

Chapter 5

Orlando: “Travelling for hundreds of years”

*Modern travel writing at its best reflects both the crisis of travelling and of travel writing as media of understanding oneself and the other, one's own culture and the culture of the Other. [...] The Other, accordingly, is a constantly shifting projection of the self. It can be, in turns or even at one and the same time, sublime and trivial, alluring and irritating, inspiring and ludicrous, incomprehensible and strangely familiar.*¹

Manfred Pfister

5. 1. “The most interesting and the most adventurous”: Orientalism

Edward Said claims that “[a]nyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient—and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist”—and I add, a novelist—“either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism.”² Regarding this point, one can refer to Woolf who textually constructs the Orient in *Orlando*, and produces a fictionalized model of Orientalism, which offers, in Said’s words, “a marvelous instance of the interrelations between society, history, and textuality.”³ It is based on Woolf’s knowledge about the Orient, originating in her reading and reviewing the travelogues of travel writers as well as in her own personal, though brief, experiences of Constantinople. Very implicitly, she represents a fictionalized discourse concerning the Orient to deal with, what Homi K. Bhabha calls, the “concept of ‘fixity’ in the ideological construction of otherness,”⁴ as well as “the superior, ‘order’, ‘rationality’ and ‘symmetry’ of Europe, and the inferior ‘disorder’, ‘irrationality’ and ‘primitivism’” of the Others.⁵

Through a historical reviewing and rereading the travelogues of travel writers and recording her two short journeys to Constantinople,⁶ Woolf fictionalizes two opposite perspectives about the Orient and the Occident; one is related to English male and the other to the English female travellers. What matters here, in illustrating, analyzing, and reflecting upon Orientalism, is a study of the Orient through the various objectives and desires of these two groups of travellers. Her concern, inevitably, is not to show that the

Occidentals are superior to the Orientals or vice versa. Yet she works profoundly on gathering sufficient information in the very wide scope of her travel narrative to elucidate that the "Orient [as Said states] is an idea that has a [hi]story and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West."⁷ More precisely, her responses to the eternal contact between the Occident and the Orient find expression in her travel narrative, *Orlando*, and to some extent in *The Waves*.

Woolf believes that "when we come to consider the question of the West & the East—then indeed—we lay down the pen, & write no more" (*PA*: 352). She considers the Occident and the Orient as two distinct worlds, which are fictionalized in Orlando's (the man's and the woman's) reaction while encountering the Eastern culture in Constantinople. In fact, Woolf lays down the pen and writes no more, for the Orient speaks itself. The Orient is "a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences," and "the object of European, colonial and imperialist aims,"⁸ even, as Said believes, "a place for projecting Western (male) fantasies."⁹ It might be considered as "a *topos*, a set of references, a congeries of characteristics" that has "its origin in a quotation without quotation marks, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone's work on the Orient" represented by "some bit of previous imagining."¹⁰ Woolf highlights, in Said's words, "a style of thought" that makes a distinction between "the Orient" and "the Occident."¹¹ In other words, her Orient helps "to define" the Occident, and offers the Occidental and Oriental ontology and epistemology in a bisexual adventurer in order to define one world by means of the other, as "its contrasting image, idea, personality, [and] experience."¹²

My objective in this chapter is focused, first, on Woolf's own journey to Constantinople. I am also concerned with tracing the signs of the history of travel to the Orient in *Orlando*, and with showing how Woolf by reading the travelogues of travel writers—especially Richard Hakluyt, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Mary Wollstonecraft, Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West—reads the East and fictionalizes what her travelling eye/I observe. She reviews and rereads the history of these male and female travel writers during four centuries, which makes *Orlando* a metaphor of travel in the history of travellers' lives from the sixteenth century up to the Edwardian period. As Orlando

was thinking this, the *immensely long tunnel* in which she seemed to have been *travelling for hundreds of years widened*; the light poured in; her thoughts became mysteriously tightened and strung up as if a piano tuner had put his key in her back and stretched the nerves very taut [...]. (*O*: 169, my emphasis)

The "immensely long tunnel" in which she was travelling "for hundreds of years" is a beautiful metaphor of travel in time and in history. Woolf demonstrates the history of travel to the East, started by English male explorers having in mind missionary, imperial or political objectives and motives, afterwards continued by English female adventurers seeking and finding the romantic beauties of their own homelands by virtue of encountering the others. It is not only the history of travels undertaken by the men and women travellers, but also the history of culture and civilization of the Occident (as male) and the beauties of freedom and the disordered life of the Orient (as female). Throughout the centuries, Orlando witnesses many changes in men, women, buildings and customs; thereupon, he or she finds that "[n]othing is any longer one thing" (*O*: 173). In this way, Woolf highlights the impact of Eastern travel on the English male and female travel writers as well as the splendour and beauty of the Eastern landscapes on the construction and reconstruction of the female travellers' life and self, especially Sackville-West's. By using intertextuality, Woolf associates her travel narrative with a travel tradition and thus tries to give a reliable authority to her work.

Second, I am interested to show that Woolf, by the use of interpretative parameters, such as the categories of gender and race, indicates how the representation of journey is always mediated by a series of interrelated factors that both shape and filter reality. She creates a bisexual adventurer or an in-between character in order to translate the discourse of travel through a gender analysis of the Eastern culture, customs and beauties for the Western world. Accordingly, by comparing and contrasting the Occident and the Orient, Orlando, who experiences these worlds as a man and a woman, realizes that the relationship between these two different worlds is an inevitable relationship of superiority. In short, Woolf criticizes, in Said's words, the Western "authority over the Orient" or the British "superiority over Oriental backwardness."¹³ For Orlando (the man), the relationship between the Orient and the Occident is, as Said argues, "a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony,"¹⁴ whereas Orlando

(the woman) comprehends it as a relationship of freedom, of natural beauties, of love and of domesticity. The main point is the selection of an Oriental setting, which signifies, in Montagu's, Vita's and Orlando's (the woman's) sense, the Orient or Constantinople as a different space which strengthens the desire for travel, especially in its romantic sense. Thus, Woolf makes use of a comparative analysis of male and female travel writings, through what one might call an "ethno-methodological approach,"¹⁵ to display their different impacts on the symbolic, social and historical order. She is concerned with recording life, culture and habits of the Eastern societies, which are clearly distinct from those of the Western world. She uses not only description of the places she visits and records in her travel notes but also all minute incidents to illuminate the desire for travel—the *voyage out* and the *voyage in*—in her work.

Thirdly, I believe that Woolf, through reading the travelogues of other travel writers, infers that the desire for travel to the East is very strong in both men and women. She represents the paradoxical desire for travel in men and women by portraying the concept of travel, embodied in a bisexual adventurer. She elaborates that there are prominent distinctions between the male and female travellers' gaze and vision in encountering the Orient, which originated in various kinds of the Western male and female imagery projected onto their travel representations. As an example, Sasha's manly behaviour suggests the first sign of a bisexual narrative: "a boy it must be—no woman skate with such speed and vigour—swept almost on tiptoe past him, Orlando was ready to tear his hair with vexation that the person was of his own sex" (*O*: 24). At that time, Orlando (the man), whose mind is obsessed by the desire for travel to the East, finds his home "uninhabitable"; therefore, he asks "King Charles to send him as Ambassador Extraordinary to Constantinople" (*O*: 69).

Fourthly, I want to show that in the structure of *Orlando*, there are three momentous phases of travel: the first one is the representation of travel abroad which, in this case, is Orlando's ambassadorial travel to Constantinople; i.e. his departure from the Western world and entering the Eastern world. The second one is the signs of his or her vision and gaze that create the chains of comparisons and contrasts in her (the woman's) mind, shown in the form of her confrontation with the gipsies and the natural landscape of Turkey, which is the result of his metamorphosis (an ambassador transformed to be an

ambassadress). It puts more light on Orlando's travel experience in Constantinople as well as his or her relationship with this new land while perceiving the 'Other.' It is also an expression of a specific cultural and historical system of values through which Orlando interprets his or her experience of the East. It is at this point that Orlando recognizes his or her own self and culture, and that of the 'Other.' The third phase and the most remarkable one is the time of return represented in the form of a round-trip journey of a woman whose soul becomes more romantic in relation to nature.

Moreover, I am interested to indicate that *Orlando* is Woolf's *double travel* narrative, through which Orlando (the man) experiences both a diplomatic journey to the East and a metamorphosis (the metaphor of travel in the body and gender), and returns as a female traveller whose horizon of expectations and sex are changed simultaneously. Accordingly, one can refer to three phases of travel, departure, transformation and return as the centre of this travel narrative.

Indeed, *Orlando* is a biographical-ethnographical travel narrative of 'boundary crossings' of space, gender and sex as well as the reflection of Woolf's telescopic view of the East. It is created by orientalizing the women's desire for travel and by textualizing her own diaries and letters, as well as, in Mary Louis Pratt's terms, by the "counterknowledge and counterhistory"¹⁶ or by intertextualizing the travelogues of other male and female travellers. *Orlando* contains the traces and voices of many texts. Undoubtedly, it includes the signs of her wide range of reading, particularly Sackville-West's *Passenger to Teheran* (1926), *The Land* (1926) and *Twelve Days* (1928); Lady Montagu's *The Turkish Embassy Letters* might also be a model for her writing. These travel writers love the uncultivated nature so much that it fascinates their romantic desires; hence, they experience and perceive the East in a romantic way by being participant-observers of its nature.

Woolf opens her narrative with the life of an English boy, who later becomes a romantic poet (a man who loves nature) in the late 1500s in England, falls in love with a Russian princess, leaves the country and marries a gipsy woman during his diplomatic mission to Turkey. Orlando's (the man's) adventurous life at the outset appears in the form of his phallic behaviour; when he is sixteen years old, "too young to ride with them in Africa or France, he [...] lunge[s] and plunge[s] and slice[s] the air with his blade" (*O*:

11). In this way, this androgynous-looking boy shows the first signs of entering the male adventurers' world. *Orlando*, therefore, reflects the metaphor of travel in desire—the erotic desire for adventure accentuated by travelling to the East, which is well mapped by Woolf in her 'Woolfian' textual land.

