

# A NON-PHALLOCENTRIC FEMININE WRITING PRACTICE IN VIRGINIA WOOLF AND ERENDİZ ATASÜ THROUGH THE ‘ALL-ENCOMPASSING FEMALE LANGUAGE’

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## ABSTRACT

Language has always played an active role in creating a subjugated life for women. In this limited life, civilization is patriarchal, history is HIStory, literature is phallogentric and language is man-made. In order to break the chain of vicious circle, forcing them being the inferior ‘others’ of men, women seek the ways of de(con)structing all the fixed and hierarchical structures of male discourse and its man-made language. Among those women are Virginia Woolf and Erendiz Atasü, who assert that women can transcend all patriarchal boundaries between body/mind, female/male and self/other through the ‘all-encompassing female language’, enabling a non-phallogentric feminine writing practice. Depending on their concerns, this study puts forward how phallogentric ideology affects women and how it is challenged by women’s writing by basing its argument on post-structuralist feminist theories. It analyzes the pursuit of a female language by Woolf and Atasü to find out if the female language shares common features despite the philosophic, religious and cultural differences. The comparative analysis of the two writers reveals that the all-encompassing female language challenges and brings down the phallogentric discourse by de(con)structing the distance between ‘body and mind’ and achieves ‘wholeness’ by moving beyond the fixed confines of sexual differences.

**Keywords:** female language, feminine writing, de(con)struction, man-made language, phallogentric discourse, body-mind unity

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# VIRGINIA WOOLF VE ERENDİZ ATASÜ'DE 'KAPSAYAN VE BÜTÜNLEŞTİREN DIŞIL DİL' İLE FALLUS DIŞI DIŞIL YAZIN PRATIĞI

## ÖZ

Dil, kadınların yaşam alanlarını sınırlamada ve onların itaatkâr bir hayat sürmelerini sağlamada her zaman etkin ve baskın bir rol oynamıştır. Bu sınırları çizilmiş hayat içerisinde tüm medeniyetler ataerkil olmuş, tarih hep erkekler tarafından belirlenmiş, edebiyat ise fallus merkezli erkek egemen dille yazılmıştır. Kadınlar, kendilerini erkeğin değersiz 'ötekisi' olarak tanımlayan bu kısır döngüden kurtarabilmek için, erkek egemen söylemin ve dilinin tüm sabit ve hiyerarşik yapılarını yıkmamanın ve yeniden yapılandırmanın yollarını bulma arayışı içine girmiştir. Virginia Woolf ve Erendiz Atasü bu arayışın öncülerindedir ve onlara göre mevcut olan tek yol, kadınların beden/akıl, kadın/erkek, ben/öteki olarak belirlenmiş ataerkil sınırlandırmaların ötesine geçmeleridir. Bu da ancak 'kapsayan ve bütünleştiren dışıl dil' ile oluşturulacak olan 'dışıl yazın' ile mümkündür. Woolf ve Atasü'nün ataerkil söylemleri kalıplaştıran ve normalleştiren erkek-egemen dil ile ilgili kaygıları göz önünde bulundurularak, bu çalışmada öncelikle, fallus merkezli ideolojilerin kadınları olumsuzlayan ve ötekileştiren yapısı ortaya konulmakta, ardından bu ideolojilerin kurmuş olduğu düzeni tersine çevirebilmenin bir yolu olarak kadın yazını değerlendirilmektedir. Bu amaçla, post-yapısalcı feminizm kuramları temel alınarak, farklı dönemlerin yanı sıra felsefi, dini ve kültürel yapıları da birbirinden çok farklı toplumlarda yaşamış olan Woolf ve Atasü'nün dışıl dil olgusu incelenmekte, tüm bu farklılıklara ve engellere rağmen ortak bir dışıl dilin varlığı sorusu üzerine odaklanılmaktadır. İki yazarın karşılaştırmalı analizi, dışıl dilin fallus tarafından yönetilen erkek egemen dil ve söylemini yıkabileceğini, 'beden ve akıl' arasındaki mesafeyi yok ederek cinsel farklılıkların ötesine geçen 'bütünlüğü' yakalayabileceğini ortaya koymaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** dışıl dil, dışıl yazın, yapısöküm, erkek-egemen dil, fallosentrik söylem, beden-bilinç bütünlüğü

