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WHO CRIES FOR WHOM?: THE SUBTLE APPLICATION AND THE REDEFINITION OF
GENDERS AND ANDROGYNY IN WOOLF'S *ORLANDO*

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the androgynous model presented in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*. Operating within the boundaries of sex-gender models and roles of her present time, she presented her subtle, redefined version of femininity and masculinity and their combinatory effects within the sexed, androgynous individual. This model differs from others, in both literature and in autobiographical documents, in that Orlando's androgyny does not make the subject gender-neutral but gender-inclusive.

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Introduction

The accepted sexes (male and female) have combated over superiority for the whole of human existence, and the solution to such a problem would seem to be in the amalgamation of the sexes. However, the physical manifestation and representation of both sexes has caused even greater controversies. In the real world, hermaphroditic people (often termed 'pseudohermaphrodites') have faced derision and persecution in the majority of societies, at times being forced to conform to one sex or another. Literary figures who share similar physical and/or gendered anomalies have faced similar problems. Virginia Woolf's *Orlando: A Biography* poses many questions between sex and gender and the relationship between the two. The titular character runs the sexual gambit, from male to female with no transition, and the eventual female Orlando's gender fluctuates between the genders. Not strictly a hermaphrodite, Orlando shares with other hermaphroditic characters certain physical and unnatural qualities, mostly that of the change from one sex to another. Orlando accomplishes what is known as the androgynous ideal, an embodiment of both sexes that is not contingent on the sex she occupies.

Orlando's sex, as well as his/her androgyny, has been debated throughout the whole of the novel's conception. What exactly is Orlando's sex? What is his/her gender? Is he a womanly man that rejects his masculinity? Is she a manly woman that becomes heady of her masculine ways in place of her sex's femininity? Is she an androgyne? A sexless being? Surprisingly, there is not a consensus on what we should term Orlando. Given any of these sexual or gendered conditions, Orlando would have been termed an invert, yet Woolf did not face prosecution for promoting a morally questionable character. In fact, *Orlando's* entire validity has been the subject for debate. Maria DiBattista's book *Virginia Woolf's Major Novels: The Fables of Anon* leaves this novel out of its listed works. Even his/her stance as an androgyne has not been

recognized in the line of critique on this book. *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision* examines the many androgynous works that Woolf has developed, but *Orlando* had no place in its pages.

An unfinished novel by Julia Ward Howe, the recently discovered *The Hermaphrodite*, and its main character Lawrence has similar debates regarding his sex and gender. In the book, no mention is made regarding his anatomy, yet the interaction between him and those around him arouses suspicion pertaining to his sex. Some regard him as male: “I recognize nothing distinctly feminine in the intellectual nature of Laurent...he has moreover stern notions of duty which bend and fashion his life, instead of living fashioned by it, as is the case with women” (Howe 194). Others claim female in Lawrence: “I recognize in Laurent much that is strictly feminine...and in the name of the female sex, I claim her as one of us” (Howe 195). A doctor poses the combination of both genders: “Never before have I seen one presenting a beautiful physical development, and combining in the spiritual nature all that is most attractive in either sex” (Howe 194). Orlando faces this, both in text and in debate, as a competition over the rights to his/her sex and gender. From discounting her androgyny completely, to emphasizing the clothes Orlando wears as an artifice of his/her gender, to labeling Orlando as the perfected androgynous ideal from Woolf’s mind, Orlando has had a history and debate as fluctuating as his/her gender and sex.

The androgyny of Orlando is problematic for readers and critics alike because the nature of her sexuality upsets nearly all of our previously conceived notions of sex, gender, and their relationship to one another. The fact that Orlando changes sex without an obvious cause raises suspicions as to what function Orlando’s gender serves in relation to each of her sexes. Other texts deal with the issue of androgyny, hermaphroditism, or various inverts in a way that

