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Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own: A Foundational Feminist Vision in Euro-American Thought

Virginia Woolf'un Kendine Ait Bir Oda: Avrupa-Amerikan Düşüncesinde Temel Feminist Bir Vizyon

Henrieta Krupa[1]

Abstract

Virginia Woolf's seminal work, A Room of One's Own, published nearly a century ago, is reexamined in this study as not only a feminist manifesto but as a feminist vision that anticipated some of the key features addressed in subsequent Euro-American feminist philosophies. Divided into three sections, the research offers a close analysis of Woolf's text and its prescient insights, discussing separately the particular focal concerns of British, American, and French feminism, and elaborating on the ways these were envisioned and addressed as early as 1929 in Woolf's visionary text. The study utilizes Showalter's typology to analyze Woolf's text and to organize elaborations on the points Woolf addresses and envisions that became fundamental within subsequent Euro-American feminist criticism, including the correlation between economic and social conditions and intellectual freedom, the necessity of women's inclusion in the literary canon, and the significance of feminine discourse and gynocriticism. By highlighting Woolf's remarkable foresight, this research positions A Room of One's Own not only as a foundational feminist text but also as a profound feminist vision that continues to inform feminist thought today. This re-examination of Woolf's work contributes to on-going academic discourse surrounding feminist theory and literary criticism.

Keywords: A Room of One's Own, Androgenous art, Feminism, Feminist Vision, Gynocriticism, Virginia Woolf.

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Öz

Bu çalışma, yaklaşık bir asır önce yayımlanan Virgina Wolf'un Kendine Ait Bir Oda adlı eserini sadece feminist bir manifesto olarak değil aynı zamanda yayımlandığı tarihten sonraki yıllarda meydana gelen Avro-Amerikan feminist felsefelerinin belirleyici özelliklerini öngören bir feminist vizyon olarak yeniden incelemektedir. Üç bölüme ayrılan araştırma, öncelikle Woolf'un metninin ve haklı içgörülerinin yakın bir analizini sunar, devamında İngiliz, Amerikan ve Fransız feminizminin belirli odak noktalarını ayrı ayrı tartışır ve son olarak 1929 gibi erken bir tarihte basılan Woolf'un yazdığı vizyoner metinde bu odak noktalarının nasıl öngörüldüğünü ve ele alındığını ayrıntılı olarak açıklar. Çalışma, Woolf'un metnini analiz etmek ve Woolf'un ele aldığı ve öngördüğü noktaları düzenlemek için Showalter'ın tipolojisini kullanır ve Woolf'un metninin ekonomik ve sosyal koşullar ile entelektüel özgürlük arasındaki ilişki, kadınların edebi kanona dahil edilmesinin gerekliliği ve kadın söyleminin önemi gibi sonraki Avro-Amerikan feminist eleştirisinin temel argümanlarını öngördüğünü savunur. Bu araştırma, Woolf'un dikkate değer öngörüsünü vurgulayarak Kendine Ait Bir Oda'nı sadece temel bir feminist metin olarak değil, aynı zamanda günümüzde feminist düşünceyi şekillendiren devam eden derin bir feminist vizyon olarak konumlandırır. Woolf'un eserinin bu yeniden incelemesi, feminist teori ve edebi eleştiri etrafındaki süregelen akademik tartışmalara katkıda bulunur.

Anahtar kelimeler: Androjen Sanat, Feminist Vizyon, Feminizm, Jino-Eleştiri, Kendine Ait Bir Oda, Virginia Woolf.

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Extended Abstract

Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own, published in 1929 might be read as a visionary anticipation of key features in subsequent Euro-American feminist philosophies. Utilizing Showalter's typology to closely examine Woolf's text, the study reveals how the focal concerns of Euro-American feminist philosophy are envisioned to be contributing to the development of British, American, and French feminism.

Woolf's work stands as a seminal work that aligns with the trajectory of British feminism, particularly in its intersectional approach that intertwines issues of gender, class, and artistic expression. The text echoes the Enlightenment's contemplations on social equality, which laid the groundwork for later feminist thought. It addresses the economic precondition for artistic production, emphasizing the need for financial independence as a means to achieve intellectual freedom. Woolf's assertion that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write" (p. 4) encapsulates this sentiment succinctly. Moreover, Woolf's exploration of the limitations faced by women in both artistic and societal realms foreshadows later feminist discourse, particularly regarding the economic and educational subjugation of women and the identification of public spaces as gendered. Her fictional narrative, intertwined with factual contemplations, blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction, which not only challenges traditional narrative structures but also addresses Marxist critique. Woolf underscores the impact of societal constraints on individual agency and creative potential, echoing Marxist critiques of economic determinism and the alienating effects of the patriarchal system. Furthermore, Woolf's invocation for societal change, embedded within her narrative through provocative rhetorical devices, aligns with Marxist feminism's emphasis on transformative action. By challenging her audience to confront their own complicity in perpetuating patriarchal structures, Woolf seeks to incite social transformation and pave the way for gender equality. In essence, Woolf's text, blending literary innovation with social critique to advocate for gender and economic justice, emerges as feminist vision, anticipating perhaps and undoubtedly contributing to the development of British feminism.

A Room of One's Own also anticipates several key aspects of American feminism, particularly in its focus on the textual representation of women and the construction of gender identity through literature. By exploring the patriarchal biases embedded in literary traditions and the ways in which women have been marginalized within these traditions, Woolf's text lays the groundwork

for future feminist critiques of literature and art. One significant aspect that Woolf addresses is the issue of women's representation by male discourse. She highlights how women have been defined and depicted primarily through male perspectives, resulting in biased and limited portrayals that reinforce patriarchal ideologies. This theme of challenging the authority of male-authored texts in defining women's identities resonates with later American feminist scholars such as Kate Millett, Sandra Gilbert, and Susan Gubar, who delve into the ways in which women have been portrayed in discourse, and examine the dichotomous representations of women, which echoes Woolf's observations, foreshadowing these later analyses. Moreover, Woolf's exploration of women's literary tradition and her advocacy for the recognition of women writers anticipate later efforts by feminist scholars such as Annette Kolodny, Linda Nochlin, and Elaine Showalter. Their focus on reconstructing the canon to include the work of women writers aligns with Woolf's concerns about the lack of recognition for women's artistic achievements, and her call for acknowledging and restoring women's contributions to literature. Finally, Showalter's concept of gynocriticism, which aims to uncover and analyze women's literature from a feminist perspective, resonates with Woolf's examination of literature by women, which emerges as the very first practice of gynocriticism, even before the term itself was coined and the concept identified. Woolf's recognition of the need for a tradition that validates women's voices thus anticipates Showalter's framework for understanding and interpreting women's writing. In summary, Woolf's text serves as an inspiring precursor to many key themes and concerns of American feminism, particularly in its exploration of women's representation in literature and advocacy for the recognition of women's tradition. Through her insightful analysis and critique of patriarchal biases in literary discourse, Woolf lays the foundation for future feminist scholarship in literature and art.

