

# The Nomadic Distribution in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*: A Deleuzian Reading

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22034/cls.2023.62856>

Article Type: Original Article

Page Numbers: 1-18

Received: 17 April 2022

Accepted: 15 June 2023

## Abstract

The debates concerning Orlando's magical sex transformation and its main concern with gender trouble are ever growing. Yet it seems a very significant fact is neglected in this debate, the extent the male Orlando is different from the female. Till Orlando is a man, he holds a very rigid and sedentary view of gender roles and reproduces the old cliché about men and women. As soon as he becomes a woman, she starts to view the world in a nomadic distribution. The present paper uses Deleuze's theory of time and his notions of sedentary and nomadic to represent how time and sex transformation are connected to a split subjectivity and the birth of a new female subject/artist. The sex transformation is a tremendous event that splits Orlando into a before and an after. The male Orlando is not equal to "the act" which is to go beyond the spirit of his age and become an artist who is able to affirm androgynous and nomadic worldview. Through "becoming woman" Orlando abandons his sedentary view of the world and becomes nomadic and at last, completes her poem "The Oak Tree". Through metamorphosis and a split subjectivity, Orlando becomes equal to "the act".

## Keywords

Sedentary; Nomadic; Metamorphosis; Split Subjectivity; Becoming-Woman.

## 1. Introduction

Adeline Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), daughter of Leslie Stephan and Julia Prinsep Jackson, was a great modernist writer in Britain. She spent her childhood in 22 Hyde Park Gate, London where she was exposed to "her formative, blissful, experience of hearing waves and a window blind moving" (Goldman 4) that became a recurrent image in her oeuvre. Her mother's death in 1895 had an everlasting impact on Woolf who "suffered her first breakdown" (6) and had to deal with it for the rest of her life. After her father's death in 1904, the family moved to Bloomsbury where she became a part of

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Bloomsbury group of artists including critics Lytton Strachey (1880-1932), Roger Fry (1866-1934), and Clive Bell (1181-1964), the economist John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946), the novelist E. M. Forster (1879–1970). She married Leonard Woolf in 1912 at the age of thirty. It seems her mental health was getting worse “Soon after her marriage she suffered another breakdown and her mental health declined sporadically over the following year, culminating in a suicide attempt in September 1913”. This was the first attempted suicide among several in her lifetime.

Her first novel is *The Voyage Out* (1915) which is followed by such famous works as *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *Orlando* (1928), *The Waves* (1931), and *The Years* (1937). She has also written short stories and critical essays the most famous one is *A Room of One's Own* which is a landmark of twentieth-century feminist thought. Unfortunately, her life ends in tragedy “on 28 March 1941, fearing a return of her insanity at this dark pass in the war, Virginia Woolf committed suicide by drowning herself in the River Ouse” (24). Her last novel, *Between the Acts* (1941), was published posthumously.

For Woolf, *Orlando* (1928) was a satirical love letter to Vita, but it is more than a playful novel. It spans over four hundred years, from Elizabethan age to modern times, while at the end of the novel the protagonist is only thirty-six years old. This is not the only astonishing feature of the novel. During the course of four centuries Orlando goes through the process of sex change and transforms from male to female. The novel is unique in Woolf's oeuvre for its unrealistic time span and sex change. Through the sex change, the fe/male Orlando finds out about the “outward gendered appearance and inward sex” (Berman 217).

It seems one of the major issues in the novel is that of sexuality and the extent culture and society shapes it. It is mostly concerned with gender stereotypes and gender expectation from sixteenth century to the present time. Woolf traces and scrutinizes gender codes of behavior for four hundred years and shows how they become narrower as the protagonist reaches the age of Queen Victoria. Before her reign, Orlando finds various ways to break these codes and social gender expectations but in the reign of Queen Victoria with the total separation of genders, Orlando is submissive and desperate. However, it is right at the heart of restriction that Orlando finds her way out and becomes a modern poet. Orlando is the story and history of the growth of a poet as well. For over four centuries Orlando struggles with himself, other poets, society, critics, etc. to become a poet but every time s/he is prevented and his/her creative potentials face new obstacles. After many struggles s/he is able to publish her unique work of art “The Oak Tree”.

Orlando's sex/gender change midway in the novel, creates a point of intersection between Woolf's vision on gender and Deleuze's philosophy of time and his notions of sedentary and nomadic distributions. This might clarify how male Orlando differs from female Orlando. The paper will try to expand it to a historical break in Enlightenment from the patriarchal sedentary view as Woolf conceived it in her *A Room of One's Own*.