compliments the many aspects that comprise the androgyny of Orlando. 1928 was a year fraught with books that toed the established lines of sex and gender. Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* was subjected to prosecution, as its main character Stephen Gordon, a lesbian with an affinity for male clothes and activities, is portrayed as a virtuous character who meets a tragic and self-sacrificing end. Hall's work was considered "a polemical novel pleading for social tolerance for lesbianism," whereas Woolf's novel "mocks all normative sex and gender codes, destabilizing the very grounds on which sexological as well as legal conventions were founded" (Parkes 436). Essentially, *Orlando*, with its satiric, humorous, and biographical slant on these issues, was able to hide its many layered messages, whereas *The Well of Loneliness* combated sex, gender, and sexuality norms too directly. The popular method of connecting these two works is to identify them as lesbian texts, but it is far more effective to view Stephen and Orlando as individuals whose sex and gender contended with each other in both a physical and a psychological way. Stephen embraces her masculinity, but she, still constrained by the limitations of her female sex, cannot provide what she believes to be adequate protection that a male would be able to. Where she recognizes (or perhaps invents at times) the extent of the powers her body allows in society, Orlando is able to experience the limitations of both a male and a female body, and she is able to experiment the shifting genders through the use of clothing and practices, much like Stephen. With Virginia Woolf's line, "there is much to support the view that it is clothes that wear us and not we them" (Woolf 138), we see that clothing is often the necessity for characters to successfully incorporate their desired or new sex.

Orlando's transformation has a basis in real life. Two separate accounts of actual pseudohermaphroditic individuals give us a basis for comparison of what it might be like for a person to change sex. *Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a*

Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite chronicles the life of a man born woman that went through a legal transition to be declared a male. *Memoirs of a Man's Maiden Years* by N. O. Body contains a similar account of a female that was later recognized as a male. These real-life accounts portray two different outcomes for a change in sex. Herculine cannot cope with the new sex and subsequently imposed gender and falls victim to suicide, but the author of *Memoirs* (who will be referred to as Nora) integrates well into her newfound sex. Herculine displays great curiosity as a woman for the opposite sex, but upon transformation, he realizes that he was far more comfortable as a woman, that "Perhaps it was that thirst for the unknown, which is so natural to man" (*Herculine* 115), which suggests that there may have been some level of maleness in him after all. Body, however, felt that he had always been a male, and there are little to no repercussions sustained in his psyche or to his body after the change. These situations, especially that of Herculine, show a push for the discovery of one's "true sex," as Michel Foucault terms it in the introduction of the memoir, that "At the bottom of sex, there is truth" (*Herculine* xi).

Debates over essentialism versus social construction have risen about the formation of sex, gender, and sex roles. *Orlando's* position in this debate is particularly precarious, as her change of sex suggests opposing views. Orlando's effeminacy as a male has prompted critics to wonder if he has been a she through the entirety of the novel. If it is "too risky to speak of Orlando as a *she*, as a woman throughout, even *before* that famous transformation from man into woman" (Kitsi-Mitakou 118), then what claim did she have over masculinity? This direct challenge of Orlando's maleness undermines any relation to the male sex and gender that he/she had at any point. The essentialist claim, "the 'naturalist' point of view, is to try to prove '(1) that Orlando had always been a woman, (2) that Orlando is at this moment a man'" (Minow-Pinkney

126), yet Orlando is forced after her advent into womanhood to learn the ways of the female. This does not suggest that Orlando did not harbor intense femininity when she possessed a male body, but the claim that Orlando is essentially a woman discounts all of her former male experiences and how they construct and influence her views after the transformation. Like Nora, there was something inherent in Orlando that made the transformation into and the incorporation of the female sex less traumatic, and unlike Herculine, there was no active desire to be the opposing sex, thus there being less damage done in the transformation.

Orlando also possesses the element of castration often seen in hermaphroditic or androgynous characters. A popular notion with these types of characters is to nullify genders when a figure embodies both. Rather than embrace the possibility of a third sex, there is more safety in canceling out male with female, and vice versa. In the case of Honoré de Balzac's *Sarrasine*, this notion of castration is heavily played upon. The titular character must sacrifice his manhood to uphold the beauty of a castrated boy, La Zambinella, the femininity and implied former masculinity seeking to fill the void left by removing his sexual identity. Sarrasine ascribes feminine beauty onto Zambinella in the form of a statue, but when the castrato's femininity fails by virtue of his male heritage, Sarrasine sacrifices his masculinity, subsequently his life, in both upholding the boy's beauty and damning the maleness that is no longer there. Orlando's feminine transformation can be seen as a form of castration, as the male form is abandoned, inasmuch as the male psychic traits remain, yet this castration is not the same as Zambinella's or Sarassine's. Orlando is castrated in the fact that her male genitalia is replaced with female anatomy. Her initiation into the world as a woman is met with a body devoid of all sex. Orlando finds herself dressed in "Turkish coats and trousers which can be worn indifferently by either sex" (*Orlando* 103), and until she learns the ways of females, having rejected for a time