Woolf's work indeed demonstrates a prescient understanding of themes that would later become central to feminist discourse in French feminism. By highlighting the importance of language, the construction of identity and the relationship between gender and text, Woolf anticipates the philosophical underpinnings of French feminist thought, such as those articulated by Simone de Beauvoir, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Monique Wittig, and Hélène Cixous. One of the key concepts Woolf addresses is the idea of "a man's sentence" (p. 89) and the need for women to develop their own modes of expression. This notion foreshadows the French feminist concept of Écriture Féminine, which emphasizes the inscription of the female body and female difference in language and text. Additionally, Woolf's exploration of the androgynous mind as the space for artistic creation resonates with French feminist ideas about the need to transcend sexual binaries in arts. Her recognition of the need for collaboration

between masculine and feminine qualities within the psyche echoes themes found in the work of French feminists like Monique Wittig, who reject essentialist notions of gendered identity of an artist. Furthermore, Woolf's emphasis on the importance of women writing themselves into history and literature parallels the French feminist call for women to reclaim their voices and experiences through writing. This idea is embodied in Hélène Cixous's concept of Écriture Féminine, which encourages women to write from their bodies and experiences, challenging patriarchal norms and structures. In conclusion, Woolf's text serves as a foundational text that might be perhaps seen to anticipate key themes and concepts in French feminist thought.

Woolf's insights into the relationship between gender, language, and artistic expression continue to resonate with contemporary feminist discourse, highlighting the enduring relevance of her work. By highlighting Woolf's remarkable foresight, this research positions A Room of One's Own not only as a foundational feminist text but also as a profound feminist vision that adds to inform feminist thought today. This re-examination of Woolf's work contributes to on-going academic discourse surrounding feminist theory and literary criticism.

Keywords: A Room of One's Own, Androgenous art, Feminism, Feminist Vision, Gynocriticism, Virginia Woolf.

Introduction

It has been almost a century since Virginia Woolf's groundbreaking *A Room of One's Own* was released in 1929 and the work continues to inspire articles, extended studies, and conference panels. Influencing generations of writers and scholars, Woolf revolutionized the literary landscape with her innovative narrative techniques, stream-of-consciousness and interior monologue. In *A Room of One's Own*, the narrator passionately advocates women's financial independence and personal space, emphasizing their creative potential when granted resources and autonomy. Several critics have noted that Woolf's work serves as a manifesto of feminist ideals. Relevant is an article by Palash Roy (2019), entitled '*A Room of One's Own*: Virginia Woolf's Feminist Manifesto and its Influence on Modern Literature', which traces Woolf's impact on modern literature, paving the way for women writers such as Margaret Atwood, Toni Morrison, Sylvia Plath, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. However, no study has yet thoroughly examined Woolf's almost-a-century-old manifesto as a prophetic feminist vision, anticipating fundamental features of the subsequent development of Euro-American feminism.

Mostly advanced in the second half of the twentieth century, feminist literary criticism has gradually emerged from heterogeneous approaches. The diversity of approaches emerged from within different focal interests in criticisms at different geographical locations. Although such division does not exclude an overlap of interests, it roughly marks the historical development of what is perceived as mainstream feminist criticism. Elaine Showalter (1981) summarizes this historical development in her article, 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness', as follows:

> The emphasis in each country falls somehow differently: English feminist criticism, essentially Marxist, stresses oppression; French feminist criticism, essentially psychoanalytical, stresses repression; American Feminist criticism, essentially textual, stresses expression. All, however, have become gynocentric. All are struggling to find a terminology that can rescue the feminine from its stereotypical associations with inferiority. (p. 186)

Despite each aiming to restore the image of woman, the prime interest falls in diverse directions: Marxist, psychoanalytical, and textual. The present article, suggesting that *A Room of One's Own* could as well be read as Woolf's vision, anticipating the subsequent mainstream feminist criticism, elaborates on several significant points within these approaches to demonstrate the alignment with Woolf's arguments foreseeing the focal interests of Euro-American feminism. Woolf's concerns for the economic oppression of women and her linking the economic conditions to artistic expressions parallel the focus of British feminism. Likewise, the notion of intellectual freedom coupled with literary expression, or more precisely, the state of psychological confinement as a depriving factor of self-expression for women, unquestionably foretells the successive French feminism on multiple levels. Lastly, Woolf's painful observation of the void in women's literary tradition, in other words, the literary repression of women, has become the interest of the upcoming American feminism. Upon closer examination of Woolf's work, it becomes apparent that the arguments and the very structure of her text foreshadowed the core principles of feminism that have since emerged. This article suggests that Woolf's feminist manifesto stands as a profound feminist vision of the future development of mainstream Euro-American feminism.

A Room of One's Own Anticipating British Feminism

British feminism has its origins in the Enlightenment, which although not feminist in its root, elicited contemplations on social, political, and gender inequality. The French Revolution raised issues of legal, political, and social rights, and although it ignored gender issues, in its philosophy of equality, it evoked concerns about gender politics. In the pioneering feminist work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft argued for social equality of sexes and called for equal educational opportunities. The struggle for equal rights brought about the 'Married Women's Property Act 1882', allowing married women to own and control property, and the 'Representation of the People Act 1918', giving suffrage to women over thirty. The social environment that raised the issues of class oppression, and soon extended to include the oppression of women, merging class issues and feminist concerns that led to a focus on the economic subordination of women, was the environment

in which Woolf wrote. Similarly, as the title of Woolf's work suggests, Woolf lays stress precisely on the history of oppression of women and the limitations of women's artistic expression, linking these to the adverse economic status of women. Thus, Woolf approaches the issues of gender and class jointly and emphasizes the importance of financial means for artistic production. As seen from the most quoted line, "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write" (Woolf, 2004, p. 4), Woolf explicitly claims that only financial independence can generate space that brings about the intellectual freedom necessary for artistic production. As further contemplations of Woolf's narrator reveal, she explicitly parallels the two perspectives of class and gender, viewing both as conditioned by the effects of money, or the lack of it, and by the lack of conditions for intellectual and artistic productions as its consequence:

> For genius like Shakespeare's is not born among laboring, uneducated, servile people. It was not born in England among the Saxons and the Britons. It was not born today among the working classes. How, then, could it have been born among women whose work began… almost before they were out of the nursery, who were forced to it by their parents and held to it by all the powers of law and custom? Yet genius of a sort must have existed among women as it must have existed among the working classes (pp. 56-57).

The narrator imagines speaking to Oxbridge female scholars and all she has to say is that if a woman aspires to write, she has to be financially independent. Her main point is the fundamental necessity of economic precondition to artistic production. The issue of gender, linked to the economy is also intersected with space as Woolf depicts space as likewise gendered. The rich lunch to which the narrator is invited at the university, provided for male academics is juxtaposed with the plain dinner the narrator has at the noticeably inferior setting with female scholars at the part allocated for women. This experience provokes further contemplations on gender issues and unequal economic and particularly, educational conditions, and the gendered space manifests the inferior, secondary position of women within institutions. Woolf's observations of

women's secondary position within every sphere of system foreshadows the arguments advocated twenty years later by Simone de Beauvoir, who in her seminal book, *The Second Sex*, published in 1949, discusses the secondary positions women occupy within diverse structures.

