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

IRAJ MONTASHERY

FBMK 2012 1
VIRGINIA WOOLF’S NEW INTELLECTUALISM IN RELATION TO THE
CONSTRUCTION OF A THIRD GENDER BASED ON DESIRE IN HER
SELECTED WORKS

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)

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

By

IRAJ MONTASHERY

January 2012

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 phallocentric 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

Pengerusi: Associate Prof. Dr. Noritah Omar

Fakulti: Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi

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 membuka pintu 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 penstrukturakan identiti. Kaitan keinginan dengan subjektiviti ini, khususnya bagi wanita, membolehkan penstrukturakan gender yang tidak tertakluk kepada norma-norma patriaki; lebih-lebih lagi, ini dapat mengubahsuaian persembahan wanita daripada objek yang diinginkan (oleh lelaki), kepada subjek yang mengingini. Ini juga dapat melatarbelakangi peranan alam semiotik dalam penstrukturakan identiti, tanpa merendahkan peranan alam simbolik. Keinginan untuk kembali ke alam ibu juga membuka peluang untuk metod perantaraan yang bersifat semiotik, 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 phallocentric (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 pestrukturkan binari dalam kehidupan sehari (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.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the writing of this thesis, I wondered if writing about and researching women brought me closer or further distanced me from them. Hopefully enough, I achieved the former through the efforts of four great female scholars. First is my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Noritah Omar, whom I regard as the highest example of a scholar, teacher, critic and writer; who continually reassured me that what I was writing was intelligent, even when I myself felt otherwise; and who fuelled my interest in narrative studies.

I would also like to thank the two other members of my committee: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mardziah Hayati Abdullah for her invaluable comments and suggestions during the drafting of the thesis; and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Washima Che Dan for her kind encouragement, especially during my seminar presentation. Her illuminating comments on the final draft of my thesis were necessary steps for the completion of this research. I am also in the debt of Dr. Leily Jamali for her encouragement and tireless support of this project from its inception, and for kindly and graciously sharing her insights on Jacques Lacan with me.

Last but not least, I need to thank my family who helped me greatly with this thesis, often more—or in more obscure ways—than they realised, or than I was able to tell them at the time. Their love, encouragement and support throughout the entirety of this project have never escaped my notice.
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.

Members of the Thesis Examination Committee were as follows:

Shamala A/P Paramasivam, PhD  
Associate Professor  
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Chairman)

Ruzy Suliza Hashim, PhD  
Professor  
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia  
(Internal Examiner)

Shivani Sivagurunathan, PhD  
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication  
Universiti Putra Malaysia  
(Internal Examiner)

Richard Corballis, PhD  
Professor  
The School of English and Media Studies  
Massey University  
New Zealand  
(External Examiner)

SEOW HENG FONG, PhD  
Professor and Deputy Dean  
School of Graduate Studies  
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:

viii
This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Noritah Omar, PhD**
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mardziah Hayati Binti Abdullah**
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Washima Binti Che Dan**
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

---

**BUJANG BIN KIM HUAT, PhD**
Professor and Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:
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

Date:
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRAK</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROVAL</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION
1

1.1 Background of the Study
- 1.1.1 Subjectivity 1
- 1.1.2 Sexual and gender identity 4
- 1.1.3 Virginia Woolf 10

1.2 Statement of the Problem 12

1.3 Scope of the Study 20

1.4 Limitations of the Study 20

1.5 Research Objectives 21

1.6 Significance of the Study 22

1.7 Conceptual Theory 22
- 1.7.1 Jacques Lacan: The birth of desire 22
- 1.7.2 Towards Kristeva’s semiotic through écriture féminine: The language of desire 32
- 1.7.3 The construction of an in-between gender identity (third gender) 42

1.8 Methodology 44

1.9 Organisation of the Thesis 45

1.10 Conclusion 46

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW
48

2.1 Introduction 48

2.2 Virginia Woolf’s Modernism 51

2.3 The Nature of Woolf’s Art and Intellectualism 52

2.4 Desire, Sex and Sexual Orientation 55

2.5 Feminine Writing Practice 59

2.6 Woolf and the French Feminists 61

2.7 Subject-in-Process 63

2.8 Connecting Subject to the Maternal Space 67

2.9 Conclusion 75

## CHAPTER THREE: DISCUSSION: MRS DALLOWAY
77

3.1 Introduction 77

3.2 Woolf’s New Intellectualism 78

3.3 Writing and Desire: Desire as Subtext 80

3.4 Lacan’s Symbolic and Woolf’s Semiotic 83

3.5 Woolf and Stream-of-Consciousness 84
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Memory as Feminine Strategy</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Patriarchal Figures in the Novel and Clarissa’s Resistance</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8 The Surfacing of Clarissa’s Real Desires</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9 A New Interpretation of the Phallus</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10 The Choraic Relation between Clarissa and Peter</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11 The Abjection and Unattainability of the Maternal Space</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.12 A Plural System of Signification through the Dialectic Relation of</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic and the Semiotic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.13 Mutual Agency in Lesbianism</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.14 Doris Kilman</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.15 Clarissa vs. Septimus and the Desire for Death</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.16 Feminine Language and the Construction of Third-Gender</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.17 Conclusion</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION: TO THE LIGHTHOUSE</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Introduction</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 A Short Background of the Novel</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Lily’s ‘No’ to patriarchy</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Mrs Ramsay: The Maternal Figure</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Mr Ramsay: The Paternal Figure</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 <em>To the Lighthouse</em> and the Oedipal story</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Lily and Mrs Ramsay</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8 Lily and the Struggle for Feminine Expression</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9 Lily and the In-Between—Third—Gender Identity</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10 The-Thing-in-Itself as a Feminine Language</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11 Lily and the Connections of ‘Desire’, ‘Language’ and ‘Agency’</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12 Lily and the Inscription of Desire</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.13 Conclusion</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION: THE WAVES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Introduction</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 General Background of the Novel</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Feminine Characters of the Novel: Susan, Jinny and Rhoda</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.1 Susan</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.2 Jinny</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.3 Rhoda</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 The Unbearable Weight of Being</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Bernard: The Story Teller</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 The Language of Desire and Immediacy: ‘Voice of Action’</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7 Bernard and Rhoda’s Relations to Language</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8 Bernard’s Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Identity</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9 Conclusion</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

xii