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## Introduction

I see Galatea, recumbent, exquisitely silent, impeccably still. Pygmalion has rewarded his perfect beauty with a soft couch and with gem bracelets, pearl strands, and a laurel crown. What more could she want? She has his attention, too—the chisel she greets daily. Pygmalion finds live women contemptible—loudmouthed, blind to their own flaws and stupidly resistant to the perfecting touch. But Galatea is hollowed where hollowing is needed, rounded where rounding is needed, glassened by the sculptor's loving rasp. What could be more generous? ... For generations hence, each woman is granted an honorary chisel which she must carry on her person as a reminder of the price she must pay for love. (Hallstead, 2013:1-2)

The story of *Pygmalion and Galatea*, having its roots in classical Greek legend, becomes well-known with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which Pygmalion, a famous sculptor, carves a beautiful maiden out of ivory as he despises and hates all human women, except his inert creation. He carves and shapes it every day in order to make it flawless. Falling in love with his own creation, Pygmalion prays to Venus to make the statue come to life. Taking pity on him, Venus blesses the union of the sculptor and his creation by granting them a son, Paphos. This myth has become of interest to many artists and writers, consequently being re-presented in theatrical plays, movies, artistic paintings and literature through the centuries. Eventually, the modern concept of Pygmalion incarnates in George Bernard Shaw's play, *Pygmalion*. In this variant of the myth, Henry Higgins, a phonetics professor, 'shapes' an uncultivated woman, Eliza Doolittle, into an educated creature.

Despite seeming simple and romantic, the myth of Pygmalion actually enforces the motif of 'Man', the supreme, ruling, judging, and life-giving male God, and gives rise to male-driven norms and stories by males for other males to read and to inspire. Appropriate masculine and feminine roles that exist in the content, language and illustrations in many of these myths, stories and tales serve to legitimize and support a patriarchal system, reinforcing the inferiority and subjugation of women in society. In this way, women internalize norms and adopt behaviors that ultimately affect their chances in life. They assent being portrayed and treated as weak, submissive, dependent, and self-sacrificing objects, who have no power to alter the events in their lives.

However, women can choose not to believe those myths and stories, and can adopt new consciousness by de(con)structing the patriarchal lie that the female of the species is inherently flawed. The damaging sources of negative female stereotypes and the many socializing forces that have discouraged females from realizing their full

human potential can be challenged. As a result of that challenge, the ending of these tales, which "tells us that happiness for a woman is to be passive, victimized, destroyed, or asleep" (Dworkin, 1974: 49) can be replaced with encouraging and promising ones for women. No matter how powerful Pygmalion's voice is, women must remember the brave women characters within these male-driven stories who defy the male-imposed definitions, such as *Gretel* that successfully kills the witch and saves both herself and her brother, Chaucer's *The Wife of Bath*, who defies male authority, or *Arachne*, who becomes an emblem of female rebellion silenced by patriarchy.

The myth of Arachne is also one of the most famous stories in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. According to the myth, a woman weaver named Arachne disrespects Athena, the Goddess of weaving, by claiming that her weaving talent is derived from her own power, not a gift from the Goddess. Thus, she challenges Athena to a weaving contest, where she weaves the gods and their improprieties with mortal women. The goddess does not deny Arachne's skill as the resulting work is flawless. "Not Pallas, not Envy could pluck out a flaw in that work", says Ovid (2004, 6: 129-145). However, angered by her lack of respect, Athena destroys the tapestry and beats Arachne over the head with a shuttle, the shared emblem of their textile production. Feeling humiliated, Arachne tries to hang herself but Athena turns her into a spider, subjecting her and her descendants to spin forever in a crude imitation of the skills they once possessed as a curse for disrespecting the gods.

