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# Modernist Women in Three Acts: The Stage for Political Protest

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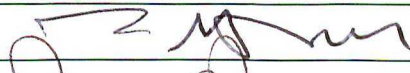
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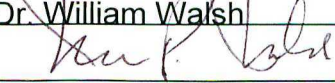
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**Modernist Women in Three Acts: The Stage for  
Political Protest**

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of the Requirements for Graduation Honors

Jennifer B. Redmond

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Throughout the early twentieth century, the New Woman, defiant of convention and tradition, became the source of much debate regarding female sexuality and gender. As the New Woman strove to become more professionalized and economically independent, she acquired new habits and attitudes reflective of masculinity. As Esther Newton describes in her article, "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian," "[Women] drank, they smoked, they rejected traditional feminine clothing, and lived as expatriates, sometimes with disastrous results" (564). From such tumult arose questions about the social and psychological roles of women during the modernist era, particularly with respect to such newly defined terms as the "lesbian," the "cross-dresser," and the "androgynous female." While all three of these categories bring women's state of mind into question, the very classifications by which they are determined are highly grounded on visual presentation within the public arena. Furthermore, debate sprang up as to whether the behavior associated with such terms represented new and liberalized forms of identity, or were simply forms of political protest – a rejection of reality publicly portrayed through "performative" actions, rather than an emotional awareness of self-identified romantic attraction. Specifically, however, the emergence of the New Woman as a "cross-dressing figure" – the "mannish" woman defiant of her controlling male counterpart – provides an origin for the other two terms, suggesting each category was merely the result of public perception and women's protest, rather than an actual change in her psychological identity. Looking back on this topic, literary scholars and historians of the period have tended to focus on the same central question: Are these roles the outward representation of women's psyches or performative acts generated in response to a particular set of political pressures?

In considering this question, many scholars have focused on the issues of lesbianism and cross-dressing. For example, Sheila Jeffreys, in her article, "Women's Friendships and Lesbianism" claims that many women who were perceived as lesbians during this period were not in fact romantically interested in one another, but instead searching for emotional support from other women in a manner that falsely suggested to the public that women were developing homosexual feelings toward one another. While the popular conception of "lesbianism" coincides with the definition of "homosexuality among females" (Merriam-Webster), with an emphasis upon romantic feelings of sexual desire between women, Jeffreys claims that the need for emotional nourishment among women (oppressed by men socially and politically) led many of them to behave in a manner that was deliberately perceived by the wider public as being romantic and sexual in nature.

Along similar lines, Susan Gubar, in her article, "Blessings in Disguise: Cross-Dressing as Re-Dressing For Female Modernists," argues that women who sported men's clothing were not "masculine" women or "lesbians" per se, but rather identifying the pursuit of women's political and social freedom with the "freedom of movement" allowed by men's clothing. In contrast, Esther Newton, in her article, "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman" argues two main points. She suggests that women were perceived as lesbians because of their presentation as cross-dressers. Newton claims that the cross-dressing woman is "a figure who is defined as lesbian *because* of her behavior or dress (and usually both) manifests elements designated as exclusively masculine" (560). Secondly, Newton points out that the act of cross-dressing was representative of the ideologies held by bourgeois women of the nineteenth

and twentieth centuries, representing the transcendence of woman over from categorical boundaries of traditional social and gender roles to more “manly” occupations dealing with education and politics. In these ways, both Gubar and Newton point to cross-dressing as a form of social liberation for women in the political sense.

In this essay, I will draw upon Katherine Mansfield’s New Zealand short stories, “Bliss” (1918), “The Woman at the Store” (1912), “Je Ne Parle Pas Français” (1918), George Bernard Shaw’s play *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* (1893), and Virginia Woolf’s extended essay *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), to defend Jeffreys’s idea that “lesbianism” was, in many cases, nothing more than a bond of friendship between two women – a private experience that took on a different meaning in the public eye.

