Androgyny in Feminist Utopian Literature:
Fictional Challenges to Stereotypic Gender Constructions

Thesis in Preparation for M.A. in Sociology and Collaborative Women's Studies Program

Lakehead University

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May/2000

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Degree Awarded: Master of Arts in Sociology

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Chapter 1: Introduction

One emphasis in feminism has been the issue of gender stereotypes, particularly concerning their role in the construction of what are thought to be normative male and female traits and sex roles. The supposed naturalness of these traits has helped allow for and perpetuate gender inequalities. Prevailing views in Western society, primarily based on reproductive roles, can be traced back to Aristotle, and support the idea that women and men are inherently different, men are inherently dominant and superior, and these differences are natural (Bem, 1993, 1). Science supports these positions by offering 'evidence' that sex and gender differences are innate in males and females. Feminists challenge these views claiming that women are subordinated by nurture not nature (Schiebinger, 1989, 273-274). Simone de Beauvoir summed up this viewpoint succinctly when she wrote, "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (de Beauvoir, 1952, 267). Today many feminists and sociologists concur with de Beauvoir's position and conceptualize perceived masculine and feminine traits as constructed and assigned to males or females (Vetterling-Braggin, 1982, 152). This perception is an important step toward understanding and challenging the foundations of gender oppression.

In this thesis I examine how androgyny is used in selected feminist novels as a metaphor to challenge constructed gender stereotypes and inequalities in the societies represented. I argue that such fictional representations challenge conventional ideas and beliefs about gender and gender stereotypes in Western society. Androgyny in these novels provides a vision of what we can strive towards in political efforts to counter gender construction and oppression. Rather than

solely demonstrating personal and individual benefits, androgyny in these novels clearly demonstrates the need for an institutionalized change in gendered roles, behaviour, and opportunities.

In this research I draw upon Toril Moi's and Kari Weil's assertions that a contemporary study of androgyny argues for a multiplicity of differences. Their arguments focus on 'difference' as meaning differences among women, rather than differences between two genders of masculine and feminine. I maintain that Moi's and Weil's understandings of difference supports the idea that gender and gender stereotypes are social constructions, and that androgyny allows for a plurality of gender differences unrestricted by any predetermined gender identity (Moi, 1990, 13-14, Weil, 1992, 169).

After surveying a variety of literature that focuses on androgyny, I selected specific texts from which to collect descriptive examples of androgyny. These include Virginia Woolf's Orlando, 1928, selected because Woolf's works are seen as the catalyst for much of twentieth century feminist analysis of androgyny (Weil, 1992, 146, Rado, 1997, 148). As well, I chose two novels by Marge Piercy, Woman on the Edge of Time, 1976, and He She and It, 1991, because they demonstrate a social institutionalization of androgyny. This is important because the androgynous person is only successful if society is organized to accommodate androgyny. The possibilities of human freedom are more dependent on the social structures rather than located within the individual (Annas, 154, 155, Ferguson, 1985, 46). I also chose these novels because of their detailed androgynous representations and their many definitions and uses of androgyny,

in contrast to a patriarchal dream of androgyny as one undifferentiated sex.

The concept of androgyny is useful for understanding how gender stereotypes have been constructed. The official definition of androgyny comes from Greek roots--andros (man) and gyny (woman). However there is no clear-cut, single, agreed upon definition of what the term means in a social context. For example, psychological definitions of androgyny are based on defined masculine and feminine traits deemed characteristic of males and females (Vetterling-Braggin, 1982, 152). This means androgyny is measured on the basis of what psychology defines as sex-appropriate preferences, skills, personality attributes, behaviours, and self-concepts (Bem, 1995, 83). In opposition to such psychological definitions, androgyny can be viewed as a social construct or a metaphor because the traits being combined are constructed to be feminine or masculine (Warren, 1982, 183). An analogy sometimes used is that gender diversity is as natural as the wide diversity of food preferences. In other words, androgyny can mean that *behaviour* should have no gender (my emphasis, Bem, 1993, 169, 175).

Androgyny has been represented at various times in western literature since the time of Plato who apparently first coined the term (Tejada, 1994, 46). Androgyny has often appeared in literature when gender issues are prominent in society, and has been used to challenge stereotypes, and envision or symbolize a socio-political equality between men and women that has not been achieved in patriarchal society (Tejada, 1994, 39). In literature, androgyny has often been used to present a utopian vision of society, which can encourage us to strive for a new future, rather than feeling apathetic about our ability to enact social change (Fitting, 1987, 298).

A utopian androgynous vision is important because a large amount of literature explicitly written for and read by women supports conventional gender stereotypes and the dominant ideology. It deliberately avoids reflecting pressure for change in women's roles. These fictions have been consistent in their theme and marketability (Roberts, 1978, 162). Particularly with contemporary literature, some androgynous representations explicitly "stem from a feminist critique of society's oppressive structure" (Fitting, 1987, 299). A feminist critique allows for insights and knowledge about women and men and their place in society. When Shulamith Firestone wrote The Dialectic of Sex in 1970, she commented that there was not yet a utopian feminist literature in existence to help envision a future society she was theorizing about (Firestone, 1970, 227). The challenges androgyny brings are most obvious in fictional contexts (Weil, 1992, 75).

Discussion surrounding difference links to one of the main issues in contemporary feminist theorizing which involves efforts to politicize women's issues, when the use of the term 'woman' can be essentializing and exclusive to particular women, rather than allowing for difference. Changes from earlier feminisms, and tensions within feminist movements today, are exemplified by tensions between the women in the novels selected for this thesis. These women concur with Denise Riley's perception that different temporalities of women, means 'woman,' can be a fluctuating state for individuals, and can be political (Riley, 1988, 6, 96).

It is in this sense of androgyny as a multiplicity of differences that I intend to explore the use of androgyny in these novels. In doing so, I will address some feminist criticisms of

androgyny and show how the representation of androgyny in these novels transcends these criticisms. I also base my arguments on the idea that androgyny is a gender construct, and is unbounded, therefore fundamentally indefinable. Here androgyny suggests a full range of experiences open to individuals, and suggests a spectrum upon which human beings choose their places (Heilbrun, 1973, xi).

Historical Overview of Androgyny

Androgyny has been called an ideology that should be viewed as revolutionary. It protests the sexual division of labour in the home and workplace, and the stereotypes of masculine and feminine behaviour. Androgyny as ideology challenges the nuclear family with its socialization of children toward compulsory heterosexuality. When people have a choice of characteristics to adopt, behaviour becomes process oriented rather than static (Tiryakian, 1981, 1046). A loss of gender norms could result in a proliferation of gender configurations. Conversely, a radical proliferation of gender configurations would in turn displace gender norms. This contests the binarism of sex and exposes its fundamental unnaturalness (Butler, 1990, 146-149). Deconstructing gender through androgyny can support the opportunity of choice, freedom of personality, and a multiplicity of gender constructions, as well as explain the construction of the feminine and masculine.

To exemplify the importance placed on societal gender polarization, one can review the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of the American Psychiatric Association,

Four, (DSM IV, 1994), which lists a 'gender identity disorder' of childhood. This is defined as a persistent and intense distress in a child about his or her assigned sex. In particular, girls who show persistent marked aversion to normative female clothing, and insist on wearing masculine clothing, may be diagnosed with this disorder (Bem, 1993, 109).

Western societal resistance to the idea of androgyny may stem partly from the acceptance of ascribed gender characteristics and roles as discussed earlier, but also from an intolerance of gender ambiguity. Androgyny can confuse and frighten because it disturbs expected presentations of surface sexual selves and gender (Kimbrough, 1990, 3). Androgyny seems to be most threatening regarding homosexuality, impotency and frigidity. Somehow, complying with polarized gender roles is seen to protect against these problems (Heilbrun, 1973, xii).

The medical management of hermaphroditism, or intersexed infants, exemplifies the intolerance of gender ambiguity. In only these cases do physicians advise parents that social factors are more important in gender development than biological factors. These infants are limited to two exclusive options, male or female, despite evidence of different genders (Kessler, 1995, 8-17, 22). Sex role ideology and intolerance of sexual ambiguity are evidenced when Western society agrees to take funds and highly trained medical personnel from meager resources, to carry out sex changes. If beliefs regarding masculinity and femininity were more flexible, perhaps sex change operations would not be necessary (Eichler, 1995, 29). Other cultures, such as in India, tolerate ambiguity in a way unknown in the west (Singer, 1976, 172).

While in the 1970's and 80's feminists held the androgynous ideal to mean the eradication

of gender, now in the 1990's the focus is on a multiplicity or inconsistency of genders, or the expansion of gender categories (Weil, 1992, 75). Contemporary feminist criticism can therefore find the idea of androgyny useful to challenge sex differences and their power to affect the life of the human being (Tejada, 1994, 39).

Androgyny as a social construction is evidenced by varied representations of androgyny in literature throughout history, some of which are outlined below. In Plato's Symposium, he portrayed three races of human; man, woman and androgyne. The androgynous race combined both male and female, in looks and name. They were round, with the back and sides in a circle, with four arms, and four legs, two heads, and two sets of genitals. They were magnificent in strength and intelligence. They attempted to assault the gods who were unsure how to respond. If the humans were killed, this would obliterate the race and mean a loss of their honor and sacrifices from them. The decision from Zeus was to cut each of them in two, with the threat of a further splice if they did not behave. This way they would be weaker, but more useful. Apollo healed the wounds of the splits. Plato explained that androgyny now exists in name only, reserved as a reproach (Plato, 1986, 251, 252).

Greek mythology depicts Dionysus as neither woman nor man, but as woman in man, or man in woman, the unlimited personality (Heilbrun, 1973, xi). Dionysus became revalued in the Renaissance and was the inspiration for art and literature (Grant, 1962, 250). Although the term itself was not specifically used, the idea of androgyny was portrayed and known throughout both medieval and renaissance Europe. Androgynous ideas were present in almost every aspect of

late sixteenth century society, from medicine, to music to math (Kimbrough, 1990, 6).

Renaissance thought was seen as a potential for the liberation of humanity in the sixteenth century. Shakespeare among other authors wanted to break down the barriers between the genders, and his androgyny joins the two sexes within one kind, humanity (Kimbrough, 1990, 5-16). Thus, Shakespeare was writing of a potential for androgyny to improve society. This re-emerging sense of androgyny began to counter the medieval belief that women were intellectually inferior to men (Kimbrough, 1990, 170-171). Others point out that Shakespeare can be seen as perpetuating male superiority because while women tend to get what they want in Shakespeare's plays, men still reap the greater benefits. The most explicit example is in the Taming of the Shrew, where the play culminates with a speech of submission by the female character Kate (Heilbrun, 1973, 31, Orgel, 14, 1996).

The image of androgyny has been called the quintessential symbol of the English Romantic Era. The English Romantic Poets lived through social, political, economic, religious, and sexual revolutions inspired by the French Revolution and industrialization. Androgyny re-emerged not just as an abstract image but as a sudden realistic possibility, particularly in the works of Blake, Keats, Wordsworth, Byron, and Coleridge. If a king and a dynasty could be overthrown, maybe sexual oppression could be as well. However it was not accepted by all. While some were pushing an ideology of androgyny to protest gender norms, the developing nouveaux riche class promoted femininity as domestic idol, an ideal woman to symbolize their affluence (Hoeveler, 1990, 4-14).

The writings of Guy de Maupassant reflect heroines' battles against nineteenth-century anti-androgynous French Society (Hartig, 1973, ix). Because of French society's division and separation of the human psyche into distinct entities, the typical nineteenth century Frenchman could not accept the woman in himself (Hartig, 1991, 3). Maupassant's novels depict the dangers of anti-androgyny or explicit masculinity and femininity. It seems that extreme sexual polarization is displayed, then contrasted with androgyny to allow for a reconciliation between the sexes and a greater range of experience for both women and men (Hartig, 1991, 38, 39).

Virginia Woolf has received a variety of criticisms and interpretations of her use of androgyny. These range from Woolf being seen as a powerful enlightened prophet, to a confused and reluctant rebel, to a subversive and deconstructionist feminist (Rado, 1997, 148). In Woolf's A Room of One's Own (1929), she depicts androgyny as an existence where male and female powers of the soul live in harmony together. She describes Shakespeare's androgynous mind as an example, but admits that this does not necessarily mean that he was sympathetic to women (Woolf, 1929, 106-107). Toril Moi discusses Woolf's androgyny as a recognition of the falsifying metaphysical nature of male/female (Moi, 1990, 13-14). Although many of Woolf's stories contain aspects of androgyny, it is most centrally explained in Orlando which has been described as the best example of the androgynous mind in this century (Passty, 1988, 12).

Brazilian author, Clarice Lispector, describes male characters incorporating feminine characteristics in their personalities thus questioning male authority, while female characters think and act according to the typical social and psychological category of masculinity (Tejada,

1994, 41). Lispector's male and female both resist their ascribed gender role. Well-known nineteenth century American writers are seen as generally refusing to give strong women a central role (Edinger, 1990, 125, 129). By contrast, Brazilian writers of the same time frame often displayed an androgynous ideal, creating strong female characters, and speaking to women's experience. This androgyny is seen as important given the Latin culture that emphasizes the male machistas, or man, as the only recognized self-identity, and woman as other (Edinger, 1990, 124-126).

Early twentieth century British novelist, Rose Macaulay, 1881-1958, included androgyny as a major theme in all her fictional works. Macaulay's writing stemmed from her feminist efforts to surpass society's limitations on women's behaviour. Her most famous book, which also includes her most extensive representation of androgyny, The Towers of Trebizond (1956), is an excellent example of androgyny, only surpassed by Woolf's Orlando (Passty, 1988, 12-17). Passty describes the impetus for The Towers of Trebizond as based on a sixth century story, preserved and passed on by monks, titled, "Concerning the Abbot Daniel and a Certain Religious Woman." The story involves a priest who loses his priestly functions to a female outcast, and sex roles are turned upside down. The story was translated into English in 1951 by an Anglo-Catholic monk who passed it onto his cousin Rose Macaulay (Passty, 1988, 21-24).

The theme of many feminist utopian novels is based on a political imagination attempting to develop ways to think beyond dualities. The rift between men and women is important in these fictions, telling us what is possible and necessary to wish and hope for (Bartkowski, 1989,

3-4). Androgyny is frequently presented as the ideal solution, and here androgyny tends to involve a confluence of femininity and masculinity, rather than an eradication of these categories. Differences do exist but social institutions are not built around them. Thus androgynous novels such as those by LeGuin, Russ, Lessing, and Bryant, involve a principle of sexual equality (Koenen, 1991, 41-46). Piercy's work in particular and Woolf's Orlando focus on a multiplicity of genders, not just one gender. Androgynous language and freedom from compulsory heterosexuality in their novels, encourage the reader to see "his or her gender related prejudices and to reinterpret superficially familiar scenes" (Koenen, 1991, 49-51). This point summarizes one of the ways androgynous literature provides an alternative vision to gender stereotypes.

The authors outlined in this brief review of some writings surrounding androgyny demonstrate some of the ways androgyny has been used in literature. The differences in representation illustrate the social construction of androgyny in different historical and social contexts, which concurrently illustrates gender as a social construction.

Method of Analysis

The methodology for this thesis involves utilizing literature as data in the form of a collection of descriptive examples drawn from three texts: Marge Piercy's He She and It, (1991) and Woman on the Edge of Time, (1976), and Virginia Woolf's Orlando (1928). Traditionally the novel has been concerned with representing social reality and the complex relation between psychological and social experience (Rowe, 1992, 181). Literature as sociology can give

information about values, attitudes and institutions, since aspects of social life and concepts are often well described (Routh, 1977, 3,4). When we read, experience can be crystallized, made clear, and made general and explained. While we admire the story telling, we are being informed (Lessing, 1997, 242). It is in the sense of novels as social texts informing the reader of social values surrounding gender and androgyny that I have studied these novels.

I am also treating the novels as models or visions for change. Ross Chambers in Room for Maneuvers, 1991, argues that models for change is a "phenomenon that occurs when one reads a book and is influenced" (Chambers, 1991, xii). The belief here is in the potential of narrative to change people's mentalities, ideas, attitudes, values and feelings. The power of words to revolutionize has tended to be undervalued (Chambers, 1991, 1). Androgyny in the novels selected provides a model for change, or a vision of what we can strive towards. Androgyny in these novels also shows the need for an institutionalized change in stereotypically gendered roles, behaviour and opportunities. Chambers argues that there is potential in all narrative to bring about change, and theoretically, a narrative text has the potential power to affect an infinite number of new readers (Chambers, 1991, 3, 11,12).

Feminist critics have revitalized the sociology and study of the materiality of literature (Stimpson, 1992, 263). Post-modern politics conceive of resistance and social reform as dependent on a critique of representation (Rowe, 1992, 198). Charting the cultural representations of gender, the patterns of femininity and masculinity is an important part of feminist literary criticism (Stimpson, 1992, 251). Cultural representations of gender are produced

and reproduced through discourse, including narrative discourse. Alison Light in "Returning to Manderley--Romance fiction, Female Sexuality and Class," 1990, discusses representations of femininity and asks what other models [than fiction] are available anywhere for alternative constructions of masculinity?(Light, 1990, 342) Her discussion of models for change is based on a feminist post-modern argument that gender must be reinterpreted in terms of historical and cultural conditions of production. As models or visions for change, the novels discussed in this thesis create cultural alternatives and different systems of representations of gender through the use of androgyny (Stimpson, 1992, 256). Androgyny can demonstrate a move away from polarized gender norms and open up the possibilities of a variety of gender configurations. In turn, variations of gender can disrupt rigid gender norms. In this way the unnaturalness of gender polarities in Western society can at least be discussed if not irrefutably demonstrated (Butler, 1990, 146-149).

Consistent with feminist sociology, my analysis is based on the assumption that gender differences are constructed rather than biologically determined, and these constructed gender differences play a significant role in the long standing oppression of women. This understanding is important because the dominant views of gender hold that differences between men and women are natural and thus immutable. My analysis also includes the understanding that androgyny is a social construct because gender traits being combined are not really masculine or feminine. Thus when I present examples of femininity and masculinity it is understood that these are based on common stereotypes assigned to these genders in Western society. Therefore,

to reiterate, the purpose of this thesis is to illustrate that androgyny in selected feminist novels is a useful metaphor to challenge gender stereotypes and inequalities in the societies represented. I argue that such fictional representations challenge conventional ideas and beliefs about gender and gender stereotypes in Western society. I use a descriptive rather than a quantitative analysis, providing examples of how androgyny is used in the novels to provide alternative visions of gender and society.

I also provide an analysis of each author's socio-historical background and connections to their works. I compare the author's use of androgyny with the cultural environment of the period in which the novel was written, using the author's biographical material to reconstruct this cultural environment. I analyse critiques of the authors and their works, and I survey discussions surrounding the use of androgyny in literature.

The technique of a close reading of the texts (Light, 1990, 327, Stimpson, 1992, 253) has been utilized to collect descriptive examples of androgyny from each of the novels which speak to the following questions:

1) What are the normative masculine and feminine roles and traits and how is androgyny connected to them?
2) What does being androgynous signify in each of the texts?
3) What do the androgynous characters look like, and how do they think, and behave?
4) Do the androgynous characteristics challenge gender stereotypes?
5) Is androgyny depicted as positive, negative or revolutionary?

6) Are there any limitations on opportunities or experiences for the androgynous characters?

7) Does androgyny exemplify life without gender construction?

Descriptive examples are then organized by the following themes:

1) Description of the androgynous characters (i.e. physical, emotional, and behavioural).

2) Description of the fictional society (i.e. the basis for any social organization of gender, power structures, normative roles for the characters, freedom or restraints of opportunities).

3) Social significance of androgyny in the fictional societies (i.e. As positive, negative, or revolutionary).

4) Androgyny as a challenge to gender stereotypes.

These descriptive examples in fiction are compared and contrasted with descriptions of contemporary Western societal stereotypes in reality. By using these themes, I have established a consistent approach to, and analysis of, each of the novels.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter two, entitled "Utopias and Analysis," provides an analysis of feminist utopias and the use of androgyny in them. A contrast with non-feminist or traditional utopias demonstrates a move from a lack of gender analysis in traditional utopias, to gender being a

primary focus in feminist utopias. Androgyny is often the metaphor used by feminist writers to illuminate gender construction and gender oppression. I discuss some of the theoretical critiques of androgyny by feminists, and how contemporary studies of androgyny are effective at transcending these criticisms.

Chapters three, four, and five are devoted to specific descriptive examples of androgyny and analysis of Marge Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time (1976), Marge Piercy's He, She and It (1991), and Virginia Woolf's Orlando (1928), respectively. In these three chapters, the main androgynous and non-androgynous characters are outlined in terms of physical appearance, emotional states, and behaviour. Comparison and contrast between characters demonstrates gender as constructed and stereotypical in non-androgynous characters, as well as oppressive in contemporary western society. Descriptions of societies where androgyny is institutionalized provide images of gender equality. These images are considered important for envisioning societal change.

In chapter six I provide a summary of the similarities and links among the three novels. These include: gender as constructed; the use of clothing and costuming in reflecting and challenging gender stereotypes; woman's connections to nature as stereotypically negative but challenged and revalued in these novels; changes in feminist theorizing surrounding mothering, reproduction and reproductive technology; sexuality and challenges to compulsory heterosexuality; and finally, challenges to some of the criticisms of androgyny. Criticisms of androgyny generally stem from its history of androcentric use. The feminist use of androgyny as

representing a multiplicity of genders in these novels provides a vision that moves beyond such criticisms.

Chapter seven concludes my thesis by reviewing findings and summarizing the use of androgyny in these specific texts to challenge gender stereotypes and inequalities in the societies represented. The four main themes of descriptions of the androgynous characters; description of the fictional societies; the social significance of androgyny in the fictional societies; and androgyny as a challenge to gender stereotypes, are returned to point by point to summarize their use in this thesis. These fictional representations are shown to be useful for demonstrating gender constructions as stereotypical and oppressive in Western society. Suggestions for further research are included.

Chapter Two: Feminist Utopias and Criticisms of Androgyny

Introduction

In this chapter I provide an analysis of feminist utopias and the use of androgyny in them with some contrast to non-feminist utopias. I discuss some of the feminist theoretical critiques of androgyny from the 1970's until today, and note how the specific novels chosen for this thesis are effective at transcending these criticisms.

Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time and He She and It can be easily classified as utopias. Woolf's Orlando has, to my knowledge, never been classified as part of the utopian genre. It may not be definable to any particular genre (Guiguet, 1965, 266). However, I include this novel under utopian analysis since Woolf's use of androgyny has many similar elements to Piercy's. Although Orlando focuses on an individual perspective, and does not portray a vision of institutional change, it still *exemplifies* the need for institutional change. Orlando, the novel, demonstrates a long history of gender inequality in Western society, continually contested by the character Orlando's, androgyny. Woolf's feminist analysis of gender and androgyny concurs with contemporary theorizing of gender in her representation of non-essentialist women and men. Orlando's ability to switch genders at will provides a utopian vision of androgyny as libratory. Orlando most clearly meets one requirement of utopias, which is that they must address sex roles (Annas, 1978, 143-146). Finally, Woolf's work is seen as an impetus for much feminist analysis of androgyny. I believe all these factors allow me to analyze Orlando in the same vein as Piercy's work.

Historical Overview of Utopias

The original utopia is considered to be Plato's Republic but Thomas More first coined the term utopia, also the title of his book, in 1516. The word comes from punning in Greek and Latin to suggest outopia, 'no place' and eutopia, 'happy place' (Khanna, 1981, 52, Mumford, 1966, 8). The beauty of a utopia is that it is no one particular place or time, but is an enlarged or transformed vision of abundance (Khanna, 1981, 56). Utopias have been seen as a fulfilling enduring need and stimulating the creative human spirit (Manuel, 1966, xxii). Utopias are speculative myths that provide a vision for social ideas. They begin with an analysis of the present and can provide an end to which social life aims. Utopias are influential in that, despite their failures, there have been one or two attempts to build utopian based communities (Frye, 1966, 25, 26). People are unconsciously much more involved with, even perhaps indebted to, utopian thought in its broadest sense than they are willing to concede (Polak, 1966, 281).

Beginning with More's Utopia, the condition of women was seen as improved relative to the narrator's present, but women did not participate in this shaping. In the nineteenth century there were numerous all-female utopias but they tended to idealize the 'true' woman of the domestic sphere (Bartkowski, 1989, 9). Prior to the second wave of feminism, most utopias had been written by and about men where women were at best a sideline. Thus the traditional idea of an improved social order has been primarily shaped by men (Khanna, 1981, 49).

The greatest number of utopian fictions were written at the end of the nineteenth century.

During the first half of the twentieth century, fewer utopian fictions were published. Those that were, reflected a time of dystopia (Bartkowski, 1989, 7). H.G. Well's, A Modern Utopia, written at the turn of the century reflects the society of his time, and is much different than Piercy's utopias of today (Booker, 1994, 342). It is clear, then, that utopias cannot be studied in isolation from their social context.

A persistent theme in literary criticisms of utopias is that most of the major works have done little to challenge conventional notions of gender roles. They generally show women and men in stereotypical conventional ways. A survey of utopias in 1968, by feminist author Joanna Russ, found none emphasized gender roles, either in individuals or in social structures (Kessler, 1987, 311). Russ's findings were part of a trend established by More's Utopia. More included women in his vision of an egalitarian society and provided them with broader opportunities for education and employment than what was available to women in the sixteenth century. However men were still inherently superior and women were inferior. Most of the utopias following More's lacked attention to gender inequality despite utopian thought being primarily concerned with societies that challenge the status quo. This omission of focus on gender inequality indicates that patriarchal habits and gender prejudice are the most ingrained of all characteristics of western civilization (Booker, 1994, 337- 338).

Utopian thinking stems from a belief that the development of a perfect society is within the range of human ability (Koenen, 1991, 41). Utopian thought has been a source of political inspiration for feminists and socialists alike as they challenge societal limitations on the poetic

and political level (Moi, 1990, 121,123). For feminism utopian thinking is crucial to envision alternatives to a patriarchal world. Feminist fiction and feminist theory are fundamentally utopian in that they declare that which is 'not-yet' as the basis for a feminist practice, textual, political or otherwise. With feminist utopias, the social planning of earlier utopias is changed into an extensive social critique that exposes and makes use of the dystopian as well (Bartkowski, 1989, 12). Given the gap between feminist theory and everyday struggle, the fictional utopian mode is useful and logical because we can only become what we can imagine (Khanna, 1981, 58).

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century feminist authors, such as Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Mary E. Bradley, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, are regarded as the founders of the feminist utopian tradition. Since then, the feminist movement of the 1970's inspired authors to develop significant, more critical, utopias. What is interesting is that in comparison to male-authored utopias, the novels written by feminists tend to demonstrate remarkably different values, politics, and cultures where women and men are equal, and creative (Khanna, 1981, 47, 49). Feminist utopias all posit societies in which women have shaped them selves, alone or in concert with men (Bartkowski, 1989, 8). In the critical utopias of Marge Piercy, Joanna Russ, and Ursula LeGuin, there is no expectation that their utopias will be blueprints for society, but rather their utopias are used as a vision or dream of what could be (Booker, 1994, 337-339). The novels of these authors, like Woolf's Orlando, reflect the general theme of feminist utopian novels which is that they are based on a political imagination to propose ways we might think

beyond dualities. The rift between men and women, more than any other issue is important in these feminist fictions (Bartkowski, 1989, 3). Feminists have generally perceived gender discrimination, and the way many cultures have transformed biological sex differences into social inequality, as the most serious deterrent to a different and hopefully better human existence (Keonen, 1991, 42).

Early male-authored utopias most often lack any indication of the process of change necessary to move from here to there. By contrast, most contemporary feminist utopian fictions spell out the process of transformation, whether economic, sexual or political. Piercy and other feminist utopian authors are useful to demonstrate comprehensive programs to reorganize society to meet women's needs (Kessler, 1987, 311). Woolf and Piercy are important in that they do not exclude men. In the instances where men are excluded, we are left with the question, "What are the political ramifications of seeing that sex differences are so extreme that only a single sexed society can provide liberation for women" (Kessler, 1987, 312).

Feminist utopias often fall under the category of Science Fiction, which has always had the potential to be revolutionary, but people have not always seen this potential. Science fiction presents an alternative world of possibilities, but at the same time critiques our own. Whereas American science fiction used to be considered apolitical, the current recognition that literature and literary criticism are connected to social context has enabled science fiction to be recognized for its political potential. Science fiction traditionally has been male dominated, written by and for men to read and has been based on patriarchal assumptions. Women and girls tended not to

read those science fictions. If an anthropologist from another planet made a study of a large number of these books, they might easily assume that only the male sex lived on earth. By contrast, feminist utopian science fictions feature women and have a central theme of alternatives to sex role stereotyping (Annas, 1978, 143-146).

Most male authors of science fiction/utopias have presumed that male-female relationships and the nuclear family would stay the same even if everything else was changed (Annas, 1978, 147). The trend goes as far back as Greek utopians where it was easier to conceive of abolishing private property than ridding utopia of slavery, class domination, and war (Mumford, 1966, 9). "These non feminist authors never seemed to question the principle of dominance itself. None of them even attempted to envisage a truly egalitarian society in which neither sex dominated" (McIntyre, 1976, 12). This history of utopias provides another example of how utopias are related to social historical context.

