Ambrine Sebaat

The I and The Eye in *Orlando : A Biography (1928)* by Virginia Woolf and *Orlando (1992)* by Sally Potter

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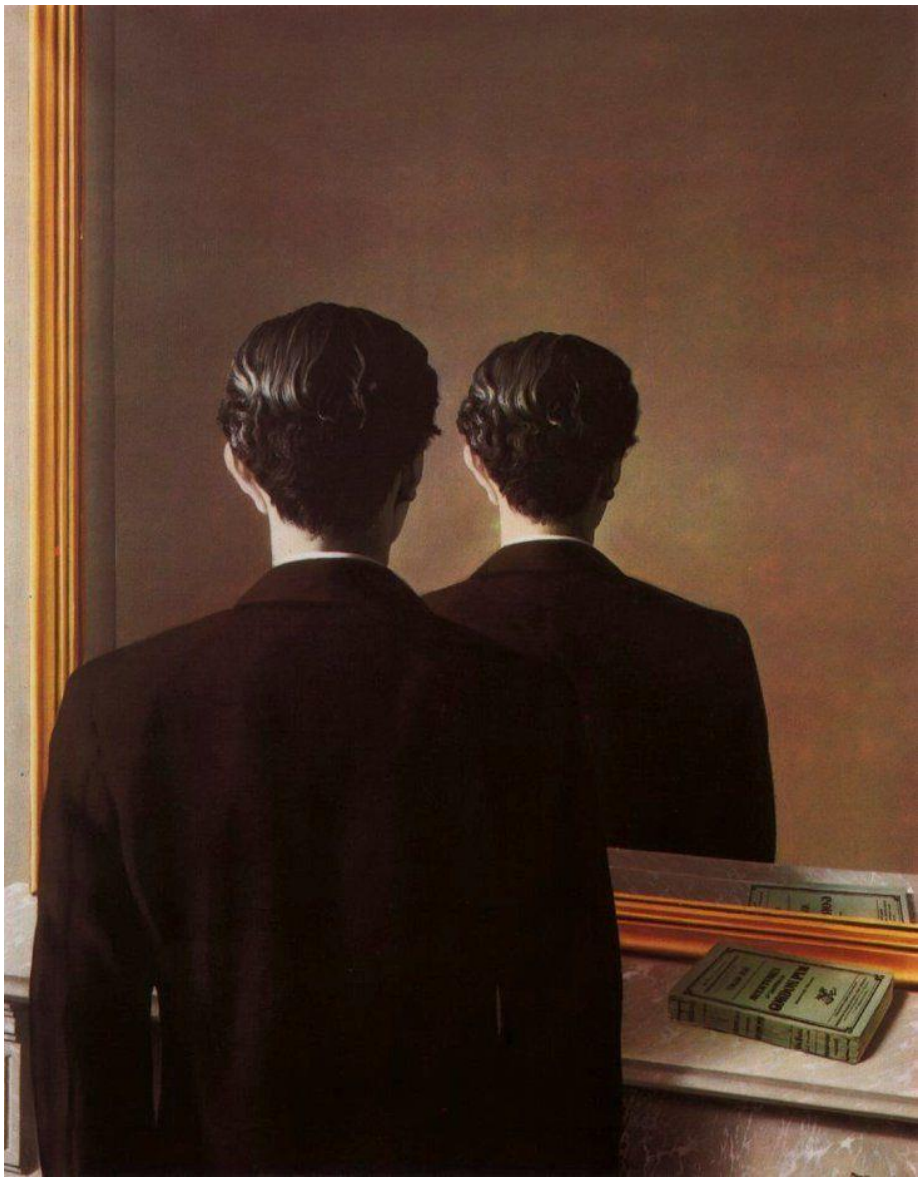

Ambrine SEBAAT

M2 master études anglophones / littérature

Sous la direction de Madame la Professeure Catherine DELESALLE-NANCEY

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“Il n’y a peut-être pas de jours de notre enfance que nous ayons si pleinement vécus que ceux que nous avons cru laisser sans les vivre, ceux que nous avons passés avec un livre préféré.”

– Marcel Proust

“Nobody sees any one as he is […] They see a whole – they see all sorts of things – they see themselves...”

– Virginia Woolf

“Poets are damned but they are not blind, they see with the eyes of angels.”

– William Carlos William

Cover illustration: “Not to Be Reproduced” (“La reproduction interdite”), by René Magritte, 1937, oil on Canvas, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

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Introduction

A Succinct Panorama of the 1920s

Orlando: A Biography[1] is the 6th novel written by Virginia Woolf. It depicts the four-hundred-year journey of a young English nobleman in quest for his/her self and who one day wakes up as a lady. Unlike *Roger Fry: A Biography*, *Orlando* is mainly fictional. The writing and the publishing of the book correspond with a political, cultural and scientific crossroads as well as a watershed in Virginia Woolf's life and carrier.

In 1928, England celebrated the tenth year of the end of the Great War. After a traumatic period of uncertainty and shortage, England knew a period of break that coincided with the French *Années Folles*, an age of revival for some privileged persons. England lost little by little its power and weight. The Great Depression hit England in 1929 and plunged European countries in an even more uncertain age at the dawn of the Second World War. Women gained independence and were granted more rights like the Suffrage in 1928, a huge step that nonetheless kept women under men's dominance.

The fragmentation of the nation and of the world goes along with a fragmentation of individual and society and with an internal fragmentation. Nothing is black or white anymore, good or bad; dichotomy is no longer a frame of reference. War created a division between the ones who believed in a greater good and the ones who thought individualities were not respected, creating a literature of anti and pro war. The few soldiers who were lucky enough to survive the war suffered from shell shock, a post-traumatic stress disorder that affected their daily lives and their personal experience of the world. This dark period nonetheless brought about a prolific production of war literature that adapted its form to the multiple fragmentations of society and the self.

Psychoanalysis emerged at the beginning of the 20th century with Sigmund Freud and his *General Introduction To Psychoanalysis* in 1917 or his *Interpretation of Dreams* in 1899. It aims at understanding the unconscious, the mind of a person, to have access to what is

[1] WOOLF, Virginia, *Orlando: A Biography* [1928], London: Wordsworth Classics, 2014.
All the following quotations, as well as appendices 16/17, are taken from the present edition of *Orlando: A Biography*.

impossible to see. Freud stresses the fact that psychoanalysis is not to be mistaken with conventional medicine. The relation between visibility and words is one of the distinctions:

> In medical training you are accustomed to see things. You see an anatomical preparation, the precipitate of a chemical reaction, the shortening of a muscle as a result of the stimulation of its nerves. […] In psycho-analysis, alas, everything is different. Nothing takes place in a psycho-analytic treatment but an interchange of words between the patient and the analyst. The patient talks, tells of his past experiences and present impressions, complains, confesses to his wishes and his emotional impulses. The doctor listens, tries to direct the patient's processes of thought, exhorts, forces his attention in certain directions, gives him explanations and observes the reactions of understanding or rejection which he in this way provokes in him. The uninstructed relatives of our patients, who are only impressed by visible and tangible things - preferably by actions of the sort that are to be witnessed at the cinema - never fail to express their doubts whether 'anything can be done about the illness by mere talking[2]'.

For Richter, the advance in philosophy and psychology displays a change in the apprehension of the mind that Woolf was aware of:

> philosophy and psychology in particular had moved away from the mind-matter split of the nineteenth century toward a more complex view of man which would present him, as Virginia Woolf herself did, as a mind-body-feeling gestalt[3].

Psychoanalysis is at the frontier between what can be seen, what can be told, and what is invisible, the "unconscious". Its rather human treatment of the patients contrasts with a common brutal apprehending of mental illness, an advancement that did not always guarantee a complete consideration of the will of the patients. Indeed, Freud's theories can nowadays be seen as displaying a sexist vision of women, a hysterization[4] of women that Virginia Woolf was not exempt of:

> Hystérisation du corps de la femme: triple processus par lequel le corps de la femme a été analysé qualifié et disqualifié comme corps intégralement saturé de sexualité; par lequel ce corps a été intégré, sous l'effet d'une pathologie qui lui serait intrinsèque, au champ des pratiques médicales; par lequel enfin il a été mis en communication organique avec le corps social (dont il doit assurer la fécondité réglée), l'espace familial (dont il doit être un élément substantiel et fonctionnel) et la vie des enfants (qu'il produit et qu'il doit garantir, par une responsabilité biologicomorale qui dure tout au long de l'éducation)

For Michel Foucault, Freud lifted the prohibition of the sexual discourse, especially for women, at a bitter cost:

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[2] FREUD, Sigmund, *Introductory Lectures On Psycho-Analysis; A General Introduction To Psychoanalysis*, New York: Horace Liveright, 1920, pp 15-16.
[3] RICHTER, Harvena, *Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970, xi.
[4] FOUCAULT, Michel, *Histoire de la sexualité, tome 1: La volonté de savoir*, Gallimard, 1976, p.137.

> On nous explique que, si la répression a bien été, depuis l'âge classique, le mode fondamental de liaison entre pouvoir, savoir et sexualité, on ne peut s'en affranchir qu'à un prix considérable: il n'y faudrait pas moins qu'une transgression des lois, une levée des interdits, une irruption de la parole, une restitution du plaisir dans le réel, et toute une nouvelle économie dans les mécanismes du pouvoir; car le moindre éclat de vérité est sous condition politique. De tels effets, on ne peut donc les attendre d'une simple pratique médicale, ni d'un discours théorique, fût-il rigoureux. Ainsi dénonce t-on le conformisme de Freud[5]

Woolf was also highly inspired by philosophy and especially by "The Nature and Reality of Objects of Perception" by George Edward Moore[6] , especially by his theories of vision. Richter gives examples of Moore's ideas that inspired Woolf:

> the importance of the physical *angle of vision* at which an object is seen in determining our subjective experience of it; his distinguishing between individual and universal modes of perception; and his way of presenting complicated abstract ideas as a pictorial diagram[7].

For Woolf: "Not only had human character changed, […] but also the artist's and philosopher's way of looking at the world[8]."

Virginia Woolf's novels are also at the crossroads of literature, between Victorian and Edwardian, between tradition and modernity. Growing up in an influent Victorian family, Virginia Woolf learned the importance of *decorum* and education from a very young age. Her mother, Julia Prinsep Jackson, second spouse of Sir Leslie Stephen, was known for being a beautiful as well as intelligent woman and a model for many Pre-Raphaelite artists. Her death in 1895 has been a blow for the young Virginia. She kept on being haunted by the image of her mother all her life, trying to overcome her loss in her writings. Virginia's father, Sir Leslie Stephen, was an eminent biographer, historian, critic and mountaineer who was first editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Virginia Woolf was very close to her mother and to her father until the death of the mother that deeply changed her father. She stayed nonetheless aware of her father's vision of her and his death in 1904 also plunged her in despair. The gaze of her father is for her both a motivation and a constraint.

Virginia found a surrogate family in the place of the Bloomsbury Group, another mingling of tradition and modernity. It regrouped a core of Cambridge male students and women artists, like Lytton Strachey, Leonard Woolf, Clive Bell, Vanessa Bell, E.M Forster and

[5] *Ibid*, pp.11-12.
[6] RICHTER, *op. cit*., p.20.
[7] *Ibid*.
[8] *Ibid*., p.4.

Virginia Woolf herself. The group had an ambiguous position, both progressist, defending social ideas and a homosexual way of life, and traditionalist, supporting bourgeois and even misogynist ideas. Dorothy Parker says that they "lived in squares, painted in circles and loved in triangles[9]", a proximity that enabled them to collide their ideas and thoughts on the changing world. The group's "queer way of seeing[10]" enabled the creation of a multiplicity of paintings, philosophy essays, novels and economic theories that suggested a new way of seeing the world and people.

One of the major technological and artistic revolutions of the late 19th century is the camera: this was another innovative way of seeing the world. The disciple of a classic form of art saw in this new object a destruction of traditional creation when the supporter of progress in art, like Virginia's great aunt Julia Margaret Cameron, considered it a revolution. The cinema soon followed this creation and offered yet another portrayal of the world: a moving image of it. Because photographs reached realism like other forms of art never did, literature and paintings put aside this constrictive notion to open up the scope of possibilities. It is thus not a coincidence that the birth of still and moving images coincides with the development of creative movements such as Impressionists, Abstraction and Avant-Garde. Vanessa Bell's abstract paintings deconstruct the eye's perception to be closer to the I's impression. To Heidegger: "the art work become the object of mere subjective experience, […] consequently art is considered to be an expression of human life[11]."

The creation of the camera also questions the value of art in the age of reproduction, a question which was later examined by Walter Benjamin[12]. A photo is a reproduction on paper of a person, an object, a scene, a recreation of the eye's perception thanks to light. It can be produced and reproduced as many times as one wants; the image will each time be identical. On the contrary, a painting is meant to be unique. The photo also takes considerably less time to produce than a painting. In *Not to Be Reproduced* (1927), René Magritte jointly questions the need to create paintings when photographs are more precise, the value of *mimesis* and he tackles issues of perception. The character in the painting, Edward James, a British poet, is in front of a mirror, yet the mirror's reflection is the back of Edward James contrary to what the

[9] JONES, Eleanor, "Painting in Circles and Loving in Triangles: the Bloomsbury Group's Queer Ways of Seeing", *The Independent*, 10 April 2017, retrieved 11/04/19.
[10] *Ibid*.
[11] HEIDEGGER, Martin, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, "The Age of the World Picture", New York: Harper & Row, 1977, p.117.
[12] BENJAMIN, Walter, *Illuminations*, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", New York: Schocken Books, 1969, pp.217-51.

spectator could expect: we should see the face of the person. It questions the essence of reality: are we only what people see of us? Magritte places reception at the centre of his work as the spectator will have to make a mental picture of the face of the man, a work that the classic spectator is not used to do. The book at the corner of the mantlepiece is also a key element as it is the only element that is accurately reflected in the mirror. It is Edgar Allan Poe's only finished novel *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, a mock-biography in which the narrator tries to convince the reader that he is a real person. This painting is comparable to *Orlando* as the book questions the achievability of an accurate reproduction of a subject in art as Magritte questions the possibility of mirroring an individual in paintings. The surface is not the whole person. *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* is also a mock-biography, a book that mocks its very genre. *Orlando* also tackles the difficulty of making sense as a person, to be homogeneous, and ends up giving the reader the role to connect the pieces of the self together.

Virginia Woolf's Writings and Orlando*'s Genesis*

Virginia Woolf's writings aim at investigating the things that are concealed or repressed: the unutterable, the unconscious, the lost, the invisible. Her sense of observation and her curiosity emerged at an early age; she wrote a periodical of her holidays in St Ives with her sister Vanessa and she had recorded her days in her diary since the age of thirteen. In her novels, Virginia Woolf seems to reach for the hidden parts of life as well as the lost ones, a way to cope with the sporadic aspect of reality. It was also a way for her to reconstruct herself after the many traumas of her life.

Her works are mainly fictional, yet highly biographical, and psychoanalytical. In the "St Ives Trilogy", *Jacob's Room* (1922), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), and *The Waves* (1931), she explores her memories of St Ives, the loss of her mother, and she conjures the traumatic events of her childhood. In *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), Woolf examines the inner life of an aristocratic woman beyond appearances. Like Joyce in *Ulysses* and Proust is *Search of Lost Time*, Woolf gives a loose voice to internal issues and a bigger importance to the interconnection between inwardness and outwardness. Virginia Woolf's writings are to be linked with Radclyffe Hall's and Djuna Barnes's writings who respectively published *The Well of Loneliness*[13] and *Ladies Almanack*[14] in 1928, controversial yet influential works for the feminist and queer causes.

[13] HALL, Radclyffe, *The Well of Loneliness* [1928], London: Virago Modern Classics, 1990.
[14] BARNES, Djuna, *Ladies Almanack* [1928], Manchester: Carcanet, 2006.

Along with the desire of exteriorising the inner life of her characters, Virginia Woolf also wished to give a visibility to the ones who are silenced, especially women. In *A Room of One's Own*, she deconstructs the structure of English literature (and society), trying to understand why women are the most treated subject, and yet, have, paradoxically, no voice and no way of having one. She realizes that the way in which a woman is seen in society usually dictates her status and identity: if Shakespeare had a sister with a greater talent than he had, she would not have been able to live through her art, Woolf thinks[15]. She thus dedicated her life in giving a visibility to women, to display their thoughts, their feelings, their aspirations.

The genesis of *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf is depicted in *Vita and Virginia* by Chanya Button, a film promoted as the love story at the origin of *Orlando*. Indeed, Virginia Woolf met Vita Sackville-West in the late 1920s and their friendship slowly turned into a love affair at the term of which they both stayed good friends. Woolf writes in her diary her idea of *Orlando* in October 5th, 1927:

> And instantly the usual exciting devices enter my mind: a biography beginning in the year 1500 and continuing to the present day, called *Orlando*: Vita; only with a change about from one sex to the other[16].

Orlando can be seen as the imaginative vision of Vita Sackville-West by Virginia Woolf, a way for her to anchor this love story in the evermore. Nigel Nicolson, Vita's nephew, also shows that the book is a time capsule, a still image of Vita:

> The effect of Vita on Virginia is all contained in *Orlando*, the longest and most charming love letter in literature, in which she explores Vita, weaves her in and out of the centuries, tosses her from one sex to the other, plays with her, dresses her in furs, lace and emeralds, teases her, flirts with her, drops a veil of mist around her[17].

Woolf on Screen

Woolf's novels have not been extensively adapted on screen: *To the Lighthouse* was adapted for television in 1983 by Colin Gregg, *Orlando* in 1993 by Sally Potter, and *Mrs Dalloway* in 1997 by Marleen Gorris. *Orlando* is the first novel by Virginia Woolf to be adapted in film for the cinema. Other than that, *The Hours* directed by Stephen Daldry in 2002, was adapted from Michael Cunningham's book, an inspiration of *Mrs Dalloway*, and *Vita and*

[15] WOOLF, Virginia, *A Room of One's Own* [1932], London: Wordsworth Classics, 2012.
[16] *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume III: 1925-30*, edited by BELL, Anne, Olivier, London: Penguin books, 1982, p.160.
[17] NICOLSON, Nigel, *Portrait of a Marriage* [1973], Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Virginia, directed by Chanya Button in 2018, portrays the love story of Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf.

When at the end of the 1980s Sally Potter manifested her wish to adapt one of Virginia Woolf's books, she was told that it was an impossible task[18]. Most of the heritage films of the period, like *A Room with a View* in 1985 and *Maurice* in 1987, were directed by James Ivory. Women directors were also very few. When directing *Orlando*, Sally Potter wanted to break with the traditionalism of heritage films and wanted to offer her vision of this genre as well as her vision of gender. If she says not to have anticipated the success and impact of her film[19], Sally Potter gave a visibility to Virginia Woolf as well as to feminist and queer concerns. After the AIDS epidemic of 1980s, the LGBT community went from a partial invisibility, or a negative visibility, to a forced visibility, and not always a positive one[20]. According to Julianne Pidduck, this period coincides with an inversion of the image of, and by, the LGBT community, going from a negative visibility to what she calls "hypervisibility": "the term hypervisibility registers a sea change in the epistemological, cultural, political and economic regimes governing the re/production and dissemination of images of same-sex desire and identity[21]." Queer visibility developed and allowed representation (even if protagonists are still mainly white gay male). Sally Potter's *Orlando* contributed to this queer visibility that other male filmmakers, like Derek Jarman who gave Tilda Swinton one of her first roles, started to promote. A field of studies also developed in the 1990s with Judith Butler, Jack Halberstam and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick for instance.

The I and the Eye

The relation between the I and the Eye is a complex one. If the two notions share a phonologic link with their pronunciation in [ʻaɪ], they do not always converge. The I designates the interiority while the Eye is oriented toward the exterior. The I is also related to the notion of self, a vague concept, and the Eye is the organ through which a person sees the world, it is only a medium, a receptive tool. The Mirror Stage of Jacques Lacan is an indicator of the first experience of the split between me and myself and me and the other, and the first realization

[18] "Sally Potter and Tilda Swinton in Conversation, BFI Southbank", 2 December 2009, *YouTube*, 14 December 2009, https://youtu.be/GtjpLrnZO-Y, retrieved 12/02/19.
[19] *Ibid*.
[20] PIDDUCK, Julianne, "The visible and the sayable: the moment and conditions of hypervisibility", in GRANDENA, Florian, and JOHNSTON Cristina (eds.), *Cinematic Queerness: Gay and Lesbian Hypervisibility in Contemporary Francophone Feature Films*, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011, p.13.
[21] *Ibid*., p.9.

that the subject does not only exist in his or her head and his or her eyes, but also in other people's eyes.

The terms identity, self and I are complex to define. We will nonetheless try and unfold the meaning of those key notions. They more or less refer to the same concepts of the ontological field, with nuances. For the Cambridge dictionary, identity is: "who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group that make them different from others[22]". It comes from the Latin word "idem", that means same. It creates here a first paradox, as identity both means what is singular and what is similar to something. If identity refers to what makes you unique, that is, what is the same as you, where does the origin of identity come from? It sends back to the baroque figure of ouroboros[23], the snails who bites its own tail. Alan Watts says that "Defining yourself is like biting your own teeth", it is a never-ending quest for the origin of what makes you who you are. What is more, identity can be plural, it can refer to a national identity, to a political identity, to a family identity… It is rarely singular and refers more to a general concept. Self is according to the Cambridge dictionary: "the set of someone's characteristics, such as personality and ability, that are not physical and make that person different from other people[24]", a definition close to the definition of identity. Although, it seems that the self is more of an inside and personal component, an ontological reflection on the how and why we are, the reflection on one's consciousness. Doubled with another pronoun, like himself or herself, the self is even more secluded from the other, and indeed, in biology, the self is the group of cells of an entity, and its opposite, nonself is the group that is not the entity. The I is the pronoun in charge of the subjective expression by the speaker on himself or herself. It has been nominalized to refer to the expression of the self, to become a synonym of inside.

Their relation is first and foremost subjective due to their ontological connection in which the relation I/Eye unveils the construction of being: how the act of seeing and the things we see have an impact on the I, the formation of the self, and, conversely, how the way we are changes the way we see. The I is "[t]he Voice of Subjectivity" according to Harvena Richter[25]. Working on the association makes visible the invisible mechanism of the development of the self. It is also subjective because the "self" and the "I" are singular realities: there are many Is, many selves, and many ways of seeing the world. The artist, a person who wants or needs to express

[22] "identity", dictionary.cambridge.org, 2019, retrieved 23/06/19.
[23] BEYNEL, Julie, "Jeux de miroirs et dédoublements dans *Sodome et Gomorrhe* et *Le Temps retrouvé* de Marcel Proust, et dans *Orlando* de Virginia Woolf: modernisme et 'baroquisme'", Université de Lyon 3, 2018, p.265.
[24] "self", dictionary.cambridge.org, 2019, retrieved 23/06/19.
[25] RICHTER, *op. cit.*, p.129.

his or her interiority or reality, chooses to display one or many individualities and points of view, and that can be a difficult task.

Secondly, the other issue is also plurality, this time within the subject: the I, as single as it can seem, is not one. Identity is rarely unique but usually heterogeneous. Someone can have an identity related to his or her work, to social status, to ethnicity, to sexuality etc. It can also be discontinuous. Being is a process that involves change, visual and internal, that does not necessarily conceal unicity in the self. The word identity in itself calls into question the unicity of the self as it can designate all the characteristics that make someone unique, but also identical, same. The notion of "sameness" clashes with the Eye: is somebody that has physically changed still the same? Conversely, does changing on the inside and not on the outside grants sameness? What is even being "oneself"? The quest of the self can benefit from the help of the exterior Eye, a third agent.

Thirdly, the I and the Eye tackle the question of reality and appearances. Sight can be reductive, first because the field of vision of a human is not wide, we have blind spots. Secondly because the I is not entirely visible by the Eye that can only see the exterior, the tip of the iceberg. Thirdly because seeing is subjective, as we said, guided by our emotions or by our knowledge; someone might see an object when someone else sees another object with another signification. Interestingly, the etymology of "person" designates a mask: is being in society only a masquerade, an interval between reality and appearances?

The I is subjective, it can designate every individual, it is a shifter. This observation poses the question of individuality in its meaning of relation between what one designates as I, a reflective pronoun, and the other, someone that is not me. The Eye can be, in this relation between I and the other another limit, or, a help. The other can be a restraint to the I when he or she does not see me as I see myself or the world, or an auxiliary with the sharing of point of view. Reciprocally, I can be a restriction to the other when I see him or her only through a single prism. In this case, the Eye can be a lens through which my individuality changes the way I see the world, a "projection":

> The external world in Mrs. Woolf's novels is colored by the character's emotion, distorted by the physical angle of vision at which he sees the object, governed by complex visual processes such as those which abstract line from mass, or color from shape. Mirroring the state of mind of the perceiver, the

> reality of the object, in psychoanalytical terms, is subsumed in the 'projections' of the viewer[26]

The task in these interactions between the I and Eye will be to determine how to express the I in its plurality and how to make it accessible to the Eye(s). Virginia Woolf extensively worked on the expression of the interiority, on how to tell the self without being descriptive or prescriptive but only expressive. In *Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage*, Haverna Richter analyses Woolf's work in its perspective of reuniting the I and the Eye:

> For the novelist [Woolf], the problem is one of rendering this new private vision to the public – of contemplating 'landscapes and emotions within' and 'making them 'visible to the world at large[27].'

It is for Richter "the delicate transaction[28]" that Woolf will work all her life on:

> The contribution of the eye, all the facts of the perceptive process – from the angle of vision through which Mrs. Woolf makes the reader view the object, to the creation of the image itself through a complexity of physical and psychical phases – are perhaps the most consciously realized means by which the reader participates[29].

The Eye in combination with the I is inherently at the centre of Woolf's work. We will thus wonder: how is the tension between the I, what we are, and the Eye, what we see, represented in *Orlando: A Biography* by Virginia Woolf and *Orlando* by Sally Potter, and what is its impact on the ontological construction of the self and on the reception by the reader/spectator?

In a first part, we will focus on the apparent opposition between the I and the Eye, a problematic union. We will first analyse the character of Orlando through the way(s) in which he sees himself/herself and the world, and through the way(s) in which people see himself/herself. His/her apparently autonomous construction is key in the relation between the I and the Eye as Orlando is a romantic wandering soul aside from society, refusing mere appearances. The constraint of defining himself/herself in society or as a character will be one of our interests as Orlando sees the other and society as a constraint to his/her construction of the self. His transformation from male to female (what we will call "transition") highlights the discrepancies of consideration of a person in society based on his or her appearance. Orlando, the book and the character, ultimately questions the intrinsic essence of "being". The book challenges its very genre of biography, literally mocking it to result into a mock-biography. The

[26] *Ibid*., viii.
[27] *Ibid*., p.11.
[28] *Ibid*., p.3.
[29] *Ibid*., p.141.

character exposes the impossibility of catching the I through the metaphor of the wild goose, a fool's errand.

In a second part, we will explore the cooperative relation between the I and the Eye and the extent through which Virginia Woolf bridges the two apparent separate worlds. The first bridge consists in human relationships. If I and Eye can display an opposition between the inside and the outside, the selves and the other, we will see how confronting one's point of view to others' is key in the construction of the self, it is not a constraint but a guidance on the coexistence between inner and the outer. I other words, in meeting the other, we do not only meet a stranger, we meet the same. Being with others is not a concealing of our identity but a complement that Orlando discovers. The second bridge is the depiction of the self as plural, especially through a post-impressionist portrait. The imperative of defining oneself through one prism, through one identity, and through one angle is no longer a necessity for Woolf and Potter. It enables them to portray Orlando through a synesthetic, multi-angled point of view that gives access to Orlando's inner fragmentation. This method also helps to show the interconnection between the inside and the outside as something subjective: reality is not one thing, vision is highly subjective and, conversely, the self is also affected by the outside. The highest reunion of the I and the Eye is in *Orlando* the androgynous self: an identity that enables plurality and unicity in the self and in the writing. Finally, the best expression of the dynamic between the I and the Eye is for Woolf the Third Eye that are imagination and writing. Because being and seeing are both subjective and have their own blind spots, the I being undetermined and the Eye not being able to see beyond appearances, we will develop the theories of the Third Eye as well as the third I. The Third Eye designates imagination, the power of seeing through something else than the Eye, to transcribe the invisible. As for the Third I, it defines the areas of the I that are inaccessible but that can be created and recreated through writing, an introspection as well as an opening up of the scope of possibilities.

The third part will work on a playful reconciliation of the I and the Eye to an overtaking and redefining of the concepts of Being and Seeing. The term "person" takes here its original meaning of "mask" and being becomes a masquerade in society, a utopia where "being" subverts the rules and invents new ways of being and seeing. We will first see the performative extent of Orlando, its theatrical and cinematographic extent. "Representing" gains a new meaning, not the one displayed in the theories of *mimesis* but the meaning of constantly reinventing oneself, "re-presenting". We will then develop the queerness of *Orlando*. Aside from tackling queer issues in a sexual and cultural way, *Orlando* constantly plays on a

displacement of expectations, on a queering of the Eye and the I: a thwarting, to go back to the etymology of "queer". The biographer constantly gives and takes away elements of Orlando's personality to the reader/spectator, which leads him or her to participate in a hide and seek game. Being is represented as a performance and especially a gender performance that shakes the classic ways of being and seeing. *Orlando* is presented as an apparently classic book, a biography, but the reader/spectator is given clues as to its internal questioning of identity and is engaged in a treasure hunt during which he or she can redefine himself or herself. Woolf and Potter re-establish a new gaze, going from a male gaze to a female gaze, a breaking with the patriarchal way of seeing women and the world. The reader/spectator is fully integrated in this long questioning of the self and of seeing and is brought in a reflexive journey that proves to be both a mental and scopic reflection. The "delicate transaction[30]" will not take place without the involvement of the reader/spectator who has to use his or her own vision and experience to solve the mystery of personality or to surrender to Woolf's or Potter's point of view to enrich his or her own way of seeing. We will finally see the way in which *Orlando,* the book and the film, are a house of mirrors in which all points of view can eternally converge to reach universality.

We will refer to Orlando with the pronouns "he", "him", "himself" when Orlando is a male, from page 5 to 67 in the book, and from the beginning of the film to Orlando's change of sex scene; and "she", "her", "herself" when Orlando is a female from page 67 to the end of the book and from Orlando's change of sex scene to the end. We will use "s/he", "his/her" and "himself/herself" when mentioning the whole character of Orlando, following Orlando's sexual progression.

[30] *Ibid*., p.3.

I. Being and Seeing: The Problematic Union of the I and the Eye

The phonologic closeness between the I and the Eye differs from the ontological distinction between those two entities. On the one hand, the I can refer to the concept of identity and designate a subject alone or in a group; an entity who is not easily definable. It can also be a pronoun, a person talking in his or her name. On the other hand, the Eye is a biological reality that, most of the time, enables a subject to see, to apprehend the world around him or her. The paradox is that the Eye cannot directly see his or her I, it has to be reflected in a mirror or in people's eyes or discourse. In the same way, the Eye cannot see the I as it is not a visible object but a sum of material and immaterial information. A crisis can occur when our self vision does not match our perception or people's perception of our self and crystallises our identity according to material features, imprisoning the subject into a single image and assigning a certain status in society. Orlando experiences this limit as a man as well as a woman but seems not to be directly aware of the codes and the limits, circumventing the Berkeleyan formula "Esse est percipi". Woolf goes as far as questioning the very tangibility of determining what "being" is and wonders if the Eye, or the pen, can catch it, both illustrating and deconstructing the individual and the art of depicting characters in a "biography" that is not quite one.

