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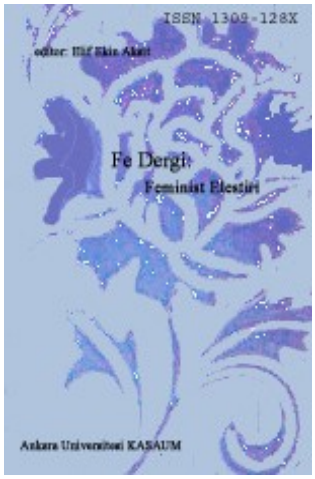

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Muzaffer Derya Nazlıpınar Subaşı

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Dillendiril(e)meyen Kadın Bedeninin Orlando'da Dile Gelişi

Muzaffer Derya Nazlıpınar Subaşı [*]

Kadın deneyimi ve bedeni her daim egemen ataerkil yapı ve onun cinsiyetçi dili tarafından sapkın olarak tanımlanmış ve horlanmıştır. Özellikle kadın bedeni, barındırdığı cinselliği, metinselliği ve tanımlan(a)mayan özellikleri dolayısıyla, bu ataerkil yapı için kaçınılması ve uzak durulması gereken 'karanlık bir kıta'dır. Bu nedenle, dişil arzuların ifadesi erkek egemen metinlerde göz ardı edilmiş ve/veya gizlenmiştir. Ancak, Medusa'nın dehşet verici efsanesiyle tarih boyunca bedenlerinden ve cinselliklerinden uzaklaştırılmış olan kadınlar için günümüz, derin uykularından uyanma ve kendilerine dikte ettirilen dilsel, tarihsel ve cinsel sınırlamalara direnme yollarını arama vaktidir. Bu direnişi gerçekleştirebilmek ve yaymak ise ancak, kadınların, kadın bedeninin dile geldiği ve dişil dil ile oluşturulmuş dişil yazını yaratması ile mümkündür. Ataerkil ideolojiler ile dil arasındaki ilişkiyi fark eden ve anlayan ilk kadın yazarlardan biri olan Virginia Woolf, kadın bedeninin ve dişil metinlerin erkek egemen dil ve söylemler ile ifade edilemeyeceğini savunur. Bu yüzden Woolf, kadın arzusunu ve bedenini ifade edebilecek dişil bir dil ve yazın yaratmanın yollarına odaklanır. Argümanlarını Virginia Woolf'un Orlando adlı eserine dayandıran bu çalışma, kadınların içselleştirilmiş reddedilme ve aşağılanma korkularını yıkarak, dillendiremedikleri kadın bedenlerini ve deneyimlerini ifade edebilen çok yönlü ve akışkan dişil dil ve söylemleri yaratma yollarını sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kadın Bedeni ve Cinselliği, Dişil Dil, Yapısöküm, Fallosentrizm, Androjen, Dişil Yazın

Articulating The Unspeakable Female Body in Orlando

Female experience and body has always been defined and ill-treated as deviant by the dominant patriarchal structure and its sexist language. It is the 'dark continent' full of indefinable things, like female sexuality and textuality that must be avoided. That is why, the expression of female desire has always been ignored and/or disguised in male texts. However, today is high time women, having been estranged from their bodies and sexualities throughout history with the terrifying myth of Medusa, emerged from their deep sleep and seek the ways of resisting linguistic, historical, and sexual confinements placed on them. To be able to realize and extend that resistance, they have endeavoured to create a new feminine rhetoric, which is only possible through writing with a female language and through the reclamation of the female body. Virginia Woolf, being one of the first woman writers, noticing and understanding the relationship between dominant male ideology and language, knows the inexpressibility of the female body and the parallel improbability of a female text through a borrowed man-made language. Hence, Woolf focuses on the ways of creating a feminine rhetoric and a female language that could express female desire and body. This study, focusing on Virginia Woolf's Orlando, aims to present the practices of de(con)structing the internalized fear of rejection and inferiority of women, and establishing a new, female-oriented tradition through articulating the unspeakable female body written in a female language, which creates multiple meanings and fluid identities.