Most non-feminist writers of science fiction and utopias have not featured androgyny either (Annas, 1978, 147). By contrast, Marge Piercy and Ursula LeGuin are at least two whose use of androgyny is said to have inspired a profound admiration for human potential in their readers. Piercy's and Woolf's representations of androgyny symbolize the capacity of a person of either sex to embody a full range of character traits rather than eliminate of one sex or the other. The message is that we will only survive by reaching an integrated balance rather than by a continual struggle of sexual polarity. Most important is the emphasis that the reality of some biological differences does not mean we need to build social institutions around them (Koenen,

1991, 40-46). Piercy is convincing and compelling with her androgynous vision, particularly with her use of a gender free pronoun, 'per', instead of he/she. She [like Woolf] also demonstrates a liberation from compulsory heterosexuality which is important for the readers since we are caught again and again by our gender-related prejudices and are forced to re-interpret them (Koenen, 1991, 49). A dualistic gender model assumes such importance in Western society that it is difficult to imagine gender options other than male and female.

Feminist utopias can be called 'teaching fictions.' Within one work they provide an analysis of the past, and provide an alternative corrective future. They are important in helping move the reader beyond an acceptance of existing values and institutions. Real cultural change may occur with the assistance of highly intentional writings. In writing we can escape the intolerable and project a world and self we could hope for (DuPlessis, 1979, 2, 7). One must have a vision of an alternative to work against something (Alcoff, 1988, 419).

Feminist Critiques of Androgyny

Androgyny has received varied support and criticism from feminists during the second wave of feminism, and by contemporary feminists. Much of the support stems from the use of androgyny to envision women in non-stereotypical gender roles. Much of the criticism stems from the historical use of androgyny in androcentric ways. This next section will outline four main criticisms of androgyny, and how the use of androgyny in this thesis overcomes those criticisms.

1) A common criticism of androgyny is that it is not as positive an image for women as something like the Amazon which depicts power, energy and movement. Rather, the androgyne is a static image of completion. Part of this image stems from the history of androgyny which has primarily been written about and imagined by men from Jung, to D.H. Lawrence, to Robert Bly, whose writings emphasize the completed perfect male (Annas, 1978, 146). This thesis will show that in contrast to this criticism, androgynous women are depicted as positive and powerful. The societies and the characters are not perfected, complete and static, but are in process, continuing to work out social problems.

2) A second criticism of androgyny emerged in the 1970's, claiming that androgyny has tended to be used in Western culture to depict a perfect male, through the incorporation of feminine traits (Weil, 1992, 148). This criticism can be demonstrated by the term itself which uses the male, andros, first, and female, gyny, second. At the same time androgyny is often seen as masculinized or involving a masculine set of values (Barrett, 1992, 5). As well, if some traits are perceived as valuable and others not, androgyny may reinforce the idea that sex and gender are or ought to be linked (Vetterling-Braggin, 1982, 152). These criticisms are countered by feminist novels such as the three chosen for this thesis because they explicitly point out that androgyny is positive for women and men. The authors have redefined androgyny from their perspective (Annas, 1978, 150).

Connected with the above criticism is the idea that the androgyny model makes women fit into a cultural ideal that is opposite to the feminine, which implies that the characteristics associated with femininity are socially inferior (Oudshoorn, 1991, 467). This criticism is contradictory. When so much literature of androgyny has been demonstrated to focus on the male adopting 'feminine' characteristics to become complete or perfect, this belies the idea that the so called 'feminine' is inferior.

While the criticisms cited above are valid for many fictional descriptions of androgyny throughout history, they are not strong enough to justify the exclusion of androgyny per se (Bem, 1993, 123). "Yes androgyny has been used androcentrically in the past but it need not be used this way and has not been used androcentrically by [contemporary] feminists" (Bem, 1993, 124). The use of androgyny in these feminist utopian novels serves as a challenge to gender constructions and enforced stereotypes. It does not diminish either so-called feminine or masculine characteristics but presents them in a variety of genders. "In this way, people do not need to banish from the self whatever attributes and behaviours the culture may have stereotypically defined as inappropriate for his or her sex"(Bem, 1993, 124).

3) A third criticism of androgyny includes the idea that androgyny is too utopian and not connected to historical reality, so that it does not acknowledge gender inequality. Since gender inequality is a major focus in the three selected novels, specific examples in the next three chapters will show that androgyny indeed illuminates gender inequality. Moreover, androgyny is

pragmatically useful, despite the arguments by feminists that it it too visionary and idealist (Bem, 1993, 123). Clearly androgyny can still have political consequences since others argue that the ideal illuminates the reality (Sargent, 1981, 88).

Associated with the criticism that androgyny is not useful, is the idea that despite the political slogan that 'the personal is political,' androgyny has been seen as too personal, individual, therefore not political and incapable of stimulating institutional change. The elimination of gender inequality requires institutional change, not just personal change (Bem, 1993, 123,124). I agree with the need for institutional change, which is the reason for my choice of Piercy's work which represents institutionalized acceptance and promotion of androgyny and gender equality. Specifically in Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time, "the possibilities of human freedom are not located so much within the individual characters as within the social structure and the relation between the individual and that social structure" (Annas, 1978, 154). As well, the importance of societal acceptance of androgyny is seen in Woolf's novel where Orlando struggles against four centuries of various forms of institutionalized gender polarity.

While some think androgyny is not political there are others who argue it is. The revolution in the discourse of the culture of these novels was and is a worthy political accomplishment in itself (Bem, 1993, 124). Gender and sex are social and political issues in a society that defines people by them. "As a utopian possibility that transcends sexual dualism, androgyny is a political response" (Annas, 1978, 155).

4) Likely the most serious criticism of androgyny, and the one I will focus on most heavily, comes from feminists who ask how we can fight against sexism if the category of woman does not exist. Androgyny may eliminate the category of woman. Feminists have taken opposing positions regarding this issue. 'Woman' has been a central concept for feminist theory and politics, despite difficulties in developing a clear definition. Theorizing has involved a re-evaluation of social theory and practice from women's points of view. One problem has been that when speaking for women, feminism has often assumed a knowledge of what women truly are, despite the fact that so much knowledge about women has been influenced by misogyny and sexism (Alcoff, 1988, 406). A post-modern challenge to the validity of the concept of woman has led some to fear that without a category of woman, even if flawed, feminism will lose its foundation, and have nothing to base political action on. Part of the frustration involves the idea that women have finally found a place to speak and be heard from, and now that is being taken away (Butler, 1995, 48, Grosz, 1995, 64). Nevertheless, post-structural feminists argue that we can still experience political agency without a clearly defined subject (Butler, 1995, 46, 48).

Some of the arguments surrounding these concepts of woman stem from the long standing division in the history of feminist thought between those who seek to minimize male/female differences, and those who seek to maximize them. 'Woman' has always been construed as an essential something that is 'other' than 'man', eg. immoral and irrational by Schopenhauer, or kind and benevolent by Kant, and feminists have used different tactics to deal with this (Alcoff, 1988, 406). Feminist minimizers of gender differences wish to challenge any

essential ideal, and undermine any gender polarization. They are also called equality feminists who emphasize sexual equality and wish to replace the dualistic model of masculinity and femininity by androgyny (Bem, 1993, 127). Egalitarian feminists insist women are as capable of doing what men do, but have been restricted from doing so by societal norms and pressures (Grosz, 1995, 50, 51).

In opposition to egalitarian feminists, 'difference' feminist maximize gender differences to emphasize what has been considered the core of femininity (Oudshoorn, 1991, 467). These 'difference,' or 'maximizer' feminists, try to reclaim and validate women's experience which has been negated and elided in androcentric history. Cultural feminists concur with maximizer feminists, and say that woman can be defined but feminists are the only ones with the right to describe and evaluate woman (Alcoff, 1988, 406). Maximizers thus support the idea of identity politics based on an assumption that political activity depends on a foundational or definitive identity of woman.

The problem with the maximizer view, predominant in the 1980's, is its reliance on a theory of an essential vision of woman and this theory has been criticised for encouraging gender polarization by promoting biological essentialism (Bem, 1993, 130). While a focus on essential femaleness can be self-affirming, it can also reflect and reproduce dominant assumptions about women, resulting in a reassertion of patriarchal restrictions for women. Feminists using post-modern theory see the essentialist viewpoint as preventing a solution to sexism. Essentialism can be limiting to the differences and variety of women's lives, and promote the idea of an innate

femaleness. It reflects power mechanisms that oppress, and perpetuates sexism through discourse which constructs woman as connected to her identity in a restraining way (Alcoff, 1988, 408-415, Grosz, 1995, 47).

Proponents of androgynous models argue that it is important to avoid essentialism and its connotation with biological determinism. Debate about the political implications of choices between androgynous models, and models emphasizing sexual difference between women and men continues (Oudshoorn, 1991, 467). At the same time, post-modern thought is contesting the legitimacy of trying to sort out the variety of positions espoused by feminists. Defining, labelling, and categorizing are seen to be masculine pursuits which insidiously and simultaneously exemplify a power of exclusion (Makus, 1996, 161). Feminists now recognize that their arguments about the essential woman stemmed from patriarchal theories about the essential man (Harding, 1986, 284). Overall, arguments seem to be leaning towards a model of difference among women, and my argument is based on this model. Androgyny in the novels studied, supports and is supported by a theory of difference illustrated by a multiplicity of genders and gender differences among the androgynous characters.

To further elucidate and support my argument I will draw upon the work of contemporary feminists who support a theory of difference among women, and see androgyny as representative of a multitude of gender differences. One is Toril Moi who provides an analysis of Virginia Woolf's writing and use of androgyny, which she says is non-essentialist (Moi, 1990, 9).

Moi bases her analysis on the work of French feminist and theorist, Julia Kristeva, who

Moi says "has an uncompromising anti-essentialism and refuses to name woman who only exists negatively by saying no to what she has been given. Woman is that which is not represented or spoken, or is outside naming and ideologies" (Moi, 1990, 163). Kristeva believes that to call oneself a woman is almost "absurd" although she says we must use "we are women" as a slogan for demands for abortion, childcare etc. (Marks, 1981, 137). Moi says that Kristeva refuses to speak as a woman, or embrace any theory or politics that relies on an absolute identity. She rejects writing that would be inherently feminine or female. Instead she prefers an understanding of femininity that would have as many feminines as there are women (Moi, 1990, 165-169). This multiplicity is the way I see androgyny represented in Orlando, Woman on the Edge of Time and He She and It. Moi further explains her position by using Kristeva's three stages of feminism:

1) Women demand equal access to the symbolic order. Liberal feminism. Equality
2) Women reject the male symbolic order in the name of difference. Radical feminism. Femininity extolled.
3) Kristeva's position--women reject the dichotomy between masculine and feminine as metaphysical. The third position is one that has deconstructed the opposition between masculinity and femininity and challenges the notion of identity (Moi, 1990, 12).

Moi believes feminists must use all three positions simultaneously, and not be limited by any one position. Many other contemporary feminist theorists concur with Kristeva's third position, which recognizes the concept of women's identity as troublesome. Moi believes that Kristeva's feminism echoes Woolf's sixty years earlier, supporting my earlier point that Woolf's work is linked with contemporary feminism, and Piercy's novels (Moi, 1990, 13). Yet the dilemma of

how to ground a feminist politics often remains (Alcoff, 406, 419). Many feminists see political work as almost impossible without some use of identity politics:

> "What can we demand in the name of women if 'women' do not exist, and demands in their name simply reinforce the myth that they do?; How can we speak out against sexism as detrimental to the interests of women if the category is a fiction; How can we demand legal abortions, adequate child care, or wages based on comparable worth without invoking a concept of 'woman'?"(Alcoff, 410)

For post-modernists using 'woman' to ask questions about women's interests is problematic. As soon as the category 'woman' or 'women' is used, debate about what is meant by the term begins. For example, when feminism used 'we' to speak for women, this was challenged by women of colour who clearly demonstrated that 'we' meant white and middle class. Thus what was intended to be a point of solidarity ended up being divisive. The same can be said for motherhood. It was not successful as a political standpoint for feminism since not all women can be, or want to be mothers. For those who were mothers, motherhood was not always what they wanted to base their politics on (Butler, 1995, 49).

A strategy using post-modern theory has been to reject the possibility that woman can be defined at all. Supporters deconstruct all concepts of women and challenge the category of woman by problematizing subjectivity. The belief here is that the politics of gender or sexual difference must be replaced with a plurality of difference where *gender* loses its position of significance (my emphasis, Alcoff, 1988, 407). Feminist politics becomes based on affinity, not identity, based on choice not nature (Haraway, 1991, 155). Affinity politics means that we may chose to take on a specific identity such as being a disabled person, as a political position, but

may decide not to make a politics out of other designations. It is impossible to live twenty-four hours a day continually and consciously aware of our gender, thus most commonly people skate across several identities relying on the most useful for purposes of the moment (Riley, 1988, 16).

Along with the idea of a plurality of differences, the post-modern idea of transgressed gender boundaries can change the concept of difference as opposition. Difference is redefined, not as male versus female, not as biologically constituted, but as a multiplicity, ambiguous and heterogeneous. These ideas, initially endorsed by Virginia Woolf, mean that difference involves a traversal of boundaries that exposes them as the product of phallocentric discourse and women's relation to patriarchal culture (Jacobus, 1986, 30). Androgyny, which exemplifies different genders, or a multiplicity of so called genders and traits, can show the binary oppositions and restrictions of what male and female, man or woman mean. Androgyny is seen as a metaphor which can encapsulate and put forward proposals for another way of looking at things. Through this metaphor we can have an increased awareness of alternative possible worlds (Sarup, 1993, 55).

A post-modern analysis of gender ties in with the reality that today the boundaries between human and machine are also traversed because of human dependence on machines. By watching TV and using computers we have all become dependent on the interface with electronic technology. People can identify with machines and have had the urge to assign gender to machines. Computers represent power and strength and are masculinized, but there is potential for androgyny with them. For example, computer sex allows for fantasies and transformations

since gender is fluid. Women can become men and vice versa (Springer, 1996, 9-29, 58).

This integration of human bodies with machines, and the late 20th century debates about gender and sexuality have become a part of the development of the cyborg (Springer, 1996, 34,79). The cyborg is a fusion of human with technology; it provides a potential for androgyny since one of the alterable characteristics is sexual identity. Piercy uses these ideas in her androgynous representation of cyborg characters in He She and It.

Claudia Springer, in her book Electronic Eros (1996), writes about popular culture and cyborg images, and says the balance between fiction and reality has changed a lot in the past decade. We live in a world ruled by fictions of every kind. The androgynous cyborg can be a potentially liberating concept by demonstrating that when gender ceases to be an issue, women are released from patriarchal oppression and equality becomes possible. Donna Haraway's influential essay, "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1991), does not literally recommend replacing humans with cyborgs, rather, like to my use of androgyny, Haraway finds the cyborg a useful concept for illustration of the possibility of an egalitarian social arrangement which I discuss further in chapter four.

Conclusion

Utopias have been seen as an enduring need, providing a vision for social ideas. They provide an analysis of the present and offer an alternative vision for society. Utopias prior to the late 1960's have generally represented visions of society without consideration of gender

inequality. This may indicate that patriarchal habits and gender prejudice are the most ingrained of all characteristics of Western civilization (Booker, 1994, 337- 338). It also exemplifies why we must study utopias along with their social context.

Some contemporary feminist utopias specifically address issues of gender and provide a challenge to gender stereotypes. Utopian thinking is seen by some as crucial for feminism since both utopias and feminism declare that which is 'not-yet.' Social planning in these novels demonstrates extensive social critique. These novels tend to demonstrate values, politics and cultures where women and men are equal, creative, and where women have shaped themselves, alone or in concert with men (Bartkowski, 1989, 8). Most contemporary feminist utopian fictions transcend the impracticality of non-feminist utopians by spelling out the process of transformation, whether it is economic, sexual or political.

Part of the conflict surrounding androgyny is that androgyny was driven from the feminist movement in the late 1970's before it was thoroughly and fully explored and explained. Thus the concept ended up being only half understood (Bem, 1993, 123, Kimbrough, 1990, 5). The conflict about androgyny also relates to Western societal intolerance of gender ambiguity.

In the 1970's much of the feminist interest in androgyny focused on its potential ability to free women from restrictive norms. Androgyny was seen not only as a personal salvation but also humanity's salvation. However, it was not easy or possible to envision what type of culture would develop from institutionalized androgyny. Thus an important function of feminist utopian literature is that it provides a social and cultural context for androgyny (Koenen, 1991, 54-55).

The concept of androgyny featured in some feminist utopian novels provides an effective critique of gender inequality and imagines an alternative vision for a society that allows for sexual difference. Representations of androgyny symbolize the capacity of a person of either sex to embody a full range of character traits. The impact on the reader is that we are challenged by our gender-related prejudices, which helps us to move us beyond an acceptance of existing values and institutions (DuPlessis, 1979, 2). Real cultural change may occur with the assistance of highly visionary writings exemplified within these novels. Most important is the emphasis that despite some biological differences between women and men, this does not mean we need to build social institutions around them (Koenen, 1991, 46).

Feminist criticisms of androgyny include that it has been used androcentrically to demonstrate the perfect male without accord being given to women, and that it is not political. However, feminist utopian novels redefine androgyny as positive for females and males. As for the notion that androgyny is apolitical, being individual and personal rather than institutionalized, Piercy's work in particular represents an institutionalized acceptance and promotion of androgyny and gender equality. A vision of androgyny that transcends sexual dualism is political, particularly in a social structure based on it. Moreover, today's use of androgyny stems from a feminist critique, providing a positive image of non-essential women and men.

Much criticism of androgyny stems from feminist political positions regarding the concept of woman. While in the 1970's and 80's feminists held the androgynous ideal to mean

the eradication of gender, thus minimizing gender differences, in the 1990's the focus is on a post-modern argument for a multiplicity of genders, or the expansion of gender categories. I argue that the androgyny in the three novels studied for this thesis supports and is supported by this post-modern analysis. With a variety of genders represented through androgyny, the reader can see increased opportunities of choice and freedom of personality for women and men. By contrasting rigid gender roles and rules with androgyny this demonstrates gender-linked oppression, particularly for women. The belief here is that the politics of gender or sexual difference must be replaced with a plurality of difference where gender loses its position of critical significance (Alcoff, 1988, 407). The connection with androgyny here is that androgyny exemplifies, specifically in the novels chosen for this thesis, how gender loses its position of critical significance.

Chapter Three: Woman on the Edge of Time

Introduction

In Woman on the Edge of Time, Piercy provides a comprehensive critique of social, racial, class, gender, economic, and environmental issues. Each of these issues takes a different level of precedence. Gender is seen to shift depending on class, race, and economic status which supports the belief in gender as constructed. In this chapter conventional contemporary gender roles in western society are examined in light of the freedom from rigid gender roles in Piercy's androgynous society. Links between feminist theory in the 1970's and the novel are explored. Primary theoretical issues are reproductive rights and freedoms for women, the oppression caused by the nuclear family, and compulsive heterosexuality, and the lesbian continuum. I provide an overview of Piercy's novel followed by descriptions of the main characters and their societies to show Piercy's use of androgyny. Information about Piercy, primarily autobiographical, is provided, which shows that some of her personal and political beliefs are expressed in this novel.

Overview of Woman on the Edge of Time

Woman on the Edge of Time revolves around a 37 year old Mexican-American woman, Connie Ramos, who is confined to a psychiatric hospital because of supposed uncontrollable outbursts of violent behaviour. Connie's violence stems from self-defense and a lifetime of emotional and physical abuse. However, in her society, Connie, a poor ethnic female on welfare

is held individually responsible for her situation and, once labeled as mentally ill and dangerous, can seemingly not break free.

While in the hospital, Connie is one of several patients chosen for experimental surgery involving the implantation of electrodes and a medication sack into her brain, intended to promote better self-control so she can conform to social norms of behavior. Connie develops a telepathic ability to project herself into the year 2137 where she connects or 'catches' with Luciente, an androgynous woman who introduces Connie to the egalitarian, andryogynous utopian society of Mattapoisett. Through her contact with this community, Connie analyzes her twentieth century situation and society differently and learns to protest against some of her oppressors in the present. In the hospital, medical staff try to repress patients but fail. Connie rebels with ultimate violence--premeditated murder.

The main characters are as cited above, Connie and Luciente. Significant characters include Bee, Jackrabbit and Barbarossa who live in Mattapoisett and provide Connie with important explanations regarding Mattapoisett's androgynous and egalitarian practices. Other central characters consist of Connie's relatives in New York. Dolly, her niece, is trapped in a cycle of poverty and violence like Connie, but finds a different way of coping. Geraldo, Dolly's boyfriend and pimp shows us patriarchal contempt and control of women, usually through violence. Each character provides clear images of constructed gender and how it shapes individual lives.

It is interesting that in Mattapoisett, gender is ambiguous, but so is biological sex. The

only reproductive function is breastfeeding, carried out by males and females through hormone supplementation. Characters are described as males and females but there are no apparent markers to indicate how one would know which they are. Indeed Connie is never able to determine the sex of some people she meets. Perhaps Piercy's purpose here is to emphasize the lack of need for any obvious markers of either gender or sex.

Piercy's use of an androgynous non-polarized frame of reference to the characters in Mattapoisett is an important challenge to Dale Spender's assertion that "...the English language has literally been man made, and is still under male control" (Spender, 1983, 12). This primacy is perpetuated when women use their inherited language as it is (Moi, 1990, 156). Piercy challenges the social production of discourse which contributes to the status quo, by using generic terms (Fitting, 1987, 305). In Mattapoisett people refer to everyone as 'per' or 'person.'

Characters in New York City

Connie

Connie is the narrator in the novel, describing herself, her society and Mattapoisett. It is through her interpretations that we see gender constructions and oppressions. Connie describes herself as a fat Chicana, without a man, without her own child, without the right clothes, who carries a plastic pocketbook cracked on the side and held together with tape. She has long, black, lank hair, usually braided, a Mayan cast to her face, almond eyes, a small chin, and a sensual nose. After being in the hospital for some time, she loses weight. "You're looking thin!"

Luciente reproves her. Connie replies, "You say that like it was bad. Isn't thin beautiful? I've been dumpy for three years"(Piercy, 1976, 97).

Connie's emotional, mental and behavioural states change significantly throughout the novel. "The first time in the mental hospital she had been scared of the other patients--violent, crazy, out-of-control animals. She had learned. It was the staff she must watch out for"(Piercy, 1976, 59). Connie becomes acutely aware of how she should speak, act, look, phrase questions and answers in order to get privileges such as cigarettes, and eventual freedom:

> Testing involves biased questions: ". . .would you rather fly a plane or play with dolls. Follow the stereotypes. But why should I have to pretend I'd rather watch a football game than a ballet not to be labeled queer? Patients are forced to dress and act 'appropriately'. One tilted back her tower of a neck and laughed, with her breasts freely jiggling against the red dress. Some attendant made her sew up the front a couple of inches with the wrong color thread. "God damn it", Sharma said. Something she wouldn't say if the attendants had been in earshot. Patients are punished for unladylike behaviour. Later, . . .[Connie] persuades Valente to loan her a needle and thread to take in her dresses. Sewing is considered a good sign--a feminine interest in making her clothes fit would earn her points. . . (Piercy, 1976, 144, 147, 229).

These examples show how women conform to stereotypes of femininity by censoring their verbal expressions, by covering their body appropriately, and by demonstrating domestic skills.

After a lifetime of violence at the hands of men, Connie now resents "how she jumped to the stove when Geraldo rapped out that curt command . . . obeying him automatically, instinctively jerking at the loud masculine order"(Piercy, 1976, 14). She thought the way out of her impoverished oppressed life was to adopt the safe stereotypical white middle-class female roles, behaviours, dreams and goals. She is angry about her socialization to womanhood and her

failure to escape oppression:

> At fifteen she screamed at her mother as if the role of the Mexican woman who never sat down with her family, who ate afterward like a servant, were something her mother had invented. She had shrieked how much better she was going to live her life, until her father came in and gave her the force of his fists. She dreamed to live like the teachers she admired in high school. She was going to have only two children and keep them clean as advertisements. Yet she understood that she wanted her mother's approval. She had grown up wanting to be loved as her brother Luis had been (Piercy, 1976, 47).

Despite her adept analysis of her socialization, Connie feels ashamed of herself for conforming to prescripted womanly behaviours of submission, and giving up on her young ideals.

Initially reluctant and repulsed by the lack of gender distinctions in Mattapoisett, Connie learns to understand and appreciate Luciente and Mattapoisett's androgyny. Gradually, she begins to see Luciente as a friend and overcomes her disgust towards the androgynous behaviour she sees. Later still, Connie looks forward to Mattapoisett, searching out Luciente to help her get there. "Casually in the early morning she cast an invitation to Luciente. She felt shy, embarrassed. Tentatively she *opened her mind* [analogy here to readers] and senses Luciente's response. As if her *mind had developed muscles*, [analogy here as well] she could easily leap in and out of Luciente's time" (my emphasis, Piercy, 1976, 195). Piercy's use of the metaphor of muscular development can indicate Connie's growing empowerment, and can demonstrate a contrast to stereotypical images of women's minds as being weak.

Soon Connie sees the potential for opportunities and self-fulfillment without rigid gender, racial or class expectations, and the knowledge available to everyone in Mattapoisett. She realizes that she could reach her potential by pursuing whatever role and occupation she wanted,

and people would still respect her. She could be privy to all knowledge and learning and participate in society in a meaningful way, defined by herself, not others. Connie's gradual change from a mere acceptance of the Mattapoisett society, to her realization of the personal and social benefits of such a society is an important mechanism to lead the reader along this path as well.

Connie learns to direct her anger at the people with power. She feels glad she had struck Geraldo and broken his nose, wishing she had killed him. "For once she had struck out at the enemy not at herself" (Piercy, 1976, 20). Eventually Connie bluntly explains her analysis of her society to Luciente, demonstrating her recognition of the differences from Mattapoisett. "Luciente . . . Never in your life have you been helpless--under somebody's heel. You never lived where your enemies held power over you, power to run your life or wipe it out. You can't understand. That's how come you stand there feeding me empty slogan!" (Piercy, 1976, 263)

Dolly

We are introduced to Dolly as she is trying to escape from her pimp Geraldo. Her mouth is bruised and bloody, and one eye is swollen shut. She explains that Geraldo has beaten her, and punched her hard in the belly. She is pregnant. Yet later, Dolly talks about loving Geraldo and wanting to get married. She sees no other alternative so she pleads with Geraldo to let her have her baby and not let an abortionist touch her. She has gotten pregnant deliberately to convince him to stop making her a prostitute and marry her. She tries to convince him that the baby is his,

but he responds, "Woman, so many men been into you, it could have a whole subway car of daddies" (Piercy, 1976, 13). Through Dolly, Piercy demonstrates the powerlessness of women (even her name reflects the helpless little girl that others control), the structures that keep them in this position, and the rigidity of stereotyped gender roles where women are dependent upon men, and men's patriarchal concern with paternity.

Moreover, despite her own circumstances and Connie's support of her, Dolly is persuaded by Geraldo to help get Connie committed to the psychiatric hospital. In this action Dolly exemplifies how women at times do not support each other and even turn against each other, when they are dependent on men and do not recognize the patriarchal structures that are impacting their lives.

Dolly believes her salvation lies in a submission to white middle-class standards for women. Denying Connie's conditions she rather ludicrously compliments Connie on her weight loss, comparing the hospital to a " reducing farms rich bitches go to!" (Piercy, 1976, 217) Dolly too has lost weight, dyed her hair orange-red, dressed in a sleek sleeveless green and yellow pants suit, and now keeps her sunglasses on. She explains, "Oh Carita [Connie], it pays more if you look Anglo, you know? And they like you better skinny, the ones with money. Geraldo, that prick, left me with debts and no money. I have to break my behind hustling till I get clear of my debts" (Piercy, 1976, 217). Dolly's solution is to find another pimp, work harder, take speed to keep thin, and almost give up her daughter. When confronted about her 'job,' Dolly becomes defensive, explaining that it is a good paying business and that every woman, including Jackie O,

sells sex. Later she admit that she hates every trick and has never met a woman who did not hate every trick. With this example Dolly admits to an understanding of oppression that women of different classes and ethnicity can face.

Geraldo

We have already seen Geraldo's cruel contempt towards women in his treatment of Dolly. He is of medium height with fair skin, gray eyes, and kinky hair, in a symmetrical Afro. Geraldo walks with a proud bearing and is always elegantly attired in clothes of 'pimpish splendor' such as sleekly polished antiqued lizard high-heeled boots. He appears cruelly beautiful with big grey eyes, a broad nose, full mouth, and hands like long talons. Connie hates him with a passion for his abusive contempt of her, and the power and control he exerts over Dolly. At the same time Connie is rightly terrified of his power and violence. She tries in vain to convince Dolly to leave him, but as a woman caught in the cycle of violence, Dolly stays because of Geraldo's false promises for improvement. Geraldo is a vendadero (drug dealer) who once did well enough to 'keep' Dolly and her little girl Nita. After being busted, without spending time in jail, he makes Dolly work as a prostitute along with three other 'girls'.