A. The Autonomous Construction of Orlando

When Virginia Woolf sketched the character of Orlando, she had a model in mind: Vita Sackville-West, her lover and friend. Vita's ambiguous sexuality and gender, her personal life and identity, and the topic and style of her writing make her one of the freest minds of the early 20th century England. Unsurprisingly, *Orlando* is instilled with the sense of rebellion yet still shows a queer adherence to the norm, a paradox which was also part of Virginia Woolf's beliefs and everyday life. Comparing *The Well of Loneliness*[31] written by Radclyffe Hall and published the same year as *Orlando*, a book that made a scandal because of its sexual issues, Jeanette Winterson asserts:

> Orlando refuses all constraints: historical, fantastical, metaphysical, sociological. Ageing is irrelevant. Gender is irrelevant. Time is irrelevant. It is as though we could live as we always wanted to; disappointments, difficulties, sorrow, love, children, lovers, nothing to be avoided, everything to be claimed. Not locked. Not limited[32].

[31] HALL, *op. cit*.
[32] WINTERSON, Jeanette, "Shape shifter: The joyous transgressions of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*", *New Statesman*, 18 February 2013.

We will work from this assertion and put forth the autonomous construction of Orlando, a conscious reconsideration of the importance of the exterior in the development of one's own identity and creation.

a. Orlando: A "Lonely Cloud" Aside from Society

Orlando is the romantic figure of the lonely wanderer first developed by Rousseau in *Les Rêveries du Promeneur Solitaire*[33]. In British culture, one may think of Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud[34]" or Rudyard Kipling's "The Cat Who Walks by Himself[35]" in which the cat says "I am the cat who walks by himself and all places are alike to me". These two texts give the essential features of the romantic wanderer: a male figure who is alone, who wanders, who seems away from society. Orlando is in this sense a "lonely cloud", s/he is alone from beginning to end, whether it be in the book or in the film.

Many occurrences of his solitude (Orlando does not feel lonely but rather alone) are to be found in the book: he has a "love of solitude" (7) and he himself says multiple times "'I am alone'" (7) as if "alone" were not an adjective anymore but a noun that could sum up his identity. He is also "secluded" (47), his house, as shown in the film, is aside from society, in the countryside. On the first page, Orlando is said to have a "father" (4) and a "grandfather", and in the film the spectator can see his parents once, but "Orlando gets free of 'his' parents very easily[36]". He later says to Sasha that he lives alone and that he has no brother or sister. He has thus no family to account for and can do as he wishes to do, without being afraid of the family's eye.

The literal absence of the father may also be given a psychnoanalytical interpretation, and be seen as an absence of "the Nom-du Père" as defined by Lacan[37]. Lacan draws the theory of "the Nom-du Père" from Freud's development of the Oedipian Complex in which the mother represents desire and the father represents limitation. According to Lacan, a triangulation is created between the mother, the baby and the Phallus, symbolic of the father. The "Nom-du Père" designates the interdiction of the father, inserting a rupture between what the individual wants and what one wants of the individual. Orlando's parents are absent in the book and appear briefly in the film. We can make the assumption that Orlando either metaphorically "kills the

[33] ROUSSEAU, Jean-Jacques, *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* [1782], Paris: Gallimard, 1972.
[34] WORDSWORTH, William, *Selected Poems*, London: Penguin Classics, 2004, p. 164.
[35] KIPLING, Rudyard, *Just So Stories* [1902], London: Puffin Classics, 2012, p.161.
[36] LEE, Hermione, *Virginia Woolf* [1996], London: Vintage, 1997, p.527.
[37] AOUILLE, Sophie, BRUNO, Pierre, JOYE-BRUNO Catherine, "Père et Nom(s)-du-Père (1re partie)", *Psychanalyse*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2008, pp. 101-113.

father" as well as the mother in the first scene of the book, symbolically cutting the motherly cord or the head of the Moor symbolizing his patriarchal lineage, and decides to act regardless of the father's injunctions; or that Orlando never knew the father's or the mother's limitations. Having no parental models, and even no gender models, enables Orlando to construct his/her own identity, an androgynous one, both wanting and being the phallus, again, following Lacan's theory, as Orlando chooses both sexes[38]. Lacan makes a phonological link between "nom du père", "non du père" and "les non-dupes errant"[39] and it is what Orlando leans forward to: errancy, not the Oedipal deterministic one but the romantic one. The biographer says that he has a "romantic power" (61), and that he "seems to have made no friends […] no attachments". He is indeed a "saunterer", a term which comes from "sans terre[40]" and was applied to the wandering knights of the Medieval Era like John Lackland, Jean Sans Terre in French. We can assume that in the choice of the name Orlando, which means "land" or "famous land", from the German name Roland, Woolf introduces the first layer of irony toward her character who does not want to be attached to any land, and by extension refuses boundaries. This could equally be seen as a mocking of "The Song of Roland", an epic poem telling the heroic endeavour of Roland, the exact opposite of Woolf aimed at in writing *Orlando*.

Hermione Lee, one of Woolf's biographer, stresses the importance of walking for Woolf: "London was her own past, which she traced and retraced, meeting her previous selves as she went[41]". Thoreau praises walking for being the moment when one can reflect on oneself aside from society, in nature: "you must walk like a camel, which is said to be the only beast which ruminates when walking[42]". That is exactly what Orlando does throughout the book and the film, and never stops to do, a continual movement paradoxically captured by the camera with the tracking shot. In *Art & Queer Culture* Catherine Lord and Richard Meyer, linking the notions of "Geonauts and Genderqueers[43]", go as far as stating: "Orlando's sex change and her/his frolics through the centuries are nothing compared to his voyages[44]". Orlando's sauntering is part of his/her identity. He is seen as: "perambulating the house alone" (32), "he seemed to wander alone in deserts of vaste eternity" (48), "he moved like a stag, without any

[38] RADO, Lisa, "Would the Real Virginia Woolf Please Stand Up? Feminist Criticism, the Androgyny Debates, and Orlando", *Women's Studies*, volume 26, issue 2, 1997, p. 152.
[39] ZIZEK, Slavoi, *What's Wrong with Fundamentalism?*, Part 1, http://www.lacan.com/zizpassion.htm, retrieved 11/04/2019.
[40] THOREAU, Henry David, *Collected Essays and Poems*, "Walking", New York: The Library of America, 2001, p.225.
[41] LEE, *op. cit.*, 553.
[42] *Ibid*., p.228.
[43] LORD, Catherine, MEYER, Richard, *Art & Queer culture*, London: Phaidon Press, 2013, p.40.
[44] *Ibid*., p. 41

need to think about his legs". Orlando is both a wonderer and wanderer. He nonetheless has a land, his "three hundred and fifty two bedrooms" (52) mansion inspired by Knole House, the property of the Sackville family, but refuses to be attached to it. He has a long family tree, but refuses to be reduced to his aristocratic status, and wants to cut the cord, just as he does for the trophy of his ancestors, "the head of a Moor" (4), he would not be confined in the "green arras" (4) either. Orlando has no family name, he does not, once more, have the "Nom-du Père", which was rather usual for a noble family, but the aristocratic families had at least titles. Orlando is indeed called "Lord Orlando" or "Lady Orlando" throughout the book, or simply Orlando, and refuses to take her husband's name when she marries, escaping the norm. S/he thus has no binding with his/her family, s/he is just "Orlando" and it is enough for him/her.

He sings "the delight of having no name" (50), "the pleasure of having no documents to seal or sign, no flourishes to make, no calls to pay" (69), of living "anonymously, needing no thanking or naming" (51); he doesn't have to keep his or her reputation intact, his identity is provokingly defined with the negative, Orlando is but himself/herself. S/he focuses on "autoperception", "the image one has of oneself" ("l'image qu'on a de soi-même[45]") and wants to be his/her own focal point. S/he continually re-enacts deixis: being I, being here, being now. For Paul Ricoeur, the construction of identity can have three levels: the "*ipse*", the Foucaldian "souci de soi", when the I only reflects on the I; the "idem", the same in the other; and the "*alter*", the difference in the other[46]. Orlando first focuses on the "souci de soi". Ricoeur makes the difference between the "I" and the "self":

> Dire *soi*, ce n'est pas dire *je*. Le *je* se pose – ou est déposé. Le *soi* est impliqué à titre réfléchi dans des opérations dont l'analyse précède le retour vers lui même[47].

Orlando is the focal point of his/her own life and is more than free, benefitting not from "a room of one's own" but of "three hundred and fifty two bedrooms" (52) of his/her own. Orlando does not see herself as the "Angel in the House[48]" but more as a ghost in the house: unseen and uncatchable. Although, it is important to clarify that Orlando is far from the selfish "I", which Virginia Woolf paradoxically disliked: "her detestation of the insistent 'I'– word of something Victorian patriarchy or 1930s Fascism. She wanted to move narrative away from the 'damned

[45] HEINICH, Nathalie, *Etats de femme. L'identité féminine dans la fiction occidentale* [1996], Paris: Gallimard, 2018, p.333.
[46] RICOEUR, Paul, *Soi-même comme un autre*, Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1990.
[47] *Ibid*., p.30.
[48] WOOLF, Virginia, *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays* [1942], "Professions for Women", New York: Harcourt, 1974, p.236.

egotistical self[49]'". When the first person pronoun is used, it is thus most of the time sarcastically. Virginia Woolf also shared the Hegelian idea that something, and *a fortioti* someone, can exist by itself even when no one looks at it[50]. Orlando lives and constructs his/her identity as if s/he were unobserved. From the beginning, the reader is shown Orlando's point of view, either directly with free direct speech, or indirectly with free indirect speech and through the third person narrator –which is, according to Benveniste[51], still the first-person talking about another person. Orlando doesn't need an interlocutor to speak to, as s/he often speaks to himself/herself, nor does he need to be seen by another person to fully exist; he doesn't need recognition. S/he also blurs the narrative and ontological quest in being both the subject and the object in Greimas's actantial model[52], the one who is in charge of the quest and the quest itself: Orlando is both "a poet and a muse[53]".

Orlando chooses to have his/her personal identity aside from the vision and expectation of society and refuses the frame, refuses the imprisonment of the I and the Eye.

b. Refusing the Frame: The Wish for Freedom and Fluidity

Like Virginia Woolf herself, Orlando refuses the frame of the self and society. Woolf had "her own sceptical resistance to authority, and her horror of being dominated[54]" and this fear and hatred of entrapment is visible in Orlando's need of freedom and fluidity. Orlando is either out of the frame or binding the frame, queering it. S/he, first, doesn't feel the gap between his/her own vision of himself/herself, and the vision people have of him/her, and if s/he does, it enables an update on her self and not a submission. Only the outside reminds him/her that s/he is not what s/he ought to be, but Orlando scarcely pays attention to his/her body. S/he is not aware of his/her change of sex; it doesn't affect her inner self.

This innocence, or witty refusal of norms, can be seen when Orlando turns from man to woman. The biographer comments: "Orlando looked himself up and down in a long looking glass, without showing any signs of discomposure" (67). In the film (appendix 1), the looking

[49] LEE, *op. cit.*, p.5.
[50] *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, edited by ROE, Sue, SELLERS Susan, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p.17.
[51] SUENAGA, Akatane, "Benveniste et Saussure : l'instance de discours et la théorie du signe", Paris : Presses universitaires de Paris Nanterre, 1997, p.124.
[52] GREIMAS, Algirdas, Julien, *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method* [1966], Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984.
[53] REYNIER, Christine, "The Impure Art of Biography: Virginia Woolf's Flush", in REGARD, Frédéric (ed.) *Mapping the Self: Space, Identity, Discourse in British Auto/Biography*, Saint Etienne: Université de Saint-Etienne, 2003, p.198.
[54] LEE, *op. cit.*, p.531.

glass is of an Arab style, round at the top, not straight, and her body is also slightly bent, refusing the authority of the "I", which the form of a body could remind. The spectator is only shown the reflection of Orlando, a voyeuristic image not from Orlando's point of view. It is an image that could remind us of Botticelli's "The Birth of Venus", in which Venus is trapped in frames – the frame of the painting, the eye of the painter and the eye of the spectator, all the characteristics of the male gaze. Orlando then breaks that "male gaze[55]" and talks directly to the spectator saying in the film "Same person. No difference at all. Just a different sex": Orlando refuses to be trapped in the reflection of her body, she didn't change inside just because her outside changed. Orlando's pubis is not covered contrary to what happens in the painting, and in so many paintings where women are naked, portraits of Adam and Eve for example. The fact that Orlando is "born again" in the East, where Adam and Eve were supposedly sent after the Fall, can be of importance: Eve, here Orlando, takes back her image and reunites the male and the female on earth. John Berger analyses paintings of women, especially nudes, in *Ways of Seeing*[56], and describes that imperative of the male gaze: "A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself[57]". On the contrary, Orlando rejects that exhortation and lives regardless of her sex: "she was apt to think of poetry when she should have been thinking of taffeta" (95), she is outside the imperative indicated by "should".

Orlando does not care for sexes. In Orlando's mind, Sacha is a "person, whatever the name or sex" (17). Nancy Cervetti notes that when he meets her, "Orlando calls Sasha an olive tree, an emerald, and a fox, metaphors conveying elusiveness and carrying no signs of one gender or the other[58]". What is more, Orlando has no assigned sexuality: Orlando is not heterosexual, not homosexual, not bisexual, not pansexual. S/he lets the spectator draw his or her own conclusions. The character of Orlando can be summed up as a queer motive, from the etymology "thwarted", bend, and s/he says time and time again his/her desire to bend the frame: "To refuse and to yield […] how delightful" (79), "the lines of her character were fixed, and to bend them the wrong way was intolerable" (120). Indeed, to bend what is already bent is impossible; Orlando places himself/herself in an untouchable, and unwatchable, position. She literally escapes the frame in the scene after her first debut as a woman in a *salon*, when the

[55]MULVEY, Laura, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", in BRAUDY, Leo; COHEN, Marshall, Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings, New York: Oxford UP, 1999, p. 834.
[56]BERGER, John, *Ways of Seeing* [1972], London: Penguin Classics, 2012.
[57] *Ibid*., p. 46.
[58] CERVETTI, Nancy, "In the Breeches, Petticoats, and Pleasures of Orlando", *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 1996, p. 168.

Archduke and two messengers pursue her. Even when she decides to settle as a wife and mother she comes across a "free spirit" in the film, who seemed to have come with the wind and will go back with it: Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine. We only know that wind, an element of freedom, is necessary for him as he travels by boat. He comes from the West, supposedly from America and he mentions in the film that his profession is the "Pursuit of Liberty", probably a tribute to Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind". Even if she seems to follow the conventions, Orlando does nothing in the right order: she is the one who proposes to Shelmerdine when the man should propose to the woman according to the conventions of the period; she proposes a few seconds after their encounter in the film, and "A few minutes later" (123) in the book; she asks Shelmerdine his name after the engagement, "The morning after" (123); and she consumes love before marriage, as the corresponding section of the film is being explicitly entitled "SEX". Orlando bends once more the frame, by not respecting what a lady should do by not caring for appearances. Lee notes that "'her' marriage is more of a free adventure than a domestic bondage[59]". What is more, she never becomes Mrs Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmderdine, she remains Orlando, free from beginning to end. Her motherhood is but episodic, it does not define, or reduce, Orlando to the status of mother; she is still Orlando, even married, and even with a child. We do not know the name of the child, and only in the book do we get to know that the child is a boy, whereas this information is left untold in the film. Her sex does not not determine her doings. Orlando is given the "female" aspiration to contemplation as well as the female passivity, but also a "manly" assertiveness and rationality, and a desire for freedom. By freeing himself/herself from the oppression of being, or being in accord with what people expect, *Orlando* (and *A Room of One's Own)* "set their women free from histories of repressions and limitations[60]". Orlando does not want to be a public *persona*, and to be reduced to his/her aspect, and does not want to be a character (*un personnage),* either. Orlando's self remains rather unaffected by the outside, s/he adjusts herself/himself to the world s/he lives in without concealing any personal identity:

> Orlando is gendered feminine gradually, through a complex social interaction whereby she alters her behaviours and self-perception according to her experience of the reactions of others to her perceived biological sex, while still maintaining an essential subjectivity unaffected by that social interpellation[61].

[59] LEE, *op. cit*., p.527.
[60] *Ibid*., p.527.
[61] HELT, Brenda, "Passionate Debates on 'Odious Subjects': Bisexuality and Woolf's Opposition to Theories of Androgyny and Sexual Identity", *Twentieth Century Literature*, 56.2, 2010, pp. 145-155.

c. Orlando's Independence from the Genre

Orlando, as a character, also refuses the frame of fiction and is independent from his/her gender but also from the genre. S/he wants to be a person with all the attending complexities and is seen struggling out of the chains of fiction to assert his/her own individuality, away from the eyes of society and even, sometimes, from the reader's or the biographer's own eyes. Virginia Woolf even said in her diary:

> How extraordinarily unwilled by me but potent by its own right by the way Orlando was! as if it shoved everything aside to come into existence[62].

Orlando even seems to be independent from his/her creator. Two hypotheses are possible regarding *Orlando*'s biographer. First hypothesis, Orlando is the character of his/her own biography and his/her life is told by a narrator whose identity we do not know. Second hypothesis, Orlando is the biographer and s/he is telling his/her own story, as the film suggests in the scene where Orlando hands in herself the manuscript of a biography –it would then be a disguised autobiography. Both hypotheses will be developed.

In the first hypothesis, Orlando is not the biographer, but is aware of someone relating his/her life but in the film, Orlando talks to the camera several times, doing *appartés* from his/her own life, being character and writer, breaking the suspension of disbelief. In the film and in the book, the biographer has to run after Orlando as Orlando always seems to want to leave behind his/her own image as well as the biographer. Sally Potter transposes this will to escape its own self in the scene of the maze when Orlando magically transforms, from a 18th century woman, into a Victorian lady with shots that are quick and halting. The biographer comments this scene by saying: "the biographer must not stop either, but must fly as fast as he can" (21); he or she (as we do not know the sex of the biographer) is Orlando's shadow. Thus, Orlando takes back the authority –in its double meaning– from the biographer, who is supposed to make someone's life his or her own and narrate it. S/he breaks away from the classical biographical character who is usually passive as his or her story is told, who rarely speaks, either in free direct or indirect speech and who never says "I".

The biographer is not a traditional one either as he or she refuses several times to be a "good biographer" (7) who should give what people want of Orlando at the cost of truth. Victorian biographers, as Woolf's father was, may rewrite a character so it matches the "spirit

[62] *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume III: 1925-30*, edited by BELL, Anne, Olivier, London: Penguin books, 1982, p.168.

of the age" (121), and here the biographer refuses to do so. Orlando's biographer is a "new biographer", as described by Woolf:

> He is no longer the serious and sympathetic companion, toiling even slavishly in the footsteps of his hero. Whether friend or enemy, admiring or critical, he is an equal. In any case, he preserves his freedom and his right to independent judgment[63].

He or she has an individuality of his or her own. One can see it by the numerous personal comments that the biographer makes throughout the book before focusing back on the biography. This may lead us to see the biographer as Virginia Woolf herself, as the biographer's last words are "Thursday, the eleventh of October, Nineteen hundred and Twenty Eight" (162), the exact day *Orlando* was published. The narrator-Woolf thus has no longer the need to be "everywhere present and nowhere visible[64]" but is present everywhere and visible where the reader can see it; it is a hide and seek game.

For the second hypothesis, according to which Orlando can be seen as the biographer of his/her own life, Orlando is granted a double authority as the subject and the object of the biography, and thus has the possibility of being out of the frame completely whenever s/he wishes, unattainable as a character (turning into a biographer) and unattainable as a biographer (turning into a character), displacing identities and losing the reader. In the book, Orlando is a writer, and does not choose between creation and procreation: s/he writes "plays, histories, romances, poems; some in prose, some in verse; some in French, some in Italian" (37), and of course is writing the poem "The Oak Tree", throughout the book. The "new biographer" can also be a woman. After seeking the advice of a professional writer, Mr Greene (that the biographer usually calls Greene), Orlando decides that writing should not be an act to please people but something to do for your own sake:

> 'I'll be blasted', he said, 'if I ever write another word, or try to write another word, to please Nick Greene or the Muse. Bad, good, or indifferent, I'll write, from this day forward, to please myself' (50)

and "I will write […] what I enjoy writing" (86). Like Virginia Woolf setting up against what is fashionable to write and choosing to express her own inner self in whatever form she wishes, Orlando does not abide by people's opinions on his/her writings, s/he constructs his/her own writing identity and makes the restricted space of the page a space of freedom and expression.

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[63] *Granite and Rainbow: Essays by Virginia Woolf*, "The New Biography", edited by WOOLF, Leonard, New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1958, p.152

[64] My translation of a section of Flaubert's phrase "L'auteur, dans son œuvre, doit être comme Dieu dans l'univers, présent partout, visible nulle part." in a letter to Louise Colet (1852).

It is striking to bear in mind that when Sally Potter wanted to adapt *Orlando* by Woolf, she was told 5 years through that it would be impossible, because Woolf was too famous an author, because adapting the stream of consciousness was impossible and because Merchant Ivory Productions was already in the period drama industry[65]. What is more, the film does not belong to only one genre but multiple ones: drama, fantasy, period movie… Sally Potter even refuses that her film should be called "feminist" because it is yet another label, another restraint to what a work could be: "I think the film is for both men and women, and it's about celebrating, really, both sexes[66]." At the end of the book and the film, Orlando has created his/her own identity, his/her own voice (*voix*) and, his/her own inner and outer path (*voie*).

B. The Eye as a Constraint to the I: Me vs the Other

As a member of the aristocracy, Orlando is required to take part in the activities of the court, to attend dinners, parties, salons, ceremonies, during which everybody must chat, dance, eat, following the etiquette. These events are, in every civilisation, the occasion to show one's best self in front of society in order to gain titles, to find a husband or a wife, to be seen and validated as an important member of the community. Being part of a group implies following rules, written or not, abiding by the "social contract" of Rousseau according to which your rights end where the rights of others begin. According to Nathalie Heinich, this results in a multiplication of the self into three selves: "l'image qu'on a de soi-même (autoperception), celle qu'on donne à autrui (représentation), celle qui est renvoyée par autrui (désignation)[67]". It is when these three "moments" are brought face to face that a crisis of identity takes place, during which society is seen as a censor to the inner self: when private and public, inner and outer, *ipse* and *alter*, differ.

a. Being or Being Seen

Many courts of the English reign are represented in *Orlando*, Queen Elizabeth's (8), "King James'" (14), "King Charles'" (57), or Queen Victoria's. Courts imply a King or a Queen and subjects who have to obey the etiquette, "the customary code of polite behaviour in society or among members of a particular profession or group[68]" according to the Oxford Dictionary. With the etiquette, everybody must follow the same rules, wear the same clothes, write following the same codes, and the film introduces us to this uniformity, from which Orlando always seems to differentiate himself/herself. Society and its members are described in *Orlando*

[65] "Sally Potter and Tilda Swinton in Conversation, BFI Southbank", 2 December 2009, *YouTube*, 14 December 2009, https://youtu.be/GtjpLrnZO-Y, retrieved 12/02/19.
[66] In DEGLI-ESPOSTI, Cristina, "Sally Potter's 'Orlando' and the Neo-Baroque Scopic Regime", *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 1, University of Texas Press, 1996, p.89.
[67] HEINICH, *op. cit.*, p.333.
[68] "etiquette", en.oxforddictionaries.com, 2019, retrieved 23/01/19.

as a whole, a homogeneous part, almost like a choir with only one voice, one body of thoughts, one vision: “the spirit of the age” (121). Being is then not a personal process but a controlled one, synonymous with *decorum*.

From page 9 to page 11, Orlando is described welcoming the Queen. The scene, in society, is shown through a more restricted point of view than when Orlando is alone a few lines earlier. The second scene is a meticulous and lyrical description of Orlando who is not static. The close-ups and extreme close-ups on the Queen and on the Queen’s eyes can be interpreted as the omnipresence of the prying eye in Elizabethan society, and on the contrary, the wide shots of Orlando wandering in the fields convey a sense of freedom away from the consciousness of the body. This vision contrasts with that of the young man getting dressed up, or tied up, by butlers with “crimson breeches, lace collar, waistcoat of taffeta, and shoes with rosettes” (9), preparing himself to be presentable, to be see-able. The syntax completely breaks when Orlando is alone wandering and when he must fulfil his duties: long sentences describe Orlando when he feels free and rushed and fragmented ones when he has to be in society. The structure probably reflects the fragmentation between public and personal selves and the difference between time spent alone and time spent with people: “Orlando looked no more. He dashed downhill. He let himself in at a wicket gate. He reached his room.” (8) Orlando then presents a “bowl of rose water” (9) to the Queen and they both see each other through a single part of their bodies. The synecdoche, transposed into a close-up in the film, mirrors the way society sees individuals: “a hand […] attached to an old body” (9) representing the Queen, and “a head” (10) representing Orlando. Bodies and individualities are thus reduced to body parts, to “attributes” (10), being equals being seen. The contradiction between appearance, the exterior image of someone, and the inner character, can also be seen in the following sentence: “He was the very image of a noble gentleman. But inwardly?” (11). This suggests that the outer and the inner selves do not necessarily match. What is more, this scene is part of the section entitled “DEATH”: it could represent both the death of the Queen that occurs in the section and the death of Orlando’s individuality in society.

This reductive image becomes a recurrent and comical topic throughout the book. Orlando is characterized by his/her leg, as a Homeric epithet is supposed to describe and define someone’s character, like “swift-footed Achilles”, Orlando could be “fair-legged Orlando”: “a pair of the finest legs” (10), “he had a pair of the shapeliest legs” (56). It even becomes satirical at some point “such a leg! Such a countenance!! Such princely manners!!!” (63): that the vision of a leg is a source of excitement can show the overrated importance given to appearances.

When Orlando is a woman, her legs bring as much excitement, but because she is a woman, she has to cover them:

> Here she tossed her foot impatiently, and showed an inch or two of calf. A sailor on the mast, who happened to look down at the moment, started so violently that he missed his footing and only saved himself by the skin of his teeth. (77)

Orlando's leg, an arbitrary exterior appearance helps him/her to make his way into society. It is indeed his leg that the Queen decorates with the jewel of the "order of the Garter" (11) that will lead him to a flourishing career.

One of the most important social codes are clothes; they represent your social status, your nationality, your age, your sex. They are supposed to sum up your identity, to make you look on the outside what you are in the inside. One look at your clothes is apparently enough to say you are as exposed in the following sentence: "An old nobleman – for such his furred gown and golden chain proclaimed him." (30) They are seen as physical and mental constraints for Orlando, both when male and female. Two scenes show Orlando being wrapped in clothes, a corset for Orlando as a female (appendix 2) and an Elizabethan suit when Orlando is a male, as if it emphasised his/her womanhood/manhood. It is even more relevant when Orlando is a female: she has to show her skin but not too much, wear a "crinoline" (115), following the fashion of the time. This balance between showing and hiding is first a burden for Orlando's mind and body. Skirts are even compared to chains "she felt the coil of skirts" (75), "'these skirts are plaguey things to have about one's heels." (75) She even is unable to move around the house, as male Orlando used to, as her dress is too voluminous (appendix 3). She also has to sit alone on a sofa (appendix 4) as her dress is too big, and she cannot run as her dress is too long (appendix 5). Clothes are in fact not only a bodily constraint but a constraint on how people see you and how you see yourself.

The differences between those two selves are even more stressed when Orlando is a diplomat in Turkey at the beginning of chapter 3: he is supposed to represent the whole English nation, not only himself. It adds another layer of social responsibilities and *façade*, for he has to abide by customs, satirically called "customs or diseases" (69), and even if they are not the same in Turkey and in England, they still are customs. Here, personal and national identity also clash. Indeed, Orlando has to be "properly scented, curled, and anointed" (59) before fulfilling his "diplomatist's duties" (60). He has to go through "ceremonies" (60) that are "always the same" (59), parades described as comical as the ones in England. These are characterized by restrictions and obligations, here with concessions and modals, "it was permissible only to

mention the weather" (59), "only permissible to compare Constantinople as a place of residence with London" (59), "the Sultan's healths had to be discussed" (60). The same obligations are here when Orlando had to recite a poem praising Queen Elizabeth's beauty in the film, codes exposed by the theatrical way in which Orlando recites the poem. But Orlando is "fatigued by them" (60) and even "depressed" (60), annihilated by the duties and the false image he has to show. It is as if appearing in public, and being a public figure, led him out of himself, and being alone, on the contrary, were the only moment when he could really be himself as shown by the scene when Orlando is heard "chanting something in an odd, sing-song voice when he was alone." (60) When he is in Turkey and attackers sack his house, Orlando is saved by appearance for he looks dead: "seeing him stretched to all appearances dead, they left him untouched" (65), it shows the irony of appearances. Christy Burns draws the parallel between one of Woolf's philosophical inspiration for *Orlando* and the idea of restraint:

> Ironically, the one philosopher parodied the most in Orlando (if only with subtle implicitness) bears the name of Woolf's dilemma John Locke's opposition between the inside and the outside is taken up by Woolf through her discussion of clothing and nature[69].

Indeed, Orlando returns in England the same year publication of the publication of Locke's *Essay* in 1689, with different body and clothes but the same mind.

As we saw with customs, constraints are not necessarily said or written, but are often invisible yet omnipresent and fixed in people's mind. They are internal, as when Orlando waits to be alone to sing or to cry. Self-restraint can be the strongest limit to the construction of the I and it is what Orlando tries to escape. Michel Foucault developed Bentham's idea of the panopticon (appendix 6) by explaining the powerful hold of unsaid rules, a more efficient technique of control than written and voiced rules. As the subject doesn't clearly know what the rules are and if he or she is being seen, the subject automatically controls himself or herself. It is probably what Virginia Woolf wanted to imply when talking about the "spirit of the age" (121): "this is an invisible voice over Orlando's shoulder, making sure she doesn't write anything a married lady shouldn't[70]", an "invisible Censor[71]".