Additionally, I wish to support Gubar’s notion that gender norms frequently existed secondarily to the importance of women gaining more liberty through their political achievements. While Newton identifies valid concerns about the influence of social and historical processes continuously altering the environment in which women lived, the more important aspect of her paper seems to suggest that the activities in which women participated to make themselves equal to men, namely cross-dressing, resulted in overly prescribed definitions of “lesbianism,” simply due to women’s behavior or appearance – their *social* not their *self*-identity. Additionally, in this essay, I will use Jeffreys and Gubar, Mansfield, Shaw, and Woolf, to demonstrate that the New Woman utilized the social, economic, and political constraints inherent to her environment to achieve her own political goals. In sum, I wish to argue that the categories of female identity that caused such controversies during the modernist era did not always reflect altered attitudes about sexuality or self-identity. Rather, these categories served

frequently as social and political statements about women seeking voice and empowerment through alternative means.

In order to identify the root cause of the behaviors associated with these three terms (while drawing literary and historical examples of how they were tools to achieve a greater political statement), it is important to note the distinction between all three, in application to the literature and politics of the modernist era, as well as the scholarly works of the mentioned critics. As many women were publicly identified as “lesbians,” simply due to their appearance, behavior, or relationships with other women, it is important to recognize the definition those claims were based upon. As Jeffreys explains in her article,

[T]he sexologists of the late nineteenth century set about the ‘scientific’ description of lesbianism. [...] They codified as ‘scientific’ wisdom current myths about lesbian sexual practice, a stereotype of the lesbian [...], categorizing women’s passionate friendships as female homosexuality and offered explanations for the phenomenon. (105)

Such definitions are speculative because they were those assigned by doctors, most of whom, during this time period, were males. While such descriptions may have applied to true homosexual women, the configuration of such relationships into formalized, scientific terminology not only created problems due to limitations of language and categorization, but also in regard to the public perception of female relationships. Yet, it is uncertain whether such classification necessitated females’ self-identification as “lesbian.” Although women may have posed as men by cross-dressing, and developed

intimate friendships with women, it does not seem feasible that a scientific definition would spur women to naturally adapt to what others perceived as a “lesbian lifestyle.” In other words, the scientific definition did not require a category of limitation that required those who were cross-dressers, or had relationships with women, to identify themselves as “lesbians.” Indeed, I would like to argue that alarms about lesbianism – during this time – was a visual reaction to the political climate of the era. As previously mentioned, the fact that many women felt disempowered by their lack of political and social rights, in relation to those of men, leads to the theory of a more serious need for close bonds among women, more so than in any other era. Yet, such relationships should not be interpreted on the assumption that they were more romantic, than simply supportive, in context.

A prime example of such “womanly bonds” is evident in Katherine Mansfield’s “Bliss” (1918). On the particular day represented in the story, the main character, Bertha, is in an unnatural state of ecstasy because she gets to see Pearl Fulton. As the narrator explains: “They had met at the club and Bertha had fallen in love with her, as she always did fall in love with beautiful women who had something strange about them” (147). Furthermore, the narrator elaborates on such feelings, when she notices:

Miss Fulton, who sat there turning a tangerine in her slender fingers that were so pale a light seemed to come from them. What she simply couldn’t make out – what was miraculous – was how she should have guessed Miss Fulton’s mood so exactly and so instantly. [...] ‘I believe this does happen, very, very rarely between women. Never between men,’ thought Bertha. ‘But while I am making the coffee in the drawing-room perhaps she will ‘give a sign’.’ (152)



This passage points to a situation unique to the female gender in that such sentiments sometimes occur between women, but never men. Since homosexuality during the period was recognized as a possibility for both males and females, it follows that what Bertha has just experienced is not homosexual love toward Miss Fulton. If this were the case, she would not conclude, “this [her connection with Miss Fulton] does happen very, very rarely between women, but never men,” because this would be denying males’ tendencies toward homosexuality. It follows, then, that while the notion of “love” is left ambiguous within the text, I argue that Bertha and Pearl’s relationship is one of friendship, and not romantic interest.