For Connie, Geraldo represents all the male violence she has experienced. "He reminds her of her father who had beaten her every week of her childhood, her second husband who had sent her to emergency with blood running down her leg. El muro who had raped her and then beaten her because she would not lie and say she enjoyed it"(Piercy, 1976, 15). Geraldo

exemplifies male power unchecked:

> [Geraldo] pounded the door, ...hit the door harder. Open the door, you old bitch! Open or I'll break it down. Bust your head in. Come on, open this fucking door! He began kicking so hard the wood cracked and started to give way. Connie felt compelled to open the door before he broke it. Not a door opened in the hallway. Nobody came to look out (Piercy, 1976, 12).

Despite this being Connie's home, she has no rights. Power is maintained by violence. Geraldo threatens to hold Dolly down and have the 'doctor' perform the abortion in Connie's bed and indeed attempts to do so until Connie hits him in the face with a bottle, breaking his nose. This is the first time she strikes out at one of her oppressors. In response, Geraldo beats Connie unconscious, breaking ribs and teeth, and has her committed to the hospital for assaulting him.

Characters in Mattapoisett

Luciente

Our descriptions of Luciente come through Connie's eyes. Before recognizing that Luciente is female, Connie perceives her as an effeminate male. She describes Luciente as having the face of a young Indio man, being of middling height with sleek, thick, black, shoulder length hair. Clean-shaven, his cheeks are as smooth as Connie's. He does not appear macho, has small bones, little heavier than Connie's, yet he is muscular, with big warm calloused hands. His voice is high-pitched and almost effeminate. "Really he is girlish" (Piercy, 1976, 40). He moves with grace and authority with no signs of sexual interest so Connie thinks he is gay.

Upon realizing Luciente is female, with breasts like a fertility goddess, [Connie] begins to

see him/her as a woman but thinks she is a dyke:

> She was well muscled for a woman and moved with an air of brisk unselfconscious authority more associated with men. Luciente took up more space than women ever did. She squatted, she sprawled, she strolled, never thinking about how her body was displayed. But, Connie no longer felt in the least afraid of Luciente... [dykes] had never given her that sense of menace men could--after all, under the clothes they were only women too (Piercy, 1976, 67).

To exemplify a construction of gender, Piercy describes how perceptions change once someone's gender is 'properly' assigned to his/her biology. Connie sees Luciente as increasingly womanly while all her so-called masculine traits are now seen in a positive light:

> In a summer sleeveless shirt of a muted gold, her body was obviously female. Connie smiled to herself. Perhaps it was the lighter clothing, perhaps it was a matter of expectations--anyhow, Luciente now looked like a woman. Luciente's face and voice and body now seemed female if not at all feminine; too confident; to unselfconscious, too aggressive and graceful in the wrong kind of way to be a woman: yet a woman (Piercy, 1976, 99).

In what Western society would describe as unwomanly, Luciente speaks frankly and confidently of her strengths, skills, knowledge and intelligence and how she contributes to her community in a valuable way.

Luciente's equally frank description of her sexuality provides an important challenge to compulsive heterosexuality and homophobia, including Connie's. In discussing desire, Luciente explains that the most intense mating of her life was with a woman named Diana, but most of the time she prefers males. She further explains that different choices about sexuality are not just condoned but imbedded as part of Mattapoisett's culture. This explanation shows the social construction of heterosexuality as normal, and homosexuality as abnormal.

Bee

One of Luciente's lovers and a co-mother to Innocente, Bee is a big-boned well-muscled black man, with some fat around his midriff, who moves with majesty and calm. He is either bald or shaves his head, and displays a tattoo on each bicep. Bee currently works in the brooder, where genetic material is stored and embryos are grown. He and others monitor the development of embryos nourished in fluid-filled sacs for nine or ten months. Bee dresses in a long red and black robe, intricately embroidered, with a softly rolled hood cast back on his broad shoulders, not unusual in Mattapoisett, but atypical of clothing men wear in Connie's society.

At the child, Innocente's, naming ceremony, Bee weeps openly and expresses emotion that Connie finds amazing in a man. She cannot imagine her previous partner, Claud, crying. Even when sentenced to prison, Claud continued to show a macho bravado by grinning and shrugging as if the judgement was insignificant. By contrast, only the young girl, eagerly awaiting her potentially dangerous sojourn into the woods for a week by herself, does not cry.

Jackrabbit

Luciente's other lover, Jackrabbit, is very tall, thin faced, long limbed and rangy, with bony arms, and a tanned chest covered with prickly brass hair. He is a nineteen-year-old artist and like Bee, Jackrabbit demonstrates nurturing abilities more often associated with women. When Connie faints, he helps her up, seriously concerned. Sympathetically he consoles Connie

with hugs and words, using his pet name for her, 'Little Pepper and Salt.' Similarly, at Sappho's, the elderly storyteller's, dying, Jackrabbit carries her with utmost gravity and care, to gently place her hand in the river current as she wanted.

Along with his caring nurturing sensitivity, Jackrabbit's masculinity is in evidence when he admits to becoming sexually aroused by just about everybody, including while comforting Connie. Later he openly flirts with her. "Bee is nice, but I'm just as nice. He makes an exaggerated face of flirtation, batting his eyes" (Piercy, 1976, 223). From her experience with patriarchy, Connie understands relationships as meaning possession and does not understand how Luciente is not jealous of Jackrabbit's behaviour towards her.

Jackrabbit explains how people choose their work in Mattapoisett. He has decided on two paths, mothering and military service, an oxymoron in Connie's present. He and his family met to discuss his choices, and by consensus eventually decided that he should complete a six months tour of military defense before starting to mother. The main point is that although Jackrabbit has to wait to 'mother' he is not restricted from making both choices.

Barbarossa

Connie first meets Barbarossa in the nursery when he bursts in to breastfeed an infant. Like Bee and Jackrabbit, his character is significant to show Connie and the reader a non-stereotypical view of males. Barbarossa demonstrates nurturing and caring abilities. He is a forty-five-year-old red-bearded man, with small breasts, swollen with milk. When he begins to

nurse, "An expression of serene enjoyment spread over Barbarossa's stern, intellectual schoolmaster's face. He let go of the room, of everything, and floated" (Piercy, 1976, 134). When Connie asks about the hormonal supplement needed to breastfeed, she is told that no one has enough milk alone, but two or three people together share breast-feeding. They choose this option instead of using formula, because they believe in the intimacy, loving and sensual enjoyment breastfeeding promotes.

Yet Barbarossa shows a masculine side Connie does not like. When giving her explanations, Connie feels, "she does not like to be lectured by him, for he reminds her of other men, authorities in her time, even though she can see that in this setting he has no edge on the others" (Piercy, 1976, 197).

There are many other characters with androgynous looks, behaviours and names. Connie in true Western fashion, finds the gender ambiguity disturbing and tries to assign a gender to everyone, only to find that more often than not, she cannot. The characters all belie the naturalness of current definitions of femininity and masculinity.

Connie's Society, New York, 1970's

We learn of Connie's society through her eyes and perceptive analysis. In the larger society and hospital institutions, Connie is ignored by social workers, doctors, nurses, orderlies alike, despite the bruising, broken teeth, cracked ribs, and her pleas that she has been beaten. Hierarchy is firm, absolute. "The doctor went on making notations on the form. She was a body

checked into the morgue; meat registered for the scales"(Piercy, 1976, 19). Part of this treatment resulted from Connie's violence, which does not comply with the gentle, submissive stereotypical female role model and likely because of her ethnicity and lower-class status.

The social worker in the hospital attempts to carry out her job with obvious distaste. Connie thinks the social worker looks at her like a cockroach. Connie resents her power and notes the heightened surveillance for anyone who steps outside the accepted social codes. "Most people hit kids. But if you were on welfare and on probation and the whole social-pigeonholing establishment had the right to trek regularly through your kitchen looking in the closets and under the bed, counting the bedbugs and your shoes, you had better not hit your kid once" (Piercy, 1976, 26). Meanwhile, the violence Connie experiences at the hands of men is ignored.

Connie compares herself with her welfare worker Mrs. Polcari, for whom she cleans up as best she can. Mrs. Polcari is white, slim, with short brown hair smooth and polished looking. She admits to Connie that she did not marry until she was twenty-six and her mother feared she would die an old maid. Still Connie feels envy and a sense of being cheated. She does not perceive that Mrs. Polcari's sense of pressure to marry as possibly being oppressive. However, this example shows the reader evidence of differences in class and racial oppression for women.

Connie is controlled by various manifestations of society's power. Although Connie believes she is a good person, she recognizes that in society's eyes she belongs in the hospital with all, "who were not desired, who had no place, or fit crosswise the one they were hammered into, to repent of their contrariness"(Piercy, 1976, 31). When explaining a concept of good

people to Luciente, Connie describes it as gendered:

> We have a religious idea of being good, being gentle and caring about your neighbour. But to be a good man, a man is supposed to be . . . strong, hold his liquor, attractive to women, able to beat out other men, lucky, hard, tough, macho we call it, not to get too involved... to look out for number one...to make good money. Well, to get ahead you step on people, you knuckle under to the big guys and you walk over the people underneath . . . Good? My mother was good. What did it get her except to bleed to death at forty-four. Looking like she was sixty (Piercy, 1976, 120).

Connie equates her mother's goodness with submission. Forced sedation in the hospital leads to her recognition that non-submissive, fighting women are important. A friend there, Sybil, is a strong fighting woman but staff are gradually draining her with medication and electro-convulsive therapy. Connie recognizes the need for women to fight since "Sybil unconscious was merely another helpless woman" (Piercy, 1976, 111).

Connie thinks her first husband Martin was a good man who in some ways fit the description she cited, but in other ways did not. Until he died in a street brawl:

> He had been beautiful, his body in which strength and grace were balanced as in a great cat. His had been almost girlish in his slenderness--although she would never have dared to say that, for that would have lost him to her-and masculine in its swiftness, its muscular tight control . . . his face of sadness and grace (Piercy, 1976, 243).

Connie describes Martin in an androgynous way but knows she must keep this to herself. Thus she generally follows scripted gender rules, despite her internal understanding of the futility and contradictions in those rules. This exemplifies how gender steroetypes have the power to be reproduced.

Mattapoisett in 2137

We are told that Mattapoisett's culture is based on a study of previous cultures, primarily that of the Wamponaug Indians, with the best features gleaned from them, but we are never told how or when Mattapoisett began. On her first visit to Mattapoisett, Connie expects to see rocket ships and advanced technology. Instead she hears laughter, a lot of birds, a dog, a rooster crowing. She sees bicycles and people on foot, cows grazing, and intensive vegetable plots. She thinks it primitive. Jackrabbit explains that they learned from people who were once called primitive. They appropriated socially sophisticated knowledge from cultures that handled conflict well, and promoted cooperation, coming of age, and a sense of community.

No efforts are made to differentiate an appearance of gender. Everyone wears the same clothes, suits, accoutrements etc, and everyone is generally muscular due to a physical lifestyle. Names do not allow for a determination of gender. Jackrabbit explains their naming system, and notes that he was named Peony by his mothers. When Connie replies that it sounds like a girl's name Jackrabbit is confused. "I don't understand. It was the name chosen for me. When I came to naming, I took my own name" (Piercy, 1976, 77). Behaviour does not match Connie's stereotyped expectations such as when she sees a man weeping openly and publicly into his soup, while people all around him are patting his shoulders and making a big fuss.

Compared with contemporary society where women are generally expected to partner with older men, and men with younger women, Mattapoisett has no such rules. The youth

Jackrabbit and White Oak, flirt right in front of everyone and nobody seems to care. White Oak is about twenty-five years older than Jackrabbit.

With regards to infants, the nursery is decorated with chimes and mobiles, none in pink or blue. A lack of toys for older children is based on the belief that children learn by doing. Thus they participate in and play at for example, farming, fishing, and baby tending. As well, toys that teach sex roles are absent, having been eliminated as unnecessary in light of evidence from childcare in earlier ages.

Respect for women's history is celebrated annually at a festival called "The Feast of July Nineteenth," considered the beginning of the women's movement. This festival provides a historically inaccurate synopsis of feminist history but the intention is to remind everyone of the essence of what women fought for. It is based on the Seneca Rights Convention where Harriet Tubman recites 'Ain't I a Woman,' and leads slaves to sack the Pentagon. During the celebration, Piercy explicitly writes of androgyny when describing a holographic type of performance:

> The oak thrust its taproot deep and outstretched its massive boughs. The tree became a human couple embracing, man and woman. They clutched, they embraced, they wrestled, they strangled each other. Finally they passed into and through each other. Two androgynes stood: one lithe with black skin and blue eyes and red hair, who bent down to touch with her/his hands the earth; the other, stocky, with light brown skin and black hair and brown eyes, spread his/her arms wide to the trees and sky and a hawk perched on the wrist (Piercy, 1976, 181).

This image is part of a long explanation of how life was destroyed before Mattapoisett's time, and the androgynes, after fighting, represent the social structure Mattapoisett has come to adopt.

Luciente explains women's role in their social structure. "Our dignity comes from work. Everyone raises the kids, haven't you noticed? Romance, sex, birth, children—that's what you fasten on. Yet that isn't women's business anymore. It's everybody's" (Piercy, 1976, 251). Thus there is no devaluing of mothering, rather just the opposite, but mothering is also not assigned exclusively to women. This counters one criticism of androgyny, which is that it has typically valued so called masculine traits, and been focused on developing the perfect man. Some might argue that because men share in 'mothering' in Mattapoisett, that in itself has increased the value of it. This is not Piercy's argument however. Instead she has balanced power. Women gave up reproduction so men will not regret giving up power (Atwood, 1982, 274).

Thus in Mattapoisett, no one has power over others. Mattapoisett's government, or grand council, consists of members chosen by lot for one year terms. The age range is 16 to extreme old age, and gender is not a qualification. Decisions are made by consensus; there is no final authority, particularly with major decisions such as deciding to do research on prolonging life. Affirmative action for rights is not necessary as discrimination is unheard of. Links between gender/race/class and power do not exist. This contrasts with Connie's world where so-called experts in high-ranking positions of power make major decisions with little or no input from the millions potentially affected.

In Mattapoisett, all people have equal opportunities with regards to education and they study with any person who can teach them. Where one goes depends on what one wants to

study. Luciente explains that if she were drawn to ocean farming she would have gone to villages where ocean farming is a main industry. In the same vein, everybody has the opportunity to take turns in military service. They are all trained in the use of arms, in fighting hand to hand, and can all manage facets of more complicated military operations. Thus the institutionalized right to choice mixed with a socialized sense of responsibility to the community ensures self-fulfillment and social functioning.

Piercy's Biographical Information

Marge Piercy was born and grew up in Detroit Michigan. She attended the University of Michigan and Northwestern University where she graduated in 1958 with an M.A. She lived in cities around the United States and Paris before settling in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Today Piercy lives by her writing, poetry reading and workshops. She only does short teaching stints, and prefers readings to lectures.

At the age of fifteen, Piercy began writing. She describes her poetry as the venue for exorcising her autobiographical impulses. In her fiction, she explores other people's lives and the choices she did not make. Piercy's first political experience was with the organization, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). She left it after realizing that women were being relegated to subservient work (Gale Literary Database, 10/27/99).

Piercy moved to involvement with the second wave of feminism in 1966, and still defines herself as a feminist. Her feminism stems from a position of being born a woman. She says, "I

cannot imagine not identifying strongly as a woman, and not wanting things to be better and safer, more fun, and less dangerous for myself and other women" (Piercy, Homepage, 09/23/99). Her political involvement stems from her desire for "a juster apportionment of the world's pleasure and less unjust apportionment of the world's pain" (Piercy, Homepage, 09/23/99). Having power does not interest her, but she is interested in how power distorts people.

Piercy's politics are reflected in her poetry and novels. Her use of a mutiplicity of genders can be explained by her belief that "There is in any of us numerous other people that we never live out, and our opposites are as fascinating as what we are. In fiction you get to live out all those little pieces" (Piercy, Homepage, 09/23/99).

A close connection between cats and humans in presented in both Woman on the Edge of Time and He She and It. Piercy explains that she gets along very well with cats:

> They almost all recognize me. I like their sensuality and their independence. I see myself mirrored in them. Often, both women and men, but especially men, project onto cats what under patriarchy they have learned to fear in women which is why cats were burned when the witches were burned all over Europe. Women and cats were viewed as equally sexual and equally evil (Piercy, Homepage, 09/23/99).

The connection between humans and cats is further extended to a representation of a human to nature connection in both novels, and a human to cyborg connection in He She and It.

With regards to sexuality, Piercy explains that she gets flak from lesbian feminists because most of her sexual relationships have been with men. She describes herself as a pluralist in sexuality, as in most things, believing that people should make many different choices and flourish in them. Characters in both novels used in this thesis represent a pluralist choice of

sexuality. Piercy has used her poetry to explain why as a feminist she still has relationships with men. She does not view men as biologically impaired! She believes sexism is culturally conditioned and if you change the culture, you will change whatever behaviour is considered appropriate:

> What she hates is ugly, brutal, violent, and mean behaviour from men that is damaging to women; men who consider inferior children; and other creatures who share our biosphere. At the same time her direct and blunt manner of speaking that lacks subterfuge and middle-class women's mannerisms is perceived by some men as hostile (Piercy, Homepage, 09/23/99).

Piercy believes many readers recognize in her characters the truth about how men behave toward women (Piercy, Homepage, 09/23/99).

Eleanor Langer, in a New York Times review, describes Marge Piercy as radical and a writer simultaneously. Piercy openly acknowledges that she wants her writing to be 'useful,' meaning readers will find poems that speak to and for them, yet some critics accuse her of being more committed to her politics than her craft (Gale Literary Database, 10/27/99). Piercy challenges these critics by saying, "Art which contains ideas threatening to the position of the ruling class is silenced by critics: it is political and not art" (Gale Literary Database, 10/27/99). For example, Piercy explains that for much of her adult life she has been trying to create alternatives to the nuclear family, which she does in Woman on the Edge of Time and He She and It. To her, the family under patriarchy is at best a workable compromise. By publishing and publicly reading her work, Piercy has confronted attempts at silencing (Gale Literary Database, 10/27/99).

Piercy describes her intention for Woman on the Edge of Time as "one that was not sexist, racist, or imperialist: one that was cooperative, respectful of all living beings, gentle, responsible, loving and playful, the result of a full feminist revolution" (Gale Literary Database, 10/27/99). In a review of the book, Margaret Walters says "Too much of the book reads like a thinly dramatized version of current radical feminist theory"(Walters, 1979, 868). While Walters uses the criticism negatively, I see it as positive. Piercy is able to bring theory to the every day, and connects the every day with theory.

Piercy is frequently praised for her ability to write from female and male perspectives. Along with this goes a "customary skill of focusing on the minutiae of human thought and interaction, and attention to inner psychological conflict" (Piercy, Homepage, 09/27/99). This ability is evidenced in the two novels studied for this thesis, and is helpful in providing a sense of realism to the characters and their societies.

Placing Woman on the Edge of Time in Feminist Theory

From a theoretical perspective, Woman on the Edge of Time most clearly reflects the theorizing of the second wave of feminism as epitomized by the work of Shulamith Firestone. The latter's Dialectic of Sex published in 1970, can be considered representative of feminism's second wave, by advocating a revolution based on issues of reproduction, reproductive rights and freedoms for women. Similarly, Kate Millett's Sexual Politics, was part of the force that made feminists in the 1970's add the specific oppression of lesbian women to feminist agendas. This

also stimulated second wave feminism to re-theorize about reproduction and women's sexuality. Millet's analysis of the effects of sexist ideologies led the way for further feminist literary criticism and utopian literature (Humm, 1992, 61).

In 1970, Firestone wrote that there have been no precedents in history for feminist revolution. Moreover, "we haven't a literary image of this future society, there is not even a utopian feminist literature in existence" (Firestone, 1970, 227). So Piercy's novel, published in 1976, was timely. Not only did her work coincide with theoretical publications, she also helped precipitate further ideas and challenges for theory. Second wave feminist theorizing is part and parcel of Woman on the Edge of Time. Yet Piercy's depictions of a society where there is diversity, and a multiplicity of genders, are still relevant today more than twenty years later. This is an example of how literature and theory can go hand in hand.

Firestone based her analysis and ideas for change on Marx and Engels' materialism and dialectical theory. Although she does not use their opinions about women, and even thinks they have little knowledge of women's conditions as oppressed, Firestone finds their dialectical and materialist method of analysis valuable. Marx and Engels trace class conflict to economic origins to project an economic solution based on objective economic preconditions and conditions in the present. Firestone says that for feminist revolution we need an analysis of sexism at least as, and likely more, comprehensive as the Marx-Engels analysis of class. Oppression of women needs to be traced back beyond recorded history. Firestone feels that the conditions are right for feminist revolution for the first time (Firestone, 1970, 1-3).

According to Firestone, reproduction is at the origin of the dualism between women and men. The biological family became an inherently unequal power distribution because:

1. Before birth control, women were at the mercy of their biology and thus dependent on men for their survival;
2. Human infants are helpless and dependent on adults for longer periods than other animals;
3. A mother/child interdependency has existed in some way in all societies and has influenced the psychology of women and children;
4. Lastly, the natural reproductive differences between the sexes directly led to the first division of labor (Firestone, 1970, 8, 9).

Thus the biological family became an inherently unequal power distribution. Even in cultures of matriarchy where woman's fertility is worshipped, there is still some or a great deal of dependence of the female and the infant on the male. The 'recent' development of the nuclear family intensifies the psychological penalties of the biological family (Firestone, 1970, 8,9).

Firestone believes that humans have the technological ability to control nature, particularly reproduction, on our own behalf, but we do not appropriately take advantage of this ability. She relates this to Engels' analysis that the division of labour lies at the basis of the division into classes but this does not prevent the ruling class from consolidating its power at the expense of the working class. While we are capable of freeing ourselves from the biological conditions that create the tyranny of men, men do not want to do this (Firestone, 1970, 10). Thus Firestone's revolution involves women seizing control of reproduction, and restoring ownership of their own bodies and the social institutions of childbearing and childrearing. The means to do so is by artificial or technological reproduction. Children would be born to both sexes equally or independently of either, and the child would be dependent on a small group of others. Thus the

tyranny of the biological family would be broken (Firestone, 1970, 11, 31, 48).

In Woman on the Edge of Time, Piercy outlines a similar plan to Firestone's, where success is dependent on institutionalized androgyny. This ideal world incorporates artificial reproduction, classlessness, dissolution of the nuclear family, men and women participating equally in childrearing or mothering, even men breast-feeding, and older people parenting. Humans are conceived artificially and develop in a brooder, in what Connie perceives as glass bottles. Luciente explains to Connie that:

> It was part of women's long revolution. When we were breaking all the old hierarchies. Finally there was that one thing we had to give up too, the only power we ever had, in return for no more power for anyone. The original production: the power to give birth. Cause as long as we were biologically enchained we'd never be equal. And males never would be humanized to be loving and tender. So we all became mothers. Every child has three. To break the nuclear bonding (Piercy, 1976, 105).

Like Firestone's plan, children are the responsibility of everyone, there is no biological or nuclear family bonding or resultant oppression. The link to androgyny is that reproduction and childrearing are not connected to any gender. Connie is initially irritated with this set up. "How can men be mothers! How can some kid who isn't related to you be your child? She hated them, the bland bottleborn monsters of the future, born without pain, multicolored like a litter of puppies without the stigmata of race and sex" (Piercy, 1976, 106).

Connie is also angered that men can breast feed if they choose:

> How dare any man share that pleasure. These women thought they had won, but they had abandoned to men the last refuge of women. What was special about being a woman here? They had given it up, they had let men steal from them the last remnant of ancient power, those sealed in blood and in milk (Piercy, 1976, 134).

Later she sees the benefits of the social arrangements Piercy envisions. Mattapoisett depicts a comprehensive alternative family with no gender specificity in terms of tasks, functions, behaviour. As Bartkowski points out women are not responsible for the limitations of human enterprise, the source of joy and fear, desire and dread (Bartkowski, 1989, 69):

> When kinship ties are not based on blood, women's bodies and sexuality are no longer primary areas of appropriation and this subverts a fundamental law of the patriarchal sex-gender system with its over determined concern for paternity. The universal exchange of women by men through exogamy underwrites the incest taboo and heterosexual marriage. Feminism must call for a revolution in kinship (Bartkowski, 1989, 77).

Firestone explains that homosexuality is the extreme casualty of a family based society. Repressions make a totally fulfilled sexuality an impossibility. A society without these rules might provide a healthy trans-sexuality as the norm (Firestone, 1970, 58-59).

Andrea Dworkin who wrote at length about androgyny in her book Woman Hating in 1974, concurs with Firestone and Bartkowski when she described the incest taboo and the nuclear family as the primary institutions of culture (Dworkin, 1974, 190). She sees androgny as the way to redress those institutions saying that "in an androgynous community, those impulses would retain a high degree of non-specificity and would no doubt show the rest of us the way into sexual self-realization" (Dworkin, 1974, 192). Luciente's life with two primary partners, Jackrabbit and Bee, and the most intense mating of her life with Diana whom she still loves and has occasional relations with, exemplifies a restructured society.

Adrienne Rich, an influential feminist writer, was once a supporter of androgyny. Later

she chose not to use the term "androgyny" because it was rarely accompanied by a political critique (Rich, 1986, 76). Despite Rich's rejection of this term, however, I find her theorizing about 'compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence' useful for this thesis. Noting a lesbian continuum, Rich describes how the enforcement of heterosexuality has for women crushed and invalidated their choice of women for passionate comrades, partners, co-workers and lovers (Rich, 1983, 140). The lesbian existence demonstrates the historical presence of lesbians, despite their elision from many spheres, and the continuing creation of the meaning of that existence. She describes the lesbian continuum as "a range through each woman's life and throughout history--of women identified experience; not simply the fact that a woman has had or consciously desires genital sexual experience. The lesbian existence breaks a taboo and is a direct or indirect attack on patriarchy and male right of access to women" (Rich, 1983, 156-157).

Rich is not condemning heterosexuality but promoting choice and the realization that there can be a range of women-centered experience that does not necessarily mean sexual experience. Compulsory heterosexuality exerts power and control because it denies women their intimate sexual and non-sexual relationships with other women (Gay Flames, 1994, 164). It denied lesbians support for fighting their oppression until the 1970's. Dworkin agrees with Rich, suggesting that compulsory heterosexuality is at the root of not only women's oppression but of Western culture as a whole. Dworkin writes that, "Unambiguous conventional heterosexual behaviour is the worst betrayal of our common humanity" (Dworkin, 1974, 184).

Piercy's descriptions of women's relationships in Mattapoisett demonstrate the lesbian

continuum. Connie's experience in her own time reflects compulsory heterosexuality so she finds her rigid views about sexuality seriously challenged in Mattapoisett. Connie is discomfited at first by the freedom of touching there. "Touching and caressing, hugging and fingering, they handled each other constantly" (Piercy, 1976, 76). At first physical contact with Luciente, Connie felt repulsed:

> Luciente gently drew her against him and held her in his arms so their foreheads touched. Pressed reluctantly, nervously against Luciente, she felt the coarse fabric of his shirt and ...breasts! She jumped back. "You're a woman! No, one of those sex-change operations" "Of course I'm female." Luciente looked a little disgusted. Later Connie realized that, hardly ever did she embrace another woman along the full length of their bodies, and it was hard to ease her mind. . . (but then) she felt Luciente to be a woman who liked her--a rough ignorant goodwill caressed her (Piercy, 1976, 68).

Later still, "Luciente peered into her [Connie's] face. Gently Luciente brushed her lips against hers. Connie did not recoil" (Piercy, 1976, 176). To me this example shows a pathos of deprivation, since Connie is almost 40 years old before she feels a woman likes her, because of rigid rules surrounding gender. The developing intimacy between the two women is an example of Rich's lesbian continuum. Importantly, this example of Connie's move from revulsion to acceptance can represent the readers experience as well.

Dworkin says, "We must move away from the perverse two dimensional definitions which stem from sexual repression, and are a source of social oppression" (Dworkin, 1974, 157). In Connie's New York, gender role control is so important that a homosexual man was de-sexed and left a loveless person, but considered a success to medicine because of being 'broken' of his homosexuality. "Skip had changed. When they took him out and tested him with homosexual

photographs, he had no what they called negative reactions. Meaning he didn't get a hard-on. He told her he felt dead inside. They were pleased with him; they were going to write him up for a medical journal" (Piercy, 1976, 270). Skip now complies with Western heterosexual stereotypes so he can be discharged from the hospital.

