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The Transgender Experience: Cross-dressing and Sex-change in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*¹

Transgender Deneyim: Virginia Woolf'un Orlando Adlı Eserinde Karşı Cins Ait Elbiselerin Giyilmesi ve Cinsiyet Değişimi

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Bu çalışmanın temel kapsamı Virginia Woolf'un beşinci romanı olan *Orlando* adlı eserindeki transgender başkahramanın olası varlığı ile yaratılmış olan cinsiyet akışkanlığının ve belirsiz toplumsal cinsiyet kimliğinin önemidir. Bu bakımdan, Virginia Woolf'un *Orlando* eseri toplumsal cinsiyet kavramının nasıl tekrar biçimlendiğini ve yeniden dile getirildiğini ve hatta bir beden nasıl sürekli değişim içinde olduğunu gösterir. Sonrasında, sürekli başkalaşım ve dönüşüm süreci içinde olan, kılıktan kılığa giren cinsiyet edimi kavramının cinsel kimliğin akışkanlığı ve çok katmanlılığı ile bir arada kullanımı romanda rastlanılan ince bir noktadır. Bu bakımdan, başkahraman Orlando hem kadın hem erkek ve aynı zamanda cinsiyetsiz biri olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Sonrasında, eserin başkahramanı Orlando kılık değiştirip sahte tavırlarla gerçeği gizleyerek cinsel kimliğin akışkanlığını ve belirsizliğini gözler önüne sermiş olur. Böylelikle, bu çalışma Virginia Woolf'un *Orlando* adlı eserinde belirsiz toplumsal cinsiyet kimliğinin romanda bulunan transgender bir karakterin olası varlığı ile nasıl oluşturulduğunu göstermiş ve bu oluşum okuyucuların zihninde toplumsal cinsiyet algısı dinamiklerini farklılıkla değerlendirmelerine ve okuyucuların cinsel kimlik ve toplumsal cinsiyet kategorileri üzerine tekrar düşüncelerine olanak sağlamıştır.

ABSTRACT

The main concern of this study is the importance of sexual fluidity and ambiguous gender identity created by the potential presence of the transgender protagonist in Virginia Woolf's fifth novel, *Orlando* (1928). In this respect, Woolf's *Orlando* illustrates how the novel both involves the rearticulation and reformulation of gender and portrays a body in the process of transformation. Then, a common thread within the novel is the juxtaposition of the performative and dressed attributes of gender and sex in the constant process of becoming and transitioning with the multiplicity and fluidity of sex/ gender identification. In this manner, the protagonist Orlando appears to be both female and male, neither female nor male simultaneously. Then, Orlando embraces sexual fluidity and gender ambiguity by means of the masquerade of femininity or gender performance of cross-dressing. Overall, this study will indicate the way ambiguous gender identity is initiated by the potential presence of transgressive transgender characters in *Orlando*, which enables the reader to explore gender dynamics and to reexamine the categories of sexuality and sex with variation in mind.

¹ Çalışma, Sezgi Öztop Haner'in "Beyond Sexuality: Transgender Bodies In The Novels Of Virginia Woolf, Angela Carter and Jeanette Winterson" adlı doktora tezinin bir kısmını içermektedir.

Introduction

The main character in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928), has constantly attracted the attention of queer and feminist scholars as a pattern for the transgressive role transsexuality and androgyny can act concerning the hegemony of heterosexuality. Many critics examine Orlando's transformation on the basis of heteronormative gender dichotomy, considering his/her transition as passing from man to woman. However, this study will argue that Woolf's portrayal of Orlando, on occasion both feminine and masculine in spite of his/her assigned sex, suit contemporary debates on the transgender theory, in which trans individuals occupy an "in-between" space of vagueness and ambiguity, or rather beyond the gender binary. Likewise, in *Second Skins* (1998), Jay Prosser's definition of "transgender" foregrounds the mutability of gender: "It is this difference of ambivalence, a wavering around transition- or rather a transformation of transition into a new identity- that characterizes contemporary transgender" (Prosser, 1998, p. 169). Although putting transgender theory into words seems to be problematic and inconclusive, the transgender scholar Susan Stryker (2006) asserts in her article that the term transgender embodies fluidity or uninterrupted mutability and constant becoming of lived gendered expressions, particularly for ones who choose to define themselves and live beyond the socially constructed sex/gender binaries (Stryker, 2006, pp. 4-9). In fact, this inconclusiveness is due to the discursive argument concerning what describes "transgender". As David Valentine remarks in *Imagining Transgender*, the term transgender mostly arises from gender communities to illustrate the cross-gender identification of individuals without hormone therapy or surgery (Valentine, 2007, p.38). In a similar fashion, in her article "Seventy Years in the Trenches of the Gender Wars", Virginia Prince coined the notion "transgenderist" which referred to individuals who have an experience of cross identification being viewed as a lifestyle, gender expression or a state of consciousness (Prince, 2007, p.5).