her masculine ways and mentality, she remains without a sex. This lack of sex is indicative of androgyny. Zambinella dons a female persona for the sake of tricking tourists, yet this tradition of the castrato results in the adoption of femininity to fill the void left after his masculinity was forfeit. Orlando differs in that her castration did not remove her male upbringing, thus allowing for a blend of two constructed concepts of gender (a male childhood combined with a female adulthood, both learned). Zambinella was never brought up as a male in her society, but Sarassine's expectations of gender, despite there being a lack of current sex, forces androgyny onto the castrato. Orlando is given the freedom to combine her experiences without discounting those unrelated to her current sex in an androgynous psyche, but this psyche is not entirely complete.

Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmdine, Orlando's husband, is a complementary figure to Orlando in terms of androgyny and is much needed in the text. Orlando's androgyny is not entirely complete, as she is limited by the constraints of her physical sex. Because she willingly settles into the roles of a female, her connection to the male sex is held only within her memories and her personality. Her transformation was not without instances of doubt, as there are times where she contemplates which gender she would rather be, but this contemplation is only contingent on her gender expression, not her sex, which will remain fixed. Shel, though sparse in appearance after their marriage, "essentially a projection of herself [Orlando]" (Rado 163), is an androgynous figure as well, with the two announcing their similar circumstances: "'You're a woman, Shel!' she cried. 'You're a man, Orlando!' he cried" (Woolf 184). Suggesting that Shel's sex came about in the same fashion as her own, Orlando marks Shel as her suitable other. Orlando's former existence weighs heavily on her newly defined sexuality because "... memory of the past remains intact, and Orlando only recognizes his/her new sexual identity through the

image in the mirror” (Minow-Pinkney 125). Shel is that mirror; he possesses the necessary tools (those of a male identity and body) for Orlando to project her male desires and memories. Orlando demonstrates that she is not entirely confined to her body in terms of expression, but Woolf was aware of societal expectations, such as, “dressed as a woman she is constituted in quite different ways than she had been as a man” (Parkin-Gounelas 147). Orlando submits to these roles in a way due to the “spirit of the age”, which “blew a little unequally” (Woolf 172). This marriage is, in a sense, Orlando residing to being a woman and accepting that the notion that a woman needs a man to complement her, but this is more of a search for her androgynous complement rather than her sexual one; her means of sexual expression is through the use of another person’s body, that of her husband’s. Kari Elise Lokke’s examination of the “comic sublime” in *Orlando* represents the marriage as a mocking of a male notion of marriage:

If Woolf mocks the masculinist sublime, she also celebrates an alternative aesthetic, an alternative model of self in *Orlando*. Her aesthetic vision in *Orlando* ... is inseparable from her testing and questioning of the gendered categories of masculine and feminine and their role in creation. In place of a disembodied sublime that represents aggressive appropriation and abstraction of nature, Woolf presents an explicitly sexual ecstasy of union with nature and another human being. (242)

This mocking and celebration is accomplished through her union with Shel. Orlando’s version of androgyny resolves itself in the coupling between the two. Woolf attempted to redefine androgyny in a single entity, but due to our limited scope of sexes and genders — even in regards to how Woolf and other writers construct androgyny — Orlando comes across as a tragic character, especially in the end where “Orlando’s androgynous psyche falls apart” (Rado 162).

Rado goes on to say, “not only does the novel chronicle the painful legacy of her androgynous imagination, specifically the repression of the body, it refuses to provide an alternative model of production to replace it” (163). Marriage becomes an acceptable and plausible way to express Orlando’s androgyny, and though Woolf may not have realized it, Shel completes this androgynous model, the idea that one body cannot harbor all that is androgynous.

Chapter 1: Do the Clothes Make or Mask the (Wo)Man?