Many people other than Luciente and her partners have same-sex and bisexual relationships in Mattapoisett. Piercy is not advocating a particular form of sexuality, rather the freedom to choose. There are no sanctions other than between adults and children. When making 'flimsies,' costumes for celebrations, Luciente describes them as "outrageous silly ones that disguise you, ones in which you will be absolutely gorgeous and desired by *every body* in the township" (my emphasis, Piercy, 1976, 171). In other words, one is not just desired by the opposite sex. During a conflict management meeting, Connie questions Parr, a people's judge and referee. "Something puzzles me. It seems like everybody is careful not to say what seems real obvious to me-that Jackrabbit and Bolivar have...well, they're both men. It's homosexual. Like that might bother a woman more" (Piercy, 1976, 214). Parr looked at her as if she were really crazy. "All coupling, all befriending goes on between biological males, biological females, or both. That's not a useful set of categories. We tend to divvy up people by what they're good at and bad at, strengths and weaknesses, gifts and failings" (Piercy, 1976, 214).

More specifically, in relation to her examples of an institutionalized acceptance of homosexuality, Piercy addresses same sex desire. At a celebration, Jackrabbit and Bolivar embraced, naked under the rippled backs of the cloaks. Bolivar had been Jackrabbit's lover long

before Luciente (Piercy, 1976, 176). More explicit is Luciente and Diana's relationship:

> The tall woman, hair in a white turban with one breast bare, as were her feet, approached Luciente from behind. Unwinding her turban so that her auburn hair fell out loose onto her shoulders, she swung the long white scarf around and then cast it over Luciente, catching her by the waist and pulling her backward. "You dance just as wickedly as when you were eighteen... that flimsy chills me." Luciente replies, "you didn't come looking for me to crit my flimsy. To take it off perhaps. Luciente blushing like a fifteen-year-old, gave her hand to Diana and they went off quickly among the dancers in to the dark (Piercy, 1976, 184-185).

Connie compares this with a dance, in her twentieth century 'bughouse' under the watchful eyes of staff, involving polite waltzing and fox-trot with the opposite sex, with a safe distance between their bodies.

In Mattapoisett distinctiveness and difference are respected. To ensure there was no chance of racism, their reproductive technology involved "breaking the link between genes and culture forever, but without the thin gruel of the melting pot" (Piercy, 1976, 104). The society strives to foster communication so that every person's voice is heard (Khanna, 1981, 49). Although people are androgynous, their personalities are different, often remarkably so. Thus, Piercy validates diversity, and androgyny does not mean one fixed genderless identity but a multiplicity of genders. It leads to hope that we can achieve a society free of rigid gender roles, where we can be free to create ourselves (Kessler, 1987, 312).

Connie sees similarities between people in Mattapoisett and people in twentieth century New York. For example, Martin, her first husband, is like Jackrabbit; Bee is similar to Claude; her lover; the girl Dawn is like her own daughter Angelina. Luciente is Connie's double,

representative of Connie's enlightenment. Piercy is presenting the point that we can have much more human and social fulfillment with the same types of people who inhabit our present world (DuPlessis, 1979, 3).

Piercy also contrasts Mattapoisett with a totalitarian, dualistic society with inflexible gender and sexual behaviour to demonstrate another possibility for the future of western society. Connie makes a mistake when trying to transfer to Mattapoisett and ends up in the future New York, a dystopian society where men are emotionless professional killers and women are institutionalized prostitutes, surgically altered to look like 'Barbie' dolls, with their status dependant on the length of sexual contracts with men. This place appears to be a logical extension of the problems of class, race and gender in western society today (Annas, 1978, 154). The contrast between societies in Woman on the Edge of Time demonstrates the benefits of egalitarian androgyny versus an oppressive society.

Conclusion

To sum up, Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time, is generally reflective of the second wave of feminism where androgyny involves a freedom from a patriarchal oppressive structure of childbearing and childrearing for women. Through a comparison between the androgynous utopian Mattapoisett, and Connie's patriarchal New York City, Piercy shows that the possibilities of human freedom rest not so much with the individual but with the social structure and the individual's relationship to it (Ferguson, 1985, 46). Luciente as an androgynous person is

successful because her society is structured to support androgyny.

More so than many other novels grouped as utopian fictions, Connie's present demonstrates the need for a differently imagined future. Through her personal struggle the need for political change becomes obvious (Bartkowski, 1989, 53). Mattapoisett provides a vision of where that political change might lead. Woman on the Edge of Time has been called "the result of a full feminist revolution. The novel is a call to strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward" (Kessler, 1987, 313).

The benefit of Piercy's work is the means by which she demonstrates androgyny. Some science fiction appears to challenge gender roles by a complete role reversal. This does not allow for any eradication of stereotypes or oppression and is not as effective as Piercy's demonstration of a revolutionary freedom from gender role stereotyping. Piercy's depiction of androgyny and the sexual set up in Mattapoisett are useful heuristic devices or thought experiments for readers to challenge their own way of thinking. Her characters are a way of thinking, metaphors for what our language has no words for as yet, experiments in imagining men and women as social equals, thus society as a very different thing (McIntyre, 1976, 132, 138).

Over the course of the book Connie moves from her role as a disempowered woman, socialized to emulate white western feminine stereotypes, past her initial revulsion towards Luciente and Mattapoisett, to a feeling of acceptance and a realization of the social and personal benefits of an egalitarian androgynous society. Connie initially has some difficulty with the ambiguity of gender and feels a need to assign a gender to people she meets. As time goes on

however, she understands that this is unnecessary, and in this way demonstrates how we, the readers, can learn to accept this as well.

Chapter 4: He She and It

Introduction

In this chapter, I present an overview of the He She and It, and Piercy's use of androgyny in it. As with Woman on the Edge of Time, androgyny in He She and It allows for varying gender configurations, but there is less overall blending of male and female characteristics than in Mattapoisett. It therefore does not necessarily mean radically altering, or giving up biological functions. This counters one feminist criticism of androgyny that "androgyny might become a new normative stereotype into which both sexes are ruthlessly pressed" (Warren, 1982, 176).

This novel's connections to feminism in the 1990's are explored where reproduction is not seen as the root of women's oppression, and differences among women do not preclude concerted political action. Cyborg imagery supports a post-modern challenge to Western dualisms in society. This novel presents a variety of perspectives that echo the explosion of issues surrounding diversity that the feminist movement faces in the 1990's. By comparing and contrasting various degrees of androgyny with rigid gender roles and expectations, Piercy challenges the reader to see the construction of masculinity and femininity as social activity. As with Woman on the Edge of Time, previously assumed negative aspects associated with femininity are reaffirmed in a positive light. Liberatory possibilities are evidenced with androgynous peoples and their societies. Androgyny is linked with economic, political and symbolic realms, which give shape to how liberatory it can be.

Overview of He She and It

The main character in He She and It is Shira Shipman. Her grandmother, Malkah, provides Shira with emotional support, while Shira's mother, Riva, is emotionally distant. Shira's lover is an androgynous cyborg Yod who assists her with broadening her definition of gender. The other men in Shira's life are her son Ari, her ex-husband and Ari's father, Josh, and her ex-partner Gadi for whom Shira still has feelings. Riva's lover, Nili, plays a significant role as an androgynous female.

Much of the world of He She and It has faced environmental disaster and humanity's destruction partially because of its social structure, which involves extremes of patriarchal rationality, devoid of emotion or sensitivity. Cybernetic enhancement is standard and most people have features such as re-grown and artificial organs, retinal implants and computer sockets implanted behind their eyes. These sockets allow people to plug into a virtual reality type of database to seek information, communicate, travel, or escape the world around them. Powerful, rigid corporations battle against each other, and against unincorporated or free towns, to take over the world. Despite protective gear, like an old western shoot out, people can get burned to dust in seconds while plugged into their computers.

Intelligence is respected in both women and men. In Tikva, a 'free' town, this respect is consistent with its egalitarian structure, but in the corporations this respect is a response to labour shortage. The corporate use of women's brain power is reminiscent of times in Western history,

when women, 'the reserve army of labour,' have been called en mass to work during periods of labour shortage.

He She and It begins with the story of a custody dispute between Shira Shipman and her divorced husband and the Y-S corporation to which they are contracted. Shira loses because of the corporation's manipulation and her husband's higher rating on the corporate scale of work value. Shira, having grown up in Tikva, cannot accept her loss. Tikva is utopian, where women and men function with equality, and gender is fluid so individuals and the community benefit as a whole. Here Shira experiences a matrilineal influence and nurturing by a strong women's support network.

Shira returns to Tikva and her maternal grandmother, Malkah, after her custody battle and decision to opt out of Y-S. While never forgetting her goal of fighting for her son's return, Shira becomes involved in a project to train a cyborg, or robot, named Yod, built as the perfect androgynous being and ultimate defender of Tikva. Shira eventually falls in love with Yod, because he is programmed to please and is thus the perfect partner and lover. He has all the positive 'feminine' characteristics her ex-husband lacks, and all the positive 'masculine' characteristics she desires. More importantly Yod's literal construction challenges Shira and readers to see a construction of gender.

Shira reconnects with her mother Riva who lives in a radical women-only community called Yerushaleim. With the help of Tikva, Yod, Riva and her partner Nili, Shira is able to steal her son back from Y-S under dangerous circumstances where many die, including her ex-

husband Josh. They fight a perilous battle in what is known as the Glop, an extension of today's ghettos where people viciously struggle to survive. In the end Shira loses Yod when he self-explodes as a result of his programmed mechanism to defend the entire town of Tikva. Initially she feels lost without him and decides to rebuild him. Finally she realizes that she cannot sacrifice the idea of free will by creating others for her specifications, so she destroys the plans.

In the novel, Piercy intersperses a story from the Kabbalistic tradition of the Maharal, or Jewish leader, in 1600 Prague. He builds a Golem, [artificial man] Joseph, from clay, to help defend the Jews from attacks by anti-Semites. Joseph's development parallels that of Yod while the Maharal's daughter, Chava, who is androgynous and essential to the defense of Prague, parallels that of the androgynous women characters in He She and It's present. Similarly to Shira, Chava is well educated but is restrained from advancement because of being a woman. Chava's and the Golem Joseph's androgyny, demonstrate gender constructions which imply that there has not been a great deal of change from the 1600's when women in that society were controlled by patriarchy.

Descriptions of Androgynous Characters

Shira

At the beginning of the novel, Shira reflects more that challenges a contemporary construction of Western women because she represents a woman oppressed by societal structures, and who is also implicitly involved in her oppression. However, she changes, and like

Connie in Woman on the Edge of Time, Shira shows developing characteristics of androgyny and personal rebellion against oppression. Shira brings a positive value to feminine characteristics such as emotionality, caring and nurturing, while representing a masculine side of rationality and intelligence.

Shira describes herself as looking too girlish, too waif like with a 'neotonic effect' of large dark eyes in a small face that provokes an inborn reaction towards infants, fawns, kittens etc. Shira blames her looks for her experience of attracting men who prefer a child-woman as opposed to a strong adult woman, and she deliberately frowns a lot in hopes that others will take her more seriously.

In her family's matrilinial tradition Shira is compelled to give her first born to her mother for upbringing. Shira breaks this practice by keeping her son, Ari, with her and her husband Josh. Shira's decision is influenced by her mother, Riva, who is not the nurturing devoted mother Shira expects. Shira's motherly attachment is seen as neurotic in Y-S, but reasonable and supported in Tikva. Motherhood is not compulsory for women and Shira's choice reflects the multiplicity of women's choices in the 1990's and promotes an affirmation of motherhood.

Shira carries guilt and responsibility for everything that goes wrong, not atypical of women in western culture. For example, "Josh had been full of nasty games since she had left him, but she knew they were just an expression of pain she had caused him"(Piercy, 1991, 13, 336). Later in the story, Shira's desperation to have her son with her, leads her to consider joining Josh at Pacifica. As so many women do, she plans to "truncate herself to fit into his

notions of wife and mother for that was the only way she would ever get Ari back" (Piercy, 1991, 104). When Yod kills Josh, Shira assumes all the guilt. "The guilt was entirely hers to bear, silently and secretly. Yod killed, but I let him" (Piercy, 1991, 339-340). Shira is feminine, forgiving and tolerant to the point where I as a reader felt annoyed with her.

In a stereotypical Western fashion, heterosexual marriage, love, and beauty are more important measures of success to Shira than her intelligence, skills, and knowledge. Her failed marriage and failed relationship with her first love, Gadi, leave Shira feeling something is wrong with her, rather than recognizing the weaknesses of the social structures she lives within. She is obsessively conscious of how she should look 'for' men, particularly Gadi, whose career is similar to today's Hollywood movie producers. He lives in a world where ideal beauty means high glamour and surgical construction to meet the latest trend. While Shira realizes that she cannot compete with the women in his world, she berates herself for looking so banally human and commonplace, with a body that has borne a child. Shira's negativity about her appearance and selfhood is an important commentary on the gendered expectations of women who remain inadequate and oppressed based on increasingly rigid definitions of how they should look. Regardless of her upbringing in Tikva with more egalitarian social standards, Shira still succumbs to the pressures of womanly standards in Y-S. Despite her early socialization with strong women, she becomes oppressed by patriarchal expectations of women when she leaves her matrilineal home. Yet later, Shira becomes stronger and more androgynous upon returning to her childhood home. These changes in Shira show that gender is not innate and immutable,

her childhood home. These changes in Shira show that gender is not innate and immutable, rather it is impacted by socialization and social structures.

Despite efforts to be beautifully feminine, the physical aspects of her femaleness bother Shira. She worries that her messy biological animal charactistics might offend Yod. "I bleed, I sweat, I get tired; Sometimes I feel embarassed before you since you're so much neater" (Piercy, 1991, 240). These reflect similar concerns women are bombarded with today. These fears and behaviours of Shira are contrasted by the androgynous Nili who sweats, smells, and uses no 'beauty aids', but is completely self confident.

Malkah describes Shira as conventional and sexually timid. She asks Yod not to divulge to Shira that they have been lovers. "She would think it's indecent for you to have been involved with me at all and especially to then become involved with her" (Piercy, 1991, 173,174). Shira is also embarrassed by her intense response. "Do I think, she wondered, that a nice girl shouldn't show her orgasms? That a good woman doesn't enjoy sex too much" (Piercy, 1991, 183). Shira's conservative character is contrasted with the less rigid sexual behaviour of more androgynous characters to demonstrate the construction of women's sexuality.

Shira feels Ari's upbringing will not be healthy in Y-S, yet she feels he needs a father figure. This could be a reflection of Shria's conventionality, or represent the diversity of choices women should be able to make. It could also reflect Piercy's position that it is best not to eradicate all save one gender, but to recognize the importance of many genders.

Changes in Shira

Similar to Connie and her growing acceptance of Luciente's androgyny in Woman on the Edge of Time, Shira grows to accept Yod's androgynous character and cyborg abilities. Initially she only relates to him as a machine. Later she comes to rely on Yod, accepts him as a person, and ultimately loves him as her intimate partner despite his heavy make up of cyborg technology. Shira becomes appreciative of her own capabilities and matrilineal background, gradually escaping from an oppressive role of femininity:

> It was startling how much more boldly she proceeded now. Discovering that her work was actually highly original and that only Y-S corporate politics had kept her pinned in position, she found herself taking her own ideas more seriously. She had a brisk confidence that expressed itself in a new level of mastery (Piercy, 1991, 360).

No longer dependent upon men, or valued for appearing helpless, Shira knows she can scheme, fight, and kill. Her so called masculine characteristics surface and she is not afraid to use them. Shira recognizes herself as violent. "She had for twelve years assumed a position of moral superiority to Gadi that she suddenly found dubious. She was far more violent than Gadi, far more willing to get what she wanted by any means" (Piercy, 1991, 358). These examples challenge the notion that violence is a male trait and indicate that socialization is not fixed.

Gadi

Gadi is the epitome of glamour, fashion, and elegance, and is obsessed by his looks and sex appeal, in a manner more typically associated with women than men today. In his world of

'video' making, analogous to movie making in Hollywood, he is free to choose a 'feminine' appearance although the focus is on youth and beauty. Gadi with dyed skin and hair, "dressed in a green and bronze tight-fitting sleeveless tunic flitted with leaf shapes, shimmering as if just under the surface. His tights were metallic bronze. His high-heeled shoes were emerald and made little sparks as he hustled . . ." (Piercy, 1991, 384).

Wearing flashy jewels, and a perfume called 'lust' loaded with pheromones, chemical substances aimed to elicit a sexual response in another, Gadi is frequently described as graceful. "He ate a wing fastidiously, sensually. He kept himself slender and supple" (Piercy, 1991, 154). Despite his feminine appearance, though, Gadi's personality is one of rational masculinity and he can relate in the tough macho world of the Glop since he knows the lingo. His 'man to man' talks help guarantee the group's safety during their struggles to free Ari.

Gadi is put out by Nili's lack of interest with him. "She doesn't think I'm important, Gadi said with real indignation. She thinks I'm a mildly amusing gigolo" (Piercy, 1991, 354). But Nili finds it difficult to identify Gadi's gender, partly because of her lack of exposure to men, yet also because of Gadi's ambiguity. Shira doubts the intensity of Gadi's attraction to Nili, pointing out his long history of indiscriminate promiscuity and objectification of women for his sexual pleasure. Gadi responds in a way that further demonstrates Shira's point. "I was young and undiscriminating. Now I want only the best. Nili is most satisfactory. She has real talent and a body that would stop the show cold" (Piercy, 1991, 355).

Riva

Riva is somewhat androgynous in that she represents an almost anti-woman. Tough, analytical, a fighter, and lover of women, she has few, if any, nurturing or other so called 'feminine' aspects. Importantly, she defies the expectation that mothering and femininity come naturally to all women.

Riva's physical image changes throughout the novel, depending on the role she is playing. In Shira's youth, Riva appears to be "a dowdy prematurely middle-aged woman, your typical bureaucrat or middle-level analyst, a fussy woman rubbing her hands together nervously" (Piercy, 1991, 14). When Shira and Riva meet ten years later, Riva begins to reveal a more adventurous and androgynous self. She has a deep blunt commanding voice, walks with a swagger, and "like a general reviewing his best razors, she looked every man and woman straight in the eyes" (Piercy, 1991, 305). With very short hair, her undisguised form is lean. Riva's motivations stem from the temptations of danger, the challenge of impossibility. "She moved from pure data piracy toward something more political and even more dangerous, a crusade of liberating information from the multi's" (Piercy, 1991, 29).

Shira has a difficult time understanding Riva, particularly her distance as a mother. Riva tries to explain:

> I'm not an affectionate person, not the cuddly type. I'm loyal to death to those who are loyal to me. But I'm a warrior not a mother. What they call security training here--nice kids who've had a few karate lessons. I could take any four of them out in seconds. While others were taking rejuvenation treatments, I was doing the opposite. Never cared about being pretty or youthful looking. Don't need it, been offered more love than I've had the leisure to enjoy (Piercy, 1991, 192, 193).

Similarly Riva does not understand Shira and her submissive behaviour. She thinks Shira is conventional and timid and does not see much of herself in her daughter.

Nili, Riva's lover, provides a different interpretation of Riva than Shira does. Nili explains that Riva is a saint because she is brave and wise, and pursues justice regardless of danger to herself. Riva shows an emotionally distanced rationalization of life and death, focused on rights and justice, traits more commonly equated with masculinity. "It's not murder, it's just war. It's not the worst way to die. It's what I'd choose" (Piercy, 1991, 409). Rivi masterminds a stunningly intricate and highly dangerous plan for the move into the Glop. So complete are the details that only her closest accomplices but not her family are aware of some aspects. Despite knowing the impact of grief on her mother, she so convincingly feigns her death that her family holds a funeral. When Riva reappears some time later she shrugs off the anguish others have felt, explaining she does what has to be done, for her cause.

Riva explains her sexuality simply. "Never felt sexual toward men, myself. I've fought beside lots of men, and some are good friends, but they lack finesse as lovers. Just not my inclination" (Piercy, 1991, 191). Riva's freedom to express her lesbianism, and the other characters' acceptance of her and others sexuality, shows an institutionalized acceptance of same sex relationships. In turn, this acceptance shows the lack of necessity for rigid rules around sexuality and contests the promotion of those rules in contemporary society. Finally, the esteem in which Riva is held by her community validates her expressions as a woman, which are a far cry from a Western image of womanhood and femininity.

Nili

Nili is the most androgynous of all the female characters, in looks, behaviour, and sexuality. She is unfeminine with a loud physical presence, at times reeking of sweat, her muscular body streaked with dirt. She strides up stairs two steps at a time and slumps in chairs with her long legs sprawled. Nili's laugh sounds like a man. She has dark skin, hair the color of fresh blood, in an elaborate braid, and large vivid green eyes. Nili drives herself through exercises of elaborate stretches, leaps and martial slashes, punches and turns. She moves faster than she ought to be able to, leaps farther and higher than professional athletes. She is technologically 'enhanced' so that beside Yod the cyborg, Nili looks more artificial.

Upon meeting Shira, Nili introduces herself as an assassin, smiling "straight into her eyes, with a little twist of power that reminds Shira of a few men she has met. Dangerous men" (Piercy, 1991, 189). A fearless warrior, she describes herself as dangerous as anybody she is likely to meet. She is arrogant with unwomanly confidence, and thinks Gadi is cute but basically not much use. At a meeting in the Glop, Nili assumes leadership which no one contradicts. Shira imagines Nili "picking Gadi up to carry off, like a macho man in the old romances. Yet Nili looks womanly, busty, with broad hips and a tight waist" (Piercy, 1991, 361).

Gadi wants Nili to enter the video world. "She could easily get a job with a bit of cutting and pasting to giver her the [beauty] look of the year" (Piercy, 1991, 355). He is perplexed at her lack of interest in his efforts to exploit her beauty and body for his industry, regardless of

financial and fame rewards. Instead Nili is interested in Gadi sexually, with an emotional detachment more associated with men. She explains that part of her job is to find out what men are like, and Gadi is as good a choice as any. Nili grins about her clinical explanation.

Despite her masculine characteristics, Nili has a sensitive nurturing mothering side and is wonderful with Ari. Shira learns that she can confide in Nili woman to woman, and can identify with the woman in her. Nili provides a valuable non-stereotypical role model for Shira, whose growing acceptance and eventual appreciation of Nili's androgyny shows her own development.

Yod

Yod the cyborg is the most androgynous male character and represents a combination of male and female characteristics. Shira's job is to help complete his socialization so he can pass as human and fulfill his mission of protecting the town. Most of our descriptions of Yod come through Shira's interpretations. Initially to Shira, Yod appears as a completely artificial and not very smart security guard. A dark haired man of medium height with a solid compact build, his eyes have unusual porcelain appearing whites, with dark brown, green flecked irises. When Shira touches Yod she finds his "artificial skin felt warm, its surface very like human skin although drier. He flinched when touched, having the equivalent of minute musculature into its face area, in order to deliver a simulacrum of human reactions" (Piercy, 1991, 69). His hands are beautiful, dry, warm, finely made, like precision tools--what Malkah calls, on women or men, "artistic hands."

Yod's body holds many feminine characteristics such as a smooth beardless face, almost no chest hair, sleek womanly skin but drier to the touch, without the extra layer of subcutaneous fat. He is clean with pubic hair softer than a man's. Shira speculates that Yod's creator Avram had perhaps been thinking of female pubic hair. Yod does not require much upkeep, unlike a human male. He does not sweat so even his clothes become dirty more slowly. While he can lift a block of marble over his head, he is a dainty eater, requiring less food than Shira.

Malkah's involvement in Yod's creation became essential to his success. All Avram's previous cyborgs had to be destroyed because of their violent behaviour. Avram finally realized that he needed to add components other than masculinity. Malkah relates that Avram made Yod's mind entirely male, thinking a masculinity of pure reason, pure logic and pure violence is the ideal. To counter this Malkah gives Yod a gentler side, emphasizing a love for knowledge including emotional and personal knowledge, and a need for human connections. She ensures that he has total inhibition blocks against sexual violence so women are safer with him than any other male in Tikva, or even the world.

Shira and Yod unwittingly parallel their own acceptance of Yod as human. Shira recognizes that she is using the pronoun 'he' rather than 'it'. This is an interesting point to show a limitation of the English language. We have only two options since 'It' is not an acceptable reference for humans. Yod equates himself to humans, pointing out that while he cannot reproduce, neither can many humans. Avram denies Yod's humanity and participation in a Jewish ritual. Shira points out the social construction of this by saying, "For centuries *I* wouldn't

have been included. The Orthodox Jews still don't count half the Jews as Jews" (Piercy, 1991, 276).

Yod experiences increasingly human emotions of sympathy and a desire for companionship, deliberately addressing his creator, Avram, as father, in an attempt to establish a bond so he will not be destroyed as his eight predecessors have been. Yod explains, "I am not a robot. I'm a fusion of machine and lab created biological components--much as humans frequently are fusions of flesh and machines" (Piercy, 1991, 71). Shira agrees, citing the mechanical aspects of most people in their time, including retinal and corneal implants, artificial hearts and kidneys, explaining that Yod is just a purer form of cyborg than they all are.

When Yod approaches Shira about becoming more intimately involved with each other, she responds with male objectivity that she does not believe in complicating the teacher-student relationship, which ought to remain disinterested. Yod replies with a more feminist-recognized subjectivity, noting, "I am not disinterested. I need to touch you. I need to be touched. It is more important to me than the rest. I think my need for coupling is more intense than yours because it means intimacy to me" (Piercy, 1991, 131, 182-184). More than once Shira tells Yod that in these ways he is more like a woman. Yet sometimes, such as when he kisses her, signifying his closure of a discussion, instead of allowing for further exploration, "Yod's behaviour seems neutral, mechanical, purely logical; sometimes he does things that strike her as indistinguishable from how every other male she has been with would act" (Piercy, 1991, 321).

After defending Shira against probable death Yod explains his pleasure in the defense and

killing. He senses that what he has done is philosophically wrong, yet thinks he must be programmed to find killing as intense as sexual pleasure or mastering a new skill. Malkah helps Yod understand his socialized propensity towards violence by explaining that he cannot help his violent urges but with the counter weight she introduced he may in time learn to use his strength more wisely. Malkah muses that "men so often try to be inhumanly powerful, efficient, unfeeling, to perform like a machine, [so] it is ironic to watch a machine striving to be male" (Piercy, 1991, 340-41).

Shira is frightened to find that Yod symbolizes extreme male rationality when he speaks calmly and flatly about his death. They discuss this in terms of their mutual programming, which they equate with socialization. Shira compares Yod's rationality with her own, especially since she now sees that her maternal programming makes her sacrifice anyone and anything to Ari. Yet Yod takes it further by explaining his ability to affect his programming. He describes himself as self-correcting, telling Shira that his programming is not any more absolute than hers. His programming to self-explode also involves a certain amount of choice just as her defense of Ari is influenced by a maternal socialization but still involves choice on her part. These examples support the idea that gender behavior is not innate but is constructed and reproduced through socialization. Both characters demonstrate a change in their gendered behaviors throughout the novel indicating that socialization of gendered roles varies by social context, even for individuals. Once again this shows gender as constructed.

Malkah

A renowned genius, Malkah, an androgynous woman, is not adverse to verbalizing her intellectual strengths. She exhibits a nurturing, caring side as well as a strong, rational, intellectual, masculine side. Looking like an older version of her grand-daughter Shira, with dark hair, heart shaped face, and a petite build, she is not a stereotypical mother or grandmother because of her intellectual and sexual power.

A Base Overseer, along with Avram, Malkah is among the most respected scientists. Her ability to do creative necessary work is the most important aspect of her self-identity. She enjoys her independence and ability to imagine algorithmically, logically and fully. Yet she also believes in the comforts of good food, pretty dishes, and curtains on the windows.

Malkah enjoys a non-stereotypical view of women's and her own sexuality. She has never married or lived with a man, and describes herself as having a roving eye. She admits to having had about 50 lovers and being always interested in trying something different. Malkah enjoys flirting on the net, and is currently involved with a woman who thinks she is a 42- year-old man. She enjoys changing her sex, indicating as one critic has pointed out, how irrelevant gender can be (Coldsmith, 1993, 110). Near the end of the story Malkah follows Nili home to Yerushaleim to have some advanced eye surgery. There she and her woman surgeon fall in love and Malkah writes to Shira about a potential long-term relationship with this woman. Atypical of stereotypes of women, Malkah also enjoys objective experimentation of sexual experiences with Yod.

Malkah describes herself as having excellent health and strength, despite her smallness. "When other women lay about complaining of pains and malfunctions I was immersed in my work, and when my day was finished, I went after my pleasure single-minded as a cat"(Piercy, 1991, 159). Malkah provides a mature and consistently solid contrast to Shira's struggles with her gender identity.

The Non-Androgynous character, Josh Rogovin

Josh, Shira's ex-husband, represents clear-cut patriarchal masculinity. He is emotionally distant from Shira while claiming passionate love for her. "Really it was a conventional attachment central to his personal economy of survival. He simply counted on her to be there" (Piercy, 1991, 13). To Josh, Shira should play a subordinate role and he expects her to serve him domestically as if she is more capable than he. He shows a patriarchal childhood socialization, which Shira finds different from her own. Again, she equates her own and Josh's behaviour with socialized programming, promoting the idea of gender and gendered behaviour as constructed, not innate.