The travel narrative, however, represents an ambassador whose job, home, properties, even desires, and power are metonymic tokens of the Western male traveller's power which signify British superiority. In contrast, Orlando (the woman) learns to behave like the Turkish women, yet never speaks proper Turkish, and all her attempts to adapt herself to their lives fail to merge with the natives' expectations, hopes and desires. Hence the purpose of Orlando's (the man's) voyage out is "to fulfil the dictates of male colonial adventure."¹⁷ He, as an English ambassador with all his Occidental Englishness and Britishness, is "discovering", "exploring", "mapping" and "constructing" himself in the Oriental world of Turkey.¹⁸ Instead, after his sexual change, she repatriates while rediscovering, re-exploring, remapping and reconstructing herself. Orlando returns as a woman who feels and understands the romantic sense of her homeland, like many other English women travellers. Based on what Francis Bacon, in his essay "Of Travaile," argues, "*Travaile*, in the younger Sort, is a Part of Education; in the Elder, a Part of Experience,"¹⁹ one can trace the signs of this travail in Orlando's years of separation, which trains her to be more romantic by opening up her heart to nature. Eventually she highlights, as Vita Fortunati writes, "the romantic dream of the return to the origins, of knowledge" by passing the boundaries between the peoples to finally belonging to one's own country.²⁰

Orlando is Woolf's "most interesting and the most adventurous"²¹ Oriental work, because it is based on her own experience of travel in Constantinople and her metaphorical descriptions, statements, imageries and quotations about the Orient. It is part of a discourse through which Woolf—like an ethnographer—reads the Orient and rereads it "contrapuntally."²² It is the most interesting because it helps her to see her Englishness and Londonness better by virtue of reading the 'Others' and finding the cultural differences between self and the 'Other.' It is the most adventurous, since it gives her a knowledge which, in Said's words, "no longer requires application to reality; [this] knowledge is what gets passed on silently, without comment from one text to another."²³

It is the most interesting since she experiences the "strangeness" and "forbidden" body and face of the veiled women in Constantinople: "it does have so much virtue in it as to suggest that it hides something rare & spotless, so that you gaze all the more at a forbidden face" (*PA*: 352).

Accordingly, by portraying Sasha, the Russian princess, she suggests Oriental sexual mystery, especially through Sasha's Eastern dress, which makes her sex ambiguous, yet "strangely familiar." Woolf experienced such an ambiguity in her own voyage in 1906 to Turkey and re-experienced it through reading Sackville-West's *Passenger to Teheran*, which is the record of Vita's journey to the Middle East, to Egypt, Iraq, Persia and Russia.

On her return to England, Orlando wants to take part in a sea-voyage, which is a *leitmotif* in Woolf's travel narratives, yet it is the first time that she records an Asian sea of "Marmara," (*O*: 84) which separates Europe from Asia, and at its entrance stands Constantinople. The Orient, for Woolf, means both Constantinople and Persia to which Sackville-West travelled. In this way, she suggests that Vita owes her romantic sensations to her travels in Persia, recorded in her *Twelve Days*, which is similar to Rachel Vinrace's desire for a voyage out of England to find new models of desire. Unlike Rachel Vinrace, Orlando returns from her round-trip journey. This refers to her escape from the "confinements of gender in polymorphous relationships."²⁴ The genderedness of Orlando's construction becomes clear when one examines that like Mary Wollstonecraft, Orlando finds a domestic sublimity.

By *Orlando*, Woolf presents the myth of Orientalism as a perpetual sign whose form sounds empty, "but present, its meaning absent but full," in Barthes's terms, it is "neither a lie nor a confession" but a "semiological system which has the pretension of transcending itself into a factual system."²⁵ It imposes, as Said states, "limits upon thought about the Orient," since an Oriental work, even if a fantasy, might be "a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar"²⁶ 'us' or the Occident and the "strangely familiar" 'them' or the Orient. Simultaneously, there are traces of the Occident in the opening chapters of *Orlando*, such as the Elizabethan military fortifications and war ships, as well as Orlando's diplomatic journey as an ambassador to Turkey. However, from the beginning, Orlando's adventure on the frozen

Thames that leads him to fall in love with a beautiful Eastern princess from Muscovy is a fascinating, and indeed as Manfred Pfister argues in another context, a "sublime and trivial, alluring and irritating, inspiring and ludicrous, incomprehensible and strangely familiar"²⁷ sign of the Orient that shows his first desire for travel to the East. Sasha is "the *very presence*"²⁸ or the incarnation of the splendour of the East for Orlando, a meaning transformed into a form, a signification transformed into a sign.

5.2. "The Age of Transition": history of English travels to Constantinople

To give the myth of Orientalism "a natural and eternal justification," to make it a perpetual representation, one needs, in Barthes's words, "a statement of fact."²⁹ This fact is the record of Woolf's travels (in 1906 and 1910) to Constantinople during which she experiences a "beautiful & evanescent & enduring" (*PA*: 347-8) impression based on her reading of other travelogues and on her own observation of the buildings, people and their customs. *Orlando* serves to eternalize the "simplicity of essences" of travel to the Orient and its history.³⁰ Every one who writes about the Orient considers some Oriental precedent or has some previous knowledge of the Orient to which he refers or on which he relies. Accordingly, the relationship between different works, for instance the "anthologies of extracts from Oriental literature" or "of travel books, [and] of Oriental fantasies,"³¹ gives the work a kind of strength as well as an authority.

Orlando is a discourse that translates the concept of travelling in time and history of the English male and female travel writers to the East during four centuries. This time-travelling is planned to furnish no astonishing escape into quaint antiquity, but rather a polemical use of the history that will lead the reader-adventurers to go through the past and present lives of the male and female travellers. It lacks the seriousness, precision and detailed documentation of history and factual accounts; instead, it includes all the charm of adventure and rehearses in a historical fashion the changing temper of the English male and female travel writers between the Elizabethan period and the modern times. *Orlando* is a composite figure blending together the behaviours and features of the male travellers as ambassadors, and the female travellers as ambassadresses who accompany their husbands and family during their expeditions. In her historical descriptions, Woolf

fictionalizes, typifies and mythologizes a veritable network of the male and female travellers' lives and their objectives in *Orlando*.

The travel narrative, which begins in the late Elizabethan period and ends in the twentieth century, in 1928, is indebted to the history of adventure, exploration, travel, travel writing about the East, particularly Constantinople. In its structure, there are traces of fragments quoted from the lives and travels of explorers or missionaries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, such as Richard Hakluyt's Elizabethan collection of the travel writings—*Principal Navigations* (1589/1598)—referred to in some of *Orlando*'s chapters in order to "give a flavour of Elizabethan sea adventures,"—or "Lord Whitworth, step-father to Frederick, fourth Duke of Dorset, during the time that he was ambassador to the Courts of Catherine II and Paul I,"³² shown as the "'savage' Muscovy"³³; the ambassadors and ambassadresses of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as Edward Wortley Montagu and his wife Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Mary Wollstonecraft, who accompanied her partner in his diplomatic journey; and the female travellers of the twentieth century, especially Vita Sackville-West, who travelled to Persia when her husband, Harold Nicolson, was the ambassador in Tehran. Therefore, the last chapter of *Orlando*, which is set in the present day, initiates the modern institutionalization of travel with quotations from Sackville-West's poem, *The Land*. Woolf's indirect quotations from Hakluyt's texts, Montagu's letters, Wollstonecraft's letters, Nicolson's diplomatic letters and reports, and Sackville-West's travelogues suggest the grand pageant of the English travellers' history. In fact, *Orlando* undertakes a renewal, redefinition or rewriting of the traditional and modern travel writings by both sexes.

Orlando (the man) and the ambassador in Constantinople as the very presence of British colonial power is a representation of English "imperiality," a "producer of myths"³⁴ of male explorers and ambassadors, who have travelled to fulfil their professional duties, to take up their diplomatic posts in the foreign lands, all at the service of their government or the state rulers. This suggests that these travellers were not neutral in their expeditions, because they were the agents of an imperial eye/I, and had to fulfil the objectives of such an invisible power. *Orlando* satirizes the male traveller's chauvinism during these periods. This travel narrative shows, simultaneously, the limitation of the possibilities of

such forms of travelling for the women travellers, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Woolf fictionalizes Orlando as an ambassador and ambassadress, having a double vision, who pursues 'off the beaten' (for women, especially for Montagu) track of the East in Constantinople, not in search of antiquity, rather in quest of identity. In this way, she, implicitly, refers to those women travellers who accompany their husbands and families throughout their journeys.

Orlando is a transformation of desire into form, an adventurer, a traveller, or a hero/heroine "to pass [through time] at will," whereas he/she has "Constantinople in view" with the dreams of the "golden domes" (*D* 3: 131). Orlando is a stereotype standing for both male and female travellers' acculturating encounter with Constantinople—Orlando's (the man's and woman's) destination—as a typified land, and one of the most beautiful Eastern cities to which many English male and female travellers journeyed for various reasons. It was (and is) a magnificent city in Turkey and in history for its cultural, political and social situation as well as its natural landscapes and panoramas. Its historical importance goes back to A.D. 330, when Constantine the Great chose the city as his capital, and then called it New Rome. The people continued to call it Byzantium until he ordered the substitution of Constantinopolis. Then, through a series of negotiations over centuries, Constantinople changed to Istanbul in 1930. For more than 2500 years, however, it has stood between conflicting surges of religion, culture and imperial power, because it was formerly the capital of Byzantine Empire (of the Ottoman Empire) until 1923. Moreover, Constantinople is itself a liminal location or space; it stands in an in-between space neither fully European nor Asian. This in-between situation makes its position exactly similar to Orlando's status in Constantinople; in other words, Orlando is the incarnation of Constantinople's historical in-betweenness. During Orlando's ambassadorial sojourn, the city plays an important political role among the Asian countries.

Orlando, who has left England as a male diplomat in the seventeenth century, anticipates Edward Wortley Montagu, who was "appointed Ambassador Extraordinary to the Turkey, [as Anita Desai writes] to replace Sir Robert Sutton"³⁵ in 1716. Orlando as a female traveller—like Lady Mary Montagu, who was charmed by the prospect of travel in the East—returns in the eighteenth century to meet and grapple not only with her status

but—as a model traveller—with women's changed circumstances. Her lack of surprise or amazement at the sight of her sexual or physical change might be a reference to the transition in the attitudes of the male travellers and their greater readiness to assimilate themselves with the emergence of more female travellers and adventurers. Therefore, this 'Ovidian' metamorphosis or change in Orlando's status is preceded by another change in the status of women in the world of travel and adventure. After metamorphosis, Orlando's new position—reflecting women travellers as a whole—inaugurates a new season of her (their) fantastic and astonishing productivity. Indeed, Woolf depicts a form of liberation for the English women travellers in the East from the demands and strictures of their Western historical circumstances and existence. In the Orient, they return to their own origin or nature and travel in the embodied female East, as free individuals, not as English women; rather, they prefer to assimilate or associate themselves with the Orient than to dissociate themselves from it.

Orlando (the man), who has "a finger in some of the most delicate negotiations between King Charles [II] and the Turks," (*O*: 70) anticipates Edward Wortley Montagu, who had begun his diplomatic task, as Desai has pointed out, when "Turkey was at war with the Venetian Republic; Austria was committed by the treaty to come to the aid of Venice. England needed to prevent Austria from becoming embroiled as its support was required to offset Spanish power in the Mediterranean."³⁶ The countries, thus, were in an uncertain political situation, whereas Wortley Montagu had brought about a "peace treaty."³⁷ In addition, the Turkish Sultan Ahmad III (1673-1736), who was the Ottoman Emperor from 1703-20, had expressed his eagerness to allow the English government to mediate. At that time, Wortley Montagu was sent to Turkey by George I (the first Hanoverian king of Great Britain during 1714-27) "to urge them to sign a truce, not plead on Turkey's behalf,"³⁸ rather show the political friendship of Britain to the Byzantine Empire in order to control the territory. This solidifies and crystallizes the presence of the British Empire and the expansion of its power in the East, especially Constantinople.

