Orlando Dies under the Oak Tree: How Pastiche will Save us in Postmodern Gender Trouble

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***Abstract*—In Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando*, the major character is constantly employing the self-fashioning strategy to strengthen her cultural intelligibility. The oak tree, namely the eye of patriarchal power in the text, supervises and regulates her demeanors. Experiencing the change from The Oak Tree to the oak tree, Orlando embraces her textual decapitation and symbolic death. The limited autonomy of Orlando's aesthetic choices and mannerisms sheds light on the transsexual dilemma haunting those unintelligible bodies in the face of absolute gender dichotomy. Their self-fashioning strategy is reduced to an approach to be readable subjects and eventually effaced from history. Judith Butler proposes the parodic nature of gender practices and holds that the subversive gender politics cannot occur without recitation of prevalent norms. Orlando's struggle is a classic example to show the lack of feasibility within the Butlerian logic: the deconstruction of heteronormativity is accessible but forever being accessed. Attempting to handle what parody cannot root out, this paper highlights pastiche as a possible alternative to randomize the gender discourses and the political context. Pastiche, occurring within culture, incurs partial signification of norms, and can possibly bring new life to the horizon of contemporary queer theories.**

***Index Terms*—Orlando, parody, pastiche, gender trouble.**

I. Introduction

Discussion on Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* has long been focusing on the character's revolutionary embodiment of androgyny and the writer's feminist horizon. As Lisa Rado argues, Woolf's gender experiment in writing is the author's response to the zeitgeist of early modernism embodied by Orlando's struggle for survival, namely an "attempt at 'being'" [1].

Nevertheless, this struggle for existence is not one-dimensional: it is a rejection based on obedience, or a rebellion which occurs in the gray area between survival and sacrifice. Judging from Orlando's constant adjustments to outfits and mannerisms, it should be noted that she is fully aware of her gender identity, and is strategically remolding her contacts with the external world. She is supposed to obey the rules before defying them and become a culturally intelligible body, just as what Jane Goldman points out to be Orlando's involvement in "the process of self-fashioning, of mustering the right self for the occasion" [2]. To Orlando, conforming to norms is always prior to shattering the norms since survival is what she conceives to be of the utmost importance in conditions that are unfavorable to the representation of her gender. The elasticity and fluidity of subject formation are inevitably confined to the historic specificity of a social framework. The degree of conformity performed in a social framework determines a subject's initiative to absorb or combat the prescribed paradigms [3]. The environment is performative, and an individual needs to sharpen his/her performativity to adapt to the immediate surroundings, but the autonomy inscribed in the performativity is controversial and needs further exploration.

Orlando is worth revisiting since the character's intentional self-fashioning is a practice of parody, a term developed by Judith Butler in her influential work, *Gender Trouble* (1990), and the novel sheds light on debatable gender issues in postmodern time. As Butler notices, parodic practices refer to a subject's endeavor to repeat the prevailing gender norms with laughter, and tap into the potential of repetition to subvert the current identities. Parody is an anticipatory measure to revolutionize the future, but the result is unfathomable; it only presents the "immanent possibility to contest" the social constructs, and accomplishment of the strategy is a matter of chance [4].

One interesting perspective to study Orlando's limited autonomy in parodic practices, besides clothing and etiquette, is the presence and absence of the oak tree. Throughout the novel, the oak tree is capitalized and dacapitalized, synchronized with Orlando's trajectory of self-fashioning. What deserves further notice is what an oak tree signifies, and how the transformation of an oak tree image turns out as a textual play which indicates Orlando's loss of vitality and viability in the eye of heteropatriarchal power. The oak tree, limiting the release of Orlando's aesthetic demand and poetic energy, displays the glass ceiling of parody; it is difficult for Orlando to extricate herself from the shadow of masculinist prowess.