Keywords: Female Body and Sexuality, Female Language, De(con)struction, Phallocentrism, Androgyny, Feminine Writing

Virginia Woolf's Pursuit of a Female Language

I thought how unpleasant it is to be locked out; and I thought how it is worse perhaps to be locked in; and, thinking of the safety and prosperity of the one sex and of the poverty and insecurity of the other

[*] Assistant Professor, Kütahya Dumlupınar University, English Translation and Interpreting Department, derya.nazlipinar@dpu.edu.tr

and of the effect of tradition and of the lack of tradition upon the mind of a writer, I thought at last that it was time to roll up the crumpled skin of the day, with its arguments and its impressions and its anger and its laughter, and cast it into the hedge. A thousand stars were flashing across the blue wastes of the sky (Woolf 1929, 21).

Having been prohibited from entering the library of 'Oxbridge'[1], representing the male *logos* and elitism, Virginia Woolf describes the miserable status of women who have been 'locked out' for centuries, but she also adds immediately that 'it is worse, perhaps, to be locked in' – locked in by the man-made ideologies and its sexist and discriminatory language. For her, the current language is inadequate to represent the female experience since "the very form of the sentence does not fit her. It is a sentence made by men; it is too loose, too heavy, too pompous for a woman's use" (1979, 48). Thus, it is high time for women to 'roll up the crumpled skin', and for women writers to write authentically by "altering and adapting the current sentence until she writes one that takes the natural shape of her thought without crushing or distorting it" (ibid, 48). Woolf thinks that it is difficult to clear the long-established man-made language as it has been internalized both by men and women, and become the norm. Thus, Woolf regards subversion as being a first step in the history of women's writing. She asserts that women should start from scratch, and "explore their own sex" first, to be able "to write of women as women have never been written of before" (ibid, 49). Woolf believes that, at the end of this process, women will create a "feminine prose", through which they can express a female inner reality by defying the rules of conventional language (ibid, 49).

However, she accepts the difficulty in defining the word 'feminine', and adds that nobody can know "until she has expressed herself in all the arts and professions open to human skill" (ibid, 60). Knowing this fact, Woolf never gives up developing and refining her concept of 'feminine prose' throughout her whole writing career. As a woman novelist, she wants to create her own style since she believes that feminine writing has been left untheorized so far. Thus, Woolf experiments ceaselessly in new forms and new techniques, and tries to challenge "the accepted forms, discard the unfit, create others which are more fitting" (ibid, 67) for women's use, because for her, a woman's sentence is not the same as a man's sentence as she states in *A Room of One's Own*:

Man's writing... so direct, so straightforward... . It indicated such freedom of mind, [...] such confidence in himself. One had a sense of physical well-being in the presence of this well-nourished, well-educated, free mind... . But after reading a chapter or two a shadow seemed to lie across the page... something like the letter 'I'. ... One began to be tired of 'I'; honest and logical; as hard as a nut, and polished for centuries by good teaching and good feeding... . But—here I turned a page or two, looking for something or other—in the shadow of the letter 'I' all is shapeless as mist. Is that a tree? No, it is a woman. But... she has not a bone in her body... . But... I had said 'but' too often. ... 'But—I am bored!' But why was I bored? Partly because of the dominance of the letter 'I' and the aridity... . Nothing will grow there (1929, 83 - 84).