On the surface, the story of Arachne seems simply about a woman who has been punished because of her excessive pride that leads her to believe in the autonomy of her textile production. However, below the surface, it is Arachne's protest against the immoral law of the gods, or more precisely, a challenge to the patriarchal ideology that denies women's autonomy. Arachne, who weaves images of raped women, becomes the symbol of female rebellion silenced by the phallogentric patriarchy, because weaving constitutes the means whereby she may conduct herself as a free subject, rather than being a defined object of society's gaze. Always keeping in mind her aim, Arachne accomplishes her textile so that her 'rebel text' may challenge the man-made script having been written for women by society. Nancy Miller, for instance, asserts that "against the classically theocentric balance of Athena's tapestry, Arachne constructs feminocentric protest" (1986: 273).

Read from this perspective, the myth of Arachne, especially with its association of textile production and female storytelling, is regarded as a literary representation of female text production. In this rereading practice, Arachne becomes an archetype of women's writing that aims to challenge and reconstruct the phallogentric representation of women. Arachne's resolution to use her tapestry/text to

tell the truth about women's abuse and oppression at the hands of male gods, representing patriarchy, has shaped and influenced the structures of feminist literary theory and later feminist readings. In fact, modern feminists have de(con)structed many mythological figures in order to find 'a woman's gaze' and an appropriate 'female language' that empowers the voices of contemporary women. Being aware of the need for establishing a different way of thinking against all forms of oppression including the feminine repression by the phallogocentric structures, early feminist critics and scholars focused mainly on disrupting culturally essentialist binaries and advocating gender equality in all domains of life. However, realizing that the language itself was the reason of the systematic deprivation of women, they centered their ideas on de(con)structing gender difference in language during the 1970s. Having those considerations in their minds, contemporary feminist theories have begun to examine "how and where women have been excluded and how to question and undo that conclusion" (Conley, 1984:1). Within this socio-political and historical perspective, feminist critics have raised critical questions about the fundamental role of language in constructing and representing gender and have strived to prove that language is one of the strategies used by men to fortify and perpetuate phallogocentric patriarchal ideology.

In this context, this study exemplifies how our means of understanding the world has been constructed and shaped through man-made language, thereby strengthening the phallogocentric myths and their reinforced ideologies that define woman as "a disadvantaged little man" (Irigaray, 1985b: 26), having no status of her own. It is argued that the only way to break free from the phallogocentric patriarchal discourse and its man-made language is to create their own female language, providing new space and opportunities that would allow women to get out of the 'dark continent', the patriarchal space where women have been captivated and silenced for ages, and participate in their own representation.

However, since having been demanded to stay silent so long by that disdainful and repressive society, women feel impotent to speak out, or more precisely, they feel defined by their feelings about words consolidating male privilege and supremacy. Therefore, feminist critics and women writers who seek to oppose the phallogocentric discourse and its man-made language engage in reinventing a language which cannot be "defined by the phallacy of masculine meaning" (Feldman, 1975:1) in order to de(con)struct the oppressive phallogocentric structure that defines women as deviant and leaves them speechless. They assert that the only way of salvation for women is to write in 'white ink', through which they can construct their own female language and feminine culture. That is why, the primary concern of most feminists is the female body, sexuality and the assertion of women's relation to language and

writing. They claim women must resist the discourse of 'docile bodies' and remember the power and the value of the female body, which is the source of pleasure, fertility and empowerment. Therefore, for feminist critics, writing from the female body is an influential way of opposing symbolic patterns ingrained in language, as Cixous states in the following:

A Woman's Coming to Writing:

Who

Invisible, foreign, secret, hidden, mysterious, black, forbidden

Am I ...

Is this me, this no-body that is dressed up, wrapped in veils, carefully kept distant, pushed to the side of the History and change, nullified, kept out of the way, on the edge of the stage, on the kitchen side, the bedside?

For you?

Is that me, a phantom doll, ...? (1986: 69) (emphasis in original).

This '*phantom doll*', having '*no-body*', can only break the chains from restrictions of male supremacy and submission through writing in a female language, which will reconstitute her wrapped body and silenced voice. Therefore, a theory of uniquely female language emerges since "woman's desire would not be expected to speak the same language as man's" (Irigaray, 1985a: 25). Despite admitting the difficulty of defining a female language and the unique difference of women's writing with that new language, feminist critics and women writers have a common standpoint, which is to free the female body and sexuality that have been encoded in accordance with culturally determined components of male sexual desire.