The current study will focus on the controversy over sex change to discuss a much-neglected fact, the difference between male and female Orlando. Critics have mostly focused on the fe/male Orlando seeing her as a whole who disrupts the gender roles in the novel. It seems that many have not noticed the difference between male and female Orlando. Thus, the main question of this study is how Orlando is different before and after the metamorphosis. The aim of this paper is to show how the male Orlando represents Deleuzian sedentary distribution and the way a shift of perspective happens after the sex transformation. The new female Orlando begins to notice the repressive gender codes made by society and tries to dismantle them. His/her attitude to life and gender is nomadic and by becoming woman she tries to go beyond such binary oppositions between male and female. The paper will also try to expand such a split to a historical break in Enlightenment from the patriarchal sedentary view as Woolf conceived it in her *A Room of One's Own*.

## 2. Literature Review

“If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman must also have intercourse with the man in her ... It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties” (Woolf, AROO 102)

The query concerning gender and sex change in *Orlando* has generated great controversy over decades of scholarship. Four lines of thought are discernable, those who have construed the novel as hiding a lesbian subtext. This line of thought is taken by scholars as varied as Hankins (180-181), Trautmann (41), Knopp (25), Suzanne Raitt (1), Elizabeth Meese (472), Braidotti (191), Blair (142), Parkes (435-6), etc.

And those who focus on the theme of androgyny. Trautmann considers *Orlando* as the realization of androgynous qualities in *A Room of One's Own*. For Rado, *Orlando* is a simple case of androgyny due to her inability to identify with neither man nor woman (161). Melita and Melita agree that “the protagonist is allowed to fully and completely experience ... life as both a male and as a female” thus, she is “the perfect androgyne” (132). Kelsey reiterates the old cliché of women as feelers rather than thinkers (428). Brown argues in Shelley Woolf saw “her ideal of the androgynous mind” (27). Piggford advances a “female tradition of camp<sup>i</sup>” and the female androgyne as its central figure (40).

Other critics discuss other aspects of Woolf's androgynous attitudes. González probes Woolf's ontology of androgyny and holds the view that "gender is constantly mocked". Lokke discusses a sexual ideal which is "multisexual more than it is androgynous or even bisexual" (236). Helt goes a step further and maintains that Woolf rejects "bifurcated sexual identity and dual-gendered minds" (131) instead she challenges "heterosexual/homosexual identity dyad" (132). Watkins compares Woolf's literary device with Potter's cinematic one and believes that literature enables Woolf to "embrace a per-formative conception of gender" (42). Gilbert focuses mostly on the clothes and transvestism and how they function differently in male and female modernist authors (393).

The third line of critics read Woolf's view of androgyny related to a sense of selfhood. For Kaivola, Woolf's view of androgyny is entangled with her vision of identity and human subjectivity beyond "sexed body". Spiropoulou contends that the notion of an ageless self is directly related to gender identity entangled with historicity symbolized in costume (84). Goldman reads *Orlando* as an exploration of "gender politics" and "artistic subjectivity across the ages" (65).

The last line cannot be categorized based on a central theme and includes wide and various readings with a focus on either gender or the sex change in the novel. Ann Ronchetti explores the sexual identity whose androgyny is mobile presenting a more chaotic hermaphroditic "intermix" (ibid). The theory of hermaphrodite is further discussed by Parsons who asserts that the sex change in *Orlando* is a type of nonphysical hermaphroditism (106), thus, highlighting Woolf's argument that gender is a social and historical construct. McIntire agrees gender is a historical and cultural process (518). For Parke the gender transformation in the middle of the novel is bridging the gap between history and flow of time (10).

Berman links Orlando's sex and gender transformation to a transnational frame seeing it as critique of both "national and sexual identification" (218). Within this line of thought, one can locate Hovey (393-4), Kennard (164), Caputi Daileader (57), and Phillips (186). For Caputi Daileader the dash on the first line violates the male gender of the protagonist. Craps draws attention to the dash too and perceives it as dismantling "the male subject" (177) along with our expectations on gender and sexuality (178). Ziarek discusses the way British imperialism is related to the "subjugation of women at home" yet Woolf "fails to imagine solidarity between Shakespeare's white sister and the colonized women" (92).