What further aligns Woolf's work with the subsequent British feminism is her emphasis that arts and reality are inseparable— a fundamental concern of Marxist-oriented British feminism. The concept of the reciprocal relationship between arts and reality corresponds with the form of Woolf's book that transgresses the boundaries between fictionality and factuality. Woolf structures her book in such as way that notably breaches the boundaries between reality and fiction. The book emerges from her extended essay entitled 'Women and Fiction', which is based on series of lectures that Woolf gave in 1928 at Newnham and Girton Colleges, the two colleges at Cambridge University where women were allowed to study and where Woolf was invited to explore women as writers and fictional characters. On the other hand, Woolf employs a fictional narrator who distinctly produces an impressionistic narrative, utilizing the techniques of stream-of-consciousness and interior monologue, which certainly indicates a novelistic structure and fictionality. To illustrate, Woolf's book opens with the narrator contemplating on the subject of the lecture she too was asked to deliver, reflecting on the protestation of her hosts, by which she eloquently applies the 'in medias res' technique: "But, you may say, we asked you to speak about women and fiction— what has that got to do with a room of one's own?" (p. 3). Utilizing the 'in medias res' technique directly posits Woolf's work within the literary tradition of high literature as it was the well-established convention of epic poetry. In fact, in *Ars Poetica* (*Poetic Arts*), Horace first uses the term, identifying the technique as the ideal for the epic: "Nor does he [epic poet] begin the Trojan War *from the egg*, but always he hurries to the action, and snatches the listener *into the middle of things*" (1964, line 147–149, emphasis added). Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost* begin at 'the middle of things', just as Woolf's epic vision does (pun intended). Moreover, what makes Woolf's narrative move by design in the tradition of fiction is her emphasis on the constructed-ness

of her narrator. It is not Woolf who narrates the book but it is, as she emphasizes, a fictitious narrator revealing her fictitious contemplations and her fictitious adventures. When on the third page the narrator says, "call me Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or by any name you please", Woolf notably deconstructs her readers' prior assumptions that the previous pages were narrated by the author who had likewise been invited to lecture at Cambridge University (p. 5). Thus, Woolf affirms that neither the previous nor the following pages are narrated by her. What complicates this argument further is that, as the book progresses, Woolf's fictitious narrator dissolves into the background and the arguments take over the work. Consequently, the reading process leaves the readers wondering to what extent the ideas driving the book still belong to Woolf's fictitious narrator Mary or to Woolf, the author. By creating such ambiguities, Woolf blurs the boundaries between facts and fiction as well as between the author and her fictional narrator. By utilizing such transgressive narrative strategies to create a palimpsest of fiction and reality, Woolf masterfully crafts a text that performs through the unfolding of Socratic dialogics, juxtaposing non-propositional ongoing factuality and fictionality, which posits her text as both fiction and non-fiction while it becomes simultaneously neither fiction nor non-fiction. Woolf's text speaks from within the space of liminality, characterized as both/and and neither/nor, which as a British anthropologist, Victor Turner (1969), argues in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* is heavily soaked in sacredness of liminality. Emerging precisely from within liminal space and speaking from within liminal sanctity, Woolf's visionary text that advocates the necessity of economic means for intellectual freedom and artistic creativity blurs the boundaries between facts and fictions as it strikingly projects the subsequent feminist philosophy.

To illustrate her point further, the narrator manifests a thought-experiment— a conjurement of an imaginary sister of William Shakespeare whom she calls Judith. Judith Shakespeare is no less talented than her brother but due to her sex, she receives no education. Being a woman, Judith writes in secret and burns her work. Driven by her "own gift alone", Judith eventually runs away to become an actress (p. 55). Because of her

sex, she is rejected, ridiculed, abused, and eventually, driven to suicide. Once again, the narrator elaborates on her argument that creative genius and self-worth depend on basic material and social conditions. This idea resonates with Marx's concerns in *The Communist Manifesto* (1845) and *Das Kapital* (1867), arguing that the totality of daily experiences and social interactions directly shape an individual's consciousness, beliefs, and values; that is to say, an individual's place in society and social interactions determine who they become. Hence, the Marxist view of human history as a result of economic and social conditions directly suggests that women who are denied access to economic resources and exposed to adverse conditions internalize beliefs of inferiority. Moreover, the Marxist addition of economic means of production, for instance, when it comes to literary production in regard to who decides what texts are published, and when and how these texts are distributed, renders Woolf's narrator to conclude that internalized sexist assumptions bring about internal oppression. This internal oppression also indicates the potential of women artistic production, as the narrator rightly observes that "it would have been impossible, completely and entirely, for any woman to have written the plays of Shakespeare in the age of Shakespeare" (p. 54). Woolf's narrator here also anticipates the central arguments put forward by the Frankfurt School, Walter Benjamin (1935) in particular, who in his essay, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' argues that art is a commodity, produced by systems of power, rather than a purely aesthetic, non-ideological artistic activity.

The function of Woolf's text identifiable as aimed at not only entertaining but also, and fundamentally so, at transforming the audience further aligns Woolf's text with Marxist feminism. The invocation to change societies, rather than merely reflect, becomes the goal of Woolf's text. Having reflected on the conditions of women in her society and women writers in literary tradition, to elicit action in her audience, Woolf utilizes a provocative narrative technique, the Bakhtinian 'double-voiced discourse'. In 'Discourse in the Novel', an essay written between 1934 and 1935, Mikhail Bakhtin explains the technique as "*another's speech in another's language*, serving to express authoritarian intention but in a

refracted way" (p. 681, 1981, emphasis original). This becomes evident in the following part where Woolf refracts her voice in order to elicit action in her audience:

> How can I further encourage you to go about the business of life? Young women, I would say, and please attend, for the peroration is beginning, you are, in my opinion, disgracefully ignorant. You have never made a discovery of any sort of importance. You have never shaken an empire or led an army into battle. The plays of Shakespeare are not by you, and you have never introduced a barbarous race to the blessings of civilization. What is your excuse? (Woolf, pp. 129-130)

The narrator evidently parodies patriarchal discourse; nevertheless, what is implied is the concealed authorial intention to provoke her audience to object. Therefore, the concurrently running themes that interlace the prevailing issues of class and gender within such an ambiguous structure that transgresses the boundaries between fact and fiction and Woolf's utilization of the modernist narrative strategies as well as her deployment of the narrative voice that seems to be constructed with inciting social transformation of her fictional, and ideally, her actual audience, undoubtedly mark Woolf's text as phenomenally visionary.

A Room of One's Own Anticipating American Feminism

Woolf's text also forestalls future objectives of American feminism, quite different from the British. While British emerged as Marxist, American feminism oriented around liberating women writes and the image of a woman. It emerges as essentially textual, zooming in on literature and literary tradition and calling attention to the textual repression of women. Woolf's narrator visits the British Museum, which, unlike the university library, does not require a woman to be accompanied by a man or have a male-written permission to enter. Her aim is to consult literature to find out what it means to be a woman. The narrator realizes that thousands of books were written about women by male scientists, professors, schoolmasters, clergymen, and writers, marking a woman to

be "the most discussed animal in the universe" (p. 30). She reflects on the mutual agreement among men that women are inherently mentally, morally, and physically inferior, and in a parodist manner, she lists these representations as library catalogue entries, juxtaposing facts, biased opinions, religious misogyny, prejudices, and the most trivial facts such as less hair on the body to emphasize the pseudo-scientific nature of these notable misogynist writings. This scene where Woolf's narrator observes that it is men with discursive power who define women and what it means to be one is reintroduced twenty years later as the core assertion developed in *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir (1949), suggesting that a woman is a discursive construct. Moreover, the library-visiting scene also remarkably precedes the key claim by an American feminist, Kate Millett (1969), who in *Sexual Politics* argues that a female is born but a woman is discursively created. Challenging gender ideologies, Millett calls for an urgent need for a feminist perspective to reveal the misogyny of male authors and the ways patriarchal discourse, shaping women's everyday experiences, are reproduced. She also defines sexual politics as prescribed roles dictated by patriarchy to which women consciously or/and unconsciously confirm; in other words, she views sexual politics, just as Michel Foucault views power, as relational, precisely as operations of power relations based on gender politics. The notion of gender as discursively constructed by ideologies and the concept of gender as relational, and by implication, performative through everyday interactions, become fundamental in the subsequent discussion in queer scholarship in the 1990s, led by the work of Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993). As seen, the idea of mis/representation of women by male discourse and the concept of a discursive power constructing a woman, affecting actual and fictional identity formation of women, are already present and emphasized in Woolf's inspiring *A Room of One's Own*.

