Woolf has said they had to struggle a lot to produce fiction .She has also said that women did not write poetry since poetry involves sustained and powerful imagination, which demands intellectual freedom which comes when one possesses her personal writing space without interruption. Woolf says,

'Women's books should be shorter, more concentrated, than those of men, and framed so that they do not need long hours of steady and uninterrupted work' (Woolf,45)

To surpass the social discriminations based on gender binary, Woolf has longed for a power of vision beyond the category of gender. She thinks that the writer should write being unconscious about their sex. She thinks that men and women should think with both sides of their brains and in a woman-manly or man- womanly manner. To clarify the idea of androgyny, she pictures a man and woman getting into a taxicab. When they enter the cab, their two minds undergo a 'natural fusion'. The mind becomes 'one' though they belong to two different bodies. She thinks that every human being is androgynous. In a man, the man's part of the mind predominates over the female and in a woman, the woman's brain predominates over the male. But a mind becomes 'fully fertilized and uses all its faculties' when the two parts of the mind live in harmony and co-operate. She brings back Coleridge's idea of androgyny that 'a great mind is androgynous' since the mind which occupies only one particular chamber cannot function to the fullest. A great mind infuses gender categories and it is not a 'single-sexed mind'. Woolf has interpreted Coleridge's words in this way ;

'An androgynous mind is resonant and porous ; that it transmits emotion without impediment ; that it is naturally creative , incandescent and undivided .' (Woolf 56)

Woolf has said that Shakespeare has an androgynous mind and so, he can write about the thought process of women in his writings. An androgynous mind can transcend the culturally established dichotomy of sex and gender.

In my thesis, I will try to look into at the characters of Virginia Woolf's novels though these theoretical debates. . By navigating through two of Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando* (1929) and *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), I will to comprehend the distinction of androgyny and performativity by through character analysis of the main protagonists, their social activities and their relation to others. I have chosen to begin with *Orlando*, the later novel, as it lays down the historical context. *Mrs. Dalloway* is read to show how these considerations effect the lives of men and women in the modern era.

Chapter One

Orlando

Androgyny and Performativity through the historiography

Orlando written in 1928 creates a sense of androgyny and displays the social performances of gender over 300 years of history. The novel merges the historical time and social gender. This novel is written like a history and the characters are created to mock established gender binaries. By highlighting socially imposed gender roles, Woolf has drawn a feminine or even a feminist history and satirized established social roles of men and women. The fusion of the sexes between men and women is theorized as androgyny in her essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929); where she debated the construction of straight gender binaries. Orlando and other characters of the novel have unconsciously embedded masculine and feminine attributes in their lives. The male self and female self are inseparable from each other. Gender roles are so frequently fused that it is difficult to recognize whether the character is he / she , man – womanly or woman –manly or there is a dominance of one gender over the other . On the other hand, in her *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf advocated an equal balance of both masculine and feminine traits in order to produce best piece of writing. So, there is a query in the novel if there is equal balance of male and female traits. By examining social interventions in the construction of gender at different periods of history, I will try to examine the novel as an effort at breaking the binaries of playing with gender roles.

Orlando is portrayed as an androgynous being, in opposition to the binary structure of male and female. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf has given an elaborate picture of androgyny which is an inter-stitching of male and female minds. Woolf has theorized androgyny as an attempt of liberating women from the staunch ideals of patriarchy. Woolf thinks that the androgynous mind would have 'a special sympathy for women' (Woolf, 56). Carolyn Heilbrun has described androgyny in 'Towards a Recognition of Androgyny' as a term that is formed with two Greek words , 'andros' (male) and 'gune' (female) and has said that it is a neutralization of sexes

which constitutes a full human being. Woolf has used the term to merge the social distinction between male and female since during her time women writers were not privileged compared to the male writers and so, she has invented this notion to write beyond the category of gender binary. In both the novel and the theoretical text, Woolf has challenged heterosexual normativity and has shown that a person can inhabit different subjectivities at a time. In the novel, we see that Orlando lives for 36 years over 300 years in different historical periods. The fluidity of gender flows over different centuries starting from the 16th century Elizabethan period and then navigating through the Restoration period, Romantic period and finally ending in the Victorian period.

The novel begins in the 16th century when Orlando is presented as a boy from the royal family. He is 16 years old and he becomes the Treasurer and Steward of Queen Elizabeth I. Though Queen Elizabeth I rules over England, the era does not treat women as equal to men. Women did not have access to education, they used to be busy only with the household affairs, they could not explore the world as men, they did not have power to make their own decisions, they were forcibly married to a man. They did not have inheritance of the property. Overall, they did not have equality with men and thus they could not enjoy the social privileges. Women were identified only through their feminine qualities which were seen as fragile and were demeaning to them. All they could do was to get married, rear children, and indulge in excessive beautification of their bodies.