The Montagus, accordingly, try to assimilate themselves to the way of people's life in Constantinople, especially Lady Montagu—behaving like them. Putting on a long Turkish cloak anticipating Lady Montagu, Orlando (the bisexual adventurer) sees "the domes of Santa Sofia and the rest would seem to be afloat" (*O*: 70). Santa Sophia is not

only an exciting landscape for the Montagus but also a beautiful and evanescent "treble globe of bubbles," experienced by Woolf in 1906, when she took a trip for the first time from Greece to Constantinople:

At six I was on deck, & suddenly we found ourselves confronted with the whole of Constantinople; there was St Sophia, like a treble globe of bubbles frozen solid, floating out to meet us. For it is fashioned in the shape of some fine substance, thin as glass, blown in plump curves; save that it is also as substantial as a pyramid. Perhaps that may be its beauty. (*PA*: 347)

The revolution, which occurred during Orlando's ambassadorial life in the seventeenth century, and anticipated Edward Wortley Montagu's ambassadorial experience in Constantinople, might be an anachronistic reference to the revolution against the Turkish Sultan that "draws on the 'Young Turks' coup that [Harold] Nicolson experienced in the Levant in January 1913."³⁹ This reference reflects Woolf's critique of the British imperial power and its continuation during many centuries. Harold Nicolson writes about it in his letter to Vita:

Europe sent a letter to the Turkish Government saying 'make peace'. They thought about it a long time and were just writing back "yes", when the revolution occurred and the answer was never sent. The new Government were thinking what answer *they* were to send—and then they told us that the answer was to be at the Austrian Embassy by 11.0 today.⁴⁰

On 23 January, when "Enver Bey seized power," the "Turkish army mutinied."⁴¹ Harold mentions "the revolution" by Enver Bey, the Ottoman general and commander in chief, a hero of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, who participated in the politics of the Committee of Union and Progress, leading the *coup d'état* of January 23, 1913, which restored his party to power, and in 1914, became the minister of war.⁴² All these references deal with the Orient as something available to the British ambassadors. This shows, as Said claims, "the realization of the [Western] projects,"⁴³ British hegemony over the Orient. Woolf, accordingly, reads and, in Said's words, comments on the "discourse of Orientalism" and the "Orient's powerlessness"⁴⁴ against the male traveller's chauvinistic desires.

Woolf's gendered reaction against the chauvinistic attempts of the English male travellers, who play the game of imperialism in the Oriental lands, is indicated in the form of a metamorphosis. Hence, as mentioned before, Orlando (the woman) might be

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. During the two years that she spent in transit and in residence in Constantinople, she carefully composed and copied out a series of the letters sent to her family and friends in England. The journey gave her an opportunity of sightseeing while her husband made contact and initiated negotiations with the Ottoman Empire which is a powerful sign for two opposite gazes of the male and female travellers.

In her *Letters*, Lady Montagu points out her "preoccupation with Turks and Turkishness"⁴⁵ through a gender analysis of their culture and behaviour. As Ludmilla Kostova states, the "authenticity of her account is a function of her gender which made it possible for her to enter the enclosed spaces of harem and *hammam*,"⁴⁶ and assumes the authoritative field of the "participant-observer" with her direct access to the seraglio and to the Turkish women.⁴⁷ Orlando's behaviour in the eighteenth century, especially her friendship with Swift and Pope, is analogous here to Lady Montagu's—ironically condemning "Swift and Pope for being ungrateful to their patrons without whom 'these two superior beings were entitled by their birth and hereditary fortune to be only a couple of link-boys.'"⁴⁸

Therefore, through turning the pages of the history of travel, Woolf highlights not only Lady Montagu's visit to Constantinople—"her Turkish costume, her voyage home, her quarrel with Pope"—in her idiosyncratic experience of travel in *Orlando*, but also Montagu's travails—as a female traveller who was far from home and her friends.⁴⁹ Unlike Orlando, who mocks the gipsies' language for its lack of meaning and diversity, Lady Montagu, in a letter to Pope, quotes Monsieur Boileau: "we are never to judge of the elevation of an expression in an ancient author by the sound it carries with us, which may be extremely fine with them, at the same time it looks low or uncouth to us."⁵⁰ Lady Montagu's confrontation with the Eastern culture is, to quote Isobel Grundy, "a most happy denial of what her own culture had led her to expect,"⁵¹ since she finds and admires the beauties and freedom in the Turkish culture for both men and women which had been misrepresented by the male travellers.

Orlando's return and her sense of wandering and domesticity remind us, as Vivien Jones writes, of "Wollstonecraft's discussion of love and marriage, of women's opportunities and their intellectual and moral capacities" as well as "of acceptable and unacceptable forms of feminine identity and behaviour."⁵² Wollstonecraft shows her

feelings and sensibilities in her letters to her family and friends, for instance, she loves domesticity, such as the "domestic felicity", "domestic comfort" and "domestic happiness."⁵³ Moreover, one of the outstanding characteristics of Wollstonecraft is her concern with "[i]ndependence," which Woolf refers to it in her "Four Figures" as "the first necessity for a woman; not grace or charm, but energy and courage and the power to put her will into effect" (*CR*: 157). Orlando's transformation and Wollstonecraft's revolution⁵⁴ in female's manners and behaviour are equivalent, because for Woolf, Wollstonecraft is one of the individuals who changed the social construction of gender in her time, like Orlando whose transformation reforms the status of women in the history of travel. The influence of Wollstonecraft's idea that the two sexes are in "all significant aspects the same"⁵⁵ can be traced in *Orlando*. Accordingly, by fictionalizing Orlando as a bisexual adventurer in the Orient, Woolf suggests that travel gives an opportunity to women to cross the traditional gender boundaries of their own culture, as Isabella Bird, Mary Kingsley and other women travellers did. These references support the gendered aspect of Woolf's thought⁵⁶ in constructing Orlando's personality, and in reconstructing the women traveller's presence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

With the improvement of technical and economic innovations, travel becomes easier and safer in the twentieth century; hence, an increasing number of the women travellers, some pleasure seekers, others adventurers, join those who travel for knowledge or business. The model for the twentieth century female traveller is Vita Sackville-West for whom travel, as she writes in *Passenger to Teheran*, "is the most private of pleasures. There is no greater bore than the travel bore."⁵⁷ For her, travel "is simply a taste, not to be logically defended,"⁵⁸ it has to be described in a language that appeals to the senses rather than the intellect. Indeed, one can trace how Vita's descriptions are not necessarily the historical facts or records of the local customs or cultures, yet reflect a world of impressions which reveals more about the places and their romantic effects rather than their cultural spaces. Her travelogues show her as a woman who approaches and explores life like an adventurer both to observe and to be observed.

Sackville-West travels throughout Europe, to Paris, Russia, Poland, and Austria with her family. After her marriage, she accompanied her husband, they travelled to Italy, Egypt, and then they set up house in Constantinople, where Harold Nicolson worked as a

diplomat in the Foreign Office for one year. In 1925 after the Great War, the English government sent Nicolson to Persia; it is then that Vita followed him in an adventurous journey through the deserts recorded in *Passenger to Teheran*. She describes the beauty of the land and the people who cultivate it. She is also influenced by the peasants' and nomads' simple lifestyle in the black tents and by their close connection to the wild land. Her romantic description of the land is recorded in her long poem *The Land* that she finishes while travelling in Persia.

In *Passenger to Teheran*, she expresses her feelings during her four days' travel through the desert by car, and believes that the Persian desert is a vast undomesticated space which fills her heart with composure and tranquillity. During her sojourn in Persia, especially in Tehran, in spite of knowing that she can never be completely separated from her cultural preconceptions, she tries to find her position as an outsider who is affected by her observations:

If you are wise you will not look upon the long period of time thus occupied in actual movement as the mere gulf dividing you from the end of your journey, but rather as one of those rare and plastic seasons of your life from which, perhaps, in after times, you may love to date the moulding of your character—that is, your very identity.⁵⁹

In her *Twelve Days*, which is an account of a journey across the Bakhtiari Mountains in South-western Persia, she describes her second visit to Persia during which she and four other Europeans—her husband, Harold Nicolson; Gladwyn Jebb, the Third Secretary of English Embassy in Tehran; Copley Amory from the American Legation in Tehran; and Lionel Smith from the American legation in Baghdad—journey through an out-of-the-way mountainous area inhabited by nomadic tribes. The remoteness of place excites her so much that she writes "I know, somewhere in my heart, that I want to be where no white man has ever been before, far from any place that has ever been heard of."⁶⁰ Woolf might portray Constantinople and the gipsy episodes with reference to Vita Sackville-West's experiences of the "Turkish capital during Harold Nicolson's wartime posting there as well as on her more recent ramble in the mountains of Persia among the nomadic Bakhtiari."⁶¹

Thus, *Orlando*, in a similar way that Pfister comments on Robert Byron's *The Road to Qxiana* (1937), is "a strange quest narrative that constantly redefines its purpose and

destination."⁶² It defines the discourse of male explorers or travellers whose quest for achievement is fuelled, in Pratt's words, by the "fantasies of transformation and dominance," and redefines the women travellers' quest for "self-realization and fantasies of social harmony."⁶³ It can also control Orlando's (the woman's) fleeting impressions and emotions by selecting domesticity and nature's splendour as the power that moulds her identity.