In this respect, the deconstructive critical approach and its feminist criticism play an important role in explaining how the phallogocentric patriarchal discourses are challenged and unsettled. As a theoretical exercise, the feminist criticism of de(con)struction challenges and subverts the opposition 'man/woman' in order to emphasize the exclusion, dependence, and violence necessary to keep that binary in place. Once they are challenged and weakened by alternative interpretations of feminine writing, "the necessary inerrability of words" (Ward, 1996: 152) is always deferred and the meaning of one word ceaselessly creates other words, which demonstrates that there can be no universal and privileged meanings and values in literary traditions. By de(con)structing the masculine values and the man-made language, women realize that there are only multiple meanings and fluid identities, like the all-encompassing female state of existence. Therefore, according to these critics and women writers, if a woman reconnects with her body and her sexual pleasure, she will experience multiple, diverse and nonhierarchical state of happiness that helps her create a new feminine rhetoric, which is only possible through writing in female language as well as the reclamation of the female body. Thus, Cixous urges women to write their bodies, as stated in the following lines:

Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it. I know why you haven't written. (And why I didn't write before the age of twenty-seven.) Because writing is at once too high, too great for you, it's reserved for the great-that is, for "great men"; and it's "silly." ... Write, let no one hold you back, let nothing stop you. (1986: 877-878)

In this process of realization, the literary works written by women writers who succeed in de(con)structing the belief that man is the "procreator and ... his pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis" (Gilbert and Gubar, 1984: 6) (italic is mine) have utmost importance. Despite the archaic and narcissistic structure of phallogocentric literary tradition that curses 'the nymph Echo/the female artist' to repeat the last words of her interlocutor rather than to find her own form, women writers put all of their efforts in violating Echo's dependence on 'Narcissus/the male artist' and reconstituting the disembodied voice of her with their feminine works written in female language. Those writers, who believe that there is no need for a penis to write, explore the alternatives of rewriting female experience and undoing the gender binaries having been used to structure both women's minds and bodies. Bearing all these in mind, they "deconstruct, displace, demystify the logocentric, ethnocentric, phallogocentric order of things" (Hassan, 1987: 445) in order to write as women and achieve the true female authority. Among those women writers are Virginia Woolf and Eréndiz Atasü, both of whom speak out against being locked in by patriarchal dictations and the sexist and discriminatory man-made language. For Woolf and Atasü, women that have been sentenced to confinement and dispossession should sentence themselves to freedom now, which is the great responsibility of women writers. It is true that feminist works should not be limited to those which are merely produced by women writers. Throughout the history, though scarce in number, there have been also male authors writing about the hegemonic expectations and gender inequalities that lead to the oppression of women. However, women are the ones who have experienced the heart-breaking reality of being silenced and suppressed throughout human history and into the present. That is why, both Woolf and Atasü seek the ways of actualizing a 'feminine' writing, which is not focused around phallogocentric ideology and discourse. Having those consideration in their minds, they believe that it is natural for a woman writer to find the appropriate words to express the female experiences. Eréndiz Atasü clarifies this point as in the following lines:

I know women have some sexual experiences that make them aghast and disillusioned. Yet, I can say that these are not confessed easily by women, and men have no idea about them. What prompts me to write about these unspoken areas is to make the experiences of females visible and clear through the help of a fictional work within the bounds of its own genre. Concerning these issues, in my opinion, women writers have a great responsibility and they should always be at the forefront, because sexuality is private. And it is so difficult to verbalize the sexual

experiences. I think it is much easier for a writer to figure out the appropriate words. (*The Author's Ideas about Women Fiction*, n.d., erendizatasu.com)

The reason why I limit my focus to Virginia Woolf and Erendiz Atasü, though there is an abundance of work on how women's voices and language is perceived, is because of the influence of Virginia Woolf on women's writing traditions. Still being regarded as a revered figure and a liberating force for modern women writers, Virginia Woolf also inspires the Turkish feminist writer, Erendiz Atasü, who honestly professes that "Woolf has made me get closer to the writer within me" (2012: 11). In spite of the fact that they have lived in quite different periods, places and cultures, the narrative techniques and the figurative language they use in their works are so close to each other, as Oya Batum Menteşe points out: "Atasü's style is so close to Virginia Woolf's poetic prose" (2014: 78). The main reason of all these similarities, despite the passage of time, is the unchanging gender roles and the reflections of their common concerns into language. That is why, they both struggle hard to unveil the relation between textuality and sexuality.

