

*Masculinities under threat: How modernist authors portray male protagonists  
with absurd masculine roles*

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### Abstract:

In recent years, increased attention has been drawn to the relationship between men and masculinity. Indeed, men's constructions of masculinity are diverse and complex with significant variations across cultural, ethnics, religious and political contexts. A substantial body of literature has emerged proposing that the powerful construction of masculinity exists to perpetuate the image of men as strong, independent and self-reliant participants. Those participants have to reserve and preserve their masculinities from any deconstructive threat. Unfortunately, most modern males do hold perceptions which critically contradict with the standard norms of masculinity. The present article, however, tends to analyze, define and identify the dynamic conditions which challenge the accurate construction and development of masculine identities. It aims to shed lights on the disturbing conditions which urge most males to perform absurd masculine performances. These performances may forcibly lead to distort their traditional masculinities due to the falsified male insertions. The recent construction of masculinity exists to be fulfilled with unsupported male traits. Such traits lead to devalue the masculine presence. In general, this article investigates the threatening conditions which lead to deconstruct the masculine identity.

**Keywords:** *masculinity; male performance; gender role; identity; subversion.*

## 1- INTRODUCTION

In most modernist fictional works, the systematic functioning of masculinity is intentionally overemphasized by various subversive issues as a determined need for portraying the distorted male identity. Accordingly, this article aims to shed lights on multiple gender choices and other implicative forces which dramatically ensured the masculine decline. From particular perspectives, this decline is pre-determined by decisive resources of male gender identity subversion. Subverted masculine identities are critically beyond the values of traditional gender reconciliation. In literature, males who are far away from the masculine boundaries do clearly assert their identity loss. This loss can be codified and rectified by other gender options. These options exist to deeply implicate the masculine identity by severe characteristics. In order to better understand these implicative options, this article will offer a critical reading about how masculinities have been clearly deconstructed in modernist literature. More clearly, it tends to analyze how masculinities are represented in both of William Faulkner's famous novel "The Sound and The Fury (1929) and Virginia Woolf's masterpiece "Orlando: A Biography" (1928) by focusing on the performed masculine roles of their main protagonists: Benjy and Orlando.

## 2- Orlando's masculine identity as being interrupted by diverse sexual selections:

In her: "Orlando: A Biography", Woolf has decisively subverted the traditional male/female roles. Her feminist tendency of gender subversion is based upon diverse sexual choices. These choices exist to convert the traditional gender roles by depending on renewed sex practices. More clearly, the subversive form of gender roles is pre-defined by alternative sex collections. Sex/ gender collection is featured by the selective forces of androgyny, bisexuality and other trans-gender features. These sexual selections, in addition to others, tend to diversify the renewed gender roles with multiple sex determinations. Stressing Woolf's Orlando, his originated masculine identity has been reinforced by converted sexual choices. Indeed, Orlando the man has overloaded his masculine identity with mixed sex qualities just to assert his sexual shift to femininity. This sexual shift towards femininity has been fused with androgynous traits. By that, Orlando's masculinity appears to be subverted with reference to selective androgynous qualities. Androgyny, however, tends to be fused with femininity as an intentional need to subvert masculinity. Orlando did not show any kind of masculine reconciliation. In fact, he did not have the pure intention to recover or fortify his masculine nature. Instead, he preferred to transform and convert his masculine identity towards femininity by depending on androgynous selections. In this vein, androgyny is identified as the bridge through which Orlando has based his/her sexual transformation.

From certain critical standing points, Orlando's gender is subverted by his/her dual appearance. This protagonist is neither recognized as a male nor as a female. Even her preferred feminine quality can be negotiated due to its falsified establishment. According to Christy Burns (1994), Orlando's femininity is re-established at the basis of the previous masculine power. Her gender shift may regenerate fallacious representations of identity transformation. In this case, Orlando's duality can signify his/her gender subversion. Such subversion, for Butler, works as a sign of **"inversion and thus a complete rejection of the**

**heterosexual matrix.**" (Butler, 1990: 135) By inverting or rejecting the accurate gender qualities, features of masculine/feminine gender tend to be inserted within inappropriate frame of identification. The androgynous Orlando often plays with his/her gender and sexuality via deformed gender structures. These deformed structures can obviously constitute his/her subversive intention to any gender quality. If Orlando was already represented as a female, she may follow the same gradual shift simply to assert her rejection to femininity. In general, Orlando's gender can be well-measured by diverse sex choices which design, clarify and assert his/her fe/male identity selections (the shift from one gender identity to another).

Further, androgyny is understood (according to Woolf) as a balanced shift in qualities rather than a balanced fusion between values. Indeed, her protagonist Orlando does not show his/her balanced performance between masculine and feminine qualities. Instead, Orlando has clearly selected the other feminine category as a supportive mode to cope with different life conditions. So, the protagonist's androgynous mind is fully overloaded with feminine virtues which exist to liberate her body from the masculine traits. Thus, the mixed balance in gender qualities is partly achieved by the perpetuated quality of femininity. In addition, androgyny tends to be falsified by certain conceptualizations which determine gender shift from one category to another. Farwell (1975) argues that androgyny exists to combine both sex categories under one purified and fused body. This androgynous combination has to be reported by the balanced shift from masculine to feminine qualities and from feminine to masculine qualities as well. By that, gender shift comes to be successfully represented by those fused values of both sexes. Such fusions should be correlated all together to produce one androgynous mind with equally-balanced male and female traits.