Through the combination of male and female characteristics, explored in the character's intermittently being depicted as both male and female following his/her transition, Orlando blurs the categorical differences between feminine and masculine which many of the previous readings of the novel depend on. This study explores the ways in which Orlando's non-normative gender embodiment goes along with those described in transgender narratives. Accordingly, Woolf seems to employ the latent capacity of transgender narratives to create spaces for forming a mental picture or image of transgender subjects and transgender bodies alternatively. Then, in this study the subversive quality of Woolf's work will be fully grasped through expanding the understanding of non-normative gender embodiment, in which a disjuncture is experienced between trans embodiment and institutionalized heterosexuality.

Then, the overall pattern of Orlando reflects the movement from the fixity of dualistic sexual difference to the fluidity of sex/gender identification and ceaseless ambiguity in sexual categorization. Interrogating the traditional understanding of gender as an anatomically assigned essence, the novel's protagonist Orlando comes to a conclusion that the process of gender identification and embodiment is constituted in the contradictions and complexity of an individual's personal aspirations, desires and needs. In fact, Orlando's conclusion is illuminating in the sense that Orlando considers the inadequacy of sexual and social prescriptions as a means of articulating her own complexity, variability and fluidity of his/her lived gender expressions. Through non-conformist practices of behaviours and clothing, Orlando attempts to perform the dynamic, fluctuating and multifaceted representations of transgender identification and embodiment, and therefore the main concern of this study is the recognition of fluid sexuality and gender ambiguity with its multiplicity. After all, Woolf's Orlando can be regarded as an attempt to indicate the instability of the natural quality of gender through the potential presence of a transgendered, elusive other.

A Fluid Alternative: Performative Disruptions of Heterosexual Binary

Occurring from the sixteenth century to the twentieth century, Orlando is a story of a young, inherently noble man who lived for centuries, exploring the world, discovering him/herself in the process. The story begins with Orlando as a 16-year-old boy “slicing at the head of a Moor” (Woolf, 1992, p. 11), fantasizing about pursuing in the footsteps of his father and grandfather and going to the war. In spite of his wish to be a warrior, some character traits indicate his sensitivity. Even as a young boy, he possesses a love for solitude, which is revealed early by the narrator: “Orlando naturally loved solitary places, vast views, and to feel himself for ever and ever and ever alone” (Woolf, 1992, p. 14). In fact, Orlando is aware to some extent that societal roles and expectations constrain Orlando. He wishes for a way to be free from these roles while still enabled to take part in society as an acceptable being. However, in periods of solitude, Orlando feels free to construe his experiences and cultivate his interiority beyond the authority of other people.

From the outset, one notices that Orlando is not similar to other boys of his age. Throughout the novel, he is depicted as a character who has a certain aspect that causes him to be more remarkable than an average character. Something special about Orlando is associated with his desire to create. However, this desire to create, which is innate to his soul, acts in opposition to his social role as a nobleman, resulting in him to confuse the deeper reality or truth with illusion itself. The truth of Orlando is that he notices he was born to write, but he is brought into this world as a nobleman and recognizes the illusion that he should come into existence as a nobleman due to the social expectation and approval. Expressing himself through writing is not suitable to his position in life.

The first time the reader encounters Orlando, he is proclaimed a “he”. Then, in opposition to the portrayal of the aristocratically exultant “man”, the reader is overwhelmed with confusion when the narrator describes Orlando in the reflection of the feminine spectacle: “A more candid, sullen face it would be impossible to find [...] The red of the cheeks was covered with peach down; the down on the lips was only a little thicker than the down on the cheeks. The lips themselves were short and slightly drawn back over teeth of an exquisite and almond whiteness” (Woolf, 1992, p. 12). What is interesting in this portrayal is that the narrative points to Orlando’s whiteness, stunning beauty and his/her perfectly proportioned body and features. Concerning the rest of the story, one could already think that he does not suit as a man. Indeed, the physical portrayal of Orlando is ambiguous in the sense that the reader could think about a girl and a boy in the same way, fluctuating drastically between notions of the feminine and masculine: A quick glance at this portrait of Orlando as a young boy proves how well this description is associated with innocence and pureness, and thus easily connected with femininity.