The issue of mis/representation of women by male discourse also becomes the primary focus in the work of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979), *The Madwoman in the Attic*, in which the authors examine

the nineteenth-century literature and conclude that most writers depict women as either angelic (deriving from Coventry Patmore's poem, written in 1854, 'The Angel of the House') or monstrous. This dichotomy by which women were represented is also a remarkable echo of Woolf's text, in which her narrator notes precisely "the peculiar nature of women in fiction; the astonishing extremes of her beauty and horror; her alternations between heavenly goodness and hellish depravity" (p. 96). This paranoid-schizoid position, to use the Kleinian terminology, into which the image of a woman was moulded, this dichotomous splitting by which a woman is mis/represented, advances further paranoid-schizoid reciprocal relationships that forward additional splitting of the ego of the represented, signified object and the representing, signifying subject. In other words, this dichotomous mis/representation of a woman not only indicates a projection of a split ego of the signifying subject but also splits the ego of the object signified and thus, produces reciprocal paranoid-schizoid relationships among these ego-split subject/object positions (Melanie Klein, 'Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanism', 1946). Woolf's narrator likewise elaborates on this issue, observing that because women are defined only within their relationships with men, limited to rigid roles set by patriarchy, women remain unknown outside these to the opposite sex; a situation from which such split images emerge as either an unconditional confirmation (angel) or a refusal and rebellion (monster) as the sole alternation for the signifying subject:

> Married against their will, kept in one room, and to one occupation, how could a dramatist give a full or interesting or truthful account of them? Love was the only possible interpreter. The poet was forced to be passionate or bitter, unless indeed he chose to 'hate women', which meant more often than not that he was unattractive to them (p. 97).

As Woolf's narrator indicates, the split representation of the signified object is a direct result of the split signifying subject. In another essay, 'Professions for Women', published in 1931, Woolf indeed urges women writers to 'kill' the dichotomous aesthetic representations, the angel and the monster, by which women were 'killed' in arts. This image of a woman

becomes not only a discursive mis/construct but also metaphorically kills a woman; therefore, "killing the Angel in the House", according to Woolf, "was part of the occupation of a woman writer" (2017, para.3). Ergo, Gilbert and Gubar's calling for the need to reconstruct the image of a woman, urging women to endeavor self-definition beyond patriarchal dichotomy, is a reiteration of a prophetic insistence, already existent half a decade earlier in Woolf's writing. Moreover, Gilbert and Gubar also introduced the 'madwoman thesis', drawing inspiration from Bertha Mason, the imprisoned character in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. They argue that due to patriarchal constraints on women's expression, women redirected their creative energy, akin to the Freudian libido, into rebellious, subversive, and often self-destructive behaviors. Curiously, Gilbert and Gubar's renowned 'madwoman thesis', developed in the late seventies, strikingly resonates with the scene from *A Room of One's Own* where Woolf's narrator likewise ponders:

> When, however, one reads of a witch being ducked, of a woman possessed by devils, of a wise woman selling herbs…, then I think we are on the track of a lost novelist, a suppressed poet, of some mute and inglorious Jane Austen, some Emily Bronte who dashed her brains out on the moor or mopped and mowed about the highways crazed with the torture that her gift had put her to… any woman born with a great gift in the sixteenth century would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked. For it needs little skill in psychology to be sure that a highly gifted girl who had tried to use her gifts for poetry would have been so thwarted and hindered by other people, so tortured and pulled asunder by her own contrary instincts, that she must have lost her health and sanity to a certainty (p. 57).

As if anticipating Gilbert and Gubar's illustrious 'madwoman thesis' half a century earlier, Woolf's narrator suspects that the repressed libido, the life-giving creative energy of women, dampened by gender politics, might have produced antisocial behavior or even driven the silenced into insanity.

When Woolf's narrator reflects on literary possibilities women in the past had and begins to trace the gradual emergence of women writers from the empty past, her insistence on the importance of women's literary tradition further predicts the concerns of American feminism. These concerns are initially voiced by Anette Kolodny, arguing that the literary canon is a construct, reflecting patriarchal biases. Kolodny's main interest lies in the restoration and reconstruction of the literary canon by including the work of women ('Dancing through the Minefield', 1980). Likewise in arts, Linda Nochlin's groundbreaking article, 'Why Are There No Great Women Artists?', published in 1971, triggered the feminist inquiry in art history that likewise aimed to identify neglected women artists. Woolf's narrator also observes and complains about the lack of women's literary tradition, which she sees as a fundamental void that poses a great obstacle for potential women writers. For this reason, it is indeed Woolf's narrator who attempts the very first restoration of the canon by outlining a women's literary tradition which, as she notes, was noticeably absent. First, she lists those noble women who not only had the financial resources necessary for creative production, an observation that supports Woolf's initial argument about the need for economic resources for artistic production, but also, as she notes, these women of high social status were privileged to afford immunity to public disapproval. Citing Lady Winchilsea's poetry (1661-1720), dismissed by men as a product of "a blue-stocking with an itch for scribing" (p. 70), Woolf's narrator finds her poetry "bursting out in indignation against the position of a woman" (pp. 67-8). Similarly, in the writings of likewise noble Margaret of Newcastle (1623-1673), within whom also "burnt the same passion for poetry", the narrator finds "the same outburst of rage", citing from her poem: "Women live like Bats or Owls, labour like Beasts, and die like Worms" (p. 71). In an effort to restore the canon by including women, Woolf's narrator pays equal homage to Dorothy Osborne (1627-1695), whose letters, as she notes, although might counterproductively demonstrate Osborne's disdain for women writers, manifest Osborne's verbal gift and her remarkable talent. Lastly, the work of Aphra Behn (1640- 1689) indicates for the narrator a fundamental turning point, as she highlights that it was Behn who despite being a woman, succeeded in becoming the first professional woman writer. Consequently, "all

women together ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn,… for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds" (p. 76). These concerns, which Woolf's narrator voices— the lack of women's literary tradition and the importance of having such a tradition— and her attempts to restore the canon for her audience, the fictitious women scholars of Oxbridge and the actual readers of the text, as evident years later, became the primary concerns of not only the subsequent American feminism trying to restore the literary canon for women but also of feminist historians within diverse artistic fields striving to include women artists excluded by patriarchal discourse.