5.3. "A love of Nature": Orlando and Vita Sackville-West

Women in particular have written, rewritten, read, reread, interpreted and reinterpreted the discourses of nature. For them nature "has innumerable beauties and defects" (*E* 1: 157). The codes of nature, as Barthes states, are "associative fields, a supratextual organization of notations."⁶⁴ These codes are deciphered, both by the male and female writers, as a discourse that creates a certain notion of romantic beauty. From the outset of women's engagement in travel and travel writing, and at the turn of the century that witnesses the change of traveller's objectives and motives, as Pfister argues, in travel writing:

the parade of knowledge is replaced by, or incorporated into, a parade of the traveller's own delicate and unique self that completely upstages the outside world he or she confronts. [...] [I]t not only deletes the external world but also dissolves itself in constantly shifting moods and flights of sensations. Such aestheticist writing is, in its 'effeminate' softness and emotionalism, the very opposite to the heroic and masculinist adventure tradition [...].⁶⁵

The significant point is the coincidence of historical and stylistic change in the concept of travel writing and its genre. This coincidence reveals the "constantly shifting moods and flights of sensations," as a unique feature in the travel writers' "aestheticist writing." When Orlando (the man) is changed into a woman, his sex change is a metamorphosis: "though it altered their [Orlando, the man's and the woman's] future, [it] did nothing whatever to alter their identity" (*O*: 81). Accordingly, *Orlando* reflects the transitional change of two sexes and two periods at the same time: Orlando's metamorphosis from a man to a woman suggests the women's engagement in the world of travel as well as the emergence of "aestheticist writing" with all "its 'effeminate' softness and emotionalism." Indeed, it is not only Orlando's metamorphosis but also the metamorphosis of the concept

of travel. Such a metamorphosis reflects a change in the style of travel writing from the masculinist, adventure narrative to a more subjective, inward-looking style, exalting the beauties of nature. Even though the English women travellers' gazes are different from the English men's, their identities are the same. For this reason, Woolf writes, Orlando's memory "went back through all the events of her [his] past life without encountering any obstacle" (*O*: 81). Orlando (the woman) is more Oriental than Occidental and assimilates herself to the Orient. She has "now washed, and dressed in those Turkish coats and trousers, which can be worn indifferently by either sex; and was forced to consider her position" (*O*: 82). Like Lady Montagu, Orlando wears her "Turkish dress"⁶⁶ which is a 'disguise sufficient' for her free journeys in the area. With this change, her ambassadorial period comes to its end, and it is then that the "Ambassador of Great Britain at the Court of the Sultan left Constantinople" (*O*: 82).

Not merely does a new chapter in Orlando's life, as a female traveller and adventurer, begin—especially when she with the accompaniment of an old gipsy "rode for several day and nights and met with a variety of adventures, some at the hands of men, some at the hands of nature," (*O*: 82) while acquitting herself with courage—but also the (hi)story of travel and travel writing encounters a new revolution in the world of adventure. Broussa⁶⁷ is her destination where the chief camping ground of the gipsy tribe is located. It is a geographically unmapped village or place that is mapped in the fictional geography of the travel narrative to signify both the unmapped uniqueness of nature and the unbeaten track (for women).

At last, Orlando finds her destination to live a natural nomadic life within the mountains, a place where she has always longed to be, which gives a kind of vitality to her romantic desires. It is crucial to realize that both Lady Montagu, Mary Wollstonecraft⁶⁸ and Orlando love nature: "[t]he wonders of nature alone remain, and 'twas with vast pleasure I observed that of Mount Etna, whose flame appears very bright in the night many leagues off at sea, and fills the head with a thousand conjectures."⁶⁹ They are also influenced by "the prospect of the sea and the islands and the Asian mountains."⁷⁰ This underscores the fact that the nineteenth century is the age of those men and women travellers, who seek to find a new model for their desires.

Friedrich Schlegel had already pointed out, "[i]t is in the Orient that we must search for the highest Romanticism."⁷¹ Accordingly, one can see and trace the impact of travel in the romantic Orient on both Sackville-West and Orlando, which gives them a "new maturity,"⁷² because their mind and soul grow. Orlando finds the gipsies a group of people without any history or tradition, whereas she comes from a race whose history, tradition and civilization are very rich—another sign of dichotomy between the East and the West. According to Said's argument that "the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident,"⁷³ the dichotomy between the inferior/superior, disordered/ordered, barbaric/civilized and irrational/rational has been operative between these two halves. At this point, it seems that Woolf, like Vita, is not interested in the history and race of the tribe, rather in the immense beauties of nature and their effect on her own identity. The quest for identity, however, cannot be separated from the history and race of the tribes or the people. These ethnic questions are powerful motives for a tribe or a group of people, because when a traveller chooses to remain in a group, his attempts shape an identity that cannot be denied or taken away by others. Travel enriches Orlando and paves the way for a change; it seems that, like Sackville-West in Persia, her "eyes could see a new colour which nobody else could see"; in other words, she feels a "personal possession," which is "incommunicable" in words.⁷⁴

Quintessentially, the observer is as pleased to contemplate as the observed is pleased to contemplate him; i.e., there is a reciprocal interaction between the gazer and the gazee during which they encounter each other, gain knowledge, then return to translate and decode each other's culture. The love of nature and her beauties fills Orlando's (Vita's) heart, when she stands above the mountains in sight of their high solitudes in the purity of an April day. Then she rejoices in the empty, "unfinished landscape, where the imagination had room to move about, without stumbling over a multitude of objects, beautiful perhaps, but ready-made."⁷⁵ Orlando now understands differently, yet by living amongst the gipsies in the tents and mountains, her eyes "adapted themselves so quickly to the mountainous landscape" that she as an English woman "should have been surprised to see [such a] flat expanse."⁷⁶ Orlando "was thinking [of return], one fine morning on the slopes of Mount Athos, when minding her goats. And then Nature, in whom she

trusted, either played her a trick or worked a miracle" (*O*: 87). The miracle of nature is its mysterious beauties. Orlando's feeling reminds us of Vita's while travelling in Persia:

Those who have never dwelt in tents have no idea either of the charm or of the discomfort of a nomadic existence. The charm is purely romantic, and consequently very soon proves to be fallacious. You imagine that you are independent, and can stop the mule by a hiss or an ejaculation in any spot that takes your fancy, but you will soon find that a number of considerations come into play: water, for instance, is more important than you had ever conceived it to be in a country [...].⁷⁷

What matters here is "the charm" of nature mixed with "the charm" or "the discomfort of a nomadic existence" which can be understood only by a participant-observer. Indeed, the nature of the Bakhtiari Mountains in reality and the fictionalized nature in the travel narrative, which are articulated by virtue of an English gaze and imagination respectively, are at odds with the Western conception of the Orientals. It is at this point that Woolf shows the change in Orlando's gazes, interests and attitudes. One of the Oriental mysteries, realized by the women travellers, is the "fallacious", "alluring" and "inspiring" charm of its nature, which makes it very attractive for women. Thus, through reading nature and deciphering its codes, the women travellers experience *independence*.

In a similar way, the gipsies' camp in *Orlando* brings to mind the nomads' black tents in the Bakhtiari mountains of South-western Persia: "[i]t was not long before we came upon the nomads' camp. The black tents were pitched on a ledge overhanging the river Bazuft, which cut its jade-green way through a narrow gorge of rock hundreds of feet below."⁷⁸ These statements demonstrate both Orlando's and Vita's "love of Nature" (*O*: 83), as if nature speaks to them. Orlando behaves like an Eastern woman: she "milked the goats; she collected brushwood", "she herded cattle; she striped vines; she trod the grape" (*O*: 83) and so on; in fact, she assimilates herself to the gipsies' lifestyle. Orlando's relationship with nature is, however, different from the gipsies', because Orlando loves nature while the gipsies live in nature. Nature awakens the English disease, i.e., "a love of Nature, was born in her, and here where Nature was so much larger and more powerful than in England," (*O*: 83-4) Orlando falls into nature's hands. Like the female travellers who travel to the Orient, observe and experience the Oriental life, Orlando (the woman) is absorbed by nature. Like the European travellers, she has never seen such beautiful "mountains", "valleys" and "streams," hence she "climbed the mountains; roamed the

valleys; [and] sat on the banks of the streams" (*O*: 84). In the Orient, indeed, everything is something else and "her soul expanded with her eye-balls" (*O*: 84).

In comparison to Sackville-West, Orlando understands "the charm of a pastoral existence," when the gipsies are at rest, and "the sense of their weary progress was suspended."⁷⁹ This draws a line between her perception of the East and its nature as well as the reality of the gipsies' life. She is also amused by the natural life of the gipsies, for whom, as Vita writes, "any resting place becomes home," although their mind instinctively rejects "the implication of transitoriness," which is sought "by an excessive adaptability, for compensation."⁸⁰ She can neither analyze the mysteries of such a simple way of life nor comprehend the gipsies' independent nature and soul in a wild and undomesticated nature.

"[T]he paths running up into the mountains," that Orlando and Vita explore, are mere "goat-tracks" portrayed by Woolf in an "unmapped village," which includes a number of "fresh, ignorant, and unsophisticated people."⁸¹ This gives them an opportunity to experience the uncultivated life of nature, for instance, "every wild flower in its season, and every change of light."⁸² All these external experiences influence the adventurer's mind, so much so that, as Vita states, the only "goat-tracks one wants to explore are the goat-tracks of the mind, running up into the mountains," albeit "the only sophistication one really wants to escape from is one's own."⁸³ This confirms the profound influence of nature on the women travellers and their 'aestheticist' travel accounts, in this case, Sackville-West's and Woolf's.

Orlando's travel to the East and her gaze at the landscapes change her horizon of expectations, which, in Vita's words, results in an "internal illumination," or an expanding of the "personal resources, personal and private enjoyments."⁸⁴ This is an example of the impact of space on the traveller's mind and life. She observes the gipsies in their "slow and contemplative movement as could be performed on [their] own legs," yet through "flowing backwards and forwards," they can achieve no mental improvement, and their mind will instead "browse and brood; sow and reap."⁸⁵ What inevitably concerns us here is a feminine discourse, which is translated and written in the form of a travel narrative, that might be shaped by Woolf's reading of Sackville-West's *Twelve Days*, in which Vita states that the Englishmen have not known or experienced

such a natural leisure or at least, few English travellers have known it. It is as if history stopped in the Orient, and this pause in the life of travellers gives them an opportunity to travel through their mind, then review and revise their feelings and thoughts. Sackville-West believes that travellers who achieve such a feeling are not only "eccentrics for their pains" but also "among the wise ones of the earth."⁸⁶ This shows that the travails of travel transform the travellers' mind and horizon of expectations. As Vita remarks, "[n]othing is an adventure until it becomes an adventure in the mind."⁸⁷

Orlando's journey to Broussa is, like Sackville-West's journey to Persia, a kind of mental adventure, as Vita Fortunati claims, "a mental journey in search of her own identity, a way to explore her feelings and to refine her own sensibility."⁸⁸ To Sackville-West, travel is something more than mere sightseeing, rather it is "to reconcile the inner experience with the experience of *seeing*, *feeling* and *tasting* the *otherness* around them,"⁸⁹ which she calls "a private pleasure."⁹⁰ Through such "a private pleasure," she constructs, reconstructs or analyzes man (human being), or to quote Clifford Geertz, "peels off layer after layer" that is "complete and irreducible in itself, revealing another, quite different sort of layer underneath."⁹¹

Actually, Woolf has found the "contours" of Constantinople, and has contemplated its "clefts" in *Orlando*.⁹² Reviving Orlando's memories of childhood and adolescence or motivating her domestic desires after returning home is a sign which represents that, as Vita believes, "the desire for escape will, after sufficient indulgence, be replaced by the desire for return."⁹³ Hence to travel far away in the distance and to go far back in time give a new insight to the travellers about "what the past had been like; and what the world had been like."⁹⁴ Through the eyes of Orlando, Woolf gazes at life, according to Barthes, "as a language"; for her, "everything is culture," as a "*field of dispersion* [...] of languages."⁹⁵ It is under the effects of the division of cultures—the East and the West, through reading it, gazing at it, being influenced by it—that she acquires an insight contrary to the blindness of those "people," who, in Robert Byron's words, "travel blind."⁹⁶ Afterwards, she understands her own self and the "Other," as Pfister argues, her "own culture and the culture of the Other."⁹⁷ Like Vita in Persia, Orlando searches for civilization in Constantinople: "[it] was civilization in the most violent contrast that lay ahead."⁹⁸ Vita feels it when she observes the black tents of the nomads that sprinkled the

plain. Contrasting the nomads' life with their own caravan, especially the Englishmen's, gives her such an idea. Orlando experiences the same feeling while living among the gipsies:

She began to think, was Nature beautiful or cruel; and then she asked what this beauty was; whether it was in things themselves, or only in herself; so she went on to the nature of reality, which led her to truth [...] since she could impart no word of them, made her long, as she had never longed before, for pen and ink. [...] [The gipsies] wished Orlando would leave the tent and never come near again. (*O*: 85)

Orlando observes the beauties of "Nature," but as she meditates, she turns "to the nature of reality, which led her to truth," to the necessity of pen and ink. In this way, a line is drawn between the two poles through the gazes of female travellers by recognizing that the difference between the East and the West is that the former is natural, as Pfister writes, "alluring", "inspiring" and "strangely familiar." In contrast, the latter is "sublime" yet "trivial", "alluring" yet "irritating", "inspiring" yet "ludicrous", "incomprehensible" and "strangely familiar."