Virginia Woolf's use of clothing as an engine for her characters to exhibit their sexual nature is one of the most important aspects of her androgynous figures. In terms of actual biology, there is little to no reference of it. Instead, we are given blind assurances from the biographer of *Orlando* on the very first page that the titular character is a "He — for there could be no doubt of his sex..." (*Orlando* 11), and then that "Orlando had become a woman — there is no denying it" (*Orlando* 102). We are left with only the biographer's word and little else other than the clothing Orlando adorns, which, without other sexual characteristics to reference, we are left to examine. Orlando's various wardrobe changes coincide with changes s/he faces with his/her body, mental state, and place in society. The clothes do reflect societal expectations in the times Orlando is living, but they do not simply reflect the sex that Orlando occupies at the time of their wearing. Woolf was also careful to identify the clothes that other characters wear as well, causing reactions in her main character that help further our understanding of Orlando's evolving views of sex and gender. It is not until Shelmerdine arrives that Orlando is presented with her most important bodily adornment, and though it can be argued that she slips into a state of resigned comfort with her femininity through their marriage, her actual discomfort with the roles assigned to females shows that clothes, if they be the wearers and not the worn, have control over gender representation but are unable to portray the mentality of characters at all times. The clothes can construct the man or woman (or both) but only if they submit to that form and its denotations.

Orlando's biography begins with him as a man in body, but claims that Orlando has only his male heritage cannot entirely be upheld. The tradition of critique regarding Orlando's initial gender, transformation, and resulting gender is divided between the assumptions that Orlando

has always been female or that he is, post-transformation, still a male. The transformation is foreshadowed by a confrontation with both a sexually ambiguous — yet sexually defined — princess and Orlando's own masculinity. The notion that Orlando, even if the assumption is by the character himself, is only a man is already on unsteady grounds at the very beginning of the biography. The opening line is catered to induce doubt regarding Orlando's gender, but it may also be the biographer's attempt to hide Orlando's distaste for a singularly male identity and both the narrator's and Orlando's androgynous potential.

The biographer is basically a tailor for Orlando. We view Orlando's various sexes and genders through the lens of someone whose own gender is something to call into question. If, like Orlando, this gender ambiguity can be linked to Orlando's gender inclusiveness, why begin as a male? Would it not be more effective to immediately show an androgynous ideal? One aspect of this piece that needs to be taken into account is the time in which it was published. Virginia Woolf was one of the first feminists to call for a female voice in writing, "that women writers must look to other women, not to men, for guidance and inspiration" (Lokke 239). For starters, readers tend to begin with the assumption that the writer is male. Women writers are presented with the unique challenge of writing in a language that is not their own, as Katerina K. Kitsi-Mitakou points out in her book: "All writers are born male (all children are born male...), as the first language available to them is a language of patriarchy. The discovery of a female language would at a first stage require adoption of the male language" (119). Essentially, with a male body and voice at the start, Orlando's eventual transition to that of a woman is not as harsh. It is not surprising that we view the narrator as male, thus asserting the "fact" that Orlando is male when we first encounter him.

The birth of Orlando as male is not merely a way of justifying the use of patriarchal language. This forced sex (and by extension, forced gender) forces discomfort onto Orlando. The narrator clothes Orlando in a gender and a voice neither constructed nor embodied in his essence. Built upon societal expectation and definition, Orlando is initially defined by his false identity — that he is only male. Orlando is not called to question his masculinity until he encounters Sasha. He sees her skating on the ice, but he does not recognize her immediately as a woman, or rather he does not attribute her features as being wholly female. He cannot determine either sex, “ready to tear his hair with vexation that the person was of his own sex” (*Orlando* 28). Sasha’s androgynous appearance distresses Orlando, as her clothing is not auspicious enough to identify her sex. He contemplates the repercussions, were she a man, “thus all embraces were out of the question” (*Orlando* 28). With his confusion comes fluidity in his view of her, as Makiko Minow-Pinkney states: “As a man, he automatically categorises this desirable object as a woman in a synaesthetic confusion” (Minow-Pinkney 122). Orlando must attribute a gender to a sex, though it is ambiguous gender to ambiguous sex, and this sexual ambiguity leads androgyne to androgyne in a comic redressing of sexes and genders.¹