If parody is not effective enough to optimize the space for a gendered body's survival, a new strategy should be adopted. A counterpart of parody, less discussed in gender studies, is pastiche. The concept of pastiche is discussed by Fredric Jameson and later cited in Butler's work. Pastiche, according to Jameson, is a "blank parody", or a neutral imitative practice without laughter or irony [5]. Pastiche undermines the concept of "origin" and thus has the potential to radicalize the formation of an already gendered identity. Although embracing an always approaching death is the normal state for Orlando, is there anything she can do to momentarily escape the loop of parody that displays an inclination for pastiche? How possible is it to influence the oak tree which is closely tied to her legible existence? The

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theoretical value of pastiche in gender studies is to be explored in the paper and hopefully it will contribute to the realization of a subversive future for queer subjects.

II. Parody: Accessing Death AD Infinitum

Orlando in the first half of the novel is different from that in the latter half not in terms gender only. Orlando is a continuum of strategic self-fashioning, a hollow cylinder with flowing contents, a collection of ideological fragments. Her lack of autonomy is closely related to the rationale of parody, and this connection is to be explored in this section.

A. Becoming a Natural Woman

Orlando's gender transformation shows the fluidity and instability of gendered identity and a subject's oscillation between the binary opposition of gender [6]. What Orlando tries to do after the transformative gender crossing, concluded by Stef Craps, is a manipulation of the fluidity and multiplicity of identity, with an intention to "effect a rearticulation of the terms of symbolic legitimacy and intelligibility" [7]. The norms of cultural intelligibility, articulated but in an unexpected direction, may lead to the configurations of gender in a society of heterosexual hegemony. Craps notices the limited capacity of Orlando's gender performatives in the face of cultural norms, and this view is more radically presented by Jay Prosser who believes that *Orlando* should not be regarded as a transsexual text since the character is "free to move beyond h/er body—quite queerly, to break through the limits of the flesh" [8]. Prosser argues that Orlando's transformation is only fantastic; her androgyny is not intricate since she is well settled with the social roles before and after her sex/gender change. Although Prosser's argument regarding the transsexualism in the text should be further considered since transsexuality itself is a cultural construct permeated with power discourses, it does deserve notice that Orlando is consciously fashioning herself in accordance to cultural expectations.

As Stephen Greenblatt notices, self-fashioning interferes with the subjection process by "governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment" [9]. A subject starts from imitating the aesthetic standards and ends up establishing a public persona in compliance with social norms. Orlando, for the sake of expediency, shifts her appearances and mannerisms to create a public identity which complies with the popular expectations of an obedient and ladylike woman. With both feminine and masculine qualities, Orlando seems to have gained more autonomy in the oscillation of gender performance, but in fact, her choice is limited. As a female intellectual, she must have sensed the inferior position of women in the phallocentric situation, but there is no alternative but adapting herself to a man's world. This is precisely the dilemma of a trans woman: becoming culturally intelligible requires less conspicuousness in a normative framework.

Orlando's self-conscious readjustment of gender performatives becomes more perceptible to readers when she has decided to return to her homeland. Her stay in the Gypsy clan is a transition during which she determines to retain her contact with the world outside and renew her public identity. On the ship back, she releases her desire to fashion her appearance: "Orlando bought herself a complete outfit of such clothes as women then wore, and it was in the dress of a young Englishwoman of rank that she now sat on the deck of the 'Enamoured Lady'" [10]. She is particularly cautious in dressing herself to be a conventional woman and realizes "the penalties and privileges of her position" [10] when she is treated courteously by the Captain. She has a critical view on her life in the future as a female; her privilege is based upon subjugation, which is a compensatory action to the inferior. Talking of her remorse for insisting that women are inherently subordinate when she was still a man, Orlando says that "women are not (judging by my own short experience of the sex) obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely appareled by nature" [10]. She is also well aware of women's prescribed attachment to normativity: "They can only attain these graces, without which they may enjoy none of the delights of life, by the most tedious discipline" [10]. Her manipulation of appearance is thus a self-sacrificing strategic reaction to invisible regulations, adding credit to the public persona.

To Orlando, following the dress code becomes a way of integrating herself into the social role. The narrator's position on dress code is a sober interpretation of parodic practices, namely the self-fashioning behavior: "it is clothes that wear us and not we them; we may make them take the mould of arm or breast, but they mould our hearts, our brains, our tongues to their liking" [10]. A female subject, naturalized as she is, is expected to inherit the dressing convention, and the artificial value of dress code thus becomes an indistinguishable part of the psyche.