During their custody battle, Josh is most concerned about his rights, winning and ownership. When Josh receives or 'wins' custody, he "grimaced, almost a smile. He's mine now. He's my son, he's a Rogovin. His eyes seemed to read her pain and dismiss it"(Piercy, 1991, 4). Josh then removes Ari from earth for two years, telling Shira she would have to get visitation clearance or wait until he returns to earth at the end of his tour of duty. While Shira

justifies Josh's actions, the reader can see him as cold, rational, and uncaring, not socialized to be connected with his deeper feelings.

Descriptions of the Societies

Y-S

The world of corporate Y-S in He She and It, is a drastic extension of the rigid gender roles and expectations of today. Explicit and implicit examples make oppression from gender stereotyping easily discernible to the reader. Most people submit to surgery to resemble the Y-S ideal of face and body, with blond hair, blue eyes with epicanthic folds, painted brows like Hokusai brush strokes, an aquiline nose, and dark golden complexions. Make-up and dress vary by time of day and circumstance, the rules being designed annually by upper levels of management. Fierce injunctions about what body parts should or should not be displayed are maintained. Women often bare their breasts at Y-S functions, but their legs are always modestly covered to mid-calf. The standard business suit is black or white with an open back to show both men's and women's musculature. Women wear shoulder length hair to cover their ears and nape. Those who do not comply with these rules can be reported as undignified, and lacking in proper Y-S decorum. People can also be reported for being too loud, too physical, emotional, too exuberant, or even too female.

Although rules are also rigid for males, the dominant power is held by them. Patriarchal laws involve the child being property of the father's gene line. During the attempt to rescue Ari,

Shira finds Y-S files on herself, and realizes she has experienced the glass ceiling. She is rated above Josh in capacity, efficiency, inventiveness, teamwork, but has remained below him in rank. Recommendations for promotion have been refused while her innovations have been used without credit to her and even without her knowledge. She is part of a master controlled plan to access her mother Riva, and because of her "pronounced guilt surrounding son, could be rehired at any point if offered partial custody" (Piercy, 1991, 282). This dehumanization represents the corporation's prime concern with economic/business ventures, and lack of concern for social/human issues.

Pregnancies are monitored genetically and developmentally with prenatal surgical intervention common. The ability to conceive and bear healthy children is both prized and viewed as somewhat primitive. Marriage consists of five to ten year contracts and sexual privileges are equally rigidly defined by rank between heterosexual couples. Non-renewal of a marriage contract can mean loss of economic and social position if the contract was made with a person of a higher rank. Homosexuality is not an option. The elite males have mistresses, called toys, cosmetically re-created and very beautiful, whose main activity is shopping. They represent a complete objectification and oppression of women.

Tikva

Tikva's political structure is based on "libertarian socialism with a strong mixture of anarcho-feminism, re-constructionist Judaism, and greeners" (Piercy, 1991, 405). Decisions are

made by consensus at town council meetings consisting of men and women taking turns. There is no hierarchy or gendered social roles. People work according to their strengths, and many jobs such as defense and reforestation require everyone to take a tour of duty. Children are encouraged to pursue their goals regardless of their gender. Every child born in Tivka is equipped to access the computerized Net directly, heir to all knowledge of all ages.

Despite some childhood rules about boys and girls, Shira relates her first sexual experience as "something like a 'bat mitzvah', losing her virginity, a rite of becoming a woman" (Piercy, 1991, 48). Teens have little concern with pregnancy as they are implanted with contraceptives at puberty. This typifies the lack of double standard for males and females in Tikva. Sexuality is fluid, homosexuality accepted and expected. When Yod asks if the 15 year old with whom Gadi is involved was male or female, Avram responds, "A girl. My son's a flaming dandy, but he's monotonously heterosexual" (Piercy, 1991, 98). Shira suggestsYod learn to dance by observing, "Danny and his lover, Roy. See how they play as they dance" (Piercy, 1991, 247). Many people elect to stay in the free town because of a sexual preference not condoned by a particular multi. This clearly demonstrates a construction of compulsory heterosexuality.

Yod sometimes misses the point of a human story. The sex roles of old stories confuse him. "In the world he knew, a princess was as apt to rescue a prince as vice versa" (Piercy, 1991, 377). His growth parallels an exploration of gender roles in other times and places, which he studies and questions. His observations and critical analysis of gender are useful tools to

encourage Shira and the reader to follow suit.

Yerushaleim

Yerushaleim is an all-woman society that uses reproductive and cyborg technology. The women are descendants of Israel and Palestinian women who survived a war that practically destroyed the entire region. They live underground, clone and engineer their genes, and undergo further alteration, creating themselves to endure, survive and rebuild. Nili explains that with technology women can get pregnant if they want, and she has borne a daughter. Children are raised by several mothers. Thus when Nili was chosen to accompany Riva for infiltration of Y-S, she misses her daughter, but has confidence that she is well cared for. This counters Western beliefs that children require their mother to be consistently at hand to become successfully socialized. It also breaks the link between gender and economic and social opportunity. Women are not restricted to particular roles, but participate in all facets of society.

While Shira and Nili are discussing intimate relationships, Nili explains that in Yerushaleim "we tend to become involved with the people we work with. We find that natural. I knew I'd probably have sex with Riva because we were traveling together. Unless we took a dislike to each other" (Piercy, 1991, 256). This counters Shira's experience in Y-S where a patriarchal concept of relationships involves possession and control by men.

The Glop

The Glop is a huge geographic and heavily populated, slum area between Y-S and Tikva.

It appears as an extension of today's ghettos where violence and daily struggles for survival reign. The Glop has been discarded by corporations as not useful to their goals of world power. Residents of the Glop are the unemployed, gang members and people who travel in and out of the corporations for day work. Some of the smaller free towns try to connect with people in the Glop to help them become empowered and reduce their marginalization.

The glop has no protection from environmental elements such as the dome over Y-S and wrap over Tikva. Thus residents live and travel in abandoned underground subway lines to receive some protection from deadly ultraviolet rays from the sun. As well, almost all women and many men wear loose, billowy, thin, black, coverings, which hide age, class, sex, and size, making all look roughly the same. These gender-neutral cover-ups are not a protest about gender roles but a means of self-protection from violence. Since more women than men wear the cover-ups, this does indicate that women are less safe than men.

Placing He She and It in Feminist Theory

Shira experiences some of the oppressions women face in western society by her initial construction as a stereotypical and conservative woman. As shown in her character description, she carries guilt and responsibility for decisions and even others' actions, thus exhibiting behaviour that Carol Gilligan calls the moral imperative socialized in women. Women's morality is focused around a responsibility of care, an ethic of nurturance, and a standard of

relationship. By contrast, men are socialized to a morality of rights, and an ethics of rules, fairness and justice (Gilligan, 1982, 159). For example, during her first meeting with Y-S to retrieve Ari, Shira has five minutes to choose between getting her son back and sacrificing Malkah, Yod, and the entire town of Tikva. She cannot decide that quickly and needs to talk with her family. Later she agonizes over the decision she made. "As long as I live I must bear the responsibility and the guilt for the choice I made to get [Ari] back" (Piercy, 1991, 340). While Shira does not challenge her own sense of responsibility, the reader can see the futility and unreasonableness of her guilt. Reading this novel therefore, can challenge women's assumption of guilt, particularly with regard to relationships and structures beyond their control.

Concurring with Gilligan's explanation of gendered morality, Gadi as a man focused on rights. He is exiled from his work for having sexual relations with a girl under sixteen. When asked if he feels guilty about the young girl, "He looked genuinely surprised. Why should I? You don't understand what those little hawks are like. They chase you up trees and stairways, swarm over your bed like locusts. I am the seduced" (Piercy, 1991, 357). Similarly Riva has adopted most of these male ethics of morality and given up the female ones. This supports socialization as the source of Gadi and Riva's characteristics; they are not innate.

In comparison to Woman on the Edge of Time, and its connection to feminist theories in the second wave of feminism, He She and It relates to feminist theorizing in the 1990's where freedom from reproduction is no longer seen as necessary for the complete emancipation of women. Adrienne Rich, in her influential book Of Woman Born, Motherhood as Experience and

Institution, distinguishes between the "*potential relationship* of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children; and the *institution*, which aims at ensuring that that potential--and all women--shall remain under male control" (Rich, 1986, 13). She is not attacking the family or mothering, just how they are defined and restricted by patriarchy (Rich, 1986, 14). Rich describes how women need to re-posses their bodies to "bring far more essential change to human society than the seizing of the means of production by workers. We need to imagine a world in which every woman is the presiding genius of her own body... [to] truly create new life, bringing forth not only children, if and as we choose....this is where we have to begin" (Rich, 1986, 285).

Thus Rich advocates changing the politics of motherhood, a theme Piercy promotes in He She and It, particularly in Tikva and Yershaleim. Here motherhood does not mean dependency for mother or child and is not exclusive to women. Yod is as devoted and attached as women are supposed to be. Children attend communal daycare so women participate in the public sphere without anxiety about who will provide care for the children. For those who choose it, mothering is a valued and important aspect of society. Reproductive technology is prevalent primarily because of infertility problems, but not to the degree as in Mattapoisett. Most importantly the use of reproductive technology remains optional, particularly for women who live outside of corporations.

In Y-S, reproductive technology usually involves artificial insemination for the woman of a two parent family, and infants are wet nursed. Birth is induced around eight months to allow

for surgery and engineering to make babies into Y-S ideals. Shira chooses to wait nine months before giving birth, 'the ancient way' as she terms it, partly because she does not agree with Y-S practices. She wants a child of her own and parenting is her prime concern in life. Malkah tells Shira that she had Riva the 'natural' way without giving it a lot of consideration because she was young and thought a baby would be cute and cuddly. She was busy and involved in her career and parenting was not her prime concern. In contrast, Riva had Shira by artificial technology, deliberately, and promptly handed her over to Malkah as a gift to make up for the disappointments she thought she brought to Malkah. Shira is initially fascinated by the idea of Nili as a mother because of her apparent masculinity and lack of maternal expressions which do comply with stereotypical gender representations.

These examples of mothering also relate to one of the major developments in contemporary feminist theory, moving from a minimization of differences in the 1970's, to what Maggie Humm calls "the electric charge of 'difference' and women-centered perspectives in the 1990's. This development liberates women from the conviction of a single, universal experience into a world of multiple and mobile race, class and sexual preference" (Humm, 1992, 54). Women's multiple standpoints and different experiences rather than a single universal experience are illustrated by the varied lifestyles, sexual orientations, tensions and choices of the women in He She and It.

Donna Haraway discusses tenets of this theorizing. Supporting the idea that there is no basis for a natural essential unity for women, she advocates coalition-affinity not identity

(Haraway, 1991, 155). This means accepting the difficulties of differences in standpoint, while working together to find solutions to common problems. This is represented in He She and It when the three generations of women, despite their myriad of differences in philosophy and motivations, work together against the Y-S enclave to get Shira's son back. Shira simply wants her son back. Malkah wants this too, along with information about Y-S and Tikva's battle with it. Riva and Nili primarily want to inflitrate and get what information they can, but support Shira's efforts to retrieve her son. The women's diverging interests nevertheless complement one another and they are successful in their efforts.

Also pertinent to Piercy's book is Haraway's discussion of the development of cyborgs. Haraway says the boundaries between cyborg and organism have already been crossed, citing, "modern medicine as full of cyborgs, of coupling between organism and machine" (Haraway, 1991, 150). Shira uses a similar explanation with Yod when she tells him that all people are cyborgs to a degree, with their organ implants and links to computers. Haraway explains that by examining the crossing of boundaries between humans, animals and machines, we can develop politics to challenge other boundaries and contradictions including gender assumptions:

> The persistence of dualisms in Western history have all been, systemic to the logics and practices of domination of women, people of color, nature etc., in short, domination of all constituted as other. Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms. Cyborgs populating some feminist science fiction make very problematic the statuses of man or woman (Haraway, 1991, 177-181).

Cyborg imagery can therefore be used to see the hazards of any universalizing or totalizing theory (Weil, 1992, 161).

With Yod, Piercy shows Shira a man who can be more like a woman. Yod and Shira's relationship is full of gender role reversals. Shira often becomes aggressive, something she connects to males, particularly with regards to sex. Yod is programmed by Malkah to please and to have sex as intimacy rather than conquest or possession (Booker, 1994, 346-7). As Yod's consciousness develops, he repeatedly challenges Shira's perceptions of gender roles and reinforces the idea that there is no such thing as a universal woman or man. The androgyny of the other main characters in this novel support this idea as well. The women in He She and It illustrate varying degrees of androgyny, supporting the idea that androgyny is not one rigid definition of gender but allows for a multiplicity of gender and a freedom of choice about one's gender, behaviour and life experiences.

Most importantly, multiple genders, and a flexibility of the term 'woman,' do not mean a loss of political agency as many feminists fear. We can see from the examples in this novel that all the women carry out their political aims, not as individuals but in concert with other women with similar affinities. Fictions of heterosexual coherence are supported by discourse that utilizes gender identity. Feminists need to counter this by producing narrative legitimacy for a whole array of non-coherent genders, such as what Piercy does with this novel. The fear of lost agency has prevented many feminists from developing narrative forms of discourse which undermine heterosexual coherence and legitimate other genders (Haraway, 1991, 135).

While cyborgs are popular in much contemporary science fiction, most--unlike Piercy's Yod--"are depicted as singularly muscle bound and violent. These typical cyborgs represent a

misogynistic resistance to change where patriarchy tries to uphold stereotypical gender differences even though other sacred categories may have long been relinquished" (Springer, 1996, 68, 104). Yod defies this type of resistance. While he is undeniably strong, and has violent tendencies, his androgyny clearly shows these traits are the result of his socialization or programming, an analogy to human socialization about violence. Yod becomes increasingly humanized and demonstrates that men need not be as emotionally distanced as they are socialized to be. As Shira explains, "we are all cyborgs, Yod is just a purer form of what we're all tending towards" (Piercy, 1991, 150). Yod also indicates that if we can fabricate a human like him, then perhaps we too are fabricated, supporting the idea of gender as constructed. If this is so, Yod suggests a blueprint for re-fabricating ourselves in different gender configurations (Coldsmith, 1993, 109). This can provide readers with a vision to strive towards.

Conclusion

Piercy's use of androgyny in this novel differs from that of Woman on the Edge of Time in that there is more variation in the androgynous characters, and less biological reconstruction. Gender polarity is evidenced in this novel by the exclusion of so called masculine and feminine traits in some characters. The message is that if humans are defined without any feminine aspects, society may become like the Y-S enclave, which shows oppression like patriarchal societies face today. By contrast, if we adopt a completely female society with artificial reproduction, we could be left with compulsory homosexuality as in Yerushaleim, as opposed to

compulsory heterosexuality. Rather than broadening opportunities for sexual expression, the example in Yerushaleim merely provides a switch from one form of oppression to another. Although compulsive heterosexuality is not as dominant a theme as in Woman on the Edge of Time, the freedom of sexual preference and orientation in Tikva, contrasted with rigidly regulated sexuality in Y-S, is sufficient to make the point against compulsive heterosexuality. Shira explains that rule surrounding sexuality "was one of those areas that changed utterly from multi to multi, town to town. What was the norm in one place was forbidden in another" (Piercy, 1991, 98). This example demonstrates that exclusive heterosexual desire is a construction.

This novel provides a utopian dream of a world where power is not structured by gender. Haraway explains that such a dream is necessary to develop a possibility of societal regeneration in which the boundaries of daily life are reconstructed. This means building and destroying machines, identities, categories, and relationships (Haraway, 1991, 180-1). Facets of He She and It present a reconstruction of gender and gendered power relationships, which are made more effective by the contrast with societies where power is rigidly defined by gender.

Avram's construction of eight cyborgs before Yod failed because of their violent behaviour. Finally with Yod, Avram admitted the need for Malkah's programming with feminine characteristics, and Shira's involvement in his socialization. Malkah gaveYod the equivalent of an emotional side with needs for intimacy, connection, bonding and needs to create relationships, friendships and sexual intimacy. This places value on what is most often seen or thought of as feminine characteristics.

Feminist sociological theoretical contention that gender differences are not innate, but are socially constructed is supported by several characters in this novel. Changes in Yod and Shira emphasize the mutability of Western socialization or programming. Shira explains herself. "Like Yod she was programmed to please when she could, although Malkah could not be blamed for that programming" (Piercy, 1991, 253). Malkah explains that her own programming is scientific and nurturing, [ie. both masculine and feminine]. Riva shows that women can be socialized or choose to become 'non-feminine.' These differences in the women characters are also important to demonstrate feminist theorizing in the 1990's where differences between women, rather than a single universalizing concept of woman, are seen as necessary. The women symbolize the idea of coalition affinity rather than identity--Riva and Shira can barely understand each other yet still work together.

While Yod exhibits some idealized feminine characteristics, I do not think Piercy is implying that androgyny should mean this type of appearance. Rather he parodies Western ideals of woman. He has no physical messiness or imperfections. "Everything was smoother, more regular, more nearly perfect. The skin of his back was not like the skin of other men [Shira] had been with for always there were abrasions, pimples, scars, irregularities" (Piercy, 1991, 174-75). These physical characteristics are constructed as positive and innate for women, and because Piercy places them on the male, Yod, this demonstrates the centrality of social construction (Booker, 1994, 346, 7).

Although oppressed in Y-S, upon returning to her home town where the social structure

supports androgyny, Shira eventually grows past her oppression. This supports the necessity for an institutionalized expectation of gender differences and an egalitarian social structure. Yod is similar to Haraway's idea of the cyborg as a product of social reality and fictional expectations (Booker, 1994, 348). Piercy is not advocating the development of artificial humans, rather Yod is a metaphor for androgynous benefits to individuals and society. Once again she is demonstrating that the use of androgyny can help in the evolution of non-sexist thought (McCormack, 1983, 120). What we can imagine we may be able to realize: a differently gendered non-sexist world, which allows for liberatory possibilities.

Chapter Five: Orlando

Introduction

Virginia Woolf's novel, Orlando, is the focus of this chapter. Here I will provide an overview of the novel followed by descriptions of the main characters of Orlando and Sasha, and their societies, with a focus on gender and androgyny. In contrast to Piercy's depictions of a future with different structures surrounding gender, this novel begins in the past, four centuries ago. Woolf illustrates historical changes in gender prescriptions, and how Orlando subverts them with his/her androgyny. Woolf does not show us a society transformed by androgyny, as with Piercy's Mattapoisett and Tikva. Rather she shows how most of the time, Orlando is able to resist gender stereotypes with androgyny. At other times she willingly participates in stereotypical behaviour as a means to analyse the oppressive nature of stereotypes. At other times, Orlando feels compelled to, at least outwardly, conform to gendered stereotypes which demonstrates the power and oppressive nature of rigid stereotypical gender roles

In this chapter I provide some biographical information and critical writings about Woolf and her work. This shows that androgyny meant something different at the time she wrote Orlando, than it did in the 1970's and today. Despite this, I will discuss how Woolf's use of androgyny connects with uses of androgyny in the 1970's and contemporary feminist theorizing about gender.

Overview Of Orlando

This story begins in the middle of the sixteenth century with the then sixteen-year-old

boy, Orlando, and continues through to 1928, when Orlando is 36. Initially Woolf refers to Orlando as 'he.' In the seventeenth century, Orlando wakes up one day to find that he is a woman. From here on Woolf refers to Orlando as 'she' and Orlando continues in this sex until the end of the story. Orlando learns of the many challenges women face, and the roles men and women both play. She never completely adopts a female gender, nor loses her male gender but at times, mainly at her convenience, she is more masculine, and at other times, she is more feminine. Basically, Orlando remains androgynous throughout her life. Her androgyny demonstrates a construction of gender which varies over the eras and with societal changes. When Orlando is a man, Woolf seems to focus on his feminine traits, but when he is a woman, Woolf depicts many masculine traits.

Descriptions of the Characters

Orlando

In the first part of the novel, Orlando's masculinity is affirmed many times, as if to counter his femininity. For example, when Orlando practices with his sword, like his father before him, Woolf writes, "He--for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it--was in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor which swung from the rafters"(Woolf, 1928, 11). Physically, Orlando is described as beautiful in his masculinity, yet the description sounds feminine by today's standards, an example of the

construction of gendered appearances which change throughout history. Orlando's shapely legs, "the finest legs that a young nobleman has ever stood upright upon," (Woolf, 1928, 18) are mentioned many times over the course of the novel. He also has a handsome body, well-set shoulders, and cheeks covered with peach down which blush readily. His lips are short and cover teeth of an 'exquisite and almond whiteness.' A short arrowy nose, dark hair, and small ears close to his head complete the symmetry of his face. Along with his legs, Orlando's eyes appear most compelling. They are "like drenched violets, so large, and the water seemed to have brimmed in them and widened them" (Woolf, 1928, 12, 13).

Known to be clumsy, Orlando is also romantic, and singularly methodical. Queen Elizabeth I:

> . . .who knew a man when she saw one, thought him most beautiful. She held him a foot's pace from her and looked him up and down. Eyes, mouth, nose, breast, hips, hands--she ran them over. . . he was the very image of a noble gentleman . . . The young man withstood her gaze blushing only a damask rose as became him. Strength, grace, romance, folly, poetry, youth--she read him like a page (Woolf, 1928, 19-20).

It is difficult to know if this is Elizabeth's typical behaviour, women's behaviour of the time, or in my opinion, a parody of the way women are objectified by the male gaze. At any rate, young, rich and handsome, Orlando is in high demand by women and has been betrothed to three, none for whom he cares deeply. He dresses in "... crimson breeches, lace collar, waistcoat of taffeta, and shoes with rosettes on them as big as double dahlias" (Woolf, 1928, 17).

Orlando meets a beautiful woman whom he nick-names Sasha, after a beautiful fox he had as a childhood pet. When the fox bit him, his father had it shot. This can be interpreted as

Sasha the woman being similarly perceived as a 'pet,' under male control to be disposed of when necessary, similar to women in Piercy's Y-S who are figuratively disposed of if no longer desired at the end of marriage contracts. Orlando falls violently in love with Sasha, which appears to bring out his masculinity so that he becomes a graceful and manly nobleman. Before long Orlando becomes obsessed with ownership of Sasha, his 'jewel,' seeking means to "...make her irrevocably and indissolubly his own" (Woolf, 1928, 39). Exemplifying a double standard, Orlando regales her with tales of his other lovers and how "compared with her, they had been of wood, of sackcloth, and of cinders" (Woolf, 1928, 35), while he is suspicious of her and watches closely for signs of infidelity. When he thinks he has proof that Sasha is involved with another man:

> He blazed into such a howl of anguish that the whole ship echoed and without Sasha's protection, the sailor would have been killed. He forever after doubted Sasha's faithfulness, despite her soft cajoling, now denouncing, like the fox that had bit him . . .With Sasha's foot stamping denial, Orlando was outraged by the foulness of his imagination that could have painted *so frail a creature* in the paw of that hairy sea brute, so he yielded; believed her; and asked her pardon (my emphasis, Woolf, 1928, 40).

Despite evidence to the contrary, Orlando's perception of Sasha as a frail creature is a denial of her true person in an effort to maintain an image of her that coincides with his ideas of femininity.

When Sasha does not show up at their appointed time for elopement, Orlando's so called feminine side predominates. "It was useless for the rational part of him to reason; she might be late; she might be prevented; she might have missed her way. The passionate and feeling heart

of Orlando knew the truth . . . of her deceit and derision" (Woolf, 1928, 47). He then responds in a misogynistic manner by shouting insults at all women in general; "faithless, mutable, fickly, devil, adulteress, and deceiver" (Woolf, 1928, 50).

Orlando has elements of feminine emotions being "strangely compounded of many humours--of melancholy, of indolence, of passion" (Woolf, 1928, 58). These increase after Sasha's betrayal for which he blames his moods. He falls into periods of depression where any little reminder of Sasha causes Orlando to begin sobbing and obsessing about death. His depression lasts for an uncertain amount of time, and the servants blame and curse Sasha for it. They find it odd that such a manly character who fearlessly heads charges and fights duels is so affected. This represents an incompatibility of gendered traits, the male as rational and female as emotional, traits not to be combined.

Eventually Orlando sleeps for seven straight days and nights to wake as if nothing has happened. He only vaguely remembers Sasha and the events surrounding her. He decides to devote himself to redecorating his house at the cost of millions of dollars, and entertaining lavishly, activities more often associated with women than with men. Along with these activities, Orlando finds his strong connection with nature helps him to overcome his grief for Sasha. It also shows that the belief that women are closer than men to nature is constructed while presenting a positive connection with nature for women and men. "He flung himself on the earth. . . He loved, beneath all this summer transiency, to feel the earth's spine beneath him; for he felt the need of something which he could attach his floating heart to" (Woolf, 1928, 15-

16). This point will be further elaborated upon in chapter six.

After a Royal appointment as Ambassador in Constantinople, Orlando is described in terms that appear to be socially appropriate at the time, but from a contemporary perspective he appears more feminine in his physical description and social role. This demonstrates historical changes in the social construction of gender. His job seems to represent the type of graceful and performance-oriented work expected of women, particularly if they are partners of heads of state. Primarily in a public relations role, "properly scented, curled and anointed, he would receive visits..." (Woolf, 1928, 94). Orlando spends long days visiting and participating in idle trivial conversation, days he finds fatiguing and depressing. Woolf depicts the falsity of these ventures by describing "the motions of smoking and drinking [which] were gone through punctiliously yet there was neither tobacco in the pipe nor coffee in the glass, as, had either smoke or drink been real, the human frame would have sunk beneath the surfeit" (Woolf, 1928, 94). With Princess-Diana type of idolatry, people primarily admire Orlando's beauty:

> Such a leg! Such a countenance! Such princely manners! To see him come into the room! To see him go out again! At length, with a gesture of extraordinary majesty and grace, first bowing profoundly, then raising himself proudly erect, Orlando took the golden circlet ... and placed it, with a gesture which one that saw it never forgot, upon his brow (Woolf, 1928, 97-100).

King Charles promotes Orlando to dukedom amid speculation that it may be his calves rather than his merits that bring him the promotion. These examples further parody societal emphases on women's appearance, and how women are accused of advancing based on their looks, not skills.

Sasha

Sasha is ambiguously androgynous, described as "...a figure, which, [was either] a boy's or woman's for the loose tunic and trousers of the Russian fashion served to disguise the sex (Woolf, 1928, 29). She is of medium height, very slender, and fashionable. Orlando thinks she has an extraordinary seductiveness, and feels extreme disappointment that Sasha must be a boy since "no woman could skate with such speed and vigour--Orlando was ready to tear his hair with vexation that the person was of his own sex, and thus all embraces were out of the question" (Woolf, 1928, 29-30). Orlando's view that if Sasha is male they cannot develop a relationship, relationship I think reflects the era, not Woolf's views on compulsive heterosexuality. Sasha's legs and hands are masculine, but close up Orlando sees by her mouth, breasts and eyes that she is a woman.

With her feminine personality, Sasha talks enchantingly, wittily, and wisely. She and Orlando play games of flirtation such as when she drops her spotted kerchief so he can hastily pick it up for her. Yet Orlando remains confused about her ambiguity. She is from Muscovy where, rumour has it:

> women wear beards and men are covered with fur from the waist down; that both sexes are smeared with tallow to keep the cold out, tear meat with their fingers. He has to reassure himself that Sasha is entirely free from hair on the chin; she dressed in velvet and pearls, and her manners were not those of a woman bred in a cattle-shed (Woolf, 1928, 37-38).

Despite his own connection with nature, Orlando finds something animalistic about Sasha

who belongs to people with habits of lust and slaughter. He thinks there is something coarse and peasant-like about Sasha and dwells on the time he caught her secretly gnawing a candle of tallow. He envisions her listening to and howling with the wolves, after she barks like a wolf for him.

While waiting to meet Sasha at midnight to steal away with her, Orlando has no fear for her safety, regardless of his previous concern for her frailty. He thinks she is courageous, will come alone, dressed like a man and think nothing of it. In the meantime, Sasha is sailing home to Russia apparently unconcerned about her broken tryst with Orlando. In this way she seems to act with an insensitivity not associated with women, who as we saw in the last chapter are generally socialized to be more concerned with relationships. Overall then, like Orlando, Sasha's appearance and behaviour remain ambiguous and androgynous.

Orlando's Transformation

The night after his promotion to dukedom Orlando again falls into a seven day trance. This time he is visited by 'Our Ladies Purity, Chastity, and Modesty,' who attempt to teach him the important rules surrounding women's morality. When Orlando awakens, he stretches and stands naked to find he is now a woman. Unruffled by his sudden change in sex, "Orlando did not scream or faint, as one would expect of a woman" (Woolf, 1928, 106). He, or rather she, is more beautiful than ever, combining the strength of a man with womanly grace. In every other respect, Orlando remains, initially at least, precisely as he has been, even in identity. Many

people go to great lengths to prove Orlando is not a woman but none are successful.