Being one of the first woman writers, noticing and understanding the relationship between dominant male ideology and language, Virginia Woolf is sure that it is impossible for women and women writers to express their ideas and feelings with that 'man-made' language. Therefore, Woolf calls women writers to free themselves from all the constructions of masculinity having been formed according to its never-ending demands and needs. To be able to realize this, once they have set aside the problems of money and time, women writers need to overcome two obstacles: the shade of father, the patriarchal tradition lurking in the background, and the cliché of ideal womanhood, "Angel in the House", who does not have "a mind or a wish of her own" (1979, 59). For Woolf, killing the Angel should be considered a priority, because if she had not killed that 'angel', the angel would have killed her. Thus, it is a kind of self- defence; as Woolf puts it:

Had I not killed her she would have killed me. She would have plucked the heart out of my writing. Thus, whenever I felt the shadow of her wing or the radiance of her halo upon my page, I took up the inkpot and flung it at her. She died hard. Her fictitious nature was of great assistance to her. It is far harder to kill a phantom than a reality...Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer (ibid, 59).

Once women writers get rid of the "perpetual admonitions" of the patriarchal male voice, their minds are free and "literature is open to [them]" (Woolf 1929, 63). Now, they can challenge the traditional representationalism in all forms and replace the rigid and authoritarian male sentence with the flexible and inclusive female one. In this connection, Woolf, in her review of *Revolving Lights,* praises Dorothy Richardson's style and her exploration of a unique feminine thought, as below:

> *Miss Richardson has invented, or if she has not invented, developed and applied to her own uses, a sentence which we might call the psychological sentence of the feminine gender. It is a more elastic fiber than the old, capable of stretching to the extreme, of suspending the frailest particles, of enveloping the vaguest shapes (1979, 191).*

Like Richardson, Woolf's sentence structure resists linear and conventional patterns of the narrative, so it disrupts the hierarchically structured patriarchal culture and its man-made language by using looser and more accretive sentences in accordance with the natural shape of the thoughts and feelings of women. To be able to incorporate female experiences and concerns into literary works, and prove how language is the medium for construction of human 'self', Woolf challenges the ready-made grids of phallocentric thinking and representationalism in all discourses in many ways. One of them is her deliberate attempt to penetrate into the "regions beneath" (ibid, 191) realism to be able to explore the inner and subjective reality of the female mind that has been overlooked by man-made language. For Woolf, the inner reality of the female mind is like atoms falling down, as she puts it:

> *Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness. Let us not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small (1984, 104).*

In fact, considering this unpatterned and chaotic psychic reality as the shaping factor of her works, Woolf attempts to create a female language that is "capable of stretching to the extreme, of suspending the frailest particles, of enveloping the vaguest shapes" (1979, 191). She believes that feminine writing, with its less restricted and more subtle language, can represent experience that has not previously found representation in the male-dominated world. According to Woolf, this representation takes place when the ambiguous boundaries between identity and origin – or more precisely self and mother – blur and the wholeness has been achieved again. She gives the details of coming to this awareness in her memoir, *A Sketch of the Past*:

> *I was looking at the flowerbed by the front door; "That is the whole", I said. I was looking at a plant with a spread of leaves; and it seemed suddenly plain that the flower itself was a part of the earth; that a ring enclosed what was the flower; and that was the real flower; part earth; part flower. It was a thought I put away as being likely to be very useful to me later (1985, 71).*

Apparently, the search for the lost mother and the desire of wholeness with her is the impetus behind Woolf's works. The 'invisible presence' of Julia Prinsep Duckworth Stephen has always inhabited and inspired Woof. Thus, to be able to deeply understand her intentions concerning feminine writing, it is necessary to focus on the relationship with her mother while studying her texts. The rhythm and sound of the semiotic, a residue of the pre-imaginary, pre-Oedipal, pre-symbolic realm closely related with mother's body, is always underneath her language. By resisting the symbolic realm of language associated with the Name-of-the-Father, Woolf attempts to rediscover the *chora* through rhythm, sound, and colour. Instead of using language simply for communication, she aims to recreate the experience and the sensation through descriptive language. Briefly, Woolf's usage of semiotic poetic language is one of the most defining features of her works. Throughout her texts, Woolf's characters try to find a way to move away from the phallocentric language of the symbolic towards the fluid language of the semiotic, including all the sensual elements inspired by the maternal body: the auditory, visual, olfactory, and tactile. Upon re-establishing the fusional unity with primeval mother, they discover the inadequacy and limitations of the phallocentric language. From that moment, their only aim is to create their own language by transcending the rigid boundaries of that symbolic language.