Parody is thus a strategy of Orlando's struggle which is ironically premised upon docility, acquiescence and discipline. As is pointed out by Butler, "performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of literability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms" [11] indicating that gender performance is not a breakaway from the cultural force but a ritualistic compliance with it. A woman, though enlightened enough to oscillate between genders, has no choice but to remain submissive to the male gaze, which is the most ironic depiction of women living in Woolf's time. Perhaps that is why Rado comments that Woolf's androgynous imagination is a "self-destructive, culturally imposed solution" [1] facing the overwhelming public discourses in a phallocentric world.

B. "I'm Dead, Sir": From The Oak Tree to "The Oak Tree"

For a queer subject, to live in the crowd is in some sense to exterminate the past self. In the essay titled "The *Empire* Strikes Back: A Posttransexual Manifesto", Sandy Stone argues that the ultimate goal of transsexual life is to erase the self from public and to embrace the crowd of the normal [12]. Stone's argument precisely displays the plight of parody: before bringing changes to the world, a queer subject, constantly ready for resignification, needs to repeatedly prompt her difference to die. The present tense of "dies" in the title of the paper denotes that "to die" is a normalcy to Orlando in parodic practices; she is forever approaching symbolic death but unable to finally reach it. This death, accessible but forever being accessed, constitutes her misery and anxiety as a naturalized woman.

The transformation of one image in the novel is closely synchronized with Orlando's practices of parody—the oak tree. The oak tree was initially a concrete image within the sight of young male Orlando, but is later more frequently used in the biographical narrative of female Orlando as "The Oak Tree", the title for her poetry manuscript. Throughout the novel, the two forms of oak tree appear alternately, but the novel ends in a scene where an oak tree stands by Orlando of unsound mind. By the end of the novel, the poetic work has been submitted to Nicholas Greene who is in charge of publishing the poetry, and thus the capitalized form is in absence as a response to the loss of poetic grace that constitutes Orlando's innerworld. The last scene, therefore, is a slide from "The Oak Tree" to the oak tree.

What does the oak tree image signify in the text? What does the textual play of capital letters denote? Hints can be found in Orlando's attitude towards her own poetic work. Before helping Orlando publish the manuscript, Nicholas Greene comments that the poem has "no trace… of the modern spirit" which he interprets as "unscrupulous eccentricity" in his time [10]. It is very likely that Greene's remark is a recognition for the poet's adherence to women's traditional values rarely seen in a pioneer woman of the early modern period. This manuscript, accompanying Orlando everywhere she goes, serves as a doctrine, a mirror and a monitor with which she can immediately evaluate and correct her dress and speech. The oak tree thus embodies the eye of power, witnessing the quotidian routine of Orlando who is ceaselessly shaded by phallocentric and heteronormative authority. She is not even aware of being watched and disciplined: before finding her manuscript, "something fluttering above her heart rebuked her with having forgotten all about it" [10].

If the writing process of the poem, prompting the change from the oak tree to "The Oak Tree", displays the accumulation of self-fashioning hebaviors, or the gradual establishment and confirmation of a public persona, then the slide from the capitalized title to the lower-case noun phrase consequently indicates the collapse of this intentional construct. Upon the arrival of her husband Shelmerdine, Orlando falls into a state of ecstasy. Interestingly, when Orlando cries out the name of her husband, she is standing by an oak tree. According to Rado, Orlando's reunion with her husband is a hallucination "created out of her own need to sublimate her anxieties about the body" [1]. Her mental disorder results from a blurred demarcation line between the external world and her body. It can be assumed that Orlando has already lost herself in ecstasy which Jane Gallop explains as being "placed out" and "no longer within your [her] frame" [13]. Orlando has created an ecstatic vacuum where she feels it natural to become an ideal docile subject whose private sphere is occupied by public discourses.