Boehm has a deconstructive reading of gender in *Orlando* (202) and Snider has a Jungian approach (264). Swinford reads *Orlando* as an elegy and ties gender and grief on two levels (196). Crawford uses *Orlando* as opposing DSM "categories and regimes of treatment" through empathy (160). Caughie reads *Orlando* concerning the discourse of transsexualism in the modernist era (502).

Recent study on Woolf and gender includes Julie Vandivere who focuses on the issue of bastardy to show how a system of authority and control in England was undermined by bastards (91). Sezgi Oztop Haner's "The Transgender Experience: Cross-dressing and Sex-change in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*" is another recent study of the novel with a focus on "gender ambiguity and fluid sexuality" (2166). She uses Butler's concept of gender performativity to reformulate gender and show body in transition.

Deleuze was also interested in Woolf's and commented on Woolf in different works including his *Dialogues with Claire Parnet*, *A Thousand Plateaus* and *What is Philosophy?* with Félix Guattari, and essays such as "Literature and Life". Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Orlando*, *The Waves*, and her *A Room of One's Own*, are cited in Deleuze's own discussions of literature. Ryan and Mattison write "Woolf ... has emerged in recent years as someone who demands serious consideration in dialogue with Deleuzian philosophy" (423). Ryan in his book, *Virginia Woolf and the Materiality of Theory*, uses Deleuze and Guattari's theories on *Orlando* and argues a "becoming-queer" of sexuality" (102).

### 3. Theoretical Framework: Third Synthesis of Time

This study will build on Deleuze's philosophy of time. The French thinker Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) developed a complex theory of time based on Bergson's theory of *duree* and Kant's "pure and empty form of time". In two books, *Difference and Repetition* (1968) and *The Logic of Sense* (1969), he sets out a very complex philosophy of time. His argument uses many contemporary debates including relativity, quantum mechanics, post-Kantian transcendental philosophy, phenomenology, and Nietzsche's eternal return. According to James Williams, Deleuze's theory of time responds to ancient philosophy of time of Platonic circular conception and Stoics (1) and uses unconscious and evolutionary theory as well.

In his *Difference and Repetition*, Gilles Deleuze theorizes a three partite theory known as three syntheses of time. The first synthesis of time or the synthesis of present is that of habit. It contracts past and future in the present. The simplest example is given by Williams in his *Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of Time: A Critical Introduction*. Williams gives the example of a man sitting in a graveyard and feeding pigeons and squirrels at the foot of a decaying statue. Williams writes "None of these actors and things exists in the same time, the same present. The events around each singular thing, the events whose synthesis creates the thing, determine a present" (6). The times of all the things in the example include reciprocally but are asymmetrical. The hand and not the person repeatedly spins nuts and crumbs into the air which means its passivity. This act distracts "the injured brain and unconscious from an obsessive return to a devastating absence" of the loss and grief. It contracts the past and the future into its present passively, without

giving conscious thought. But there is also “the predatory fight between pigeons and squirrels for dominance of the sanctuary” which is a different present, a longer one “over generations and over space according to the fluctuation of populations in line with food supplies and disease”. But we should keep in mind that “All of these times interact and interlock, but according to Deleuze’s philosophy of time they do not submit to any external or internal order that can reduce the multiplicity of times to a single set of laws, patterns or even probabilities” (Williams 11).

In the second synthesis, Deleuze uses Bergson’s theory of time. In space, elements are made up of discrete parts that are related by juxtaposition and exteriority. By contrast, the reality of time is of interiority and intensity. The question is “why does the present pass?”. Without the presence of past, we encounter passing presents without a reason of passing. Indeed, to know that present passes the being needs to have memory. For Bergson and Deleuze, the present and the former presents are not successive instants, rather, the present one contains an extra dimension, a cone like virtual past, in which the former present and the present present are represented in present. It is virtual since it is passive, it is not remembered consciously but is reflected upon passively. It is like all the past coexist with the new present in a cone like shape. Each present contracts a level of the whole of the past. In other words, the past reappears, not as it was or as it could be, but in such a way as it was never lived, this is pure past. The pure past is the a priori element of all time.