Furthermore, aiming to create a female artist who can both speak and survive, Virginia Woolf and Erendiz Atasü have established a new, female-oriented literary tradition, providing women an organic structure that allows their silenced voices and ignored bodily experiences to be expressed and passed along to their targeted readers with efficacy and candor. In order to be more influential, both writers speak the same language in their works, which is the 'female language' that enables the writers to de(con)struct the transcendental signifier and its internalized beliefs and patriarchal modes of signification. Thereby, all categories, boundaries, hierarchies and binaries that have been patriarchally constructed are dissolved and the repressed, silenced or sometimes completely rejected voices of women are heard and welcomed in the works of Woolf and Atasü.

### **The Pursuit of a Female Language in Virginia Woolf and Erendiz Atasü**

Virginia Woolf, a pioneer feminist seeking to challenge all the patriarchal ideologies by incorporating a woman's vision of life into her works, is still a highly-regarded force for modern women writers. "First there was Virginia Woolf" (1996: 1), says Mary Eagleton in her essay "Constructing Literary Feminist Studies", implying that Woolf stands as a creative literary foremother for the tradition of women's writing, especially on Western women's writing tradition, especially on Canadian literature, like Marie Campbell, Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro and Anne Carson. However, she is also very influential in the Middle Eastern world, which has different philosophic, religious and cultural perspectives. For instance, Erendiz Atasü, a prolific Turkish feminist writer, who highlights the private world of feminine consciousness



and sexuality, especially in bold interpretations unlike her contemporaries, sincerely declares she is fascinated by Virginia Woolf's style and work of art. Based on this fact, my aim is to make a comparative review between Virginia Woolf and Erendiz Atasü, concerning the pursuit of a female language, even though they live in quite different periods, places and cultures, because "books continue each other" (1929: 67) as Woolf conveys. It does not mean that Atasü uses the same blueprints or tools during her creative process, but as a woman and a woman writer, she also "thinks back through her mothers" (Woolf, 1929: 81) – the 'mothers' who paved the way for future generations of women writers. This is the inevitable influence of women's writing tradition, through which all women speak the same language – the 'female language' that enables the writer to de(con)struct the Father's rule, its internalized beliefs and patriarchal modes of signification, as Woolf and Atasü explain in the following lines:

The very form of the sentence does not fit her. It is a sentence made by men; it is too loose, too heavy, too pompous for a woman's use.... And this a woman must make for herself, altering and adapting the current sentence until she writes one that takes the natural shape of her thought without crushing or distorting it. (Woolf, 1979: 48)

I write to be able to understand and give voice to women, my fellows, who have been ignored and subordinated. I write, never forgetting that I am a woman. Women, having been silenced for thousands of years, need to find their own voices, so as not to repeat what they have been taught and dictated so far. They need to express and transfer their demands, repressed feelings, opinions and lives – trapped inside the patriarchal system – to the collective consciousness of humanity through their own words. (Atasü, 2014: 33)

Thus, for both Woolf and Atasü, women should stop regarding themselves as 'dark continents' waiting to be explored by men, but rather take control of their own bodies and speak out their desires against masculine values. In addition, they should create a female history and tradition of writing to shape the new generation of women. That is why, they have plunged into their search for a new language and incorporate a female vision of life into it so that all women can coalesce around shared aims and create a female history and tradition of writing by speaking the same language. More importantly, for Woolf and Atasü, that language should be their language, not their oppressors'. They assert that "the whole of feminine literature *that* has been whispered to women in man's language" (Leclerc, 1990: 75) (*italic is mine*) will take on a new meaning and prepare the way for revolutionary change in women's lives through those questioning and de(con)structing feminine texts written in a 'new female language'.