Orlando's horizon of expectations is changed; at last, she returns to her English blood and finds the Occident and its civilization superior to the Orient. Through her inner eyes, she sees England, "the roofs and belfries and towers and courtyards of her own home," (*O*: 88) then she bursts into a passion of tears, and decides to sail for England. Indeed, Woolf, meticulously, shows the ephemeral desires, passions and emotions of the women travellers, when they are far from home.

Orlando gazes at the Orient, reads it, translates its culture and is influenced by it; accordingly, the underlying will-to-write in the Oriental cultural text makes her begin writing a poem. Orlando's "The Oak Tree," which is an imitation of Sackville-West's *The Land*, is the poetic description of the experiences of her travels to the Orient, that is, a return to the land and what the land has given her. "The Oak Tree" or *The Land*, reshaping the myth of Orientalism that transforms "a meaning into form,"⁹⁹ is "the stammering answer" of a lover-traveller made during all these years:

What could have been more secret, she thought, more slow, and like the intercourse of lovers, than the stammering answer she had made all these years to the old crooning song of the woods, and the farms and the brown horses standing at the gate, neck to neck, and the smithy and the kitchen and the fields, so laboriously bearing wheat, turnips, grass, and the gardens blowing irises and fritillaries? (*O*: 185)

The passage refers to the experience of Orlando's Eastern travel and Vita's travel in Persia. "The Oak Tree," Orlando's "sea-stained, blood-stained, [and] travel-stained" (*O*: 134) poem, which pictures her adventurous life with the gipsies, includes all Vita's beautiful moments in Persia and its effect on her power of creativity as a romantic poet of nature.

5. 4. "Turkish trousers": a cultural discourse in the Orient

Barthes in "Pax Culturalis" argues that "everything is culture, from garment to book, from food to image, and culture is everywhere, from end to end of the social scale."¹⁰⁰

One of the concerns of a traveller that motivates him to seek out the people and their customs is the signs in other cultures; hence, for him "[a]ll objects which belong to a society have a meaning," so to speak, "there is virtually never an object *for nothing*."¹⁰¹

The first object that might attract the attention of a traveller is the people's garments, which are definitely different from his own garments; at least for a European traveller who travels to the Oriental countries it is so. Dress is a sign, a value and a discourse implanted in the cultural and social structure of the societies, carrying a burden of meaning which is deciphered by every observer, not necessarily a participant-observer, based on his social, cultural and ethnographic knowledge.

Woolf compares the situation of women in the Occident and the Orient by describing their costumes to trace another form of dichotomy between the East and the West as a *leitmotif*. Such comparisons and contrasts preoccupy Orlando's mind from the beginning of the travel narrative up to its end. When Orlando encounters his or her own cultural and social structure and that of the travellers, every sign or object appears to him or her as having a metaphoric depth which refers to a signified. Each sign begins to speak with Orlando; simultaneously, he or she begins to read them. *Orlando* faces the discourse of dress based on two different perspectives, one is through reading the *cultural* significance of dress, and the other is through deciphering its particular *social* representations. For Woolf, the desire for travel is the same in both men and women travellers; however, it is their clothes which makes the difference: "[h]ad they both worn the same clothes, it is possible that their outlook might have been the same too" (*O*: 109). Her objective, like Wollstonecraft, is to show that, albeit the travellers have different sexes, they might

define, redefine, construct and reconstruct the concept of travel, its privileges and its consequences in a similar way.

First, Woolf reads the discourse of dress in the Orient and in the Occident, which moulds the people's cultural identities. For her, dress, according to Barthes, functions "as the vehicle of meaning," and it "effectively serves some purpose, but it also serves to communicate information."¹⁰² The point, she focuses on, is the women's dressing, as "feminotopias,"—as Pratt states, the "idealized worlds of female autonomy, empowerment, and pleasure"¹⁰³—in the Orient which Orlando gazes at: "what an odd pass we have come to when all a woman's beauty has to be kept covered" (*O*: 91). In this regard, when Woolf arrives in Constantinople in 1906, she decides to "rid [herself] of certain preconceptions" about the "manners or politics with which all travellers should ballast their impressions" (*PA*: 351). She changes the course of her gaze from "those observations upon manners or politics" and "from the actual facts" to "the female sex" (*PA*: 351):

Were we not told for instance, that the female sex was held of such small account in Constantinople—or rather it was so strictly guarded—that a European lady walking unveiled might have her boldness rudely chastised? But the streets are full of single European ladies, who pass unmarked; & that veil which we heard so much of—because it was typical of a different stage of civilisation & so on—is a very frail symbol. Many native women walk bare faced; & the veil when worn is worn casually, & cast aside if the wearer happens to be curious. But it does have so much virtue in it as to suggest that it hides something rare & spotless, so that you gaze all the more at a forbidden face. (*PA*: 351-2)

Woolf does not see the veiled East which is described by the previous travel writers, especially Lady Montagu, who records the veiled East in her *Letters*: "all the women in town being veiled."¹⁰⁴ Contrary to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries travel writers who gazes at the people based on their presuppositions, Woolf observes the Europeanized cultural structure in Constantinople where "the veil" that is "worn casually" is changed into "a very frail symbol." Those veiled women, however, attract her attention and curiosity to know and search for the mystery of that "forbidden face."

Observing a "passionate creature," a woman who "raises her shield for a moment," Woolf's asks "[w]hat danger has she got to hide from? Whom would a sight of her face seduce?" (*PA*: 352) She guesses that all these impediments originate in "the sacred responsibilities of womanhood," (*O*: 91) especially in the Orient. Earlier than Woolf,

Isabella Bird experiences the same thing in her travels in Persia, as she records: "[t]he face is covered with a thick black gauze mask, or cloth, and the head and remainder of the form with a dark blue or black sheet, which is clutched by the hand below the nose."¹⁰⁵ Such a "feminotopia," as a language, a sign, an object, a form, a meaning and a value that is not neutral but is "marked in the light (or the shadow) of power,"¹⁰⁶ refers to the prevailing religious discourse in the Eastern societies, which might express in itself, as Pratt argues, the utopian worlds of female "autonomy, empowerment, and pleasure,"¹⁰⁷ or vice versa; i.e. the force behind a dictated convention. Conversely, Lady Montagu is not shocked by "their [the Turkish women's] custom of wearing the veil"; indeed, she feels that it gives them a greater freedom to walk out in the streets without fear of being recognized.¹⁰⁸ Thus, she writes in a letter to her sister Lady Mar that

no woman, of what rank so ever being permitted to go in the streets without two muslins, one that covers her face all but her eyes and another that hides the whole dress of her head, and hangs half way down her back and their shapes are also wholly concealed by a thing they call a *ferace* which no woman of any sort appears without. This has straight sleeves that [reach] to their fingers ends and it laps all round them, not unlike a riding hood. In winter 'tis of cloth and in summer plain stuff or silk.¹⁰⁹

The veil disguises them so completely and effectively that no one can distinguish "the great lady from her slave."¹¹⁰ For Lady Montagu, Kostova states, the veil is an advantage that gives the "Turkish women the freedom of anonymity, which enables them to move from place to place undetected."¹¹¹ The veil also gives Lady Montagu the opportunity to see the "mosque of Sultan Selim I,"¹¹² which is well worth the curiosity of a traveller, while she is dressed in her "Turkish habit."¹¹³ She describes these women, who "go veiled from head to foot under a black crepe and, being mixed with a breed of renegades, are said to be many of them fair and handsome."¹¹⁴ Dress is the subject of her gaze in the East and on her way to Constantinople, for instance, she finds the nuns' "dress" in Vienna and the Hungarian ladies' very "becoming."¹¹⁵ Dress as a sign shows the social, cultural and religious norms of the host country.

Second, dress plays an essential role in constructing and reconstructing the social personality of a person. Besides the primary function of covering the body, dress, as Woolf argues, has "two other offices—that it creates beauty for the eye, and that it attracts the admiration of [man's] sex"; accordingly, it creates pleasure for the eye and

"serves to advertise the social [...] standing of the wearer" (*TG*: 19). When Orlando decides to return, first of all, she "had bought herself a complete outfit of such clothes as women then wore, and it was in the dress of a young English woman of rank that she now sat on the deck of the *Enamoured Lady*" (*O*: 89). Dress changes both Orlando's appearance and her thought, since the "Turkish trousers" distract her thoughts: "the gipsy women, except in one or two important particulars, differ very little from the gipsy men" (*O*: 89). This form of costume might destroy not only the penalties and the privileges of the women's position in the society, but also "the whole edifice of female government" (*O*: 89).

Dress is a significant object, a sign and a myth, which makes known a person's sex and identity. It is a constructed discourse, a language which is not innocent or neutral; hence, it carries a meaning which is marked in the light of power. This knowledge gained through Orlando's first experience of meeting the Oriental veiled princess with her "extraordinary seductiveness", "a figure which, whether boy's or woman's, for the loose tunic and trousers of the Russian fashion served to disguise the sex, filled him with the highest curiosity" (*O*: 24). This desirable image of an Oriental veiled woman connotes the dialectic of truth and appearance. According to Mary Ann Doane, the veil not simply makes the "truth profound" and rare, but ensures "there is a depth that lurks behind the surface of things."¹¹⁶ This veiled truth is the secret and fantastic aspect of the Eastern veiled women which attracts the attention of the Western male travellers, because the East metaphorically plays an effeminate role for them.