A look at the process of Woolf's narrator's efforts to restore women's tradition, examining the nature of these past women's writings, reveals that Woolf's narrator's careful observations anticipate the forthcoming *gynocriticism*. As Woolf's narrator attempts to restore women's literary tradition, she carefully examines the tone and style, the subject matter, and the motifs and themes that feature in the work of women of the past. Although the narrator finds the poetry of Lady Winchilsea and Margaret of Newcastle full of anger at the conditions of women— and this anger impeding the artistic value of their poetry, which becomes, in her words, "disfigured and deformed by the same causes…the same outburst of rage" (p. 71) — she, nevertheless, acknowledges that their poetry plays a fundamental role in women's tradition. For the same reason, she argues, those "innumerable bad novels" written by women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, rejected as having no artistic value, should also be noted (p. 75). These arguments anticipate future feminist studies in two ways. The first relates to the concerns advocated by the Frankfurt School that regards arts not as pure aesthetics but rather as a commodity, produced and reproduced by systems of power. For instance, in *Literary Theory,* Terry Eagleton (1983) summarizes these concerns, arguing that literary production is created by ideologies and subjected to historical developments, understood in the Marxist sense as resulting from social interactions at particular times and locations. Eagleton's argument indicates that the rage and anger driving women's writings of the past, observed by Woolf's narrator as a deforming element impeding the value of women's poetry, are thus the outcomes of social interactions, based

on patriarchal gender politics— a fact noted by Woolf. This implies not a lack of talent or inferior poetic skills of women but rather it points at the otherized subject position from which these women of the past wrote. Secondly, the importance of women's tradition and the development of women's writing are concerns approached, almost fifty years later after the publication of Woolf's text, by an American feminist, Elaine Showalter. In her essay, 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness (1981), Showalter's argument that "women's culture forms a collective experience within the cultural whole, an experience that binds women writers to each other over time and space" (p. 197) is also an echo of Woolf's commentary on women's writing that their "books continue each other, in spite of our habit of judging them separately" (p. 93). Woolf's narrator keeps emphasizing the importance of recognizing women's literary tradition for women writers; a tradition denied to women because while there is a recognition of a few great authors such as the Bronte sisters, George Eliot, and Jane Austen, a sense of an ongoing tradition, of a tradition in motion within which a woman can write, is nonetheless, absent:

> The middle-class woman began to write. For if *Pride and Prejudice* matters, and *Middlemarch* and *Villette* and *Wuthering Heights* matter, then it matters far more than I can prove in an hour's discourse that women generally, and not merely the lonely aristocrat shut up in her country house among her folios and her flatterers, took to writing. Without those forerunners, Jane Austen and the Brontes and George Eliot could no more have written than Shakespeare could have written without Marlowe, or Marlowe without Chaucer, or Chaucer without those forgotten poets who paved the ways and tamed the natural savagery of the tongue. For masterpieces are not single and solitary births (pp. 75-6).

This call for a recognition of women's literary tradition was put forward half a decade later by Showalter's studies in her essay, 'Towards a Feminist Poetics' (1979), in which she defines *gynocriticism* as an aim to uncover women's writings to re/establish a distinct canon and "reconstruct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature" (1997, p. 131). Showalter's *gynocriticism* shifts the subject of feminism from the history of women's economic oppression into the textual repression, aiming

to uncover women's writing, recover women's tradition, and undo the literary repression suffered by women artists. Hence, Woolf's tracing of the history of women's writing and her analysis of women's work not only anticipates the need of *gynocriticism* but also emerges as the very first attempt of *gynocriticism* even before the term was coined. In her radical study, published in *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), Showalter likewise traces and analyzes women's literature, creating a critical framework that not only reconstructs women's tradition but also categorizes women's writing into three phases: the Feminine, the Feminist, and the Female. The initial phase, the Feminine, lasting until about 1880, is observed as that in which "women wrote in an effort to equal the intellectual achievements of the male culture, and internalized its assumptions about female nature" ('Towards a Feminist Poetics', 1997, p. 137). This idea resonates with the concerns of Woolf's narrator likewise observing that at certain times women wrote as men, often under male pseudonyms:

> It was the relic of the sense of chastity that dictated anonymity to women even so late as the nineteenth century. Currer Bell, George Eliot, George sand, all the victim of inner strife as their writings prove, sought ineffectively to veil themselves by using the name of a man….(the chief glory of a woman is not to be talked of, said Pericles, himself a much-talked-of man)… Anonymity runs in their blood. The desire to be veiled still possesses them (p. 58).

This quotation indicates a parallelism with Showalter's definition of the Feminine phase, highlighting that writing under a male pseudonym reveals certain conformations, often internalized and unconscious, to patriarchal values. Instead of questioning the place of women, especially within the literary tradition, these women simply aimed at inserting their work within the impenetrable-by-women tradition. Indeed, Woolf's narrator mentions Dorothy Osborne's letters that openly depict Osborne's disapproval of women writing, yet ironically, this compilation of letters becomes a part of women's literary tradition within Showalter's Feminine phase that directly refers to the internalization of the patriarchal ideology by women writers, and thus, it is precisely this subject position from which these women writers were allowed and did indeed write. Woolf's narrator comments on Osborne's internalized patriarchal values:

> And so, since no woman of sense and modesty could write books, Dorothy, who was sensitive and melancholy,…wrote nothing. Letters did not count. A woman might write letters while she was sitting by her father's sick-bed. She could write them by the fire whilst the men talked without disturbing them. The strange thing is, I thought, turning over the pages of Dorothy's letters, what a gift that untaught and solitary girl had for framing of a sentence, for the fashioning of a scene…one can measure the opposition that was in the air to a woman writing when one finds that even a woman with a great turn for writing has brought herself to believe that to write a book was to be ridiculous… (pp. 72-3).

The narrator's comment suggests a sense of pity at Osborne's internal (and external) limitations. Although Woolf does not categorize women's literature into phases, she nonetheless notes and comments on women's writings in particular times as manifesting elements identical to those by which Showalter years later defines the Feminine phase. The second phase, which Showalter defines as the Feminist (1880-1920), is distinguished by literature which reflects protestations of women against patriarchy and advocates for autonomy. The literature of this phase seems to be tendentious, featuring the theme of questioning the conventional role of women in societies. Woolf's narrator too, in her analysis of Lady Winchilsea's poetry, comments on the tendentiousness in women's writings characterized by "bursting out in indignation against the position of women" (p. 68). "The human race is split up for her into two parties," Woolf's narrator observes Lady Winchilsea's anger, reflecting that "men are the 'opposing factor'; men are hated and feared, because they have the power to bar her way to what she wants to do- which is to write" (p. 68). Hence Woolf's narrator identifies and anticipates Showalter's Feminist phase and perceives this tendentiousness as a great obstacle that likewise gets in the way of full artistic expression: "It was a thousand pities that the women who could write like that, whose mind was tuned to nature and reflection, should have been forced to anger and bitterness" (p. 69). Woolf's narrator accuses Charlotte Bronte of the same tendentiousness in *Jane Eyre*, objecting to Bronte's writing as writing from the standpoint of complaint, stating that "it is clear that anger was tampering with integrity of Charlotte Bronte the novelist" (p. 85). As in the case of the seventeenth-century women writers, Woolf's narrator perceives this inner rage as a blockage to Bronte's artistic expression:

> …one sees that she will never get her genius expressed whole and entire. Her books will be deformed and twisted. She will write in a rage where she should write calmly. She will write foolishly where she should write wisely. She will write of herself where she should write of her characters. She is at war with her lot (p. 81).