However, Woolf is also aware of the dangers of becoming obsessed with the pre- Oedipal mother and its disastrous consequences. In one sense, she knows very well that she must commit 'matricide' to live, as Julia Kristeva puts in her work, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia* (1989). Thus, she tries to demonstrate the dangers of attempting to return to the lost mother through her characters. In the meantime, Woolf also cannot resist 'the call of the mother'. As a result, the only solution for her is to create women characters exploring the possibilities of bridging the symbolic and the semiotic. This is another important feature of her feminine writing. That is, by consolidating masculine and feminine elements, or in other words symbolic and semiotic elements, which are regarded as in influential determinants in the process of the construction of subjectivity, she creates a new poetic language. In this way, Woolf facilitates, according to Christina Kay Moriconi, the "multiplicity of meaning" (1996, 8) by moving beyond the fixed confines of sexual differences. Thus, this new writing practice introduces a kind of "in-between" writing, a term introduced by Cixous in "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976, 883), with its emphasis on the connections, rather than the oppositions between woman and man. It is the unity of mind, or in Woolf's own words, "it is one of the tokens of the fully developed mind that it does not think specially or separately of sex". It is the 'androgynous mind' that can be both "man-womanly, and ... woman-manly" (1929, 82- 83), which enhances freedom to think creatively and liberation from sexual prejudice in literature. As long as one is able to think androgynously, according to Woolf, "the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties" (ibid, 82) to disrupt the fixed and the hierarchical structures of language in favour of a more fluid, sophisticated and heteroglossic discourse.

In fact, these remarks of Woolf concerning the theory of androgyny – signalling a close affiliation with Kristeva's and Cixous's vision of bisexuality and the construction of shared poetic language – disrupt the symbolic structures of language, meaning, and writing by connecting both sexes, and thus, have paved the way for the French feminists and become the essential component of 'écriture feminine' that questions how language is highly responsible for the patriarchal construction of feminity. In nearly all her literary and non-literary works, Woolf endorses fluid, permeable and multiple identities that challenge the essentialist structure of the symbolic order and enjoy the sensations of the semiotic expression. In this creation process, her pursuit of a female language is the key point. She uses it as a tool to feel and experience sensation rather than solely for communication. It is not simply aesthetic but it also explores the deepest regions of her experience as a woman through metaphors and symbols. Knowing that the body is the realm of the self, Woolf – like the French scholars Cixous, Kristeva and Irigaray, whose aspirations show uncanny parallels to the type of writing proposed by her – advocates that a woman should write and create with her maternal body. She believes that when she takes her body as a fruitful source bearing in mind the symbiotic relations with her mother, there will be no restriction and she will find a new way to make her silenced voice heard. For Woolf, this new way is the 'literature':

> *Literature is open to everybody. ... there is no gate, no lock, no bolt, that you can set upon the freedom of my mind. ... No doubt we shall find her knocking that into shape for herself when she has the free use of her limbs; and providing some new vehicle, not necessarily in verse, for the poetry in her (1929, 65).*