In the third synthesis of time, that of the open future, Deleuze develops on Kantian “pure and empty form of time”. Kant made serious and significant critiques of Cartesian subject’s transcendental and self-autonomous status. When Descartes said “I think” he made a substance distinct from the body which carries a paradox in relation to consciousness. With Kant, there comes a fundamental split in the subject. Daniela Voss writes:

The Kantian subject is torn between the form of spontaneity, that is, the ‘I think’ which accompanies all concept production and guarantees the unity of synthesis, and the empirical self which experiences the effects of thought rather than initiating the act of thought itself. (196)

What fills this gap is time. Kant was one of the few people who saw time not as an effect of motion or space but as a priori and transcendental. He wrote “Time is the formal condition a priori of all phenomenon whatsoever ... no object ever can be presented to us in experience, which does not come under the conditions of time” (Kant 49-50). Deleuze views this as the moment of Copernican Revolution in Kant and writes:

Kant demands the introduction of a new component into the cogito, the one Descartes repressed - time. For it is only in time that my undetermined existence is determinable... but it is a completely different time from that of Platonic anteriority ... Time becomes form of interiority" (*What is Philosophy?* 31-32).

By adding time as the determinable to Descartes' revolutionary formula, Deleuze talks about its extreme consequences. "I exist" as the undetermined can be determined only "within time" thus leading the subject to be "a passive, receptive phenomenal subject appearing within time" (*Difference and Repetition* 86).

To develop his theory of time further, Deleuze uses French poet Rimbaud's poetic formula "I is an other" as his lead to show "the paradox of inner self". What is this other? The simplest answer is "thought". He writes "The activity of thought applies to a receptive being, to a passive subject which represents that activity to itself rather than enacts it ... and which lives it like an Other within itself" (ibid). This "I" is fractured by the pure and empty form of time. This fractured "I" comes with death of God. But how? In Cartesian system the identity of the I needed to be unified leading to the expelling of time, this identity was dependent on the "continuous creation carried out by God". In other words, God survives as long as this unified, identifiable, subsistent "I" survives, when it is fractured it heralds the death of God. This is what Kant saw in his magnum opus *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Deleuze writes Kant saw this at one point in this book "the speculative death of God entails the fracture of the I, the simultaneous disappearance of rational theology and rational psychology" (ibid). The pure and empty form of time points to this horrendous event, that of death of God, which Nietzsche's Zarathustra informs in the beginning of the book *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. According to Deleuze Kant left this issue and instead resurrected both God and the "I" and filled this fracture with "active synthetic identity". According to Voss, the Leibnizian or Spinozian subject was an analytic one but "The Kantian subject is premised on the synthesis of two opposed faculties: the active faculty of thought and the merely passive faculty of receptivity" (211). Deleuze criticizes both types of subjects since for him they both stick to the identity of the subject and preserve it.

Time is defined by a formal and empty order and a totality and a series. Empty form of time means time is independent of movement and thus it is no longer depending on presents, devoid of successive Aristotelian "nows". By eliminating the difference between the past presents and the present presents. The elimination results in a determined ratio independent of both sides that can make "nows" appear in a new synthesis and can create a new calendar through the actualization in these "nows". Based on Kant time is

subordinate to categories of the understanding but Deleuze believes the transcendental subject is indeed an "other". The empirical "I" is totally embedded in time and imagines this transcendental "I" as the logical condition for the possibility of experience.

Time is defined by totality too. What is totality? Deleuze defines totality as follows: the caesura is determined in "the image of a unique and tremendous event" that is divided into two unequal halves, but brings together the "totality of time". This tremendous event is called a symbol which is expressed in many ways such as killing God. As a symbolic event, the tremendous event cuts the subject into two unequal halves and creates a fracture in the "I". This symbolic event is big enough to cause a split subjectivity and to bring the subject into difference with itself. On the negative side, the tremendous event dissolves the self and disperses it. The before and the caesura exclude the self and dissolve it. They "turn back against the self which has become their equal and smash it into pieces" (*Difference and Repetition* 89). Multiplicity means the self is a descendant of overman.

Hence, Deleuze turns into Nietzsche's eternal return. Deleuze asserts that "Nietzsche seems to have been the first to see that the death of God becomes effective only with the dissolution of the Self" (*Difference and Repetition* 58). The dissolved self is the painful effect of the caesura, but caesura has another side to it too, that of positive and creative. On the positive side, the cut endows the dissolved self with the ability to create something new. The self, emancipated from the rules of law and identity, can become an artist or a political being.

Hereupon, the cut brings metamorphosis upon the subject. "All is repetition in the temporal series, in relation to this symbolic image. The past itself is repetition by default, and it prepares this other repetition constituted by the metamorphosis in the present" (90). Deleuze asserts that repetition is the condition for the production of something new. After repeating past and present and producing something new, it is time for the third repetition "the repetition of the future as eternal return" (*ibid*). The function of eternal return is to free subject from "the rule of identity and law" and to give it "its artistic, creative potential" (207).