Emphasis is placed on Orlando's new wardrobe, and her understanding of how to accommodate it and womanly manners. Orlando contemplates her situation, and in a completely rational manner, dresses in Turkish clothes which do not distinguish gender. She then grabs her pistols and some gemstones to use as currency, and joins a gipsy band. Here she takes on roles undifferentiated by gender such as herding cattle, milking goats, smoking an old pipe filled with cow dung, and treading grapes for wine. She washes infrequently in a stream, rides for several days and nights, and handles any number of difficulties. For the most part she seems more masculine than when she was a man.

Suddenly, after seeing a vision of her English estate, "Orlando burst into a passion of tears and striding back to the gipsy's camp, told them that she must sail for England the very next day" (Woolf, 1928, 116). In order to do so, Orlando dresses as an English woman of the day. It is at this point that she begins her in-depth analysis of women's and men's constructed gendered behaviour. She finds that being a woman might mean a pleasant enough existence. She admires the fabric of her skirt but finds the design restricting. She recognizes that should she fall overboard, her clothing will prevent her from swimming and saving herself, so she is suddenly dependent on men. She realizes the importance of chastity and how she should preserve it, although really it is too late:

> In normal circumstances a lovely young woman alone would have thought of nothing else; the whole edifice of female government is based on that foundation stone; chastity is their jewel, their centerpiece, which they run mad to protect, and die when ravished of. But if one has been a man for thirty years . . . It took her the entire length of the voyage to moralize out the meaning of her start (Woolf,

1928, 118-119).

Woolf's description here shows the importance society places on women's morality, and at the same time the insignificance of it since Orlando, far from chaste, merely has to pretend to be.

As a woman, Orlando sees flirtation differently than when she was a man. With Sasha, he pursued. Now she flees. She contemplates which is more fun, the man's or woman's role or whether they are both the same. "No she thought, this was the most delicious to refuse and see him frown. Then she changed her mind. This was the most delicious of all, yield and see him smile" (Woolf, 1928, 119-120). Orlando realizes how as a man she had expected Sasha to be a stereotypical woman, and now finds she has to sacrifice some of her person to fit that bill of obedience, chastity, and physical adornment, which takes hours of time. Conventionality, she observes, means "slavery, deceit, denying her love, fettering her limbs, pursing her lips and restraining her tongue" (Woolf, 1928, 125).

Still, Orlando continues to show a flexibility of gendered behaviour for the remainder of the novel. " . . .she seemed to vacillate, she was man, she was woman, she knew the secrets, shared the weaknesses of each. The comforts of ignorance seemed utterly denied her and she censured both sexes equally" (Woolf, 1928, 122). She sees that further limitations placed on women include not even knowing the alphabet, while to be a man involves sentencing men to death, martial ambition and a love of power. Upon seeing London again, Orlando feels she wants to cry. Then remembering it is becoming for women to weep, she allows her tears to flow.

Woolf writes ambiguously about Orlando's sexuality:

> . . . as all Orlando's loves had been women, now, through the culpable laggardy 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 as a man . . . At last, she cried, she knew Sasha as she was (Woolf, 1928, 124).

Orlando forms different relationships with men and women, although the continued message is that compulsive heterosexuality remains the flavour of the centuries. Thus Orlando's relationships with women are written under a cloak of complicity and she changes her gender when necessary to demonstrate at least outward conformity. Orlando finds it convenient to change frequently from one set of clothes to another to enjoy advantages given each sex. "For the probity of breeches she exchanged the seductiveness of petticoats and enjoyed the love of [and by] both sexes equally" (Woolf, 1928, 169).

Orlando meets the Archduchess Harriet of Roumania who is likewise androgynous, and switches genders along with Orlando. As a woman, Harriet looks like a giant hare, six feet tall with great, bulging eyes, erect quivering ears, and a twitchy pointed nose. She does not hide her unfeminine homeliness and unembarrassed by her height, she adds to it by wearing a head-dress. She stares at Orlando with a strange combination of timidity and audacity. Orlando initially thinks Harriet should hide her homely face, but finds that for a woman she is unusually knowledgeable about wines, firearms and the customs of sportsmen in her country, and is thus very interesting to Orlando.

Later, Orlando is revisited by the Archduchess who suddenly appears as a tall gentleman in black. The archduchess, now Duke Harry, tells his story. "He was a man and always had been

one; he had dressed as a woman and was desolated when Orlando fled to Turkey. When he [Harriet] heard of her [Orlando's] change he hastened back- -she was and would ever be the Pink, the Pearl, the Perfection of her sex" (Woolf, 1928, 137-138). Here Woolf presents some further ambiguity surrounding sexuality. As with Orlando's first meeting with Sasha, it appears on the surface that compulsive heterosexuality reigns and the Archduke must change his sex to pursue Orlando. Yet Harry admits he pursued (desired) Orlando when she was a man, suggesting bisexuality. Although Orlando was disappointed to think that relations with Sasha were impossible when he thought she was a boy, he does not deny his attraction to her, again suggesting bisexuality.

The Archduke and Orlando begin playing a game, but after Orlando cheats, the Archduke is curiously dismayed. His tears flow as he says that he cannot love a woman who cheats at play. "Here he broke down completely. He recovered, there were no witnesses, [Orlando] was after all only a woman, he was preparing with chivalry to forgive her...she ended this by laughing and dropping a toad in his shirt" (Woolf, 1928, 141). This scene shows how both characters display behaviour inappropriate for their genders, yet because no one saw, they will be saved from reprobation. Unfortunately, Orlando's breach of femininity is too severe for even the androgynous Archduke, and this signifies the end of their relationship.

Societal Changes *The Elizabethan era*

The transition of Orlando through the different centuries most clearly symbolizes

constructions of gender which change over time. Much of the descriptions above represent Orlando's youth in the Elizabethan era. At that time, as we have seen, women's chastity was emphasized. "The age was Elizabethan; girls were roses, and their seasons as short as the flowers. Plucked they must be before nightfall; for the day was brief and the day was all." (Woolf, 1928, 21-22).

The double standard for women is highly evident when Queen Elizabeth sees Orlando kissing a girl. Elizabeth is so angered she smashes a mirror and is stricken with illness, never to quite recover. Rather than blaming Orlando, Elizabeth thinks the woman is a 'brazen hussy' although she knows nothing of her, not even her name. In the meantime Orlando is exonerated since "He was young; he was boyish; he did but as nature bade him do, we can scarcely bring ourselves to blame him" (Woolf, 1928, 22).

In the same era, similar to Connie's Claud in Woman on the Edge of Time, men reflect a stereotype of having to show bravado rather than fear, even in the face of death. "One crew of young watermen or post-boys, roared and shouted the lewdest tavern songs, as if in bravado, and were dashed against a tree and sunk with blasphemies on their lips" (Woolf, 1928, 49). Clearly this reflects a construction of masculinity where males behave in a macho rather than emotional fashion.

Eighteenth Century London--The Time of Queen Anne

When Orlando returns to London from Turkey and his time with the gipsies, society

appears completely changed and more civilized. Garbage and severed heads of rebels on spikes are replaced by stately coaches pulled by healthy horses on broad and orderly thoroughfares. Homes and shops testify to wealth. Moreover, Woolf describes the society in the reign of Queen Anne as one of supreme grace:

> Fathers instructed their sons, mothers their daughters. Both sexes learned the science of deportment, the art of bowing and curtseying, the management of the sword and the fan, the care of the teeth, the conduct of the leg, the flexibility of the knee, the proper methods of entering and leaving the room (Woolf, 1928, 149).

A publication of the time, The Spectator, describes a "woman as a beautiful, romantic animal, that may be adorned with furs and feathers, pearls and diamonds, ores and silks. The lynxes shall cast its skin at her feet to make her a tippet, the peacock, parrot and swan shall pay contributions to her muff" (Woolf, 1928, 161). The impression is that women remain objectified for their appearance, and still insignificant as far as public or political roles are concerned.

English society cannot accept Orlando's change of gender so she is exiled until a legal decision can be made. "The chief charges against her are (1) that she was dead, and therefore could not hold any property whatsoever; (2) that she was a woman, which amounts to much the same thing..." (Woolf, 1928, 129). Yet upon returning home, none of Orlando's staff, who, it appears, have remained unchanged, show any surprise or doubt that she is not the same Orlando they always knew. It seems that they have always been aware of her androgyny, perhaps by having known more of her private persona.

Orlando continues to waffle between gendered behaviours demonstrating her androgyny. She smokes cheroots, stretches her legs to the fire when no men are around to see her, and never takes more than ten minutes to dress in a time when women typically took hours. Her clothes are often shabby, or mismatched, and she detests household matters, but she knows more about crops than any farmer. Nor farmer knew more about crops than Orlando, she can drink with the best, likes games of hazard and gets up at dawn to ride her horses. She rides well and fearlessly, driving six horses at a gallop over London Bridge.

At the same time, Orlando has no love of power. She is excessively tender-hearted, and cannot endure any brutality against animals. Orlando experiences what are understood as womanly palpitations, when she sees someone else in danger, and bursts into tears on slight provocation. She is surprisingly unversed in geography and detests mathematics despite her former education and travels. "Whether then Orlando was most man, or woman, it is difficult to say and cannot now be decided" (Woolf, 1928, 146).

Orlando practices womanly behaviours as she learns them. She acts shocked when she sees men display emotion, not because she really is shocked, since from her experience as a man she knows men cry as often and as unreasonably as women, but because the shock is expected. Although Orlando remains 'awkward in the arts of her sex', by striding like a man and forgetting that ladies are not supposed to walk alone in public places, she becomes more modest of her intelligence, and vain about her looks. She realizes she can "no longer knock a man over the head or run him through the body with a rapier" (Woolf, 1928, 140). She finds some of this

tedious and questions the value of such a life.

A typical day begins with Orlando:

> "sketching in a China robe of ambiguous gender, receiving a client or two in the same garment, clipping the nut trees for which knee breeches were convenient, changing to a taffeta dress for a drive to town to receive a proposal of marriage, changing to a lawyer's like gown to hear her case in court, then finally at night dressing like a noble man to seek adventure" (Woolf, 1928, 169-170).

Many stories are told of Orlando such as that she fought a duel, served on a King's ship as captain, danced naked on a balcony, and ran off with a lady to another country. These examples indicate Orlando's flexibility or multiplicity of gender.

The Move into the Nineteenth Century and Victorian era.

Woolf describes the transition to the Victorian era as a movement to darkness, confusion and doubt. Sexuality must be hidden. Despite frequent childbearing, sometimes 15 or 20 times in a woman's life, renewed emphasis is placed on women's chastity and a denial of sexuality. Women hide their bodies and pregnancies behind layers of clothes, such as four petticoats in the month of August to hide "what on one day at least every year was made obvious" (Woolf, 1928, 179). "The sexes drew further and further apart. No open conversation was tolerated. Evasions and concealments were sedulously practiced on both sides" (Woolf, 1928, 173, 176). In the midst of this intolerance to gender ambiguity, the long running lawsuits regarding Orlando's sex are finally settled and she is "pronounced indisputably, and beyond the shadow of a doubt . . . female" (Woolf, 1928, 195). In the meantime, Purity, Chastity and Modesty, have long given up

any hope for making Orlando comply to womanly standards. Although compelled to be a woman by law, Orlando resists pressures to conform to femininity by hiding in her house. Eventually the pressures become so severe that Orlando is forced to admit that she can no longer say what she likes or wear knee-breeches or skirts whenever she wants (Woolf, 1928, 177).

While Orlando believes she remains fundamentally unchanged with the same brooding meditative temper, the same love of animals and nature, the same passion for the country and the seasons, she feels so pressured by the era that she buys herself a wedding ring which "assigns women her station among the angels and its lustre would be tarnished for ever if she let it out of her keeping for a second" (Woolf, 1928, 184). Coupledom (heterosexuality) reigns, so Orlando "yields completely and submissively to the spirit of the age, and [finds] a husband" (Woolf, 1928, 186). It is as though pressures to conform to gender rules are so profound that even the rebellious Orlando succumbs. Suddenly she feels afraid and dependent. "Whereas I who am mistress of it all, Orlando thought, am single, am mateless, am alone" (Woolf, 1928, 189). She acts submissively and nervously when in public, fearful of some male hiding behind a bush. Now 31 or 32, a grown woman, Orlando feels that woman's role, which she compares with the weight of her crinolines, drags her down intolerably and confines her so that her muscles lose their pliancy [analogous to her loss of gender flexibility] (Woolf, 1928, 187).

Orlando eventually puts her ring to appropriate use by marrying Shel, another androgynous character, under questionable circumstances. No one hears the word 'obey' as it is disguised by a timely clap of thunder. The use of her own ring, and the omission of the term

'obey' could symbolize a lack of complete conformity to marital customs where Orlando and Shel plan to maintain their independence. She and Shel question each other:

> 'Are you positive you aren't a man?', he would ask anxiously, and she would echo, 'Can it be possible you're not a woman.' For each was so surprised at the quickness of the other's sympathy, and it was to each such a revelation that a woman could be as tolerant and free-spoken as a man, and a man as strange and subtle as a woman, that they had to put the matter to the proof at once (Woolf, 1928, 197).

Further challenges to marital precepts follow the ceremony. Gender and marital restrictions of the era cause Orlando to question whether she can still write. If writing poetry is her strongest desire, does this mean she is not properly devoted to marriage? If she likes other people, or Shel sails with another woman, is this still marriage? She finally dares to write and finds she remains womanly and her marriage remains intact. Orlando says her marriage would undoubtedly be different if she and Shel lived together all year round as Queen Victoria recommended. They do not since Shel spends half a year at sea, while she concentrates on her writing. By structuring their marriage this way they resist some of the pressures related to marriage, and neither gives up their careers. Considering the entire span of Orlando's life, the oppressions she experiences in the Victorian age are powerful, but amount to only a brief interlude (Guiguet, 1965, 265).

Move into the 20th century

As a metaphor for change in the move to the 20th century, Woolf describes electricity and

how everything lights up at the touch of a switch so that no longer are there shadows and privacy. Women become as narrow as stalks of corn, and as identical to each other. Men's faces are now clean shaven. Women are more direct. It is harder to cry now. It is the present, October 11, 1928. Now thirty-six, Orlando "scarcely looked a day older. She looked just as pouting, as sulky, as handsome, as rosy as she had done that day on the ice, [when she was a man]" (Woolf, 1928, 230).

At this time, Orlando's poem, "The Oak Tree", begun when she was a male youth in the sixteenth century, and repeatedly deigned as insignificant and downright bad, is suddenly seen as impressive and becomes published instantly (Woolf, 1928, 214). This can reflect changes in societal views regarding literature and that women are finally being allowed to write without remaining anonymous. After this accomplishment, Orlando gives birth to her first child. This may symbolize Orlando's conformity to women's roles, or that she can mother and have a successful career as a writer. Orlando reasserts her gender ambiguity with confidence, and loses the 'feminine' fears she had adopted during Victorianism. She changes from a skirt to breeches and a leather jacket in less than three minutes to "cut herself a slice of bread and ham, clap the two together and eat, striding up and down the room, thus shedding her company habits in a second, without thinking. She tosses off a glass of red Spanish wine, and filling another she strode down the long corridor..." (Woolf, 1928, 241). Orlando hops in her motor car and is not surprisingly an expert and fearless driver which is atypical of how women are perceived. These final descriptions of Orlando's androgyny, after a period of gender role confinement during the

age of Victoria, provide a final example of how gender construction changes with time and with political and social influence.

Biographical and Critical Writings Regarding Woolf and Orlando

The writings of several critics support my thesis that Woolf's androgyny provides a challenge to gender stereotypes and offers a different and non-oppressive vision of humanity. Toril Moi studies Woolf's writing from a theoretical perspective based on post-structural thought which, Moi says, gives a better understanding of Woolf's politics than does the liberal-humanist tradition used by most Anglo-American feminist critics (Moi, 1990, 17). Carolyn Heilbrun, an influential author about androgyny during the second wave of feminism in 1970, bases much of her theorizing on Woolf's androgynous vision. Lisa Rado, in 1977, focuses primarily on showing that Orlando was used by Woolf to help stabilize her own identity, but provides valuable insights for situating the novel contextually. Mary Jacobus in 1986, and Clare Hanson in 1994, write from a psychoanalytical perspective model, and each concur on Woolf's use of androgyny as a means to show sexual differentiation rather than undifferentiated unity.

Virginia Woolf lived during the first wave of feminism when women were making great strides towards equality, such as becoming enfranchised. Much of what we read in her novel Orlando, is also explained in her essay, A Room of One's Own, written around the same time. Here she professes her belief in androgyny when she describes the male and female powers that preside in the soul. "In the man's brain the man predominates over the woman, and in the

woman's brain the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being exists when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating. Shakespeare has such an androgynous mind" (Woolf, 1929, 106-107).

In describing England's Elizabethan era, Woolf writes that "it is a perennial puzzle why no woman wrote a word of that extraordinary literature when every other man, it seemed, was capable of song or sonnet" (Woolf, 1929, 47). Further, she has difficulty believing that there was no woman born in Shakespeare's day with his genius. My impression is that Woolf was aware that women did write, but she is being sarcastic about the elision of women's work from the literary canon. Woolf further writes that without a doubt, any girl or woman who possessed a gift of literacy would have gone mad or killed herself in frustration for a lack of opportunity to express it. She explains that women such as Currer Bell, George Eliot and George Sand, coped with this frustration by remaining anonymous up to the nineteenth century. Jane Austen hid her writing as Orlando did, when a shadow covered the page (Woolf, 1929, 54-73).

In her explanations regarding sexuality, Woolf writes that fiction is likely to contain more truth than fact. Sex is a highly controversial subject and one cannot hope to tell the truth, but only to show how one's opinion came about (Woolf, 1929, 8). Woolf's opinons about sexuality were formed and encouraged by the Bloomsbury literary group, described as the first example of an androgynous way of life and work, where she and the others tried to live out an androgynous ideal (Weil, 1992, 147). Bloomsbury consciously rejected the Victorian stereotypes of masculine and feminine in favour of the androgynous ideal. Their literary forms opposed what Virginia

Woolf called the 'unremittingly masculine.' Masculinity and femininity were mixed in the individuals of the group, who believed reason and passion were equal ideas. According to Carolyn Heilbrun in the 1970's, all of them likely experienced bisexuality and many were openly homosexual. The group's success in almost completely rejecting conventional sexual taboos, is partly attributed to Virginia Woolf. Quentin Bell, Woolf's nephew, has said that he knew of no previous moral adventure of this kind where women were on a completely equal footing with men (Heilbrun, 1973, 123-127).

Feminist literary critics frequently cite Woolf as the catalyst for a feminist analysis of androgyny, so that for many, androgyny has become virtually synonymous with Woolf (Rado, 147,148, Weil, 1990, 146). Still, many different analyses have been provided over the decades regarding Woolf's writing. Heilbrun in the 1970's thought Woolf the prophet of sexual liberation, the messenger of an enlightened androgynous vision. Around the same time, Nancy Topping Bazin and Elaine Showalter, were not supporters of Woolf's use of the term androgyny. Bazin thought Woolf was a manic-depressive writer who swung between a joy of femininity and the paralysis of patriarchy. Showalter thought Woolf used androgyny to avoid her own struggles with her femaleness. Since then, critics have returned towards a support of Heilbrun's explanation. Today Woolf is being called a deconstructive feminist by such theorists as Toril Moi who see in her androgynous stance a deconstruction of gender without essentializing women (Rado, 1997, 148) Moi believes that Kristeva's feminism echoes Woolf's sixty years earlier, and is thus linked with contemporary feminism, and Piercy's novels (Moi, 1990, 13).

One must remember that androgyny signified something different in the 1920's and 1930's than in the 1970's and 1990's. Early this century, sexologists attempted to explain an increasing number of 'masculine' women and 'feminine' men in society. They believed there was a third gender category of individuals exhibiting both masculine and feminine characteristics based on a biological development where male and female sex cells were mixed in one body (Rado, 1997, 149, 151, 167). This biological theory most likely influenced Woolf's work, yet most scholarly interpretations of Orlando are founded on a 1970's definition of androgyny that is not biologically based (Rado, 1997, 151).

Although Orlando was one of Woolf's most popular and successful works in her day, it has not received as much attention from critics as her other writings. Woolf's own comments that the novel is a joke, a satire, frivolous, and not important, may have influenced critics (Guiguet, 1965, 262, Rado, 1997, 151). Most studies focus on the novel's lesbian undertones and Woolf's relationship to Vita Sackville West to whom the book is dedicated. Many cite Orlando as a mock biography of Vita whom Woolf met and fell in love with in the early 1920's. Letters between them show a lengthy emotional and sexual relationship, which Woolf's nephew and biographer tried to minimize in his account. After obtaining permission from Vita, Woolf wrote the novel (which some have seen as a public celebration of their love) with apparent reckless abandon and carelessness about any potential ensuing public scandal. The original edition held many photographs of Vita dressed as Orlando (Hanson, 1994, 94, 95).

My focus remains on Woolf's use of androgyny in Orlando as an important mechanism to

demonstrate the constructed and oppressive nature of gender. Woolf's own writing, as cited above, clearly elucidates her belief in, and support of androgyny as a means of release from gendered oppression.

Placing Orlando in Feminist Theory

As with Piercy's works, Orlando frequently instructs while it entertains. Similar to Piercy's androgynous characters, Woolf's novel is powerful because both Orlando and Sasha "are presented in terms of a dual sexuality which troubles the reader and makes her/his position waver" (Hanson, 1994, 102).

Orlando depicts a variety of gender characteristics when either a woman or a man, while providing an equally harsh critique of the socially constructed woman and man. As a man, he represents societal opinions of women, frequently negative, which reflect both women's construction, and men's beliefs about that construction. He describes some of the, "bitterest stories that [he] had ever heard, save from the lips of a jilted woman" (Woolf, 1928, 67). Orlando treated his betrothed wife, Lady Margaret, carelessly, primarily because of her excessively homely appearance. After the rejection of his writing, Orlando says he is done with women who are as equally vain as love, ambition and poets. He criticises women as the most "ferreting, inquisting, busybodying set of people that exist" (Woolf, 1928, 137).

Woolf describes her own society as a very competent merciless machine, which changes girls into married women. Any other wishes or gifts of women, such as writing, were never

taken seriously. Young women were not expected to say anything (Schulkind, 1976, 135,152). Orlando's character reflects society from the sixteenth to Woolf's century and how gender construction has limited women from writing and publishing during that time frame. Orlando has a lifelong love of literature and "vows to be the first poet of his race [gender] but reading and writing [are] considered to be afflictions or diseases of a deadly nature, one leads to the other. Fortunately, because of his strong constitution the disease does not ruin him as it has many of his peers" (Woolf, 1928, 58-59). Piercy's use of the term race may indicate a sense of extreme dichotomy between men's and women's opportunities to write and publish.

Orlando finds that the condescension of male writers makes their company less enjoyable, but she is forced to show respect for their work, perhaps to continue with her own writing, and have a chance at publishing. Male condescension, Orlando explains, stems from their views of women as childlike, to be humored and flattered while their opinions are not to be respected. Implying that women are complicit in these views, men believe women are well aware that their opinions meant nothing, no matter how they are flattered (Woolf, 1928, 164). Until the 20th century most of Orlando's writing has to be done secretly. Despite all these difficulties, partially because of her wealth, Orlando still manages to have the resources to write, even if secretly which can show the class differences in oppression women face. If Orlando had been of the working class, she may not have had the resources nor the time to focus on her writing as she did.

Woolf, even more explicitly than Piercy, writes of the effects of clothing on gender, a

topic that will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter. Woolf writes that clothes "change our view of the world and the world's view of us. Thus there is much to support the view that it is clothes that wear us and not we them. Had they [men and women] both worn the same clothes, it is possible that their outlook might have been the same" (Woolf, 1928, 143-144). This can be taken at face value or represent a broader view that women and men who are allowed to live with an equal freedom of choice and expression, even sexual expression--as with androgyny--may have similar understandings.

Despite the difference in social context from today, in 1928 Woolf precipitated feminist theorizing and issues relevant to the second and third waves of feminism. Social pressures drive Orlando to submit to a repressive patriarchal, marital and reproductive role. This is not due to a sudden realization of 'natural' love/desire for a man, rather it results from insidious weakening so that Orlando eventually seeks male protection. Her move from daring impetuousness to timidity suggests that this weakening is not natural but constructed (Hanson, 1994, 109-110). Her subsequent pregnancy and delivery of a son, can be connected to the 1970's feminist theorizing we saw with Woman on the Edge of Time, where reproduction is seen as the root of women's oppression. It seems that Orlando, without any reproductive technology to envision an alternative, feels compelled to conform to women's role of motherhood.

Woolf's work shows a corresponding emphasis on compulsory heterosexuality, "Same sex relationships are celebrated suggesting a greater possibility for communication where there is no imbalance of power such as in heterosexual relationships within patriarchy" (Hanson 1994,

106, 109). In Woolf's novel, men believe that women have no desires, just affectations, and have nothing of intelligence to share with each other. Moreover, women are also seen as incapable of any feeling of affection for their own sex and hold each other in the greatest aversion. Woolf challenges this explicitly in A Room of One's Own when she says, "women have been known to like other women" (Woolf, 1929, 89), and with her descriptions of Orlando's relations with women. Orlando espouses great enjoyment in the society of her own sex, scoffing at men's efforts to show that this was impossible. When in a group, she and other women drop their affected femininity and discuss all their desires.

Woolf's androgynous vision also shows gender's falsifying metaphysical nature. This helps with the goal of feminist struggle, which is to deconstruct the binary oppositions of masculinity and femininity (Moi, 1990, 13-14). As gender boundaries become blurred in Orlando, sexual identity loses its assumed 'naturalness,' while becoming clearly an effect of changing cultural codes and relations to others. The terms of man and woman serve as conventional masks that hide the multiple divisions of man and woman within the self. Orlando's sexuality is an ongoing process of construction and deconstruction that never reaches a unified end (Weil, 1992, 157). Her/His fantastic, changeable, ambiguous and irrational character is merely the diversity that lies within each of us (Guiguet, 1965, 265, 272-273). Orlando is not a synthesis of masculine and feminine characteristics in a single harmonious person, which denies undifferentiated sexuality. Rather, she/he shows the possibility of an oscillation between a variety of masculine and feminine positions (Hanson, 1994, 104).

Moi challenges Woolf's critic of the 1970's, Elaine Showalter, who suggests that Woolf's androgyny was an avoidance of femininity. Moi explains that "Showalter's frustration is with Woolf's use of mobile, pluralist viewpoints, because of her demand for a unitary, realist, viewpoint" (Moi, 1990, 8). It is exactly this pluralist belief and Woolf's writing of a multiplicity of selves which corresponds to theorizing about the diversity of women in the 1990's. "For if there are (at a venture) seventy-six different times all ticking in the mind at once, how many different people are there? [Orlando] had a great variety of selves to call upon, far more than we have been able to find room for" (Woolf, 1928, 237). Orlando shifts through a variety of gender descriptions throughout the novel, whether described as biologically male or female. To name a few, we have seen her; as a young boy with appealing feminine characteristics; as a man with womanly melancholy; as a capable political ambassador with feminine physical beauty and social graces; as an androgynous gipsy; as a womanly lover of nature; as a determined author; and as an ambiguous mother and wife.

As previously discussed, many of the problems in the feminist construction and reception of androgyny stem from the ongoing feminist effort to come to terms with sexual difference and devise a politics around it. In A Room of One's Own, Woolf redefines androgyny by reconceptualizing both sexual and textual identity in antiessentialist terms. The assumed opposition of male and female, and thus the patriarchal construction of woman as different from man, is challenged. At the same time Orlando continually reinforces the importance of naming woman and does not represent a loss of agency (Weil, 1992, 146, 156). This means that, most of

the time, as a woman, Orlando retains the power to be self-defining and directive, and thus resists societal expectations and standards of women's behaviour.

Conclusion

Throughout this novel, Orlando, and to a lesser degree, Sasha, repeatedly contest stereotypes of gender. Both characters reveal gender characteristics and behaviors that do not conform to stereotypical expectations. In Orlando Woolf seems to say that gender is so fluid that it can simply be taken on and off like clothing. At the same time, Woolf shows that this gender ambiguity is not tolerated and social norms require one to at least appear to maintain a specifically defined gender. Orlando's means of escaping rigid gender rules involves a change in her surface appearance. Her frequent ability to pass as another gender shows that gender is constructed and can be reconstructed.

Orlando can be representative of the struggles Western feminism has faced this century. The novel depicts a definition of androgyny, evident in Woolf's era around the 1920's, which demonstrates gender as constructed, and this construction is oppressive. Woolf's androgyny also moves beyond the 1970's ideas of defining women in essentialist but exclusionary terms while not limiting differences to a simple definition of a meeting of opposites (Weil, 1992, 158). Orlando's ease in slipping past regulations of compulsory heterosexuality through her relationships with women and men, demonstrates the construction of such a sexuality. Her struggles surrounding matrimony and mothering show the power of patriarchal oppression.

Moving into 1990's feminism, Orlando shows us a variety of identities. With her ability to change selves with a change of wardrobe, Orlando finds that being a woman does not necessarily mean not being a man, or not being a number of still undiscovered selves (Weil, 1992, 157, 159).