However, both Woolf and Atasü know that women cannot realize this aim if they "[write] like men, or [live] like men, or [look] like men" (Woolf, 1979: 74), because "the language bearing the traces of patriarchal culture that humiliates the female body and sexuality" (Atasü, 2009: 144) condemns women into passivity and subordination. It alienates and treats them as 'other' since the available model of literary history is male-centered, claiming that man is the "procreator and ... *his* pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis" (Gilbert and Gubar 1984: 6) (*italic is mine*). Nevertheless, for Woolf and Atasü, writing with a pen(is) would mean articulating the female experiences through the patriarchal discourse and its dominant, ordered and logical man-made language, which does not allow women to unveil the unspoken areas and verbalize their real experiences, especially the sexual pleasures. Henceforth, being writers by profession, their constant interaction with language has led Virginia Woolf and Erendiz Atasü to create a new female language "to speak not only against, but outside of the specular phallogentric structure, to establish a discourse the status of which would no longer be defined by the phallacy of masculine meaning" (Feldman, 1975: 10). They believe that this new female language, which is fluid, unconfined and supple enough to communicate multifarious experiences, does not just articulate what cannot be spoken and written within the male discourse, but creates a sense of recognition, connection and most importantly unity among women. As a consequence, a theory of uniquely female language emerges against the oppression of the patriarchy.

Nevertheless, Woolf and Atasü acknowledge that defining the female language and the unique difference of women's writing with that language presents a slippery and demanding task, as they maintain in the following:

Women's discourse is not a kind of formula with a certain definition and limitations. (Atasü, 2009: 144)

Woman's writing is always feminine; it cannot help being feminine; at its best it is most feminine; the only difficulty lies in defining what we mean by feminine. (Woolf, 1979: 70)

Despite admitting the difficulty of defining a female language, Woolf and Atasü claim that women can challenge and defy all the patriarchal odds and put an end to women being portrayed as a 'blank page' (Gubar, 1980) by male writers, who often use literature as a way to create women the way they would like them to be created. The only thing women writers must do is to bring to the surface what masculine history has repressed. This process begins with their sexuality, and their sexuality begins with their bodies, which have been sexually objectified and treated as an object for male gaze and desire. In fact, writing the ignored, suppressed and humiliated female body is the crucial element in the textual product for Woolf and Atasü, as the body –

especially the female body – is not a body in isolation exclusively possessed by its owner, but rather, the bearer of cultural practices, symbols and values that have a crucial role in determining who one is. Thus, they try to encourage women to unveil and question the relationship between body/sexuality and text, as well as inviting them to de(con)struct the phallogocentric discourses, because they believe that “a woman is much closer to her true essence of self, *so ... she may identify with her body*” (Atasü, 2009: 54) (*italic is mine*). Thereby, women are able to reach a literary self-consciousness and a ‘productive space’ for a female voice through their bodies. According to these writers, if a woman desires to experience fluid, multiple, diverse and non-hierarchical state of happiness that helps her create a new feminine rhetoric, she must achieve a personal autonomy and a self-determination over her own body, because “if a person has no power of decision over her/his own body, s/he does not experience true freedom, but deception” (Atasü, 2009: 133). Therefore, a woman must reconnect with her body and unveil the masqueraded female sexuality in order to start the journey to individuation and self-discovery. Only then can she achieve the “creative, incandescent and undivided” (Woolf, 1929: 82) consciousness of mind and wholeness by diminishing the socially-constructed distance between her mind and body. According to Woolf and Atasü, upon breaking the taboos molding her body and mind, a woman can regain authority over her body and come to realize what she really wants: “to seek for the non-created language of the unexpressed experiences and contribute to the creation of this language” (Direnç, 2014: 90).

However, women have “many ghosts to fight, many prejudices to overcome” (Woolf, 1979: 62). In fact, what both Woolf and Atasü intend to clarify is that women have always been suppressed and exploited within and through their bodies, which are regarded as the sources of male pleasure and fantasies. They are the passive objects, instruments and bodies with certain roles as Barbara Omolade summarizes in the following quotation:

... her head and her heart were separated from her back and her hands and divided from her womb and vagina. Her back and her muscles were pressed into field labor where she was forced to work ... like men. Her hands were demanded to nurse and nurture the ... man and his family ... Her vagina, used for his sexual pleasure, was the gateway to the womb, which was his place of capital investment being the sex and the resulting child, the accumulated surplus, worth money on the slave market. (1983: 354)