Furthermore, Deleuze's notion of sedentary and nomadic might need elaboration. Sedentary distribution holds the view that there are rigid attributes allotted to subjects thus reterritorializes them. It "proceeds by fixed and proportional determinations which may be assimilated to "properties" or limited territories within representation" (36). It uses pairs of predicates to define the world, sticking to a strict view of the world like "the Aristotelian division of the world into species and genera by dividing identities with differences" (Somers 40). Somers writes of this view "The limit is also what allows us to

determine something as possessing one property and not another. Something cannot be both rational and non-rational at the same time ... Each term limits the other, but also, to the same extent, defines it, so that the properties form reciprocal pairs. In other words, to determine something, we in effect characterise it as ‘this and not that’” (40-41). Nomadic distribution is an unlimited space where the domineering views are disrupted and challenged. A nomadic view of the world which is “a space which is unlimited, or at least without precise limits” (*Difference and Repetition* 36). It disrupts “the sedentary structures of representation” (ibid) and separate spaces.

#### 4. Discussion

Woolf’s first sentence in *Orlando*, “HE—FOR THERE could be no doubt of his sex” (1) can be interpreted as a foreshadowing of what is to come the sex transformation almost in the middle of the novel. It also draws attention to the main concern of the novel, that of gender. The sex transformation serves as a tremendous event that cuts Orlando into two unequal halves, the male as before and the female as future. It causes a difference in Orlando and fractures his/her “I”. Before this tremendous event, everything seems to be sedentic or in order.

The sedentic view follows fixed determinations that are represented in Male Orlando’s following of the stereotypical view of the poetic tradition of his age girls “were roses, and their seasons were short as the flowers” (Woolf 17). His view falls into the sedentary distribution which “proceeds by fixed and proportional determinations which may be assimilated to “properties” or limited territories within representation” (Deleuze 36). Sedentary distribution uses pairs of predicates to define the world. Orlando sticks to a strict view of the world like “the Aristotelian division of the world into species and genera by dividing identities with differences” (Somers 40). When Sasha leaves him, he hurls “at the faithless woman all the insults that have ever been the lot of her sex. Faithless, mutable, fickle, he called her; devil, adulteress, deceiver” (Woolf 38).

Furthermore, for the male Orlando there are unwritten gender laws followed carefully by the two sexes. The binary of male-female cannot be defined except by the opposing properties. Somers writes of this view the “limit is also what allows us to determine something as possessing one property and not another. Something cannot be both rational and non-rational at the same time ... Each term limits the other, but also, to the same extent, defines it, so that the properties form reciprocal pairs. In other words, to determine something, we in effect characterise it as ‘this and not that’” (40-41). Watching Sasha skating professionally he wonders “alas, a boy it must be —no woman could skate with such speed and vigour” (Woolf 22). Sedentary distribution is the judgmental view of the world, there are subjects such as women and there are attributes

such as “women cannot skate with such speed and vigor”. In other words, the male Orlando believes in certain stereotypes and specific attributes that belong to one sex. This means that for the male Orlando one cannot be both male and female, only male but not female or vice versa. This reproduces “social compulsion to tie human beings down to one of two genders” (Craps 179). The sedentary distribution provides “a hierarchy which measures beings according to their limits, and according to their proximity or distance from a principle” (Deleuze 36). When Looking back, the female Orlando criticizes her former self by thinking “as a young man, she had insisted that women must be obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely appalled” (Woolf 93). As long as Orlando is a man, he is cooped in the cage of sedentary distribution and fixed judgments.

The sedentary view has an awful consequence for Orlando who is an author but cannot accept his creative powers. Hence, he has to go through the sex change in order to be able to become *the* poet he yearns. So, the tremendous event of changing sex is necessary for the structure of the novel since Orlando is not ready to carry out “the act” which is to accept himself/herself as a poet and an artist. This is more emphasized by his/her hesitation to publish his/her “The Oak Tree” and to become a real poet/artist at the end of the novel. Deleuze writes of the act the “second time, which relates to the caesura itself, is thus the present of metamorphosis, a becoming-equal to the act and a doubling of the self, and the projection of an ideal self in the image of the act” (Deleuze 89). Not until Orlando’s transformation into a woman s/he is able to become equal to the act. S/he needs “time in order to act” (Somers 80). Borrowing words from Somers, Orlando “exists as a person, rather than an identity, and hence exists outside of the role” (ibid) that the novel assigns to him/her. Throughout the novel, Orlando is grappling with his/her creative potentials. As a young boy of sixteen he wrote “tragedies and a dozen histories and a score of sonnets” (Woolf 14). His poetry and plays all follow the spirit of their age whether it is Elizabethan age or the Neoclassical era. The only exception to the rule is “The Oak Tree”, the never ending and ever-present poem in the novel which is the main focus of Orlando’s attention and affection.