As Orlando grows up, he encounters many things: following his father’s death, the Queen Elizabeth I gives Orlando the monastic house and makes him her steward and treasurer. Thanks to his maleness and social stance, Orlando took this privilege since as a young woman he would never have been under the protection of the Queen. At that time, he is preoccupied with his sexual matters; he meets the Russian Princess Sasha, his first real love, at the court of King James during the Great Frost. Sasha immediately awakens Orlando’s curiosity as well as his passion. At first glance, Orlando cannot differentiate whether Sasha is male or female. Sasha comes to be Orlando’s first experience with an illusion which causes Orlando to continuously question himself in her presence. Similar to the way Orlando is presented: “He – for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it” (Woolf, 1992, p. 11), Sasha is presented as “a figure, which, whether boy’s or woman’s, for the loose tunic and trousers of the Russian fashion served to disguise the sex, filled him with the highest curiosity” (Woolf, 1992, pp. 27-28). As the narrator tends to describe Sasha, the description is

broken short since the “details were obscured by the extraordinary seductiveness which issued from the whole person” (Woolf, 1992, p. 28). There is something hidden in Sasha as soon as she is introduced. It is this uncertainty that turns out to be the seductive aspect of Sasha’s being and fires Orlando’s erotic attraction to her. The harder Orlando tries to fulfil the sexual desire or attraction that Sasha stimulates, the more his attempts to describe and possess her “obscure” Sasha. Apparently, Sasha cannot be turned into an object of sexual desire but inspires the new forms of sexual experimentation.

Due to Sasha’s gender ambiguity, Orlando uses an expansive series of images in his attempt to fix Sasha’s identity. At this point, the narrator comments on the process: “Images, metaphors of the most extreme and extravagant twined and twisted in his mind. He called her a melon, a pineapple, an olive tree, an emerald, and a fox in the snow all in the space of three seconds” (Woolf, 1992, p. 37). In fact, Orlando does not narrow Sasha down into a single image. She is not only a melon, with its allusion to conventionally feminine seductiveness and curves, or just an emerald, glittering and jewel-like. This profusion of images occurs once again and multiplies further in the same paragraph: “Snow, cream, marble, cherries, alabaster, golden wire? None of these. She was like a fox, or an olive tree; like the waves of the sea when you look down upon them from a height; like an emerald; like the sun on a green hill which is yet clouded” (Woolf, 1992, p. 47). Orlando alludes to conventional representations of femininity: “snow, marble, cherries, alabaster” only to determine that Sasha is “none of these” (Woolf, 1992, p. 47). Orlando combines a series of allusions to exemplify Sasha’s fluctuating identity position and roles. Specifically, Orlando’s final description for Sasha, “the waves of the sea” and “the sun on a green hill which is yet clouded” (Woolf, 1992, p. 47), refer to constant movement and fluctuation, reflecting upon the incessantly shifting performative aspects of gender performed by each of the novel’s characters.

When Orlando comes to accept to go with Sasha to Russia, Sasha saves Orlando from his self-sacrificial, romantic intention by sailing away, leaving him with the elevated emotional sensations of love’s betrayal and passion. It was after his experience of being defeated in love, Orlando enters a period of depression, solitude, and reading, initiated by his seven-day trance-like state. Through such characters as Nick Greene, poet, and the Archduchess Harriet Griselda, Orlando re-establishes relationship with the world. Impressed with Greene’s status as a poet, Orlando brings him into his circle of life. However, soon Orlando is disappointed with Greene, who ridiculed him.