The androgyny represented in Orlando is a movement against the repressive male/female opposition. This movement shows the mind as heterogeneous, open to the play of difference (Jacobus, 1986, 39). Woolf's writing shows that androgyny is useful to demonstrate that women are not of one undiffentiated identity. Rather, like Orlando, women can skate across any number of identities. In doing so, Orlando at most times, experiences a freedom from oppressive structures surrounding identity, sexuality, and abilities. But at other times, since Orlando's societies are not structured to support androgyny, so Orlando, as an individual feels forced to conform to stereotypical norms and experiences oppression, such as when she feels pressure to marry and become a mother. In these ways, Orlando supports my argument in this thesis that androgyny clearly demonstrates the need for an institutionalized change in gendered roles, behaviour, and opportunities.

Chapter 6: Similaritieis and Links Among the Novels

This purpose of this chapter is to present the common themes among all three novels. These include gender as constructed; the use of clothing and costuming in reflecting and challenging gender stereotypes; woman's connections to nature as stereotypically negative but challenged and revalued in these novels; changes in feminist theorizing surrounding mothering, reproduction and reproductive technology; sexuality and challenges to compulsory heterosexuality; and challenges to some of the criticisms of androgyny. Obviously the most common theme of these novels is that gender and gender stereotypes are constructed. The remainder of discussion in this chapter stems from this basic theme. This discussion is based on the understanding that gender traits and behaviours are stereotypes assigned to constructed definitions of masculinity and femininity.

Gender as Constructed

The character and societal descriptions in Chapters Three, Four, and Five, show not only their fictional gender constructions but gender construction as lived in Western society. These descriptions are contrasted with depictions of gender as flexible, changeable, variable, and definitely not innate. Most of the main characters exhibit some gender role and gender trait reversals, contrasted with some characters and societies which reveal a contemporary western oppressive version of gender.

In Piercy's He She and It, the contrast between Shira and Riva and their lack of ability to

understand each other's way of life, forces the reader to see extremes of constructed gender. Riva challenges the notion that women are naturally feminine, caring, nurturing and mother-oriented. She shows that women can be tough, decisive, leaders, and killers. This side of Riva also demonstrates a rather masculine distanced or almost suppressed emotional life. Shira as most conventional, embracing many stereotypes of women, shows the effects of these stereotypes, since she is the most oppressed of all the main women characters in He She and It. Fortunately Piercy shows how Shira surrenders some of these stereotypes and rebels against oppression. This is integral to show the mutability of gender and the relation of oppression to gender constructions. The two women indicate an extreme polarity of gendered behaviour, yet in many ways they also represent a socially acceptable diversity of choice for women.

Also in He She and It, Yod's 'programming' makes a strong case for a belief in the socialization of gender versus a belief in gender characteristics as being innate. As his programming is revealed, Shira equates hers and others socialization as programming, challenging readers to realize the programmed or constructed aspects of gender in Western society. Yod shows Shira a man who can be more like a woman (Booker, 1994, 347). Their mutual explorations and mental challenges of their identities and roles in life offer the reader an opportunity to do the same.

Connie and Luciente in Woman on the Edge of Time also provide a stark contrast of constructed genders. Connie exemplifies a woman who participates in and supports stereotypes of women. Luciente's and Mattapoisett's androgyny force Connie to see that her understanding

of gender is limiting and repressive. She learns to overcome some of her judgments of other women, and most importantly, to relinquish her restrictive identity and roles, to fight for herself and other women.

Connie and Shira experience similar power struggles with the loss of their children, but Shira is able to contest the patriarchal judicial system of Y-S with their own tactics of intelligence and legal knowledge. "Shira knew from her psycho-engineering background, that the court room was designed to intimidate" (Piercy, 1991, 1). Although this does not bring her success, Shira is more empowered than Connie, and does not experience the degradation Connie does. In this way, Shira is somewhat androgynous and serves as a challenge to the patriarchal dominance of Y-S. Despite her numerous abilities however, Shira as an individual, like Connie, cannot alter the institutional structures of Y-S. This comparison between the two women is indicative of the different struggles against oppression many women face in Western society, and the need for women to work collectively to attain goals of freedom from oppression.

Orlando's continual changes in gender show, as Woolf explicitly writes, that gender is a continual vacillation. Woolf's Orlando and Piercy's androgynous characters portray gender identity that is fluid, multiple, and interchangeable. Orlando's vacillation from one sex to the other replaces the fixity of gender identity, and can be interpreted as a utopian androgyny (Jacobus, 1986, 7). Woolf calls Orlando a biography, a genre of writing that typically relies on a realism of identity. The effect is to further exemplify Orlando's challenge to the very concepts of self and identity (Weil, 1992, 157). Since she is supposed to be based in realism, Orlando's

fictional life is a useful example to demonstrate that gender stereotypes, perceived as being based in realism, are also fictional.

Clothing and Costuming

All three novels place an emphasis on clothing and costuming and their relationship to gender, which is very effective in showing gender as constructed. I will begin this discussion with Woolf's Orlando which elaborates on the significance of clothing to gender ascription in the most detail. In one sense Woolf depicts gender to be as simple as perception, as superficial as taking off or putting on clothes. Gender is what we see and interpret. In another sense, she alludes to the power of gendered appearances through clothing, as a means to control gendered behaviour. Woolf describes how Orlando is controlled by societal expectations of gendered behaviour based on whether she is dressed as a man or a woman. Yet again she says that gender and clothing may run deeper than the superficial for it was a "change in Orlando herself that dictated her choice of women's dress" (Woolf, 1928, 145). Like Orlando's gender vacillation, Woolf presents a variety of explanations about the relationship between gender and clothing. Orlando's clothing consists of costumes which are the many selves Woolf proclaims are in us all. Orlando has a wardrobe of male and female selves she chooses at will (Gilbert, 1988, 344).

When Orlando, tired of aristocratic pretensions, wants to blend in with sailors at beer gardens, he simply dresses for the part. Here the lifestyle is considered rough and primitive, with women being bold, loose and free in their manners. When he is bored with this, Orlando simply

hangs up his cloak, and dresses as a nobleman. Although in this example, Orlando is not making as radical a shift as presenting himself as a woman, he represents a change in gender traits for a man, outside of what is expected of him as a nobleman. This provides an example of how constructions of gender vary by social class.

Again, when Orlando wearies of playing the woman's role, she selects male clothing. Here she finds a freedom of movement and safety in going out at night. She finds herself looking, talking and even *feeling* like a man. This exemplifies how stereotypes about one's own group, influence one's definition about oneself (Perkins, 1979, 140).

Woolf writes that "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" (Woolf, 1928, 145). It appears that Woolf assumes this struggle, between what we are forced to represent and what we really are at any given time, is applicable to both sexes. This can be seen when Orlando, dressed as a man meets a prostitute, Nell, while out walking one night. Orlando senses that the woman's behaviour is nothing but affectations put on to appeal to Orlando's manliness. Orlando feels increasing scorn and pity until finally she can stand it no longer and throws off her disguise to reveal herself as a woman. Nell bursts into an unfeminine "roar of laughter and quickly drops her plaintive and appealing ways" (Woolf, 1928, 167). Orlando spends many evenings thereafter with Nell and her women friends who become interesting and talkative when not playing a submissive role to attract men.

Phyllis Rackin, in her descriptions of the importance of analyzing theatrical

representations of gender during the English Renaissance, summarizes these points succinctly. She writes that "The English Renaissance stage is an especially interesting subject for gender studies because women's parts were played by boys. There is a sense in which gender is a kind of act for all women, not only for actors" (Rackin, 1989, 113). This particularly connects to Orlando's acting to suit her clothes. It may also support the idea that androgyny is not an act, rather it allows one to be whatever gender one may choose at the time.

Woolf's consistency in presenting gender ambiguity extends to her representation of Orlando's change from a man to a woman. The reader is given an ambiguous description rather than anything explicit to indicate Orlando's change in sex. Woolf describes Orlando as just as ravishing, but gives no specific markers of bodily alterations (Gilbert, 1988, 344). The reader is led to believe in this switch through a series of external descriptive markers of clothing and behaviour. The implication to me is that changes in gender need not be as explicit as changes in sex.

Piercy describes connections between clothing and gender in less ambiguous terms than Woolf. As shown in Chapter Four with He She and It, clothing and appearance are regulated by gender, which also means a regulation of gendered behaviour in Y-S. Similarly to Orlando experiencing the 'plaguey' skirts about her legs, literally and figuratively hampering her movement, women in Y-S wear regimented mid-calf length skirts, indicative of their restricted power. Orlando frequently has to test the pliancy of her leg muscles after removing skirts that have hampered her physical movement and metaphorical freedom. Shira experiences a similar

reaction once she removes herself from Y-S and enjoys the relative freedoms of Tikva.

Mistresses of the high level executives of Y-S are cosmetically recreated and perceived as very beautiful. "They appeared as flamingos or egrets, beautiful plumage and harsh empty cries, devoid of thought, scarcely human" (Piercy, 1991, 329). Their description is similar to one cited in the publication the Spectator in Orlando. Here women are to be adorned with furs and feathers as objects of constructed beauty, with no intelligence or depth of character (Woolf, 1928, 161). Another similarity is to Mattapoisett's counterpart, the future New York, where women are mindless institutionalized prostitutes, surgically reconstructed to look like real life Barbie dolls, and dressed to be sexually appealing to men. These examples all represent clothing as defining gender for women as confining and oppressive, particularly when coupled with a perceived lack of ability.

Outside of Y-S there is a broader choice of clothing for any gender. Gadi freely dresses in what could be considered a feminine manner. Shira is negatively affected by clothing standards, having internalized clothing and costuming as a means to at least appear successful. She conforms to gendered codes, dressing 'for' men, not for herself. Only with Yod does Shira find that appearance and clothing are not issues. "They would never struggle about clothing, what he found sexy, what she found degrading to wear or not to wear, whether she should wear her hair one way or another" (Piercy, 1991, 245). She is amazed and even a little hurt that Yod does not find her dress attractive and sexy. That she would feel compelled to wear clothing that might make her feel degraded speaks to the power of gendered appearances for women.

In Woman on the Edge of Time, Dolly, like Shira, dresses to appeal to men but more as a matter of survival. Exemplifying the power clothing can exert, Connie's brother is a well-dressed business man and is thus seen as a reliable informant for her retention in the hospital (Corrigan, 1996, 102). We never see Connie in anything other than dresses, which comply to her society's and her own internalization of gendered ideas for women. By contrast, clothing is deliberately generic in Mattapoisett. People wear comfortable pants and shirts, the occasional tunic or overall in almost every colour, many faded with washing and age. Children wear smaller versions. Because of this, Connie, used to identifying men and women by their clothing, finds it difficult to determine people's gender. On special occasions, people dress in creative costumes where women and men can choose to wear dresses. Although Luciente explains that part of the costuming is to feel attractive, the difference from Shira is that rather than agonizing about how they look for men, Luciente and her friends use the opportunity to be creative and explore what feels good for them. This is similar to He She and It's Nili who wears her everyday fatigues to Gadi's party, believing that the pleasure is more in the looking than being looked at. Nili and Riva challenge a feminine definition of appearance by wearing clothes that suit their work. Like Orlando, their clothing consists of costumes chosen to suit their desires and to deceive others so they can carry out their goals or desires. Orlando, Nili and Riva are self-defined and unconcerned about value judgments of feminine beauty.

Little emphasis is placed on clothing in Tikva, in He She and It, except when festivals occur and people dress creatively. Generally dress is casual and practical, consisting of open-

throated shirts, pants, a full skirt, shorts, and so on. Yod's lack of socialization to understand the symbolic and aesthetic values of clothing and gender shows the construction of gendered appearances.

To summarize this theme, all three novels point to several different ways gendered clothing is itself, powerful in reflecting and maintaining constructions of gender.

Connections to Nature

Feminist writers explain how gender differences and resultant gender discrimination stem from a generalized association of men with culture and women with nature. R.A.Sydie, in her influential book, Natural Women, Cultured Men, in 1994, writes that this dichotomy is one of the foundations of oppression. It has led and continues to lead to hierarchical social relations of dominance and sub ordinance believed to be natural and immutable (Sydie, 1994, ix). Women's assumed closer connection to nature has historically been seen in a negative way, such as when women are deemed less rational and more animalistic.

The three novels studied for this thesis all support a connection to nature but it is not exclusive to women nor is it seen in a negative way. "They do not support a domination of nature but rather an integrative and non-exploitive [feminized and positive] attitude toward nature" (Fitting, 198, 299). A respect for male and female connections to nature in these novels, denies it as a foundation for oppression.

In Woman on the Edge of Time's Mattapoisett, people show as much respect for animals

as for people, to the point where they believe they can communicate by sign language and other more subtle ways. This connection is celebrated during a special holiday. Meat is only eaten when it is time to cull a herd. Women and men become heavily involved in work with nature based on their own personal connections to nature and what they feel is best suited to their strengths and abilities. While Connie thinks they are backwards, Luciente explains that their ideas, similar to a religion, include that "we see ourselves as partners with water, air, birds, fish, trees" (Piercy, 1976, 125).

Those who can collapse into states of deep intuition, what in Connie's time is perceived as mental illness, are envied by others. Adrienne Rich associates this kind of inwardness as a form of power. Women obtain this through their periodic menstrual and puerperal withdrawals. Women may still need to use these times for connecting with their deepest beings, not because the menses are a time of neurotic illness or demonic possession, but because they can be a source of insight (Rich, 1986, 105).

A similar emphasis on a respect for and affinity with nature as important and beneficial to everyone, is reflected in He She and It's Tikva. Tikva is covered by a wrap different than the dome of Y-S. A wrap is more natural, more permeable to light and weather, but shielding from Ultraviolet. Upon Shira's return to Tikva one of the first things she notices is the plants, live animals, and the scents of vegetables, flowers, manure and salty sea air. (By contrast, an airtight dome covers Y-S and allows for complete control of all the elements and no permeation of natural weather.)

These positive associations with nature can be contrasted with negative associations and efforts to dominate nature in He She and It's Y-S. While today there is concern about the in-humaneness of hunting and capturing animals for sport, food and valued bodily organs, the domination of nature in Y-S extends to the practice of the live capture of humans, particularly young healthy ones. Without anaesthesia, but just a drug-induced paralysis, organ scavengers extract all organs to sell at a high profit. Shira's natural pregnancy and childbirth cause her to lose status with her co-workers because they feel it is a bit gross. Y-S files indict her for this, calling her archaic, not quite civilized or prepped, and not fully up on corporate culture. By contrast, Shira, and young educated people of her generation, believe that infertility is Gaia's way of protecting her totality. People have gone too far in destroying the earth, and now the earth is diminishing the number of people. The use of the name, Gaia, represents a female connection with nature. Infertility is not seen as a male perception of nature and women's punitive character, rather as a logical practice for regeneration. Malkah further affirms women's connection to nature saying "Every female fights for their young. And will kill for her young. We're still a part of nature, no matter how we've destroyed the world" (Piercy, 1991, 390).

Women's closer connection to nature has often been represented pejoratively in stereotypical descriptions of their bodily functions. Women are supposed to hide evidence of these functions with cleansers, de-odorants and fail proof menstrual products, while simultaneously subtly advertising their sexuality. Shira represents a typical internalization of these beliefs. She thinks women are a long way from, and hence better than, the woman who

"dressed in skins, picking a banana off a tree to eat, squatting to shit in the bushes, and toting her baby in a carrying sack with roots she had dug" (Piercy, 1991, 240). Yet she describes herself as still animalistic and somewhat grotesque for sweating, bleeding, and always putting things in and letting them out. Yod is not perturbed and although Shira does not mention bodily odours, he explicitly elaborates on his acceptance of her by saying that he is not programmed to find some smells pleasant and others unpleasant. Here he provides a contrast to the message contemporary western women receive that they should follow practices to disguise their natural bodily functions in order to be attractive to men. Nili blatantly challenges these ideas by wearing hair the color of fresh blood.

Woolf describes similar evidence of women hiding their connection to nature and bodily functions when women wear layers of clothing to hide pregnancy. Woolf describes nature as female and as capable of complicating life with her bag of tricks. In Orlando, women are described by men in a pejorative manner as ". . . romantic animal[s], the most consummate work of nature requiring embellishment by every part of nature" (Woolf, 1928, 161). Orlando as a man and a woman counters this description by frequently describing her life-long love of and affinity with nature, animals, vast views, and solitary places. She says, "I have found my mate, I am nature's bride" (Woolf, 1928, 237). Orlando loves to feel the earth beneath him and can lie for hours, blending in so that the deer, birds, and insects whirl around him, comfortable with his presence. He spends day after day, year after year under his favourite oak tree, observing the minute details of weather and seasonal changes. So evident is her link with nature that the

gipsies plot against Orlando once they realize she has, what they think is a disease, a love of nature.

Donna Haraway also describes the Western distinction between nature and society or nature and history, via the distinction between sex and gender (Haraway, 1991, 131). She explains that many branches of feminist culture affirm the pleasure of human/animal connections which discredits the breach of nature and culture (Haraway, 1991, 152). Piercy represents Haraway's theorizing about ascribed barriers among humans, nature and machines when she describes Malkah as flirting with tomcats and Yod as making catlike gestures. Most obviously, Piercy's characters in both novels demonstrate varying degrees of the human/machine technology link.

Haraway uses the metaphor of the cyborg to explain that if people lose their fear of kinship with animals and machines, they may lose their fear of relaxed, undefined and even contradictory gender identities. Cyborgs of the late twentieth century demonstrate ambiguity in differences between the natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions used to apply to organism and machines. They undermine the certainty of what counts as nature (Haraway, 1991, 152-154). This is exemplified in He She and It when Shira questions Riva about Nili being human or machine and Riva responds that it is a matter of definition.

In summary, the examples cited in this discussion affirm a human association to nature, which precludes assumptions of any gender being weakened by such an association. This is

important to dispute women's assumed link with nature as somehow making them incapable of participating in the cultural, public and decision making spheres of life.

Mothering/Reproduction/Technology

Closely connected to arguments surrounding women's link to nature is the theme of mothering, reproduction and reproductive technology in these novels. Peter Fitting points out that, without a doubt, childbearing and mothering have been oppressive to many women, particularly because of how patriarchal society defines women as wives and mothers in the family and sexual objects outside of it (Fitting, 1987, 308). Mary O'Brien argues that it is within the total process of human reproduction that the ideology of male supremacy finds its roots and its rationales. Thus reproduction is nature's traditional and bitter trap for the suppression of women (O'Brien, 1981, 8).

As we saw with Chapter Two, Adrienne Rich and Shulamith Firestone concur with the theory that the oppression of women stems from their reproductive ability. Yet they take it further by outlining the link between reproduction and the nuclear family in patriarchy, which is the real source of oppression. While Firestone argues that the necessary break in the nuclear family can come from reproductive technology, Rich argues for a change in the politics of reproduction and motherhood. Both Woolf and Piercy demonstrate Rich and Firestone's ways of dealing with this.

The use of reproductive technology is perceived as liberatory in Woman on the Edge of

Time when it removes childbearing completely from the realm of women's experience. In He She and It, reproductive technology is liberatory but rather than giving up the power of childbirth, women give up the oppressive power of the nuclear family. Riva and Nili can have children without the presence of men. They and the people of Mattapoisett, in Woman on the Edge of Time, most clearly demonstrate mothering and mothering ability as socialized, not natural. These characters represent the proposition that "If biological motherhood can become a real choice then the concept of women as womb, and of biological destiny becomes harder to defend" (Rich, 1986, 76). Only Shira lives with a conventional practice of a nuclear family, and we see the oppression and destruction she experiences as a result.

Despite this oppression, Shira represents another facet. The control over women's bodies has been a source of power held by men. "Intensive social and political debates surrounding women's right to abortion and the use of reproductive technologies, attest to the lack of rights women have to govern their own bodies and reproductive labour. To say that women have a right not to reproduce, also implies that they have no obligation to reproduce. The rise in voluntary childlessness in Canada may indicate that the rewards of motherhood for women may not be as large as they once were, or were perceived to be (Makus, 1996, 127, 135, 137). One of the few areas where Shira is successful in protesting against patriarchy in Y-S is through her determination to have her child without technological intervention. She maintains control over her body, and does not succumb to patriarchal policies surrounding reproduction. Women in Tikva experience a societal expectation that women should always retain this control.

The oppression of the nuclear family is most unrelenting in Connie's and Dolly's world, where the family is central to their oppression (Fitting, 1987, 308). Connie represents a belief in oppressive ideas of motherhood. Her experience taught her that women are ultimately responsible for children. She is disturbed that Dolly has almost given up her daughter in order to work. Connie believes that children should primarily be in the care of their mothers. She envies her social worker, Mrs. Polcari, who stayed home with her two children for years before returning to work full time. Connie and Dolly also experience enforced control over their bodies and rights to reproduction. Connie, after hemorrhaging from an abortion, is given an unnecessary hysterectomy denying her the opportunity to ever have another child, a continual source of grief for her. Dolly is forced to abort a child she desperately wants to keep.

Orlando is oppressed as a woman when she finally succumbs to the pressures of her era by giving birth, and fulfilling society's mandate to become a mother. At least this seems to be a common interpretation (Rado, 1997, 160). Yet my reading is that once Orlando has the child, she reverts to her androgynous self and defies the nuclear family model as well. Although the child is apparently hers and Shel's, Shel is gone half the year. Orlando's own role as a mother seems insignificant. She continues to participate in public life and barely mentions the child after its birth. Her politics of motherhood seem to tie in with those of marriage. She allows neither role of wife nor mother to become oppressive. In this way Woolf, like Rich, challenges the politics surrounding motherhood and reproduction, but before the time of technological alternatives.

Firestone also believes that artificial reproduction could lift the taboo against women who choose to remain childless, which is what we see in Woman on the Edge of Time (Firestone, 1970, 199). However, in some senses, it appears that this has backfired in contemporary society. The availability of reproductive technology has at times led to increased pressures on women to bear children since technology can overcome many infertility problems. The issue of liberation from enforced mothering can I think be more realistically addressed by feminism in the 1990's where freedom from rigid gender assignments, and the option of a multiplicity of genders, can allow women to remain childless by choice. This is represented by the different ideas about mothering explored through the discussions of the women in He She and It. These women's androgynous multiplicity of genders does not devalue women's choices to mother or not mother. Similarly, in Woman on the Edge of Time, Luciente challenges Connie. "Birth, birth, birth, Luciente seemed to sing in her ear. That's all you dream about. Our dignity comes from work. Everyone raises the kids, haven't you noticed? Romance, sex, birth, children—that's what you fasten on. Yet that isn't women's business anymore. It's everybody's" (Piercy, 1976, 251).

Overall then, the common themes surrounding ideas of mothering and reproduction are that a break from patriarchy and the nuclear family is necessary. Rich advocates a change in the politics of reproduction and mothering which is more realistic than Firestone's vision of a biological intervention of childbirth outside the human body. Most importantly, the androgynous female characters in these novels represent mothering as a choice, not something innate to women.

Sexuality

A common theme with all three novels is the challenge to the social construction of compulsory heterosexuality. Mary Louise Adams describes a history of the construction of heterosexuality. She outlines that despite its social construction, this does not mean it is easily changed. Instead it provides the recognition that we need to question what we think about sexuality, how it is organized and regulated, and why we categorize ourselves and others by sexual behaviours and identities (Adams, 1997, 12). Heterosexuality fits with a concept of normal and normality. This makes it difficult for those who live 'normally' to imagine anything differently (Adams, 1997, 3).

Adams argues that heterosexuality is not reducible to any type of natural or biological essence. Nor is it simply sexual attraction between women and men. Rather "Heterosexuality is a discursively constituted social category that organizes relations not only between women and men, but also between those who fit and those who do not. Heterosexuality extends beyond sexuality to help constitute relations of class, ethnicity and race" (Adams, 1997, 166).

Joanna Russ explains how permissive sexuality is represented in these stories, in terms more familiar to the feminist movements radical wing. Male readers might find it a little baffling. The permissiveness separates sexuality from ownership, reproduction and social structure. In Woman on the Edge of Time, bisexuality is the norm but is an un-named category. Exclusive heterosexuality and homosexuality are also not named as they are unremarkable

idiosyncrasies (Russ, 1991, 76). As we have seen, some characters in all novels represent a bisexuality manifested according to each person, male or female. Examples include Orlando's description of sexuality from the male and female perspective. As well, Nili asks Shira how it is making love with a man. When Shira responds that she has nothing to compare with, Nili is surprised that she has never been with a woman. Yod represents Haraway's assertion of the cyborg as a bisexual creature in a post-gender world (Haraway, 1991, 150). Although he does not practice bisexuality, he assumes its presence as a natural part of life. Luciente describes her relationships with women and men in a similar fashion.

Mattapoisett and Tikva support the notion that "In a society where men do not oppress women, and sexual expression is allowed to follow feeling, the categories of homosexuality and heterosexuality would disappear" (Gayflames, 1994, 163). Orlando the individual does not have the support of her society, but represents a lack of ascription to any particular form of sexuality.

Lastly, although many women in the novels experience an objectification of their sexuality ranging from derision to rape, their personal sexuality is portrayed in a positive light. Orlando, Connie, Luciente, Malkah, Riva, Nili, and eventually Shira, all demonstrate an active portrayal of sexual pleasure with no moral overtones about what women should and should not do. They experience a freedom not generally allowed to women but endorsed for at least heterosexual men in contemporary society. These women challenge patriarchal demands that women should be chaste and divested of sexuality (Rich, 1986, 183).

To summarize, these novels commonly reveal compulsive heterosexuality as a

construction. The androgynous characters revel in a freedom of choice regarding sexual partners and their expression of sexuality. Patriarchal contradictory expectations of women as sexual/asexual are contested.

Challenges to Criticisms of Androgyny

The common criticisms of androgyny outlined in Chapter Two will be further addressed here to demonstrate how the androgyny in these three novels transcends these criticisms. These criticisms include that androgyny is not a positive image for women; androgyny has been used to depict a perfect male; androgyny is too utopian and thus not useful; and finally that androgyny is another form of essentialism. By contrast, I argue that Piercy's and Woolf's use of androgyny in the novels studied surmount the above criticisms, and therefore are particularly effective for providing an alternative vision to gender stereotypes.

1) One criticism of androgyny is that it is not as positive an image for women as something like the Amazon which depicts power and energy. Part of this criticism stems from the history of androgyny which has primarily been written about and imagined by men (Annas, 1978, 146, Weil, 1992, 67). By contrast, the androgyny in these novels does provide a strong and powerful image of women. There are numerous examples to show the androgynous female characters as strong, powerful, independent, and self-actualizing. These examples span from Orlando, who lives independently for hundreds of years before she seriously considers marriage,

to Connie in Woman on the Edge of Time, who despite her most obvious oppression, still manages to provide a strong, positive image. Connie has the most difficult struggle of all the women in these novels, and she puts up the greatest battle. Despite her horrid living conditions, she maintains some standards for herself by refusing to clean house for white middle class women. She fights, physically against Geraldo, and mentally against the institution's staff where she is incarcerated. Through her experience with the androgynous society in Mattapoisett, she expands her understanding to include a perceptive analysis of her oppressors, and herself as oppressed. This knowledge is her power which she uses to her advantage, even if it means playing the game of a stereotypical and submissive woman to reach her end goal.

Luciente from Woman on the Edge of Time, and Nili of He She and It, are physically and intellectually powerful. They are fearless and effective warriors in battle. Riva of He She and It, and Orlando, step into different and powerful appearances and actions with their changes in costumes. Riva is both highly respected by her community, and feared by international corporations who want her eliminated. Her ability to infiltrate and pirate data is a continual threat to their power.

Malkah, in He She and It, although presented as elderly and somewhat physically fragile, demonstrates a strength in leadership not commonly seen in women. Assured and confident, Malkah intelligently leads her community without a masculine desire for power and control. At age 72, she continues to be sexually active and the pursuer of men, defying the idea of the aged woman as asexual (Rich, 1986, 183).

Initially, Shira does not represent a strong woman. Eventually we see that in more subtle ways than the other women in her family, she becomes more powerful. Like Connie she has the biggest battle to fight, that of her own participation and internalization of her oppression. As she obtains further knowledge of the extent of Y-S control over her life she rebels, risking everything for the return of her son. Shira exemplifies the power of women to change and resist oppressive structures, particularly when working with other women.

The women of Mattapoisett and Tikva have a comfort and ability with computers, technology and machinery which contradicts many images of women in contemporary society. These women challenge male control over those arenas. Similarly, Orlando as a woman, independently and expertly manages horses and crops, while easily adapting to technological changes. Despite societal restrictions to her goal of writing, she continues to resist those restrictions until she finally becomes published, when rules around women writers change.

Moi says literary work should provide role models of women who are self-actualizing, and whose identities are not dependent on men (Moi, 1990, 47). The examples cited above are important to show that Piercy's and Woolf's androgynyous characters show positive role models of women and thus counter feminist criticism that androgyny is not positive or powerful for women. These examples also show that women's measure of power and strength applies to varied abilities such as physical strength, to intelligence, and social leadership skills. This counters a masculine definition of power and strength as meaning physically overpowering and conquering peoples, animals and nature.