Thus, Woolf's analysis of Bronte as not able to let her anger go foretells Showalter's proposed features by which she classifies women's literature into the Feminist phase. The third phase Showalter defines is the Female phase (1920- present time), characterized by the self-discovery of women writers. Showalter argues that in this phase, women writers "reject both imitation and protest - two forms of dependency [according to Woolf, the cause of artistic deformation] - and turn instead to female experience as the source of an autonomous art, extending the feminist analysis of culture to the form and techniques of literature" (p. 139). In Woolf's contemplations, the women writers of Showalter's Female phase are those women who plainly accept the legitimacy of a woman's perspective without the need for verification and thus, they write from an objectively genuine point of view "without hate, without bitterness, without fear, without protest, without preaching" (Woolf, pp. 78-9). Woolf's narrator finds the work of Jane Austen and Emily Bronte "without boasting or giving pain to the opposite sex", viewing both as able to transcend subjectivity (p. 78). Woolf's narrator further surveys contemporary women's literature realizing that some women of her time write without trying to imitate men or without anger at patriarchy. To exemplify this change in women's writings, she examines *Life's Adventure* by Mary Carmichael and although she does not find her writing as good as Austen's, she nonetheless appreciates her experimental writing, reminding her audience that women writers have "every right" to try out new forms and styles (the way Woolf does) (p. 94). Moreover, Woolf's narrator also notes Carmichael's innovative subject matter, introduced by three revolutionary words: "Chloe liked Olivia" (p. 95). The idea that women started to depict themselves independently from their relationships to men and rather to each other, rare in earlier literature, thrills Woolf's

narrator, which also anticipates the objectives of the subsequent wave of feminist philosophy, known as Radical. Additionally, speaking from within Showalter's framework, unlike the women of the Feminist phase, Woolf's narrator observes that Carmichael's writing shows no rage against men or her position in life as a woman:

> Men were no longer to her 'the opposing faction'; she need not waste her time railing against them; she need not climb on to the roof and ruin her peace of mind longing for travel, experience and a knowledge of the world and character that were denied her. Fear and hatred were almost gone, or traces of them showed only in a slight exaggeration of the joy of freedom… (p. 107).

Forecasting Showalter's Female phase, Woolf's narrator realizes that women of the twentieth century start writing in this mode. Woolf's narrator's observations and comments on women's writing stand as a prophecy of Showalter's proposed theories, coining the history of feminist literary criticism. Furthermore, Showalter's *gynocriticism* strongly resembles Woolf's narrator's concerns about appropriating women's writing tradition. If Showalter's belief that women needed a tradition of their own generated the task of *gynocriticism*, then one notes that some fifty years earlier, Woolf already anticipated the idea of the need for an ongoing women's tradition within which women could write. As Woolf's narrator states those women of the past "when they came to set their thought on paper— that is that they had no tradition behind them, or one so short and partial that it was of little help" explicitly indicates Woolf's advocating the need for tradition (p. 88). Consequently, the focus of American feminism concerned with the literary repression of women can be identified as anticipated and likewise addressed as early as in 1929 in *A Room of One's Own*.

A Room of One's Own Anticipating French Feminism

Woolf's work also prognosticates the subsequent feminism that emerged in France, quite distinct from British or American, with its focus on psychoanalysis and essentially, more philosophical. It has been mentioned that Woolf's concerns about the discursive nature of a woman anticipate

the argument in *The Second Sex* by a French essentialist philosopher, Simone de Beauvoir (1949), whose much-quoted statement that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" explicitly identifies a woman as a construct- an argument that became fundamental to issues of women's oppression (1989, p. 267). Nonetheless, Woolf's narrator's comments about "a man's sentence" (p. 89) and identifying those women writers who "wrote as women, not as men write" (p. 87) become prophetic of the theory of Écriture *Féminine*, translated as 'women's writing'. Originating in 1970s, the focus of this theory was to examine the "inscription of the female body and female difference in language and text" (Showalter, 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness', 1981, p. 185). The term coined by Helen Cixous in her essay 'The laugh of the Medusa' (1976), of which the philosophy is further expanded by feminist critics such as Luce Irigaray and Monique Wittig, arises from applications of psychoanalysis that focus on the impact of language on identity formation and the psychic understanding of the world and self-thoroughly studied by French feminism in relation to text. This philosophy stems from both Freudian theories concerned with the absent phallus, the ultimate signifier central to language, defining women's position in language and culture, and Lacan's studies on how language shapes male and female consciousness and the unconscious, resulting in the formation of gendered identities. Also of interest became Lacan's studies examining how linguistic structures deny the signifying power to women once socialized through language. Lacan argues that when women enter the Symbolic order governed by patriarchal culture and language, they are subjected to social submission and deprived of signifying means. The Lacanian notion that there is no other form of expression than that provided by the signifying phallus, which women ultimately lack, is exemplified in Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), in which his protagonist, Bathsheba Everdene eloquently laments: "It is difficult for a woman to define her feelings in language which is chiefly made by men to express theirs" (1998, p. 182). Likewise, Woolf's narrator emphasizes the hardship of dealing with not only the lack of a room of one's own but also the lack of a medium of one's own: "Perhaps the first thing she would find, setting pen to paper, was that there was no common sentence ready for her use" (p. 88). She also remarks that because the majority of literary models were male, the

consequences are: firstly, that literature per se had a male stamp on it, and secondly, that the medium of artistic expression was constructed to address male purpose. Quoting a male author, Woolf's narrator notes that the language and form signify male aims:

> That is a man's sentence; behind it one can see Johnson, Gibbon and the rest. It was a sentence that was unsuited for a woman's use… Indeed, since freedom and fullness of expression are of the essence of the art, such a lack of tradition, such a scarcity and inadequacy of tools, must have told enormously upon the writing of women. Moreover, a book is not made of sentences laid end to end, but of sentences built, if an image helps, into arcades or domes. And this shape too has been made by men out of their own needs for their own uses. There is no reason to think that the form of the epic or of the poetic play suit a woman any more than the sentence suits her. But all the older forms of literature were hardened and set by the time she became a writer (pp. 89-90).

Woolf's concern that 'a man's sentence' was unsuitable for women became the focal concern of French feminism. That language is a biased construct became evident by studies of psychoanalysis and linguistics. However, in 'Revolution in Poetic Language', a Bulgarian-French philosopher, Julia Kristeva (1974), introduces her theory on language and its un-representable components. Challenging Lacan's theory, Kristeva proposes that the pre-linguistic experience, maternal in nature, is not entirely lost by entrance into the Symbolic but it resides in the unconscious, representing the maternally-oriented psychic energy, identified as the *semiotic chora*. Kristeva defines the *semiotic chora* as chromatic, vocal, and kinetic rhythm, an ongoing flow in a state of fluidity that exists beyond the Symbolic, within the pre-verbal hence, it is non-describable by the signifying system. The *semiotic chora* represents the non/pre-discursive aspects of meaning, and subjectivity, and as such, it continually challenges the Symbolic (patriarchal) signifying systems by being that which has no boundaries and thus, is capable to disturb the Symbolic system. Kristeva's theory engenders a possibility of signifying beyond the phallogocentrism, which became the focus of French feminism that

brought about Cixous' theory of Écriture *Féminine*. However, even Cixous refuses to impose 'Cartesian' limitations to enclose in definition as to what it is exactly to write as a woman. This notion of suturing sexuality and textuality generated the idea that unlike men whose writing is governed by the signifying phallus, women write with their whole bodies, in *white ink*— referred by feminist critics as a unique feminine mode of writing. Further interpretations suggest that unlike male writing, women's writing is somehow more ongoing, fluid, and impressionistic, perhaps corresponding to that which Woolf exposes her readers to but also to that which her narrator observes as "merely giving things their natural order, as a woman would, if she wrote like a woman" (p. 106). Since Woolf's narrator openly distinguishes 'a man's sentence' from woman's, she expresses hopes that just as Austen who "devised a perfectly natural, shapely sentence proper for her own use" (p. 89), women writers of the future will also be able to "knock into shape" (p. 89) both language and form. Woolf's observations that "the book has somehow to be adapted to the body" undoubtedly anticipate not only the subsequent Écriture *Féminine* but also its need if women are to write as women (p. 90).