This division is the foregone conclusion of the Cartesian tradition, where “[e]mbodiment ... [is] feminized, and the mind ... [is] masculinized. That the mind, the social and the public are not only privileged but also masculinized means that subjectivity itself is implicitly masculine” (DiQuinzio, 1999: 11). For Woolf and

Atasü, the patriarchal Cartesian tradition, which promotes and perpetuates a sexual dualism through masculinizing the 'mind' and feminizing the 'body', reduces women into the male-defined feminine bodies. Thus, losing their 'mind/body unity', women gradually acquire a split identity and self-understanding as they are merely considered speechless objects of male desire. Virginia Woolf and Erendiz Atasü reject this dichotomous distinction of Cartesian rationality that assigns dominance to the masculine at the expense of the feminine. For them, the masculinization of the mind and thought and the feminization of body and emotions destroy the wholeness of female existence, and "split [it] up in such a way that her body, mind, willpower and consciousness are ignored"(Atasü, 2009: vii). That is why, Woolf and Atasü are in a constant search for bringing split selves together, which is merely attainable through the 'all-encompassing female state of existence and language', in which all aspects of life blend, dissolve and merge into each other to achieve a spiritual balance and union that combines the masculine mind and feminine body. By consolidating masculine and feminine elements, Virginia Woolf and Erendiz Atasü aim to create a "synthesizing unity" (Kristeva, 1984: 237) by moving beyond the fixed confines of sexual differences. With this unity, they not only facilitate a new writing practice written in a new poetic 'female language', emphasizing the connections rather than the oppositions between woman and man, but also create a 'fluid personality', embracing all that is considered 'other' within her being. According to Woolf and Atasü, this 'fluid personality' disrupts the hierarchically structured patriarchal culture and its man-made language through the 'all-encompassing female language' that puts an end to "the inconsistency persistent between the fleshly desires of her body and rational mind" (Atasü, 2009: 47) and achieves "the normal and comfortable state of being [...] when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating", which is "man-womanly ... womanly-man" (Woolf, 1929: 82). Once women get rid of the "perpetual admonitions" (Woolf, 1929: 63) of the patriarchal male voice, they achieve the 'wholeness' through the all-encompassing female language, which puts an end to the conflict between the two parts. By combining feminine the body and the masculine mind, women get liberated from the confines of the appropriate and experiences a kind of reconciliation. As a result, they defy totalizing discourses on history, science and culture by proving that identities cannot be fixed in gender stereotypes, because identities are fluid, idiosyncratic and susceptible to change. This 'fluid personality' is "a fledgling, new and fluid entity" (Atasü, 2009: 144), but it can be shaped by women/women writers, because "it is a more elastic fibre than the old, capable of stretching to the extreme, of suspending the frailest particles, of enveloping the vaguest shapes" (Woolf, 1979: 191). Replacing the rigid and authoritarian phallogentric discourse and its man-made language with the flexible and inclusive female one, the new female identity subverts the symbolic structures of language,

meaning and writing, and reclaims autonomous ‘wholeness’ back to women and their female bodies.

The woman, resisting expulsion from the realm of knowledge just because of her female body, “reject[s] the mythic woman of literature written by men, reject[s] a stereotype of the “animus” conceptualized by Jung, ignore[s] the theory of penis envy postulated by Freud, fight[s] an identification with her mother in order to individuate, . . . to create the artist/woman, the task seems Herculean rather than feminine. She must die as this mythic “feminine” woman in order to give birth to herself as an artist, a creator of myths” (Stewart, 1981: 109). Once she achieves this innovative glorification of womanhood, she is ready to create, thus giving her an opportunity to influence the norms of society with her works of art. According to Woolf and Atasü, this wholeness is the inevitable influence of women’s writing tradition, through which all women begin to speak the ‘all-encompassing female language’ that creates an ambiguous, fluid and split subject not rejecting the ‘Other’. In brief, by combining the feminine body and masculine mind, the new female subject acquires an open, multiple and plural language by breaking away from the rigid boundaries or dichotomies of the phallogocentric discourse. In this respect, she also begins to speak through a more fluid language, “which is, like woman, fecund [...], inventive, ever changing and pointing beyond itself” (Kuzniar, 1992: 1203). This all-encompassing fluid language, like the female body and sexuality, functions as many parts of woman combined into one woman and passes out of the boundaries. It cannot be pinned down, controlled and possessed since it is continually becoming, forever fluid. This physical and linguistic fluidity encourages the female subject to explore and perform different identities beyond the confinement of a socially inscribed body. She, eventually, begins to speak in feminine voices, like the many serpents of Medusa, rebelling against the “libidinal and cultural—hence political, typically masculine—economy” (Cixous, 1976: 879).