Barthes argues that "[m]en do not have with myth a relationship based on truth but on use."¹¹⁷ For Orlando, it is very delightful to change her sex by exchanging frequently one set of clothes for another, since in this way "she reaped a twofold harvest [...] the pleasures of life were increased and its experiences multiplied" (*O*: 126). The experience of her travel to the East teaches her all the mysteries of being veiled; therefore, she exchanges "the seductiveness of petticoats and enjoyed the love of both sexes equally" as well as the freedom of experiencing all forms of adventures:

So then one may sketch her spending her morning in a China robe of ambiguous gender [...] she would change into a flowered taffeta which best suited a drive to Richmond and a proposal of marriage from some great nobleman; and so back again to town, where she would don a snuff-coloured gown like a lawyer's and visit the courts to hear how her cases

were doing [...]; and so, finally, when night came, she would more often than not become a nobleman complete from head to toe and walk the streets in search of adventure. (*O*: 126)

When Orlando wears "a China robe of ambiguous gender," it gives her all the joys and freedom of an Eastern traveller in the West. When she changes her dress into "a flowered taffeta" or "a snuff-coloured gown," it gives her an opportunity to taste the feelings of a lovely noble lady, or a lawyer, respectively. At the same time, it might suggest that wearing a man's clothes keeps women safe during their travels, and gives them an opportunity to taste all pleasures of adventure. For instance, as Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan state, "[Mary] Morris and [Dervla] Murphy try to draw attention away from themselves as women travelers by pretending to imitate men, both in their attitudes and styles of dress."¹¹⁸ Changing of clothes on the one hand gives the travellers an opportunity to gaze critically, not as an outsider, rather as an insider, and on the other hand makes them content to gaze instead of being gazed at as a foreigner.

Orlando shows dress as a sign whose meaning is deciphered according to the social and cultural codifications of different communities. After Orlando's return to London, the biographer explains that "clothes have [...] more important offices than merely to keep us warm," because they can "change our view of the world and the world's view of us" (*O*: 108):

For example, when Captain Bartolus saw Orlando's skirt, he had an awning stretched for her immediately, pressed her to take another slice of beef, and invited her to go ashore with him in the long boat. These compliments would certainly not have been paid her had her skirts, instead of flowing, been cut tight to her legs in the fashion of breeches. And when we are paid compliments, it behoves us to make some return. Orlando curtsied; she complied; she flattered the good man's humours as she would not have done his neat breeches been a woman's skirts, and his braided coat a women's satin bodice. (*O*: 108)

Clothes play an important role in determining the social position of man. For instance, Captain Bartolus reads Orlando's rank through "her skirts," which do not "cut tight to her legs in the fashion of breeches," it means that he respects "Orlando's skirt," stretches for her "an awning," presses "her to take another slice of beef," and invites her "to go ashore with him." All these "compliments" are for the sake of "her skirts," since, "it is clothes that wear us and not we them," we use clothes to wear our body, whereas "they mould our hearts, our brains, our tongues to their liking" (*O*: 108). Accordingly, the change of

clothes might bring "changes of behaviour and attitudes; [to quote Gail Ching-Ling Low] replacing our work day suits with evening wear may reflect an alteration in conduct."¹¹⁹

Similarly, description of the shopping scenery in *Mrs Dalloway* also represents the significance of dress in that travel narrative. Dress as a discourse traces the acceptance or rejection of the social or cultural values. For instance, "Clarissa's dress is a symbol of 'the perfect hostess,'" which, according to Jean M. Wyatt, "shines in artificial light but looks drab in the sunlight."¹²⁰ Her dress conveys her social self that glows at parties, but seems "shallow in the light of life's larger concerns"; hence, at the party when Clarissa wears her "silver-green mermaid's dress," she dazzles everyone, especially Peter Walsh.¹²¹

Dress as a particular social code classifies the people in society, and conveys a social identification; indeed, the people are identified by what they wear. For instance, Clarissa quotes Uncle William: "[a] lady is known by her gloves and her shoes, old uncle William used to say" (*MD*: 12). This suggests that dress is a discourse based on the class to which people belong, encoded in the shadow of power, and read by the members of that society. Woolf deciphers this social code in order to discover a new form of relationship derived from an experience shared by all women, who "acknowledge its full weight,"¹²² as she comments that "[d]ress, after all, is one of the chief methods of women's self-expression" (*TG*: 136).

Orlando's "modesty," her "vanity" and her "fears for her safety" are the same in Orlando (the man) and Orlando (the woman); the only obvious change is the change of their clothes. Metaphorically speaking, the body, here, plays the role of a fixed soul, which passes into different clothes that plays the role of the body; therefore, the traveller's cross-dressing is a kind of metempsychosis in itself. As Orlando observes everything through the gaze of a traveller, who sees the clothes as the significant signs that mould man's identity, Lady Montagu's clothing also was a multivalent symbol which not only defended her as a woman but also maintained her Occidental privilege.

Susan Bassnett, in "Travel writing and gender," states that Isabella Bird's reputation, as a serious traveller, is that she had dressed improperly in the "mannish clothing."¹²³ Nevertheless, in her travels, Isabella Bird tries to adapt herself to the situation; for instance, during her journeys to the East, she puts on her clothes like the Eastern women

in order to enter different shrines and harems. Elsewhere, in her travels to Japan, Julia M. Gergits writes, she dresses "as a Japanese woman to gain entry to a Shinto shrine"¹²⁴ or in her travels to Persia, she cannot "explore cities without wearing a mask and a black over garment."¹²⁵ Woolf underscores the significance of the Oriental clothes when Orlando disguises herself in the eighteenth century fashion by wearing a "China robe of ambiguous gender" (*O*: 126). Vita Sackville-West sees the "black veiled figures" or "the Persian women [who] are very bold and enterprising under the *cover* of the veil" both in Tehran and in "Kum's" (Qum's) bazaar: "the black veiled women stood and stared and whispered."¹²⁶ The clothes are signs which give the traveller a view of the culture of travellers from inside rather than from outside: "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"; indeed, the clothes are the "symbol of something hid deep beneath" (*O*: 109).

Consequently, by translating, and deciphering the cultural and social codes of clothing, and comparing and contrasting the consequences of wearing various forms of clothes, *Orlando* gives us an ethnographic view. This indicates that clothes are suitable masks, which can hide the real nature of man and help the travellers and adventurers to assimilate themselves with the cultural and social codifications and norms in the Orient or the Occident. Through portraying the clothes as a feminotopia, Woolf makes dress a valuable and powerful sign in cultural studies.

5. 5. "The sight of her native land after long absence": Self versus Other

Western cultural and economic hegemony, which strengthens the "idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures,"¹²⁷ needs a stimulus to construct, preserve and impose the Western knowledge and power upon the life of non-European peoples. This means that the underlying element in this hegemony originates in the implied objectives of power which are not attainable in a vacuum, but rather through encountering the 'Other.' Inevitably, these two worlds, in maintaining their identities, need each other, and one of the outcomes of such a confrontation results in presenting the Western (here English) identity as "sublime", "alluring", "inspiring" as well as "incomprehensible," and the 'Other' as "trivial", "irritating", "ludicrous" and "strangely familiar." Regarding this view, Orlando's attempt,

in comparing and contrasting himself or herself with the 'Other,' in Pfister's words, functions as a "media of understanding oneself and the other, one's own culture and the culture of the Other."¹²⁸

To approach the discourse of the Orient systematically as a kind of learning, discovery, and practice, Woolf opens the first chapter of *Orlando* with the exploratory journeys of the Hakluyt collection or Orlando's ancestors and its influence on Orlando (the man), by showing the head of a Moor that swings from the rafters:

He [...] was in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor which swung from the rafters. [...] Orlando's father, or perhaps his grandfather, had struck it from the shoulders of a vast Pagan who had started up under the moon in the barbarian fields of Africa; and now it swung, gently, perpetually, in the breeze which never ceased blowing through the attic rooms of the gigantic house of the lord who had slain him. (*O*: 11)

The "head of a Moor" or the "barbarian fields of Africa" is a sign, a message, an "inflection," a meaning transformed into form, a "type of speech defined by its intention,"¹²⁹ a myth, which is repeated throughout the book in different forms. It signifies the colonization, the British imperialism, the Western superiority over the 'Other,' and a motivation for a young English boy to take part in such kind of adventures by lunging, plunging and slicing the air with his blade, which reflects the desire for travel in the English male explorers, especially in the Elizabethan period. Moreover, as Indira Ghose referring to John Mackenzie states, it may demonstrate "the hunting ethos [which] was imbricated with the ideology of imperialism."¹³⁰

Like Gertrude Bell, Orlando sees the homeland as "an enclosed garden" or a "sanctuary,"¹³¹ but the East as the place of expedition and adventure. He tends to travel to change his life, because the "sights disturbed him", "exalted him" and "made him in love with death" (*O*: 12). In addition, he is in quest of the new sights, since all the sights of England and home here become boring and disturbing: "all these sights [...], the hammer beating, the wood chopping, began that riot and confusion of passions and emotions" (*O*: 12). Orlando, who is in a horrible position, finds himself "gazing, recognizing" and surrounded by the great family houses; therefore, the desire to depart from this situation makes him think: "it was the back of a great horse that he was riding; or the deck of a tumbling ship" (*O*: 14).

To reach self-recognition and a recognition of the 'Other,' to experience the changes of travail, and to return as a knowledgeable individual, Orlando needs to undertake a journey both in time and in space, which originates in his desire for travel and passes from a closed, silent existence to his adventurous activities; hence, his quest becomes a myth. It is at this point that Queen Elizabeth calls him "her Treasure and Steward" and sends him to "Scotland on a sad embassy to the unhappy Queen," (*O*: 17) and then, on his way to the Polish wars, the Queen recalls him. Accordingly, the desire for travel is shaped and reshaped in Orlando's mind like in every male traveller who is in quest of departure and desires to be far from home and its tedious routine. It is, indeed, the "adventure that befell Orlando," (*O*: 20) and his desire for travel to the effeminate East is motivated by "the loose tunic and trousers of the Russian fashion served to disguise the sex" of a figure whose "extraordinary seductiveness" (*O*: 24) makes her attractive.

Orlando (the man) falls in love with the Russian princess, finds his Englishness, as "a privilege reserved only for those of imperial blood," (*O*: 30) which is a critique concerning the superiority of the Occident. This sixteenth-century Orlando

suspected at first her [princess's] rank was not as high as she would like; or that she was ashamed of the savage ways of her people, for he had heard that the women in Muscovy wear beards and the 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 and live in huts where an English noble would scruple to keep his cattle; so that he forbore to press her. (*O*: 30)

This is the starting point of contact between what he "had heard" about the 'Other,'— the barbarians, whose women "wear beards," the "men [who] are covered with fur from the waist down," or the way they "tear meat with their fingers and live in huts"—and what he encounters in such a situation. The comparison between the Muscovite and English temperament, as an English projection rather than reality, shows not only the primitive and barbaric manners of the Russians contrary to the civilized and ordered system of the English life, but also the marginality of the Orient and the centrality of the Occident through "the Orient's special place in European western experience."¹³² Orlando (the man) dissociates himself from the Russians, namely the 'Other,' and sees in them "something coarse flavoured, something peasant born," which reflects the nature of Russia where they "would listen to the wolves howling across the steppes" (*O*: 34). In

contrast, for Orlando, England, especially London, seems to be "a golden window with troops of angels [...] passing up and down the heavenly stairs perpetually" (*O*: 33).