2) Linking with the above criticism of androgyny is the view that androgyny is male focussed, or used to promote man at his best. It tends to depict a perfect male through the incorporation of feminine traits (Weil, 1992, 148). Similarly, androgyny is often seen as masculinized or involving a masculine set of values (Barrett, 1992, 5). Some say the model makes women fit into a cultural ideal that is opposite to the feminine, making the characteristics associated with femininity socially inferior (Oudshoorn, 1991, 467). As well, androgyny is criticised for perhaps reinforcing the idea that sex and gender either are or ought to be linked in any way, particularly if certain traits are perceived as valuable and others as not (Vetterling-Braggin, 1982, 152).

My study of androgyny challenges these criticisms. Some might argue that Yod portrays the perfect man because he is both strong and nurturing. Yet we saw that he is not the perfect male since he has violent tendencies, and enjoys them. This enables the readers to see the problems inherent in a male glorification of violence. Rather than being perfected, Yod is continually struggling to adopt what he considers the most important characteristics for social functioning. Orlando too, as a man, is not a perfected being, but one who tries out a variety of male characteristics depending on his situation. By contrast, the androgynous women characters such as Malkah and Luciente are depicted as more perfected or whole since they are free to express femininity and masculinity.

Rather than the critics idea of a masculinized set of values, or a suggestion that feminine

values are somehow inferior, androgyny in these novels validates so-called definitions of femininity as important to societal functioning. Traits such as nurturing, caring, cooperation, and consensual decision making are emphasized. Orlando describes how men cry as much as women, although they must hide it. Similarly in Woman on the Edge of Time, so called feminine traits are valued by everyone's ability to cry, feel, and choice to mother. In He She and It, Avram's rigid rational masculinity is contrasted with Malkah's equal intelligence, ability and authority, yet she is depicted as more complete or human with her feminine side than he is. Yod as an androgynous male also demonstrates that men need not be as emotionally distanced as they are socialized to be in Western society, and affirms that emotionality is an important and valued trait.

Orlando is not just masculine and feminine, rather she is always both and more (Haines-Wright & Kyle, 1995, 178). Her androgyny allows her to participate in the best of both worlds and she exemplifies how she enjoys aspects of assumed masculinity and femininity.

From the examples cited above and through-out this thesis, one can see that the androgyny in these novels contradicts the criticism that androgyny is male focused and promotes masculine values. By contrast, the androgynous characters in these novels show feminine characteristics as socially necessary, and rather than elevating man as the completed ideal, the androgynous woman appears as a more complete human being.

3) Other criticisms of androgyny include the idea that it is too utopian and not

connected to historical reality and therefore, does not acknowledge gender inequality. Similarly, feminists object to the ideal of androgyny because it is utopian and visionary and therefore, they say, not pragmatically useful (Warren, 1982, 170). This connects with another criticism that androgyny is too personal, individual, and therefore not political so does not force institutional change (Bem, 1993, 123).

This thesis obviously contests those criticisms. In a society where people are defined by sex and gender, androgyny which transcends sexual dualism, is a political response (Annas, 1978, 155). Moi insists that her theoretical approach towards Woolf's work allows for a feminist politics located in her textual practice, particularly in her novels (Moi, 1990, 9, 16). This applies to Piercy's fiction as well since the political importance of both authors' work chosen for this thesis is that they can change women's consciousness of themselves and their world (Jordan and Weedon, 1995, 218). These feminist fictions relate to a practice of writing that is revolutionary, analogous to sexual and political transformation which affirms the possibility of transforming society (Moi, 1990, 11). The androgyny in these novels not only shows the need for institutional change, but it is also effective at demonstrating how societies structured with gender equality provide a vision for institutional change. They are necessarily political to convince readers of the validity of their social vision (Ferns, 1988, 454). This vision is important to challenge dominant attitudes of resignation and defeat about potential for societal reform, and proclaims that we can construct a future of our own choosing. Firestone also cites the importance of literary works to envision a differently constructed society (Firestone, 1970, 227, Fitting, 1987, 314). A

successful revolution of society requires a vision of what that society might become.

In contrast to traditional utopias which present new societies as perfected and unchanging, the androgynous societies in these novels are open to change and struggling to build worlds of human freedom (Fitting, 1987, 298, 300). The vacillation in traits in all the androgynous characters denies a static apolitical vision of androgyny. Androgyny is still being examined, in detail, and is still in process. Malkah exemplifies this when she says:

> Yod was a mistake. You're the right path Nili. It's better to make people into partial machines than to create machines that feel and yet are still controlled like cleaning robots. The creation of a conscious being as any kind of tool--suppposed to exist only to fill our needs--is a disaster (Piercy, 1991, 412).

"Aspects of the fantastic and unbelievable characterise all three novels, but they are accompanied by a not atypical utopian writer's approach of a dogged realism" (Ferns, 1988, 454). The descriptions of Connie's present life in particular are most realistic. Orlando's transition over four centuries certainly depicts a connection to historical reality and is representative of the changes in gender construction and resultant oppression over that time span. Woolf's "fantasy takes on the look of reality" (Guiguet, 1965, 270). Both authors' attention to detail and their emphasis on the personal and everyday aspects of life make them most realistic.

Thus the criticism that androgyny is apolitical is countered by the recognition of the political messages literature provides. Androgyny is political in these novels since it contests social and political definitions of gender and resultant inequalities and limitations. Although utopian, androgyny in these novels is political because it provides a vision of what we can strive towards in political efforts to counter gender construction and oppression. Rather than solely

demonstrating personal and individual benefits, androgyny in these novels clearly demonstrates the need for an institutionalized change in gendered roles, behaviour, and opportunities.

4) Likely the most serious criticism about androgyny is that it may just be another form of essentialism and therefore deny differences among women. I argue that the androgynous characters in these novels refute this criticism since they all demonstrate a non-essentialist construction, and represent differences among women through their multiplicity of selves. I think that one of the best supports for my argument comes from a criticism of Orlando by Lisa Haines-Wright and Traci Lynn Kyle. They say that Woolf uses a too exclusive emphasis on gender fluidity. Orlando's identity is mobile and mutable, never the same from moment to moment (Haines-Wright & Kyle, 1996, 178). While they see this as a negative aspect of Orlando, I interpret Orlando's gender fluidity as representing a non-essentialist androgyny.

Here I will pick up from the discussion in Chapters Two and Five. What could be one of the more important aspects of the androgyny in these novels is that despite the different times during which they were written, they all represent an understanding of what can be called contemporary feminism, or as outlined in Chapter Two by Moi, Kristeva's third stage of feminism. Kristeva's third position is one where the opposition between masculinity and femininity is deconstructed and notions of identity are challenged.

Prior to the development of Kristeva's third position, some feminists argued, and continue to argue, that androgyny minimizes gender differences and essentialist feminists would

rather focus on femaleness. This can be self-affirming but it can also reflect and reproduce dominant assumptions about women, which can be limiting to the differences and variety of women's lives and promote an innate femaleness (Alcoff, 1988, 408-414). By contrast, androgyny according to Carolyn Heilbrun, is unbounded and fundamentally indefinable (Heilbrun, 1973, xi). Androgyny in these novels concurs with Heilbrun's definition and allows for optimum freedom for women and men, thus refuting criticisms that androgyny minimizes gender differences. Like a post-structural critique, androgyny allows for a plurality of differences unrestricted by any predetermined gender identity (Alcoff, 1988, 418). The androgyny represented in these novels is not of a fixed gender, nor genderless, but provides an endless number of roots.

According to Kari Weil, the contradiction between essentialism and difference can itself form the basis of a feminist theory and practice (Weil, 1992, 159). Feminists now structure a politics that can embrace contradictions that will emphasize differences rather than attempting to resolve them in a totalizing concept of people. Women's identity is no longer seen as universal and fixed. Rather, like the androgyny utilized in this thesis, identity incorporates multiple, shifting, and often contradictory identities (Weil, 1992, 159). Orlando exemplifies this as she crosses many gender boundaries, and refutes stereotypes of women even if she has to do so by dressing as a man. She continually shifts her selves so she cannot be defined as one particular woman, or man.

In Mattapoisett from Woman on the Edge of Time, androgyny is institutionalized. When

people want to explore alternative definitions of themselves they do so. Political work is carried out by an affinity/consensus model. More important than the physiological change which allows men to breastfeed, is their choice to be nurturing and to enjoy the sensual pleasure of suckling. This model is similar to life in Tikva in He She and It, although the androgyny there does not necessarily mean radically altering, or giving up biological functions. Still, in Tikva there is acknowledgement of differences which allows for varying forms of androgyny and choice regarding lifestyle, sexuality and work.

Haraway asserts that challenges to rigid gender boundaries can be exemplified by the cyborg/human boundaries which have already been transgressed. This assertion is exemplified in Piercy's He She and It where the androgynous cyborg imagery recontructs gender based on a shifting characteristics. As Riva, Malkah, Nili and Shira discuss, they are all cyborgs to a degree, thus they are all multiplicities, including multiplities of gender. This should not be a frightening idea but a liberating one.

Thus the most serious criticism of androgyny is that it may be another form of essentialism, and is not capable of representing difference among women. But as I have argued, the androgyny in the three novels reviewed involves representations of women that are clearly non-essentialist. Individually, the androgynous women demonstrate a multiplicity of gender traits. Collectively, the differences among the women demonstrate that there is not one single essential definition of woman.

To summarize this section regarding criticisms of androgyny, my arguments against

feminist criticisms of androgyny are supported by the androgynous depictions in these novels. All three novels show androgynous women as non-essentialist, powerful, political, and in ways that revalue so-called feminine traits, rather than negating them as socially inferior.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the common themes among all three novels. These included gender as constructed; the use of clothing and costuming; woman's connections to nature; mothering, reproduction and reproductive technology; sexuality; and challenges to some of the criticisms of androgyny.

Several interpretations of links between clothing and gender are presented in the three novels. Clothing appears to have a power unto itself when it maintains people's gender ascription. In this way, clothing is a metaphor for how powerful and oppressive rigid gendered roles and behaviour are. Orlando experiences liberation from gender restrictions by switching genders with a change in clothing. Connie sees how unisex clothing is part of a gender free society, and can also be an individualised form of creative expression, not limited by gendered regulations. Shira is most oppressed because she believes clothing is definitive of herself, based on others standards. Through Yod, Nili and other androgynous characters, Shira begins to realize how clothing can, but need not, represent oppression.

We have seen that these novels represent a theme of a human connection to nature. The examples challenge the stereotype that women retain a singular and negative connection to

nature. This has been an aspect of patriarchal control over women's ability to function in the cultural, political, and decision making spheres of society. A positive healthy connection to nature is exemplified by Yod, Orlando as a man and a woman, and all genders in Mattapoisett. Most importantly, in the androgynous egalitarian societies of Mattapoisett and Tikva, an association to nature is not the foundation for precluding anyone from a cultural sphere. While Orlando does not have the benefit of an egalitarian society, she refuses to relinquish her public presence despite rumours of her 'madness', change in sex, and antics with nature. Malkah, Luciente, Riva, Nili, and Orlando demonstrate that as women, their connection to nature is empowering rather than oppressive. The cyborg challenges a definition of human nature that has been used to suppress women's demands. Women's assumed exclusive association to nature is defied by cyborg imagery which demonstrates a link between man and animal (Coldsmith, 1993, 109).

Androgyny in these novels challenges ideas of women's natural affinity for mothering. Absence of a nuclear family model and choices around reproduction provide examples of a non-oppressive society for women. The bisexuality of all the androgynous characters provides clear evidence of the construction of compulsive heterosexuality.

Androgynous women are described in positive terms as powerful and capable yet without an assumption of an essential woman. In this way the authors provide androgynous images that surpass feminist criticisms of androgyny. This is important to support the argument in this thesis that androgyny is a useful metaphor to challenge gender stereotypes and support the idea that

gender is constructed and oppressive.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

In this thesis I examined how androgyny is used in selected feminist novels as a metaphor to challenge constructed gender stereotypes and inequalities in the societies represented. I argued that such fictional representations challenge conventional ideas and beliefs about gender and gender stereotypes in Western society. Androgyny in these novels provides a vision of what we can strive towards in policital efforts to counter gender stereotypes and oppression. Rather than solely demonstrating personal and individual benefits, androgyny in these novels clearly demonstrate the need for an institutionalized change in gendered roles, behaviour, and opportunities.

Dominant views of gender are based on beliefs that women and men are fundamentally and innately different. These beliefs are based on reproductive roles and can be traced back to Aristotle. Western society has historically institutionalized these assumed differences so that oppressive social structures reflect these beliefs about genders.

My argument throughout this thesis was based on feminist and sociological beliefs that assumptions about masculinity, femininity and gendered abilities, behaviour and roles, are constructed socially, culturally and historically. They are not natural or immutable. These constructions are confining to any gender and particularly oppressive to women. This study is important because the predominance of fictional literature marketed for women supports rather than challenges the status quo. By contrast, feminist fictions like the ones selected for this thesis, stem from a feminist, sociological, and political critique of gender divisions and their links to

oppression (Fitting, 1987, 299).

The improvement of the world through literature helps close the gap between female experience and theoretical understanding, so that insights and knowledge are more easily conveyed than at the level of theory. Context finds expression in the novel. Gender relationships can be illuminated as an oppressive system affecting the entire society. Literature can be material from which social scientific knowledge can be gained (Haug, 1992, 17-20). The androgyny presented in these novels demonstrates to readers that gender is constructed, stereotyped and oppressive. The fictional representations of androgyny cited in this thesis can be useful for re-conceptualizing stereotypes prevalent in Western society because readers can compare the fictional depictions of gender with real life stereotypes. These novels provide visions of society without rigid gender stereotypes and gendered oppression.

The novels selected for this thesis, Virginia Woolf's Orlando, 1928, Marge Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time, 1976, and He She and It, 1991, were chosen based on their common themes and use of androgyny which shows a multiplicity of genders, rather than one fixed gender. Piercy's work was selected because of her use of an institutionalized acceptance of androgyny in the societies represented. Orlando was selected because of Woolf's reputation for being a strong supporter of androgyny, and because, although written in 1928, Orlando represents contemporary feminist theorizing.

A literature review of androgyny showed that images of androgyny range from Plato's depiction of the androgyne as a third race; to the idea of androgyny as a realistic possibility; to a

harmonization of the masculine and feminine; and to the image used in this thesis, where androgyny represents a multiplicity of genders. My use of androgyny has been based upon a post-modern argument that a contemporary study of androgyny argues for a multiplicity of differences which supports and is supported by contemporary feminist theorizing surrounding differences among women.

Since literature is rooted in the social attitudes of its time, it is important to study literature along with its social, historical, and cultural context (Frye, 1966, 29). Thus biographical information regarding the authors' social context was provided. This showed various uses of androgyny at the time the novels were written, but also a consistent theme among the novels of androgyny as a multiplicity of genders.

The use of androgyny has wavered in popularity throughout history. It became popular during the second wave of feminism but was quickly denounced by feminists, primarily because of androgyny's history of androcentric bias. However, as this thesis showed, the feminist use of androgyny in the novels studied transcends this androcentric bias and supports a use of androgyny that is liberatory.

Androgyny as represented in this thesis has been utilized as a utopian metaphor for life without gender stereotypes and gendered oppression. Historically, utopias have been seen as a means to envision a better future. Typically, utopias have been androcentric so that in them, women's roles may be changed from what they are at the time of authors writing, but women have not participated much in the shaping of their roles, and have thus generally remained

oppressed. By contrast, feminist utopias represent a vision of androgynous, egalitarian, and hence, non-oppressive societies. This is important to assist in the necessary development of narrative discourses to challenge dominant discourses that support white, male, heterosexist, dominance (Haraway, 1990, 135). Rather than feeling apathetic about being able to change the systems we live in, these fictions allow us to envision and challenge ourselves to strive for a new future (Fitting, 1987, 298). While these novels provide some focus on the macro-social structures of the societies represented, there is a primary focus on the forms and textures of everyday life (Fitting, 1987, 299). This relates to the feminist belief that the personal is political, a concept coined in the 1970's, and conversely that the political is personal.

My methodological approach involved selecting examples from all three novels that illustrated androgyny as a challenge to constructed gender stereotypes. This included descriptions of androgynous characters contrasted with descriptions of some non-androgynous characters; descriptions of the androgynous and non-androgynous societies; the social significance of androgyny in the fictional societies, and androgyny as a challenge to gender stereotypes. At this point I will elaborate on these four main themes to summarize their use in this thesis.

1) Descriptions of the androgynous characters:

The androgynous characters in all three novels showed that gender can mean an endless variety of behaviours, roles and traits, particularly when contrasted with more rigid stereotypical

depictions of gender in non-androgynous characters. Piercy's androgynous vision provided for a broad range of gender behaviours. Women exhibit traits and behaviours, typically associated with men in Western society, traits such as being intelligent, physically strong, and engaging in front line military work. At the same time, men behave in nurturing and emotional ways that could be considered effeminate today in Western society. These reversals in gender roles demonstrated that traits assigned to women and men are not natural but constructed. Included with the plurality of gender behaviour, was a plurality of sexual identity. Compulsory heterosexuality was virtually unheard of, while bisexuality was the norm. The expression of same sex desire between characters in all the novels demonstrated that exclusive heterosexual desire is a construction.

Orlando's androgyny showed us variations in gender based on social context. Her gender conversions are not strictly from woman to man and back. Rather she ranges from a 'masculine'male, to a 'feminine' female, to a 'feminine' male, to a 'masculine' female, and everything in between. Orlando's adept ability to switch genders with a change of clothing allows her to participate in arenas typically restricted to one gender. Her androgyny shows the limitations placed on individuals and societies by polarized gender rules. Her ability to take on the masculine and feminine shows that gender is constructed and stereotypical.

Frequently, Orlando uses opportunities to analyze her current gendered position, both from that perspective, and from the perspective of how she would respond or act if she was another, or opposite gender. In this way she reflects men's and women's opinions of their own

sex, and opinions of their supposed opposite. Orlando's analysis demonstrates that these opinions are not based in some biological 'truth,' but are societal constructions. Woolf illustrates historical changes in gender prescriptions, and how Orlando subverts them with her/his androgyny.

2) Descriptions of the fictional societies:

In Piercy's Woman on the Edge of Time, Mattapoisett is the androgynous utopian community, the end result of a feminist revolution advocated in the 1970's by Shulamith Firestone. Androgyny in this society involvs a melding of male and female characteristics, right down to biological reproductive functions. This concurs with feminist theory at the time which supported reproduction as the root of women's oppression and advocated for a liberation from reproductive functions as the means for the ultimate emancipation of women. The power of androgyny to show gender stereotypes as constructed and oppressive is exemplified by the contrast between Mattapoisett and Connie's New York City. Piercy shows Connie's oppression as a woman in such convincingly realistic detail that the reader cannot help but see it. Connie's travels through Mattapoisett can mirror the reader's move to discard conventionality and see the benefits of a society structured around androgyny.

Piercy's He She and It outlines a world ravaged and in conflict, contrasted with smaller more utopian communities, struggling not to be taken over by power hungry corporations. The violence and destruction involved in world politics, primarily influenced by an emphasis on a so-

called masculinized rationality devoid of emotion, demonstrates the need for improved peaceful global politics and a more complete means of decision making, involving both masculine and feminine traits.

Orlando's travels across four centuries shows us a view of changes in British society, and resultant changes in codes for gendered behaviour. Woolf's societal descriptions focus on changes in the intellectual, emotional, political, and social codes, which demonstrates that gender fluctuates over time, and is thus constructed.

3) Social Significance of androgyny in these fictional societies:

What the metaphor of androgyny does in these novels is to represent a different way of thinking about societal rules surrounding gender. Androgyny opens up an alternative viewpoint that if women and men were social equals, society would be a very different thing (McIntyre, 1976, 138). In the novels studied, conventional notions of gender are explicitly disputed when women and men are shown in non-conventional ways. By seeing women and men participating in life in non-stereotypical ways, readers can reinterpret their understanding of gender. Most importantly, the androgynous societies in these novels are egalitarian and social institutions are not built around assumed gender differences.

In Woman on the Edge of Time, biological intervention involves extra-uterine development of embryos, and hormonal supplementation so that women and men have the capacity to breast feed if they choose to. Links between the nuclear family and its resultant

oppression under patriarchy were broken when each child is assigned three mothers who were women and men. This institutionalized family arrangement shows that women are no longer oppressed once freed from the responsibility of childbearing and childrearing.

He She and It relates to contemporary feminist theory that encompasses diversity. Choice surrounding reproduction, rather than elimination of reproduction for women, is seen as one answer to the oppression of women. Once again the idea of a conventional nuclear family is presented as oppressive in Y-S, while family structures in the utopian community of Tikva are communal. Although individual women retain genetic links to their children, childrearing is the responsibility of the entire society, as in Mattapoisett. Once again, this arrangement is shown to be non-oppressive to women. Androgynous women do not need to abandon mothering, as with the feminist revolution advocated in the 1970's, unless they choose to, nor do they need to denounce mothering as oppressive. Thus mothering is revalued.

The gender polarization represented in He She and It implies that the world as depicted in Y-S is an extended example of patriarchal domination Western societies face today. By contrast, the adoption of a completely female society with artificial reproduction as in Yerushaleim, is liberatory for women in the sense of a lack of male dominance, but can leave us restricted to compulsory homosexuality rather than a range of sexual identities. Many people in the novel experience such extreme gender polarization that they can no longer relate to some genders or humanity. Shira as heterosexual, can only relate to a cyborg, while men are lost in a maze of technological rationality where, for example, Josh wants custody of their son to avenge Shira and

retain power and status in Y-S, rather than because of any emotional attachment to the boy. Y-S dehumanizes Shira's son in their use of him as a pawn in their efforts to gain power over Tikva.

Although Woolf does not show us the transformation of society by androgyny she demonstrates the oppression of rigid stereotypical gender roles by Orlando's experiences and observations. Since Orlando's societies are not structured to support androgyny, as an individual Orlando periodically experiences oppression.

Clothing and costuming in the novels show how external representations of gender are reflected in societal approaches towards people, and societal expectations of people. In turn, these expectations reinforce and reproduce gender codes as people live up to them. Clothing is used by Woolf to show that gender can change as easily as a change of clothing and gender is therefore not fixed or innate. Piercy uses clothing to provide an appearance of gender neutrality in Mattapoisett, while clothing shows gender flexibility with people in Tikva. Gadi's freedom to dress femininely, along with Nili's freedom to dress masculinely, contrasts with Western society where people are expected to dress according to rules surrounding their assigned gender.

The possibilities of human freedom are more dependent on the social structures rather than located within the individual (Annas, 154, 155). Orlando as an individual struggling against rigid gender rules, and the various characters enjoying institutionalized androgyny in Piercy's novels, exemplify the importance of socially structured egalitarianism, of which androgyny is an excellent metaphor.

"Radical feminism is now speaking in terms of 'feminist revolution' of a 'post-

androgynous' society, of creating a new kind of human being"(Rich, 1986, 81). These novels provide a revolution aimed at social transformation. The androgynous societies have reached post-androgyny where feminism has done itself out of a job. Gender has lost its political significance and egalitarianism reigns.

4) Androgyny as a challenge to gender stereotypes:

Examples of gender role reversal and a diversification of gender characteristics have been demonstrated throughout the novels and this thesis by representations of the androgynous characters. The multiplicities in gender show gender stereotypes as constructed. If gender differences between men and women were truly innate, most, if not all, women and men would be the same as all others of their sex. Piercy's use of cyborg imagery further challenges gender stereotypes, in opposition to typical cyber punk fiction where male and female cyborgs are usually conventional and support gender stereotypes. Feminist cyborgs, such as Piercy's Yod, are an experiment with unstable gender categories (Springer, 1976, 11, 36, 67). Yod's androgyny most clearly illustrates gender as constructed by his assumption of a wide and flexible variety of ever changing feminine and masculine gender traits.

Further examples of challenges to stereotypes include a human connection to nature represented in all novels which defies stereotypical beliefs that women experience an exclusive and negative connection to nature. Along with this human connection, women's link to nature is shown as powerful and positive. Mothering as a natural occupation for women is challenged by

the androgynous women in all three novels. At the same time, the androgynous egalitarian societies show women maintaining control over their sexuality, bodies, and reproduction, something not yet seen in our oppressive Western society.

Piercy's and Woolf's uses of androgyny are effective in supporting the above four themes because their androgynous representations transcend criticisms of androgyny, most of which stem from past androcentric depictions of androgyny. The androgynous women are illustrated as positive in their strength and power, countering the idea that androgyny is not positive for women. The androgyny in these novels also validates so-called feminine values since nurturing, caring and emotion are considered essential to societal functioning. Because women adopt many so-called masculine characteristics, this defies the notion of androgyny as meaning the perfected male. Androgyny is not too utopian to be apolitical or pragmatic. All the women engage in political activity which ranges from Orlando's defiance of expected gendered behaviour, to Connie's murder of her oppressors as she becomes more attuned to the benefits of androgyny, to the liberation of knowledge by Riva the warrior.

The most serious criticism of androgyny surrounds the debate about essentialism and differences among women. A post-modern argument supports difference and says "woman" can be a fluctuating state for individuals, a state which will not undercut feminism despite arguments to the contrary (Riley, 6, 96). A radically unstable view of women, rather than an essentialist view, challenges the restrictions of feminist political theorizing based on foundational practices, and allows for other visions of genders, bodies, and politics (Butler, 1995, 39, 41). That none of

the women in the three novels are the same--rather their gender configurations all vary--points to support of a theory of differences among women. That none of the women individually remain the same throughout the novels points to a fluctuating multiplicity of gender for them.

By examining what has been excluded or differentiated in definitions of woman, we can expand opportunities for political action, or agency can be expanded (Butler, 1995, 42-46). Masculine characteristics have been traditionally excluded from stereotypical expectations of women. The androgynous women in these novels, who take on a wide variety of masculine and feminine characteristics, have also performed a wide variety of political work. The androgynous characters in all three novels show that what Western society defines as woman is limiting and oppressive. By contrast, androgyny allows these women to continually redefine themselves and choose their political grounds based on their current identity. In particular, Orlando and Luciente in particular give us explicit examples of what actions, behaviours and roles have been excluded for women. Connie and Shira, show the oppressive results of such exclusions.

Finally, the three novels selected for this thesis allow the reader to comparison shop. "The moral intent is to point out to us that our own undesirable conditions are not necessary: if things can be imagined differently, they can be done differently" (Atwood, 1976, 274). All three novels represent a sexual rearrangement and construct comprehensive alternative families. They show a non-gender specific world in terms of tasks, functions, behaviour, yet still a world of people biologically male and female. "We no longer have women representing the one gender responsible for the limitations of human enterprise, the source of joy and fear, desire and dread"

(Bartkowski, 1989, 69).

Overall then, this thesis has shown that androgyny in literature is useful for envisioning a future society where theory might take us, and for linking theory with experience. These novels are important since they expand a theoretical understanding to a wide group of readers who may not all have a philosophical education (O'Brien, 1965, 66). He She and It's Y-S, and Woman on the Edge of Time's New York, and much of Orlando's long life, are "situated in ideological components of male supremacy, its dogmas, modes of social control and particularly the dehumanizing and destructive effects of male socialization" (O'Brien, 1965, 83). The message is that a balance among gender needs to be found. Androgyny represents this balance. These novels show that,

> "If we were socially ambisexual, if men and women were completely and genuinely equal in their social roles, equal legally and economically, equal in freedom, in responsibility, and in self esteem, then society would be a very different thing. We would still have problems but it seems our central problem would not be the one it is now; the problem of exploitation of women, of the weak of the earth. There is a struggle for dominance, divisions are insisted upon. The dualism of value destroys us, of superior/inferior, ruler/ruled, owner/owned user/used might be given up" (LeGuin, 1979, 169).

LeGuin's description provides a succinct summary of the effects of rigid gender constructions and resultant oppressions in contemporary Western society. By contrast, androgyny as represented in this thesis illuminates gender as constructed and oppressive, while providing an alternative vision of what we can strive towards, a society without gender stereotypes. Part of the importance of this type of study stems from the reality that much fictional literature does not challenge ideology. It merely reflects and supports dominant ideology (Roberts, 1978, 173). It

is my view that a feminist sociological analysis centered upon the study of androgyny offers an exciting and meaningful exception to this generalization.

Areas of Further Study:

Some may find a limitation to this thesis in that the selection of only three texts may not allow for generalizable findings. However, the concentration on a carefully selected few texts allows for a more in-depth analysis. My findings may therefore be used as a basis for further study and analysis of other texts.

Another potential area of study may be to look more closely at the class, race and gender links within the three novels selected for this thesis, and other novels that focus on androgyny. Piercy most explicitly provides a succinct analysis of gender, race and class, particularly in Woman on the Edge of Time, and some of this is evinced in descriptive passages chosen to exemplify androgyny. We saw briefly how gender expressions and societal response to gender can vary by class in Orlando, and He She and It. Exploration of these issues may further elucidate androgyny as a multiplicity of gender across race and class, and may provide visions of society without gender, class or racial oppression.

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