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I and James I, women were required to be submissive and subordinate to men. Their identity operates in relation to men. Men used to enjoy the social privileges and they used to play the role of 'self' where women were recognized as the 'other'. By putting themselves in this particular frame, men were considered as the 'centre' and women as the 'periphery'. Simone de Beauvoir has explained that by portraying women as other, men want to control them, subdue them, possess them. A woman can see herself in the position of power by reflecting on the binary position of men. The nature of women is immanent. She lives only within the locus of her body. She cannot surpass it. On the contrary, men are shown as transcendental; they can go beyond their body and can possess women. Foucault has said that power is always unstable and mobile. *Orlando* is a novel where the power relationship changes from one era to the other. By the changing of the gender roles, power shifts in time. The person

who is located at 'self' shifts to the 'other' and the 'other' shifts to the 'self'. The shifting gender roles in the novel point to the fact that gender is created by social performance. Simone de Beauvoir famously stated, 'One is not born as a woman, one becomes a woman'. This means gender is about reasserting and re-appropriating through performance. Throughout the novel, we can see that the characters change their sex and through social performance, they constitute a gender which is not static. By merging the social category of male and female, the novel challenges the social normativity of gender during the time of the writing.

In the novel, Orlando possesses social power as a man during the 16th and 17th centuries until he is sent to Constantinople as an ambassador. The novel breaks the mores of the society by showing that Queen Elizabeth I falling in love with Orlando, which was not acceptable during that period. Queen Elizabeth I feels betrayed when she finds that Orlando kissing a girl. The novel breaks the image of a strong man, as Orlando is subject to a woman. Orlando is shown as a feminine-looking man and is only 16 years old.

'The long, curled hair, the dark head bent so reverently, so innocently before her, impaired a pair of the finest legs' (Woolf, 3).

Thus, from the beginning of the novel, Orlando is depicted with an ambiguous nature. His appearance also is feminine. 'The red of the cheeks was covered with peach down; the down of the lips was only a little thicker than the down on the cheeks.' (Woolf, 15). So, from the beginning of the novel, Orlando's is a man-womanly nature. In the novel, Orlando enjoys social privileges being a man. And from the location of being centre, he counts all the women as the weaker sex. As a man, he thinks that submissiveness, calmness, politeness, chastity are the natural qualities of women. So, he demands all these qualities from the women whom he chooses to marry. He rejects the idea of marrying Frivola by finding that she has crooked teeth like a hare. He considers Euphrosyne as potential wife for her good looks.

Orlando can perceive the strict binaries between the genders when he changes into a woman during his role as Ambassador at Constantinople. She has a change of her sex halfway in the narrative and becomes a figure who transgresses the borders of time, gender and sexuality. To form the notion that gender is an inner subversion of identity, the subversion of the gender takes place in the presence of three goddess who try to prevent the unveiling of the female body. The

whole process is preceded with the sound of trumpets. The revolt of the gypsies against the Sultan is a metaphor for showing that Orlando's body is also going through changes.

Orlando's sex change does not entail any change in her gender identity. Orlando remains precisely the same as before. Orlando remains uninterested about his/her sex until s/he sails to England. It has been stated ;

‘Orlando remained precisely as s/he had been. The changes of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing to alter their identity. Their faces remained, as their portraits prove, practically the same’ (Woolf, 133).

After becoming a woman, Orlando feels the social pressure of being a woman. She has found that society has fixed certain roles and responsibilities for women. Though she feels distasteful performing her social role as a woman, she repeats those acts to construct a feminine gender. She starts inculcating female qualities which are required for a woman. She feels that chastity is the jewel of the female sex and so, they have to protect it from men. Though Orlando feels disgust in wearing skirts, she wears skirts in order to perform the role of an English Lady. She feels that the skirt covers those parts of her body which could be exposed before. She now thinks differently about women;

‘A woman must be obedient, chaste, scented and exquisitely appareled’ (Woolf, 150).

She spends hours in front of the looking glass; washing, powdering, changing clothes. Though she finds it tedious, she works hard at building the social values of a woman. She finds the emphasis on chastity dull and boring, even as she understands that covering oneself is one of sacred responsibilities of womanhood. Through the change of gender, she understands the suppression of the women as the weaker sex. She feels that women are always neglected and stereotyped as ignorant and poor.