This woman, who has come "in the train of the Muscovite Ambassado," (*O*: 25) accentuates Orlando's desire for travel to the Orient. Sasha as an Oriental female traveller observes everything:

The Princess continued. Who were those bumpkins, she asked [Orlando], who sat beside her with the manners of stablemen? What was the nauseating mixture they had poured on her plate? Did the dogs eat at the same table with the men in England? Was that figure of fun at the end of the table with her hair rigged up like a Maypole (*une grande perche mal fagotée*) [a big perch dressed up badly] really the Queen? And did the King always slobber like that? And which of those popinjays was George Villiers? (*O*: 26)

All these questions and curiosities are the result of being a traveller or adventurer in a foreign land. Sasha, who compares the noble men and women, their way of eating and behaviour, and even their situation with her own country, gives Orlando all the exceptional joys and delights of travel to the East which is different from all his previous experiences. They "talk of everything under the sun; of sights and travels" (*O*: 28) to the East and the West. Orlando with his English blood thinks of death, whereas Sasha with her Russian blood is powerful like the "waves of the sea," bright "like an emerald," warm "like the sun on a green hill," unlike whatever Orlando "had seen or known in England" (*O*: 29). Both the East and the West, these two totally different worlds, need such an encounter to reach a self-recognition and to comprehend the 'Other'—the "strangely familiar" Other.

Orlando's desire becomes so strong that it changes into a "disease to substitute a phantom for reality," (*O*: 45) the disease of travelling which paves the way for going far out and escaping from his homeland to experience the others:

Orlando was of a strong constitution and the disease [of travelling] [...] never broke him as it has broken many of his peers. But he was deeply smitten with it, as the sequel shows. [...] [Orlando's] most daily movements are like the passage of a ship on an unknown sea, and the sailors at the mast-head ask, pointing their glasses to the horizon: is there land or is there none? (*O*: 46-7)

Orlando's desire for travel is gratified when the Queen offers an "ameliorative" travel in order to give him, as James Buzard would say, "a time or imaginary space out of ordinary life for the free realization" of his "thwarted potential."¹³³ Therefore, they need to be

somewhere far away to patrol the corridors of power. By sending Orlando to the Orient, the Queen aims at producing better Englishmen or "better statesmen and masters of estates," because travel furnishes, as Buzard claims, some "comparisons favourable to the social and political institutions of England."¹³⁴

Oriental travel gives Orlando, as Buzard would argue, "channels for those energies that must remain pent up in [his] domestic rounds."¹³⁵ In fact, Orlando's eyes are focused on "the ships of the Ambassadors [...] the French; the Spanish; the Austrian; [and] the Turk" (*O*: 39). This confirms his desire for diplomatic travel. The text gives both an ambiguous image of the Orient, embodied in a veiled Russian princess like an unattainable goal, and the desire of all male adventurers for experiencing this veiled and unknown being. It is at this point of unveiling the Orient that the West tries to achieve the knowledge of both the Eastern and the Western culture.

By portraying this ambassadorial travel, Woolf shows travel as a stronger instinctual desire in men than in women, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It means that the desire for travel among English young men is stronger than any other desires, because young Orlando experiences the women, books and solitude, yet none of them fulfils his desire for going far out:

Eagerly recalling these and other instances of his unfitness for the life of society, ineffable hope, that all the turbulence of his youth, his clumsiness, his blushes, his long walks, and his love of country proved that he himself belonged to the sacred race rather than to the noble. (*O*: 50)

The "sacred race" is his hidden desire for the East incarnated as a female body of the Russian princess. This indicates Woolf's own sense of adventure, because she believes that even an ordinary walk in the street can change the man's mind. As a result, when she illustrates that Orlando "would go out after breakfast a man of thirty and come home to dinner a man of fifty-five at least," (*O*: 58) it means that any form of adventure, even a short expedition in the streets, can be very beneficial for the adventurer. In this way, she elucidates her theory of travel and its advantage and influence on the mind and sensibility of a traveller. As she writes, in "The Sentimental Traveller":

If only, in travelling, you will open your mind to receive all impressions and force your imagination to track down the most fugitive of suggestions, something charming and

valuable, because original, will be recorded. This is perhaps the course that any sensitive mind adopts naturally, though it does not always go on to trace it out upon paper. (*E* 1: 158)

Woolf comments on travel as a process which improves the travellers' insight and knowledge of the world, and suggests that life, for Orlando as a traveller, is something "of prodigious length" (*O*: 59). Orlando comes to no "peroration," and finds it better "to go unknown and leave behind [him] an arch, a potting shed, a wall where peaches ripen, than to burn like a meteor and leave no dust" (*O*: 62). In short, the West, through encountering the East, tries to remove its own blindness and acquire an insight of both the self and that of the East or the 'Other.'

When one thinks of such a confrontation as a kind of Western projection onto or the Western will over the Orient, one will encounter some realities through a comparative observation, such as Orlando's gaze during his diplomatic stay:¹³⁶

there would be the river; there the Galata Bridge; there the green turbaned pilgrims without eyes or noses, begging alms; there the pariah dogs picking up offal; there the shawled women; there the innumerable donkeys; there men on horses carrying long poles. [...] [T]he beating of gongs, cryings to prayer, lashing of mules, and rattle of brass-bound wheels, while sour odours, made from bread fermenting and incense, and spice, rose even to the heights of Pera itself and seemed the very breath of strident, multi-coloured and barbaric population. [...] Nothing, he reflected, gazing at the view which was now sparkling in the sun, could well be less like the counties of Surrey and Kent or the towns of London and Tunbridge Wells. To the right and left rose in bald and stony prominence the inhospitable Asian mountains, to which the arid castle of a robber chief or two might hang; but parsonage there was none, nor manor house, nor cottage, nor oak, elm, violet, ivy, or wild eglantine. There were no hedges for ferns to grow on, and no fields for sheep to graze. The houses were bare and bald as egg-shells. (*O*: 70-1)

This is an image of the Orient based on the European imagination, the outcome of a hegemonic ideology, which sees and constructs the Orient Occidentally, in Said's terms, as "irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different,'" whereas the West is "rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal'."¹³⁷ It underlines, according to Said, an "absolute demarcation between East and West"¹³⁸ from which one can trace that the "knowledge of Orientals"¹³⁹ originates in the West's "will to power over the Orient."¹⁴⁰ Therefore, everything in the Orient, especially the people, seems strange, "multi-coloured" and "barbaric," because like every English traveller Orlando compares Constantinople and its "inhospitable Asian mountains" with London.¹⁴¹ Orlando with his "English root and fibre" sees everything in

"this wild panorama, and gaze[s] and gaze[s] at those passes and far heights planning journeys there alone on foot" (*O*: 71).

During his travel and sojourn in the Orient, Orlando undergoes a travail, encounters the Orient, even though different, as in Said's words, it is "a world with its own national, cultural, and epistemological boundaries and principles of internal coherence"¹⁴² which changes his horizon of expectations. Thus, his romantic power is often associated with "a nature of extreme reserve" (*O*: 74). Yet the beauties of the East awaken his soul and enable him to comprehend the power of these natural beauties:

power to stir the fancy and rivet the eye which will keep a memory green long after all that more durable qualities can do to preserve it is forgotten. The power is a mysterious one compounded of beauty, birth, and some rarer gift, which we may call glamour and have done with it. (*O*: 74)

The passage shows, as Said believes, the "European sensibility"¹⁴³ towards the Orient. Or as Pfister writes, the "sublime and trivial, alluring and irritating, inspiring and ludicrous, incomprehensible and strangely familiar" power of the natural beauties that give Orlando a "mysterious" power "compounded of beauty", "birth, and some rarer gift," which is called "glamour." Hence the "glamour" of the East is really essential to a romantic traveller like Orlando.

As much as the desire to travel is fascinating for Orlando (the man), *nostos* or the desire to return is pleasing for Orlando (the woman), when she sees the cliffs of the British Island, "*the sight of her native land after long absence* [my emphasis]," (*O*: 95) a deep joy captures her mind. Return is, as Pfister argues, the result of "understanding oneself and the other, one's own culture and the culture of the Other" that gives Orlando a kind of self-recognition. The moment of return is so "delightful", "august" and "sublime" that the "Tower of London" and the other buildings in the city with their glorified shape, which remind her of the memory of the traditional England, become attractive "to the gaze of a returned traveller" (*O*: 95-6). Likewise, the same desire is experienced by Lady Montagu who, at last, decides to return: "I wish with all my heart to hasten my return, because I am absolutely obliged to lie in every year as long as I remain here. [...] I pray every day to see my king, my country and my friends again. I take great pains to see everything."¹⁴⁴ In spite of the fact that she is able to speak Turkish passably well and has

the advantage of forming friendships with Turkish women, she desires to see her country and friends.¹⁴⁵ Travel trains her to experience the absence and to reshape herself based on her travails.

For Victorian women, home is constructed as a sacred or holy place that is both the literal and metaphorical point of travellers' departure. It is the fixed point to which other places will be compared. For this reason, Victorian women serve as the symbolic embodiment of home because not only is the woman's place at home, yet she is in fact home itself, for her body is traditionally associated with earth, shelter and enclosure. However, every traveller's heart might desire to return home, as Vita Sackville-West states: "it is home which drags the heart; it is spirit which is beckoned by the unknown. The heart wants to stay in the familiar safety; the spirit, pricking, wants to explore, to leap off the cliffs."¹⁴⁶

For most women, travelling means to gather a series of impressions and to make a succession of more or less conscious notations on the superiority or inferiority of other places and societies when compared with one's own home. Hence, after returning, Orlando is absorbed in wonder: "[h]er eyes had been used too long to savages and nature not to be entranced by these urban glories" (*O*: 96). According to Barthes, when we look at an object, "it becomes a lookout in its turn when we visit it."¹⁴⁷ Now Orlando looks at London and sees that "London itself had completely changed since she had last seen it" (*O*: 97); indeed, both London and Orlando's gaze are changed. Orlando has no longer the same personality, worldview and identity of the time of his or her first departure from the Occident.

When Orlando (the woman) enters London as an experienced Oriental traveller whose horizon of expectations, gazes and observations are completely changed, she finds "each sight and sound" differently and they fill "her heart with such a lust and balm of joy" (*O*: 100). She is changed, since she is not that faithful ambassador, since she has experienced the Orient, and especially Rustum el Sadi, who has "waved his hand that night in the Asian mountains," (*O*: 101) which is not an empty signifier, but a sign full of meaning. Woolf embodies the culture of the East in an old gipsy, Rustum el Sadi, who signifies the East's glorious past as well as its continuity. The waving of the hand is a sign to show that the Orient and the Occident are two inseparable poles through the gazes of the

English travellers, for they need each other; i.e., they are defined by each other. At the same time, it refers to their close relationship and Rustum's Oriental hospitality.