By then Orlando's identity is not for her to decide any more; she is now just a body, an ultimate goal of the self-fashioning strategy. Her ecstasy, her madness and her sobriety are no longer under her control; instead, her meaning of life only exists when she is attached to a natural male, resembling an oak tree whose shade is so wide that she can never escape from it. The regulative public discourses produce an illusory exemplar for a subject to impersonate, and the oak tree is such an "illusion" or the ultimate signifier which reflects the lack on a queer body; it is a reminder of the absence that makes a naturalized woman different, of what to do as a compensation for the lack during the signifying process. It stands there as the phallus, as the Law of the Father, and as the ultimacy of all chains of signifiers.

When Orlando meets Shelmerdine for the very first time, she is narrowly hurt by the man's horse, and for the instant reaction she utters: "I'm dead, sir!" This being "dead" is an exaggerated signal heralding Orlando's symbolic death. The root "cap", meaning "head", solidifies the cultural association between "decapitation" and "decapitalization". When the oak image has turned from a poem title to a concrete existence in the end, Orlando is symbolically beheaded. The "I" becomes an "i" that cannot signify independently in the textual play. Under the oak tree are innumerable headless women swooning over the sacrifice of their visible bodies. No wonder why Orlando sees a wild goose at the scene: the goose-walking-over-a-grave chilliness is a premonition of death—the death of a naturalized woman's fantasized virginity.

If parody is the only strategic concept to be adopted in a gendered life, the benefits hardly outweigh the risk to be borne by a queer subject, since the autonomy one has is highly confined to the prevailing normative structure. To die for a living is nothing but an act of expediency; parody provides only an ideal path of subversion whose effect is forever deferred.

III. Pastiche: Shattering the Norms

The logic of parody strengthens a subject's adherence to cultural intelligibility, and thus the success of a subversive future is a matter of probability. If pastiche, the juxtaposed counterpart of parody, is introduced and integrated into gender issues, a new prospect of gender politics may come into being.

A. Performative Collage

According to Jameson, pastiche is "the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language" [5]. What distinguishes pastiche from parody is that the former delivers no satirical message and is therefore a neutral practice. Jameson believes that postmodern cultural logic is characterized by pastiche, since the late capitalism dissipates appeals for tradition.

Butler's interpretation of Jameson focuses on pastiche's lack of recourse to tradition. As Butler notices, when the sense of "the normal" is dispelled, and "the original" manifests itself as a failed copy that can never be embodied, laughter will be aroused even if no direct satirical content is involved in pastiche practices. It seems that Butler's elaboration on pastiche stops here, and her sequential deductions focus on the parodic repetitions in gender performatives, and thus the potential of pastiche for gay identities remains untapped. Nevertheless, Butler does offer a noteworthy perspective to look at pastiche; the concept of "normal", chained to derivative standards of cultural intelligibility, can be reformatted in the capacity of pastiche.

Pastiche, compared to parody, is a more playful textual play that advocates a comparatively random access to the sense of normalcy, and it will access the ultimate goal of subversion in a more efficient manner. Orlando, as is discussed in the first chapter, is a typical example of a marked subject suffering from the unfruitful functioning of parody, but she does show a flashing tendency of pastiche in the text.

This happens when Orlando meets the Archduke Harry who used to cross-dress as an Archduchess. By the time they meet, Orlando is said by the narrator to have "completely forgotten" her sex, but the sudden appearance of the Archduke Harry has her "recalled thus suddenly to a consciousness of her sex" [10]. By far this instant reaction is still a parodic process since the authority of normalcy is conjured after comparison of physical appearances, and Orlando's immediate readjustment of her performatives recites and resignifies the normative regulation. However, what brings pastiche into the text is the two characters' interaction that confounds the normative framework: the two develop a conversation by acting "the parts of man and woman for ten minutes" [10], and the readers do not know who plays the parts of man and who plays woman. It is not difficult to understand Orlando's capacity to be a coherent gendered subject if she plays woman, but what if she plays man? It can be assumed that this is a momentary respite from the internalization of discipline in the face of someone able to read her transsexual history.