In addition, Bertha has no incentive to fulfill any homosexual desires since she claims to be happily married to Harry. Early in the story, we are told that Bertha “had everything. She was young. Harry and she were as much in love as ever, and they got on together splendidly and were really good pals” (148). It is plausible, however, that perhaps Miss Fulton offers Bertha the support Harry can not give her, simply because his masculine qualities do not allow him to empathize with those of a more feminine nature. For this reason, it is important for Bertha to find another woman who can she admire and confide in: needs that Harry – who often dismisses Bertha coolly with statements such as “liver frozen, my dear girl,’ or ‘pure flatulence,’ or ‘kidney disease’” (148) – cannot relate. (Often this gap in marriages was furthered by the political climate of the time, one that segregated gender roles and commonly led women to marry out of economic needs.) Although Bertha finds such comments (representing Harry’s “small-talk” contribution to their discussion) humorous, they do not provide her with the contentment and substance that she seeks to build her life upon. However, her one

“moment” with Pearl seems more stimulating than her entire marriage: “What there was in the touch of that cool arm that could fan – fan – start blazing – blazing – the fire of bliss that Bertha did not know what to do with?” (151). It follows that perhaps the amiable and trustworthy feelings Bertha has developed toward Pearl – feelings of an innocent, mutual connection – are what lead her to feel such disappointment once she realizes the one person with whom she could best identify is having an affair with her husband. Likewise, this interpretation of the story lends itself to Jeffrey’s notion of the public display of female kinship that, once detected by the public sphere, could possibly be conceptualized as evidence of one’s lesbian identity.

Coincidentally, similar to Jeffreys, Esther Newton argues, “From about 1900 on, this cross-gender figure (such as Bertha) became the public symbol of the new social/sexual category ‘lesbian.’” (560). In contrast to Jeffreys, however, Newton points out that this type of cross-gender figure, representative of “lesbianism,” becomes *disassociated* from the romantic and sexual overtones the public ascribed to cross-dressing women or those who simply exhibited intimate friendships with other women. Instead, a woman considered a “lesbian” becomes a figure proclaimed so, simply due to the signification of her *physiological* appearance as, what Newton would call, “the mannish lesbian” or “butch,” rather than her *psychological* identity as a lesbian.

Secondly, Newton points out that the act of cross-dressing was representative of the ideology held by bourgeois women of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (561). Newton describes this as a world in which:

British and American women gained access to higher education and the professions, [as] they did in all-female institutions and in relationships with one

another that were intense, passionate, and committed [and often] they sought personal and economic independence by rejecting their mothers' domestic roles. [...] Ironically, they turned to romantic friendships as the alternative, replicating the female world of love and commitment in the new institutional settings of colleges and settlement houses. (561)

From this passage, it is evident that Newton's argument focuses on the social and historic progression of women in their effort to achieve the same educational and professional caliber of their male antagonists. In doing so, she attributes the behavior of women's dress and relationships primarily to her ambitions to achieve equality in all spheres of her political, social, and economic environment.

In sum, a suitable example of Newton's theory plays out in Mansfield's "The Woman at the Store." Within the text, the notion that the mannish form of the New Woman is depicted as one who suffered isolation, loneliness, and abuse as a result of their husbands. A clear representation of The Woman at the Store is derived from:

She stood, pleating the frills of her pinafore, and glancing from one to the other of us, like a hungry bird. [...] Certainly her eyes were blue, and what hair she had was yellow, but ugly. [...] Looking at her, you felt there was nothing but sticks and wires under that pinafore – her front teeth were knocked out, she had red pulpy hands, and she wore on her feet a pair of dirty 'Bluchers'<sup>2</sup> (29).