Perhaps Sasha is not what most would consider to be the typical androgyne (this paper equally not seeking to argue that point), but Orlando is attracted to the androgynous qualities that the princess possesses. She represents and “epitomizes the third alternative — a third sex...uniting the virtues of both power and beauty”, where he is not attracted so much to “her sexual body, but [to] her transcendence of conventional categories of identity” (Rado 153). Orlando, however, is not yet a true androgyne. He is still defined only by his male identity, despite possessing androgynous potential. Sasha unwittingly continues to draw Orlando in with

¹ The ideas of the comic sublime and the tailor model attributed to the narrator are adapted from Christy Burns’s work.

her androgynous apparel and traits. With their plans to elope, it is Sasha, having finally recognized that Orlando is not yet ready to embrace his sexuality, whom is repelled. She flees, and Orlando is left to define himself once again.

Orlando wears his masculinity until he meets with the “woman” who will liberate him from his purely male self. Archduchess Henrietta (as we first see her/him) is a character who does not embody androgyny the same way that Sasha does — or the way that Orlando eventually will. Henrietta dresses as a woman, but this façade of clothing does not disguise the underlying nature and potential physicality of the character. Sasha wore gender-ambiguous clothing to emphasize her ability to fill that perceived void of gender, whereas Henrietta is blatantly in disguise. Wearing the clothes of a gender that does not suit one’s nature performs several functions. Seen in *Herculine Barbin* is the destruction of the self. Herculine crosses over into the male realm, partly out of curiosity, partly out of, as she states, “what I then regarded as an imperative duty” (*Herculine* 81). Both in speech and in the longing to return to her former sex, Herculine’s new gender and sex she wears is not her own. When Orlando looks beyond the clothes to see the masculinity buried underneath Henrietta’s shell, he sees a mirror of his own masculinity, projecting onto her “his own sexuality, from which he then recoils” (Minow-Pinkney 124). Orlando cannot stand the sight of his own sexuality being reflected back upon him, abhorring what he appears to be. He runs away from her, and in doing so, “he flees aspects of his masculinity which he now denounces as disgusting (they had earlier repelled Sasha), and in this limited sense his metamorphosis into a woman is already prefigured at the end of Chapter 2” (Minow-Pinkney 124). The mirror that is the Archduchess germinates the seed that Sasha planted, or perhaps it forces Orlando to recognize that masculinity in its entirety cannot contain him. This

use of transvestitism is not singular to Orlando, and its use in other texts helps to frame its value here.

La Zambinella in *Sarrasine* perhaps best illustrates the futility of trying to conceal one's true gender through dress. This castrato, now an old man, still clings to particular forms of feminine dress that had once served him well in his courting and cruel trickery of Sarrasine. His clothes seem to those who view him an "outmoded luxury, this particular and tasteless jewel, made the strange creature's face even more striking" (*Sarrasine* 229). Having once been a cunning façade, age deteriorates his once striking feminine beauty, but this is typical of the transvestite, something Orlando likely distinguished out of Henrietta's attire. In *S/Z*, Barthes expands upon what is so distasteful in Zambinella's clothes:

The lack of taste refers to his dress, in which the feminine essence and wealth are displayed, with no concern for whether it is aesthetically pleasing or socially fitting (the "particular jewel"): similarly, vulgarity suits a transvestite's dress more strikingly than distinction, because it makes femininity into an essence, not a value; vulgarity is on the side of the code (which enables it to be fascinating), distinction on the side of performance. (57)

The code the quote speaks of is one of a system of five codes employed by Barthes to analyze the text, this one being the Hermeneutic Code (HER), used to pose a problem, question, or enigma and compose or stave off its answer (Barthes 17). The question we may ask here is: what makes the transvestite's dress vulgar? It is that his/her dress does not coincide with his/her true gender, instead bastardizing or satirizing his/her gender (or the other gender) by wearing such conflicting clothing, but there are situations in literature where the clothes fit the gender but find opposition in sex roles when the clothing and the sex do not match up.