The biographer depicts the society Orlando lives in from Sasha's point of view as a "crowd full of prying old women […] who stared in one's face" (20), a single body with a single

[69] BURNS, Christy L., "Re-Dressing Feminist Identities: Tensions between Essential and Constructed Selves in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*", *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 40, No. 3, Autumn, 1994, p. 348.
[70] LEE, *op. cit.*, p.524.
[71] LEE, *op. cit.*, p.523.

individuality, "a mob", a "crowd" (94). It underlines the artificiality of society when the biographer says: "Society is the most powerful concoction of the world and society has no existence whatsoever." (95). It is a "mirage" (94), in other words, only an image: "Take away Lord O., Lord H., Lord C., or Mr M. and separately each are nothing" (95). The title does not define the person, it does not give them an identity, but without a title, most English subjects have no identity anymore. Titles are depicted as arbitrary, just like the body, as one does not choose his or her body, or the family he or she was born in. Yet, for Orlando's society, it is everything that matters: "Orlando had won the praise of Queen Elizabeth for the way she handed a bowl of rose water as a boy" (95). It is even associated with "pressure" (94) when everybody is "eager to gaze upon the heroine of the celebrated lawsuit" (94). The predominance of appearance over the inner self, of body over mind, is also shown through the character of the Archduchess/Archduke who falls in love with Orlando by merely looking at a painting: "The Archduchess […] had seen a portrait of Orlando and had fallen hopelessly in love with him" (88). In the end, even *Orlando* plays with appearances: it was misjudged and knew a lower selling rate because of its subtitle[72], and it is nowadays only considered as "the longest and most charming love letter in history[73]" according to Nigel Nicolson, a "reduction to an escapade or 'love letter'[74]" according to Nancy Cervetti, a reduction that proves Woolf's point: do not judge a book by its cover.

Identity is perhaps never fully understandable alone, self-perception ("autoperception") never fully understandable without representation ("representation[75]"), *ipse* never fully understandable without *alter*.

b. *Ipse* vs. *Alter*

The interaction with the other, "other" understood as what is not me, is at the heart of the construction of the self after the "personal identity" ("identité personnelle[76]") as developed by Paul Ricoeur. The opposition Ricoeur makes between "*ipse*", the self not in interaction with the other, and "alter", the other, is still a watershed in the understanding of the self because the individual realizes that he or she is not alone to carry the pronoun "I".

The other is then seen as a constraint, a barrier to the development of the personal identity. Being oneself takes on another meaning: not being a self, *ipse*, in the assumption that

[72] LEE, *op. cit*., p.516.
[73] NICOLSON, *op. cit*.
[74] CERVETTI, *op. cit*., p.172.
[75] HEINICH, *op. cit*., p.333.
[76] RICOEUR, *op. cit*., p.9.

my identity is created by myself through a comparative approach, but being myself because others are not me. It goes over the "self-perception" ("autoperception[77]"), and when the image you have of yourself and the image people have of you is not the same, there can be a rejection by the two parts.

Orlando discovers the other several times, but we will focus on two figures: Sasha and Mr Greene. Those two characters can be seen as opponents according to Greimas's actantial model (but also helpers, as we will further see) and be barriers to Orlando's quest for the self, for power. Greene, first, represents the literary critique, he is described as "the most influential critique of the Victorian age" (137). His name, Greene, can symbolize renewal and fertility, which is quire ironical for a character who does not believe in the future but is stuck in the past; green will then take its other symbolism of decay and stasis as the colour green is also associated with mould. Greene is indeed the epitome of nostalgia: "he could see no good in the present and had no hope for the future" (43). He is the opposite of Orlando: "Nick Greene came to precisely the opposite conclusion" (45). When silence is "of all things the most oppressive to his nerves" (45), it is everything that Orlando seeks. When he writes for "Glawr" (43), Orlando writes for himself/herself, in the film, they even sat at the opposite ends, far away from each other, a physical distance that mirrors the mental distance (appendix 7). He first meets Greene at the beginning of the book when he rushes to meet the Queen, in a passage ripe with the lexical field of the vision. Orlando gazes at Greene but Greene does not see him, does not acknowledge his existence: "He did not see Orlando." (9). He is physically described as a "shabby man, whose ruff was a thought dirty, and whose clothes were of hodden brown" (9); he is the very figure of the poet that Orlando makes in his mind. Here, too, Greene is the opposite of Orlando "He held a pen in his hand, but he was not writing." (9), "His eyes, globed and clouded like some green stone of curious texture, were fixed." (9) He is characterized by his non-action when Orlando is in a "hurry" (9). This first encounter evokes to Orlando the image of a reflective poet absorbed in his thoughts as well as in the world, his writing material. But when Orlando invites him later on, he is disappointed, because Greene seems more of an egocentric man who thinks that the fact that "he had only sold five hundred copies of his poem […] was largely due to the conspiracy against him" (42): he is more interested in a "pension" (43), and in food, than the art poetry, as for him "the art of poetry was dead in England" (42). He is hardly interested

[77] HEINICH, *op. cit.*, p.333.

in Orlando as a human being but rather in Lord Orlando's fortune. Greene even goes as far as making a fiction of Orlando's life:

> this, Greene felt, was the atmosphere for writing […] The subject was made for him. A noble Lord at home. […] Greene dashed off a very spirited satire there and then (45-46)

The second time Orlando opens his heart to a human being, he is "roasted" (46) and he is turned into a caricature because Greene only stopped at the image of Orlando and did not take time to know him in depth. In the film, he even mocks Orlando's writing when he is in the boat to go home, laughing at his poem "Death of a Lover", and thus laughing at Orlando's naked interiority. Two worlds collide, the world of nobility and the world of writers, as Greene thinks those two worlds are separated when Orlando wants to reunite them. Orlando sees himself as a poet but the image Greene mirrors back is that of a noble man with no legitimacy to write. Greene is thus seen as an opponent of Orlando's writing and quest for himself.

Sasha represents as much an opponent to Orlando as Greene does: "Greene's ridicule of his tragedy hurt him as much as the Princess' ridicule of his love" (49). With the encounter of love, it is also pain that he meets, rejection more than approval. If there was in the beginning an "intimacy" (19) and a complicity between the two with shared looks in the book and especially in the film, Orlando will be the victim of his wanting to be one with Sasha, thinking that love is the merging of identities. He says to her in the film "We're linked. […] You are mine.", as if being linked were enough for somebody to belong to someone else. Orlando is himself a victim of appearances and illusion when he thinks he has seen Sasha with another man: "For one second, he had a vision of them; saw Sasha seated on the sailor's knee; saw her bend towards him; saw them embrace before the light" (24). This image is but an illusion, translated in the film by blurry and quick camera movements. His realisation will come one night, the night Sasha and Orlando were supposed to meet and elope, through an epiphany, a moment of vision, both literally and figuratively: the frozen river breaks into million fragments, just like Orlando's self and Orlando's relationship with Sasha. His quest for love is stopped by Sasha herself, and another vision is given to Orlando, a vision that he had not imagined: that someone he love could be against him. The transformation of Orlando into a woman gives him/her another point of view on his being seen in public and adds some clear-sightedness to the dynamic between I and Others as Orlando is to take the point of view of a woman. It helps him discover the gender expectations of society.

c. Gender Expectations

No matter whether Orlando is a male or female, s/he experiences being seen as a woman or a man as a constraint to his/her interior self as it brings expectations: his/her body should match his/her inner self. The body becomes a prison more than a carnal envelope.

From the first words of the book, Orlando's sex is at the heart of the plot, it becomes an issue, and it mocks those who absolutely want to know if Orlando is a man or a woman. Saying "He – for there could be no doubt of his sex" (5) is an antiphrasis, an ironical way to cast light on Orlando's ambiguous sexuality and gender, triggering off the question without answering it. Doubt about Orlando's sex is paradoxically introduced by the incongruous assertion that there is no doubt about it. This first sentence also starts to challenge gender norms: there is no doubt about his sex because he is a man and being a man is in the norm of patriarchy: "Orlando is perceived as a man and, therefore, is regarded as the social norm[78]". On the contrary, a whole debate upon Orlando's sex is triggered when Orlando is supposed to have turned into a "woman", a female. This device is one of the ways in which Virginia Woolf denounces gender expectations. It is fundamental to remember that genders are social constructs as Judith Butler, and many gender theorists, explain. Genders are the way our sex defines our position in society, the way we are seen, according to the "heterosexual social contract" ("contrat social heterosexuel[79]") as Monique Wittig points out : "elles sont vues femmes, par conséquent elles sont femmes[80]". What one sees must match what someone is. Following this theory, the interior much match the exterior, and vice versa. According to her, genders are a limit to what a person can or cannot do and be in society, no matter what the person feels inside, and this arbitrariness is well portrayed in *Orlando*.

Orlando's "change of sex is against nature" (68) according to "many people" (and indeed, Vita Sackville-West's mother found it revolting[81]). Wittig reminds the reader of *La pensée straight* that society itself is against nature, as it is also a construct; heterosexuality is also a construct. In her essay, Lina Eriksson differentiates three key concepts of gender theories: the mind, that is all the feelings, emotions and experiences of a person; sex, a biological feature that one does not choose, male or female; and gender, a social construct which is usually

[78] ERIKSSON, Lina, *Mind vs. Body and Society. Androgynous Self-Perception and Social Preconceptions of Gender in Virginia Woolf's* Orlando, Karlstad: Karlstad University, 2014, p.12.
[79] WITTIG, Monique, *La pensée straight* [1992], Paris: Editions Amsterdam, 2018, p.80.
[80] *Ibid*., p.56.
[81] LEE, *op. cit.*, p.520.

deducted from the sex[82]. In heteronormative societies, those three notions are intertwined: if I was born a female, then I am a woman, then my mind will not be the same as a man's mind. This shortcut based on appearances is exactly what Woolf tries to unveil and annihilate with Orlando's androgyny; the body is but the tip of the iceberg. Orlando is seen differently when s/he is a man and a woman: "Not only does Orlando feel constrained, but because being 'female' and 'woman' are contingent and relational performances, men now treat her in radically different ways[83]". The restrictiveness of society is strengthened by the Gipsies's open-mindedness on genders: their clothes are unisex, Orlando hurries to dress in "those Turkish coats and trousers which can be worn indifferently by either sex" (68), and both men and women work the same amount and have the same social status; they don't pay attention to Orlando's gender. English society, on the contrary, does. The consciousness of Orlando being seen differently from when s/he was a man provokes not only a shock for the mind but also for the body:

> She was alone with a man. Recalled thus suddenly to a consciousness of her sex, which she had completely forgotten, and of his, which was now remote enough to be equally upsetting, Orlando felt seized with faintness. (87)

People act then as mirror of her body: she is constantly reminded that she is a woman and thus should not do certain things. When being a woman, she is no longer excused for her behaviour. When Orlando was a man, he had the possibility of being polyamorous but as a woman, Orlando is not even excused to cheat at a game of sugars with the Archduke: "Orlando cheated so grossly that even he could be deceived no longer. When he realized the truth at last, a painful scene ensued." (90) The fact that the Archduke didn't realize that she was cheating "so grossly" probably reveals that he couldn't imagine a woman was able to cheat, and afterwards, he decides to forgive her: "She was, after all, only a woman, he said." (90)

In the film, when Orlando joins a *salon* and meets three gentlemen including Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope, she realizes that being a woman is difficult. In the film, she sits alone on a chair, in front of three men, and the camera shows only her back, as if she were in a trial. The three men represent the male thinkers, writing about women but despising them, and the fluid movement of the camera between the three men shows the consensus of the time. On the other hand, the camera cuts from Orlando to the men, they are separate. They don't even address Orlando directly, but they speak of her in the third person ("The lady is aflame. And silent.

[82] ERIKSSON, *op. cit.*, p.16.
[83] CERVETTI, *op. cit.*, p.167.

Perfect") as if she were not there, or as if she were an art object, or worse an "animal" (103) as one of the three men says. In the book, Woolf mentions "The Character of Women" in which Pope draws a caricature of women, a disdain well-described in the film through his sayings and his bodily gesture. Woolf mocks the godly vision male think they have over women by making the biographer say for example: "But love – as the male novelists define it – and who, after all, speak with greater authority? – has nothing to do with kindness, fidelity, generosity, or poetry." (133) The satirical tone is even more present with the three hyphens that break up the consensus and point to it as a construct. Woolf will develop this idea in *A Room of One's Own*, saying that when it comes to "women and fiction", what is usually implied is men writing about women in fiction. Orlando, and Woolf as well, refuses to let a man "run her through the body with his pen" (105). Literary and political authorities then join to restrict women. According to Pope, "women are but children of larger growth" (105) – a limited definition of women characterized by the restrictive "but". They are seen as "bearer of the bleeding wound[84]", persons who have no phallus and who are making up for it by making a baby, as Mulvey says mimicking Freud's words. Indeed, it was the case for the law as the right to vote was granted to women in the UK in 1928, when *Orlando* was published.

In the eyes of the law women must have a husband to acquire the beginning of a legal identity. Orlando loses this identity when he turns into a she: "The chief charges against her were (1) that she was dead, and therefore could not hold any property whatsoever; (2) that she was a woman, which amounts to much the same thing" (82). She becomes "incognito or incognita" (82), "legally unknown" (87), her identity is also here tried and defined by its absence, concession and restriction; she is a "nonentity" (85). In order to regain her social status, to be visible again in the eye of society, she is asked to be associated with a male: "'The estates which are now desequestrated in perpetuity descend and are tailed and entailed upon the heirs male of my body, or in default of marriage'" (126). She can only be seen as a woman if she can fulfil her maternal of marital duties. Before being able to marry she has to abide by womanly qualities such as chastity as "the whole edifice of female government is based on that foundation stone; chastity is their jewel, their centrepiece, which they run mad to protect, and die when ravished of" (75). This contradiction is evocative of the figure of the Virgin Mary, women are paradoxically only women when they are chaste but when they have babies, otherwise, they turn from saint to witch.

[84] MULVEY, *op. cit.*, p. 834.

Women power is discussed when Orlando is harassed by the Archduke and asks herself what she should do: "she could no longer knock a man over the head" (89). Does "could" imply possibility or ability? Woolf points out the performativity of words: women usually do not act only because they are told they cannot. So is it with writing. When male Orlando wrote "plays, histories, romances, poems; some in prose, some in verse; some in French, some in Italian" (37), female Orlando cannot, she is always interrupted: "But as for writing poetry with Basket and Bartholomew in the room, it was impossible." (117) and "Basket and Bartholomew interrupted with the tea things." (117) Time for men and women is not the same, female Orlando has less time to develop her inner self and her creativity than male Orlando: "'A plague on women' […] "they never have one moment's peace." (87) Orlando is urged to marry and to have kids because the clock is ticking faster for women. Her butler comments: "'And some little masters and mistresses to come after her', […] being privileged by virtue of his holy office to speak his mind on such delicate matters as these" (83), when Orlando, and women, are censored: "But we must omit that word; it was disrespectful in the extreme and passing strange on a lady's lips" (76). Woolf was utterly against those Victorian "great expectations" towards women and was not fond of home duties. When woman is supposed to be the "Angel in the House[85]" Woolf "killed her[86]" with the same weapon men depict women with, and created a character which had the same unwillingness to follow the "path[87]" society chose for women, but used the angel's wings to fly over gender constraints.

C. The Difficulty of Catching the I: "Can words say everything[88]?"

In 1925, Virginia Woolf published *Mrs Dalloway*. In this novel, Virginia Woolf explores the day of an aristocratic woman through her thoughts and memories. By focusing on a single day, Woolf exposes the following paradox: one day is enough to give a sample of the identity of Mrs Dalloway, and yet, at the end, Mrs Dalloway remains but a figure. Woolf renews this psychological experiment three years later with *Orlando*, but this time through four hundred years and under the subtitle "A Biography". One day or four hundred years are both, according to Woolf, enough to catch the "essence" of a character, and still not enough to capture the entire self of a person. With the attempt at portraying the I through two extreme lengths, Woolf underlined that the very endeavour of capturing life is impossible, as the self remains undefined

[85] BLAIR, Emily, *Virginia Woolf and the Nineteenth-Century Domestic Novel*, State University of New York Press: Albany, 2007, p.57.
[86] *Ibid*., p.57.
[87] WOOLF, *A Room of One's Own*, *op. cit*., p.31.
[88] WOOLF, Virginia, *Flush* [1933], London: Penguin Books, 1999, p. 32.

and undefinable. She thus sets against an English tradition of writing biographies that her father believed in. Sir Leslie Stephen contributed to this tradition by writing "378 lives[89]" in *The Dictionary of National Biography* which very title "dictionary" implies the notion of definition Woolf disagreed with. *Orlando* can be seen as the practice, a *preuve par l'absurde*, that the end of a biography is not catching the self but following the ripples of the self as far as they go. She wonders on the very tangibility of the I in *Flush* in which Flush, the dog of Elizabeth Barrett Browning wonders in front of a mirror: "But what is 'oneself'? Is it the thing people see? Or is it the thing one is[90]?". In *Orlando* she both unveils the vain enterprise of catching the self and portrays what she calls the "integrity" of Orlando: "the pith and essence of personality[91]".

a. From a Biography to a Mock-Biography: The Limits of Writing the Self

The limits of biography are suggested in the very composition of the word: *bíos*, which means "life", and *gráphō*, "writing". A biography consists in writing the life of someone, to set in stone what is apparently a stream, a moving process from cradle to coffin.

After writing on the art of creating characters and telling their lives, with "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown[92]" in 1924, with "Modern Fiction[93]" in 1927 and with "The New Biography[94]", Woolf puts theory into practice with *Orlando*. Hermione Lee describes it as "a biography which makes a mockery of the very idea of writing biography[95]." Indeed, it could be seen as a trojan horse, disguising itself as a biography, as the subtitle of *Orlando* testifies, to a way to criticize the genre from within, and creating a new way of telling the self. Little by little, the biographer finds a balance between "something of granite-like solidity" and "something of rainbowlike intangibility[96]", a balance between facts and feelings.

Orlando's biographer constantly juggles between a supposedly true account of Orlando's life, to a sarcastic and overrated description of facts. Facts are indeed one of the chief features of the Victorian and the Edwardian biography[97], with "Truth, Candour, and Honesty, the austere gods who keep watch and ward the inkpot of the biographer" (65), here personified. In "The

[89] REYNIER, *op. cit.*, p.189.
[90] WOOLF, *Flush, op. cit.*, p. 32.
[91] REYNIER, *op. cit.*, p.197.
[92] WOOLF, Virginia, *Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown* [1929], Norwood: Norwood Editions, 1978.
[93] WOOLF, Virginia, *The Common Reader, Vol.1* [1925], "Modern Fiction", London: Vintage Classics, 2003, pp. 146-154.
[94] "The New Biography", *op. cit*.
[95] LEE, *op. cit.*, p.522.
[96] "The New Biography", *op. cit.*, p.149.
[97] SAWYER, Robert, "Virginia Woolf and the Aesthetics of Modernist Shakespeare", *South Atlantic Review*, Vol. 74, No. 2, 2009, p.3.

New Biography[98]", Woolf regrets both the Victorian and the Edwardian tendency to stick up to facts, hence erasing the flourishing invisible interiority of a person. In "The New Biography" she takes the example of Lytton Strachey whose conciseness is sometimes only due to the exploration of the surface: "Mr Strachey compressed four stout Victorians into one slime volume[99]." For Woolf, "[f]acts are all that they can offer us, and facts are a very inferior form of fiction[100]." Victorian biographers even could sum up a life in one word: "The writers in the *Dictionary of National Biography* have a pleasant habit of summing up a life, before they write it, in one word, thus. 'Stanhope, Lady Hester Lucy (1776-1839), eccentric[101]'". Woolf reproaches the biographers with paying too much attention to the tangible and the visible, the body for instance, and not enough to the soul, thus omitting the imperceptible one can offer.

In *Orlando*, the biographer fulfils the biographers' "simple duty" to "state the facts as far as they are known" (31), thanks to "documents", but it soon reveals to be insufficient. The reader is sometimes given the exact date of an event "seven o'clock, on Monday, April the twenty first" (40) or "Tuesday, the 16th of June 1712" (96), which are either unimportant dates to understand the character of Orlando or not the dates that could have been interesting, like his/her date of birth. These dates are part of the make-belief of a true biography, a mocking in disguise. The portraits of Orlando throughout the book are also a tool to make the biography more real. According to Sue Roe: "The index, preface and illustrations further contribute to the 'truth' side of the equation in this mock-biography[102]". In other words, it is a deceptive biography: it looks like a biography, but it is not truly one. The biographer asserts truths about Orlando throughout the book:

> We know that he discharged his duties to admiration – witness his Bath and his Dukedom. We know that he had a finger in some sort of the most delicate negotiations between King Charles and the Turks (58)

those are facts. Yet, the biographer later on says that there is a "hole in the manuscript big enough to put your finger through" (58). This passage, between certainty, illustrated by the repetition of the verb "know", and the fragility of knowledge, especially towards someone's life, is exposed. It also creates expectations in the reader, expectations that the biographer does not fulfil, falling short of the readers' voyeuristic needs. The biographer increasingly realizes

[98] "The New Biography", *op. cit.*, p.155.
[99] *Ibid*., p.151.
[100] WOOLF, Virginia, *The Common Reader, Vol.2* [1932], "How Should One Read a Book?", London: Vintage Classics, 2003, p.263.
[101] REYNIER, *op. cit.*, p.188.
[102] *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, *op. cit.*, p.62.

the barrier of what is and what is not possible in biography, showing the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of such an enterprise: “To give a truthful account of London society at that or indeed at any other time, is beyond the powers of the biographer” (94), “To give an exact and particular account of Orlando’s life at this time becomes more and more out of the question” (108) and “we must go and say straight out to the reader who waits a-tiptoe to hear what life is – alas, we don’t know.” (134) He or she prefers to “confess than to gloss over” (31) this difficulty that many biographers encounter, telling the truth about writing a biography more than telling the truth about the subject of the biography. Unlike Greene who wrote about Orlando and stole his life to make a fiction, stepping over the frontier of what is possible to know of a person, the biographer carefully stops before the edge and treats carefully the matter of biography, saying for example: “Perhaps; but what appeared certain (for we are now in the region of ‘perhaps’ and ‘appears’)” (153), not taking facts as face value but giving “hints” (35) as a guidance for the reader, usually using modals. He or she makes comments on the very art of biography, for example, when Orlando wonders who he is after being left by Sasha, the biographer says “explain it how one may (and no explanation perhaps is possible – Memory is inexplicable)” (38).

When Orlando sleeps for seven days before becoming a female, the biographer is tempted to end the biography there, to write “[f]inis” (65), as he or she says, because nothing is known on this episode and because Orlando apparently dies. The words “obscurity” and “opacity” (65) are used to describe the lack of information. But “Truth” (65), repeated several times, and here an allegory, is summoned; “‘The truth and nothing but the Truth’” (66) says the biographer. In this scene, the three “Ladies” asking for the truth represent the *decorum* of Victorian society. This passage mocks the surrealistic importance of truth in biography, and at the same time the hypocrisy of such a demand, as it is not truth that is asked but a certain truth. When Orlando shows her naked androgynous body, the three ladies shout “Hide! Hide! Hide!” (66): it is not the naked truth that they want, but their own veiled truth. The biographer surrenders and gives *the* truth: “we have no choice left but confess – he was a woman.” (67) The use of the pronoun “he” and of the noun “woman” that bears a feminine meaning brings to light what nobody wants to see, yet, what is truthful. Some things cannot and shouldn’t be written in biographies as it is part of privacy, but the “Ladies” asked to and now refuse the truth. In this sense, the biographer refuses several times to treat some motifs because it has nothing to do with biography: “Let biologists and psychologists determine.” (68), “But let other pens treat of sex and sexuality” (68) and “These moralities belong, and should be left to the historian” (73) because for him or

her "[l]ife, it has been agreed by everyone whose opinion is worth consulting, is the only fit subject for novelist and biographer" (132). Hence, the biographer retraces not only the life of Orlando but also the borders of biography.

The other biographical points Woolf makes about biographies is that there is no unique truth about someone's life, biographies are always subjective. In this sense, the biographer is a medium through which one's life can be narrated, it will never be a complete account of someone's life. The question of whether biography is partly fiction is thus raised: it is not supposed to be one as this genre is labelled "non-fiction", but the biographer's choices can make it a fiction. Woolf makes a biography a fiction with *Orlando* and wants to show that everything is fiction and construct. The method of collage, Christine Reynier notes, is used by the biographer and shows on the one hand, the artificiality of biography, telling the self is not self-evident, it needs a process of re-writing the self, and, on the other hand, that the self is not evidently united:

> Quotations made apparent, both for the mind and for the eye, the patched nature of biography, which clearly appears as a collage of quotations and blanks to be filled by the biographer's imagination; discontinuity, the holes in our knowledge are thus exposed[103].

Biography, and its make-belief tools the biographer satirically uses, turns the self into something that is evident and unquestioned, while Woolf questions both the self and biography from the first lines.

Woolf does not entirely condemn the genre of biography, but she questions the technique of writing one. With *Orlando,* she writes a manifesto of her vision of biography. In "Modern Fiction" she deplores that Edwardian writers did not know how to write characters anymore. Their characters are flat characters, and because they are flat, one can see the entirety of it with one look. On the contrary, Woolf wants to write round characters. Thus, those characters cannot be seen in their entirety, they are like icebergs. Failing to describe a character in all its forms and complexity makes the success of writing one, because there is always something missing. In August 1923, Woolf wrote in her diary: "My discovery: how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters[104]". For her, it is not knowing that is important but exploring ours and people's personalities, and it will never be complete as "we do not know

[103] REYNIER, *op. cit*., p.197.
[104] *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume II: 1920-1924,* edited by BELL, Anne, Olivier, London: Penguin books, 1982, p.263.

our own souls, yet alone the souls of others[105]". Writing *Orlando*, a tribute to a close friend and lover, Woolf discovers the complexity of knowing and writing about life. She shared her doubts with Vita Sackville-West in 1928: "Do you think I know you? Intimately[106]" and "what are you really like? Do you exist? Have I made you up[107]?". Writing the self is a never-ending enigma.

b. Catching "the Wild Goose": A Fool's Errand

Woolf was as interested in revealing the difficulty in writing a biography as she was in the exploration of the frontiers of being, an act more than a state, whose seizing appears as an unsuccessful attempt: an everlasting quest.

With the character of Orlando, the unity of the self is challenged; the notion is questioned in its very basis. At the end of the book and of the film, is Orlando still Orlando? The character herself, questions her own identity: "So, Orlando, at the turn by the barn, called 'Orlando?' with a note of interrogation in her voice and waited. Orlando did not come" (152). This interaction with herself unveils multiple ontological questions: is Orlando still the same, physically and mentally? Does the quest for the self have an answer? Is being oneself even possible? Here, Orlando seems to want to attain the impossible, like catching a shadow, asking a question to herself that can only be answered by herself but waiting for the answer of a third party, like an echo in the mountain. Nathalie Heinich describes this watershed as being a crisis of identity:

> Ne pas se ressembler, c'est là la formule type du désarroi identitaire, où le sujet découvre qu'il ressemble, soit à personne (et c'est la néantisation, l'identité en prise sur le vide), soit à quelqu'un d'autre (et c'est la possession, la prise par autrui)[108].

Orlando takes the term "herself" to the letter and takes distance from it as if it were a third party: her self. The individuality that has been asserted throughout the book is now questioned, as if being would not go without saying, which she literally does in this scene as she voices and expresses her ontological perplexity.

The notion of identity takes here another meaning: its original meaning of *idem*, identical. Having an identity would mean being identical to yourself, which is a never-ending mirror reflection (*jeu de mirroirs[109]*). Having an identity would lead to a void notion, and authenticity, being true to oneself, would be impossible as the original would not be identifiable. This

[105] WOOLF, Virginia, *On Being Ill* [1930], Ashfield: Paris Press, 2002, p.9.
[106] In LEE, *op. cit.*, p.514.
[107] *Ibid*.
[108] HEINICH, *op. cit.*, p.173.
[109] BEYNEL, *op. cit.*

dilemma is raised in *Orlando*. The biographer comments on Orlando's satisfaction on wearing a ring and its correlation to the achievement of identity: "She was certainly feeling more herself." (130) Is it possible to feel more yourself? And is it even achievable by an exterior feature? Once more, Woolf turns this serious and dramatic ontological question into a satire, a mockery on the obsession of "being yourself".

Orlando goes through a sexual change, lives over four hundred years, marries, has a baby, travels and has different social positions. Physically, apart from the fact that from a male Orlando turns into a female, Orlando does not change: "through all these changes she had remained, she reflected, fundamentally the same." (117) Her change of sex does not alter her interiority. On the contrary, a few pages later, way after Orlando's transition, a big shift suddenly occurs: "nothing changes. And then, in the space of three seconds and a half, everything had changed." (130) The suddenness of the change stresses the fact that these moments cannot be detected, although the biographer surprisingly and satirically knows when they happen and for how long, and it emphasises the fact that they are unpredictable, they do not necessarily concord with a bodily and visible change. These imperceptible changes are what Woolf calls "moments of being". She defines them in "A Sketch of the Past":

> The past only comes back when the present runs so smoothly that it is like the sliding surface of a deep river. Then one sees through the surface to the depths. In those moments I find one of my greatest satisfactions, not that I am thinking of the past; but it is then that I am living most fully in the present[110].

Harvena Richter defines the moment of being as "a cross-section of consciousness in which perceptions and feelings converged and formed for an instant something round and whole[111]." As the biographer notes at the beginning of the book "the changes *in* Orlando was extraordinary."(19) [my emphasis] It is not a shift that can be noticed from the outside and the biographer thus tries and interprets Orlando's inner life and sometimes uses his or her imagination when understanding that it is out of reach. The book raises the question of the factors of unity: is it the body, the mind, one's experience and memories, others' testimonies of our existence? *Orlando* both pushes that question to a dead end and offers a multiplicity of possibilities, either destroying the notion of I or showing unity as an open notion. It offers a vision of the self close to the image of the ship of Theseus: change, shown in the book and the film through Orlando's peregrination, is in that manner necessary and a factor of unity.

[110] WOOLF, Virginia, *Moments of Being*, "A Sketch of the past" [1939], New York: Harcourt, 1985, p.83.
[111] RICHTER, *op. cit.*, p.27.

Time, as an extension of unity, mocks once more classical biographies. For the biographer: "The true length of a person's life, whatever the *Dictionary of National Biography* may say, is always a matter of dispute. For it is a difficult business – this time-keeping […]" (151). Time reveals discontinuity, or "discrepancy" (47), in the self, between what Woolf calls "time in the clock and time in the mind" (47). Orlando ages around 20 years in four hundred years, which does not respond to the laws of science. Here, the self does not follow what one should see, which is decay, as everybody is mortal. But the self does not, strictly speaking, follows the same laws as the body. Time is subjective, Orlando's notion of time is more, for Julie Beynel: "une conception du temps corrélée à la subjectivité du personnage[112]". It is not social or biological time but psychological time. The fact that Orlando does not die when s/he should have can be interpreted as the everlasting quest for the self. It becomes an even more central issue in the understanding of the self when we remember that being is a process through time, even if it is, paradoxically, a stative verb. In a biography, the biographer follows linearly some events that have already occurred. In *Orlando*, it is as if the events were happening at the same time the reader reads the book, and at the same time the spectator watches the film. It is thus not a pre-established character with a determined story but a character whose identity is yet to be discovered and will never be completely full. Woolf extensively talks about this ungraspability of the self because the self is not yet finished and will never be. She speaks of "Memory", here personified, a possible representation of the three Parcae: "Memory runs her needle in and out, hither and thither. We know not what comes next, or what follows after." (37) As talented as he or she can be, the biographer cannot capture the full personality of someone in a text, cannot sew a complete tapestry as some aspects of life and of individuality are undetermined, invisible or complex.