In this interaction, the category of sex still exists but is remolded in a random manner. The biological difference is not dissipated, since "man" and "woman" remain as two inevitable entries of the category, but the gender norms signify in an unintelligible sequence, debilitating recourse to "the original'. What fills in the phantasmatic category is an emotionless collage of performatives that partially signify the prevalent gender norms. Rather than temporarily adhering to essentialism for strategic efficiency, the two characters reformat the polarized entries and recreate the supposedly hierarchical interaction into an unintelligible length of time that cannot be comprehended by any heterosexual understanding of linear time.

A more radical view on this outstanding part of the novel can be adopted if the categories are understood to be dispelled: playing "the part of man and woman" denotes a strong implication that the totality of categories here is queered. The "part of man and woman" is precisely the cursory imposition of heteronormative framework, and Orlando's confounding gender performative shows how the binary structure can be thoroughly displaced by queer subjectivity.

B. Hauntology of Normalcy

The standard of normalcy always exists and is vitally geared to signify. In what ways are queer subjects capable to randomizing the textual play with pastiche practices even when the normative forces are constantly censoring the performatives? A theoretical look at the the haunting normalcy is necessary before exploring the subversive capacity of pastiche.

In *Specters of Marx* (1994), Jacques Derrida develops the notion of hauntology, or the logic of haunting: in the postmodern time when the public and the private sphere are constantly displaced because of the techno-culture, the material reality is always haunted by prosthetic happenings, and this logic "exceeds a binary or dialectical logic, the logic that distinguishes or opposes effectivity or actuality… and ideality" [14]. Hauntology, as Derrida notices, is therefore a deconstructive tool to look at presence and absence combined with his insight into difference and deference, which displays "the condition of possibility and impossibility of any conceptual order" [15].

Hauntology is also applicable in the sphere of gender studies. As Elizabeth Freeman notices, the logic of haunting reminds us that history is not the only factor that constitutes subjectivity; there is also the other who "takes precedence and has priority and thus splits our selfhood, detours our forward-moving agency" [16]. This notion of the other, haunting the subjection process, is applied by Nancy J. Holland to a study of Father/daughter relationship: a woman is always haunted by "the spectral Other", or "idealized Woman" in the eye of patriarchy, and this is what she is supposed to become [17]. This precisely demonstrates a queer subject's parodic interaction with the heteronormativity by which he/she is incessantly being haunted; self-fashioning is just a representation of the other, a melancholia for the loss of vitality.

The above analysis of hauntology is meant to illustrate that pastiche will hardly succeed if the affective tie between the subject and the signifying normalcy is not destabilized. Pastiche, on the front of gender performative, should highlight playfulness and dilute the intensity of affection towards the authority of normalcy. A subject's reaction to the circulating normalcy should be randomized and incur partial signification of heteronormativity, until the entries of norms become empty categories.

Throughout *Orlando* the novel, pastiche practice is rarely seen in Orlando's life. Some quasi-pastiche practices, ending up as parodic repetitions, fail to outcompete the overwhelming influence of heteronormativity that haunts the body and psyche of the character. After the aforementioned confusing play of gender performative, Orlando falls in love with Shelmerdine, a man known for his female attributes. It would have been another pastiche practice, but in fact their marriage is again a parodic repetition of the heteronormative framework that constitutes Orlando's death as a docile wife under the oak tree.

Similar failures of quasi-pastiche practices demonstrate that, if the affective structure is not approached in a radical manner, the influence of normalcy will always overshadow the subversive capacity of repetitive acts. Besides her adjustment of outfits to fit in various occasions, Orlando also cross-dresses from time to time, seemingly trespassing the prescribed gender norms, but the awareness of self-regulation has penetrated Orlando's daily mannerisms. In the fourth chapter, there is a seemingly light-hearted description of Orlando's frequent cross-dressing on various occasions. It seems that Orlando is carefree in her choices of outfits, but in fact an underlying force instantly deprives her of autonomy the moment it is regained. Her deviation from normal dress codes only happens when a slip from the eye of power is achievable: "a China robe of ambiguous gender", "knee-breeches", "snuff-coloured gown like a

layer's suit" and the clothes of "a nobleman" are all put on her body only when she enjoys no direct contact with men. Feminine clothing, like the "flowered taffeta" [10], is what she wears when a man proposes to her. As can be seen, Orlando can find vent for her defiance of phallocentric discourses only when she personally assumes that no man is gazing at her. This is what an optimist can do in a desperate situation. However, she knows that any blatant resistance to social norms will bring her the cruel punishment: disgrace and depravity of a naturalized woman. Later when Orlando is passing by the Buckingham Palace, "her eyes seemed forced by a superior power down upon her knees" [10], which indicates that she is completely docile this time to the authoritative power of normative standards.