Since Orlando has occupied both the nature of man and woman, she can recognize the qualities of both sexes. She feels that she belongs to neither of the sexes. She claims to know all the secrets of both the genders. Through her statement, it is clear that there is no specific binary between the sexes;

‘Thus it is no great wonder, as she pitted one sex against the other, and found each alternately full of the most deplorable infirmities.’ (Woolf, 152)

Woolf has described about androgyny in more specific form. She states,

‘ In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place , and often it is only the clothes that keeps the male and female likeness , while underneath the sex is the very opposite from what it is above .’ (Woolf, 181)

On her return to England from Constantinople, Orlando understands that being as woman, she cannot enjoy social privileges. Being a woman has been compared with being dead. She had married a woman named Rosina Pepita when she was an English Duke and her three sons do not recognize him/her as a father. Her marriage during the Dukedom and having an affair with Sasha at the same time proves that man can be polygamous but woman cannot. She will not inherit wealth any more. Even when she walks alone on the road, she needs the help of a man. Orlando gets married to a person named Shell who also alters his social position according to the binary structure of male and female. Though Orlando does not feel happy in the marital relationship, she has to get married to confirmation her gender identity.

Orlando only gets conscious of her changed sex after the social performances of gender. Her gender can only be identified based on the cultural construction of gender. Through the different social positions, Orlando has seen the positioning of self through different social contexts and situations .In her mind Orlando has both male and female segments of personality. She is not bounded by any sex . She has created a balanced aesthetics by keeping in mind the male and female segments at a time. Her mind is undivided. It is not divided by social experiences. She resembles the androgynous incandescent and undivided mind. Her subjectivity is so fluid that it does not construct any firm gender. Orlando goes through the Elizabethan period, to Restoration period and to the Spirit of Eighteenth century and she has seen the changes from one century to the other. And in each period she tries to reassure her identity through social confirmation. Through her attributes of both male and female genders, Orlando can see the flaws and the differences of both male and female. By knowing both genders, Orlando understands the scope

of mind that lies beyond physical sex. Her awareness of both the genders and seeing the scope for freedom is reflected in the following lines;

‘Thus it is no great wonder , as she pitted one sex against the other , and found each alternately full of most deplorable infirmities and was not sure to which she belongs . (Woolf, 152) The category of sex creates the social privileges and social discriminations and the social regulation of sex and gender is thus created. The power of the male and female alternates when they intermix and shifts from one to another.

There are other characters in the novel which have ambiguity of sex and gender. One is the Russian Princess Sasha .There is a difference between her sex and her social performance .Woolf has played with the gender role by creating ambiguous characters that has a distinction between the appearance and the performance. Orlando falls in love with Sasha . Sasha’s nature is so confusing that it is hard to say whether she is a male or female. Her outer appearance is described in the following manner:

‘A figure which whether boy’s or woman’s for the loose tunic and the trousers of the Russian fashion served to disguise the sex, filled him with the highest curiosity’ (Woolf, 36).

Orlando’s inner ambiguous nature attracts him to Sasha. In their relationship Sasha and Orlando play both the roles of female and male. Sasha’s sexuality is as doubtful as Orlando’s. From the very beginning Orlando is uncertain of Sasha’s gender. She looks like a boy but she is not a boy at all. Her body seems like a boy but she is not a boy at all.

‘But no boy ever had a mouth like that; no boy had eyes which looked as if they had been fished from the bottom of the sea.’ (Woolf, 37)

Orlando fails to define Sasha in a fixed gender. Her ambiguous nature seems to him unnatural.

‘Whom had he loved, what had he loved, he asked himself in a tumult of emotion’ (Woolf, 38).

Sasha’s gender is not specific rather it is hidden. Through her character, Woolf has questioned the static form of gender which Elizabethan society demanded. Sasha’s nature is mysterious and

it cannot be defined within the specific term of gender. There is something always hidden behind her appearance and her physical structure.

‘For in all she said , however open she seemed and voluptuous , there was something hidden ; in all she did , however daring , there was something concealed.’ (Woolf, 45).

Orlando finally loses Sasha who betrays her, and he lives with her memory for the rest of his life. He scolds her for being faithless and calls her ‘faithless, mutable, fickle, devil, adulteress, deceiver’ (Woolf, 62). Orlando violently establishes his masculine power over the female to demean her.