Gender identity, and gender unity, is also a matter of dispute. We saw that the correlation between sex and gender is not self-evident, that if one was born male he will not necessarily identify as a man, or even as a male. The crisis between the I and the eye is at its climax into gender dysphoria, the clash between one's person assigned sex/gender and the person's sex/gender identification. In the introduction of *Orlando*, Merry M. Pawlowski writes that Orlando's body is "a question mark of form[113]", an ontological query visible through his/her body. This crisis triggers a question: does the exterior match the interior? Having *mimesis* or identicality between what we see and what we are is probably never achievable because the I is

[112] BEYNEL, *op. cit.*, p.37.
[113] WOOLF, *Orlando*, *op. cit.*, xiii.

already a fleeting notion. Because *mimesis* works with resembling as close as possible the original, the body can never match the soul, and vice versa, as it is undetermined. Caughie links "gender trouble[114]" with the troubles with identity in its larger term: "Gender trouble is contagious in *Orlando,* a playful trouble that questions the possibility, the need, or the advantage of any stable notion of identity[115]". The biographer underlines the "vacillation from one sex to the other" (92), the "trouble". He or she refuses to tag Orlando, by conviction, but also because it is impossible: "Whether, then, Orlando was most man or woman, it is difficult to say and cannot now be decided." (93) Yet, Cervetti also recognizes the limit of words, as they shape the vision of identity, even with non-conforming theories: "Still, such words as 'androgynous,' 'lesbian,' 'bisexual,' and 'ambisexual' continue to function within a binary frame and always recall male and female, A and not-A[116]." Virginia Woolf may have wanted to highlight the fact that words, "full of echoes, of memories, of associations[117]", are not to be read biblically; no truth is going to come out of words, and especially regarding identity, they are not definition, a dilemma that Pamela Caughie words as: "the difficulty of reaching conclusions about identity or language[118]."

To bring to light the fragility of writing and even defining the self, Virginia Woolf uses the symbol of the "wild goose" (162). Richter comments on it:

> A metaphor in action, metamorphosis expresses a sudden psychic state or change of states, as Ovid's *Metamorphosis* pictures through the outer transformations of people the emotional changes within them. Of these transformation metaphors, the animal is the more vivid[119]

She says that it is "metaphor as reality[120]". It can be linked to the ancient paradox of Achilles and the Tortoise, in which Achilles runs a race with a tortoise, and leaving the tortoise an advance, Achilles can mathematically never pass the tortoise if they both run steadily. In popular culture, a wild-goose chase refers to the quest of something unattainable because the object does not exist[121], a fool's errand. In the book, Orlando's words are: "'It is the wild goose! Orlando cried. "The wild goose…'" (162) Orlando never finishes her sentence, three dots and

[114] CERVETTI, *op. cit.*, p.168.
[115] *Ibid*., p.169.
[116] *Ibid*., p.173.
[117] WOOLF, Virginia, "Craftsmanship", 29 April 1937, BBC radio.
[118] CAUGHIE, Pamela, "Virginia Woolf's Double Discourse", in BARR, Marleen, S., FELDSTEIN, Richard (eds.) *Discontented Discourses: Feminism/textual Intervention/psychoanalysis*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989, p.43.
[119] RICHTER, *op. cit.*, p.191.
[120] *Ibid*., p.180.
[121] "fool's errand", dictionary.cambridge.org, 2019, retrieved 24/02/19.

silence follow, a synonymous of letting go, of accepting the fleeting of the self and the insufficiency of words. The wild goose can also be seen on page 155 in a comparison between Orlando driving full speed in her car and the wild goose, a moment of vision of her own need for freedom. Even at a great speed she cannot capture it, as Achilles cannot pass the tortoise: "Up I jumped (she gripped the steering-wheel tighter) and stretched after it. But the goose flies too fast." (155) She also tries to capture the wild goose with words: "I flung after it words like nets" (155) but nothing more than "seeweed" comes out of the "nets". Orlando is, in the first scene of the book, said to write with a "goose quill" (6), linking the act of writing and the chase of the wild goose, the chase for the self. The end of the scene on page 155 discloses the paradox of the quest for the self:

> And it was at this moment, when she had ceased to call 'Orlando' and was deep in thoughts of something else, that the Orlando whom she had called came of its own accord" (155).

Orlando, not looking for the goose (and her self) anymore magically finds what she was looking for. It illustrates the paradox Virginia Woolf pointed out in her diary in February 1926 "one can't write directly about the soul. Looked at, it vanishes[122]." The self refuses to reveal itself to the prying eye but appears, paradoxically, to the one who is not looking for it. This symbol echoes Woolf's essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" in which Mrs. Brown goes out of her status of character and challenges the Edwardian writers and readers by saying: "Catch me if you can[123]", a challenge renewed by Orlando a few years later. In the film, the wild goose is presumably embodied in the last scene by the angel in the sky (appendix 8), though the scene is different from the book as Shelmerdine is replaced by Orlando's child. The angel, a blurry and surreal figure played by Jimmy Somerville, an English musician, is seen through the lens of the camera Orlando's child is shooting with, following Woolf's statement that the self cannot be looked at directly. The angel is freed from the house, it is not restrained anymore, and it can express itself, here through the act of singing. The voice over introduces Orlando's liberation from herself –and her self– as well as from society: "She's no longer trapped in destiny" says the song. The angel then praises freedom: "At last I am free." The last image shows Orlando looking straight at the camera, a possible translation of the three dots of "The wild goose…" (162), an affirmation of being, purely, without any complement, without any need of defining, a ternary echo that Sylvia Plath will re-enact into: "I am, I am, I am[124]."

[122] *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume III, op. cit*., p.62.
[123] WOOLF, *Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown, op. cit*., p.4.
[124] PLATH, Sylvia, *The Bell Jar* [1963], London: Faber and Faber, 2005, p. 233.

The notion of self in *Orlando,* looked at from many angles, is ultimately dissolved, freed from the authoritarian and ontological chains. For Hermione Lee "Orlando's biographer, preoccupied with questions of how lives can be written […] ends up dissolving all concepts of stable 'self[125]'." The very process of writing a biography enables the reflection not only on how to write a biography but on the very notion of self and life: the more one digs into the self, the more the notion crumbles. Orlando once asks: "What's an 'age', indeed? What are 'we'?" (100), questioning not only the ontological question "what am I?" but the epistemological notion of self, here with the pronoun "we". No platonic "essence" can be found in identity. In *Orlando,* "the true self" (153), the "single self" (155), is shown as a mirage. Contrary to the Victorian biographies in which readers wanted to find a model, a path to follow, the new biography that Woolf offers sends the message that being oneself is first and foremost being in accord with change and ephemerality, not literally being *one* self. There is no "single self" (155) because we constantly change: "change was incessant and change perhaps would never cease." (86) The adaptation of *Orlando* in film is even more significant if we think of the self resembling cinematography: it is a projection of images shown at great speed, and pausing annihilates the technique, it is not a film anymore, it is an image. Orlando assimilates the importance of change and movement and the biographer comments on her inner change: "she was […] changing her self as quickly as she drove" (153), "(here a new self came in)" (153), repeated multiple times as change is never-ending in this scene, to eventually being "relieved from the pressure of the present" (159) when she essentially turns into a shadow for a moment, she becomes a "nondescript character" (159), a "shadow" (159), with the pronoun "it" and "its", an almost non being.

Through this portrait of a young romantic aristocrat that does not abide by the rules of society, Woolf may have wanted to suggest that being is fragmentary and that we should "[t]olerate the spasmodic, the fragmentary, the obscure[126]". If Orlando sees society as a constraint to his/her own construction, Woolf nuances his/her reticence toward the other, towards the unknown. There will always be something "unknown" in you, something you don't know, a stranger, and this factor may be one of the keys to understanding the self though other perspectives.

[125] LEE, *op. cit.*, p.522.
[126] WOOLF, Virginia, *Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown*, *op. cit.*, p.26.

II. A Bridge Between the I and the Eye: *The Voyage Out*[127], the Voyage In

Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer[128].

– E.M Forster, *Howards End*, 1910.

Despite Woolf's awareness of words' limits over life, she deeply believed in writing as an act to bring people closer together and to reconnect the broken pieces of the self. As a member of the Bloomsbury group, she valued being together as a confrontation to other and the image people have of you as being a creative tool. It is without a surprise that the artists she worked with were Impressionists and believed in reunion in fragmentation. In *Orlando*, Woolf shows that the construction of the self goes hand in hand with the confrontation to society and people's vision of you, a necessary evil.

A. Human Relationships as the Hyphen Between the Inside and the Outside

As Ricoeur expresses in *Soi-même comme un autre*[129], the self can be understood according to different dynamics: the self towards the self, the self as different from the other, and the self resembling the other. We will try and pass the duality between I and Other to focus on the junction between the two: the human relationships, a prism and a mirror.

a. Meeting the Other

The encounter with the other is a recurrent *topos* in literature and is an important feature in *Bildungsroman*. Nathalie Heinich underlines the importance of this confrontation:

> Quoique relevant d'une expérience très intime, la construction de l'identité n'est pas une action solitaire, qui renverrait le sujet a lui-même : elle est une interaction, qui met un sujet en relation avec d'autres sujets, avec des groupes, avec des institutions, avec des corps, avec des objets, avec des mots[130].

The self realizes the limit of the *ipse*, the I towards the I, and takes another meaning: I is opposed to the other, either being *idem* or *alter*.

In encounter scenes, eyes have a paramount importance. When the eyes meet, it seems that Is meet. Orlando's first encounter in the book is with the Queen, and in the book and in the film, dialogue is absent from this meeting; looking into someone's eyes, is sometimes enough to bridge the distance between two individualities. In the film, the close-ups emphasise the

[127] WOOLF, Virginia, *The Voyage Out* [1915], London: Wordsworth Classics, 2012.
[128] FORSTER, Edward, Morgan, *Howards End* [1910], London: Penguin books, 2010, p.180.
[129] RICOEUR, *op. cit*.
[130] HEINICH, *op. cit*., p.333.

proximity between Orlando and the Queen, achieved by an unbroken gaze. The biographer comments on the Queen's feelings by saying "she read him like a page" (11), her eyes "pierce his soul." (11) The comparison between Orlando and a book highlights the easiness of access of Orlando's interior thanks to the eyes. The looks are even more important when Orlando meets Sasha. In the film, the vision of Sasha makes Orlando stop his activities and the camera follows his eyes on Sasha who does not see him. The film then follows the book, when Sasha and Orlando are "seated opposite each other" (18) to dine with the court, a position that facilitates the exchange of glances. The film builds the connection between Sasha and Orlando around their exchanging looks. First, Orlando is shown devouring Sasha with his eyes, through a glance that is not broken from beginning to end; on the contrary, Sasha, through a wide shot, looks away. Then, "Orlando catching her eyes" (19) builds "intimacy" (19), shown in the film through close-ups, from Orlando's eyes to Sasha's eyes. They become "Orlando and Sasha" (20), their identities become one. The gap between the "foreigner" in the film and "the Muscovite" (15), and Orlando, the English, is narrowed by the universal power of the eyes. Heinich underlines: "L'amour représente pour la fille la rencontre avec soi-même, l'accomplissement identitaire au moins autant que la rencontre avec l'autre[131]". In *Orlando*, love also represents the encounter with the self, when Orlando is a man and when Orlando is a woman.

The strength of the eyes in bridging two individualities reaches its summit when Orlando meets Shelmerdine. The visual extent of the encounter is strengthened in the film. Orlando, who just fell on the ground, finds herself face to face with a man who just fell from his horse (appendix 9). This glance was enough for Orlando to propose to Shelmerdine and for him to accept. The biographer comments "though their acquaintance had been so short, they had guessed, as always happens between lovers, everything of any importance about each other in two seconds at the utmost" (124). The shots are not only close-ups but the camera is panning from Orlando to Shelmerdine and from Shelmerdine to Orlando showing the reciprocity, the intimacy, and the continuity of looks.

The scene in which Orlando meets the Khan in Turkey, the one in charge of the territory Orlando arrives in, is particularly relevant in the film, as the differences between the two characters are exaggerated. Julianne Pidduck underlines the visual opposition of the scene:

[131] *Ibid*., pp.59-60.

> Visually, these encounters are composed of perfectly symmetrical balanced shots which play up the formality of imperial exchange against the exaggerated quality of the costumes and the explicit irony of the dialogue[132].

Orlando shifts from the want to be alone to the need of being around people. S/he goes from a rejection of people because s/he sees the relation with them as subordination, to acceptance, seeing relationships as coordination. The need of relationships is stated from the beginning of the film: "it wasn't privilege he sought, but company." The differentiation between the inside and the outside is never completely achieved for Orlando: "It was decided to settle this last question that he decided, after many months of such feverish labour, to break the solitude of years and communicate with the outer world." (39) Orlando later on concludes: "Human beings had become necessary." (134) As lonely as Orlando can be, his/her individuality cannot bear the total rupture between the self and the world and each time Orlando gives a last chance to the beauty of an encounter. From the figure of the romantic poet towering over the world as is described at the beginning of the book –"It was very high, so high indeed that nineteen English counties could be seen beneath" (7)–, Orlando humbles himself/herself and acknowledges the richness of human cooperation wondering: "Why, then, had he wished to raise himself above them?" (51). Orlando comes down from his rebellious refusal of human society to accepting difference and being seen as different. The biographer uses the metaphor of the building and says that Orlando wants to "add another stone to their building" (52) like building a bridge between different worlds.

Orlando decides to radically change his behaviour and moves to Constantinople (58), a crossroads between Eastern and Western civilisations, a city in which books are read from left to right and from right to left. Orlando finds himself to be a stranger in the eye of the Turkish people, struggling with customs, living what Sasha must have lived when she arrived in England. He leaves his land to meet the other, but he is the other in Constantinople. This shift in points of view has a huge effect on him, even a physical effect as it is in Constantinople that Orlando transitions. A few pages after his arrival, Orlando completely adapts himself and adopts the customs of the Turks. He even has the appearance of an Eastern man in the film (appendix 10). After Orlando's change of sex, she meets the Gipsies, which represent the other also in Turkey as they are not autochthons, they are a nomadic tribe. Even without sharing the same language, Orlando and the Gipsies understand each other perfectly thanks to looking and showing. It goes even beyond as the biographer comments: "She need not even look at them,

[132] PIDDUCK, Julianne, "Travels with Sally Potter's *Orlando*: gender, narrative, movement", Screen 38:2,1997, p.186.

and yet they felt, here is someone who doubts" (71). The people that Orlando thought represented the other reveals itself to be more welcoming that her own people: "The gipsies […] seem to have looked upon her as one of themselves" (69). They are even "willing to help her become more like them" (69). The barriers of language and customs are nothing to the universality of being human and of having feelings. Thus, being oneself does not necessarily imply a rupture with others but sometimes a continuity and even a resemblance.

The scene when Orlando and Shelmerdine realize that they are closer than they thought, being both men and women, is also an instance of the unexpected closeness between two persons who were said to be different: "an awful suspicion rushed in both their minds simultaneously,

'You're a woman, Shel!' she cried.

'You're a man, Orlando!' he cried." (124)

The symmetry between both exclamations breaks with the apparent opposition between the two characters: they are indeed of different sex, but they both can see through the other's point of view. Being in front of someone that is different from you is not an obstacle but a richness, revealing your particularities and filling the gaps that being oneself imposes. This scene is rendered in the film through the discussion between Orlando and Shelmerdine on what they would do if they were of the opposite sex. In the book, they are both surprised by the discovery of sameness in the other:

> For each was surprised at the quickness of the other's sympathy, and it was to each such a revelation that a woman could be as tolerant and free spoken as a man, and a man as strange and subtle as a woman. (127)

It even affects the biographer according to Sue Roe: "once Orlando becomes a woman, the distance between her and the narrator narrows and the narrator sees things more from a woman's point of view[133]". The other offers thus a prismatic vision of the self as well as a mirror in which individuality is strengthened, from subordination, to coordination, and even juxtaposition.

[133] *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf, op. cit.*, p.64.

b. Meeting the Other in Me

One of the particularities of the pronoun "I" is that it is a "shifter", or as Ricoeur says: "'je' est un terme voyageur, une position à l'égard de laquelle plusieurs énonciateurs virtuels sont substituables l'un à l'autre[134]". "I" can thus refer to someone speaking about or for himself or herself, but also to the other in front of me, also talking about for himself or herself: I is a question of point of view. This can be the first interpretation of Rimbaud's phrase "je est un autre": "I" refer to me, but it is also everybody else with the conscience of being. I is thus closer to the other than we think. On the other hand, this phrase can have an internal meaning in the subjectivity: I can also be a stranger to the I. The Eye, the encounter, would be here the bridge between what we think we know of ourselves and what we can be, triggering a discovery not only in the other but also in us.

From the beginning of the film The I and the other mingle, mixing the figure of the biographer and Orlando. The voice over has the voice of Orlando and he says "he – that is I": the other becomes the I and enables an exterior point of view, a detachment, to be paradoxically closer to the I. Orlando sees himself and herself, in this theory, as the other. Orlando also bridges the gap between others and him, between his image and himself, searching for sameness, the link more than the differences: "looking at picture after picture as if he sought the likeness of somebody he could not find" (33). In this excerpt that plays with the closeness between looking at and looking for, Orlando is both searching the sameness in the other and the link between him and himself, beyond the look, the "picture".

Orlando has the chance to see through two opposite views according to society: the man's and the woman's points of view. He literally meets the other, "the woman, the eternal Other" ("la-femme, l'éternel Autre[135]"), when he transforms into a woman. If at first, Orlando seems to stick to one point of view, the woman's when she's a female, and the man's when he's a male, Orlando takes from the richness of seeing through the other's eyes, demonstrating that barriers are constraints and that men and women, male and female, are closer than expected. They should not be apart, taught to see through one point of view, a gendered eye, but a kaleidoscopic one, the only one that enables distance from the self. Orlando once thinks: "Which is the greater ecstasy? The man's or the woman's? And are they not perhaps the same?" (76) The sameness is here the key notion but it is different from Ricoeur's "*mêmeté*[136]". Orlando

[134] RICOEUR, *op. cit.*, p.65.
[135] WITTIG, *op. cit.*, p.96.
[136] RICOEUR, *op. cit.*, p.6.

literally has the other in him/her as s/he changes sex the biographer comments: “he was a woman.” (67) It is not a contradiction anymore but a juxtaposition. If we take another cinematic metaphor, having multiple points of view is similar to being able to see colours, the camera needs to compile several colours. Likewise, a few pages later: “she was a man; she was a woman; she knew the secrets, shared the weakness of each.” (77) The differentiation that can be brought by the semi colon is in fact to be read as a coordination of both points of view, if not an equality sign, a juxtaposition.

Orlando discovers a new vision on himself/herself, as well as a new vision of the interactions with others, when he turns from male to female and acknowledges the sameness in essence beyond the body. One can read that “as a young man, she had insisted than women must be obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely apparelled” (76) and Orlando says a few lines later “women are not (judging by my own short experience of the sex) obedient, chaste, scented, and exquisitely apparelled by nature” (77), twisting the words and her vision. In being both the I and the other, a male and a female, Orlando not only overpasses the so-called division between the I and the other but also embraces the other in him/her. Turning into a female enables Orlando to reconsider her looking at people, male or female, and at her past experiences.

In the film, the parallelism between the scene in which Orlando is trying to convince Sasha to stay and the Archduke trying to convince Orlando to marry him underlines the change in points of view as a necessity to understand a situation, to understand the other, and realize the I can be a constraint to the other. In the first scene, Orlando is seen through a slight low-angle shot and Sasha is seen through a slight high-angle shot, mimicking the dominance of males in society. Orlando tells Sasha who resists him: “But you are mine”, and when Sasha asks why, Orlando answers “Because I adore you”. In the scene with the Archduke and Orlando, the former kneels down to propose to Orlando and when he is out of arguments he says: “you are mine” and when Orlando asks why, he answers “Because I adore you”, which is the exact same discussion between Orlando and Sasha. This realisation also happens with the Gipsies: Orlando realizes that the way s/he had thought all his life, the way s/he had seen the world, his/her inner world as well as the exterior world, is not similar to other people’s way of seeing it. His/her truth is not everybody’s truth. Seeing things from a different angle helps him/her strengthen his/her inner truth. One night, sitting around with the Gipsies and sharing their customs, Orlando goes from “pride” to “shame” (72). She thought: “she came of an ancient and civilised race, whereas these gipsies were an ignorant people, not much better than savages.” (72) It takes her the will to connect worlds to realize the importance of changing points of view:

> Looked at from the gipsy point of view, a Duke, Orlando understood, was nothing but a profiteer or robber who snatched land and money from people who rated these things of little worth, and could think of nothing better to do than to build three hundred and sixty-five bedrooms when one was enough (72).

Being confronted to another "point of view" indeed helps Orlando to grow his/her self and tolerance. Orlando has hence the distance to see more clearly, s/he has the points of view of a man and a woman and has gained clear-sightedness.

Confronting the I to the other can be seen as an alteration: the self is no longer the same at the contact of the other. The self is also literally altered, it then contains the *alter* in it. We all have a part of others in us and Ricoeur reminds us so, in a more familiar tone, in *Soi-même comme un autre*:

> Des tranches entières de ma vie font partie de l'histoire de la vie des autres de mes parents, de mes amis, de mes compagnons de travail et de loisir[137].

The characters who are as immortal as Orlando are the ones who mattered in his/her life. Orlando meets Sasha and Greene again, around 200 years later for Greene and around 400 years later for Sasha. When meeting Greene again, the biographer comments on Orlando's thoughts: "A violent tumult of emotion besieged her at meeting the man who had caused her, years ago, so much pain" (136) and later on "the events of the morning made a deep impression on her, but it cannot have escape the reader's attention that Orlando was growing up" (140). Orlando has altered and now realizes it. It had brought to her character more depth, an alteration that fashioned the person she is now. The same thing occurs with Sasha. Orlando meets her again when she is in a department store in London. Seeing Sasha again and the changes that took place in her makes Orlando realize that she has changed too: "'Time has passed over me […] Nothing is any longer one thing." (150) Julianne Pidduck believes that the change in Orlando's brains and body is also part of a mockery of the Orientalism movement in which artists depicted what they thought the Eastern world was, most of the times stereotypes: "Orlando fulfils all the *clichés* of westerners who 'discover' themselves in the Orient[138]."

Understanding the other is a probable help to the discovery of the self, of what is identical and what is different from the I, an extra element to solve the equation of the self. Meeting the other also enables the I to embrace the plurality in everybody, a way to accept that the self may be, in fact, plural.

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[137] *Ibid*., p.190.
[138] PIDDUCK, *op. cit*., p.187.

B. A Post-Impressionist Portrait: The "Myriad Selves[139]" and How to Express Them

After the expansion of the artistic Impressionist movement in France in the late 19th century, a new intellectual wave shook the perception of art. In 1910, Roger Fry, an active member of the Bloomsbury group, a painter and critic, coined the word "post-impressionist" with his exhibition "Manet and the Post-Impressionists". This new movement, whose techniques and philosophy were close to the Impressionists, took a step further in the vision of aesthetics. In "An Essay in Aesthetics" Roger Fry depicts this movement:

> Art appreciates emotion in and for itself. The artist is the most constantly observant of his surroundings and the least affected by their intrinsic aesthetic value. As he contemplates a particular field of vision the aesthetically chaotic and accidental conjunction of forms and colours begin to crystallize into a harmony[140].

Art is no longer reduced to its link with *mimesis* because perception is subjective, it is first and foremost an impression, and can be internal, and the object is not more important than the subject and his or her way of thinking, a representation more than a reproduction[141]. Unlike the canons of the Academy, the Post-Impressionist movement valued the singularity of each artist. Virginia Woolf acknowledged the importance of this movement not only in art but on beings: "about December 1910 human character changed[142]". A new way of expressing the self was necessary according to Sue Roe: "writing and painting could take on new responsibilities: both media needed to find new languages for subjective experience; new ways of depicting the rhythms of the inner life[143]". They developed some techniques to express themselves freely, to go as close as possible to the inner self, to reconcile the inner with the outer, and to portray the multiplicity in the self.

a. How to Show the Inner Self

If Virginia Woolf chose the art of writing when her sister Vanessa Bell chose the art of painting, Woolf developed writing techniques that were close to painting and especially close to Post-Impressionism:

> She learned, in her writing, to train the reader's eye as she described inner and outer forms, radically questioning relationships between surface and depth and finding new frameworks and forms of narrative[144]

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[139] *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, *op. cit.*, xiii.
[140] FRY, Roger, *Vision and Design*, "An Essay in Aesthetics" [1909], London: Chatto and Windus Ltd, 1920, p.4.
[141] SAWYER, *op. cit.*, p.4.
[142] WOOLF, *Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown*, *op. cit.*, p.5.
[143] *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, *op. cit.*, p.166.
[144] *Ibid.*, xiv.

The challenge the Post-Impressionist painters took up, that is to paint the inside in a shifting era, echoes Woolf's desire to reconcile the inside and the outside in a non-classical way. They both used all the techniques that already existed and created new ones when techniques when the old ones were not enough. She achieves her redefining through a range of tools that we will compare with the Post-Impressionists' techniques.

Contrary to what the style could suggest, Post-Impressionists' paintings and Virginia Woolf's writings are both willing to be more realistic, it is just the point of view that changes. Woolf manages to express the conflict between the inside and the outside through different techniques that Robert Sawyer lists:

> how to obtain such an abstract, painterly-like effect in writing? For Woolf, it involved empty spaces, digressions, multiple points of view, significant forms (often repeated for effect), and complex characterization[145].

Because perception is subjective, unique to everybody, they used techniques to unify the I and the Eye that would not only need the intellect but also the affect, a more instinctive way of seeing. This focus on realism is stressed by Sue Roe:

> Where a closer relation to post impressionism may be discovered is, perhaps, in Woolf's psychological realism […], in the perfection in this novel of her technique […] of multiple points of view, where we come very close to Cézanne and his use, in still life, of multiple perspectives, and perhaps also to a species of cubism[146]

The kaleidoscopic vision unlocks the tension between the I and the Eye. The fact that Orlando is either narrated by an exterior person, or is the biographer, is an introduction to the multiple levels of points of view. If Orlando is the biographer, it enables him/her to have distance from himself/herself, to paint an auto-portrait like many Post-Impressionists, and painters in general, did. A biography often says more about the person who is writing it than on the person one is writing about, an indirect and privileged insight in the writer's interiority.

The biographer either describes the characters or lets them express by themselves, directly or indirectly. He or she mingles the classical styles of speech: direct speech in "'I am alone', he breathed" (7), free direct speech "One must lean on someone she thought" (122) and "what a luxury to be alone once more!" (45) for the free indirect speech. The point of view of the book is sometimes interior, the biographer is in Orlando's thoughts and emotions; sometimes exterior, as if the biographer were looking at Orlando, and sometimes interior to

[145] SAWYER, *op. cit.*, p.5.
[146] *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, *op. cit.*, p.19.

other characters' minds, for example Queen Elizabeth at the beginning of the book. As Reynier says: "the biographer keeps oscillating between 'the thing people see' and 'the thing one is[147]'". The more characters we follow the more we learn about Orlando and the more we can paint a portrait of him/her. John Berger says the importance of surroundings in *Ways of Seeing*: "We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves[148]." The exterior is not an obstacle to the vision but an auxiliary to a better understanding of the self as well as the world. This trait is important in Post-Impressionists paintings as the landscape is often treated as a character *per se*, sometimes a magnifier or a mirror of the interior. The other characters are also important and even as important as the main character in *Orlando*: their relations to others are a possible reading of interiority. In some Post-Impressionist paintings like Toulouse-Lautrec's, one cannot identify a main character. The film follows exclusively Orlando but uses other media to achieve the same goal: the variety of shots, the play with the camera and the music are tools used to translate interiority on screen.

One of the most interesting features of the film is the direct looks of Orlando at the camera, always given at a critical moment, always showing a different emotion. Sally Potter said in an interview that it was the visual rendering of the stream of consciousness, a technique Woolf used to shape interiority[149]. A lot of Post-Impressionist portraits depict the artists directly looking at the spectator, a second attempt at catching the attention to fully express themselves. The stream of consciousness is the technique Woolf used most to reconcile the inside and the outside, to put on paper the inner flow of thoughts. It mingles many techniques of writing and is more characterized by an absence of rules than a precise code. Because it depicts what one feels, it is more a style linked to affect; one feels the stream of consciousness. However, some features are at the foundation of the stream of consciousness. The point of view is internal, accessing interior thoughts. The pronouns used are not the first person singular but the third person singular, as if a distance from the self were crucial to access it. The sentences are most of the time long ones, interspersed by an unusual punctuation, semi colon, ampersand and hyphens, three punctuation points used to coordinate that were dear to Woolf. Punctuation is coordinated with rhythm, an exterior demonstration of the emotions within, like the heart pumping blood. Punctuation and rhythm both reveal what is most hidden, the wording and

[147] REYNIER, *op. cit.*, p.193.
[148] BERGER, *op. cit.*, p.9.
[149] In PIDDUCK, *op. cit.*, p.185.

coordinating of what is unconscious. The following passage is an example of the stream of consciousness:

> Indeed, she was falling asleep with the wet feathers on her face and her ear pressed to the ground when she heard, deep within, some hammer on an anvil, or was it a heart beating? Tick-tock, tick-tock, so it hammered, so it beat, the anvil, or the heart in the middle of the earth; until, as she listened, she thought it changed to the trot of a horse's hoofs; one, two, three, four, she counted; then she heard a stumble; then, as it came nearer and nearer, she could hear the crack of a twig and the suck of the wet bog in its hoofs. (123)

It focuses on the parallelism between Orlando's inner emotions and the arrival of Shelmerdine on a horse. Orlando's thoughts are hastening, her heart is beating, speeding up because of love, and this internal rush is rendered in the syntax and the rhythm, the alliterations in /f/ and /θ/ as well as the alliteration in /t/ mimicking the beating heart and the horse feet approaching. The technique of the stream of consciousness Woolf uses can be compared to the technique of the distinctive brushstrokes used by the Post-Impressionists. The painter applies light touches of colours on the canvas, either a mark or a point –the latter leading to another sub-movement named Pointillism[150]. They even sometimes mixed both techniques, strokes and points, the Impasato technique[151] that gives depth to the subject of the painting and to colours, superposing colours and paint. This adding of techniques is close to Woolf's use of a wide range of tones and styles and Sally Potter's usage of different genres and film techniques. Indeed, the superposition of multiple media is at the heart of cinema, with the superposition of images as we said earlier on, and with the use of music, of text, of other arts and especially with the editing. Woolf gives thus disconnected fragments of Orlando and it is the work of the reader, an active member of the book, to paint his or her own mental picture of Orlando, to connect the elements together and to create a patchwork of the character.

The important feature that makes Woolf closer to a Post-Impressionist than to an Impressionism is simultaneity:

> While their predecessors, the impressionist painters, had been content to present life in disconnected, sensual glimpses, the post-impressionists wished to depict a vision of simultaneity which would show the shifting uncertainties within the human psyche which moves us from - for example - bliss to despair and back again[152].