At this point in the short story, readers realize that there is no man living at this woman's house, and that despite her mental instability, she is fulfilling both the role of the mother and father: her "bluchers" imply that she is a working woman, while her two missing teeth suggest she is abused by her husband whom she says is absent because of his habit

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<sup>2</sup> Leather half-boots

of frequently leaving home. However, the picture shown by the Woman's daughter, at the end of the story (34) suggests that she was driven into complete madness by her household/womanly duties and killed her husband. Even the narrator of the story takes note of the Woman's peculiar behavior, saying, "'Good Lord, what a life! [...] Imagine being here day in, day out, with that rat of a child and a mangy dog. Imagine bothering about ironing – *mad*, of course she's mad! Wonder how long she's been here..." (30). Ironically, the Woman has killed her husband in an effort to assume patriarchal control over her family and property, yet this male narrator is empathizing with her situation. Yet, his very lack of recognition of what has led her to this state of lunacy – the oppression of the female sex by his own gender role – demonstrates the ways an aloof (and predominately assertive) attitude, on the part of men, contributed to the further oppression of women.

As Otto Weininger establishes in the section "Woman and her Significance" from *Sex and Character*, the opinions of most modernist men could be summarized by his belief that,

By education or environment woman adopts a whole system of ideas and valuations which are foreign to her, or, rather, has patiently submitted to have them impressed on her; and it would need a tremendous shock to get rid of this strongly-rooted psychical complexity, and to transplant woman to that condition of intellectual helplessness which is so characteristic of hysteria. (266)

Essentially, while the narrator of the story understands the Woman's madness is an effect of society's expectation of women to devote themselves to household duties, he does not understand how such expectations have developed into a complex issue of gender roles,

based on a feeling of female inferiority. More importantly, he does not realize that his aloofness is indirectly driving the social problem at hand, and that it is closely tied with women's lack of political and economic opportunities. In relation to the "hysteria" mentioned within Mansfield's story and by Weininger, the Woman at the Store is representative of the effects of "environmental" constraints on her mental frame of mind. Although she does not exhibit any lesbian-like qualities, she assumes both the role of the male and female within the household; she is the mannish representation of the New Woman, as well as the androgynous female.

As for the second key point of Newton's argument, she explains women's rejection of traditional household/motherly duties in order to pursue their goals of professionalism and education. Although the ambition of women was not necessarily portrayed in "The Woman at the Store," the notion of woman juggling both masculine and feminine duties is evident. Expanding this transition from the traditional to the more masculinized female, George Bernard Shaw's play *Mrs. Warren's Profession* touches on the public perception of women defiant of tradition and how they, like cross-dressers, were perceived as harboring "lesbian" or "androgynous" qualities. Before highlighting such representations in the play, however, it is significant to, once more, elaborate upon the second part of Newton's claim that, "British and American women gained access to higher education and the professions. [Often] they sought personal and economic independence by rejecting their mothers' domestic roles. [They] turned to romantic friendships as the alternative, replicating the female world of love and commitment" (561).

From this, it is important to note that, just as Jeffreys claims relationships between women were based on the emotional support offered by kinship, Newton claims that “all female institutions” allowed women to advance in their endeavors for political and economic freedom by equipping them with the education and professional skills needed to succeed like men. Furthermore, Newton describes women’s associations with one another as alternative romantic relationships. Not necessarily implying “romance” between two women, but an alternative to the “romance” lacking in their lives, either from attending an all-female institution or because women’s relationships with men were antagonizing.