Before leaving for Constantinople as an Ambassador, Orlando meets another queer character named Archduchess Harriet who is a cousin of the queen. She falls for Orlando while seeing him writing in solitude. But her physical nature has is also startling. Six feet in height, she resembles a startled hare. When Orlando feels love for Archdutchess he feels that his love itself is queer and ambiguous. He feels the duality in love like the dual nature of his body and mind. It is stated;

‘ For love , to which we may now return , has two faces ; one white , the other is black ; two bodies ; one smooth , the other hairy . It has two hands, two feet, two nails, two indeed of every member and each one is the exact opposite to the other.’ (Woolf, 112)

After returning from Constantinople, Orlando finds that the Archduchess is actually a male and he claims that he has changed his gender into female when he fell in love with Duke Orlando. So, here it is seen that sex is formed regardless of the binary of gender.

During the Victorian period in the 19th century, there was some progress in the granting of rights and opportunities for women. Though men still enjoyed the benefits of patriarchy, there was a female queen. Queen Victoria ascended the throne at the age of 18 and she was symbolically superior to others. But gender discrimination did not disappear. In the novel, Orlando finally completes the manuscript of her novel ‘The Oak Tree’ and she gets the permission of publishing it through Neil Green, a poet who was once a rebel. Neil had once criticized Orlando’s writing but finally her novel gets published by him. This is a symbol of women’s victory over men.

Orlando's love for poetry and finally her emergence as a writer proves that by being a writer he can surpass the boundary of the body and can create the art because of her androgynous nature.

In the conclusion, we can say that by portraying an androgynous figure whose gender is determined through performativity, Woolf has tried to eliminate the boundary between male and female.. Orlando constitutes different identities and which s/he appropriates differently in different periods of history. Woolf criticizes the restrictions imposed by gender roles in a humorous way, deconstructing gender norms by showing that one can freely choose any attributes. With the fluidity in the nature of Orlando, Woolf has created an androgynous harmony and has diminished the power of gender categories.

Second Chapter

Mrs. Dalloway

Looking through the characters androgynous mind and social performativity

Mrs. Dalloway is the narrative of an upper class woman Clarissa Dalloway. The novel opens with walking on the London Street on a particular day of June 1923. In Post –World War I situation there is also another parallel story of Septimus Smith who is a shell shocked soldier trying to figure out the present situation through his disturbed mind. The opening discussion is followed by Clarissa's party where she has invited all upper class aristocrats in London. The novel was written in 1925 with a woman's voice as the central narrator. The streets of London as observed as she walks the streets, her internal feelings are revealed. They are also separated through the emotion of stream of consciousness. As she walks the street her internal feelings are revealed. They are also juxtaposed with thoughts and emotions. The stream of consciousness style allows for the flow of the emotions and thoughts. Each character has a deep personal concern and their inner thoughts are linked with others. Mrs. Dalloway is the culmination of the thought processes of all other characters. Virginia Woolf created Clarissa as a call for change portraying a woman with her own identity. Thus a new era is created for women's voice. It is a self- reflexive novel where a central character communicates with the fragmented souls and finally gathers them together in a particular atmosphere. By analyzing different characters, I will try to portray the androgynous coalition of the mind and the formation of gender through the social performances in the novel.

Mrs. Dalloway is a self-reflexive novel which demonstrates the characteristics of modernism. Though there is no specific time frame of modernism, it is thought to have started in the late 19th century and the early 20th century. Modernism implies a break from the tradition in writing and perhaps the human mind which is fragmented, shifting, related to the past and repetitive and circular. The fragmented mind form and the fragmentation of the individual thought process are related. Mrs. Dalloway has represented the internal thought process of each who is not always

socially connected to each other. Each individual has a sense of separateness as well as a collective form. This particular style is called stream of consciousness. This narrative style imposes an internal view of the characters mind, their imagination, and personality, fragmentation of thought process, their own inner voice and psychological conflict. Each character is connected to the other in some way. The third person point of view it is a bit ambiguous. The narrative style is self-reflexive and each character leaves a shadow of his/ her personality and view. The fractured environment has connected the characters through devices like airplane, the motorcar, the strike of Big Ben, the vehicle of the Queen etc. Virginia talks about her modern writing style in her essay 'Modern Fiction';

'The mind receives a myriad impressions-trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpest of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms, and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged, life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.' (Woolf, 4)