Her self-mockery shows the compromise she has made: "'I am a woman,' she thought, 'a real woman, at last'" [10]. She is subservient not only to the social norms but also to her own public identity, a joint product of the social and the personal sphere. Wearing men's clothing is therefore a momentary lapse of concentration on gender norms or a self-entertaining deviation from them, because she is aware that this occasional rebellion contributes nothing to the change of the prevailing condition. Orlando's horizon is limited in terms of rebellious thoughts; her fear of deviation and subsequent punishment are camouflaged by the apparent autonomy she uses to satisfy herself only.

The above examples are in sharp contrast to that in the previous section; the circulating gender norms are decoded in completely different methods. Butler's understanding of normalcy, namely the copy of copy, should be further considered. The gauge of "the original" is something of the past and cannot be thoroughly dissipated, and therefore it is natural to constantly establish and strengthen the affective ties to the ghost of prescriptive sexuality. Nevertheless, a gaming attitude is more efficient and radical in interrupting the loop of eternally approaching death, the shade of the oak tree, and the signification of oppressive norms.

IV. Pastiche and Future

Contemporary queer theories are centered around the idea of queer time, or a sustainably radical future in which performatives are less likely to be penetrated by normative discipline. Pastiche, reacting effectively against the postmodern gender trouble of parody, strategically exploits a future less confined to heteronormativity, and therefore it remains to be further discussed by queer theorists.

Influenced by the Pêcheuxian theory, José Esteban Muñoz develops disidentification into a queer strategy against heteronormativity. As Muñoz argues, the current cultural framework will be reformulated if a subject who has failed in interpellation to be intelligible "works on and against dominant ideology", which is "a strategy that tries to transform a cultural logic from within" [18]. Disidentification is supposed to occur within the current structure, characterized by a subject's negotiation of personal desire, ideological penetration, and subjection process. Muñoz's strategy of disidentification is exactly a simulacrum of the Butlerian logic of parody: in order to change the political prospect of a certain cultural environment, hierarchical norms are recited before they are devitalized, since disagreement is another way of readdressing the norms. Disidentification is supposed to rearticulate the Althusserian interpellation, but it reversibly facilitates another powerful entry of interpellation.

The favorable condition for disidentitificatory subjects is therefore based upon a utopian prospect in which queer desires will be rewritten and rearticulated. This idea is also elaborated by Muñoz in *Cruising Utopia* (2009) which mainly discusses the utopian possibility of queer studies. Inspired by Bloch's anticipatory illumination, Muñoz expects a functioning indeterminacy and potentiality for queer agenda in which there will be a turn to the "no-longer-conscious" and the "not-yet-here", combating the logic of "here and now" underlying heteronormativity [19]. Queerness is thus a disidentificatory horizon, a chain of forever becoming, an arena of transformative ecstasy.

It is a good idea to magnify the performative nature of queer time, but the dialectic aspect of performativity should not be trivialized; being and being done happen spontaneously and simultaneously on a subject. Muñoz also realizes the limited capacity of a disidentificatory queer agenda in an unfavorable milieu because of the ghost of sex in the collective unconscious of the public, addressing hauntology as an important tool to study public discourses of queer sexuality. Therefore, a utopian future deserves to be explored, but the issue is how this future will be accessed, forwarded, and popularized. If this future is generated within the heteronormative framework, which is to say, the future itself becomes a product of parodic repetitions, a lifeless picture of continuous discipline, then queerness is still not emancipated from the logic of haunting.