Before turning into a woman, Orlando is somehow an inessential character to the structure of his role in the novel. His role is to represent the apparatus of sedentary distribution and to compare such a limited view with the unsettling and nomadic distribution of the female Orlando. A view not in contrast with the male Orlando, but a result of it, since Orlando is ignorant of his gender as a cultural construct. It is the female Orlando who disrupts not only his limited view but also the structure of the novel. The very act of transformation is taboo, an impossibility that ruptures the novel and the

subjectivity of the male Orlando. This nomadic view refreshes Orlando's creative powers and emancipates her from rules so dear to his/her former self. Thus, "The Oak Tree" is a modern poem freed from any restricting view of women as unable to create real literature.

The nomadic view of the world is a belated event in the novel. It is not till almost midway in the novel that three goddesses descend, and with magic words, transform Orlando into a woman. This event is not only the tremendous event, but also the beginning of his/her nomadic rebellion against social constructs. The event is a caesura or a cut made by the "pure and empty form of time" and is determined in "the image of a unique and tremendous event, an act which is adequate to time as a whole. This image itself is divided, torn into two unequal parts" (Deleuze 89). It is after this event that female Orlando feels to be both one and different person and begins self-criticism and rebellion against her former self. This event is related to a scrutiny of female tradition of writing too. Orlando begins to record such a history. So the event can be interpreted in many ways, as a tremendous event that cuts Orlando to be different with her former male self, as an event that happens almost at the end of eighteenth century when women began writing, and a nomadic rebellion. All three are interrelated. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf writes "towards the end of the eighteenth century a change came about which, if I were rewriting history, I should describe more fully and think of greater importance than the Crusades or the Wars of the Roses. The middle-class woman began to write" (65). Hence, locating the sex change in Enlightenment means Woolf is not writing about a simple act of transformation in one person, but a major shift in history, when women finally gained a proper status to write and started to have a voice of their own.

Moreover, the nomadic in the novel is in connection with "becoming woman" literally and figuratively. Events arise from multiplicities and are part of the process of becoming. The events change and reshape worldviews and relationships. For Deleuze, every change begins with "becoming woman". Clair Colebrook writes a "minoritarian mode of difference does not ground the distinction on a privileged term, and does not see the distinction as an already-given order" (Colebrook 104). Despite the fact that "man" or "male" or "subject" exists, "becoming man" cannot exist since "man" is a major concept which is not singular. Being major is the advantageous and the central position of men in conceptualizing the world that makes them major and not minor. Conceptualizing the world means a sedentary composition of the world in which the so-called subject judges the world and makes his judgment the basis for everything. It is a subject-object dichotomy in which the subject attempts to master the object. Hence, it is

an aggressive and domineering relationship. "Becoming woman" is minoritarian and nomadic since "there is no standard or norm for woman" which means that "human life is not defined by the male ideals of reason, strength, dominance and activity" (Colebrook 104). In *Orlando*, "becoming woman" is symbolic, minoritarian, and nomadic which perturbs the domineering views of the male Orlando as correct. The fe/male Orlando, who is at difference with his/her former self, picks a nomadic view of the world and frees herself of the rule of identity and law. Hence, to the end of the novel, Orlando struggles with the stereotypical attributes and the separation or the unity of the sexes.

Another aspect of becoming nomad is to say yes to flux, change, and difference. The dissolved self becomes the overman "who is capable of affirming difference and becoming" (Voss 207). Put differently, becoming nomad decentralizes the judgmental and extrapolating rationality with its dominating view of the world. To become nomad, one must abandon one's faith in a fixed subjectivity and one's central position of knowing, measuring, and judging. It is right after his transformation, which is irrational enough, that Orlando's foundation of thought collapses in the face of his/her new experience of living in the skin of a woman.