Woolf has also reflects the socialistic view of the early 20th century. There is a shift in class, economy and technology. Most of the characters of the novel belong to the aristocratic upper class. Characters like Clarissa and Richard Dalloway, Lady Bradshaw, Sir William, Mrs Hilbery all represent the upper class. All are gathered at a party that Clarissa throws. There is mention of Labour party and political unrest in India in the novel. Richard Dalloway is a member of parliament. The arrival of the motor car through which we get introduced to the character Septimus Smith is in the novel. There is several mention of airplane which is a symbol of advancement of the technology. In a way, it means a woman's wish to the exploration of the modern world in the novel. The aftermath and destruction of World War I which is depicted through Septimus Smith. There is a criticism of the world war. Through the character of Septimus it has been shown how a war can have dark impact on a person's life. It destroys friendship, personal life, family life and the person lives in trauma for the rest of his/ her life. The inner space of London has been portrayed in the walking of Virginia Woolf. There is a vivid landscape of social life of London in the novel. It depicts that a modern woman can perceive the world through her own eye. Through her travel on the London street, she finds the social order

among her disturbed thoughts. Her inner lacking of orderliness has searched for structural order in the street of London. Each character is passing through the streets of London and building up connection. The search for the outer elements is constructing the stream of consciousness of the characters. Virginia Woolf has combined the lack of orderliness of her life with the order of London. Jane Moorcroft Wilson has mentioned this in his book 'Virginia Woolf's London'

‘ she achieved this mainly by bringing a particular stream of consciousness , whatever it may have been preoccupied with , to the present moment in time and place , by focusing upon some object , then caused another mind to focus upon the same object.’ (Wilson, Jane Moorcroft, 132).

Each character is moving through the streets of London. They are meeting each other, having conversations, crossing each other's and creating the plots. In the beginning of the novel Clarissa goes to Bond Street to buy flower, then she hears the sound of a motor car which is heard by Septimus Smith and he interprets it through his lunatic state of mind. Then he and his wife go to Harley Street to see a psychiatrist and for that purpose they wait at the Regent Park. Then Septimus sees an airplane which he and other characters in the novel interpret in different ways. There are many such links of the incidents in the novel. When the ambulance is carrying the dead body of Septimus Smith, Peter; the lover of Clarissa hears the siren on his way to Clarissa's party and tells Clarissa about Septimus's death. Peter Walsh who is a middle aged ambiguous person ,tries to offer Clarissa his love and Clarissa refuses it each time. Like Peter each character is interrelated to each other. There is another use of Big Ben in the novel to link the characters. When Peter is having a conversation with Clarissa and is expressing his love , the Big Ben strikes and Clarissa's daughter Elizabeth enters and Clarissa promptly says , ‘ Here comes my Elizabeth’ (Woolf, 49). This is described as ‘inconsiderate’ and indifferent for breaking the suspense of creating connection between Clarissa and Peter. Virginia Woolf's love for London springs from its order and synchronization. In this way she brings out the orderliness from chaos. For example; the novel describes Bond Street in the following words;

‘Bond Street fascinated her ; Bond Street early in the morning in the season ; its flags flying , its shops; no splash; no glitter ; one roll of tweed in the shop where her father had bought his suits for sixty years; a few pearls; salmon on an ice block’(Woolf, 9)

Through the character and the parallel narration of Septimus and Clarissa, Mrs. Dalloway creates the intermingling of the masculine and feminine spheres of mind. The narration of the both characters, their philosophy, pleasure, pain and finally the ending takes place parallel way. Clarissa and Septimus are two distinct characters; Clarissa is a upper class lady who is hosting a party at her house and she is preparing for it. On the other hand, Septimus is a veteran of World War I who is shell shocked with the massive destruction of the war and mourns the death of his friend Evelyn in the battlefield. He is going through hard times and his relationship with his wife is suffering. The mind thus portrays both a feminine mind and a masculine mind. She is reflecting on Coleridge's vision on androgyny,

‘Androgynous mind is creative, incandescent and undivided’ (Woolf, 103)

There is no distinction between male and female quality in the mind. These two aspects stay together and function together and create the epitome of performance. Both the characters are empty, restless, and unhappy and they are trying to seek for an identity. They are both trying to construct their own identity. Clarissa Dalloway is not socially independent. She is married to a Parliament member Richard Dalloway with whom she pretends and consoles herself that she is happy. She does not participate in the worldly affairs like other women such as Lady Bexborough and Lady Bruton who take part in politics. Her marital life is almost broken and shabby. Here she is trying to construct her own identity by arranging a social gathering and by trying to be a perfect host. Neither she nor her husband feels connected to each other. Clarissa reassures herself by saying she has a perfect marriage with a perfect man and denies the proposal of Peter. But deep inside she compares Richard with Peter. In fact she likes Peter since he offers her deep devotion. For this reason, Clarissa walks through the London streets and tries to observe the nature and the people and other daily happenings to transcendence her pain and emptiness. Clarissa feels that her life is meaningless. Clarissa's mind seeks beauty in the nature and she can feel and observe deeply. But as an identity, as a person she feels that her body is empty. Her persona as a married upper class woman means nothing. Clarissa states,