[150] RICHMAN-ABDOU, Kelly, "Exploring the Vision and Diverse Styles of Post-Impressionism Pioneers", My Modern MET, 30 July 2017, retrieved 24/02/19.
[151] *Ibid*.
[152] *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, *op. cit.*, p.179.

One cannot assign a genre to the book, a tone, a style, a point of view or a dominant colour. It is as heterogeneous as the self. In the Post-Impressionist movement, colours are probably the element that renders best the sense of simultaneity. A branch of the movement, Fauvism played with colours to give a unique subjectivity and painted objects not in the colour they were usually associated with. It helped to detach the eye from automatisms and create other automatisms, to extend the range of understanding of the world through the eye. If we go as far as to link Woolf with Cubism –although the movement did not place woman at the centre of their concerns– colours and forms express another vision of the interior. Synaesthesia is its literary side, an expression of full simultaneity. When Orlando describes Sasha at the beginning of the book, words are not enough. He thus describes her in an unconventional manner: "He called her a melon, a pineapple, an olive tree, an emerald, and a fox in the snow" (17), all these comparisons appeal not only to sight but to the four other senses.

One of the last features linking painting and Woolf is symbolism, an element that touches all arts, and symbols are pregnant in the book, through the oak tree and the wild goose. It helps connect what is visible and known in the world to what the interior is going through, that can culminate in the moment of vision. It is a highly subjective feature.

The portrait of Orlando that is suggested by Woolf is thus Woolf's Orlando, a combination of multiple fragments, of thoughts and feelings: "Abstraction, reflection, metamorphosis, discontinuity – these and other modes are the means by which Mrs. Woolf brings the reader into the very center of the work[153]"

b. The "Myriad Selves[154]"

According to Hermione Lee, Orlando's portrait can be understood as a mirror on the biographer, and by extension on Woolf's interiority: "Orlando's biographer keeps disassembling and re-assembling Orlando's 'selves': a reflection of Virginia Woolf's sense of her own 'great variety of selves[155]'". Indeed, Woolf paints Orlando almost in a cubist way, in all his/her multiplicity. We see Orlando through a kaleidoscopic lens that enables to present his/her "myriad selves[156]". Orlando is set free from the pressure of absolute unity and that demonstrates that unity does not mean uniformity. It can only be achieved by reassembling the

[153] RICHTER, *op. cit.*, x.
[154] *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, *op. cit.*, xiii.
[155] LEE, *op. cit.*, p.529.
[156] *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, *op. cit.*, xiii.

fragments and it reaches never-ending possibilities. For Richter, "discontinuity" is key to the understanding of the depiction of Woolf's characters:

> This new view of man included more than that of a submerged irrational self. Man was seen to be a complex of consciousness, existing on many levels. He was also seen to be a complex of personalities, consisting not of a single integrated ego but rather of separate states of awareness. This 'discontinuity' of personality meant that man was never the same from one moment to the next; his identity changed with each new set of perception[157].

Orlando's inner fragmentation is compared to exterior objects throughout the book. At the beginning of the book, the reader is giving a glimpse of the "green arras" (5) of Orlando's family, a tapestry that passed from his ancestors to his father and finally to Orlando. This object, made of many threads, can be read as the necessity of being plural to make sense, to enable the eye to see an image through different colours, just like a text. It is the multiplicity of threads, or the different colours and different textures, intertwined thanks to different techniques, that make one piece of work. It is like Pointillism; the eye must link the dots of the bigger picture together; it is not at the object's work to be uniform. The multiple forms of Orlando are also compared to the ice when the Thames breaks into pieces. Water is usually read through its reflective symbolism and here it is Orlando's fragmentation. Orlando looks in the water as in a mirror: "Now a sight of the most extraordinary nature met his eyes." (29) The double reflective of the eye and water plunges the reader into Orlando's interiority. The river is described mainly through the term "fragments" that are repeated several times: "it swept the huge noises and many fragments furiously apart" (29) and "the river would seem to be hurtling itself between the fragments" (29). The noises of the breaking are also compared to an oak tree: "Huge noises as of the tearing and rending of oak trees could be heard." (29) It is even more relevant as Orlando is followed through the book by his/her poem "The Oak Tree", a synonym of change, creativity and plurality. The bending probably resides here as the oak tree is a strong tree, a symbol of England and of royalty, of a national and common identity, but is here the symbol of subversion and personal identity. In the film, the first and the last scenes both show Orlando next to an oak tree. All trees have a top, the trunk, the leaves and the fruit, the visible part; but they also have a foot, hidden, invisible side, the roots, that can go as far as they are permitted to. Trees also grow from the inside, a slow growth that is not visible to the naked eye. One must cut the tree to have an insight of the layers of the tree indicated by the knots of the trunk. When the biographer relates the thoughts of Orlando, she seems to define herself as a tree: "The tree had grown bigger, sturdier, and more knotted since she had known it, somewhere about the year

[157] RICHTER, *op. cit.*, p.5;

1588, but it was still in the prime of life." (156) Here again, Woolf's inspiration is Locke, as Burns underlines:

> Locke articulates the belief that 'The variation of great parcels of Matter alters not the identity; an Oak, growing from a Plant to a Tree, and then lopp'd, is still the same Oak[158]'.

The biographer presents Orlando's inner fragmentation as ordinary against the hiding of it in traditional biographies. The biographer's defence speech for Orlando's fragmentation mirrors the shattering of identity:

> Thus, the most ordinary movement in the world, such as sitting down at a table and pulling the inkstand towards one, may agitate a thousand odd, disconnected fragments, now bright, now dim, hanging and bobbing and dipping and flaunting, like the underlinen of a family of fourteen on a line in a gale of wind. Instead of being a single, downright, bluff piece of work of which no man need feel ashamed, our commonest deeds are set about with a fluttering and flickering of wings, a rising and falling of lights. (37)

It is "ordinary" and "no man need feel ashamed". The biography creates itself on those fragments, proof of Orlando's past self, a sedimentation: "it is with fragments such as these that we must do our best to make up a picture of Orlando's life and character at this time" (60) and "Again, details are lacking, for the fire had its way with all such records, and has left only tantalizing fragments" (61). The biographer presents Orlando not only through what s/he is but also through what s/he has been and is not anymore.

Orlando acquires the ability to see in his/her multiplicity a richness. At the beginning, he rejects his past life when Sasha leaves him, he wants to leave his old self behind him: "he happened to have an imperfect recollection of his past life" (31). The term "recollect" can have here a double meaning of remembering but also the meaning of collecting back, gathering his old self. Even if Orlando has "suffered dissolution" (134), Orlando shows resilience like a tree that bends and bends back to its original place and keeps a coherence in his/her being. s/he is like an organ, mixing the different tones to create harmony; Orlando can:

> somehow contrive to synchronize the sixty or seventy different times which beat simultaneously in every normal human system so that when eleven strikes, all the rest chime in unison, and the present is neither a violent disruption nor completely forgotten in the past. (151)

Unity can be achieved in multiplicity.

[158] BURNS, *op. cit.*, p.348.

Orlando is a polymorphous being, a multi-faceted character, not only outside, with his/her change of sex, but also, and especially, inside. Sasha is the first character to reflect his great range of selves: "she said, panting slightly, that he was like a million-candled Christmas tree" (25). Those candles are present in one of the film's poster (appendix 11). She is the first to offer Orlando another vision of himself, to show him that he can be more than what people see of him.

Orlando's inner self is also compared to his/her mansion. Ancient Greeks and Romans used to think that the brain was like a house with several rooms, hence the phrase *in primo loco* that means "in the first place". The description of his inner maze punctuates the book: "some change, it was suspected, must have taken place in the chambers of his brain" (31) and "slowly there had opened within her something intricate and many-chambered" (86). If in the book the transformations are only inner, the film shows Orlando's outer selves. When Orlando escapes the Archduke, she enters a maze dressed as an 18th century lady, runs in the maze, losing the camera, and comes out of the maze dressed as a Victorian lady. It is the perfect example of Orlando's "great variety of selves" (153). In the book and in the film, some of Orlando's multiple selves are presented: he is a lord, a "Duke" (64), an ambassador, a writer, a wife, a mother, a lady… Those different identities do not erase one another but "are built up, one on top of another, as plates are piled on a waiter's hand" (152), like the layers of a tree trunk. The fact that Orlando is an ambassador also brings the questions of national identity and personal identity, a scission that does not seem to disturb Orlando until he is in contact with another people[159]. Indeed, the consistency of Orlando's exterior helps the visualisation of uniformity in plurality: "Their faces remained, as their portraits prove, practically the same" (67). The possessive pronoun "their" emphasises cohesion within variance. If at the beginning of the book Orlando does not see the possibilities of being himself, at the end she apprehends her multiplying power: "Nothing is any longer one thing." (150) The biographer plays with his or her duties as biographer to explicit this incongruity: "how many different people are there not — Heaven help us — all having lodgment at one time or another in the human spirit? Some say two thousand and fifty-two." (152) He then exposes Orlando's past or present selves and presents some of the selves that are still left to discover. At the end, Orlando becomes synonymous with plurality, with possibilities of being multiple and keeping one's unity:

[159] HOVEY, Jaime, "'Kissing a Negress in the Dark': Englishness as a Masquerade in Woolf's *Orlando*", *Modern Language Association*, Vol. 112, No. 3, 1997, p.393.

> So that it is the most usual thing in the world for a person to call, directly they are alone, Orlando? (if that is one's name) meaning by that, Come, come! I'm sick to death of this particular self. (152)

c. Androgyny: The Reunion of the Selves

In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf wonders: "What does one mean by 'the unity of the mind[160]'?" We tried to explore her demonstration of the impossibility of the concordance between what we see and what a person is and the difficulty of catching the self. For Woolf, there is not one answer to the question of identity: "biography never return a single and simple answer to any question that is asked of it[161]". Presenting the androgynous mind, an achievement of the meeting of plurality, is for her a more complete answer to the puzzle between the I and the Eye.

It makes no doubt that the multiplicity of Orlando is shown through his/her change of sex, but Woolf goes beyond the body and describes the equivocal mind of Orlando: being has more than one meaning and the androgynous reunites all of them. Of Orlando's outer form, the biographer says: "His form combined in one the strength of a man and a woman's grace." (67) We have here an adequate definition of the androgynous: the union between the womanly and the manly features in one form. It also affects Woolf's writing as she advised to write both like a man and like a woman. The biographer is indeed also an androgynous mind as he sometimes sticks to "facts", as we saw, writing in a formal way, but also writing in a womanly manner, subtly playing with rhythms, metaphors, poetic flourish. At the end, there is no distinction between the two and it creates a style that is asexual, transcendental. The unity of the sexes is asserted and even asked to be respected: "Different though the sexes are, they intermix." (92) and "this mixture in her of man and woman" (93). It is once more in variety that the self achieves union: "the androgynous mind is resonant and porous; that it transmits emotion without impediment; that it is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided[162]." As Woolf reminds the reader of *A Room of One's Own*:

> It is when this great fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine, I thought[163].

[160] WOOLF, *A Room of One's Own*, *op. cit.* p.96.
[161] WOOLF, Virginia, *A Room of One's Own/Three Guineas*, London: Penguin classics, 2010, p.245.
[162] WOOLF, *A Room of One's Own*, *op. cit.*, p.97.
[163] *Ibid*., pp. 96-97.

It is "feeling and perceiving simultaneously[164]" with "Masculine in its bent for abstract and logical thought, feminine in its intuitive grasp of emotional relationships[165]" that characterizes Woolf's androgynous writing.

Through her writings, Woolf wanted to give women a voice but did not want to isolate them, confine them in a feminine style of writing. Monique Wittig writes on this subject in *La pensée straight*:

> 'écriture féminine' est la métaphore naturaliste du fait politique brutal de domination des femmes et comme telle grossit l'appareil sous lequel s'avance la 'féminité': Différence, Spécificité, Corps/Femelle/Nature[166].

It is with the pen and the mind that Woolf offers to overpass appearances.

C. The Third Eye: Imagination and Writing as a Therapy

As a writer, Virginia Woolf devoted her life to crack the shell of what could not be told and what could not be seen. For her: "Books are the mirrors of the soul[167]"; it is through the act of writing and reading that an unconceivable, an invisible, truth would be discovered. Above the difficulty for the individual to understand the world and for the world to understand subjectivity, lie words, a third party in the equation between the inside and the outside: the third eye. Because some elements are unutterable, indescribable and even as imperceptible as an atom, it is sometimes necessary to make sense, to reconstruct a meaning, and words can inhabit the void between reality and abstraction. Woolf tried to unsettle the normal matches of perception. Writing also insinuates where there is a void or a need for a void: it is a remedy to the illness (*maladie)*, what is hard to say (*mal à dire)*. It offers clear-sightedness, because in order to write, one has to take distance from the paper; the I dissociates from the subjective Eye to be reunited in a Third I. Writing and reading are an "autopsy[168]".

a. Writing the Invisible: The Power of Imagination

Imagination appears in Virginia Woolf's work as the keystone, not only in her style but also in the subject she deals with. The figure of the artist is a recurrent character in her works just like Lily Briscoe in *To The Lighthouse*, a young painter who loves and admires Mrs Ramsay and tries to find the right angle, the right colours, the right style to encapsulate the image and

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[164] RICHTER, *op. cit.*, p.18.
[165] *Ibid*.
[166] WITTIG, *op. cit.*, p.113.
[167] WOOLF, Virginia, *Between the Acts*, London: Vintage Classics, 2013, p. 21.
[168] *Les Destinataires du moi : altérités de l'autobiographie*, dir. KUWASE, Shojiro, MASUDA Makoto, SAMPIERI, Jean-Christophe, Dijon : Editions Universitaires de Dijon, 2012.

feelings towards her, just as Virginia Woolf would try to find the perfect words to capture the image of her mother. Orlando is also one of the figures of the artist, always searching for his/her style to connect his feelings and the world. They are always portrayed as outside of the world and with a singular vision close to a seer's vision using the third eye. The image of the artist as a seer is an ancient one; Cicero already mentioned the *mentis oculi* in *De Oratore*: a third eye that does not really exist, that is far in the mind but that can see the invisible. Writing and imagining could have a power of filling the void between what we apparently know, and see, and what is still mysterious, and between the image and the essence of someone. For Richter, the attempt for reaching the Third Eye can be assimilated to:

> verbalized *being*; giving voice to the total moment, transcending self and time, its vibrations strike the inner ear of the reader as a familiar voice. Since it is at one conscious and unconscious, personal and impersonal, individual and collective, it is the voice of everyman and, conversely, of no-man – "the voice that was no one's voice,' as Mrs Woolf wrote in *Between the Acts*[169].

Orlando is the figure of the artist who does not settle for reality but goes beyond the image and tries to solve the riddle of life thanks to writing. Woolf uses the symbolic of the eye to share Orlando's experience of inventiveness that transcends biological vision. First, Orlando has "violet eyes" (10). Violet can be the colour of imagination and creativity[170]. It is a rare and precious colour and having violet eyes is quite uncommon. The fact that Orlando has violet eyes can signify that s/he sees the world with a different point of view, with a veil of imagination and from a peculiar point of view. This colour also represents ambiguity and unconventionality, as it is a mix between blue, long associated with the Virgin Mary and with purity, and red, the colour of passion in Western society. It is also the colour of the queer movement; indeed, the study of queer linguistics is called "lavender linguistics[171]" and queer people usually held it as a sign to manifest their queerness without being arrested. Moreover, Virginia Woolf used purple ink to write, it is thus for her the colour of creation, a sense of inspiration that she may have wanted to give Orlando.

Orlando has an epiphany when he realizes the power of having no name and he thinks that Shakespeare must have written with this status of *incognito* that writing gives:

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[169] RICHTER, *op. cit.*, p.129.
[170] "Colour Psychology: What Colours communicate", https://graf1x.com/color-psychology-emotion-meaning-poster/, retrieved 13/02/19.
[171] LEGMAN, Gershon, "The Language of Homosexuality: An American Glossary", in HENRY, George, *Sex Variants*, New York: Paul B. Hoeber, 1941.

> The thought struck him like a bullet. […] he opened his eyes, which had been wide open all the time, but had seen only thoughts, and saw, lying in the hollow beneath him, his house. (51)

His (violent) moment of vision is characterized by a double openness. It is as though even with his eyes opened he couldn't have seen the reality of things because he didn't see them with the right distance or with the right eyes. The "bullet" is also something too fast to be seen, a tiny object that penetrates without warning, something that you feel more than something you see, like a truth that is sometimes unwanted. The truth in *Orlando* is often said to be displaced, found where no one looks at, where it is not supposed to be, and the poets are the ones who can see this truth not face to face but with a distance. According to Chklovski:

> la tâche de l'écrivain c'est de recréer la première vision des choses dans sa puissance – par contraste a la banale reconnaissance qu'on en fait tous les jours[172].

That is, to unveil what can be seen but is invisible to the mundane eye.

Poetry is the medium between the intense light of truth and the interior. Kenneth Burke makes poetry the link between those two elements: "There is the eye, and there is the thing upon which the eye alights; while the relationship between the two is a poem[173]." It is a portal that enables the mutual understanding between inner and outer worlds. Poetry goes beyond the prime need of language, that is to communicate, it focuses on challenging the vision of what is apparently known and plays with the signifier and the signified. Orlando is a writer and a poet: he wrote "some forty-seven plays, histories, romances, poems; some in prose, some in verse; some in French, some in Italian" (27); s/he tried different genres, different styles, different languages. If at the beginning of the book Orlando is stuck in the classical vision of poetry, the one that praises nature to its closest and that describes and sublime the world, Orlando finds a limit to it and transcends it:

> So then he tried saying the grass is green and the sky is blue and so to propitiate the austere spirit of poetry whom still, though at a great distance, he could not help reverencing. 'The sky is blue,' he said, 'the grass is green.' Looking up, he saw that, on the contrary, the sky is like the veils which a thousand Madonnas have let fall from their hair; and the grass fleets and darkens like a flight of girls fleeing the embraces of hairy satyrs from enchanted woods […] 'I don't see that one's more true than another. Both are utterly false.' (49)

He discovers that there is a higher truth, a subjective one, beyond the traditional associations in literature and in life. Truth and poetry are, for Guttermann-Jacquet, a construct:

[172] In WITTIG, *op. cit*., p.127.
[173] In GASQUET, Lawrence, *Lewis Carroll et la persistance de l'image,* Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2009, p.23.

"Comme la poésie, la vérité est une construction, une esthétique[174]." They both need the intervention of a third party.

Orlando slowly discovers the power of imagination and writing on him/her and on the world. When words touch Orlando, it appeals to all his/her senses: "The astonishing, sinuous melody of the words stirred Orlando like music." (26) and "the words, even without meaning, were as wine to him." (26) It is the musicality of words, not their meaning, that shakes Orlando; not the association between signifier and signified, but the pure aesthetic of words. They have the power to transform the body and the mind, making peace between the two: "what strange powers are these that penetrate our most secret ways and change our most treasured possessions without our willing it?" (32) Words are piercing. Orlando is a writer but also a reader: "the taste for books was an early one" (35). Reading also has the power of unveiling and when Orlando is described reading, the fragility and vulnerability of the very act of being is disclosed: "Orlando would sit by himself, reading, a naked man" (35). It is almost an out-of-body experience as Orlando sits "by himself", which has a double meaning of being alone and next to himself. He is naked, his soul is laid bare, he sees things like a new born. He has access to things through words that would not have been possible for him to see without words.

Against the "facts" that lay in *Orlando* as an authoritative and reductive element, Orlando sees the importance of illusions:

> It is all an illusion (which is nothing against it, for illusions are the most valuable and necessary of all things, and she who can create one is among the world's greatest benefactors) (98).

An illusion, in its primary meaning, is something deceiving, an image beyond what is visible. The "greatest benefactors" can be interpreted as being writers, those who create meaning beyond the neutral signs of language. Writers create and destroy illusions. Writing has almost its own surreal force: "No sooner had she said 'Impossible' than, to her astonishment and alarm, the pen began to curve and caracole with the smoothest possible fluency." (117) Orlando is here drawn almost against her will in the spiral of inspiration, possessed by the ghost of creation. The act of writing is personified later on:

> As she wrote she felt some power (remember we are dealing with the most obscure manifestations of the human spirit) reading over her shoulder, and when she had written 'Egyptian girls', the power told her to stop. (131)

[174] GUTTERMANN-JACQUET, Deborah, "L'impossible à écrire et l'illisible. À propos des rapports de la littérature et du réel lacanien", *Recherches en psychanalyse*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2015, p.45.

Orlando is passive and the power is active. Writing, hence, allows a letting-go of the mechanisms of thinking and seeing and triggers a transcendental and unconscious perception. The almost godly powers are described when Orlando compares poets' power with the strength of lion and sea combined:

> For if it is rash to walk into a lion's den unarmed, rash to navigate the Atlantic in a rowing boat, rash to stand on one foot on the top of St Paul's, it is still more rash to go home alone with a poet. A poet is Atlantic and lion in one. While one drowns us the other gnaws us. If we survive the teeth, we succumb to the waves. A man who can destroy illusions is both beast and flood. Illusions are to the soul what atmosphere is to the earth. (100)

The liquid element that is close to the ink is also used further on when Orlando comes across a pool:

> She now looked down into this pool or sea in which everything is reflected — and, indeed, some say that all our most violent passions, and art and religion, are the reflections which we see in the dark hollow at the back of the head when the visible world is obscured for the time. (159)

Writing is indeed reflective like water, both mirroring and meditative. It connects subjectivity and the world, the mind and the spirit, and gives access to the most secluded parts of the mind; it is a way of expression, of making the inside come on the outside.

When words reach the edge of what they can mean or what they can say, a difficulty of uttering the unutterable, a new language appears and shows the need for correspondence between the inside and the outside. This new sort of language succeeds in uttering what we can call a "scream of consciousness" and in showing the limit of the authority of language. Woolf already used it in *Mrs Dalloway* in the scene when an old lady sings:

"ee um fah um soo,

Fo swee too eem oh – [175]"

This song, with apparently no linguistic meaning, reaches the unutterable. When Orlando meets Greene again in the book, she sends a telegram to her husband:

> 'My God Shel', she wired; 'life literature Greene toady —' here she dropped into a cypher language which they had invented between them so that a whole spiritual state of the utmost complexity might be conveyed in a word or two without the telegraph clerk being any wiser, and added the words 'Rattigan Glumphoboo', which summed it up precisely. (139)

[175] WOOLF, Virginia, *Mrs Dalloway* [1925], London: Penguin Classics, 2000, p.88.

The sibylline messages "life literature Greene toady", and "Rattigan Glumphoboo" play with the correspondence with language and feelings. The first uses the basic degree of communication, words without any link, and the second, close to the names of the characters in *Gulliver's Travel* by Jonathan Swift[176], joins the nonsensical language of children, babblings. This message calls for a different meaning in each reader who will have to "make sense", to create a sense out of incongruous elements. The deconstruction of language is necessary to reconnect the different instances of language, what Woolf called "little language[177]": "broken words, inarticulate words, like the shuffling of the feet on pavement[178]."

The biographer exhorts the reader to use his or her imagination. Books only present a thread, they sketch the form of characters and events, but it is the role of the reader to reconnect all the pieces together, to make up the blank spaces, with the power of imagination. The biographer addresses the reader several times to warn him or her about the need to be active; if there is a missing piece, the reader will have to find it: "it was necessary to speculate, to summarise, and even to use the imagination." (58) and "It is with fragments such as these that we must do our best to make up a picture of Orlando's life and character at this time." (60). The biographer develops the lexical field of imagination in the first quotation and underlines the importance of the reader with the possessive pronoun "our" and the verb "make up": there is no pre-existent version of Orlando, only the imagination of the reader will fill in the blanks. Even Orlando's change of sex demands that the reader should suspend his or her disbelief, let go of what is real, and read with his or her Third Eye. It is indeed a "a miasma – a mirage" (94), a play on perception that needs a certain adjustment from the eye. Finally, the biographer purposefully leaves a blank spot in the book after praising poetry as incomplete:

> the most poetic is precisely that which cannot be written down. For which reasons we leave a great blank here, which must be taken to indicate that the space is filled to repletion. (125)

These sentences are followed in the book by a blank. Words are a powerful tool connect what is apparently unconnectable, to express the unutterable.

b. The Self as A Palimpsest: Writing and Rewriting the Self

Writing can be seen as the crossroads between the I and the Eye. It connects universal and specific, inner and outer, the subject with himself or herself. The act of writing connects mind and body and has a meditative effect through the repetition of the movement, the search

[176] Note 21 of *Orlando*.
[177] WOOLF, *The Waves* [1931], London: Vintage Classics, 2016, p.171.
[178] *Ibid*.

for words and of meanings. It is an introspection, an observation of the inside. Writing is then closely linked to rewriting the self, and a Third I, aside from the personal I and the I people see, appears: a fictional I. For Richter, writing ends up being for Woolf a powerful examination tool:

> writing, as [Woolf] expressed in *Night and Day*, is 'that process of self-examination, that perpetual effort to understand one's own feeling and express it… in language (p.38[179]).

Lacan connects the two sides of writing, cure and disease. Literature is a cure to illness (*maladie/mal à dire*), but it can also be the cause, to a Bovarian extent. Through his neologism "sinthome", Lacan shows that both cause and consequence are linked[180]. In her essay "L'impossible à écrire et l'illisible. À propos des rapports de la littérature et du réel lacanien", Deborah Guttermann-Jacquet underlines the healing properties of writing that Lacan developed :

> Parce que l'effraction de jouissance première est *troumatique*, le sujet vient au langage. Il parle pour boucher, recouvrir, habiller ce trou, et le langage n'est, d'une certaine manière, qu'une formation réactionnelle au trauma[181].

Language inhabits the void of life, related to trauma or not. The invisible in the mind is partially compensated for language. In *Orlando*, literature and writing are also seen as both disease and cure, disease because it splits the mind and the body and secludes the individual from society, and cure because it reconnects the individual with himself or herself and links people together. Orlando is said to be "a nobleman afflicted with a love of literature" (35), with "the disease of reading" (35), and "the fatal nature of this disease to substitute a phantom for reality" (35). The lexicon of illness is surprisingly intertwined with literature. The cure of this disease is finally the act of writing: "The wretch takes to writing" (35). Following Lacan's theory of "*trouma*", writing permeates the interstices of illness, plays with the fragmented selves and makes art around the void. The moment Orlando is suddenly left by Sasha without warning coincides with the frozen Thames breaking into pieces, a possible projection of Orlando's inner self. The end of this chapter is pregnant with symbolism, as Orlando receives at his feet "a broken pot and a little straw." (30) This symbol can have a plurality of meanings, mostly sexual meanings according to P. J. Vinken in "Some Observations on the Symbolism of The Broken Pot in art

[179] RICHER, *op. cit*. p.15.
[180] GUTTERMANN-JACQUET, *op. cit.*, p.45.
[181] *Ibid*., p.45.

and literature[182]". He links it with the La Fontaine's "La Laitière et le Pot au lait[183]", a description of the danger of illusions and disillusions.

The frontiers between fiction and autobiography can be tenuous, especially for Virginia Woolf. She puts a lot of herself in her writings and wonders about posterity. *Orlando* is one of the clearest examples of the projection of herself in her writings. Writing this novel, Virginia Woolf wanted not only to capture the image she had of Vita Sackville-West, but also the mark of her feelings for her at a precise moment, as amber crystalizes an ant forever, magnifying it. Orlando is the transfer of a particular vision of Vita Sackville-West on paper. Woolf leaves several hints of her real self in her book, when she writes "the first of November 1927" (131) for example, this date coinciding with the moment of the redaction of *Orlando*. The biographer is her *alter ego*. Hints are also to be found in the following date: "Thursday, the eleventh of October, Nineteen hundred and Twenty Eight." (162), the date *Orlando* was published. We can also read echoes of Orlando, in the theory that Orlando is the writer of his/her own autobiography, in the following words:

> 'For', he said, 'I have done with men.'
>
> Nevertheless, he paid the pension quarterly. (46)

The text is indented in the book, aside from the rest of the text, it is like seeing Orlando writing and taking distance from himself/herself. The multiplicity of layers in who is writing is also a mark of the distance of writing in order to reassemble the self and his or her perception: Virginia Woolf is writing *Orlando* through a narrator who is describing Orlando who is the distorted image of Vita Sackville-West. Taking the place of somebody else in order to write closer to your self is indeed what the biographer (and indirectly Woolf) prescribes: "one must always, always write like somebody else." (141) It is what Woolf does. For Ricoeur : "L'identité narrative fait tenir ensemble les deux bouts de la chaine : la permanence dans le temps du caractère et celle du maintien de soi[184]." The narrative identity is what links the multiple identities together.

Woolf gives herself and Vita Sackville-West new identities and she keeps writing and rewriting them. The text is in itself an intertwining of different threads that the writer assembles and disassembles. Burns argues that: "Writing has a psychologically constructive function for

[182] VINKEN, P. J. "Some Observations on the Symbolism of The Broken Pot in Art and Literature.", *American Imago*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1958, pp. 149-174.
[183] *Ibid*., p.162.
[184] RICOEUR, *op. cit*., p.196.

Woolf, one that helps the author re-determine herself[185].” In the first scene, the reader encounters Orlando and the “green arras” that is described thoroughly. One can read: “The green arras with the hunters on it moved perpetually.” (5) When Orlando sees Sasha, he uses language to render her beauty:

> Images, metaphors of the most extreme and extravagant twined and twisted in his mind. He called her a melon, a pineapple, an olive tree, an emerald, and a fox in the snow (17).

It is also what Woolf does with Vita. She is nonetheless conscious that the portrait of Vita is a distorted one, seen through the prism of writing, and that the copy will never match the original: “everything suffered emaciation and transformation” (26). Woolf once again reunites one of Locke’s dissociation, here developed by Burns:

> Referring to the ‘double use’ of words, Locke divides the use of language into two projects: that of recording autobiographical notes to the self, and also that for conveying ideas to others[186]…

Woolf reunites not only the multiple images a public person can have but also the duality of writing.

The redaction of Orlando’s poem “The Oak Tree” follows his/her change and peregrinations. This poem follows Orlando from the beginning to the end of the text, as if the poem were the very book the reader has in his or her hands. It is present on pages 37, 46, 54, 86, 116 and 136 and is likely to be an *alter ego* of Vita’s “The Land[187]” published in 1926. One can read a few lines of the real poem:

> And then I came to a field where the springing grass
>
> Was dulled by the hanging cups of fritillaries,
>
> Sullen and foreign-looking, the snaky flower,
>
> Scarfed in dull purple, like Egyptian girls:— (131)

A book is also an assemblage of different pages, or leaves, made of a wood mixture, sewed together just like the Oak Tree: “the whole assortment shall be lightly stitched together by a single thread” (37). Sue Roe thinks of the oak tree as an intersectional material between the interior and the exterior:

> The tree creates history, and it creates frameworks for the future; it begins in the organic world, and creates interiors. Here is another mystery, teased

[185] BURNS, *op. cit.*, p.356.
[186] *Ibid.*, p.357.
[187] Note 8 of *Orlando*.

