



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**VIRGINIA WOOLF'S NEW INTELLECTUALISM IN RELATION TO THE
CONSTRUCTION OF A THIRD GENDER BASED ON DESIRE IN HER
SELECTED WORKS**

IRAJ MONTASHERY

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**VIRGINIA WOOLF'S NEW INTELLECTUALISM IN RELATION TO THE
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By

IRAJ MONTASHERY

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
(English Literature)**

January 2012

DEDICATION

To my mother, from whom all my hopes and desires originate



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (English Literature)

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Chair: Associate Prof. Dr. Noritah Omar

Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication

In *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Virginia Woolf subversively urges that “we think back through our mothers if we are women” (132); this radical belief which was uncommon in Woolf’s time turned out to be her lifelong commitment in her literary life, and which formulated a new form of intellectualism. This thesis explores Woolf’s radical argument in locating subjectivity in relation to desire: the desire to return to the lost mother, whose absence is the source and initiator of all speech and writing, and that which removes the values drawn by patriarchal maxims in reference to subjectivity. This new intellectualism specifically connects subjectivity to femininity, and considers the semiotic as doubly important in the construction of identity. The inscription of desire from a subject position particularly for female characters is a way of constituting a differently gendered self, which ultimately leads to the representation of female characters as the subjects of desire, and not the objects of male desire. In this study I will use the psychoanalytic approaches of Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva to juxtapose the symbolic and the semiotic, so as to not emphasise one over the other. These approaches valorise and celebrate the semiotic, to foreground its significance in the construction of identity. Furthermore, the inscription of desire for the maternal space takes multiple and plural systems of signification, and comes closer to the French feminists’ *écriture féminine*, which is informed by the semiotic, and is able to disrupt, undermine and circumvent phallogocentric symbolic language. In my exploration of the ways in which desire informs textuality, I will focus on Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Waves* (1931), and show, by way of *écriture féminine*, how desire acts both as a subversive element—which is by no means reducible to any patriarchal expectations or definitions regarding the trajectory of subjects’ sexual orientations—and as a defining element in disrupting and disturbing the commonly conceived and accepted binary thinking on sexuality. The latter opens up the possibility of a third gender, and consequently a new subject position in between the semiotic and the

symbolic, which is the sum total of both; this grants the female subjects a hitherto denied agency.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KEINTELEKTUALAN BARU VIRGINIA WOOLF DALAM KONSTRUKSI
JANTINA KETIGA YANG BERDASARKAN KEINGINAN DALAM
KARYA-KARYANYA**

Oleh

IRAJ MONTASHERY

Januari 2012

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Dalam *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Virginia Woolf mendesak bahawa “kita memikir kembali melalui ibu kita jika kita wanita” (“*we think back through our mothers if we are women,*” 132). Kenyataan ini, yang dianggap radikal pada masa itu, menjadi komitmen beliau dalam kerjayanya sebagai penulis, dan membuahkan apa yang boleh diklasifikasikan sebagai satu cabang intelektualisme baru. Berdasarkan intelektualisme baru ini, tesis ini akan mengkaji hujah Woolf yang megaitkan subjektiviti dengan keinginan—secara khususnya, keinginan seseorang subjek untuk kembali ke ‘alam ibu.’ ‘Ketiadaan’ ibu (apabila subjek dipisahkan daripada ibunya pada masa kelahiran) membolehkan kewujudan metod-metod perantaraan yang bersifat patriaki (alam simbolik). Keinginan untuk kembali ke alam ibu/matriaki (alam semiotik) ini boleh digunakan untuk mempersoalkan nilai dan norma yang diwujudkan oleh logik patriaki. Lebihan itu, intelektualisme baru ini mengaitkan subjektiviti kepada kewanitaan, dan menganggap alam semiotik sebagai elemen yang amat penting dalam penstrukturan identiti. Kaitan keinginan dengan subjektiviti ini, khususnya bagi wanita, membolehkan penstrukturan gender yang tidak tertakluk kepada norma-norma patriaki; lebih-lebih lagi, ini dapat mengubahsuai persembahan wanita daripada objek yang *diinginkan* (oleh lelaki), kepada subjek yang *mengingini*. Ini juga dapat melatardepankan peranan alam semiotik dalam penstrukturan identiti, tanpa merendahkan peranan alam simbolik. Keinginan untuk kembali ke alam ibu juga membuahkan kepelbagaian metod perantaraan (berbeza daripada metod perantaraan patriaki yang mufrad), yang menghampiri metod perantaraan yang disarankan oleh beberapa feminis Perancis, iaitu *écriture féminine*. *Écriture féminine* ini bersifat semiotik, dan boleh menyongsangkan bahasa simbolik yang bersifat *phallogentric* (kelelakian) dan patriaki. Tesis ini akan mengkaji bagaimana keinginan mempengaruhi tekstualiti dalam tiga karya Woolf: *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) dan *The Waves* (1931), dan juga akan mengkaji bagaimana keinginan ini boleh bersifat