‘This body with all its capacities seems nothing, nothing at all. She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen, unknown; there being no more marrying, no more children

now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond street , this being Mrs Dalloway , not even Clarissa any more , this being Mrs Richard Dalloway .
(Woolf, 9)

On the other hand, Septimus plunges through death and seeks triumph through this. Septimus is self- conscious about his mental illness, the inability to feel nature. He knows the war has left a scar in his mind. He is shell shocked at the destruction of the war and the loss of his friend Evans. Though he is married to an Italian girl Luckrezia for four or five years, who left her country to marry him, Septimus feels disgusted around her and he cannot stand her. She disgusts him :

‘She is always interrupting’ (Woolf, 24)

Like Clarissa, Septimus’s relationship is also broken and meaningless. Luckrezia also does not feel happy and cannot tolerate his madness. She manages to cure his illness which Septimus knows is incurable. Finally Rezia decides to go back to Italy and start regretting for marrying him. Her wedding ring slips which is a sign of the ending of their relationship. The characters invisibly meet when the motor car crosses. The sound of the airplane creating smoke strikes Septimus on his way to Regent Park with a sense of beauty which Clarissa also observes on her walks. The Big Ben strikes when Septimus is pondering about his friend Evans and Clarissa is preparing for sleep. They both like literature. Septimus cannot relate the beautiful nature of liking literature with the destruction of the war. His creative mind is horrified, shattered with the cruelty of the war. He has deep knowledge about great writings of Shakespeare, Keats, Darwin’s ‘The Origin of Species, Dante, and Barnard Shaw. He cannot connect the humanity of what he learnt with the inhuman experience he had in the war. Clarissa has also the fondness for literature and the Shakespeare. She finds beauty in nature. She deeply meditates in all the natural beauties. They both find connection with nature since they both have a strong sense of isolation. Clarissa finds beauty in the broad day light. She explains;

‘What a lark, what a plunge!’ (Woolf, 1)

Septimus also ponders on the beauty of nature. In Regent Park he watches the 'watery gold glow and fade with the astonishing sensibility of some creature on the roses, on the wallpaper.'

(Woolf, 148)

Septimus cannot endure his own pain and being able to feel everything so deeply. He understands, he can escape this trauma through death. He seeks death as an escape from his worldly suffering of the soul. He has been thinking about committing suicide for a long time but finally he jumps from the window when Sir William arrives for his treatment. He breaks free from the worldly experience through his death. Death becomes a means of escape and ecstasy to Septimus. His death finally connects him with Clarissa when she hears about it from. Through the news of Septimus's death, Clarissa feels her connection with Septimus. Though Clarissa controls her world, she feels a void in it like Septimus. She feels an immense emptiness. Her body is trying to seek an identity as a perfect hostess but her mind seeks independence through death. She wants to go beyond the confinement of self and her social world. There is a sense of eternity which the mind can surpass, not the body. Clarissa sees Septimus's death as a self-affirmation in a timeless situation where he can actually find eternal beauty and resurrection. This is a kind of reconfirmation of identity where the body does not matter rather the mind can connect with each other. It reestablishes Clarissa's transcendental thoughts. She thinks that the body is temporary and only the mind is eternal and when the mind surpasses the body, it can spread wide and build connection with eternal souls. And this is the way it goes beyond the body. Clarissa says,

'Since our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentarily compared with others, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive.' (Woolf, 162).

Clarissa feels that there is an embrace of the real self through death. It leaves the colossal reality and finds peace. Clarissa thus thinks Septimus's death the happiest incident. On the other hand, Clarissa tries to reconstruct her identity through social connection and gathering. Through his death, her mind connects with Septimus's mind. During his lifetime though his performativity and repeated acts Septimus tried to recreate his gender and form an identity. Septimus had to struggle inner fighting just to be a mere civilian, enjoying nature, literature, married life. But his fragmented mind interrupts and so finally he separates his mind from his body through committing suicide. Clarissa has also tried to form her identity as a perfect wife, hostess, by

creating social gathering and a lavish party for which she concretely plans and tries to build relationship and connects with people. But every time she fears that her mind is empty. Her female voice acts like an alternative theory for gender binary. As Beauvoir has mentioned in her 'Second Sex' that a man is transcendent since he can surpass his social position because of his social accessibility. He creates the position of 'self' by portraying the sexed body of the female which is disposed as 'other'. Women are immanent since they cannot overcome their situation and are confined to a particular sphere. In this novel, Woolf has situated a female as the 'self' since the whole story is narrating her activities and Septimus appears as the 'other' because he is the narration of his life that Clarissa realizes her reality. Here, Clarissa mentions the transcendence through which she overcomes the subjectivity of the body. She builds up the connection between her soul and Septimus's soul. It is transcending and integrates the subjectivity and though the transcendence, the masculine mind and the feminine mind blends and create an androgynous intercourse. To quote the essay from 'The Concept of Self in Virginia Woolf' that