> opened throughout Virginia Woolf's fiction: the mystery of the connection between the organic external world, and interiors: interiors of ships, cities, houses, rooms; of the heart, the mind, and one of the mind's most vibrant manifestations: the imagination, or what we sometimes call the mind's eye[188]

The life of the tree resembles the process of the writing of the poem, of tying and untying: "The oak tree had put forth its leaves and shaken them a dozen times in the process" (48). The *corpus* of Orlando's poem mirrors Orlando's quest for himself/herself, adding and removing words, working on the prime material:

> But as he scratched out as many lines as he wrote in, the sum of them was often, at the end of the year, rather less than at the beginning, and it looked as if in the process of writing the poem would be completely unwritten. (55)

Orlando is the embodiment of his/her poem. Orlando's internal change is even to be seen in his style: "he had changed his style amazingly." (55) As Orlando writes his/her poem, Orlando changes; it has a double dynamic of writing that is changing Orlando, and Orlando's change is transcribed into his/her writings as well. The "manuscript" (60) becomes a palimpsest[189] as Orlando changes it. The textual space, the "construction site of literature' ("chantier littéraire[190]") represents the inner working site, a space composed of different heterogeneous elements that are "perpetually" (5) in construction: "change was incessant, and change, perhaps, will never cease." (86).

Corpus and body (*corps*) mingle as Orlando bears his/her manuscript on him/her at all time: "he still carried about with him, in the bosom of his cloak, a much scored manuscript" (60) and:

> Then Orlando felt in the bosom of her shirt as if for some locket or relic of lost affection, and drew out no such thing, but a roll of paper, sea-stained, blood-stained, travel-stained — the manuscript of her poem, 'The Oak Tree' (60)

For Cristina Degli-Esposti: "In the film the body, or the changing form of the body, is a ground of and for experience, a generator and an end point of meanings-a text[191]", and that statement can be asserted about Orlando's body in the book too. The biographer comments on Orlando bearing the poem in these terms:

> She had carried this about with her for so many years now, and in such hazardous circumstances, that many of the pages were stained, some were torn, while the straits she had been in for writing paper when with the gipsies,

[188] *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf, op. cit.*, p.177.
[189] GENETTE, Gérard, *Palimpsestes : La littérature au second degré* [1982], Paris: Seuil, 1992.
[190] WITTIG, *op. cit.*, p.149.
[191] DEGLI-ESPOSTI, *op. cit.*, p.89.

> had forced her to overscore the margins and cross the lines till the manuscript looked like a piece of darning most conscientiously carried out. (116)

The adjective "stained" is repeated several times and punctuates the description of the material version of Orlando's self. Like a palimpsest can be, it is "stained", "torn", a piece of paper that Orlando has "cross[ed]", just like the actual manuscript of *Orlando: A Biography* (appendix 12). Sue Roe underlines the interconnection between self and words: "They distort us; we distort them. We necessarily distort, because our vision is subjective, and unfixed[192]". When she is with the Gipsies and she cannot write because the Gipsies have no pen, Orlando is desperate, as if she had lost a vital organ, contrasting with the peaceful state she is in after her transition a few pages before:

> 'Oh! if only I could write!' she cried (for she had the odd conceit of those who write that words written are shared). She had no ink; and but little paper. But she made ink from berries and wine; and finding a few margins and blank spaces in the manuscript of 'The Oak Tree', managed by writing a kind of shorthand, to describe the scenery in a long, blank version poem, and to carry on a dialogue with herself about this Beauty and Truth concisely enough. (71)

Writing is a bodily, and almost violent act, which is to be compared with the first scene of the book when Orlando "was in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor" (5):

> we write, not with the fingers, but with the whole person. The nerve which controls the pen winds itself about every fibre of our being, threads the heart, pierces the liver. (120)

The sword is replaced by the pen, which has the right to life or death. At the end of the book, Orlando has a baby: "Orlando was safely delivered of a son on Thursday, March 20th" (146). Creation and procreation meet. Indeed, according to Pawlowski[193], the date more or less coincides with three dates in the lives of Vita Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf: the finishing of Vita's "The Land" on March 23rd, 1926, the conceiving of *Orlando* on March 14th, 1927 and on the completion of *Orlando* on Thursday 22nd, March 1926. Those dates are no coincidence between the birth of Orlando's son and the process of creation of *Orlando.* In the film, the section in which Orlando (implicitly) gives birth to her child and in which Orlando gives the manuscript to a publisher is also entitled "BIRTH", which once again mingles creation and procreation. The shortcut between procreation and women is an easy one in literature and the cinema, and Woolf presents a woman who has almost miraculously conceived and brought up a child alone and who has written a book alone.

[192] *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, *op. cit.*, p.174.
[193] Note 24 of *Orlando*.

Writing reconciles the inside and the outside: the self absorbs the exterior, the image, and gives back its version of the exterior. It enables a multiplicity of visions, a reflection on both sides that language displays. Orlando is prone to contemplation and it is a material for writing:

> She read a sentence and looked up at the sky; she looked up at the sky and looked down at the newspaper. Life? Literature? One to be made into the other? (141)

The chasm presents the interconnection between the inside and the outside, the world into the self and the self into the world. Words are reflectors of the inside and the biographer describes it with Orlando's use of Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, Orlando's husband:

> when she called him by his second name, 'Bonthrop', it should signify to the reader that she was in a solitary mood, felt them both as specks on a desert, was desirous only of meeting death by herself"" and "'Tell me, Mar,' she would say (and here it must be explained, that when she called him by the first syllable of his first name, she was in a dreamy, amorous, acquiescent mood, domestic, languid a little… (128)

The Third Eye and the Third I go with the notion of creation and recreation that is inherently present in performance, reaching the first meaning of "person" as a mask and playing with expectations.

III. The Performativity of the Self: to Show or not to Show

Despite her scepticism towards cinematography and her preference for essays and novels against plays –the only play she wrote being *Freshwater* in 1923–, Woolf's novel *Orlando* fundamentally bears a performative dimension, both theatrical and cinematographic.

A. Theatricality, Cinematography and Representing the Self: A Moving Space

At the beginning of the cinema, a camera could be called a "cinematograph", "animatography" and even "biograph". The wish of literary biographs and film-makers was to write life, or as the word "cinematograph" suggests, to write (*graphein*) the movement (*kinema*), as Woolf says, to "capture a multitude of things at present fugitive[194]". The eye of the camera is to replace the eye of the spectator in the theatre, the place "where one sees" according to the etymology, but in a permanent manner. The film, contrary to the play, is supposed to give one version of a scenario that can be seen multiple times. Each time will be the projection of the same images. A play, as it is live, can be performed multiple times and each time be unique. Virginia Woolf equally feels sceptical about the cinema and the theatre. According to Cassigneul she denounces its *mimesis*: "sa démarche aveuglément mimétique […] sa dimension narrative (héritée du roman du XIXe siècle, sa superficialité et la passivité intellectuelle qu'elle implique[195]." We will nonetheless try and explore the theatrical dimension of *Orlando*, a moving performance.

a. The Performative Extent of *Orlando*

The performative dimension of *Orlando* is pregnant in the book and is transcribed in the film through different ways. Each of the six chapters of the book seems to represent an era, the "spirit of the age" (121) and Orlando's experience of this era, through internal and external conflicts. Even though Virginia Woolf underlines the lack of subtlety of theatrical gloss and artifices[196]; she uses them as landmarks of Orlando's ontological questioning. The image, the costumes, the music, the text, are all elements of theatrical display that engage a reflection on interiority and exteriority, on appearances and essence.

The book is divided in six chapters that have no particular title. The film is separated in eight "movements" or "tableaux"[197], and each "carries its own colorations and mood[198]"

[194] In CASSIGNEUL, Adèle, *Voir, Observer, Penser. Virginia Woolf et la photo-cinéatographie*, Toulouse : Presse Universitaire du Midi, 2018, p.80.
[195] *Ibid*., p.79.
[196] SAWYER, *op. cit*., p.1.
[197] PIDDUCK, *op. cit*., p.175.
[198] *Ibid*.

according to Pidduck: the opening sequence, "1600 DEATH", "1610 LOVE", "1650 POETRY", "1700 POLITICS", "1750 SOCIETY", "1850 SEX" and "BIRTH", undated. They all work as acts in a play and the end of each chapter or each movement seems to be like a drop of the curtain, always at midnight, especially at the end of chapter 4: "A turbulent welter of cloud covered the city. All was darkness; all was doubt; all was confusion. The Eighteenth century was over; the Nineteenth century had begun." (111). This description is to be found at the end of the two paragraphs in which Orlando praises the play she has just seen: "Never was a play so absorbing." (109) The use of fog is also present in the film when Orlando meets Shelmerdine and going home on a horse, they come across a locomotive that steam enables a fade to the next image. According to Degli-Esposti:

> The 'functional' relevance of the titles/sign-functions of the film […] overtly recalls the explicatory/rhetorical strategy of historical baroque and eighteenth-century literature where the explanatory subtitle was used in an ironic way as a means of explaining something that could not always be completely explained.[199]

The titles can be seen as the transcription of the mock tone of the book. One can get the mood and the era through the costumes, the props, the music, the light: "Visually, these tableaux are set apart by a distinct array of period costumes and decor which evoke and exaggerate the 'feel' of an era[200]". During the Elizabethan era, a simple candle suggested that the plot was taking place at night. Each movement has its tone, for instance Degli-Esposti believes that:

> Green, airy colors prevail in the opening sequence, red and gold in the Elizabethan period, gray and silver in the James I section, white and sand in the Middle East scenes, dusty blue in the nineteenth century, and green, watery, transparent hues in the twentieth century[201].

A demonstration of the signs of theatre can even be seen in the film, when a play takes place on the frozen Thames (appendix 13). A turban, a fake beard and dark skin can imply that the character is a middle Eastern or a Moor representing Othello, and a blond wig and a rich dress can imply that the other character is a Western lady representing Desdemona in act V scene II of *Othello*.

The music also plays its part in the setting of the mood and tone. In the book, music is mentioned a few times like "the fine music of flute and trumpet" (16) during James I's festivities, "music of a rustic kind" (64) in the Middle East and a "fluty, frail […] music" (158)

[199] DEGLI-ESPOSTI, *op. cit.*, p.76.
[200] PIDDUCK, *op. cit.*, p.175.
[201] DEGLI-ESPOSTI, *op. cit.*, p.79.

when Orlando remembers her past days. Music stays dominant in words as Orlando associates them with music. In the film, the music composed by David Motion and Sally Potter herself captures either the "spirit of the age" (121) or Orlando's mood. The interpretation of "Eliza Is the Fairest Queen", originally composed by Edward Johnson and interpreted by Jimmy Somerville, captures the sense of protocol and austerity of the Elizabethan era. The ceremonial "Pavanne" during the scene of the dance on the Thames stresses the importance of self-demonstration during James I's reign. The song "The Kiss" shows Orlando's first excitements towards love. The melancholic "Broken Ice", with the crying violins, mirrors the internal fragmentation and sadness of Orlando. The music "A Change of Sex" goes crescendo with heart beats and only one female voice at the beginning, to a music canon between multiple feminine voices (supposedly from the same woman) and a high-pitched male voice in the background, signifying unity in the plural and the androgynous. The final song interpreted by Jimmy Somerville with an androgynous voice (along with the playing of the character of the angel that sings the song) mixes the different genres of the preceding music, Elizabethan, classical, baroque and adds 1990s electro music, a unity underlined by the lyrics. Music does not only give the tone of an era and of a scene, but it also echoes Orlando's interiority, giving access to a universal feeling that is not necessarily possible to give with words. Woolf herself underlines in her essay "The Cinema" the help music can provide to the image or the text, bearing in mind that in 1926 films were silent films:

> Yet if so much of our thinking and feeling is connected with seeing, some residue of visual emotion which is of no use either to painter or to poet may still await the cinema. That such symbols will be quite unlike the real objects which we see before us seems highly probable. Something abstract, something which moves with controlled and conscious art, something which calls for the very slightest help from words or music to make itself intelligible[202]

Music adds another dimension to the moving image and can reach the subconscious in a way that words cannot, making new associations. Intermediality in films is probably the cinematic version and extension of intertextuality as all media are at the service of the image, magnifying it.

Shakespeare is one of the most important underlying references in *Orlando*. The name of the character has a long pedigree and can be a reference to *As You Like It* in which Rosalind disguises as Ganymede to teach Orlando how to love[203]. Sawyer compares the influence Shakespeare had on Woolf to the inspiration of modernist painters: "Woolf's aesthetic draws

[202] WOOLF, Virginia, "The Cinema", 1926, www.woolfonline.com, retrieved 17/11/18.
[203] BEYNEL, *op. cit.*, p.19.

as much color from Shakespearean substance as it does from modernist painters' palettes[204]." She both admires and rejects the will of Shakespeare to "provide a plot, to provide comedy, tragedy, love, [and] interest[205]." Shakespeare is both an influence and a character in *Orlando* as he is mentioned in the book on pages 9, 38 and 54: "Orlando's idol, the supreme poet, who unlike Nick Greene, a writer seeking after 'glorie,' the Shakespeare character of the novel is content to write anonymously[206]." Shakespeare is also quoted twice in the film, during the performance of *Othello* and when Orlando reads "Sonnet 29" out loud.

Orlando implicitly brings to light that "the world's a stage[207]" and that individuals are but playing a role, hiding behind masks and following a plot, saying lines, to exist in the eyes of the other characters. Not being aware of it is for Woolf the real tragedy. According to Aristotle in *Poetics*, tragedy is composed of an event of misfortune, the great sufferance of the main character that triggers fear and pity and thus *catharsis* on the spectator. It is always followed by a resolution. Most of misfortunes in tragedies are based on the conflict between the character's wish and society's expectations. Comedy is the other side of the drama coin and displays events that trigger laughter thanks to displacement of expectations or repetition of patterns. Cervetti presents the effect of laughter on the reader/spectator:

> Laughter changes the face and the body, has its own sounds, and creates a distance from the object of amusement or ridicule. With laughter, the tone changes, undermining and diminishing the formidable nature of what is being laughed at. These changes in the body, tone and location alter the relation; there is an exchange of power in laughter, and laughter is one way to take control[208].

In *Orlando*, both genres are mixed to make the most of them and to introduce a double dynamic of creating distance between the reader/spectator and the stage, and bringing universality through the eye. Woolf writes her wish of bringing those two genres in her diary: "[*Orlando*] has to be half laughing, half serious: with great splashes of exaggeration[209]". Orlando describes that ambivalence through the metaphor of the blade: "nothing thicker than a knife's blade separates happiness from melancholy" (21), "happiness" representing comedy and "melancholy" representing tragedy. Both tears of sadness and tears of joy activate *catharsis* for Orlando and the reader/spectator, sometimes generating sadness, sometimes entertainment.

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[204] SAWYER, *op. cit.*, p.1.
[205] *Ibid*.
[206] *Ibid*., p.8.
[207] In SHAKESPEARE, William, *As You Like It* [1599], Act II, Scene VII, London: Penguin Classics, 2015.
[208] CERVETTI, *op. cit.*, p.174.
[209] *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume III*, *op. cit.*, p.168.

Catharsis is described at the end of Orlando's viewing of a play at the court of James I: "At last the play was ended. All had grown dark. The tears stream down his face." (27) Society itself is described as a stage: "London enjoyed a carnival of the utmost brilliancy." (15), "nothing could exceed the brilliancy and gaiety of the scene by day. But it was at night that the carnival was at its merriest" (16),

> The main press of people, it appeared, stood opposite a booth or stage something like our Punch and Judy show upon which some kind of theatrical performance was going forward. (26)

and "a tableau vivant or theatrical display in which English ladies and gentlemen…" (61). "Scene", "stage", "performance" or "theatrical display" are all terms from the theatrical lexical field here applied to society. The court of James I turns into a stage. The characters are also "exaggerated" as Woolf underlined, with the example of "Archduchess Harriet Griselda of Finster Aarhorn and Scand-op-Boom in the Roumanian territory" (87), a "grotesque shadow" (87), whose name and appearance (she cross-dresses to approach Orlando) accentuate the humour (if not the ridicule) of titles and appearance.

The biographer is like a stage-director who sheds light on some scenes of Orlando's life even though Orlando keeps his/her independence and escapes this authorship. Orlando seems to have the awareness of being in a book, of being a character, and that frees him/her from the strings attached to the puppet the character in a book or a film can be attached to. One of the reasons *The Well of Loneliness* by Radclyffe Hall probably knew censorship is probably the seriousness of the treatment of gender issues that *Orlando* always turns into a tragedy when the reader/spectator thinks it is a comedy and vice-versa, playing with the codes. When Stephen, the heroine of *The Well* rushes into the cracks of the tragedy of expectations, Orlando evades it by displacing expectations. It is exactly this that allows Orlando to take distance and to be an immortal character.

b. Movements of Being: The "Neo-Baroque Scopic Regime[210]"

In films and plays, movement is the key element. For the French cinéaste Robert Bresson: "'le cinématographe est une écriture avec des images en mouvement et des sons[211]'". Woolf's scepticism towards the cinema is transcribed by Cassigneul as : "une succession d'image factuelles qui s'apparente à ce que Bresson nomme 'le recopiage photographique de la vie[212]'". Woolf nonetheless knows the importance of dynamic and movement which are the

[210] DEGLI-ESPOSTI, *op. cit.*
[211] CASSIGNEUL, *op. cit.*, p.80.
[212] *Ibid*.

epicentre in *Orlando*. It can be both seen as a *bildungsroman*, a novel of formation, but also as a novel in formation. Degli-Esposti describes this dynamic as a "Neo-Baroque Scopic Regime" and we will try and analyse this affirmation. She applies this theory to the film more than to the book, even if the book puts also a strong emphasis on movement at its heart:

> Unlike the novel, the film presents a baroque dimension where revision of perspective(s) and *trompe l'oeil* open our eyes onto a world which is absent from Woolf's modernist work. The baroque *Weltanschalung* and "nomadic" world of movement(s) and morphing(s) of form(s), of metamorphoses, of parody, of carnivalization, of self-reference is the world of Potter's Orlando[213].

Degli-Esposti explains the "Neo-Baroque scopic regime[214]" as a system of perception, a play on vision inherited from the Baroque and its equilibrium between "emphasis on details" and "the intentional framing of void areas[215]". She invokes Freud and his development on the canny and the uncanny, in German *Heimlich* "kept out of sight[216]". For her "Orlando represents the uncanny. Within the frame of a fantastic/carnivalesque tale, Orlando's story appears as a representation of the uncanny[217]." There is a pendular movement between two opposite extreme that leads the reader/spectator to be constantly in doubt, constantly readjusting his or her sight and have a baroque and personal view of *Orlando*: "We are never abandoned by the feeling that we never actually know who Orlando really is[218]." This constant movement of Orlando literally keeps him/her eternally alive against *stasis*, death.

Orlando does not content himself/herself with appearing in his/her life and in the book and film dedicated to him/her but actively takes part in the construction of his/her life and the construction of the story, giving a tempo to both: Orlando becomes the "scopic" centre, the gravity centre, of the book and the film[219]; Orlando moves and the reader/spectator moves with him/her. The book gives the sensation that Orlando is creating himself/herself in front of the reader's eyes and that s/he cancels the deterministic extent of a biography; nothing is settled, and everything could change in a blink of an eye. In the film, Orlando's glance at the spectator could emphasise the fact that everything can change; s/he catches the eye of the spectator to bring him or her in this movement. The editing of the film gives to internal and external movements an importance and for Cassigneul: "Le montage engendre un rythme d'images qui

[213] DEGLI-ESPOSTI, *op. cit.*, p.77.
[214] *Ibid*.
[215] *Ibid*., p.81.
[216] *Ibid*.
[217] *Ibid*.
[218] *Ibid*., p.82.
[219] PIDDUCK, *op. cit*., p.180.

lie vision et idée et donne à penser."[220] She develops the parallelism of Bresson between the two meanings of "moving" ("mouvoir" and "émouvoir") : "Mouvement de ce qui est dans l'image, mouvement de l'image elle-même, mouvements qui en retour émeuvent le spectateur[221]." Portraying the construction of a person on screen enables a depth in the development of the character and the spectator's apprehension. For Walter Benjamin: "[les] aspects de l'original qui échappent à l'œil et ne sont saisissables que par un objectif librement déplaçable pour obtenir divers angles de vue[222]".

Julianne Pidduck defines movement in *Orlando* as: "the spatiotemporal issues of costume, decor and narrative tempo and the psychological dimension of character development, as well as narrative and imaginative historical and geographical voyages[223]". Pidduck sees in this movement a denunciation and a resolution of the constrictive outside view and an independence on the construction of the self. Period drama are according to her more feminine, because they are slower than Westerns for instance[224], less centred around a plot, more visual through costumes, located in more confined places where there is less doing and more being:

> Mary Ann Doane extends such a gendered economy to spatiotemporal patterns of genre. She suggests that the more dynamic narratives and open landscapes signifying freedom of movement and possibility correspond to male address, while cluttered interiors and narrative constraint correspond to female address[225].

Orlando, though, both plays on his/her caricatured feminine slowness and exaggerated masculine rapidity no matter his/her gender or sex, with her rapid cavalcade in the maze when she is a woman and his slow wandering when he is a man. Pidduck asserts:

> The slowness and uncertainty of Orlando's progress coincides with what I believe to be an explicit play (in both Virginia Woolf's source novel and Potter's film adaptation) upon gendered conventions of narrative movement[226].

The exaggerated dynamic movement shows what Pidduck calls the "irreality" of the narrative[227]; it unveils the carnivalesque of being in society, displays the strings of the puppet show. She takes the example of Orlando's crinoline dress:

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[220] CASSIGNEUL, *op. cit*., p.86.
[221] *Ibid*., p.85.
[222] *Ibid*., p.92.
[223] PIDDUCK, *op. cit*., p.173.
[224] *Ibid*., p.172.
[225] *Ibid*.
[226] *Ibid*., p.173.
[227] *Ibid*., p.175.

> the sheer crippling unmanageability of Orlando's bourgeois female attire speaks volumes to the 'structure of feeling' of upper-class British womanhood - the limits on physical and social mobility. The newly-corseted Orlando in her voluminous stiff white gown minces with difficulty around the dust-draped furniture in what had been her own parlour: the whiteness and volume of her skirt resemble the abandoned furniture which has been draped awaiting the return of the Lord of the Manor[228].

The "ironic costumes" show the absurd "social mobility and constraint[229]". Both Woolf and Potter play with "*distrortions* and *expansions*[230]", the unsettling tempo that displaces the reader/spectator, forcing him or her to adapt as Orlando did. The ambiguity of gender is also linked to movement as Pidduck suggests that Orlando "never achieves full status as a mobile adventurer[231]." The reader/spectator is embarked on a journey in which he or she will have to be fully active and not take for granted the signs written on a paper or the images projected on the screen. It also enables him or her to see himself or herself as an actor of his or her own life.

B. A Queer Play

Orlando queers the conception of identity and the conjunction to conformism but it is also a queer play in other many ways. Etymologically, "queer" has three meanings: "odd", "strange"; "oblique", "off centre" and "thwarted"; "sabotage" and "ruin". In the history of sexuality, it was first an abuse word to the non-straight people with the "scientific" term "inversion" used by Freud[232]. The use of the term "queer" went through a process of reappropriation, an inversion and then subversion of it. This term exceeded its vision of abnormal in society and became a norm itself. Queer questions, it points at supposedly obvious truths and unveils the construction of the machinery of society. Because queer is an outsider, he or she has a thwarted vision, it can see the gears or the backstage of life, and can disclose the invisible restraints. *Orlando* is thus queer in the way that it points at the performativity of gender and makes the reader/spectator see life and identity from another position, other than displaying homosexual relations and transsexuality. Orlando follows the evolution of the term "queer". Pawlowski places Orlando's sexual transition as the epicentre of the novel, a queer visibility that unlocks the ontological dilemma:

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[228] *Ibid*, p.176.
[229] *Ibid*., p.177.
[230] *Ibid*., p.178.
[231] *Ibid*., p.182.
[232] FREUD, Sigmund, *On sexuality: three essays on the theory of sexuality, and other works* [1905], "The Sexual Aberrations", London: Penguin Books, 1977.

> if androgyny is a metaphor for change, a way of interpreting the self as theatrical, as role-playing at sexuality, the staging of the scene of the sex change is the most theatrical moment of the novel[233].

a. Gender Performance

In *How to Do Things with Words*, J.L Austin explains his theory of a new speech act, the "performative":

> The name is derived, of course, from 'perform', the usual verb with the noun 'action': it indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action -it is not normally thought of as just saying something[234].

He takes the example of a promise; while saying "I promise to…" the speaker both says that he or she promises and does the action: "*by* saying or *in* saying something we are doing something[235]." Judith Butler actualizes the performative speech act in gender theory. For her, gender –that has been assimilated with sex– is a historical construct[236], it does not exist *per se*. It is the "*stylized repetition of acts*[237]" that creates the "object of *belief*[238]" that is gender. She states:

> Because there is neither an 'essence' that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires; because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender creates the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all[239].

Gender has nothing natural; it is not an essence thus is not easily definable. It only exists through the actualisation of the eye and the I, the "heterosexual social contract" ("contrat social heterosexuel") being an accomplice. However, because it has been constructed, it can be deconstructed and its very basis is the flaw: because it must be performed to exist, some would push the performance further in playing the "wrong" gender ("wrong" for society), hence unveiling its construction. For Butler: "Genders […] can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent[240]."

Gender is an act and *Orlando* plays with this notion of "act". From the beginning, Orlando acts: "He […] was in the *act* of slicing at the head of a Moor" (5) [my emphasis]; Orlando inscribes his self in performance, letting the reader/spectator watch him display the

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[233] Introduction of *Orlando*, xiii.
[234] AUSTIN, John, Langshaw, *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962, p.7.
[235] *Ibid*., p.12.
[236] BUTLER, Judith, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist", *Theatre Journal*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Vol. 40, No., 1988, p.521.
[237] *Ibid*, p.519.
[238] *Ibid*., p.520.
[239] *Ibid*., p.522.
[240] *Ibid*., p.527.

construction of gender. He needs a spectator. Following Lacan theory of being or wanting the phallus, Orlando does not decide to "be" the phallus because he "has" a phallus (being a man because he is a male), but he "performs" it, playing with the fact of having a sword, a phallic symbol: it is making a show of the sword that really *makes* him a man. According to Lacan, women, especially lesbian women, wear a masque to fill the gap of the phallus: "En tant que femme, elle se fait masque. Elle se fait masque pour, précisément, derrière ce masque, être le phallus[241]." It is for him a masquerade, emphasising masculine traits to fill the lack of a phallus. But following the performative theory, men also wear the masque of masculinity. Tamara Guénoun reactivates the theory of the masquerade; being in society is *per se* a masquerade, everybody plays a part:

> Goffman, sociologue, soulignait que le mot personne, dans son sens premier, signifie un masque. Pour lui, cela atteste le fait que tout le monde joue constamment un rôle, de manière plus ou moins consciente[242].

The sword is a recurrent display of the masquerade of gender in *Orlando*. When Orlando wants to parade in front of Sasha one can read the awakening of Orlando's manhood:

> […] his manhood woke; he grasped a sword in his hand; he charged a more daring foe than Pole or Moor; he dived in deep water; he saw the flower of danger growing in a crevice; he stretched his hand — in fact he was rattling off one of his most impassioned sonnets when the Princess addressed him, 'Would you have the goodness to pass the salt?' (18)

The epic raising of the sword contrasts with the more mundane request for the salt by Sasha, turning masculinity in an exaggerated display. It also plays on the preconception that maleness works with its associations against its opposite, the female, compensations that Bourdieu illustrates by a diagram in *La domination masculine*[243] (appendix 14). Femaleness supposedly only exists with maleness and is activated by it, a conception that is also the object of sarcasm when Orlando is a female and a woman, and that she says she is: "'a real woman, at last.' She thanked Bonthrop from the bottom of her heart for having given her this rare and unexpected delight." (125)

The character who seems to have the most powerful performative dimension is Queen Elizabeth I, who is, in the film, played by Quentin Crisp, a male actor and gay icon who decided not to hide his homosexuality in his career and who cross-dressed and played female characters

[241] In BRUNO, Pierre, "Phallus et fonction phallique chez Lacan", *Psychanalyse*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2007, pp. 95-103.
[242] GUENOUN, Tamara, "Le personnage, figure de l'autre en soi", *Recherches en psychanalyse*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2015, p.52.
[243] BOURDIEU, Pierre, *La domination masculine*, Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1998, p.24.

or effeminate men on screen. He literally performs genders on screen, a double performance. The dress and the feminine makeup are the only visible indications of his playing a female character along with the title "Queen", and it is even more relevant because male transvestites can be called "queens" or "drag queens", "drag" meaning "clothes" in the gay slang Polari[244]. Because of this performative power, the Queen seems to be able to change reality with words. In the book, we have an example of a performative with the following sentence: "Instantly she plucked a ring from her finger (the joint was swollen rather) and as she fitted it to his, named him her Treasurer and Steward." (11) The Queen dubs Orlando "Treasurer and Steward" through words and through accessories, she turns him into someone else. In the film, she even magically turns Orlando immortal, in the manner of a Godmother in fairy-tales, by saying: "Do not fade. Do not whither. Do not grow old." In the film, the performative extent doubles because actors perform characters that are already performing roles and the parody shows even more. Actors put their person at the service of the character, they become the character, but they also give a part of their identity to their character: Tilda Swinton is an active feminist, has an androgynous body and aura, and has always refused labels; when we see Orlando we also see the figure of Tilda Swinton. Pidduck even links the two by saying "Orlando/Tilda Swinton[245]" and she thinks "it is absolutely pivotal that Orlando is played by a woman, not a man[246]." The choice of actor for Shelmerdine is also important and a performance *per se*: "The newly-female Orlando finds in Shelmerdine a mate who is very womanly, played by a sensual and 'feminine' Billy Zane resplendent with long flowing locks and sensuous lips[247]."

Orlando is frequently described in an act of performance. His position as an ambassador is portrayed through a theatrical or performative vocabulary such as:

> It is, indeed, highly unfortunate, and much to be regretted that at this stage of Orlando's career, when he played a most important part in the public life of his country (58)

and "Orlando performed these tasks" (60). The polysemy of words as "stage", "played", "part" or "public" emphasises the masquerade even more. It is all part of the stories we tell ourselves and playing with those stories enables creation and recreation. *Orlando* can be associated with the term biomythography[248] that was used as a subtitle of Audre Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name: A Biomythography*; real life is allowed twists and changes. Interestingly enough,

[244] BAKER, Paul, *Fantabulosa: A Dictionary of Polari & Gay Slang*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing PCL, 2002.
[245] PIDDUCK, *op. cit*., p.182.
[246] *Ibid*., p.183.
[247] *Ibid*., p.182.
[248] LORDE, Audre, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name: A Biomythography*, Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1982.

Virginia Woolf calls herself "Violet's [Violet Dickinson] 'Bio –or mytho– grapher[249]' in a letter to Violet Dickinson.