The Outspoken Female Body in *Orlando*

Expression of female desire, which has been ignored and disguised in male texts, starts to puzzle Woolf again in *Orlando* (*O*, henceforth). She decides to explore that vast, private and unapproachable 'dark continent' so that she can articulate the unspeakable body and its desires. Knowing the inexpressibility of the female body and the parallel improbability of a female text through a borrowed man-made language, Woolf focuses on the ways of creating a female language that could express female desire. However, this is a long process paved with adversity since the first language available to women is a language of patriarchy. It seems that women have but two options to be able to involve into the male discourse: they may "remain outside entirely, and thus communicate in incomprehensible babble. ... *or* remain inside (or perhaps on the 'underside') of masculine discourse and imitate it", as Parkin-Gounelas emphasized in "Women's Fantasy Writing and Woolf's Orlando" (1993, 142) (italic is mine). Woolf chooses neither of them and finds an alternative way to create the language that she seeks in *Orlando* by joining the polarized gender roles. Everything in *Orlando,* identities, polarities, and demarcations, coalesce into one and form the androgynous – "the man-womanly, and ... woman- manly" mind that is "fully fertilized and uses all its faculties" (Woolf 1929, 82). Eventually, Woolf practices what she

persistently praises in *A Room of One's Own*, and creates the character Orlando, who "operate[s]on both sides of the looking glass" (Parkin-Gounelas 1993, 147).

At the beginning of the novel, Orlando's biographer feels obliged to "*state the facts"* (*O*, pp. 32) because of the influence of the hegemonic masculinity, and gets irritated with his elusive subject, who does not fit in with any rules of time, gender, sexuality or pre-established patterns. Thus, not to let his subject "slip out of [his] grasp altogether" (*O*, 125), he vainly tries to get a firm hold on Orlando. On the one hand, the biographer attempts to find a "single thread" (*O*, 38) of personal identity for Orlando, but on the other hand, he is fascinated by Orlando's body, which encompasses all the features of masculine and feminine nature:

> *[T]hough the shapely legs, the handsome body, and the well-set shoulders were all of them decorated with various tints of heraldic light, Orlando's face […] was lit solely by the sun itself. …The red of the cheeks was covered with peach down; […] The lips themselves were short and slightly drawn back over teeth of an exquisite and almond whiteness. Nothing disturbed the arrowy nose in its short, tense flight; the hair was dark, the ears small, and fitted closely to the head. But, alas, that these catalogues of youthful beauty cannot end without mentioning forehead and eyes. […] he had eyes like drenched violets, so large that the water seemed to have brimmed in them and widened them; and a brow like the swelling of a marble dome pressed between the two black medallions which were his temples (O, 8-9).*

To the dismay of the biographer, who wants everything to be predictable and in its place, Orlando is full of "a thousand disagreeables" (*O*, 9) due to the feminine natures of his manly body. The legs, lips and face of 'male' Orlando, which are described in accordance with the words that are most commonly associated with females, are wisely displayed to the reader in a subversive way. Through these variances from the accepted and promoted binary standards of sex and gender expectations, Woolf attains her aim and creates an androgynous personhood by "combin[ing] in one the strength of a man and a woman's grace" (*O*, 65), which is echoed in her *A Room of One's Own*, where she continuously questions the presumption that all human beings belong to one of two discrete gender categories – either masculine or feminine – that have been permanently determined on their basis of biological sex characteristics. However, with her "man-womanly" and "woman-manly" (Woolf 1929, 82) character, Woolf, as Karin Elise Lokke suggests, "celebrates an alternative aesthetic, an alternative model of self in Orlando" (1992, 242) by mocking the masculinist phallocentric sublime. Not only does she cancel the gender distinctions but she also refutes Freud's famous statement: "Anatomy is destiny" (1924, 178).

The notion of the androgyny is mostly based on the well-known myth of the formation of the two genders recorded in Plato's *Symposium.* The round, rolling and omnipotent creatures having two heads, four legs and arms as well as the two genders, threaten to surpass the gods. Therefore, they have been punished by being sliced into two isometric pieces, which forms the two genders, as clarified below:

> *In the first place, …the sexes were not two as they are now, but originally three in number; there was man, woman, and the union of the two, having a name corresponding to this double nature, which had once a real existence, but is now lost, and the word "Androgynous" is only preserved as a term of reproach. … So great that they dare to climb mount Olympus and challenge the gods themselves. Furious, the gods discuss what is to be done with these troublesome humans, and Zeus comes up with an ingenious solution. … He said: "Me thinks I have a plan which will humble their pride and improve their manners; men shall continue to exist, but I will cut them in two and then they will be diminished in strength and increased in numbers; this will have the advantage of making them more pro table to us" (Plato 2013, 1017 - 1019).*