Such reasoning is feasible when considering the behaviors of Vivie, the protagonist in *Mrs. Warren’s Profession*. Vivie is an ironic character in the sense that she represents the educated New Woman, yet her mother’s profession<sup>3</sup> as a prostitute funded her schooling. The image of the New Woman on which Newton elaborated is evident in the conversation about culture between Vivie and Praed. While Praed tells Vivie that the honors of her schoolwork are representative not only of hard work, but culture as well, Vivie comments,

Culture! My dear Mr. Praed: do you know what the mathematical tripos means? It means grind, grind, grind, for six to eight hours a day at mathematics, and nothing but mathematics. [...] Outside mathematics, lawn tennis, eating, sleeping, cycling, and walking, I’m a more ignorant barbarian than any woman could possibly be who hadn’t gone in for the tripos. (16)

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<sup>3</sup> During the early twentieth century when *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* takes place, prostitution was nearly one of the only professions in which women stood a chance at earning enough money to become economically independent of men.

This quote is significant because, as Newton suggests, the New Woman emerged as a cultural figure, persistently seeking professional skills and an education in order to better herself and the world. However, as Vivie suggests, these two things were merely a means to an end. Taking on a masculine form and “mak[ing] calculations for engineers, electricians, insurance companies, and so on” (16), Vivie finds her education has only improved her status to the degree that she serves as the assistant to men. While she may have the same knowledge as a man, she is not able to exercise her abilities in the same way, represented by her claim, “I know next to nothing about engineering or electricity or insurance” (16). Such divisions between men and women, then, prove that the dividing line was gender, and not capability or intelligence. Although the New Woman began pursuing her interests, her endeavors toward education and equality did not change her image in the public sphere. Likewise, if the public perception of women was so set in stone and unrepresentative of their inherent qualities and capabilities, it is no wonder society’s skewed perception of women became misrepresentations of the “lesbian” and “androgynous female.” Furthermore, in a society that refused to accept the invisible intellect of educated women, cross-dressing allowed women to visually portray their accomplishments in a provocative, as well as politically and socially defiant statement.

Shifting the focus now to ways in which women used their outward appearance to make a political statement about male and female equality, I would like to discuss Gubar’s analysis of the female “cross-dresser.” Commonly, notions of lesbianism and cross-dressing are viewed from a similar standpoint, given that they are both associated with one’s sexual identity and, often, revolve around the public persona one chooses to demonstrate. Although lesbianism has been previously discussed, in the context of

kinship among women, and the “mannish lesbian,” in regard to the female cross-dresser, Gubar explains,

[F]emale modernists escaped the strictures of societally-defined femininity by appropriating the costumes they identified with freedom. Cross-dressing in the modernist period is therefore not only a personal or sexual statement on the part of women; it is also a social and political statement that exploits the rhetoric of costuming to redefine the female self. (488)

For Gubar, this entails females’ rejection of the social expectations of the homebound, domesticated woman. As Ellen Key, the Swedish feminist writer, describes in *The Woman Movement*,

Culture now sets new duties for woman, more significant than exclusively natural ones. The more the individual life increases in value, the more the interest for the mere functions of sex declines, and with it also the value of woman *as woman* for a society where, because of motherhood, she has become a being of secondary rank. (577)

This passage reveals that women are becoming aware of their exploitation and the lack of appreciation by society’s movers and shakers; they feel they are useful only because of the natural role of childbearing with which their gender has provided them. Yet, by suiting up as a man, the woman is physically able to adopt the characteristics of the thing she wants achieve within an ideological realm – most notably, the social and political opportunities of men and their consequent economic independence. Additionally, many suffragists of the Women’s Movement, such as Lucy Stone, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Dr. Walker, were sold on the political significance of female cross-



dressing, Dr. Walker going so far as to found *The Mutual Dress Reform and Equal Rights Association* (Gubar 490). So, while “cross-dressing” may have appeared to be a result of the “mannish lesbian” or the “androgynous female,” such action fundamentally served the purpose of a political caricature.