After leaving gypsies, Orlando has to enter civilization, and the door to society is to submit to its rules. The first rule is that of gender, specifically the law of attire "such clothes as women wore" (91). Up until this point in the novel, Orlando was never concerned about gender "she had scarcely given her sex a thought" (90), and was sticking to the sedentary views of male Orlando. The captain offers her "an awning spread for her on deck" and she realizes "the penalties and the privileges of her position" (91). Woolf gives a subtle account of the process of becoming socially woman as a sedentary structure. S/he starts internalizing social behaviors and moralizes her "chastity" (Woolf 91). Not only she has to abandon the activities she likes, such as swimming because of her clothes but also wears modest clothes. She has to do things to her disliking "must I then begin to respect the opinion of the other sex; however monstrous I think it?" (93). It is the sedentary distribution of society that uses must or thou shalt and creates obligations according to gender. But the question is whether Orlando as a woman can liberate herself from such rules. Before the cut, male Orlando would never give such rules a thought. As a woman, such social rules occupy Orlando's mind and make her wonder and reconsider them.

Subsequently, s/he obeys the sexual codes of her society and begins "to be aware that women should be shocked when men display emotion in their presence, and so, shocked she was" (107). Or "Orlando curtseyed; she complied; she flattered the good man's humours" (111). The sexual codes are forceful she "was becoming a little more modest, as women are, of her brains, and a little more vain, as women are, of her person" (ibid).

What haunts her is her former self before the caesura and how he never gave gender and gender roles a thought:

She remembered how, as a young man, she had insisted that women must be obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely apparelled. “Now I shall have to pay in my own person for those desires,” she reflected; “for women are not (judging by my own short experience of the sex) obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely apparelled by nature. They can only attain these graces, without which they may enjoy none of the delights of life, by the most tedious discipline. (Woolf 93)

S/he starts to hold a nomadic view of the world which is “a space which is unlimited, or at least without precise limits” (Deleuze 36). Her androgyny is “limitless”. The nomadic distribution disrupts “the sedentary structures of representation” (ibid) and thus she “vacillate[s]” between man and woman. S/he no longer thinks as *his* old self and “was censuring both sexes equally, as if she belonged to neither; and indeed, for the time being she seemed to vacillate; she was man; she was woman; she knew the secrets, shared the weaknesses of each” (94). S/he disrupts the sedentary view of creating separate spaces for genders.

Following her return to London, Orlando is recording the living experience of an English Woman through different ages, with a focus on the growth of a female artist both individually and historically. On the one hand, s/he lives under the shadow of talented male poets such as Pope. On meeting Pope, Orlando thinks “This is indeed a very great honour for a young woman, to be driving with Mr. Pope ...I am the most blessed of my sex” (Woolf 121). And if s/he publishes some poems, s/he does it under her cousin’s name, as a man. Just like early women writers who wrote with a man’s name such as George Eliot. Woolf is tracing the nomadic history of female writer(s) through exposing social restrictions and male sedentary view of female talent.

On the other hand, Orlando discovers new possibilities “‘Woman’ opens the human to new possibilities” (Colebrook 104). Now s/he is feeling a singularity of androgyny “the mixture in her of man and woman” (Woolf 112). Till s/he follows the sexual codes of behavior and dresses like women, Orlando is still an imperfect individual who follows the laws of society and identity and sticks to her former male-self. The narrator records a nomadic view:

Different though the sexes are, they intermix. In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place, and often it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness, while underneath the sex is the very opposite of what it is above (ibid).

Orlando's androgyny causes her to break codes of behavior and laws imposed by human reason whether "Orlando was most man or woman, it is difficult to say and cannot now be decided." (113) Thereupon, the nomad is limitless and cannot fall under sedentary categories. Orlando's nomadic and androgynous worldview continues to disrupt the structures of sedentary distribution. S/he disturbs the discriminatory social laws, which want to disown her from her properties, and s/he wins the lawsuit. S/he rejects the suitors who ask for her hand and breaks the marriage code. And most significant of all is the frequent change of clothes and her gender (130). Moreover, Orlando begins to disrupt every expectation from a lady of high rank, returning "from some of these junketings ... that she fought a duel, served on one of the King's ships as a captain, was seen to dance naked on a balcony, and fled with a certain lady to the Low Countries where the lady's husband followed them" (130-131). What has become of her is the fact that before "becoming woman" and nomad, she could only adopt male point of view, as a woman, she acquires a nomadic worldview in which she sees everything from an unlimited androgynous point.