These Platonic formulations of androgyny have passed on to the Romantics, especially to Coleridge, who is fascinated with the ideal of the androgynous imagination. Then, twentieth-century writers influenced by these notions, including Woolf, try to explore and extend the idea of androgyny in their works. Contrary to the Gods leaving the 'Androgynous' creatures incomplete and distorted, Woolf has always clung fiercely to the unity of mind and claims that "the normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating" (1929, 82). However, critics Jones (1994), Marcus (1987) and Brown (1984) assert that despite advocating the unity and balance of the mind, what Woolf actually offers is the female-centred

type of androgyny. Woolf knows very well that, even in androgyny, the patriarchy would force the woman to either sacrifice her selfhood or remain as a negative 'other' existing within the male. Thus, in her androgynous symbolism, "femaleness is plainly its ideal" (Brown 1984, 200) and especially in *Orlando*, "the whole tenor of the work is to elevate femaleness at the expense of maleness" (Brown 1984, 200). Having this fact in her mind, Woolf manages to subvert the long-established phallocentric norms and gainsays the essentialist view of gender, stating 'anatomy is destiny', through the famous feminization process of Orlando that takes place during his stay in Turkey as ambassador to King Charles. In fact, Orlando's gender shift from masculine to feminine comes completely naturally, because it is not a kind of transformation but a realization of Orlando's female identity within herself/himself, so it is hardly a change:

> *Orlando had become a woman — there is no denying it. But in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity. Their faces remained, as their portraits prove, practically the same. His memory — but in future we must, for convention's sake, say 'her' for 'his,' and 'she' for 'he'— her memory then, went back through all the events of her past life without encountering any obstacle. ... The change seemed to have been accomplished painlessly and completely and in such a way that Orlando herself showed no surprise at it (O, 66-67).*

Though the change is a natural fact for Orlando, her naked 'female' body is represented as a veiled mystery when compared to the eloquent celebration of her 'male' body on the opening pages. The three ladies, 'Purity, Chastity and Modesty' struggle hard "to mitigate, to veil, to cover, to conceal, to shroud ... the naked Orlando" (*O*, 136) with their white garments. In fact, in this scene, Woolf reveals the myth of the unspeakable female body once again, and leaves the reader alone with those recurring questions: What is it that cannot be articulated in Orlando's body, and why does it have to be kept away from the male gaze by hiding beneath the veil?

According to Showalter, the veil traditionally represents the hymen associated with female sexuality, "a kind of permeable border, an image of confinement and enclosure that is also extremely penetrable" (1991, 148). Nevertheless, for Woolf, what is hidden beneath the veil is not the hymen symbolizing chastity and virginity, but Orlando's muffled "little clitoris" (Cixous 1981, 43), the symbol of androgyny. Rediscovering of her clitoral nature, Orlando "stood upright in complete nakedness [...], and while trumpets pealed Truth! Truth! Truth!" (*O*, 65), the three veiling figures disappear from the scene as they "have no choice left but confess — he was a woman" (*O*, 65). Now, it is time for Orlando to celebrate her hysteria, despite the Freudian notion claiming that the clitoral woman is hysteric. According to Freud, the female child has to undergo a maturation process that involves a move from clitoral (or masculine) eroticism to vaginal (or feminine) sexuality to become a woman. However, Orlando gets the utmost enjoyment of her 'new experience' and does not repress the pleasure of her clitoral nature as she understands fully that "hysteria ... is almost inevitable in female sexuality because of the double erogenous zones: one masculine, one feminine", as Sarah Kofman argues in *The Enigma of Woman* (1985, 37).