subversif—kerana membolehkan pestruktur binari dalam kehidupan seharian (pengklasifikasian sifat dan gender kepada maskulin/feminin) disoalkan. Ini juga akan membuka ruang untuk kewujudan ‘jantina ketiga,’ yang meletakkan seseorang subjek di antara kategori maskulin dan feminin—yang merupakan *hasil* daripada penggabungan kedua-dua kategori tersebut. Kewujudan kategori ini seterusnya meletakkan kuasa dalam tangan subjek wanita, yang secara kebiasaannya tidak dibenarkan dalam alam patriaki.



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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 3 January 2012 to conduct the final examination of Iraj Montashery on his thesis entitled "Virginia Woolf's New Intellectualism In Relation To The Construction Of A Third Gender Based On Desire In Her Selected Works" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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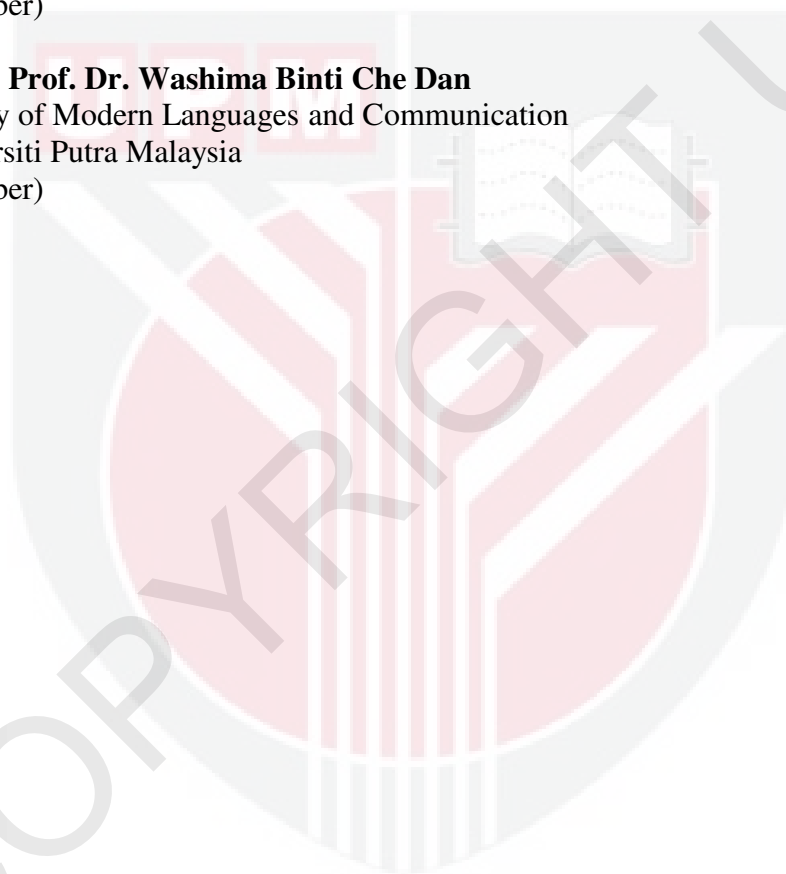
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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

IRAJ MONTASHERY

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