## Conclusion

[O]ne has to face the challenging rudeness of language which needs to be broken in order to create a female discourse; let alone the difficult task of shaping into words an ages old silence of feelings and sensations. I daresay all the languages of the world would force a woman writer to create a new discourse if she dares write about sexuality. I wonder if there exists any language that does not contain words of scorn for the female body and female sexual experience. (Atasü, n.d., *The Author’s Ideas about Women Fiction*, erendizatasu.com)

We think back through our mothers if we are women. It is useless to go to the great men writers for help, ... Lamb, Browne, Thackeray, Newman, Sterne, Dickens, De Quincey—whoever it may be—never helped a woman yet, ... The weight, the pace, the stride of a man's mind

are too unlike her own ... there was no common sentence ready for her use. ... That is a man's sentence; behind it one can see Johnson, Gibbon and the rest. It was a sentence that was unsuited for a woman's use. (Woolf, 1929: 64-65)

Virginia Woolf and Erendiz Atasü carry the double burden of being both a woman and a woman writer in a patriarchal society. They are “torn not only between life and art but, more specifically, between [their] roles as a woman, demanding selfless devotion to others and [their] aspirations as an artist, requiring exclusive commitment to work” (Huf, 1985: 5). The undeniable link between her real life as a woman and her career put Woolf and Atasü in a double-bind situation, in which they are first assigned a restricted place in the male-dominated society, and then condemned for occupying it. That is, becoming a writer is restrained by the gendered roles of ‘woman’, which means that Woolf and Atasü have to de(con)struct and demystify the patriarchally imposed gender roles in order to rewrite their female destiny. Through writing, they achieve “not only [their] imaginative freedom but also [their] freedom in the real world” (Howells, 1987: 47) and express their ‘female gaze’ in their works.

Built on these arguments, this study has aimed to reveal how Virginia Woolf and Erendiz Atasü have substituted the traditional male gaze with a ‘female gaze’ to unsettle the patriarchal definitions of the female body and sexuality assigned by the man-made language. These ‘literary mothers’ aim to create a female tradition of writing and give rise to the future generation with feminine texts written in an ‘all-encompassing female language’ that subverts the prevailing phallogocentric order, patriarchal logic and its man-made language. In this way, both writers struggle to prepare the way for revolutionary change in women’s lives and let them create their own system of self-expression in order to regain their ‘wholeness’ back, which has been destroyed by the phallogocentric ideologies and discourses.

In fact, the need to ‘make it whole’, or more precisely, ordering disparate narrative pieces of fragments into a “coherent and comprehensive whole” (Woolf, 2000: 189) is so evident “in literary works written up with a distinctive female consciousness” (Atasü, 2009: viii). It may seem “disconnected and incoherent in appearance” (Woolf 2000:104), but then the contradictions blend so perfectly that they bring out the fusion and create an experience of “panoramic awareness” (Atasü, 2009: 150) – a vast open space of consciousness in which endless thoughts, perceptions, emotions and sensations keep appearing and disappearing in pursuit of ‘wholeness’. For Woolf and Atasü, this is one of the most distinctive features of women literature. With this spiritual balance and union, achieved through the ‘all-encompassing’ female state of existence and language, they not only facilitate a new writing practice, emphasizing the connections rather than the oppositions between woman and man, but

they also create a 'fluid personality', embracing all that is considered 'other' within her being. Briefly, despite the generational, socio-cultural and historical boundaries, Woolf and Atasü validate the possibility of creating a non-phallogocentric writing practice and a new world built on a true diversity and culture with this fluid, multiple, diverse and non-hierarchical 'all-encompassing unity'.

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