The crisis of unfulfilling relationships continues as Orlando finds himself constantly attracted to sexual ambiguity. He encounters the Archduchess Harriet Griselda, a figure of sexual indeterminacy, who overwhelms Orlando and thus Woolf seems to offer the eroticism of sexual ambiguity and gender fluidity for the second time. Like Sasha, the Archduchess embodies both the feminine and masculine features. More precisely, the Archduchess had declared her love for Orlando when she was a he. Then, Orlando the woman realizes that the unclothed Archduchess is in fact a man. Once Orlando the woman notices she is with the now detected male Archduke, she becomes shocked and faints. The dynamic between the two sexually ambiguous individuals has altered into a comically dramatic exploration of social construction of sexuality: “In short, they acted the parts of man and woman;” however, such subversive, gender-bending tricks of masquerade to maintain specific identities end ten minutes later, and they ultimately fall into “natural discourse” (Woolf, 1992, p. 132). Apparently, they played an ambiguity game in the sense that they determined their own sexual and gendered identity through clothes and masquerade of femininity.

Crossdressing as Transgression

Throughout the novel, clothing serves to have an effect on how an individual is behaved towards and on how one performs in a particular manner. That is, clothing regulates the performance of gender by creating the way an individual should be interpreted and the way that individual relates to the world. At this point, the text asks which aspect of an individual's identity is performative and which one is natural, indicating that in fact all aspects are performative, but at the same time seem to be normalizing or normative. In a similar vein, the narrator explains the connection between gender and clothes in two contradictory ways within the same paragraph. Clothes both identify the difference between the sexes and conceal that difference: "Clothes are but a symbol of something hid deep beneath", but "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" (Woolf, 1992, pp. 188-189). Then, clothing itself, while providing Orlando the opportunity to escape from the societal constraints placed on women, concurrently works to make the categories and labels concrete to "keep the male or female likeness" (Woolf, 1992, p. 188).

Sandra Gilbert, in her article, "Costumes of the Mind" proposes that the truth of clothing partially originates in its gender appropriateness, which preserves an orderly and hierarchical world (Gilbert, 1986, pp. 70-71). Gilbert also demonstrates how female modernists like Virginia Woolf have described clothing as "false costume." For Gilbert, this false costume is not to be distinguished as a "true nakedness," since even the body serves as a costume (Gilbert, 1986, p. 72). That is to say, nakedness is no more natural than its costume, and thus gender itself turns out to be a costume in a state of flux. In relation to nakedness, the physical body in Orlando does not contain the signification of realness and truth. Orlando appears naked twice, and neither occasion is the nakedness attached to anatomical sex. Then, the body fails to work as the true and readable indicator of anatomical sex.

Woolf's celebration of gendered masquerade disrupts the ostensible relation among anatomy, sexuality and gender presentation. The possibility of deception inherent in masquerade offers an opportunity for attacking the idea of gender as concrete and permanent. Accordingly, Orlando questions the "natural" integrity of its characters, and in so doing, it challenges the notion that sex and gender are "natural" categories as stated by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 1999, p.30). In this sense, in *Orlando* Woolf implies that, basically, gender is a sexual masquerade or an illusion, which masks sexual difference. That is, sexed identifications felt as natural are subject to the interferences of unconscious identifications and uncontrollable sexual desire. In *Orlando*, Woolf takes away the "natural" alignments of gender and sex, so one is never free from doubt whom one is desiring. Seeing the charming Sasha and being convinced of her being a boy ("no woman could skate with such speed and vigour"), Orlando encounters his libidinal energy when he feels "ready to tear his hair out with vexation" (Woolf, 1992, p. 28). Attracted to Sasha, although unsure whether Sasha is female or male, Orlando resigns himself to his own frustration. In case of Orlando, acting on his desire might be "out of the question" in view of the social taboo of same-sex romance (Woolf, 1992, p.110). Notably, sexual determination is thus not assured prior to the experiencing of affective and emotional states in Woolf's novel, but fixing gender or gender stabilization comes to be an important aspect of courtship, at least before the twentieth century. As Woolf comes close to the modern era, she treats gender stabilization in an ironic fashion. While Orlando comes to terms with a sudden and uncontrollable passion for the Archduchess Harriet, Harriet is in fact Harry in disguise. Then, the narrator wonders, "But what sort of passion... could this be? And the answer is double-faced as Love herself" (Woolf, 1992, p. 116). Here, Woolf plays with love's instability in its multifariousness and its resistance to stabilization or fixing.