In this vein, Woolf's protagonist Orlando is powerfully equipped with multiple sex choices in order to institutionalize the legitimate form of "accepted" sexuality. Orlando the fe/male has been intentionally described with indefinite gender categorizations as a mean to devalue his/her identity. More clearly, Woolf portrayed Orlando with mixed sexualities simply to disturb the traditional gender binaries. In fact, Woolf firmly attempts to fulfill the "normalized" gender categories with "stigmatized" qualities and redefine these "stigmatized" identities as "vivid" categories. By disturbing these gender balances, different sex categories will appear to be functionally accepted in society. Respectively, Woolf's dual mixture does strategically reinforce the accessibility to different queer characteristics. These queer characteristics validate androgyny, bisexuality and other forms of sexuality as legitimate sex powers for gender identity re-location. To large extent, Woolf is interested in understanding the ways through which identity categories are instituted or created. She mostly challenges the rigid identities, categories and sexual norms which forcibly exercise emotional and psychological violence against varied sex minorities. Generally, Woolf's feminist tendencies are predefined to relocate or fulfill the traditional identities with diverse sexualities.

These established identities can cause serious implications for many expert readers. Indeed, readers may face certain difficulties in understanding the deliberate fusion between various sexualities. This fusion exists to be organized by diverse sex characteristics. Androgyny as a sexual organization may appear to be fused by balanced or unbalanced sex features. This means that readers can differently interpret Orlando's androgynous being. The protagonist's double identity may polarize to mean the emptiness of masculinity or simply explores the developmental process of the newly designed feminine masculinity. Accordingly, the power

of masculinity is disintegrated from Orlando the man to relocate Orlando the woman. In this respect, Orlando is prepared to organize the new gender tendency which mixes aspects of maleness with femaleness throughout well-identified androgynous body. This body is empowered by its bisexual capacities which design the definite transgender being. So, Orlando the man is free to move from one sexual being to another by his/her empowered bisexuality. This bisexuality can organize his/her gender shift throughout well-identified transformation qualities or simply dislocates his/her gender identity throughout those unbalanced androgynous qualities.

Throughout the novel, the varied sexualities and gender combinations are improved to illustrate the deeper unity of any gender category. Woolf has deliberately moved beyond the binary gender structures in order to justify her sexual variation. This implemented variation is organized to effectuate the change in gender qualities. At the beginning of the novel, the narrator clearly illustrated the masculine gender of Orlando. Such illustration is certainly based upon binary gender structures. Orlando's masculine existence has been gradually transformed into femininity as a purposeful need to deconstruct gender binaries. Thus, the gradual transformation from Orlando's maleness to femaleness is reported to ensure the renewed sex combinations. These combinations are not necessarily based on gender binary forms but rather indicated by the coercive combinations of sex and gender characteristics. By combining gender and sexuality together, the whole system of gender binaries comes to be redirected by the renewed aspects of gender subversion. Woolf's strategy of gender subversion is widely perpetuated by diverse sex fusions such as: androgyny, bisexuality and queerness. Such strategies of sex fusion exist to eliminate any power behind gender categories. So, in Woolf's fiction, the power behind gender is indicated throughout the organized combination of varied sex aspects.

In a related issue, the clothing items can largely change the sexual morality of Orlando but cannot easily change his/her gender. This idea has been widely supported by Woolf who directly clarified that **"it is clothes that wear us and not we them"**. She further adds that **"we may make them take the mould of arm or breast, but clothes mould our hearts, our brains, our tongues to their liking."** (Orlando: 303) This may imply that clothing is inseparable from identity. Those covering items do design the identity by their favourable capacities of sex change. Hence, clothing reshapes or simply re-creates the identity which can be consumed, viewed as well as delivered via valid intentional needs. In this regard, Orlando comes to be privileged by diverse selections which help him/her to modify the characterized gender attitudes. His/her sexual identification can be clearly re-modified or re-established by the designed fashion style in addition to the declared attitudes of gender performance. However, Orlando largely prefers to cover his/her body with **"those Turkish coats and trousers which can be worn indifferently by either sex."** (Orlando: 98) The protagonist's clothing choice tends to reconceptualise his/her gender mode and attitudes which exist to ensure the dual capacity behind his/her naturalized/recognized sex.