It is important to note, however, that the act of becoming a cross-dresser relied on the physical representation/performance of the female personifying the male role. As Sarah Henstra notes in her article, “Looking the Part: Performative Narration in Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood* and Katherine Mansfield’s “‘Je Ne Parle Pas Français’,” for Judith Butler, American post-structuralist philosopher, “gender as a set of cultural signifiers is not descriptive or representational; rather, it is *performative* insofar as its signifying acts produce and reiterate the sexed body that it then dissimulates as prior to any description” (Henstra 129). For example, Mansfield’s “Je Ne Parle pas Français” (1918) exhibits the role of performative gender and a quest for one’s identity in a way that defies the influence of society’s expectations on the personhood of the individual. In Mansfield’s story, this theme is revealed through the main character Raoul. Throughout the story, Raoul is described as an effeminate, disillusioned, and seemingly depressed male, whose identity is developed through the role of performative gender (Henstra 130). However, throughout the course of the plot, his greatest challenge is developing self-identity and independence, due to, what the reader is initially made to believe, the emotional barrier created by his attraction to Dick Harmon.

Essentially, Raoul’s emotional attraction to another man allows him to express himself in a way that is contradictory to society’s definition of gender – a definition strictly adhering to the socially constructed concepts of “male” and “female.” This

confinement allows Raoul to seek outlets of self-expression through feminine tendencies, and a somewhat clownish disposition. Comments, such as, “I have quantities of good clothes, silk underwear, two evening suits, four pairs of patent leather boots with light uppers, all sorts of little things, like gloves and powder boxes and a manicure set, perfumes, very good soap, and nothing is paid for” (127) exhibit these two aspects of his personality. While Raoul is obviously attracted to men, his partial self-identification as a woman is a telling sign that any interest he shows towards women is not as genuine as the interest he shows towards men. The importance of women to Raoul, in most cases, reflects one of greed, rather than lust. In all, however, as a physical being in the public eye, Raoul appears to be a menagerie of sorts that does not fit the gendered stereotypes common to early twentieth century society.

At its roots, this story is representative of the ways society has created an invisible force of control rooted in fear of judgment. Eventually, this concept is furthered by Raoul’s questioning of the purpose of his role in society, by asking, “How can one look the part and not be the part? Or be the part and not look it? Isn’t looking – being? Or being – looking?” (133). As this quote reveals, it is evident that a division exists between the character’s internal and external conversation and appearance. While the course of events throughout the plot follows Raoul’s emotional introspection, his first- person narration often focuses on the way in which his performative self (how he is recognized by others in his daily life) exists as part of his more immediate and tangible reality.

The end of this story, however, seems to exist solely for the purpose of showing that the emotions Raoul seemingly possessed as part of his “cross-dressing” act were, essentially no more than that – a selfish act. When he finds himself alone in the room

with Mouse, he says, “But I’ve got the little girl for you, *mon vieux*. So little...so tiny. And a virgin.’ I kiss the tips of my fingers – ‘A virgin’ – and lay them upon my heart.” (144). Here, it is apparent that Raoul makes most of his money, not by his profession of “serious literature,” but as a pimp. With this information, it is hard to believe that, even as a “cross-dresser,” he was caught up in the emotional aspect of pretending to be a female or sort of transvestite. Rather, his garb seems to imply he has deeper reasoning behind it, such as allowing it to help him succeed at his job of luring in both males and females. Yet, disguised in his female garb, Raoul does run into issues pertaining to gendered stereotypes of women, although he essentially has the “male brains” that are socially viewed as the only thing needed to succeed.

Much of the discussion among “lesbians” and “cross-dressers” thus far has focused on the distinction between male and female roles and the social and political implications inherent to the ways each gender (focusing on the female gender as my emphasis) chooses to represent itself. However, as seen within the stories “The Woman at the Store” and “Je Ne Parle Pas Français,” both The Woman and Raoul exhibit characteristics of both genders. This blending of both male and female characteristics is known as “androgyny,” and is something Gubar considers as well. Gubar describes how androgynous men were often treated as clowns and rebuked for holding anarchical personalities, or viewed as psychopathic (Gubar 493). Likewise, Gubar illuminates the ways in which images of the androgynous “woman warrior,” and those of the androgynous man demonstrate the different attitudes of the two sexes in relation to cross-dressing. Gubar describes how,

Athena, wielding the shield and spear of the male warrior, gains esteem by deriving her identity from her father. [...] But when Hercules is dressed as a female and placed before the distaff, he is pathetically weakened, emasculated, because he loses the prerogative and power the male genitals and garb symbolize.