Stephen in *The Well of Loneliness* is an invert — to use the language of the time — that finds solace in wearing clothes deemed for the opposite sex but not the opposite gender. Her position in life, particularly with that of her money, allows her to buy all of the clothes that she desires for both her and her loves. With Angela, she begins to see her own limitations and the limitations of clothing and money. The male clothing she wears affirms her gender, but Hall was conscious of the fact, like Woolf, that clothing may affirm the gender but not the sex, that is to say if the sex did not match with the socially-approved gender. Stephen dismays, “Money could not buy the one thing that she needed in life; it could not buy Angela’s love” (Hall 186). She perseveres when the relationship with Angela fails, later finding Mary, but Stephen dooms herself when she feels that she cannot provide what a member of the male sex can. When she abandons her claim to Mary, she equally relinquishes her connection to the male gender.

Orlando’s connection is not so easily dissolved. Her transformation presents her with a peculiar predicament in that she still holds an association with the male sex and gender, which is not easily applicable in her female sex. In the Archduchess, the aforementioned contradiction between the transvestite’s clothing and gender becomes a figurative mirror for Orlando, whereby he can see that his own gender is not sufficient. Both Sasha and Henrietta are catalysts for the transformation. When this does occur, Orlando does not immediately dress in “gender-appropriate” clothing. She joins a troupe of gypsies, classically a symbol of “anarchic liberation and energy” (Minow-Pinkney 126). Orlando needs this libratory opportunity to establish her claim to her new gender, eventually incorporating it into her ambiguous self. Her gender-ambiguous clothing is a transition; it is not androgynous. The wearing of this clothing and being among gypsies means that she can ease into being a woman; she “does not yet need to behave according to a rigid code of manners as a woman” (Minow-Pinkney 126). Even if Orlando’s

“true sex” was meant to be that of a female, her former life as a male has not conditioned her to function properly as a woman. The Turkish garb she wears is equally meant to solidify her coming experiences as a woman, as a member of the female sex. Androgyny does not imply impermanence of sex, as hermaphroditism does, though it is not always able to.

In the scope of Orlando’s over four-hundred year existence, her time with the gypsies is rather brief, suggestive that her androgynous clothing cannot help her for too long. To experience femininity, she must become female — look, act, and dress as a female does, “come to terms with her new sex” (Burns 351). However, she faces a new problem in terms of how she is viewed by her former counterparts, men. As an outwardly androgynous being in Turkish clothes (and thus a sexless individual), Orlando occupies a space below the radar of sexual distinction. Expectations of her are naught, and she is free to view either sex in peace. Once she sheds her concealing clothing, “she finds herself helpless and at the mercy of chivalrous condescension” (Burns 351). With English propriety come expectations of the now visibly female Orlando. She must give up her male practices and subject herself to the feminine ways. As Christy L. Burns puts it, “Orlando’s body may be altered by the sex change, but her *gender* cannot be effected until clothing — that external social trapping — pressures her to conform with social expectations of gendered people” (351). Society expresses Orlando’s need to wear feminine clothing, but it is the biographer who ultimately dresses Orlando and presents her to us.

If the genders of the biographer and Orlando are interconnected in any way, then the reader can view the hasty redressing of Orlando as an attempt to conceal the biographer’s own androgyny. In the course of the novel, the biographer has, in a sense, grown up, similar to Orlando with the experiences of a male. Where Orlando is more accepting of her new feminine position and willing to absorb the female experience into her being, the biographer is not quite as

willing to relinquish the claim to the male sex. When Sasha is described earlier in the novel, her features are well documented, the identifiable traits of both male and female well-represented: with the “legs, hands, carriage, [of] a boy’s, but no boy ever had a mouth like that; no boy had those breasts; no boy had those eyes...” (Woolf 28), yet Orlando’s feminine features are omitted. This is for the sake of veiling the female sex in the main character.

The act of concealing Orlando’s sexual features serves two functions. The first function of the veil is to “distract and deflect our attention from Orlando’s biological sex in order to preserve his/her androgynous subject-position from the imposition of patriarchal norms” (Rado 153), but this is only an auxiliary effect of its original intent. Orlando’s female body is able to embellish androgyny, “the female body androgynous as two genders combined in one flesh — the very likeness of Orlando’s body” (Kitsi-Mitakou 126), being inherently androgynous with the presence of both a phallic object (the clitoris) and a vagina. Whether purposefully or not, the biographer seeks to impose the patriarchal norms that Rado speaks of in order to preserve his sexual identity up to the transformation. In effect, the biographer only affirms Orlando’s implicit androgyny and draws attention to her new and imposed femininity, but not without sticking to those patriarchal roots. Without the clothes, Orlando’s female body, theoretically embodying androgyny in a physical form, “can be threateningly subversive of the patriarchal order” (Kitsi-Mitakou 126). The biographer may not support the patriarchy of Orlando’s world in principle, but in action, patriarchy may seem like an affirmation of the biographer’s gender. For this reason, Orlando’s femininity, subsequently her androgyny, is suppressed through her lack of physicality, which only seems to ironically frame it.