Likewise, Woolf describes her protagonist's personal identity as a "project" that is shaped throughout his/her cross-dressing selections. The protagonist Orlando is purified as a "fe/male" who develops his/her identity via selective dressing items. Orlando's decisions about his/her gender capacities are related to diverse fashioning clothes which characterize his/her external body. Unsurprisingly, Orlando's indefinite gender identity appears to be reinforced by his/her bodily-dressed costumes. These dressed costumes exist to enlarge the developmental process of gender performance. This performance does reflect the potential

capacity of Orlando for creating the desirable change. To large extent, the protagonist has combined his/her mixed gender performance with diverse cross-dressing costumes simply to create or ensure the intended gender identity. Indeed, Orlando's femaleness appears to be fused with selective dressing costumes which exclusively purify his/her feminine sense. This sense is deeply originated from her female gender selections being organized by bodily designed features. However, Orlando's masculinity is not appropriately expressed or flourished by his male covering costumes. Instead, this masculinity tends to be eliminated, shifted or transformed by the newly organized feminine behaviours and dressing costumes.

It may be asserted that Woolf has partly ensured her privileged power for eliminating the binary gender forces. Such elimination is exemplified throughout Orlando's behavioural acts which purely reinforce the duality of gender qualities. More clearly, Orlando's masculine/feminine traits exist to validate the co-existence between both male/female performances. This co-existence between such gender qualities is widely supported to eliminate the classical traditions. Orlando's body does constitute the strategic fusion between diverse sex/gender qualities which forcibly dislocate the uniqueness of any category<sup>1</sup>. According to Gabriele Pamperl (2008), binary existence of gender forces cannot explicitly refresh individuals' actual identities. Instead, those individuals will appear to be traditionally trapped within favoured or disfavoured gender identities. Pamperl further clarified that the true gender identity and sex quality do exist beyond the offered identity. Individuals, however, should not be offered such gender identities but rather liberated to perform or exercise the adequate one. By that, individuals would not deny the binary gender concepts but simply activate particular or multiple identities under great capacities of gender selection.

In general, the shifting gender performances of Orlando the man often reflect his inner intentions to subvert the masculine identity. This man does not only subvert his gender behaviour but also directs his masculine existence towards the feminine one. More precisely, Orlando disturbed his masculine performances just to perpetuate the other feminine behaviours. This quality of subversion is clearly employed to perpetuate certain feminine desires at the expense of the deformed masculine aspects. So, the change in gender has been positively fulfilled or accomplished without implications. This widely proves that the new Orlando (the female) is unsurprised about such change in gender. This change cannot be easily determined or accepted by Woolf's readers. In fact **"many people, taking this into account, and holding that such a change of sex is against nature, have been at great pains to prove that Orlando had always been a woman, that Orlando is at this moment a man."** (Orlando: 221) Such contradiction may assert that the change in gender does not necessarily mean the change of identity. Perhaps this change is effectuated to improve or ameliorate the existing identity. Accordingly, the process of subverting gender is accomplished to prove the characterized appropriateness behind Orlando's identity.

### **3- Benjy's masculine identity as being interrupted by mental/physical modes of disability:**

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<sup>1</sup> Sex fusions are widely determined and theorized by Woolf to declare her refusal to the unified gender qualities. Such ideology has been clearly overemphasized by different feminist critics who do ensure their opposition to the uniqueness or the solid fusion (unity) of any gender category.

Stressing Faulkner's *The Sound and The Fury*, it often represents the existing struggle between characters' unspoken thoughts and their illusive roles within society. Some characters within the novel do seriously suffer from mental illnesses which deeply impede their functioning roles. Benjy, in particular, is a thirty-three idiot man who does encounter various psychological problems which implicate his masculine image within society. Benjy's conscious awareness about the external world has obliged him to re-free himself from different internal conflicts by redefining his masculine existence. By this kind of psychological novel, Faulkner mostly aims to underline Benjy's mental conflicts by analyzing his state of disability and status of masculinity as well. For that, Faulkner has employed different narrative techniques just to make Benjy expresses his thought freely. Indeed, Benjy's narrative section is correlated with allusive fragmentations and discontinuous events which reflect his confused state of being. To large extent, Benjy's mental confusion has greatly affected his masculine identity. This identity appears to be subverted by the implicated sense of disability.

Hereby, Faulkner has introduced a new perceptual sense about disability. This renewed sense may greatly affect the characterized type of identity. Disabled characters are negatively portrayed due to the existing stereotypes which conventionally theorize their deficiencies. These deficiencies can critically contradict with society's norms. These norms generally theorize the practice of disability as a deviant practice. In this respect, Faulkner's Benjy is considered as a "disabled" man whose performances deviate from the standard social realities. Such deviance in performing different social roles often reflects the severe qualities of disability which Benjy suffer from. This distinctive force between "standard" and "deviant" social practices is structurally related to individuals' characterized dis/abilities. In relation to this, aspects of disability are stereotypically canonized by the structural norms of society which practically prove the implicated sense behind them. From a critical point of view, Benjy cannot be recognized as a "deviant" social member with unsupported traits. This "disabled" man can be an effective member who positively benefits from his featured disability. By that, disability as a deficient practice can be so beneficial in redirecting the existing social norms.