In *No Future* (2004), Lee Edelman presents his radical view on queer future by arguing that a so-called "reproductive futurism" is confining gender politics to the symbolic Child, a teleological representation of a sustainable future of humanity, and therefore we should refuse to take current hope for granted since the hope is "always affirmation of an order whose refusal will register as unthinkable, irresponsible, inhumane" [20]. Edelman is suggesting a decisive break from promissory cultural intelligibility that solidifies the normative framework, which will eventually disturb the prevailing comprehension of identity formation. Borrowing Butler's notion of repetition and Paul de Man's view on irony as undoing, Edelman illustrates that queer subjects, by rejecting any appropriate identity assigned to them, should undertake the task of "embodying the remainder of the Real internal to the Symbolic order" with the expectation of disavowing the repetitive normative regulation.

Edelman's argument shows how a utopianism reproduced from the heteronormative context will stifle the legitimate existence of queer subjects. However, a radical break from the prevalent norms is not completely possible; the fringe of culture is dynamic, and identities are by no means extricated from the circulating power discourses. Before we deny a repetitive future, a transitional strategy is needed to mobilize queer subjects and shuffle the power dynamism that has long been ransacking and marginalizing queerness.

Pastiche, randomizing queer subjects' reaction to cultural intelligibility, progressively paves the way for a radical future in which the reproductive expectations will be

defaced and re-inscribed. The affective connection of the public to the Child will undergo a paradigm shift towards a future imperceptible to the present-day locus of queerness. If Orlando's cross-dressing and gender neutral mannerisms are regardless of occasion, in casual defiance of patriarchal rules and regulations, the alternation of the oak tree and "The Oak Tree" may possibly change into a more favorable circumstance to her. What remains to be explored before the arrival of an unknown future is how gender performatives will be specified, optimized, and finally opening a wider anthropological horizon. Pastiche, still inadequately discussed in the arena of gender studies, deserves more theoretical concern.

V. Conclusion

The androgynous Orlando's oscillating gender performance is not capricious as it seems; instead, it is a strategy to strengthen her adaptability in a world of masculine logic. As a naturalized woman, she is meant to be a body of docility; as a female intellectual, she clearly understands her difficult situation. She may disguise her female characteristics for the time being, but this recreational attempt can never offset her will to discipline herself. Orlando has become a woman who "smiled the involuntary smile which women smile when their own beauty, which seems not their own, forms like a drop falling or a fountain rising and confronts them all of a sudden in the glass" [10]. Always anxious about her public image, she constantly accustoms herself to the common expectation. Androgynous characters, therefore, are not always so heroic as they are in queer and feminist imagination. The strategic readjustment, to the marginalized people, is just a self-sacrificing method to be part of the world they are living in.

Orlando is the projection of Woolf's apprehension about her dual identity as both a writer and a woman. To know what she is unable to control is one source of anxiety to women like her; to obey what she despises is another. In *A Room of One's Own*, she claims that "It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly" [21]. If Woolf is not so confident as she seems, she is just granting herself the ideal autonomy she needs in a stifling modern life. One's identity is thus not so controllable as it performs to be, and it is hazardous to say that both the writer and the character are radical enough to revision the prevalent gender representation. Woolf's creation of a "biography" can be regarded as a desperate call for attention to women like her in a heteropatriarchal society. Her androgynous imagination is not just an independent woman's manifesto but rather a projection of her defenselessness: to be a reformist or a conformist is not for her, but for the social framework to decide.

Woolf's creation of *Orlando* is a projection of today's world where queer community acquiesce in a loop of parodic suicide. If we pledge all our political expectations on parodic practices, the marginalized subjects have to take the risk of a failed resignifying process and erasure from history. In order to tackle the postmodern gender trouble in limited parodic practices, a shift to pastiche is needed to bring into reality the subversive gender politics. Utopia is not supposed to be a replica of current oppression; possibilities should be relocated for a future unknown to people suffering in the abyss of today's cultural norms.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

Ying Hu advanced the arguments and wrote the paper. Yang Mu offered constructive ideas and proofread the paper. Both authors have approved the final version.

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