'The two selves of gender are parted': they share no personal history, they never actually meet and never have meet. Still, as the critic further asserts, Woolf manages to bring them together with the help of some points of transition established at the level of the reading process' (Nicolae , 4)

The reference to Shakespeare in the novel brings back Virginia Woolf's statement in 'A Room of One's Own' that Shakespeare has an incandescent mind which can form the best piece of art and can strengthen the androgynous vision of the novel.

In the novel Clarissa feels sexually attracted to Sally Seton who is a free spirited, rebellious woman and together they wanted to bring the revolution in the society. Then they both got married but still they feel a connection for each other. Sally has a husband and five sons and Clarissa is a mother of one daughter and wife of a Parliamentarian. There had been a romantic lesbian relationship between the women before they got married. According to Clarissa, Sally has 'extraordinary beauty of the kind she most admired, dark, large-eyed with that quality which since she hadn't got it herself' (Woolf, 33). Clarissa has unusual, queer and absurd feeling for

Sally. Clarissa claims that it is not like the feeling for a man rather it has an immense sense of togetherness and it may only exist between two grown up women.

‘Absurd, it was very absurd. But the charm was overpowering’ (Woolf, 35)

The most exquisite moment of Clarissa’s life is kissing Sally. She marks it as a true moment of passion. She even feels angry with Peter when he interrupts this intense moment. Sally also feels attraction for Clarissa even after her marriage. By depicting a lesbian relationship and a rebellious character like Sally, Woolf tries to break the perception of normativity. She has pictured a woman’s love relationship by putting aside traditional views about heterosexual relationship. Sally is a revolutionary character who does not perform traditional feminine attributes. She smokes like a man, moves like a man and her body gestures are free- spirited. She bicycles around the terrace and talks about social revolution by abolishing private property. Through her sexual performativity she is trying to build up the attributes of the masculine gender. Through the repetitive actions played upon her body, she is trying to deconstruct her body and builds up a transfigured identity. In the chapter of ‘Subversive Bodily Acts’ in ‘Gender Trouble’ Butler has noted that

‘ Cultural values emerge as the result of an inscription on the body , understood as a medium, indeed a blank page; in order for this inscription to signify , however that medium must itself be destroyed’ (Butler, 130).

Woolf breaks the concept of hetero- normativity by portraying a homosexual relationship between women. She breaks the norm through the character of Sally Seton who transforms ideologically the natural forms attributed to women. There is a distinction between sex and the sexed body. As Beauvoir says ‘one is not born as a woman, one becomes a woman’ which means women are not the cultural construction of the female body. Wittig has extended this perspective in her lesbian theory inscribed in ‘one is not born as a woman’ that lesbians are breaking the binary relation of woman as opposed to man. She thinks that lesbian are not fit the category of sex . She says that

‘ A lesbian has to be something else, a not-woman , a not –man , a product of the society , not a product of nature , for there is no nature in society. (Wittig, 105)

Lesbian immerses with the concept of third gender. Since there is a cultural and political interpretation of the body, Woolf destroys compulsory social relation by forming a new gender and new identity. Thus Sally Seton's body is fragmented and is beyond the male female categorized body. It is an internal subversion of the body. So, it can be noted that Woolf is creating the sphere of another category of gender which is like creating a new form, a new order out of the tormented body. Modernism also aspires to create a new order out of the scattered forms.

Septimus also ponders over the loss of his friend Evans who died in Italy during World War I. He cannot forget his feelings for him though he is married to a beautiful woman Luckrezia. He feels lonely and empty. He hallucinates about Evans while observing the nature and imagines that his body without mud, without wound. This is what keeps his happiness. This is what gives him happiness. He hears Evan's voice everywhere and tries to search for him but breaks into tears by finding the reality every time in which he has a message in death. He feels that there is a relationship between them and by trying to engage with Evan's soul, he surpasses his body. His suicide is an attempt to join with him. Here, we can see that Septimus's body is trying to imitate or perform heterosexual normativity by marrying a woman. He tries to prove that he is an average general human being who is engaged in a heterosexual relationship. He is trying to form his gender within a binary framework. But his sexuality and identity formation is not that simple. Wittig has said that sex is performed within an institutional heterosexual relationship and Foucault thinks that

‘Unity imposed upon the body by the category of sex is disunity’ (Butler, 114).