From particular dimensions, Benjy's talk is highly qualified with aspects of self-consciousness and confidence. He mostly describes or narrates events with much confidence. This confidence theorizes the issued sense of desirability. Indeed, Benjy's desires to recall diverse events are implicitly codified by features of self-confidence, maturity and consciousness. Such originated qualities are obviously illustrated throughout Benjy's behaviours. Hence, Benjy's mind is refreshed with memorable events which severely design his mode of consciousness. This consciousness generally demonstrates the refreshed schemata of Benjy. His schematized perceptions oblige him to consciously record past events, memories and desires. Benjy's mentality is hugely overloaded with diverse chaotic desires which are separately classified or organized. As a result to this chaotic inspirations within his brain, Benjy often depend on his sensual (sentimental) moments in order to schematically organize his talk, desires and needs. Unsurprisingly, Benjy's schematic frame appears to be refreshed with emotional, nostalgic and other affective moments. This structural frame is explicitly "chaotic" but implicitly "organized" by diverse expressive moments.

Throughout Benjy's language, there are some words and phrases which testify Benjy's reflective mood and behaviour over diverse issues. Sometimes Benjy appears to be calm

and relaxed especially toward his beloved sister. This state of relaxation is regenerated from Benjy's deeper sense of reflection. The virtualized capacities of thought, perception and reflection mostly urge Benjy to express his behavioural mood via appropriate, accessible and convincing manners. In some occasions, Benjy's inappropriate behaviours do clearly convey negative understandings about his mental processes. Sometimes, readers can hardly depict meanings behind Benjy's employed words. Certainly, this use of language is characterized by specific selections which definitely define as well as categorize Benjy's state of being. Expressions such as: **"Our shadows were on the grass, the candles went away, I could smell the sickness"** are employed to diversify Benjy's talk. In addition, they convey clear images about his personalized identity. Thus, Benjy's romantic devotions, inspirations and purity are strategically exemplified via expressive modes of language selection. These expressions are also employed to designate events which cause Benjy's pain and sufferance.

Unsurprisingly, Benjy's language is decisively employed to reflect his processed reasoning. As being already mentioned, this reasoning appears to express the chaotic inspirations within his mind. Such chaos is generated from the impeded features of mental recognition. The characterized aspects of mental processing, reasoning and reflections are structurally organized throughout valid narrative structures. From critical dimensions, Benjy's language describes his depressive sequences and chaotic impressions via fragmented modes of narration. To some extent, Benjy's cognitive mood is characterized via valid language structures. Benjy's employed phrases, linguistic choices and narrative devices underline the chaotic desires within his mind. This chaos is frequently distributed throughout the employed segments of fragmentation. To more clarify, Benjy's disruptive thought and chaotic inspirations do, to large extent, validate the linguistic choices being offered by him. Words and phrases such as: **"darkness, it was dark, I couldn't see myself, I looked at myself, I couldn't see it I began to cry"**, are structurally designed to reflect the disruptive mood of Benjy. This mood often reflects the struggling emotions and the conflicting desires of Benjy. Such struggles and conflicts may come to be interpreted as essential conditions which legitimize Benjy's idiocy.

Therefore, the language of Benjy is originally facilitated to support the link between his ideas, memories and thought with readers' schematic reflections. Hence, the simplistic discourse of the character is indicated throughout the designed features of language. This language is as pure as Benjy's mind. In other words, his language is so simple and spontaneously employed and this denotes the simplicity of Benjy's thought. This thought appears to be chaotically featured but this chaos is linguistically enriched, implemented as well as supported by the desirable aspects of the narrator. However, Benjy's section includes simplistic language structures and this reflects the organized chaos within his mind. When Benjy says: **"I could still hear the clock between my voice"** this indicates the vast and vivid mind of Benjy. This mind is chaotically characterized but linguistically organized via supportive narrative structures. Benjy further says: **"she took my hand out of my mouth"**, this can denote his gradual reasoning and processed reflections. Indeed, Benjy often portrays abstract aspects of reasoning which internally express his impeded mode of recognition. This process of mental recognition is determined by the featured fragmentations being strategically employed.

To large extent, Benjy's complex thought urges him to process knowledge throughout deliberate modes of identification. These modes do portray the severe mental state which clearly obliges Benjy to re-assess, utter or simply filter information. Such process of filtering language (and knowledge as well) does not hide the fact behind Benjy's efforts to improve self-being. Additionally, Benjy does chaotically narrate events which indicate his temporal journeys from past experiences to present moments. This mode of narration is illustrated as a determined need to highlight his asserted desires to create the positive change. Further, Benjy's actions are progressively transformed into performed acts which clearly ensure his desirability to apply adequate communicative practices. These practices are not verbally achieved but perceptually codified. Benjy's perceptual progression is pre-organized by appropriate features of self assessment. These features are logically combined to ensure his cognitive abilities of development. Indeed, Benjy does assess his mental state by implementing useful and adequate processes of self-development. Hereby, the characterized acts being performed by Benjy are successfully portraying his featured quality of wisdom. This wisdom is certainly re-generated from the pre-determined aspect of idiocy.