Published almost half a decade later, the opening lines of 'The Laugh of the Medusa' reveal Cixous' likewise urging women to write themselves into their texts and into the world that has written them out:

> Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies… Woman must put herself into the text— as into the world and into history— by her own movement (1976, p. 875).

Cixous' plead echoes the concerns Woolf's narrator raises when she notes the lack of women's experiences in records: "For all the dinners are cooked; the plates and cups are washed; the children sent to school and gone out into the world. Nothing remains of it all. All has vanished. No biography or history has a word to say about it" (p. 104). Woolf's narrator likewise urges women to write themselves back into the world. And the way of writing themselves into history, literature, and the world is by the

language of their bodies. This notion of a woman's body engendering her language thus becomes yet another identical characteristic that runs in both Cixous' and Woolf's texts. In Cixous' view, women are to use their bodies as a means of communication and claim their identities:

> Almost everything is yet to be written by women about femininity: about their sexuality, that is, its infinitive and mobile complexity; about their eroticization, sudden turn-ons of a certain minuscule—immense area of their bodies; not about destiny, but about the adventure of such and such a drive, about trips, crossing, trudges, abrupt and gradual awakenings, discoveries of a zone at once timorous and soon to be forthright (Cixous, p. 886).

The modus operandi of merging sexuality and textuality is likewise anticipated in Woolf's text in which the speaker also hopes that "those unrecorded gestures, those unsaid or half-said words, which form themselves…when women are alone" would one day emerge on pages written by women by means of their bodies (p. 98). Woolf's narrator also expresses her desire and faith that women of future, writing with their whole bodies, "put(ting) herself into the text…by her own movement" (p. 875) in Cixous' words, or as Woolf puts it, having developed "the habit of writing naturally" (p. 126), will rewrite the woman and womanhood outside of relationships to men in a way that gives expression to the unique shades of women's personalities and experiences, still unrecorded, and perhaps, unknown to the world. Cixious' plea that nothing should stop women from rewriting the lack they have been subjected to for so long and her appeal that in writing, women ought to overcome both external and internal limitations also noticeably resonates with Woolf's urge. When Cixous implores women to "Write," and "let no one hold you back, let nothing stop you…not man…not *yourself*" (p. 877, emphasis in original), her lines ring the tune of the lines in Woolf's text: "So long as you write what you wish to write, that is all that matters; and whether it matters for ages or only for hours, nobody can say (p. 123). Ultimately, Cixous' fiery rhetoric prompting women writers to "kill the false woman who is preventing to live one from breathing" (p. 880) manifests in likeness to Woolf's impelling women writers to "killing the Angel in the House"

('Professions for Women', 2017, para.3). A parallel reading of Woolf and Cixous thus reveals that Woolf's arguments strikingly anticipate several fundamental points advocated by French feminism.

Worth noting in the present context of Woolf's text anticipating the unique mode of women's language is another French feminist philosopher, Luce Irigaray (1977), whose notion of a feminine language, explained in *This Sex Which is Not One*, is identified as a distinct feminine mode, *parler-femme*, translated as 'womanspeak'— the unprecedented signifying as a woman in a mode that leaks through the phallogocentric signifying system. Womanspeak, Irigaray argues, is conjoined with the female body, which, unlike the unity of phallus, is peerlessly polymorphic and fluid. Hence, 'womanspeak' is viewed as a practice of signifying by correspondence with the female body it speaks from. That women's language is distinct from that which Woolf calls 'a man's sentence' is already discussed in Woolf's text. Nevertheless, Irigaray's addition to the theory of feminine signifying is her view of this unique mode as being a source of distinct feminine creativity accessible only to women. She correlates female bodies and their sexual experiences with the signifying system, associating femininity with unique feminine drives and singular creative powers other than those accessible to men. "Woman has sex organs more or less everywhere", Irigaray exquisitely argues and adds that "she finds pleasure almost everywhere…the geography of her pleasure is far more diversified, more multiple in its differences, more complex, more subtle, than commonly imagined" (1985, p. 28). Her view of sexual difference hence, the difference in expression and language, which for women, Irigaray believes, is of "'other meaning' always in the process of weaving itself, of embracing itself with words, but also of getting rid of words in order not to become fixed, congealed in them" leads feminine creativity into exploring novel, rather unique ways, "in which 'she' sets off in all directions leaving 'him' unable to discern the coherence of any meaning" (p. 29). One cannot miss that Irigaray's argument concerned with the different modes of feminine creativity is already prophetically anticipated in Woolf's text:

> But this creative power differs greatly from the creative power of men. And one must conclude that it would be a thousand pities if it were hindered or wasted…It would be a thousand pities if women wrote like men…Ought not education to bring out and fortify the differences rather than the similarities? (p. 102).

Woolf's affirmation of difference in creativity is obvious. The quote also suggests that whereas men and women differ, neither is superior; the two are diverse sides of humanity and thus, ought to complement one another to bring out the best of humanity.

The question of biological difference versus ontological sameness links Woolf's philosophy to yet another French feminist theorist, Monique Wittig, who likewise is concerned with the difference of sexes and arts. Like Woolf, Wittig wrote fiction and non-fiction but categorically refused to be labelled as a woman writer. Wittig's objection was not her denial of womanhood but resulted from her philosophy that art is genderless. Her essay, 'The Straight Mind' (1980), explains Wittig's radical philosophy where she claims that "there is no such thing as women literature" because "one is a writer, or one is not" and therefore, in her view, art emerges from "a mental space where sex is not determining", giving rise to artistic creativity, which "is about building an idea of the neutral which could escape sexuality" (1992, p. 103). Wittig's reference to 'a mental space' as genderless is a resounding echo found in Woolf's philosophy on the androgynous mind. Woolf's philosophical concept of androgynous art emerges from her envisioning the 'mental space' Wittig refers to as likewise androgynous, a space from where writers, transcending their sex, "use writing as an art, not as a method of self-expression", as Woolf explains (p. 92). Woolf's vision of androgyny, however, does not dismiss the differences in sexes, as we observe her narrator urging women to abandon 'a man's sentence' and write with their whole bodies as women instead. What Woolf's philosophy of androgyny implies is that sexes ought to be merged within the artist's mind. As Woolf argues, only an ego/gender-less 'mental space' can produce pure art. Thus, whilst the notions of abandoning 'a man's sentence' and developing 'a woman's language and form' refer to a mode of writing aligned with the body, Woolf's theory of androgynous mind entails a space for artistic creation and views ideal art as transcendent of its creator's sex. For Woolf's thesis on the

androgynous mind, the anti-thesis alludes to those women such as Lady Winchilsea and Margaret of Newcastle, whose consciousness of their sex produced rage that prevented their art from emerging in its full potential. Moreover, the anti-thesis of Woolf's theory of the androgynous mind also indicates those women who wrote either in service of patriarchy or against it, as evident in Dorothy Osborne's letters and Charlotte Bronte's novels. All in all, writings that confirm or oppose the system on the basis of sex fall apart from what Woolf's philosophy considers pure art. Be that as it may, Woolf's narrator also examines male writing, which she likewise identifies as spoilt. Quoting a male writer, her narrator observes:

> …a shadow seemed to lie across the page. It was a straight dark bar, a shadow shaped something like the letter 'I'. One began dodging this way and that to catch a glimpse of the landscape behind it…Back one was always hailed to the letter 'I'. One began to be tired of 'I'. Not but what this 'I' was a most respectable 'I'; honest and logical; as hard as a nut, and polished for centuries by good teaching and good feeding. I respect and admire that 'I' from the bottom of my heart. But— here I turned a page or two, liking for something or other— the worst of it is that is the shadow of the letter 'I' all is shapeless as mist (p. 115).