If the truth or fixity of anatomical sex were admitted, Orlando's passion would technically be homosexual, his sexual desires "out of the question". Orlando affirms his/her continuous love in the context of sexual ambiguity that she is experiencing. After Orlando's sex change, the newly female Orlando notices that her sexual object choice has not changed together with her body:

As all Orlando's loves had been women, now, through the culpable laggardry of the human frame to adapt itself to convention, though she herself was a woman, it was still a woman she loved; and if the consciousness of being of the same sex had any effect at all, it was to quicken and deepen those feelings which she had had as a man. (Woolf, 1992, p. 161)

Following Orlando's transition from male to female embodiment, her passion for women unsettles the narrator's attempt to frame her desire within a culturally accepted narrative of idealized heterosexual relationship. The novel thus leaves open the matter of a "true" gender or the question of a "true" sex by stubbornly refusing to inform the reader what sex Orlando really is. In this sense, it disrupts the non-contradictory and stable definition of gender. Although Orlando seems to remain a female beneath her transformations and multiple disguises, she never conforms to normative femininity.

As Judith Butler states in *Gender Trouble*, "the parodic repetition of gender exposes as well the illusion of gender identity as an intractable depth and inner substance" (Butler, 1999, p. 187). Here, she suggests that gender is just a matter of performance, dependent upon repetition. If gender simply comes to arise from a naturally sexed body, then from where do these illusions of femininity and masculinity emerge? According to Butler (1999), for gender or sex, there is not a pre-existing identity that determines action. Then, gender is an "act", Butler notes, "as it is open to splittings, self-parody, self-criticism, and those hyperbolic exhibitions of the natural that, in their very exaggeration reveal its fundamental phantasmatic status" (Butler, 1999, p. 165). Accordingly, gender or sex, which has been blended for this study just as Woolf had, is an illusion of naturalization and originality, an act and a parody, constructed by phantasmatic identifications based upon incomplete ongoing process and never fully embodied.

To understand the binary battle on the issue of sexual ambiguity that Orlando is experiencing, Woolf emphasizes the potential conflict among sexual anatomy, gender identity and gender performance throughout the novel. In this sense, unsettling the fixity of gender identity and sexual anatomy enables Woolf to frame the unconventional marriage of Orlando and Shelmerdine, Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, Esquire, who "had a castle in the Hebrides, but it was ruined... and had been a soldier and a sailor, and had explored the East" (Woolf, 1992, p. 251). Although their initial encounter is performed as a courteous horseman rescuing a maiden lying on the ground due to her injured ankle, the ridiculousness of both Orlando's reply to him and their immediate engagement cause the reader to interpret this scene as a much more explicit sexual coupling rather than a ceremonial attachment. Only a few minutes after this beginning, the two become engaged in love-making, without exchanging introductions or without any conversation (Woolf, 1992, p.252).

Notably, the narrative portrays Orlando's relationship with Shel as recreating the courtship tradition in cursory yet not conforming to, subverting that tradition. Even though they encounter, get engaged and finally get married, they undermine tradition by making a mock pretence of what it means to be engaged both in relation to the traditional timing of an engagement and in the sexually indirect manner their engagement can be interpreted. In a basic way, a traditional courtship plot essentially requires a woman and a man, which explains why Orlando, as a man, could not have pursued a courtship with Sasha in spite of his desire. Likewise, in Orlando's relationship with Shel, one finds on the surface a woman and a man, yet their courtship calls Orlando's and Shel's femaleness and maleness into question.

At first, Orlando and Shel states each other's sex dependent upon their appearance: "You're a woman, Shel" she cried. "You're a man, Orlando!" he cried" (Woolf, 1992, p.251). Later, rendering the two lovers neither absolutely male nor female, Woolf conveys a question of negation: "Are you positive you aren't a man?" Shel asks Orlando. "Can it be possible you're not a woman?" she asks him in return (Woolf, 1992, p. 252). Remarkably, the answer does not put an end to the question of which sex each of them is, only which sex each lover is not. At the same time, the relationship between Orlando and Shel immediately develops into a sort of interdependence where the lovers are more reflective figures of one another than counterparts. In addition, the ironic statements "You're a woman, Shel!" she cried" and "You're a man, Orlando!" he cried" (Woolf, 1992, p. 253) extend one's attention towards the unique communication between the lovers that situates them outside traditional romantic relationship.