(493)

As with Raoul, the clown analogy is definitely feasible, in that he refers to himself as such throughout his narration: “What I wanted to do was to behave in the most extraordinary fashion – like a clown. To start singing, with large extravagant gestures...” (137). The lady in “The Woman at the Store” however, while not exactly a “woman warrior” in any way, due to her hysterical nature, has taken on both the female role of a mother, and the male role of working and manning her house and property. Ultimately, both characters represent responses to the political/social pressures of the era, and in doing so transcend gender categories.

The importance of the “androgynous female” is relevant to this discussion because it bridges the gap between the male and female personas in a way that suggests a movement toward greater social and political equality. Perhaps the best example of the relevance of this concept can be found in Virginia Woolf’s essay *A Room of One’s Own*. Woolf’s theory of “androgynous compromise” is rooted in her desire for women to acquire the means necessary for their creativity to blossom – namely, 500 pounds a year and a room of her own. In speaking of the androgynous mind, Woolf asserts, “Perhaps the androgynous mind is less apt to make these distinctions than the single-sexed mind [...] Perhaps the androgynous mind is resonant and porous; that it transmits emotion without impediment; that it is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided” (97). From

this statement, it can be inferred that Woolf would view “cross-dressers,” as well as so-called “lesbians,” or those women merely seeking kinship with one another as, indeed, “androgynous” because they are connecting with the opposite gender in an emotional, creative, and artistic manner. Just as those publicly perceived as “homosexuals” or “androgynous women” were perhaps only making political statements or furthering their self-identity by pursuing a more professional or educated lifestyle, such categorical terms were proclaimed as women attempted to expand their intellect to the knowledge and capacities of both female and male roles.

Furthermore, if the lack of social, political, and economic freedoms are what Woolf suggests held women back in terms of literary success, then it is these environmental constraints that are inevitably holding women back in other areas in which men have succeeded. In order to bridge this gap, the “androgynous mind” must be embraced in a way that enhances both masculine and feminine thought – it must not eliminate the influence of one gender over another, as in the example provided by Gubar. Ultimately, the “androgynous female” seems to be the most realistic category in the achievement of women’s emancipation. Not only does it prove that women are capable of making gains and achievements by transcending the categorical barriers of social and gender roles, but it opens up the possibility of equal achievement of like-minded individuals, despite being “male” or “female.”

The criticism that has been offered, in addition to the examples derived from literary texts, do not offer an argument rejecting or affirming the definite interpretation of the female cross dresser as being representative of the lesbian or androgynous female. Rather, such discussion serves as a basis of analysis for possible understanding of such

actions, behaviors, and thoughts of the New Woman during the modernist era. While the categories of “lesbian,” the “cross-dresser,” and the “androgynous female” provide examples of women’s reactions to the Suffrage Movement, some categories provide greater examples of the environmental stresses placed on women during the British modernist era, than others. Although “lesbianism” may have referred to sexual relations between women, it also signified simply kinship among them. Furthermore, “lesbianism” served as a way to cope with a difficult and sometimes hostile social reality. On a level more representative of activism, “cross-dressing” seems to have existed primarily as a political statement, allowing women to become a type of “effigy” mocking the source of their social rebellion, while portraying a representation of idyllic freedom. Lastly, the “androgynous female” can be viewed as a sort of compromise between the domesticated, subservient woman of the past and the tyrannical man of political and economic power of the modernist era. Empathizing with both the masculine and female gender roles and perspectives, both men and women could move toward a more politically insightful, economically stimulating, and socially free empire.

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