The autistic state of the youngest child of the Compson family, Benjy, is observed through the eyes and actions of other characters. Without the help of others, he confusedly narrates his story. Evidently, Benjy's autism is derived from his monologues. Principally, Benjy cannot communicate with others through verbal or vocal speeches. According to Cheryl Ware (1983), Benjy's body does not coherently serve his running mind. Ware further adds that Benjy's section is seemingly chaotic and meaningless. From particular perspectives, Benjy's illusive narrative section **"contains all the necessary information the reader needs"** (Ware, 1983: 63) Benjy's "idiolect" reflects the world around him. He does not make efforts to provide explanations. Indeed, he speaks to himself as if he has a listener inside his own mind. By that, Benjy's language, sounds, smells, objects, and memories serve as meaningful conditions which enrich his conscious sense. This sense is deeply enclosed within his mind simply to convey or express encoded forms of abnormality. However, the abnormal code of thought does purely validate the illusive mode of expression (invalidated language codes).

Therefore, Benjy's identity is characterized by diverse qualities of disability which strictly devalue his presence. By devaluing Benjy's presence, the designed order of his identity appears to be covered by invalidated human aspects. To some extent, Benjy's identity is overemphasized by unsupported features which negatively assess his presence. In their critical studies about Faulkner's novel, Griffiths (2002) and Larson (2014) have clarified that Benjy is identified as a dehumanized figure in the text. Such negative portrayal may affect Benjy's featured presence. Faulkner himself has reinforced Benjy's dehumanized sense by saying that **"...You can't feel anything for him because he doesn't feel anything (...) He was an animal", "Benjy is incapable of good and evil because he has no knowledge of good and evil (...) He was an animal"** (quoted in Meriwether and Millgate, 1986: 246, 235). From these words, it appears evident that Benjy is unable to actualize any performance because he cannot clearly distinguish between good and bad values. This "human animal" has no knowledge about the factual conditions which validate, prove or ensure his conceptual perceptions. By that, Benjy is definitely recognized as a subhuman with unsupported virtues.

Indeed, Benjy is portrayed as a disabled child with subhuman characteristics. This portrayal is effectuated by Faulkner to devalue Benjy's presence. This devalued presence



may come to negatively interpret his masculine identity as well. In fact, Benjy the feeble minded man can offer nothing due to his restricted masculine capacities. These capacities are implicated by the featured quality of disability. In this respect, Faulkner's readers are introduced to a "feeble minded" human being who has no communicative voice. Those readers may **"have noted that Benjy is "pre-lingual" that he "could never really narrate his section" because he has no language. But he is in fact non-lingual: the language of the Benjy section is Faulkner's language."** (Polk, 1993: 144) Benjy appears to be mentally disordered with a deficient communicative voice. This deficiency urges him to be "unqualified" man. Indeed, this man cannot speak intelligible words and often communicates solely through moans, wailings and abstruse gestures. Further, Benjy's inability to communicate does isolate him from his own family. By presenting Benjy as a "subhuman" both from the perspective of his family as well as within the reader-narrator relationship, the author tends to challenge readers' resistive attitudes and perceptual sense. Faulkner's readers are tested whether to accept Benjy as a subhuman character or simply tolerate him as a humankind.

Likewise, Benjy's traditional form of masculinity is developed under well-structured combinations of human deformity which strictly dehumanize his presence. These qualities are rhetorically suggested by Faulkner to effectuate the determined fact behind Benjy's dehumanized identity. This identity is overloaded by unsupported features of mental/physical deformation which practically devalue his masculine practice. However, Benjy's psychiatric state of being exists to be chaotically disrupted by the frustrated associations being caused by the deficient ability of masculine practice. Faulkner's suggested masculine frustrations are reinforced to redirect the current role being performed by Benjy. This authorial suggestion may come to be strategically enhanced to reactivate the human sense and desire within Benjy. To large extent, Benjy's dehumanized characteristics are purposefully inserted within his personality as a decisive manner to reactivate his masculine presence. Benjy the child like-man is gradually effectuating a masculine struggle to improve his deformed self. As being already mentioned, this struggle was not successfully achieved but has, to some extent, reactivated the humanized values within his deeper soul.

Meanwhile, Benjy's masculine resistance is diversified by valid and legitimate practices which clearly ensure his conscious and valued presence. Faulkner's qualities of dehumanization do urgently activate the struggling sense within Benjy as to rectify his deformed identity. Effectively, Faulkner has given his character a chance to defend his deficient masculinity and dehumanized presence. This chance is enriched by the raised aspect of consciousness which greatly falsify any negative perception or reflection behind Benjy. So, despite the fact behind Benjy's passive participation, his conscious reflections, vivid memories and nostalgic inspiration may elevate his virtualized traits. Such processed consciousness is directly resembled by the struggling trauma which has necessarily marked his desirable intentions to effectuate the change. From particular dimensions, Faulkner's descriptive selections could be determined as strategic features which directly support, perpetuate or simply strengthen the masculine practice. As many modernist authors, Faulkner aims to combine aspects of masculinity with other qualities of deformation as an urgent need to visualize the implicated practice behind males' roles. In this vein, males' masculine practices are certainly weakened by the complicated conditions of the modern thought.