[Orlando, the woman] thought of the Egyptian pyramids and what bones lie beneath them as she stood in the crypt; and the vast, empty hills which lie above the sea of Marmara seemed, for a moment, a finer dwelling-place than this many-roomed mansion in which no bed lacked its quilt and no silver dish its silver cover.

"I am growing up," she thought, taking her taper. "I am losing my illusions, perhaps to acquire new ones," and she paced down the long gallery to her bedroom. (*O*: 101)

Orlando compares and contrasts England's ancestral situation and her present status with that of the Orient, "the Egyptian pyramids," the "bones [that] lie beneath them" and the "empty hills which lie above the Sea of Marmara." She comprehends that her British identity is based upon a notion of England's hegemonic white ethnicity formed by the men's rules from which there is no escape: "I am losing my illusions, perhaps to acquire new ones." Here, Woolf observes like Sackville-West, "[whose] eyes could see a new colour which nobody else could see."¹⁴⁸ Woolf uses, however, a different discourse to define, redefine, discover and rediscover her identity.

Orlando owes "the progress of her own self along her own past" to her travel to the East and its experiences: "[y]et still for all her travels and adventures and profound thinkings and turnings this way and that, she was only in process of fabrication" (*O*: 102). This shows the incessant change and the high "battlements of thought" (*O*: 102) of the travellers' gaze, which help them to construct their identities not only during their travel but also after their return. In spite of all these changes, her sense of Englishness (the travellers' imperial eye/I) remains unchanged and in the chambers of her mind, she sees the old gipsy and says, "this is a thousand times better than Turkey, Rustum" (*O*: 102). Throwing her cheroot out of the window, "a habit she had brought back from the East," (*O*: 100) is a meaningful sign to signify that she throws away her past memories and her habits which attach her to the Orient just for a while.

As far as the question of cultural difference emerges in her mind, it produces the doubling moment of the emergence of Western modernity. She finds herself in an imaginary spatial distance, as if she lived somehow beyond the border of times. This temporal and spatial distance throws her into the social differences that may interrupt her collusive sense of cultural contemporaneity. It creates a sense of newness which is not

part of the continuum of past and present, rather, as Homi K. Bhabha states, an "insurgent act of cultural translation."¹⁴⁹ This presence-absence or absence-presence of past-present is a part of the necessity that refigures and reshapes her identity. What matters is that Orlando does not forget the Orient, but rather that the Orient plays a profound role in her self-recognition as well as her social perception. It reveals that the fixity of identity is sought, as Robert J. C. Young argues, in the situations of "instability" and "change."¹⁵⁰ Indeed, by orientalizing her experiences of travel, Woolf defines and fixes her "national distinctiveness."¹⁵¹

Orlando recognizes the superior order, rationality and symmetry of England and the inferior disorder, irrationality and primitivism of the gipsies, as the self-confirming parameters which motivate her to return. Her mind and gaze are different now. She analyzes London's social structure through the new lenses of an experienced adventurer: "society is one of those brews such as skilled housekeepers serve hot about Christmas time, whose flavour depends upon the upper mixing and stirring of a dozen different ingredients" (*O*: 111). She searches out Western society, as "the most powerful concoction in the world," and finds that the "society has no existence whatsoever" (*O*: 112); therefore, it can be everything or nothing, it depends on those who control it. The main point is that this truth about the distinctive differences between races, civilizations, the East and the West is the concern of every traveller who goes to the East. This shows, in Said's words, Woolf's critique of "the real boundaries between human beings, on which races, nations, and civilizations were constructed."¹⁵²

Orlando reflects the spirit and language of the English men and women travellers and adventurers; it is the myth of the English travellers' life, joy, diplomatic experiences, romantic sensations, travail and so forth. In the nineteenth century, Orlando remembers her experience of life with the gipsies in Turkey and sees herself as "nature's bride" (*O*: 140):

camels passing in single file through the rocky desert among clouds of red dust; and then, when the camels had passed, there were only mountains, very high and full of clefts and with pinnacles of rock, and she fancied she heard goat bells ringing in their passes, and in their folds were fields of irises and gentian. (*O*: 142)

She fancies and her soul is united with nature, but even such unification cannot satisfy her desire for the East, which is revived again. The discourse of "absence" and distance is carried on, as Barthes states, by the woman who is "sedentary", and "faithful."¹⁵³ Woolf rereads and translates this Penelopean, Barthesian (*avant la lettre*) meaning of absence, and as a result creates a bisexual adventurer who loves the East, its adventures, its beauties and, as Nigel Nicolson writes, its "emphatic landscapes."¹⁵⁴ Orlando feels, in Barthes's words, "the *raised arms of Desire*," the desire for travel and the East, and concurrently she feels "the *wide-open arms of Need*," which originates in her love of the natural and virgin beauties of the East. She reads the discourse of absence and its "two ideograms": "*Desire*" and "*Need*."¹⁵⁵ The splendid outcome of Orlando's travel to the East is to find that the East and the West desire each other, and that both need "supplements, not complements."¹⁵⁶

Orlando cannot be satisfied just with the East; she needs English blood, and at last, finds it in Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, Esquire (*O*: 142). When Orlando marries Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, she calls him "Bonthrop" that means "England," and sometimes "Shelmerdine" that suggests his high adventurousness, because he "spent [his life] in the most desperate and splendid of adventures" (*O*: 143). Orlando also calls him Shel, which might refer to "shell" or "shield," or sometimes "Mar," which might be a reference to Lady Mar—Lady Montagu's sister—or it might be "an honorific title for saints and higher clergy."¹⁵⁷ Mar may also be Vita's sobriquet ("her mother's name [Mar] for her") in her letters to Harold, or it may suggest the meaning of "Mar" in Persian (a title for saints or religious men) as "Harold's father's pet name for him", "Hadji," meaning a religious man who goes to Mecca or a "pilgrim," which was Harold's Persian name, and "Vita adopted it for the rest of her life."¹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, Orlando loves a man who has "been a soldier and a sailor" and has "explored the East" (*O*: 143). She, symbolically, marries the masculinist exploration of the East; in this sense, *Orlando* unites Orlando, on the one hand, with the exploration of the East, and on the other hand, with the femininity of the East. Shelmerdine whom Orlando calls a woman is not only a man whose "life was spent in the most desperate and splendid of adventures—which is to voyage round Cape Horn in the teeth of a gale," (*O*: 143) but also the incarnation or the embodiment of Orlando's desire for the lost East.

The word "Bonthrop" may signify that Orlando, like Rachel and Hewet in *The Voyage Out*, is drowned in a "solitary mood," like being lonely in a caravan in a desert close to death, whereas for Shelmerdine the word signifies "separation and isolation and the disembodied pacing the deck of his brig in unfathomable seas" (*O*: 147). Shelmerdine is a voyager who is "always sailing round Cape Horn" (*O*: 150); he is like Rachel's father, whose lifestyle is voyage. At last, by aestheticising and poeticising the East, Orlando gives the image of the East in "the Oak tree," the same as Sackville-West, who gives her own cultural and poetic translation of the East in *The Land*.¹⁵⁹ Orlando, like Sackville-West, is absorbed by the "foreign-looking [...] Egyptian girls," (*O*: 151) who are veiled by scarf in dull purple: "Sullen and foreign-looking, the snaky flower, / Scarfed in dull purple, like Egyptian girls—" (*O*: 151). The "Egyptian girl" is a symbolic image of the Oriental veiled woman like the Turkish woman, or the Persian or Russian girl. These references reflect the influence of those parts of the East that are visited by the women travellers, especially Vita. These lines underscore the profound influence of the East and the Oriental women on both Orlando and Vita to show how the beauties of nature and its femininity attract their attention.

As a matter of fact, Orlando rejects a life of sitting still in a chair and thinking, because for her this kind of life is not satisfactory. She is a traveller; therefore, only travel and movement can bring all the joys and pleasures of the East. At the present time dated by the biographer "the eleventh of October" in 1928, Orlando is a twentieth-century traveller ("Vita should be Orlando," [*D* 3: 157]), who sees a girl in Russian trousers: "'what is it that I taste? Little herbs. I hear goat bells. I see mountains. Turkey? India? Persia?' [...] sees her now preparing to get into her motor car with her eyes full of tears and visions of Persian mountains" (*O*: 173). Orlando is like Vita who remembers the Bakhtiari Mountains, which she records in *Twelve Days*. Hence the twentieth-century Orlando travels all these centuries while "being out in the country and needing another self presumably" (*O*: 175).

Orlando experiences different selves which are made during the years of his or her travel. Having "a great variety of selves," (*O*: 175) she is changed far more than any traveller has been able to find room for: "the conscious self, [...] the true self [...] compact of all selves we have it in us to be; commanded and locked up by the Captain

Self, the key self, which amalgamates and controls them all" (*O*: 176). In fact, Woolf suggests that by means of every experience of travel a new self emerges, and she confirms it by portraying Orlando's different selves. Orlando is in quest of her "real" and "single self," (*O*: 178) or, in Barthes's words, "an always present *I*," or her sense of Englishness or Londonness, which is "constituted only by confrontation with an always absent *you*"¹⁶⁰—being Oriental. Her gaze is changed and her eyes become so exact that it seems "she had a microscope stuck to her eye" (*O*: 181). Travel and travail train her penetrating eye/*I* and give her, in Clifford Geertz's terms, a critical "microscopic"¹⁶¹ eye/*I*, like an ethnographer.

The point to be emphasised is that Woolf creates a *double travel* narrative in which Orlando (the man) experiences on the one hand a diplomatic journey to Constantinople and on the other hand, a metamorphosis (the metaphor of travel in the body and gender or the male travellers' presence and the emergence of female travellers). Concurrently, it is a journey in the history of the travellers' life in the East and the impact of their cultural confrontation which form the *leitmotif* or three phases of travel as departure, transformation and return. Accordingly, Orlando paves the way for the confrontation of the self and the 'Other,' and offers, in Buzard's words, a fantastic "dialectical play of cultural 'belonging' and 'homelessness.'"¹⁶² Woolf proposes that travel can broaden a person's horizon of expectations, without any gender boundaries, make him "a citizen of the world" or at least, as Buzard claims, "a better citizen at home, confirming the superiority of British social arrangements over those found elsewhere."¹⁶³ Orlando discovers Constantinople, and the gypsies' life, and rediscovers England, her own world and the mysteries of life. When she departs, "having seen [the English society] by contrast with other societies,"¹⁶⁴ especially the Orient, she finds herself a better Englishwoman and adventurer, and realizes that "being far away makes one fairer to England than when one is at home and worried with all the pettiness and ignorance."¹⁶⁵