Orlando learns the codes of femininity quickly and sometimes fails at them (proof for Wittig that being a woman is not self-evident[250]). She sometimes forgets that she is a woman and when she remembers it, it allows her to do things that she would have never been allowed to do as a man: "remembering that it is becoming in a woman to weep, she let them flow." (81) and "she was beginning to be aware that women should be shocked when men display emotion in their presence, and so, shocked she was." (87) It always demands reflection, it is not natural and happens "suddenly" (87); when something exterior doesn't remind him/her, Orlando does not feel his/her gender or her sex. "Being a woman" or "being a man" is thus not a status but a constant performance. It sometimes leads to theatrical exaggerations as when Orlando:

> smiled the involuntary smile which women smile when their own beauty, which seems not their own, forms like a drop falling or a fountain rising and confronts them all of a sudden in the glass (91).

Femininity is described as something mechanical, "involuntary". Women don't think about being women, but Orlando has to be hammered three times the word "smile" to keep having it as it is not self-evident for her. It is almost an uncanny and frightening smile that she also has in the film; a doll-like smile.

When Orlando meets Shelmerdine, she meets an accomplice, someone who is conscious of society being a play, of genders being performed. She could have had the same relationship with the Archduke (who cross-dresses as a woman in the book) with the example of the scene in which "they act[…] the parts of man and woman for ten minutes with great vigour" (87), but the Archduke takes the roles too seriously, he isn't actually aware that the performance is just a game. Shelmerdine and Orlando both know that being a woman means performing as a woman, and being a man means performing as a man. They even perform an actual gender performance when they say: "'You're a woman, Shel!' she cried.

'You're a man, Orlando!' he cried." (124) They are indeed both woman and man, both androgynous, but they are also both dubbing themselves man and woman, thus revealing that they are just playing parts. We could go as far as assuming that the name Shelmerdine,

[249] In LEE, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
[250] WITTIG, *op. cit.*, p.64.

shortened to Shel for Orlando, is a sarcastic name: gender identity, and identity, is but a shell, and choosing one should be a choice.

Clothes and hairstyle play a paramount role in the queering process in *Orlando*. By veiling the body, clothes unveil the construction of genders and their role, their performative part in society. They are supposed to represent an inner truth, to indicate a class, a gender or a status. Wearing a skirt means being a woman, wearing rich garments shows that the person is probably rich and someone wearing a crown is most likely to be a queen or a king. Clothes overpass their practical function that is to protect humans against cold or predators, by metonymically representing, gaining a symbolical function. Through the choice of dressing in a particular manner, a person becomes the symbol of the clothes he or she wears. Orlando is the living proof that "One was not born a woman; one becomes a woman" [my translation] ("On ne naît pas femme: on le devient[251].") First, because Orlando biologically becomes a female, changing sex from male to female, and because in society female equals to woman, Orlando becomes a female then a woman. This existentialist point of view is shared by Woolf: "now that Orlando was grown a woman…" (120) Orlando was not born this way. Clothes are inherently linked to gender performance and the questioning of sexuality as an identity for Cervetti:

> Throughout Orlando, dress is a persistent theme, different clothes addressing different desires and sexual relations. Gender becomes a cultural performance shown to be historically, even geographically, contingent and in the service of the regulatory systems of reproduction and compulsory heterosexuality[252].

The biographer ironically says: "it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness" (92). Clothes are sarcastically said to increase the difference between male and female, a difference that is biological and it is thus doubtful that clothes increase it when they should erase it by hiding the sex. The difference is more cultural and wearing clothes demonstrates that. Orlando understands this symbolic power and frequently disguises himself/herself in clothes from another social status or another gender. Indeed, at the beginning of the book, when Orlando is a "man":

> he began going frequently to Wapping Old Stairs and the beer gardens at night, wrapped in a grey cloak to hide the star at his neck and the garter at his knee. (13)

[251] DE BEAUVOIR, Simone, *Le deuxième sexe*, tome 1, Paris : Gallimard, 1949, pp. 285-286.
[252] CERVETTI, *op. cit.*, p.168.

As the biographer says: "clothes have, they say, more important offices than merely to keep us warm. They change our view of the world and the world's view of us." (92) Orlando's discovery of the woman attire is an indicator of the staging that womanhood is:

> Orlando bought herself a complete outfit of such clothes as women then wore, and it was in the dress of a young Englishwoman of rank that she now sat on the deck of the 'Enamoured Lady'. (75)

Here "outfit" also means costume and buys Orlando the status of woman and Lady the same way little girls receive women attires (princess dresses, heels, fake jewellery, makeup) and little boys receive men attire (handyman attires, fake weapons, outfits). It is also a time-consuming and a violent task. The preparation of women is portrayed with servants lacing Orlando with vigour and Orlando, back to a mirror, watching her reflection in a pocket mirror (appendix 2). Again she:

> smiled the involuntary smile which women smile when their own beauty, which seems not their own, forms like a drop falling or a fountain rising and confronts them all of a sudden in the glass (91).

The transformation Orlando goes through is thoroughly described in the book as a never-ending task present in the repetition of the deictic "there's", with indication of the time it is taking:

> 'There's the hairdressing,' she thought, 'that alone will take an hour of my morning, there's looking in the looking-glass, another hour; there's staying and lacing; there's washing and powdering; there's changing from silk to lace and from lace to paduasoy; there's being chaste year in year out . . . ' (77)

Pidduck thinks that Orlando's change is exaggerated on the exterior, a radical change following binarity transcribed by clothes:

> What transformation occurs does not change the 'essence' of Orlando/Tilda Swinton, but registers at the level of costume and hairstyle, or, in the case of the sex change, is etched on the body surface[253].

The inner change is smoother and less binary. Orlando has only to take his wig off to become a "she" in the film. When in the book society wants to discover if Orlando is a man or a woman, clothes even come as an argument:

> The curious of her own sex would argue, for example, if Orlando was a woman, how did she never take more than ten minutes to dress? And were not her clothes chosen rather at random, and sometimes worn rather shabby? (92)

Not paying attention to her appearance would be, according to the "curious of her own sex" representing the prying society, a sign of weakness from a woman and that would deny her

[253] PIDDUCK, *op. cit.*, p.182.

femininity (both her being female and woman), taking off an identity that she didn't want in the first place and making her feel guilty for not being womanly enough and then not having an identity anymore, as Wittig suggests[254].

Realizing that having the appearance of a woman is a limit to one's power, and to one's mobility, Orlando decides to cross-dress as a man, taking the advantages of both sexes. For Heinich, clothes are an intermediary portal, the visibility of the crisis of identity: "On comprend […] le rôle fondamental du vêtement: zone frontière entre intériorité et extériorité, il est l'instrument par excellence de ce travail d'ajustement identitaire.[255]". We can see transvestism as a good portrayal of this "identity adjustment", playing with one or the other side of the "border" to draw new boundaries.

Orlando cross-dresses, becomes a transvestite, which designates a person, usually a male person, (here a female) who dresses with the clothes associated with the opposite gender regardless of his sexual orientation. Vita Sackville-West also enjoyed the exercise of crossdressing as mentioned in *Vita and Virginia*. According to Butler, transvestites have an even more powerful performative force as they both question gender and reality, the matching between what you see, what you are, and what people see:

> The transvestite […] can do more than simply express the distinction between sex and gender, but challenges, at least implicitly, the distinction between appearance and reality that structures a good deal of popular thinking about gender identity. […] Indeed, the transvestite's gender is as fully real as anyone whose performance complies with social expectations[256].

Transvestism enables the self to expand the possibilities of its identity; someone can be as many selves as he or she wants and can overpass the obligation to conform to one identity. Clothes do not have a metonymic function anymore but a polysemic one:

> […] for her sex changed far more frequently than those who have worn only one set of clothing can conceive; nor can there be any doubt that she reaped a twofold harvest by this device; the pleasures of life were increased and its experiences multiplied. (108)

Orlando naturally turns to cross-dressing either to disguise himself and to become invisible, to erase his masculinity as when he was in Turkey and go unnoticed "he would pass out of his own gates late at night so disguised that the sentries did not know him." (60) or as an

[254] WITTIG, *op. cit.*, p.111.
[255] HEINICH, *op. cit.*, p.334.
[256] BUTLER, *op. cit.*, p.527.

amusement, a social and ontological experiment in which she becomes more visible by wearing men clothes:

> Now she opened a cupboard in which hung still many of the clothes she had worn as a young man of fashion, and from among them she chose a black velvet suit richly trimmed with Venetian lace. (105-106)

At the end of the film, Orlando's hairstyle and clothes are neither feminine nor masculine, do not belong to a certain era, especially not to the 1990s, or to a certain social class either; there is no way to tell if Orlando is a man or a woman, a male or a female. Eventually, cross-dressing and clothes challenge the very notion of truth:

> Woolf plays on a twentieth-century conception of truth, derived from the Greek notion of *alethea*, unveiling. In her novel truth is destabilized and turns into parody through an emphasis on period fashions, cross-dressing, and undressing of 'essential bodies[257]'.

Cross-dressing is not just a repetition of the heterosexual codes but a subversion, as Butler underlines:

> 'The task, […] is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat or, indeed, to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, to displace the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself[258].'

Richter also works on the notion of subversion and displacement and it is for her a way to escape censorship that sexuality could trigger: "the process of *displacement*, a shifting or distortion of the image for reasons of censorship[259]."

Pronouns are also a key linguistic feature in the definition of identity in *Orlando*, they are usually the first information on someone's identity. They are part of the skeleton of expression as the speaker communicates an information placing himself or herself as the subject. Even a story-teller, here we have the example of the biographer, has an implicit identity and pronouns, thing that the biographer carefully avoids. The pronoun "I" is a shifter according to Ricoeur[260] and everybody can say "I" about himself or herself, men and women, it is apparently a gender-neutral pronoun. In English, some sentences can blur the gender of the speaker when in French it is rarely the case. Genders appear more explicitly when someone is talking about the "I" in question as a third party, and Monique Wittig calls this characterisation:

[257] BURNS, *op. cit.*, p.343.
[258] In BURNS, *op. cit.*, p.355.
[259] RICHTER, *op. cit.*, p.184.
[260] RICOEUR, *op. cit.*, p.65.

"la marque du genre[261]". However, according to Wittig, this "mark" is also visible with the pronouns "I" and "you":

> C'est ainsi que sous la pression de cette marque (qui on le comprend ne révèle pas seulement de la grammaire), le locuteur doit, même en anglais ou il n'y a aucune obligation grammaticale d'accord du féminin avec les adjectifs et les participes passés, quand il s'agit de *je* et de *tu,* […] rendre son sexe public[262].

It is an allegedly grammatical mark that can change the vision someone has of you. Orlando's pronoun is, in the book, the very first word: "He" (5). Reading the book, the reader will have a vision of a man in mind. In the film, when the voice over says "he" Orlando cuts it by saying "that is I", probably implying that gender should not change the perception of the spectator on him; he is still "I" regardless of his gender or sex. When Orlando talks of himself/herself however, there is seldom a clue on his/her identity. When Orlando transitions, the biographer mocks the grammatical conventions by using two different genders to refer to Orlando: "He was a woman." (67) He or she then uses the pronoun "they", escaping binarity (a pronoun transgenders usually opt for) and sarcastically says: "in future we must, for convention's sake, say 'her' for 'his,' and 'she' for 'he'" (67). The use of these pronouns following "convention" is but a *trompe-l'oeil,* a disguise, that enables subversion to pierce through expectations.

b. Trojan Horse and *Trompe-l'oeil*: Inversion and Subversion

Orlando's form and content can be linked to a Trojan Horse or a *trompe-l'oeil*. The Trojan Horse, present in the *Aeneid* by Virgil or the *Odyssey* by Homer, is a construction that has the appearance of a horse, a gift for the city of Troy for the supposed surrendering of the Greeks. It is a subterfuge that enabled the Greeks to enter the city of Troy without violence, because the Trojans thought it was harmless, but the horse happened to be full of Greek soldiers. The *trompe-l'oeil*, that originated during the Baroque period, plays with the same codes, with reality and expectations: it looks like a certain object, but is usually just a painting that plays with perspective and with what the spectator wants to see, like the painting *Escaping Criticism* by Pere Borrell del Caso, 1874 (appendix 15). One can argue that the power of *Orlando* is its "mock" extent, the appearance of a conventional biography that criticizes the genre from the inside, between the lines.

In the book and in the film, Orlando plays hide and seek with the reader/spectator and is never where we expect him/her to be. S/he always displaces himself/herself and "teases"[263]

[261] WITTIG, *op. cit.*, p.133.
[262] *Ibid.*, p.137.
[263] LEE, *op. cit.*, p.524.

the reader/spectator who is forced to perpetually actualize his or her view, eyes and thoughts. In *Ways of Seeing*, Berger says that: "We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice[264]." In *Orlando*, the biographer and Orlando orchestrate and stage the things they want the reader/spectator to see or not. The biographer himself or herself has difficulties in following Orlando in the book and it is as if Orlando were controlling the camera in the film, pointing at things s/he wants to show, veiling and unveiling. Orlando is always at the border of what is acceptable in society, playing with grey areas, suggesting but seldom openly showing. Orlando "showed an inch or two of calf." (77) and is "half hiding her yawn" (89), but never explicitly breaks rules, that is why Orlando and *Orlando* are untouchable and even uncatchable

> we seem now to catch sight of her and then again to lose it. The task is made still more difficult by the fact that she found it convenient at this time to change frequently from one set of clothes to another. (108)

In the film, the scene of the maze is an example of Orlando's control over what is shown or not. After the argument with the Archduke, Orlando escapes in the maze, but seeing that the camera does not follow her she returns to the entrance and seems to urge the spectator to go with her. Follows a scene in which the spectator is lost by Orlando who magically had the time to change her dress while running in the maze. It is as Cassigneul phrases it : "un jeu de cache-cache sur la présence et l'absence, le vu et le suggéré[265]". It is a game that is magnified by editing. Degli-Esposti links the labyrinth with a baroque view of life that post-modernists actualized:

> Like the historical baroque in the visual arts, the postmodern neo-baroque cinema tries to shock, to create a sense of marvel, to surprise, and, of course, to 'trompe l'oeil' us[266]

This sense of losing the spectator to "b(l)end"[267] reality is present from the very first scene of *Orlando*, with the movement of the camera, an inversion of movement that Degli-Espoti describes: "He walks from right to left, and the camera moves from left to right. Then he walks from left to right, and the camera moves from right to left[268]." Orlando sets new ways of seeing. It is the same movement of vacillation that s/he has between genders: "she seemed to vacillate; she was man; she was woman" (77).

[264] BERGER, *op. cit.*, p.8.
[265] CASSIGNEUL, *op. cit.*, p.86.
[266] *Ibid.*, p.80.
[267] DEGLI-ESPOSTI, *op. cit.*, p.75.
[268] *Ibid.*, p.84.

Orlando uses subterfuges to subvert, s/he fakes conformism, allegedly showing what the spectator wants to see or read but acts in his/her own way. For example, Orlando eventually, marries, following the "spirit of the age" (121), following conventions. But her marriage is only superficially conventional, she implicitly breaks conventional rules: she consummates the marriage before the union (even the movement is entitled "SEX"), Shelmerdine is also a woman so it is a homosexual marriage, and most importantly, the marriage is never shown, they may as well has never been married. Burns thinks that: "Orlando takes the category that is forced upon her (marriage), but she subverts it by negating many of its more traditional constraints[269]."

Orlando also inverts the look by looking directly at the camera, not being the one to be looked at but the one who looks, and s/he sometimes is even "an unobserved observer[270]". Indeed, Orlando likes being "where she could see the wits without being seen" (109). The satirical level of the book and of the film is implicit but offers itself to anybody who wants to see it. *Orlando* can nonetheless be read in a conventional manner, a book following the "spirit of the age" (121) and literary conventions of its time. The film takes a more satirical point of view and for Pidduck the direct look from Orlando to the spectator plays its role in it:

> Perhaps the most singular stylistic device in the film, these carefully orchestrated looks and addresses to the camera reach outside of the diegetic action to create a moment of complicity with the audience[271].

The notion of "complicity" is especially important, it makes the spectator an accomplice to the subterfuge and to the subversion, placing the "truth" in the hand of the spectator who becomes an agent.

Concerning homosexuality, Woolf also plays with grey areas according to Burns: "As Woolf approaches the modern era, she ironizes gender stabilization and comes very close to valuing homosexual love explicitly[272]". Technically, no homosexual relationship is explicitly described in the book and in the film but the implicit has a stronger power. In the film, Charlotte Valandrey, who portrays Sasha, and Tilda Swinton, who portrays Orlando, share a kiss, and even if Tilda Swinton is supposed to portray a man, her sex is not erased, it is still a lesbian kiss. During the performing of *Othello*, the two actors are male actors following the Shakespearean convention that all actors on stage must be male, so the kiss between Desdemona and Othello is also a homosexual kiss. It is not just a play; it is reality disguised. In the film and

[269] BURNS, *op. cit.*, p.355.
[270] LEE, *op. cit.*, p.553.
[271] PIDDUCK, *op. cit.*, pp.178-179.
[272] BURNS, *op. cit.*, p.352.

in the book, Orlando keeps circling around conventions and expectations, half showing what people want to see, always being at the border of breaking the illusion: a funambulist.

Orlando is fundamentally queer following the definitions we provided earlier on. Virginia Woolf said that "one can't write directly about the soul. Looked at, it vanishes[273]", so Orlando and the reader/spectator are to take distance and to have a thwarted look in order to have access to the backstage and gears of the mind, to be at a respectable distance to see the optical illusion, just as the Baroque movement suggested. If somebody is too close or too far from an object, the vision is blurred so the need of being at a certain distance is part of the experience of looking. "Queer" is either the outsider or the thwarted look that enables a new vision, a look from a different point of view that gives others reading keys. Wittig says that Djuna Barnes's text is : "un constant décalage qui fait que quand on la lit l'effet produit est comparable à ce que j'appelle une perception en coin de l'œil, le texte agit par effraction[274]." The text is not explicitly dissident, it enters the eye and the mind through a door that is not common, that is not expected: the front door. In *Orlando,* men are associated with frontal look, while women are linked to side and subtle looks:

> The man looks the world full in the face, as if it were made for his uses and fashioned to his liking. The woman takes a sidelong glance at it, full of subtlety, even of suspicion. (92)

Orlando benefits from both looks, a queer look, as she has been both male and female. In a passage, when she cannot understand her past writing she takes a queer look, a thwarted look that enables her to catch the meaning: "Orlando, by inclining her head, could make out what it was that it was saying." (154) The portraits that are in the book are also queer portraits in a way, as the subjects of the painting always seem to look outside the frame through a side look (appendix 16).

Woolf's subversion is all the more profound and strong as it uses the same tool with which patriarchy oppresses minorities with, the same language, thus, inverting domination and trying "to make a break by examining patriarchy with the tools it provides[275]".

[273] *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume III, op. cit*., p.62.
[274] WITTIG, *op. cit.*, p.115.
[275] MULVEY, *op. cit.*, p.834.

c. From Male Gaze to Female Gaze

Orlando, especially the film, inverts the look, from a male gaze to a female gaze, assuming multiple gender identities and multiple points of view, conforming and non-conforming ones. The book and the film are both works created by women and their points of view are inevitably different from a male point of view, because of the difference of education and of treatment in society, although being a female or a woman does not doom one's point of view, as people are first and foremost human beings. In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf reflects on women and fiction and realizes that those are linked by men: through centuries, women have been described by men, and by a tiny minority of women who had to take pennames like the Brontës. Woolf and Potter offer an image of women that does not pass through the scope of men. As Woolf says in *A Room of One's Own*: "Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size[276]." Instead, Woolf places "a double mirror, a parodic displacement of any essential and 'true' position[277]".

The phrase "male gaze" was coined by Laura Mulvey in her 1975 article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema[278]" but the notion was already explored by Berger in *Ways of Seeing* in 1972. The male gaze consists in the look of men over women in art and is developed through three points: the look of the male filmmaker, the look of the male actors and male characters, and the look of the male spectator[279]. For Berger, the male gaze is part of a long patriarchal domination: "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at[280]." Women (and females) are most of the time actors of the male gaze. Mulvey explains the male gaze through Freud's and Lacan's theories of the missing phalluses of females. According to them, the anxiety caused by the fear of castration by women who have no phallus is the cause of the male gaze; males have to make sure that women are under control[281]. Scopophilia[282], the pleasure triggered by the act of looking, is one of the factors of the creation of identity, like the Lacanian mirror stage, the acknowledgement of being seen through someone's own reflection in the mirror. Mulvey underlines the importance of the image of the self and others in the ontological construction:

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[276] WOOLF, *A Room of One's Own*, *op. cit.*, p.52.
[277] BURNS, *op. cit.*, p.344.
[278] MULVEY, *op. cit.*
[279] *Ibid*.
[280] BERGER, *op. cit.*, p.47.
[281] MULVEY, *op. cit.*, p.837.
[282] *Ibid*., p.835.

> Important for this article is the fact that it is an image that constitutes the matrix of the imaginary, of recognition/misrecognition and identification, and hence the first articulation of the 'I,' of subjectivity. […] it is the birth of the long love affair/despair between image and self-image which has found such intensity of expression in film[283].

For Mulvey, the limit has been crossed when the heterosexual society has put a passive label on women and an active tag on men[284] who gained the right to objectify women and to make "[the] woman as image, [the] man as bearer of the look[285]", from simple look to "erotic contemplation[286]" to finally domination. The "*to-be-looked-at-ness*[287]" has been sold as the only way to have an identity for women, an abuse that both Woolf and Potter want to denounce and invert.

The scene in which the male gaze is the more represented and mocked at is in the book, (absent in the film) when Orlando meets Nell, a prostitute, probably a rewriting of Nell Gwynn, King Charles II's mistress. Orlando is dressed as a man, so Nell has a different attitude towards Orlando than if Orlando were dressed as a woman. A game of looks is engaged between the two, Nell seems to look for men's eyes as she lives thanks to them: "Through this silver glaze the young woman looked up at him (for a man he was to her)" (106). Having the godly power of the eye, of making somebody exist, feels strange to Orlando: "To feel her hanging lightly yet like a suppliant on her arm, roused in Orlando all the feelings which become a man." (106) Orlando becomes a man not only because of her clothes but because she is in a position of knowing that she is dominant. The scene goes on with a seduction dynamic between the two, but Orlando eventually "flung off all disguise and admitted herself a woman." (107) Nell "burst[s] into […] a roar of laughter" (107), a laughter, probably of relief, because now she can be herself and laugh, not act anymore. Indeed, one can read later on that "when women get together […] they are always careful to see that the doors are shut and that not a word of it gets into print." (107): women always have to behave around men. Orlando's change of identity makes Nell change her way of approaching her: "on discovering that they were of the same sex, her manner changed" (107). This sudden change of behaviour between thinking that Orlando is a man and discovering that she is a woman is a reflector of the pressure of the male gaze on women and its power. At the end, we are offered some thoughts on what men think women do together: "what can we suppose that women do when they seek out each other's society?" (107)

[283] *Ibid*., p.836.
[284] *Ibid*., p.837.
[285] *Ibid*.
[286] *Ibid*.
[287] *Ibid*.

It implies that without men and their Pygmalion-like power, women do not exist. Orlando plays once more with grey areas when the biographer says:

> Orlando professed great enjoyment in the society of her own sex, and leave it to the gentlemen to prove, as they are very fond of doing, that this is impossible. (107)

a description of lesbian love and sex?

Woolf takes back the control of "women and fiction[288]". For Sawyer, and "[a]s Marianne Novy suggests, Woolf's 'literary uses of Shakespeare clearly involve tribute, but they also involve feminist rewriting[289]'". She both rewrites the image of women and changes the canonical ways of writing them. Woolf places herself in the position of creator of her own image and she takes the liberty to show or not to show, to even censor, men. While quoting the words of a nobleman talking about women, the biographer censors them, thinks these words have been voiced enough not to be rewritten again:

> Then the little gentleman said,
>
> He said next,
>
> He said finally*
>
> *These sayings are too well known to require repetition, and besides, they are all to be found in his published works. (99)

Woolf is in the delicate position of writing as a woman, and thus insisting on her sex, or hiding her sex because she wants to write in a gender-neutral way, and thus silencing her experience and male domination, a dilemma that Butler develops:

> There is, in my view, nothing about femaleness that is waiting to be expressed; there is, on the other hand, a good deal about the diverse experiences of women that is being expressed and still needs to be expressed, but caution is needed with respect to that theoretical language, for it does not simply report a pre-linguistic experience, but constructs that experience as well as the limits of its analysis[290].

She finds a balance by giving Orlando his/her own voice; Orlando becomes active and passive and according to Degli-Esposti: "Orlando, who is consciously both the voyeur and the object of voyeurism, eventually causes the patriarchal eye to blink[291]." By looking directly at the spectator, Orlando blurs the limit between the fictional and the real, and sends back a mirror on

[288] WOOLF, *A Room of One's Own*, *op. cit.*, p.29.
[289] SAWYER, *op. cit.*, p.6
[290] BUTLER, *op. cit.*, pp.530-531.
[291] DEGLI-ESPOSTI, *op. cit.*, p.78.

the spectator which unconsciously makes him or her rethink the so-called voyeuristic right. Pidduck writes that: "Through her looks and addresses to the camera, Swinton's Orlando usurps and comments upon the constraints of narrative and social codes[292]."

The male gaze is turned into a female gaze, first because the writer and the filmmaker are women. It shifts the phallocentric view to a female view; women do not wait for the male gaze to exist or do not look at women as opponents in the male gaze equation[293]. At the end of the film, the lines from the beginning of the film come back, are rewritten through a female point of view:

> She – for there can be no doubt about her sex – is visiting the house she finally lost for the first time in over a hundred years. She does still have certain natural advantages, of course. She is tall and slim, with a slightly androgynous appearance that many females of the time aspire to ... but she has changed, she is no longer trapped by destiny. And ever since she let go of her past, she found her life was beginning.

The "He" is replaced by "She", from man to woman, and the conditional "could" by the assertive "can"; because she has become a "she", she has gained her status and her pronouns. "She is no longer trapped by destiny" opens a hopeful future for women. Orlando has discovered a liberty in being a woman, far from the domination of men, a utopic-like dream suggested by the last picture of Orlando in the book, a Vita Sackville-West in the forest with her dogs, ready to open a gate (appendix 17). It is no coincidence that at the end, Orlando has, apparently a daughter and not a son, and that her daughter holds a camera, a symbol of the female gaze in the cinema that captures an Orlando that is finally herself, finally in peace with the world and with her internal fragments. For Pidduck, the end is "[t]he symbolic achievement of artistic self-expression, the birth right of a new generation of daughters, […] the key focus of resolution and utopic future vision[294]." According to her, the "English oak tree [is] an evocation of interconnected generations of feminist artistic creators. A field of their own, perhaps[295]?" Orlando diverts from the conventional paths assigned to women and links her femininity and her individuality that she shows as simple and authentic.

It is also important to stress the fact that the film does not pass the Bechdel test, a measurement of the male gaze and female visibility in films, even if Virginia Woolf was an

[292] PIDDUCK, *op. cit*. 183.
[293] DIRSE, Zoe, "Gender in Cinematography: Female Gaze (Eye) behind the Camera," *Journal of Research in Gender Studies*, 3, p.15-29.
[294] PIDDUCK, *op. cit*., p.184.
[295] *Ibid*., p.185.

inspiration for it[296]. The three commandments are not respected: there should be two women who have a name, at least two women talking to each other and two women not talking about men[297]. The film fails the third test. Because the film plays with the actors' gender, Tilda Swinton playing a male and a female person, it blurs the foundation of the test. The film has also a multi-layered meaning, two women talking together about a man can be a denunciation of women's invisibility in society and two men talking about women can also give women visibility. Women's visibility cannot be fully measured with the test but has to be examined in its full complexity.

C. Reflexivity and the Specular Extent of *Orlando*

Before writing and becoming one of the most important authors of English literature, Virginia Woolf was first and foremost an avid reader. As a child, she wasn't allowed to go to school like her brothers, but she had access to her father's library and attended school at home, her father teaching her German and Greek and her mother French and Latin, a real emancipation for her[298]. In the preface she wrote for *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf says she is "in the debt of Defoe, Sir Thomas Browne, Sterne, Sir Walter Scott, Lord Macaulay, Emily Brontë, De Quincey, and Walter Pater" (3), writers that filled her childhood imagination. Reading played an undoubtable role in her life, shaped her writing as well as her identity. In "How Should One Read a Book[299]?", Woolf addresses the issue of whether there are rules in reading books and engages the reader to be as active as the writer, to be "his fellow-worker and accomplice[300]", to "try to become him[301]" and to "refresh and exercise our own creative powers[302]", in short, to be "actors and spectators[303]". The book should not be seen as a sacred relic but as a material in which the reader nourishes his or her thoughts, something intellectual as well as sentimental, a mirror to everybody's individuality. We will thus explore the reflexivity of *Orlando*, the act of thinking oneself as a reader or as a writer, and the specular extent of the book and the film, a mirroring effect, and try to see how it ultimately leads to a better understanding of one's individuality through different characters and to the universality of each individual conundrum of being.

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[296] BECHDEL, Alison, "Testy", 8 November 2013, http://dykestowatchoutfor.com, retrieved 13/12/18.
[297] *Ibid*.
[298] DUCHENE, Mireille, *Virginia Woolf. Carnet inédit (1907-1909)*, Dijon: Editions Universitaires de Dijon, 2019, p.19.
[299] WOOLF, *The Common Reader, Vol.2*, "How Should One Read a Book?", *op. cit*.
[300] *Ibid*., p.259.
[301] *Ibid*.
[302] *Ibid*., p.263.
[303] *Ibid*., p.266.

a. The Common Reader[304]/Spectator

The space of the page is a privileged space for the writer as well as for the reader. The book only exists because it is read; without the reader, the book does not exist; the reader actualizes words with his or her eyes and with his or her own experience. It both enables the reader to have a "temporary loss of ego while simultaneously reinforcing the ego[305]", Mulvey says about the cinema, a process that is also applicable to reading. In *Orlando,* the biographer once says that "we write, not with the fingers, but with the whole person." (120). We also read, not with the eyes, but with the whole person. The reading and understanding of a book are highly correlated with one's experience, one's mood, one's knowledge. Following the baroque agenda of making the human being a part of the creation, Woolf fully integrates the reader and permits, if not summon him or her to be active as if he or her, were writing the book at the same time as reading it.