Readers, in particular, cannot easily touch Benjy's conscious mind and determined contributions simply because they may define him as a disabled man who is unable to control his daily acts. These assumptions may come to clarify the disruptive behaviour of Benjy which, to some extent, stigmatizes his existing identity. This produced and regenerated reality may fallaciously describe Benjy's conscious reflections. In fact, readers' produced reality may exist to contradict with Benjy's reality. This contradictory reality is evidently based on unjustified treatment. Truchan-Tataryn (2013) says in this regard: **"Inhuman treatment is justified by subhuman status and evidence of cognition is subsumed by a self-authorized judgment of mindlessness"** (Truchan-Tataryn, 2013: 167) Hereby, Faulkner's Benjy is widely recognized as a mindless man whose behavioural acts are neglectfully and abusively felt (interpreted) by readers. Benjy's subhuman status is validated by diversified forces which devalue his enacted roles and performances. Such status does not clearly purify Benjy's cognitive awareness and conscious reflections. Instead, it perpetuates the insufficient qualifications and the deformed anticipations of Benjy.

Such literary depiction may negatively assess the humanized sense behind those disabled characters. Hence, Faulkner's Benjy is mostly treated as a subhuman with unsupported human values. These values are, of course, regenerated from his featured disability. From a critical point of view, Benjy's humanized sense is highly valued due to his respectful manners and tolerant heart which deeply glorify his elevated degree of self-consciousness. In fact, Benjy is a respectful man with pure humanized sense. This humanized sense is not related to that characterized quality of disability but rather recognized, felt or simply interpreted from Benjy's produced language and discursive patterns. Hereby, Faulkner's nondisabled characters are supposed to learn some life lessons from disabled characters. Benjy, in particular, appears to be the wisest person among his brothers. This wisdom is certainly deployed to draw up the humanized value behind Benjy's identity. Undeniably, Benjy's identity is virtualized by naturalistic human conditions. These valued conditions do essentially situate or locate him in a special world where reality is part of it.

Unsurprisingly, Benjy's disability can affect his masculine presence but cannot affect his male virtues due to his valued qualities of tolerance, respect and dignity. From psychological perspectives, individuals often regain dignity and tolerance from other individuals who are physically/mentally impaired. Those impaired individuals do logically stress out issues of morality with a qualified sense of interaction. Their interactive behaviour tends to guarantee the valued aspects of human morality. According to Samuel Scheffler (1992) this morality reflects the purified sense of existence. This existence does determine the moral values and the human morality behind individuals. Those individuals can greatly provide socially acceptable interactions due to their regenerated moralities. Scheffler further adds that individuals have varying degrees of human sense, morality and dignity. Such variation is interpreted by the codified norms in individuals' mind. Indeed, those individuals can appear to be socially acceptable by their inserted moralities. This applied sense of human morality is diversified by the codified social values. By that, Benjy's morality does practically validate his masculine presence. Despite the fact that Benjy's presence is implicated by disability, his humanized sense falsifies the existing aspect of sub-humanism.

In fact, Benjy's moral values do clearly eliminate any predetermined quality behind his presence<sup>2</sup>. Scheffler adds:

**“Modern moral ideas provide us with a vantage point from which particular human relationships and practices can be criticized in the name of humanity itself; it is a vantage point that we have attained slowly and imperfectly, and one that is not easily sustained. I do not think that we do ourselves any favors by repudiating it, and I believe that we have every reason for aspiring to forms of friendship, community, and tradition that are consistent with more abstract moral values.”** (Samuel Scheffler, 1992: 16)

Hereby, Benjy's moral sense can essentially rectify the existing quality of sub-humanism. This quality appears to be ideologically reinforced, by Faulkner himself, to devalue Benjy's presence. As a critical viewpoint, Benjy's humanistic values exist to determine the social dialogue of relational interactions. Throughout these relations, individuals can gain the sense respect, tolerance and dignity. Indeed, these social relations do not evaluate individuals' physical/mental disabilities. Rather, they certainly attempt to rectify these disabilities by empowering the humanistic values and the virtualized moralities behind social participants. Such socialized values, for Magomedova (2000), tend to classify individuals in accordance to their regenerated behaviours and interactive manners. In this regard, Benjy cannot be regarded as a subhuman whose presence is socially unvalued, unaccepted or denied. Instead, he can be evaluated in accordance to the implicit sense of human morality. Benjy's explicit quality of disability is overemphasized to denote the sense of sub-humanism. By depending on the implicit quality of morality, Benjy's humanistic sense tends to be featured by accurate values of masculine socialization. This aspect often evaluates the sustainable behaviours and the conscious actions which are characterized to determine Benjy's socialized patterns of masculinity<sup>3</sup>.

Likewise, Benjy does clearly express his featured issues of morality, dignity and politeness via deliberate modes of interaction. These modes are not verbally achieved but rather understood throughout his narrative imagination. Indeed, he mostly conveys his expressive emotions by depending on sequential aspects of narration. Benjy as a narrator has successfully created an imaginative combination between his moralistic senses and linguistic selections. Such interactive design between morality, language and narration tends to reflect Benjy's qualified inspirations of self-expression. In fact, the narrator Benjy depicts every moment, act or event with a great expressive sense. This sense is attributed by the fused nuance between Benjy's expressive language and dignified morality. More clearly, Benjy often aims to convey his moral principles via qualified codes of language expression.