With the final depiction of the female Orlando, Woolf seems to suggest that Orlando has become a new type of woman, one who is able to explore the pleasures of both the sexes equally, because "she was man; she was woman; she knew the secrets, shared the weaknesses of each" (*O*, 75). Now, with her new status providing the "dual personality" (Knopp 1988, 30), like the 'clitoral jouissance', Orlando is able to utilize her intellect and creativity thoroughly. She puts a strain on phallocentric thinking and its man-made language, and liberates the self from any supposed determinism of the body through this dynamic and fluctuating quality of identity. Now, achieving the "greater ecstasy" (*O*, 74), situating her outside the inheritance of any established style or language, Orlando realizes that what she seeks is not "Life and a lover" (*O*, 87), "Life! A husband!" (*O*, 113), which means maintaining the pre-existing codes of male dominance and female submission; but to live and write outside the patriarchal definitions and frame. However, as a woman, to write about female desires through a borrowed male language is like spitting in the wind, so Orlando has to invent her own language, "a kind of shorthand ... to carry on a dialogue with herself about this Beauty and Truth" (*O*, 69).

Orlando finds the courage to write when she suddenly has discovered her 'boyish, short dream', *The Oak Tree*:

> *Orlando felt in the bosom of her shirt as if for some locket or relic of lost affection, and drew out no such thing, but a roll of paper, sea-stained, blood-stained, travel-stained — the manuscript of her poem, 'The Oak Tree'. She had carried this about with her for so many years now, and in such hazardous circumstances that many of the pages were stained, some were torn ... She turned back to the first page and read the date, 1586, written in her own boyish hand. She had been working at it for close three hundred years now. It was time to make an end (O, 110).*

Upon the discovery of her long-hidden poem, Orlando's "floridity was chastened" (*O*, 53) and she decides to "write, from this day forward, to please [herself]" (*O*, 49). The revival brings change and Orlando arrives at a protean state of writing with *The Oak Tree* that revitalizes and cultivates her body. "She felt the bones of the tree running out like ribs from a spine this way and that beneath her" (*O*, 150), which makes her more spirited to write. Freeing from patriarchal patterns and its authoritarian language, Orlando experiences her first euphoric moments of creation:

> *She had no ink; and but little paper. 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 version poem ... This kept her extremely happy for hours on end (O, 69).*

As if she were performing a private ritual or in a secret act of self-discovery, Orlando starts writing her poem again. Her first lines, full of empty spaces and strange sights, seem incomprehensible to everyone except Orlando because of the new language she uses to articulate her newly found consciousness. With this new female language, she penetrates into the dark and private female chamber and initiates a change for the unspeakable female body and its desires. Despite being aware of the fact that writing, for a woman, "is to usurp a place, a discursive position she does not have by nature or by culture", as Teresa Lauretis asserts 1987, 80), Orlando has a firm belief that she can plunge into man's discourse and de(con)struct it to speak the female desire:

> *Orlando, it seemed, had a faith of her own. With all the religious ardour in the world, she now reflected upon her sins and the imperfections that had crept into her spiritual state. The letter S, she reflected, is the serpent in the poet's Eden. Do what she would there were still too many of these sinful reptiles in the first stanzas of "The Oak Tree". But "S" was nothing, in her opinion, compared with the termination "ing". The present participle is the Devil himself, she thought (now that we are in the place for believing in Devils). To evade such temptations is the first duty of the poet ... We must shape our words till they are the thinnest integument for our thoughts (O, 82).*