According to Foucault sex is established in socially and culturally institutionalized binary power discourses. And here Septimus is forming his own identity breaking through the institutional power discourse. His mind surpasses his sexualized body and gets liberty by committing suicide.

Let us just take a glance at another character. Mrs Kilman, Clarissa's daughter Elizabeth's teacher who is very fond of her student. Clarissa cannot stand the closeness between her daughter and Mrs Kilman. She is jealous of her. She hates the idea of Mrs Kilman. Elizabeth thus leaves for making Mrs Kilman perplexed. Mrs Kilman wants to walk over Clarissa's body to subdue her soul. The distinction between mind and the body is mentioned several times in the novel. Mrs

Kilman wants to cross Clarissa's body to subdue her soul. Clarissa also feels envy of Mrs Kilman, not the body but her mind. The mind-body dualism theory proposed by Rene Decartes talks about the fusion of both the mind that creates human subjectivity. Butler has also mentioned in her 'Gender Trouble';

'Inner and outer constitute a binary distinction that stabilizes and consolidates the coherent subject' (Butler, 134)

Finally, Woolf's androgynous mind gives her the capability to write without the consciousness of the sex. In her mind the male and female power co-exists and functions together. These two traits are functioning together. In 'A Room for One's Own' she has argued that to be productive a mind should have both male and female aspects. Thus Mrs Dalloway's mind is

'Unconscious about the sex, not the void of sexless absence' (Revaluating Woolf's androgynous mind, 15)

By creating a central female voice, she has shifted the notion of 'self' which is generally attributed upon the male. Clarissa lives her life as a hostess and as a housewife by connecting herself with Septimus's soul and by intermingling two opposite gendered minds. By depicting both male and female mind in the novel and by connecting them with each other, Virginia Woolf has merged the boundary between male and female mind and has created an androgynous vision. The characters are divided only through the social performances which is set by the heteronormative society.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have tried to show how social performance gradually builds up gender identities, and the fluidity in the process of such constructions. Virginia Woolf, as a feminist writer wanted to diminish the distinction between male and female by merging the two into one. Through the conceptualization of androgyny, she tried to abolish fixed gender categories which are seen to be natural. By choosing two of Woolf's novels, I have tried to prove how Woolf used androgyny to portray the interconnection of male and female minds and by using Butler's theory of performativity, I have tried to prove how gender is constructed by the repetitive performance of social norms.

Through a reading of the novel *Orlando*, I have tried to show how Woolf satirized the social construction of gender over different periods of history. Orlando's navigation over different historical periods and changes from one sex to another helps to question heterosexual sexual norms established by society and most importantly, it helps to diminish the discrimination towards women in the society which is shown to be normal. Orlando's frequent sex change shows that sex is not a-priori rather it has a historical, cultural and social phenomenon. Orlando does not feel sexual difference in him or herself, but society forces him/her to acknowledge these and through performativity, take on ascribed gender roles. He feels that he is neither male, nor female. By inhabiting both genders as s/he travels from one period to another, the reader is shown that gender is not a natural phenomenon, but is a social construction. The male and female sides of his/her intermix and create an androgynous mind. This androgynous mind sometimes seem to be man-womanly and woman-manly, and this intermingling of male and female minds, creates a balanced and harmonious state. Though this mind, Orlando observes that the body is only a passive medium to interpret the social norms and by repeating these social norms, gender is formed and thus, Woolf views that the social discrimination between men and women based on gender is not natural as well as not right

In the second novel *Mrs Dalloway* the central female character occupies a dominant role in the narrative, and it is through her that all the other characters' minds are perceived. The different characters are linked up with each other through different incidents and they finally gather together at a certain place. The detailed characterization of male and female voices helps to establish an androgynous atmosphere in the novel, where male and female are bound together through inhabiting the same space. In the end of the novel, Clarissa and Septimus's mind are unified thus reflecting the intercourse of male and female minds. Septimus's death makes him surpass bodily limitations, and Clarissa, who feels strangely in unity with Septimus's sufferings, builds a unity of souls between male and female. Their bodies represent the surface where social events or norms are inscribed, such as Clarissa's identity as a perfect hostess. By putting Clarissa's narrative in the centre, Woolf challenges social norms where women's lives are dominated by patriarchal rules.

Through an analysis of these two novels, I have tried to prove how Woolf has created the anonymity of mind through androgyny and questioned the social rules and regulations which form gender binaries. By looking at the characterization of male and female in the novel, I have tried to prove that gender is a construction of the society and it is affirmed by the repetitive social act which reflects Butler's performativity theory.

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