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<sup>2</sup> To large extent, Benjy is qualified by unsupported qualities of disability as a predetermined need to devalue his presence. This presence, however, is implicitly codified with moralized virtues which positively evaluate his human sense. This sense is reinforced by appropriate modes of social interactions (which greatly reflect the acceptable codes of human morality) as a necessity to redirect the pre-integrated quality of sub-humanism.

<sup>3</sup> It cannot be denied that Benjy's masculinity is individualized to determine the social sense of humanity. This humanity is achieved by the codified virtues of morality. By that, Benjy's masculine sense conveys validated codes of humanity and morality. His masculine presence can directly eliminate qualities of sub-humanism due to Benjy's accurate virtues which reinforce the sustainable patterns of masculinity. In this regard, his masculine sense is qualified by sensualised moralities, virtues and values which empower the socialized productivity of masculinity. Readers, however, may perpetuate Benjy's productive masculinity which appears to be acceptable by the socialized virtues.

His emotional sense is purified by true and valid qualities of dignity, morality and tolerance as well. As being already said, these qualities are collectively designed to reflect the fused interaction between Benjy's emotional feelings and expressive language codes. Indeed, his narrative section appears to be characterized by purified moral senses which are deliberately codified by expressive language selections. In this regard, Benjy's moral principles are definitely encoded to assert his emotional truth and realistic sense. For Scheffler:

**“Any person, no matter how poor, or powerless, or socially marginal, no matter how remote from the centers of influence and privilege, may, be invoking moral principles, assert a claim or express a grievance in the language of a system to which no body, however, rich, powerful, or well-bred, may claim immunity. In this way the public articulation of such principles reflects the democratic character of the moral point of view and reveals the illegitimacy of any attempted privatisation of moral standards, that is, of any claim by an elite to have a privileged access to moral ideas or to the moral truth.”** (Scheffler, 1992: 12)

Stressing Scheffler's views, the expressive sense of morality is featured to reinforce individuals' human values, interests and principles. These qualities are validated due to their purified qualifications and regenerated outcomes. This **“morality may be very demanding, and so any adequate moral theory may have to be very demanding, too. But this is no objection to either. Morality demands what it demands, and if people find it difficult to live up to those demands, that only shows what everyone knows anyway: that people are not, in general, morally very good.”** (Scheffler, 1992:18) In this regard, Benjy's appears to be qualified with “good” moral values which essentially empower his masculine presence. In addition, these prestigious moral qualities may clearly eliminate his devalued trait of sub-humanism. To large extent, the coherent design of Benjy's behaviour is predetermined by virtualized moral capacities. His issued moralities are aesthetically perpetuated for their offered sense of respect, dignity and tolerance. Hereby, Benjy's narration can critically convey the attributed sense of true humanity.

#### **4- The masculine loss: the processed de-construction of Benjy's/Orlando's masculine identities:**

In both selected novels, the masculine identity appears to be characterized with severe forms of deformation. This deformation affects and reflects the behavioural, interactive and “performative” actions of characters and protagonists. Both of Faulkner and Woolf aim to portray the masculine characteristics of male protagonists by referring to their changing modes and attitudes. Evidently, some males appear to be gradually attracted by renewed masculine traits which progressively perpetuate their gender shift. Other males however, feel frustrated whether to accept the modern masculine change or not. These frustrations exist to reinforce the exaggerated manner of masculine enactment which strategically reflects the traditionally asserted male practice. In this vein, the diversified mode of masculine enactment tends to characterize, ensure and validate the type of male being structurally convinced by the valued masculine practice. Effectively, the true masculine man often tries to validate and legitimize his social existence by applying adequate and acceptable male performances. This adequacy and acceptability may lead to fortify the masculine identity from any characterized quality of deformation. Stressing Woolf's Orlando, his masculine practice tends

to be apparently characterized by renewed gender modes which explicitly determine his masculine deformation, absurdity or loss.

Orlando the man has previously had the intention to re-direct his masculine identity towards femininity by sexualizing his male attributes. In contrast, Faulkner's Benjy has appropriately applied the masculine virtues but, unfortunately, these virtues were not positively evaluated due to the severe quality of disability. Benjy's physical/mental disability made him psychologically frustrated whether to recover his masculine identity or accept the chaotic sequences which deficiently characterize his presence. Benjy's intentions to recover his masculine identity (by applying adequate male performances) have been threatened by diverse disabilities. Hereby, the masculine deformation which characterized both of Benjy's and Orlando's masculinity is pre-determined by inconsiderate insertions. These insertions do clearly falsify the masculine design of those protagonists. Evidently, Orlando's decisive quality of sexuality (androgyny) urged to disorient his masculinity. Similarly, Benjy's existing quality of disability led to reinforce his masculine perturbation. In both cases, the masculine identity exists to be forcibly stigmatized by severe deformations. Such deformations are kinds of barriers which typically theorize the masculine loss of the modern man. Indeed, they mostly assert the masculine emptiness of the modernized man.