Dependent upon likeness, upon sympathetic identification, upon the state of redoubling of self, for their perverse sexual tendencies, Orlando and Shel continue to act in ways that complicate the barriers and characteristics of sexual stereotyping and thus give ways to fluid, transgender identification. To be more precise, in *Orlando*, Woolf openly critiques heterosexual relationships which create and depend upon the gender division or physical sex characteristics. As an example, in order to preserve heterosexual norms, the Archduke Harry acts as a woman when Orlando is male and exposes himself to be male once Orlando passes as female: "he was a man and always had been one" but "to compass his ends, he had dressed as a woman" (Woolf, 1992, p. 179).

In addition, Orlando's sexual orientation changes through erotic attraction towards different gender presentations or remains in flux until she marries. Soon after the ceremony, Orlando proclaims, "I am a woman ... a real woman, at last" (Woolf, 1992, p. 253). The acceptance of a socially regulated gender identity, that of wife, comes to establish Orlando at this point. Orlando's involvement with the wife role is as unconventional as her motherhood since conventional notions of masculine supremacy are disregarded by the masquerade of sexuality. Woolf complicates what appears to be a return to masculine and feminine gender positions and conventional roles in the marriage of Orlando and Shel. Although they get married and Orlando gives birth, their gender positions are not stable or conventional.

When Orlando recalls Shelmerdine's question, "Can it be possible you're not a woman?" Woolf renders both Orlando and Shel neither definitively male or female (Woolf, 1992, p. 253). At this point, gender ambiguity once again matters to Orlando and Shel in the sense that they not only echo the instance of questioning concerning the other's sexual identity but also the act of confirming that identity. Inherent in each lover's uncertainty is an essentialized view of identity for the other which neither acts in accordance with. Their constant questioning of each other's gender both restates how different each character is from the conventional gender role they have in the fabrication of a courtship plot they assume to act. Such a questioning of gender shows that each is frequently surprised to see the other as straying away from that role. Accordingly, gender is unstable, not fixed; therefore, it is difficult to state whether Orlando and Shel are just a heterosexual husband and wife, more problematically a couple in which each vacillates from one sex to the other, something more of an intermix of any or all of these permutations. To be intermixed is to include the other or more broadly the constant multiplicity and vacillation of gender identities within the self beyond the boundaries of any gendered perspective.

Conclusion

One way of challenging gender norms involves a "replication of heterosexual constructs in non-heterosexual frames" (Butler, 1999, p. 137) as stated by Butler in *Gender Trouble*. In

this manner, Orlando's fluid sexuality, by inserting transgender images into a heterosexual framework, exposes the artificiality of that framework, challenging the notion that conventional roles of male and female are natural. Then, the rigid gender binary is constantly disrupted by gender ambiguities that run through gender communities where gender does not certainly follow from sex. As Butler (1996) explains in "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" the "authentic", "original" and "true" expression of human sexuality in tandem with an individual's assigned birth sex is a fantasy built upon the normalized binary of male and female (Butler, 1996). In fact, there is no origin for true gender identity. Rather, uncertainties and ambiguities abound in all individuals.

In other words, if Orlando's transgender existence presents a critique of binary gender and sex distinction, it is just because it destabilizes and denaturalizes gender and sex signs. Due to the variance from gender norms, such a transgender identification creates a gap in the mainstream society's understanding of gender and sex. This gap leaves us to search for the pretensions of original, but the idea of original, a stable ground will not be found. Hence, in Orlando the transgressive replication of heterosexual practices and transgender subject occur together, creating the multiplicity of depth. Through Orlando's repetition of various gender performances, Woolf troubles the traditional markers of gender. In this sense, throughout Orlando, Woolf's celebration of gendered masquerade undermines the apparent connection between anatomy, gender presentation and sexuality. To put in another way, the pre-existing cultural norms or normative expectations of society demand agreement among individual's gender identity, sexual anatomy and gender performance, which make possible the authentic experience of being a woman or man due to the convincing illusion of male or female essence. However, transgender identification interrupts this order and thereby they can only come close to gendered realness in such a way that people cannot consider an individual as being either/neither woman or man or both gender at the same time. Such a dissonance can occur in non-normative fabrications of gender. Accordingly, what transgender understanding in Orlando promotes is the possibility for all gendered subjects to remove gender from the impenetrable confines of definite referentiality and to instead make transgender embodiment something elusive, fluid and moving. To put it another way, transgender identification not only demonstrate the process of constant transformation and movement but also signify the nature of their unstable variances and ambiguities, which are central to transgender subject position.

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