The wardrobe the biographer provides does not contain Orlando’s androgynous tendencies completely. She finds the need to engage in cross-dressing in order to remember what

it was like to be a man, though it does not serve the same capacity as the Archduchess's. This comes about after the Archduke Henry — formerly the Archduchess Henrietta — beleaguers Orlando with proposals to marry. It is perhaps here that she realizes, prompting her wearing of male clothes, the extent of becoming fully feminine. Nell, a prostitute and doting on Orlando, mistakes her for being a man and seeks to become a lover, which “roused in Orlando all the feelings which become a man. She looked, she felt, she talked like one” (Woolf 158). Through only clothes, she is able to reaffirm her ability to play a male role, the biographer going so far as to refer to her as “him” by drawing on the perceptions of Nell. She directly contends against the biographer's attempts to dictate her dress, and hence her gender, by realizing that, “although the clothes control Orlando as she adjusts to womanhood, she is well aware that she is the one who chooses the clothes” (Burns 351). The biographer may hide her sexual traits through his initial dressing and description, but Orlando, unwilling to abandon her male heritage, takes charge of her own expression through cross-dressing. She, having “flung off her disguise and admitted herself a woman” (Woolf 159), befriends Nell. This friendship is as important as Nell's assumption that Orlando, when dressed in her male clothes, is a lover, as Orlando is able to occupy the spheres of both male and female gender roles to this streetwalker. Her need to reveal her true sex to Nell does reveal some need to stay honest to her sex, and the same can be said when she meets Shelmerdine.

Her future husband provides for Orlando the last piece of clothing. The ring provides what some believe to be a damning conformity to societal femininity, “seem[ing] at first to abandon her clitoris in the nineteenth century, when the disease reaches its apex” (Kitsi-Mitakou 128), the disease being hysteria. She does conform to a certain degree. Like Stephen, she is limited by the duties of her sex. She proves through Nell and her cross-dressing that there is

room to experiment with her fluctuating gender, but her freedoms are not entirely expansive. The source of some of her distress stems from her writing. Burns postulates, “In order to regain control of her writing, Orlando must give up her preferred social position of the single, sexually ambivalent subject. To save her writing, Orlando contemplates conformity” (353). She marries Shelmerdine in an attempt to save her passion, and the ring becomes part of her body. This marriage is, though, not a typical marriage, as Shel is gone a great deal of the time, allowing Orlando to freely explore and experiment with gender roles, just as she used to. She has conformed, but “she finds that she has conformed just enough to slip by unnoticed in the age, which she may also maintain a resistance to further constraint” (Burns 355). Just as when she realized that the biographer could not force her into conformity in dress, Orlando realizes that her ring, much like her marriage, may only define how she is viewed, not how she defines herself.

Her submission and lack thereof to her dressings and the roles they suggest only indicate this scant conformity; they do not imply weakness and her inability to resist sex roles. Like any human being, she must still operate within the parameters of society, or else face harsh persecution. Her use of male attire when she encounters Nell is rather dangerous, but it does prove her resistance to any sort of conformity. When she dons female clothing, she has the ability to experience “male desires” and cast off her trappings for male clothing. She proves that she is not hindered by either her former male existence or her current female one, that she can use both of them to construct her own form of gender. Neither does the ring constrain her, as she realizes that Shel is merely another engine by which she can vicariously experience her male self whilst regarding the gender implied both by her physical sex and the clothing she wears.

Chapter 2: The Framework Rather than the Frame: The Success of Subtlety

Virginia Woolf incorporated into her novel a myriad of sexes, genders, and sexualities, many of them being controversial, and in spite of treading on dangerous ground in terms of the subject matter and implied commentary, *Orlando* triumphed where others were left to face the criticism of the age. It is perhaps the parodic element of Woolf's work, allowing the more questionable issues she addresses to slip by unobvious, that saved it from the discovery of its themes and both the prosecution and persecution of society. Woolf's disguises her characters and their actions, be it through their clothing or through the vagueness of the narrator, in order to build up the framework of the various characters, sexes, genders, and couplings.