The figure of nomad changes shape in different ages. In the reign of Queen Victoria, Orlando is witness to a great change the "sexes drew further and further apart" (135). Gonzales believes *Orlando* is "a parody contestation against the late Victorian sexual codes" (75). Woolf writes in the novel "The life of the average woman was a succession of childbirths. She married at nineteen and had fifteen or eighteen children by the time she was thirty; for twins abounded" (Woolf 135). As Colebrook explains "Once 'woman' is appealed to as a new standard, as the embodiment of caring, nurturing, passivity or compassion it becomes majoritarian: capable of excluding those who do not fulfil the criteria" (104). When majoritarian view dominates, Orlando's free spirit is captured in an iron-barred cage "Suddenly she saw with a start that she was wearing black breeches. She never ceased blushing ... as a signal proof of her chastity" (Woolf 137).

It seems at first Orlando is no exception to such palpitating era. As she is writing "The Oak Tree", she feels the necessity of marriage represented in "a thick ring" (141). Orlando, who has not married for three hundred years wonders "Could it be Queen Victoria then, or Lord Melbourne? Was it from them that the great discovery of marriage proceeded?" (143). In other words, with the advent of the Victorian era and the presence of a conservative woman on top of society, it is impossible to fight the marriage constitution "they were somehow stuck together, couple after couple" (142-143). So, at last, Orlando gives up and accepts "the most desperate of remedies, which was to yield completely and submissively to the spirit of the age, and take a husband" (143). Will she finally succumb to sedentary distribution?

The answer is no. Even in her submission to the zeitgeist of Victorianism Orlando's marriage falls into nomadic distribution. First of all, she chooses an androgynous man

“You’re a woman” (149). Moreover, her marriage is irregular enough since he is an absent husband who is always on Cape Horne “She was married, true; but if one’s husband was always sailing round Cape Horn, was it marriage” (157). And lastly, her only act in marriage is her insatiable desire to write poetry which makes her wonder “if one still wished, more than anything in the whole world, to write poetry, was it marriage?” (158). The answer to her question is “she needs neither fight her age, nor submit to it; she was of it, yet remained herself. Now, therefore, she could write, and write she did” (159). In doing so, s/he emancipates herself from a perfect domestic life. But also, s/he does not submit to views such as love “is woman’s whole existence” (160) and s/he counters such a view by writing at her table to prove that writing could be part of a modern woman’s existence.

It is at this point that Orlando finishes her poem (162). The Victorian era, as the most repressive of all ages depicted in the novel, gives her the necessary courage to become equal to her act and thus become a poet at last. She faces the fact that “It wanted to be read. It must be read. It would die in her bosom if it were not read” (ibid). The task is no longer “too big for” her (Somers 80). The task Orlando most feared is finally there, it never went away, it was her Destiny<sup>ii</sup> fulfilled with a simple choice. In this sense the entire past piles up to make Orlando a modern woman capable of writing and creation, just like Lily in *To the Lighthouse* who finally finishes her painting, Orlando finishes her poem. S/he chooses to go against the grain of the Victorian era, a time most limiting for women. She disturbs the sedentary structures of Victorianism when women did nothing but childbirth, and thus she gives birth to her own child, “The Oak Tree”.

## 5. Conclusion

In *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf reveals a genuine outlook on gender and history and subjectivity. She traces the development of a poet since Renaissance but it is not until he becomes s/he that his/her artistic powers are revealed. Through becoming woman and becoming a poet Orlando emancipates herself and women from the authority of society by giving an affirmation to her imaginative and original powers through The Oak Tree. Orlando breaks the most repressive social codes and becomes a fe/male or androgynous subject with innovative forces. Therefore, s/he becomes minoritarian and gives voice to voiceless women through ages. Women’s creative powers were repressed by society because of their genders and it is through the publication of The Oak Tree that she becomes equal to “the act” assigned to him/her. S/he is a free androgynous subject/artist who disturbs the sedentary view that believes women’s sole purpose is to marry and bear children. His/her nomadic distribution ruptures the sedentary social codes of gender and substitutes it with an androgynous one. The third synthesis of time, that of open future belongs not to man rather to fe/male who affirms her powers of creativity.

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<sup>i</sup> Camp is "a code of appearance and behavior that mocks and ironizes gender norms" (Piggford 40).

<sup>ii</sup> Destiny means "everything is determined by the past, but a past that still allows for freedom through the selection of the level at which the past is played out" (Somers 72).