The seductive immortal snake, Lilith, having lived since the first days of creation, like Eve and Lamia, seem to defile Orlando's text initially. However, the female part of her dual personality helps her come to an important realization: the first women-snakes, disobeying the Law of Father, have provided women with the freedom to act by subverting the patriarchal patterns. Thus, for Orlando, "Eve becomes "Eve eating" the fruit, "Eve defying" patriarchy; Medusa likewise may become "Medusa laughing", "Medusa defying" Perseus' sword. The **S** and the verb, the woman in the moment of action, the "woman writing" her own story, becomes part of Orlando's religion", as explained by Kitsi- Mitakou (1991, 248). She gets out of the discourse of man and begins to feel the rhythm of her 'female' body. This new body, as Helene Cixous has claimed in *The Laugh of Medusa* (1976), subverts male authority by putting the feminine sensuality and bodily desires into circulation and "fills [her] breasts with an urge to come to language and launches [her force] ... urges [her] to inscribe in language [her] woman's style" (882). Now, it is time for Orlando to overcome all the obstacles and make her poem emerge from obscurity:

> *The manuscript which reposed above her heart began shuffling and beating as if it were a living thing, and, what was still odder, and showed how fine sympathy was between them, Orlando, by inclining her head, could make out what it was that it was saying. It wanted to be read. It must be read. It would die in her bosom if it were not read. ... The violence of her disillusionment was such that some hook or*

button fastening the upper part of her dress burst open, and out upon the table fell 'The Oak Tree', a poem (O, 127 - 130).

The poem refuses to remain unspoken, to be buried in eternal silence. Like the baby miraculously coming out of her mother's womb, *The Oak Tree* abruptly comes to life from her bosom, which brings 'the greater ecstasy' for Orlando. At that moment, when the body and text are united, Orlando discovers her censored sexuality and, according to Cixous, regains "her native strength, [...] her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal" (1976, 880). After a long wait lasting for centuries, Orlando lets her breast, or rather her body, spawn and hatch the pearls adorning her neck during the whole journey of her self-discovery. Finally, she proves to be an eternal tale weaver, "a vast moon spider", from whose eggs her future female texts will emerge:

'Here! Shel, here!' she cried, baring her breast to the moon (which now showed bright) so that her pearls glowed — like the eggs of some vast moon-spider. The aeroplane rushed out of the clouds and stood over her head. It hovered above her. Her pearls burnt like a phosphorescent are in the darkness (O, 152).

Conclusion

Virginia Woolf has attempted to prove the fact that nearly the entire 'HIS'tory of writing has been gathered around a principle focal point: the phallocentric tradition and its man-made language. Knowing the fact that women have always been looked down on and forced to stay within their predetermined domestic fields and take the assigned roles – an obedient wife, a self-sacrificing mother, a good keeper of the household and a guardian of moral purity – due to patriarchal society having male- dominated power, her sole purpose is to seek the ways of opposing the phallocentric discourse and its man-made language. Therefore, she aims to provide women with possibilities for getting out of the 'Dark Continent', the patriarchal space where women have been captivated and silenced for ages. Having those considerations in her mind, Virginia Woolf has created a new and significant theoretical formulation known as 'feminine writing', which allows women to express things that cannot be articulated in the dominant culture through "the inscription of the female body and female difference in language and text", as Showalter has clarified in "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness" (1981, 185). Thus, Woolf focuses her attention on language and the ways in which meaning is produced. She, gradually, reaches the conclusion that female repression is sustained by phallocentric structures of the patriarchal society and its man-made language, which therefore only represents a world from the male point of view. Thus, with 'feminine writing', Woolf sets sight on the expression of female body and sexuality, which has always been defined and treated as deviant by the dominant patriarchal structure and its language. The female body is not a source of horror, shame and disgust that must be out of sight, but it is the source of pleasure, fertility, and empowerment. Virginia Woolf asserts that women must write and their body must be heard. Thus, in *Orlando,* Woolf voices out the desires and pleasures of the female body, which are plural, fluid, and cannot be 'coded and theorized' within the framework of phallocentric rules.

[1]The term 'Oxbridge' is a widely used portmanteau of the two eldest institutions in the UK, Oxford and Cambridge, by Virginia Woolf in her essay *A Room of One's Own.* Citing William Thackeray, Woolf used it as a metaphor of male dominance and arrogance, and emphasized the gender inequality in education.

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