Hereby, Woolf's feminized sense of masculinity is purified by diverse forms of gender subversion. These subversive qualities do largely contradict with the traditional dimensions behind masculinity and femininity as well. Thus, Woolf's feminist thought is definitely derived to ensure the sexual presence behind men/women. By sexualizing males'/females' identities with bisexual qualities, the hierarchical organization of gender attributes tends to be systematically subverted by the ruling ideologies of feminism and gender theories. Hereby, Woolf's authorial dimensions are purely exemplified to determine the liberated mode of the modern thought. This liberated mode of thought, for instance, does not attract Faulkner's Benjy. This child-like man often struggles to defend his masculine position and role among his brothers. Unlike Orlando, Benjy is an active man with "acceptable" masculine sense. Benjy's masculine presence is not fully approved (due to his characterized disability) but exists to determine his purified male category. In fact, his masculine existence is not overloaded with feminized traits but partly diversified with dehumanized determinations.

Effectively, Orlando's masculine presence has been challenged by sexualized issues. These issues worked as mixed gender qualities which seriously falsify the fact behind Orlando's masculinity. In this respect, Orlando's masculine trauma is featured and characterized by her newly designed feminine selection and sexualized destination. The tendency to purify masculinity with extra sexual determinations urges to critically devalue the existing male qualifications. By that, Orlando's sexual desires have practically deactivated his masculine power. Indeed, such desires have negatively theorized his masculine failure. Orlando, however, does not have the pure intention to rectify, ameliorate or sustain his masculine presence but seriously preferred to change and transform his originated male sense. It cannot be denied that Orlando's masculine identity was positively portrayed. The masculine purity of Orlando appears to be dramatically challenged by diverse sexual choices. Hereby, Orlando's masculine identity was seriously affected, deconstructed or simply deactivated due to his renewed sexual determinations. Unlike Orlando, Benjy's masculine identity was directly affected and disoriented by multiple forms of disability. In this regard, Benjy's masculine failure is imposed whereas Orlando's masculine failure is desired (wanted).

This articles illustrates how there are certain expectations, in modern societies, on how males and females should behave. The selected characters' conscious or unconscious desires to create the change are connected to society's expectations. Characters often try to change themselves in accordance to the expected demands of their conservative societies. In fact, both characters have the desire to change their identities in order to create suitable as well as acceptable positions which are socially desirable. Those characters have clearly designed reconciliatory recognitions with themselves and towards others just to identify their social positioning. This process of self-recognition is obviously identified through their actions, behaviours and performances. Characters' reactionary behaviours generally denote the transitional shift from particular state of mind to another. Orlando, for instance, has changed his masculine identity to another feminine one just to confirm his/her androgynous state of mind. In the case of Benjy, his deficient mental processing seriously reflects the disabled state of being. Both characters' state of mind is enriched by a new coding system about self-being and existence as well. This existence can be either legislated by socially acceptable manners or not.

Accordingly, characters' social behaviours appear to be encoded by individualized expectations. These self-expectations can, to some extent, ensure their behavioural appropriateness. Society's appropriate behaviours do largely contradict with Orlando's androgynous being. This sexual identity could be normalized with negative assumptions about gender qualities. Orlando's femininity (as a quality) should be perpetuated or constituted on behalf of masculinity. Such constitution or construction is based upon unbalanced gender features just to create the sense of self-satisfaction. Moving to Benjy, his individualized sense of existence is rather purified with positive behavioural aspects which are adequate with social norms. Benjy's behavioural appropriateness does not contradict with society's expectations. Indeed, he is mostly struggling against his mental deficiencies just to ensure the acceptable social normality. So, despite the fact behind his disabled state of being, his progressive mental development could be, to some extent, felt, touched or simply desirable. In this respect, characters' social expectations could be demonstrated via conscious desires of change. This change should not be individualized but rather socialized with appropriate behavioural manners.

## **5- Conclusion:**

Therefore, the masculine identity being decisively and intentionally distorted in modernist fiction is asserted as a stigmatized mark which devalues men's social existence. Such stigmatization is, in fact, **"a mark of shame or discredit; a stain, or an identifying mark or characteristic"** which negatively portrays the masculine nature. (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 1990: 506) According to Penn and Martin (1998), the stigmatized image of masculinity often determines the degraded social status of males whose performances do not fit to the social norms. For Goffman (1963), stigmatized men do practically form a "virtual social identity" through which they become disfavored or dishonored by other social members. Goffman further coined the term "spoiled collective identity" to describe men who were stigmatized and whose identity as a whole was brought into question. Stressing Crawford's and Brown's assumptions (2002), stigmatized men are judged in accordance to their deviant masculine performances. For them, deviant masculine identities do not represent the socially defined ideal identities. Masculinity, however, is an internal process of

evaluation through which males judge themselves. This process of evaluation reflects the activated cognitive thought which deliberately reinforces the accurate male performance.

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