Woolf likewise finds the masculine writing flawed because of "the dominance of the letter 'I'", operating as a conscious reminder of one's privileged sex, blocking "the fountain of creative energy" (p. 116). The confirmation of superiority of one's sex, according to Woolf, creates a distorted vision, rendering art sterile. Like those texts Woolf's narrator encounters in the British Museum, which as she notes, speak through "that persistent voice" of patriarchy, "now grumbling, now patronizing, now domineering, now grieved, now shocked, now angry, now avuncular" (p. 87), such man's writings produce distorted art that speaks of "not of what he was saying, but of himself" (p. 39). Woolf's philosophy suggests that writing with a consciousness of one's sex, either from privileged or disadvantageous positions, produces an abortive art. Besides, in Woolf's philosophy, ideologies also generate the anti-thesis to her hypothesis of pure art. Woolf observes that Victorian puritanism produced flawed femininized poetry while the rising fascism in the twentieth century was about to engender deformed masculinized poetry: "The Fascist poem…

will be a horrid little abortion" (p. 119). The extreme polarization within ideologies can only produce 'gendered art' and bring about deformations in arts. Therefore, Woolf's narrator proposes her theory of androgyny in arts, prompting her audience to write without consciousness of one's sex. Only androgynous art, Woolf claims, reveals art for what it is when the differences of sexes are harmoniously played out within one's psyche:

> Some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the art of creation can be accomplished. Some marriage of opposites has to be consummated. The whole of the mind must lie wide open if we are to get the sense that the writer is communicating his experience with perfect fullness. There must be freedom and there must be peace (p. 121).

One might suggest that Woolf's theory of the androgynous mind might have derived from Carl Jung's concept of Anima and Animus— the female collective archetype within the male unconscious and the male archetype within the female unconscious. As Jung claims, a balanced psyche requires an individuation, acceptance, and harmonization of these anthropomorphic archetypes. The psychoanalytical recognition that the unconscious comprises the psychological qualities of the opposite sex is likewise present in Woolf's text. This becomes evident in her contemplations on the human soul when it is noted that "in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man's brain the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman's brain the woman predominates over the man"; nevertheless, the peace of mind is achieved "when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating" (p. 113). It is within this interior harmony of the psychic sexes where one becomes unconscious of one's own sex and from where writers of both sexes become capable of writing as fully human beings with "the fully developed mind that it does not think specially or separately of sex" (p. 114). Woolf provides examples of literature produced by "fully fertilized" minds of "man-womanly" and "woman-manly" writers (p. 114). For example, she finds Shakespeare's mind androgynous— his writing "uproots a thousand other things in one's mind" (p. 117), his plays "hang there completely by themselves" (p. 48), and most importantly, his art speaks not of the author but for itself. As Woolf notes:

> …his grudges and spites and antipathies are hidden from us. We are not held up by some 'revelation' which reminds us of the writer. All desire to protest, to preach, to proclaim an injury, to pay off a score, to make the world the witness of some hardship or grievance was fired out of him and consumed. Therefore his poetry flows from him free and unimpeded. If ever a human being got his work expressed completely, it was Shakespeare. If ever a mind was incandescent, unimpeded…it was Shakespeare's mind (p. 66).

Only androgynous minds are able to create pure art. Woolf also finds the literature of Sterne, Keats, Lamb, Cowper, Proust, Shelley, and Coleridge likewise produced by androgynous minds. She notes the effect Coleridge's work has as follows: "when one takes a sentence of Coleridge into the mind, it explodes and gives birth to all kinds of other ideas, and that is the only sort of writing which one can say that it has the secret of perpetual life" (p. 117). The androgynous mind has the eternalized creative power capable of engendering diverse thoughts in its audience. Such art speaks of itself rather than of its creator. Woolf also regards the writing of Mary Carmichael with respect, not only because Carmichael seems to have abandoned 'a male sentence' but also because "she wrote as a woman, but as a woman who has forgotten that she is a woman, so that her pages were full of that curious sexual quality which comes only when sex is unconscious of itself" (p. 108). Worth noting is also that Woolf finds a 'curious sexual quality' in Carmichael's writing, which reinforces the notion that writing comes from a sexed body, however, for the sexed body to create pure art, the mind ought to get rid of prejudices and come into consonance with the world. Writing unconsciously of one's sex as a woman implies writing about perceptions of a woman, in a language of a woman. In Woolf's philosophy of the androgynous mind, such mind is "naturally creative, incandescent, and undivided", multiplying itself while celebrating the unity of differences (p. 114). For as Woolf ultimately argues, it is "fatal to be a man or a woman pure and simple", and it is likewise "fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex" because such art "is doomed to death" (p. 120). It becomes evident that Wittig's revolutionary theory of androgynous 'mental space' from which artists create is anticipated by Woolf.

Conclusion

Virginia Woolf's seminal text, *A Room of One's Own*, published years prior, addresses the disadvantaged socio-economic position of women, advocates for the restoration of the image of the woman and the revitalization of women's literature, and underscores the importance of women's tradition as well as the avenues and means of women's expression. Anticipating perhaps and addressing various issues and concerns of subsequent feminist movements, Woolf's insights still resonate with contemporary feminist discourse. Moreover, Woolf's groundbreaking narrative techniques such as stream-of-consciousness, interior monologue, and her blurring the boundaries between facts and fiction, which are also employed in *A Room of One's Own,* not only revolutionized the literary landscape, inspiring generations of writers, especially women, but also provide a loop input for her arguments of the necessity and possibility of women writers to write beyond the phallogocentrism in *white ink*. In other words, in *A Room of One's Own,* Woolf's divergence from the conventional linear storytelling, typically dominated by male viewpoints, not only highlights female consciousness and subjectivity on a content level but her arguments are also presented precisely in a form that inscribes the woman's mind and her body into her text.

Woolf's work stands as a seminal work that aligns with the trajectory of subsequent British, American, and French feminism philosophy, and while these feminist movements are often categorized by geographical locations and issues of interest, such as British as Marxist, American as textual analysis, and French as psychoanalytical, in practice these concerns often overlap. The present article, however, utilizes Showalter's typology, which provides a useful framework for analyzing Woolf's text to argue that Woolf's work foreshadows many fundamental arguments of Euro-American feminist criticism, including the belief in the correlation between economic and social conditions and intellectual freedom and expression, the necessity of women's inclusion in the literary canon, and the importance of feminine discourse, anticipating perhaps and even performing the very first pursuit of gynocriticism. Woolf's remarkable foresight in *A Room of One's Own* not only positions her text as a feminist manifesto but also as a profound feminist vision of the subsequent feminist thoughts and aims.

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