The biographer is aware that the book he or she is allegedly writing is going to be read by people, he or she is aware of his or her audience and addresses it throughout the book through the terms "reader" or "readers", sometimes using the second person singular or the second person plural, the third person singular or the third person plural, even the pronoun "one" or "we"; these are as many pronouns referring to as many individualities, making sure that everybody is included. The pronoun with the most powerful effect on the reader is probably the pronoun "we", and the possessive "our", as it puts on the same level the biographer and the reader in the journey of discovering Orlando's life: "are we to blame Orlando" (12), "for directly we glance at Orlando" (6) and "We are, therefore, now left entirely alone in the room with the sleeping Orlando and the trumpeters." (67). It creates an intimacy, a secure space within the book that makes the reading enjoyable, but first and foremost, it gives credit to the reader's individuality. When Orlando once wonders about what constitutes life, he asks the ontological question "What are 'we'?" (100) and not "what am I?", which includes the reader in the questioning of identity. The filmic side of this intimacy between biographer, Orlando, and reader is Orlando's gazing at the spectator, validating, again, the spectator's status and his or her importance in the making of the film. It can also be seen as a rhetorical question, a mirror directed at the face of the spectator who may have been lost in the comfort of fiction. Orlando sends the message that when reading a book or watching a film, nobody should conceal their identity but that everybody is free to be himself or herself and that everybody should dare to

[304] WOOLF, *The Common Reader, Vol.1*, "The Common Reader", *op. cit.*, p.1.
[305] MULVEY, *op. cit.*, p.836.

think and reflect on himself or herself. For Pidduck, eye contact is a strong link between the spectator and Orlando, but it also reconnects the spectator's individuality with himself or herself: "Swinton's looks and addresses construct a bridge, a link of sensibility, offering a humorous phatic contact which continually invites the spectator back into Orlando's journey[306]". Sally Potter comments on her innovative choice of breaking the fourth wall as being a bridge between the story and the spectator:

> […] to convert Virginia Woolf's literary wit into a cinematic humour.... I hoped that this direct address would create a golden thread that would connect the (1990s) audience ... with Orlando[307].

One of the film covers portrays Orlando looking straight at the camera and at the reader's eye. (appendix 18)

The biographer makes the cooperation between the writer and the reader essential and Eco will later on theorize this pact as "interpretative cooperation" in *Lector in Fabula*[308]. For Richter, Woolf plays with what W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley will later on coin as "affetive fallacy", the reader response[309]. Readers should play an active role in the book and not wait for the writer to give all the information, because even with all the information, the book could not reach its full scopic capacity without the Eye and the I of the reader.

The biographer says about writers: "Our simple duty is to state the facts as far as they are known, and so let the reader make of them what he may" (31). The reader is here to link the dots of the text and of the characters from "bare hints" (35). The biographer sometimes teases the reader on the conscious lack of information on Orlando: "But what, the reader may ask with some exasperation, happened in between?" (97). The reader is even given a voice in free indirect speech, an anticipation from the biographer. He or she supports the reader in using imagination, vision and even feelings, beyond what is written on paper: "probably the reader can imagine" (47), "and the reader will have to see too" (144) and "That it was precarious and embarrassing in the extreme must be the first thought of every reader who has followed her story with sympathy" (68), feelings that were probably disregarded in Victorian fiction.

In "How Should One Read a Book?", Woolf stresses the fact that there is no ideal reader, only the "common reader", the one who reads according to his or her wish:

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[306] PIDDUCK, *op. cit.*, p.182.
[307] In PIDDUCK, *op. cit.*, p.183.
[308] ECO, Umberto, *Lector in fabula* [1979], Paris: Grasset, 1985.
[309] RICHTER, *op. cit.*, p.234.

> The only advice, indeed, that one person can give another about reading is to take no advice, to follow your own instincts, to use your own reason, to come to your own conclusions[310].

Everybody should incorporate his or her own singular vision of the story and the characters to the textual source in order to take full advantage of the reading experiment. Woolf describes this "common reader" in *Orlando*:

> For though these are not matters on which a biographer can profitably enlarge it is plain enough to those who have done a reader's part in making up from bare hints dropped here and there the whole boundary and circumference of a living person; can hear in what we only whisper a living voice; can see, often when we say nothing about it, exactly what he looked like; know without a word to guide them precisely what he thought — and it is for readers such as these that we write (35).

It is a reader that gives enough of his or her identity to see Orlando as another human being and not only a character on paper. She sets far from the academic quarrels that Julian Barnes will describe later on in *Flaubert's Parrot*[311] in which some critics argue about the eye colour of Madame Bovary because "[n]o passion is stronger in the beast of man than the desire to make others believe as he believes" (73), what Woolf labels as "facts", important topics but not essential ones. Ultimately, it is the multiplicity of readers and the multiplicity of their points of view on the story and on the character of Orlando that create as many Orlandos as possible. For Burns:

> Woolf's habit of writing in ambivalent symbols that admit of a variety of definitions is a way of giving some partial authority to her readers, which creates more conspicuously this double/multiple-mirror[312].

It creates endless possibilities of Orlando's forms and identities as well as an expansion of the individuality of the reader/spectator.

In *Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage*, Harvena Richter develops Woolf's importance of creation as communication, sending and receiving. Indeed, "[t]he reader, placed within the mind of the character, becomes to some extent that mind, receiving some of the emotional stimuli and sharing in its response[313]", the reader becomes an extension of the characters and of the author. For her, it says Woolf's need for communication and communion:

> The concept of a reader who would take an active part in the experience of the book may have had its origins not only on the exigencies of the methods,

[310] WOOLF, *The Common Reader, Vol.2*, "How Should One Read a Book?", *op. cit.*, p.258.
[311] BARNES, Julian, *Flaubert's Parrot* [1984], London: Vintage, 2009.
[312] BURNS, *op. cit.*, p.358.
[313] RICHTER, *op. cit.*, vii.

> which demanded just such a reader, but also in Virginia Woolf's own urge for communication[314].

The active action of the reader is also underlined by Richter in a complete way:

> The reader is no longer a passive spectator in a horizontal sequence of events. He is involved actively in the character's total environment – an *envelopment* in which all the senses, all central and peripheral feelings, are called upon. The response of the reader may vary according to his particular self, but it is a response on a universal or collective level than a simply individual one[315].

It is not a one way operation, as the reader: "must submit to a process of self-examination, of exploring unknown, perhaps tabooed, areas of himself; of participating rather than playing the role of the disinterested spectator[316]." The reader ends up having a "double vision" only possible with a book for Richter: "It is the reader who has the double vision; who, seeing how the characters sees his world, catches from the reflecting gleams[317]." We may extend this assertion to films and to, not a double, but a multiple vision.

b. *Orlando* as A House of Mirrors

In her thesis "Jeux de miroirs et dédoublements dans *Sodome et Gomorrhe* et *Le Temps retrouvé* de Marcel Proust, et dans *Orlando* de Virginia Woolf: modernisme et 'baroquisme'", Julie Beynel asserts the baroque extent of *Orlando* underlining the importance of the effect of the work on the reader/spectator and its specular degree[318]. *Orlando* can be seen as a baroque "building[319]", or cathedral, that mingles microcosm and macrocosm, life and death, emphasising light and the unfinished aspect of the building, using cultural references like paintings and sculptures and the use of mirrors or *trompe-l'oeil*, forcing the subject to move and reflect. It is also a house of glasses, an attraction in which the person has to find his or her way out of a room full of magnifying and miniaturizing looking-glasses. *Orlando* can be linked to a house of glasses because of the importance of its specular extent that can lose the reader/spectator. Its endless reflection of external references, the privileged place of the reader, and of its hide and seek mechanic characterize *Orlando*. The book is at the end under constant metamorphosis and so is the reader's vision, a never-ending spiral.

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[314] *Ibid*., p.234.
[315] *Ibid*., x.
[316] *Ibid*., p.11.
[317] *Ibid*., p.99.
[318] BEYNEL, *op. cit.*
[319] WOOLF, *The Common Reader, Vol.2*, "How Should One Read a Book?", *op. cit*., p.259.

Mulvey underlines "the extraneous similarities between screen and mirror[320]", a comparison that can be made with the book which can be, depending on who holds it, assimilated to a mirror that reflects the reader's own essence. To be more precise, books and films may not be mirrors that reflect the appearance, let alone the character, but as Cassigneul phrases it: "un espace intermédiaire, […] espace mouvant à habiter[321]." It is, to some extent, a utopia, a land of possibilities where all the individualities collide and where the internal void can be filled by the character, and *vice versa*. Instead of being a space of clash between reality and imagination, of conflict between the identity of the actor and the identity of the character, the stage is a place of cooperation. The actor gives his or her body to the character who needs one and takes a new identity provided by the character. It is the same process with reading. For Guénoun: "Le personnage s'érige alors comme figure de l'*alter-ego*[322]." It is not just *alter*, different, and not exactly *ego*, but an in-between that enables a constant creation and recreation of identity. For Guénoun :

> Le personnage peut en cela être considéré comme cet espace 'inter'. Il est ce trajet subjectif, cet objet contact, cet *objeu*, qui sert de métaphorisation à l'inéluctable de l'absence. Le jeu à faire comme si, dont le personnage est l'essence, permet donc un travail de réflexivité, soi parmi les autres, par la mise au travail de la symbolisation de l'absence[323]. [my emphasis]

Guénoun places in the centre a hybrid form between the character and the actor (that, in my opinion, can be extended to the spectator, even if the effects are not seen on stage or on screen) as inhabiting the ontological void, a place where infinite reflections can be seen, just as in a house of mirrors. Indeed, for Richter: "People, objects, landscapes –all the world which forms the boundaries of semi-transparent envelope of consciousness –become a series of mirrors reflecting the many aspects of the character himself[324].", everything ends up reflecting multiple things.

The linear progression to *Orlando* brings the reader to Woolf's present moment: "It was the eleventh of October. It was 1928. It was the present moment." (147), and the book even finishes on those lines "Thursday, the eleventh of October, Nineteen hundred and Twenty Eight." (162). In her preface of *Orlando*, Woolf makes a refence to her "nephew Mr Quentin Bell" (4) or "Angelica Bell" (4), a reflection of Virginia Woolf herself. In the book she even refers to "the first of November 1927", which is, according to the notes, the probable date at

[320] MULVEY, *op. cit.*, p.836
[321] CASSIGNEUL, *op. cit.*, p.86.
[322] GUENOUN, *op. cit.*, p.53.
[323] *Ibid.*, p.54.
[324] RICHTER, *op. cit.*, p.99.

which she was writing this part of the book. She finally makes a metareference to the book when saying: "There are ninety-nine pages more of it" (53), when talking about Orlando's notebook, which is surprisingly the exact number of pages left in the original version. In the film, even if the last section is not dated, Orlando is likely to be in 1991 or 1992, the year the film was shot or the year the film was released. The concordance between the end of a work and the present moment, calls upon what Deleuze calls "re-presentation[325]" in theatre and films, a term that does not only refer to the projection of images or the movement of the actors, but to the act of making present again. According to Richter, hints of Woolf in *Orlando* are not only playful details for the reader but a factor of communication in the "delicate transaction":

> the various characters throughout her novels, both men and women, who exhibit in part certain facets of Mrs. Woolf's personality and feelings are channel for […] communication[326].

Burns, while wondering on what constitutes the essence of Orlando, underlines that only the name "Orlando" remains the same: "That is, once the corporeal body is gone, only the textual body remains[327]." The text is also called *Orlando,* so one can postulate that the text eternally "re-presents", brings to life again through the reader/spectator, even after the "death" of characters or the end of books. It is no coincidence that Orlando is immortal, Woolf may have drawn the argument that characters and books live as long as the readers read them (and as long as the spectator watches the film), and even after, as the piece of art will always be part of our mind. Orlando is thus made eternal by the reader's and spectator's eye and mind: "this man and his words were immortal" (39).

Orlando ultimately can be said to join all individualities together, all the eyes and Is are focused on him/her and the "'damned egotistical self[328]'" disappears to make place to the universality of literature: "in Virginia Woolf's novels, the traditional frame of point of view may be said to dissolve in participation; analytical structure into synthetical experience[329]." As we said, "I" is a shifter, and everybody can be "I" individually. In the movie theatre, everybody is alone watching a film, but together. While reading a book, everybody reads alone but reads the same book. And if the points of view and opinions may not be the same at the end, it still brings different individualities together. We can make the assumption that Orlando, even if s/he

[325] DELEUZE, Gilles, "The Image of Thought," in, *Difference and Repetition*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p.129.
[326] RICHTER, *op. cit.*, p.238.
[327] BURNS, *op. cit.*, p.358.
[328] LEE, *op. cit.*, p.523.
[329] RICHTER, *op. cit.*, ix.

has a certain character, is a chameleon character, the multiplicity of eyes enables a multiplicity of Is, s/he can be everybody; Orlando can be seen as a John Doe. In her diary, Woolf wishes to switch from a subjective "I" to a universal "We", a universality that does not conceal individuality:

> […] in connection with real little incongruous living humour: & anything that come into my head; but "I" rejected: "We" substituted: to whom at the end there shall be an invocation? "We". . . composed of many different things . . . we all life, all art, all waifs & strays – a rambling capricious but somehow unified whole – the present state of mind[330]?

In *Orlando*, she does the opposite of what she did in *The Waves*. In *The Waves*, all the characters are mingled and it is hard, even if possible, to distinguish the five characters from each other, showing the universality of the experience of life:

> The voice which seems at times to be the reader's own voice talking to himself is that of Virginia Woolf, however impersonal, however universal that voice may be. 'I, I, I – how we have lost the secret of saying that" she laments. But no matter by what name we call it – Je est, the 'invisible 'I,'' the voice of subjectivity – that perpendicular pronoun is always present in her work […] For if a reader is made to see and feel through the very eyes and mind of a character, and that character resembles the author, he may be said to experience that author as well[331].

In *Orlando*, only the main character is explored and his/her internal multiplicity is displayed: *Orlando* is an act of showing that although being is a solitary process, it is a universal and timeless experience that has its artistic transcription for everybody.

[330] *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume V: 1936-41*, edited by BELL, Anne, Olivier, London: Penguin books, 1985, p.135.
[331] RICHTER, *op. cit.*, p.238.

Conclusion

In *Orlando*, the book and the film, the interactions between the I and the Eye go from divergence to convergence. The relation to the other is first seen as a subordination but I and Other reach coordination: discovering the other enables to discover oneself. Meeting images of the world and the difficulties of being allows the self to grow. The Eye is no longer a constraint, it is an opening up of possibilities. These subjective experiences of seeing and being reach the state of universality on paper or on screen, a performance that concerns everybody and that enables creation and recreation.

Orlando: A Biography considerably reveals the way in which Virginia Woolf saw the world and the way in which she thought she was seen. It also displays the fact that she wanted to reconcile different points of view through literature. In writing *Orlando*, Woolf creates a world in which a person passes all expectations, all rules and all frames but his/hers. It is a world in which the characters, the writer as well as the readers can reinvent themselves and reinvent the codes of being and seeing. Virginia Woolf dreaded the image people had of her and preferred the anonymity that writing grants: "'I met somebody who says 'youre [sic.] this or that', and I dont [sic.] want to be anything when I'm writing[332].' She makes the most of this anonymity and creates an *alter ego* in the form of the biographer, escaping the authority of being oneself: "'the fictitious V.W. whom I carry like a mask about the world[333]'". She ends up playing with the image readers can have of authors. She playfully acts the role of a biographer. She also partially lays herself bare by displaying publicly her love for Vita Sackville-West, passing from invisibility to "hypervisibility[334]", always leaving grey areas.

In the 1970s, Woolf gained a greater renown than in her lifetime, becoming one of the most famous writers in England and in the world. Her image became associated with feminism, independence and resilience. She is also sometimes reduced to her mental-illness and her allegedly frigidity that her nephew Quentin Bell related in his biography. She also has her place in popular culture as *Orlando: A Biography* recently appeared in the Netflix television show *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018). Its appearance is fully linked with the problematic

[332] In LEE, *op. cit.*, p.5.
[333] *Ibid*., p.6.
[334] PIDDUCK, Julianne, "The visible and the sayable: the moment and conditions of hypervisibility", in GRANDENA, Florian, and JOHNSTON Cristina (eds.), *Cinematic Queerness: Gay and Lesbian Hypervisibility in Contemporary Francophone Feature Films*, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011, p.13.

between the I and the Eye as one of the secondary characters, Susie Putnam, is to find guidance in the book of *Orlando* when suffering from gender dysphoria and not finding any role model, any representation: this book helped her/his finding herself and making peace with the image of her/his body, escaping binarity. *Orlando* remains a classic reference on gender and feminist literature that the censorship of the time did not stop Virginia Woolf from writing.

Ninety years after *Orlando: A Biography* and more than twenty-five years after *Orlando*, Chanya Button makes her contribution to the building of Orlando in releasing *Vita and Virginia*. She gives her vision of the love story between Vita and Virginia, love story that conceived *Orlando*. It is a subjective view on the story, a romanticized and reshaped version of the story that mingles 1928 with 2018, a film that is yet close to the records of the love story. This film makes the assertion, as *The Hours* did, that a story, even a real one, has always a strong fictional extent and is first and foremost personal, may differ from someone else's vision of a story. It confirms Virginia Wolf's statement: "A good biography 'is the record of the things that change rather than of the things that happen[335]'", variations make a biography a good biography.

Orlando does not only turn from a male to a female, but also overpasses his fear of society, of the other and of the other in him to confront his own image and ideas with the world. Being oneself ends up being an act that enables mistakes, diversity and plurality. At the end, Orlando's mind and body are not defined, and never will be. Jack Halbertsam developed the concept of "trans[336]*" (trans asterisk) in which the body does not have to be defined, away from any stigmatisation, a possibility to redefine oneself perpetually, an endless performance. Woolf's vision of biographies is closely linked to her ideas on sexuality, as underlined by Hermione Lee:

> Orlando is the hero who turns into a heroine, in a biography which turns out to be a fiction. For Virginia Woolf, a revolution in biography is also a sexual revolution[337].

It is a complete yet subtle revolving of ideas as well as a total shaking of one's vision. Virginia Woolf will be followed in her endeavour to free the body and the mind by female writers like Jeanette Winterson, Alison Bechdel, Audre Lorde, Joanna Russ or Emily Danforth.

[335] In LEE, *op. cit*., p.11.
[336] HALBERSTAM, Jack, *Trans*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variability*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018.
[337] *Ibid*., p.13.

The book and the film ultimately shed light on the incompletion of literature and film and on the self. Literature, even if the book ends, is a forever passing of the baton on existential and cultural issues. Reading connects the self with the self, with Others, but also with the past. It enables an enrichment of past wisdom and a confrontation with past ways of thinking. Just like the self, literature is an accumulation of experience and of knowledge that never ceases to be fuelled. It is also a material that keeps on being bent, worked on, mimicked and improved with personal visions. Films also follow this rule. Even after the end of the film, the spectator carries with him or her the images of the film just like the reader carries with him or her the lines of the book. The work of art keeps on living in the minds of the receivers. The self also reaches the conclusion of incompleteness: there will always be more things to see, more books to read, more people to meet. The self learns gradually to enjoy the baroque aspect of life, uneven like the *barroco*, the irregular pearl that makes it so unique.

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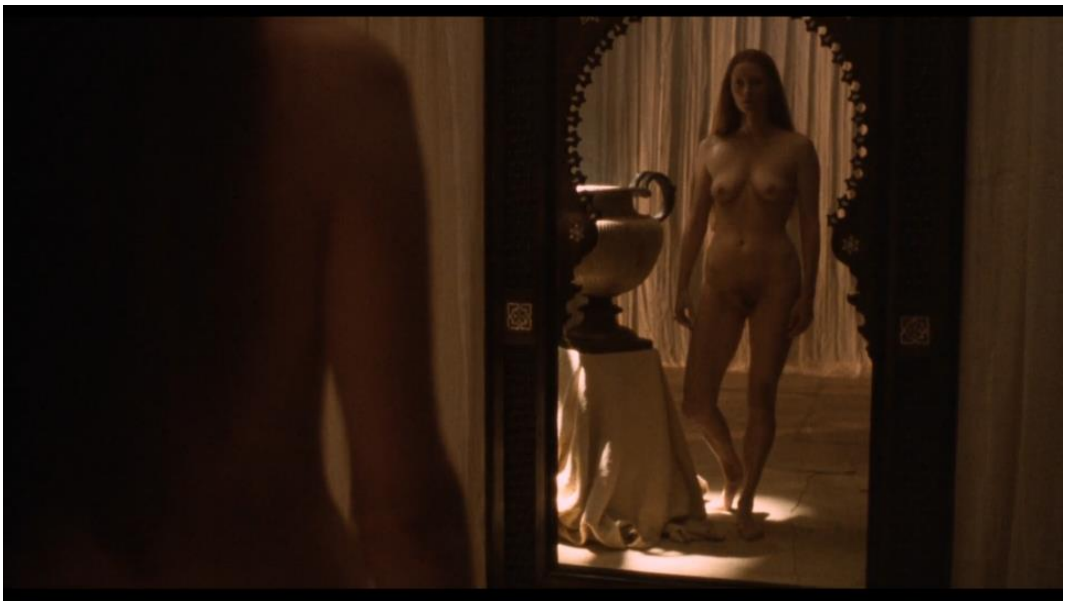
Appendices

Appendix 1: Orlando watching herself in a mirror after her transition.



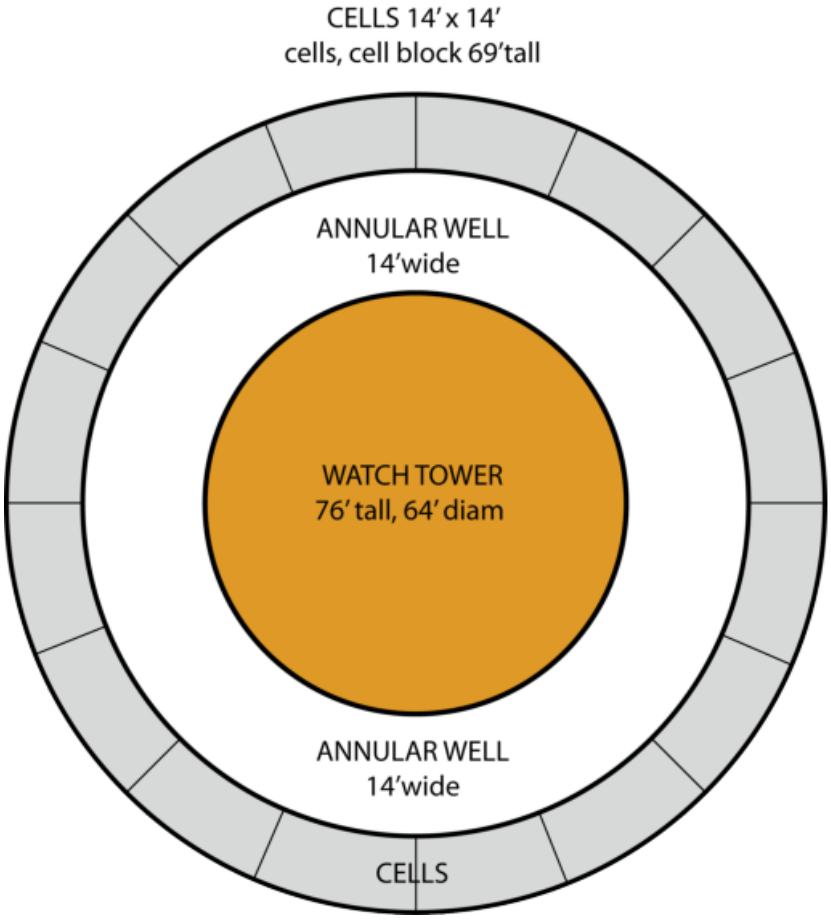
Appendix 2: Orlando being dressed as an 18th century English Lady.

Appendix 3: Orlando and her voluminous dress wandering in her mansion.

Appendix 4: Orlando at a *salon*.

Appendix 5: Orlando escaping the Archduke.

Appendix 6: Bentham's Panopticon layout (retrieved 12/04/19 on https://thefunambulist.net/history/foucault-episode-4-the-cartography-of-power)



Appendix 7: Orlando dining with Nicholas Greene.

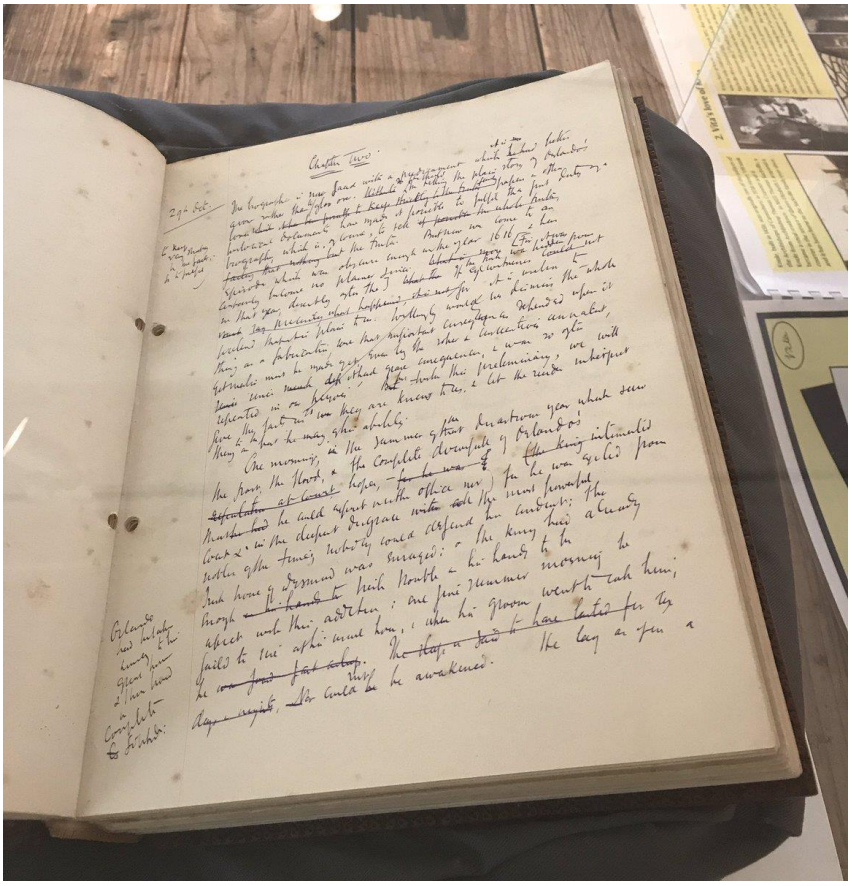
Appendix 8: Jimmy Somerville as an angel in *Orlando*.

Appendix 9: Orlando and Shelmerdine's first meeting.

Appendix 10: Orlando dressed like a Turk in a Turkish bath.

Appendix 11: Poster of *Orlando*.

Appendix 12: Manuscript of *Orlando* at Knole House by Dr Jana Funke (retrieved on 23/02/19 on https://twitter.com/drjanafunke/status/880415017660710912)



Appendix 13: Two male actors playing Othello and Desdemona in the play *Othello* in *Orlando.*

Appendix 14: “Schéma synoptique des oppositions pertinentes” in BOURDIEU, Pierre, *La domination masculine*, Paris: Edition du Seuil, 1998, p.24.

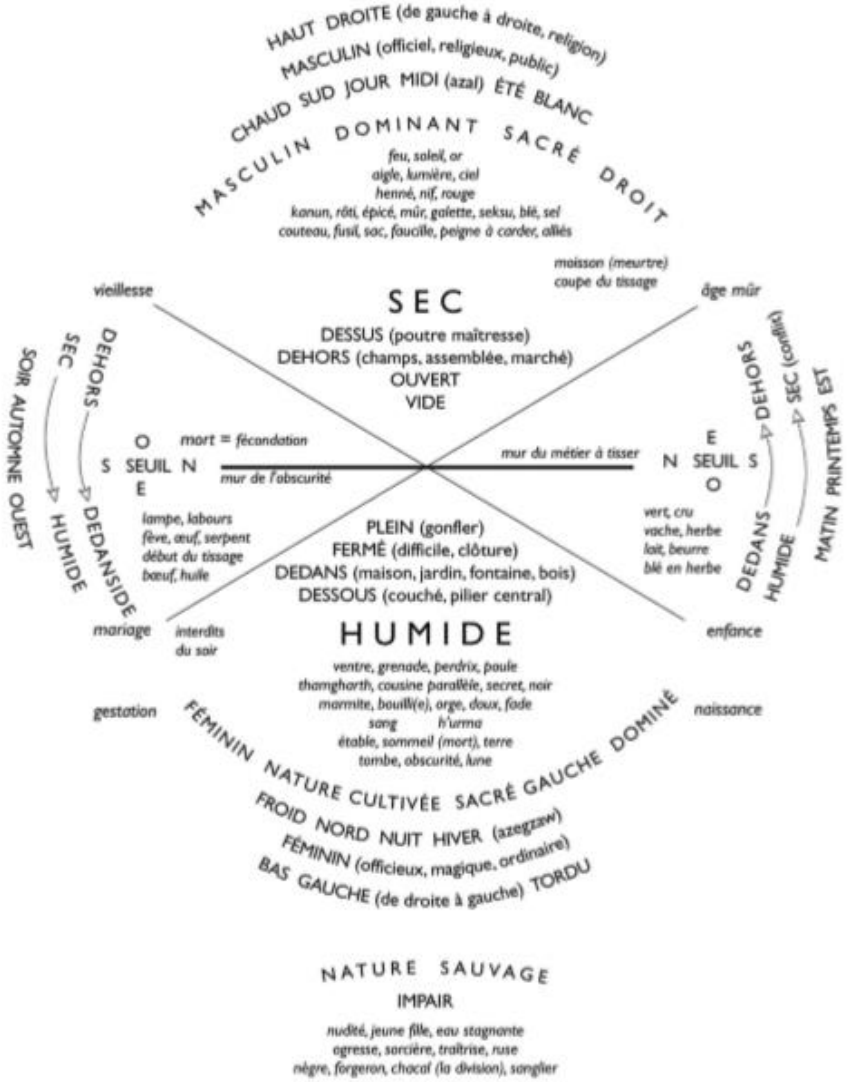
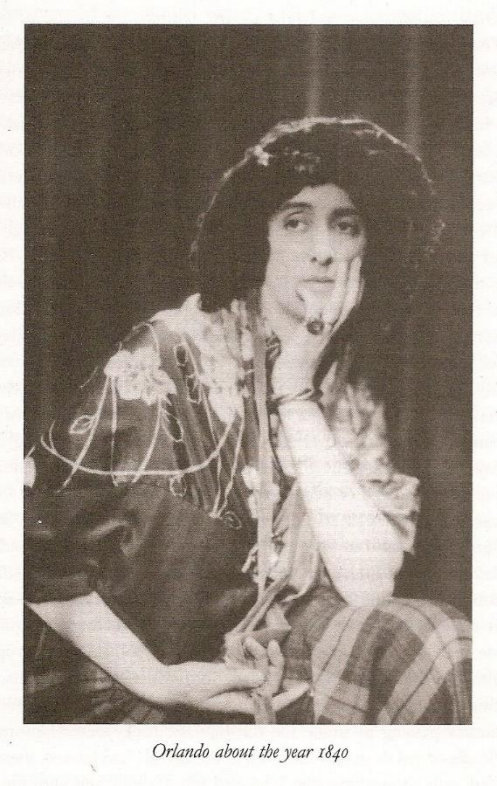


Schéma synoptique des oppositions pertinentes

Appendix 15: *Escaping Criticism* by Pere Borrell del Caso, 1874.



Orlando about the year 1840

Appendix 16: Vita Sackville-West as "Orlando about the year 1840" in *Orlando: A Biography*

Orlando at the present time

Appendix 17: Vita Sackville-West as "Orlando at the present time" in *Orlando: A Biography*

Appendix 18: Poster of *Orlando*.

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