Where *Orlando*'s salvation is likely rooted the best is in its subtitle: *A Biography*. Breaking all convention of a typical biography or a novel, Woolf allows herself the license of reworking the building blocks of sex and gender as well as freeing herself of the confines of conventional morality and judgment. Comparing it to *The Well of Loneliness*, which did not fare so well in the eyes of its readers, *Orlando* avoided the mistake Hall made. Hall's novel brought to life controversial topics that were not comfortable with the audience, but that is not what brought it down. *Well* was marketed as "a polemical novel for social tolerance of lesbianism" (Parkes 434). Despite the character of Stephen residing to the fact that she is limited to the roles of her assigned sex, it is the fact that she becomes a lesbian martyr that ultimately damns the context with which readers would take Hall's message, especially at the trial (Parkes 443). Woolf approaches similar ideas with far different methods. *Orlando* is meant to be laughed at, while *Well* is meant to shock and invoke sympathy. Hall's work was basically calling for an immediate questioning of the morals of the day. *Orlando* would provoke very similar questions and speak many of the same criticisms, but she modeled her characters using different means.

Hall designed characters whom fell into the category of “sexual invert,” and though it was a manner of justifying her characters medically and socially, this design made the characters’ lack of normality much more evident. Birkett, one of the lawyers fighting for Hall’s benefit, “took pains in court to distinguish between ‘perversion’ and what Ellis had termed ‘inversion’: a natural hormonal imbalance whereby an individual experiences desire only for members of the same biological sex” (Parkes 440-41). Terming someone an invert justified their condition — however, under the stipulation that it was treatable — in some legal proceedings, but it still called attention to the fact that Stephen and her fellow characters, along with the advocacy of their story, were not typical in the world. For Orlando, once he felt disquieted by his own masculinity, a transformation occurs in order to facilitate his embrace of femininity. Stephen is termed an invert, and thus she remains painfully aware of that fact, additionally conscious of the limitations that being an invert imposes on the individual. Orlando is a man, and then she is a woman. She even obtains, in the story, the benefit of the courts, “the sex change is even endorsed by law” (Parkin-Gounelas 143). There are instances where Orlando comes close to the border of inversion, but she manages to still remain either male or female.

When the correlation between sex and gendered-clothing is interrupted, the character causing such an interruption risks becoming seen as inverted and pathologized. Transvestitism was also an element of sexual inversion that Woolf had to handle carefully, but its presence was necessary to tackle the beliefs of society. She remedies Orlando’s cross-dressing by never giving the details of her body. By doing so, “Orlando is so alienated from her own body and all external reality” (Rado 162) that she is able to suspend the negative connotations that come with wearing clothes of the opposite gender or sex. While Rado argues that it is at the end of the novel that this alienation occurs and that it causes great madness in Orlando, it occurs far earlier with Nell.

Orlando adopts the clothing of a male, and she becomes a man, “for a man he was to her [Nell]” (Woolf 158). This brief change of pronouns implies that the perceived sex matched the clothing, therefore absolving Orlando from being an invert. The Archduchess’s and Orlando’s transvesticist function “as a first plane of obliterating gender polarities and patriarchal notions of female desire” (Kitsi-Mitakou 137). The gender-bending quality of transvestites directly challenges the notion that male and female are fixed states with expectations of dress and behavior. The Archduchess seems absurd in her garb; it feels unnatural, but the purpose of “her” challenging the elements of dress in relation to sex and gender is evident. When Orlando is a female dressed as a man, she is not treated as a woman in men’s clothing. She transcends the moniker of a simple transvestite, as Woolf demonstrates that such a pairing of clothes to human does not have to be parodic. As Nell becomes more infatuated with the idea of becoming a lover to Orlando, she feels the need to shed her male clothing, promptly becoming a woman again upon doing so. This is an indication that she is challenging the heterogeneous pairing that would have come with the two individuals’ genders, but it is also a reluctance — and it would not be the first occurrence of this — to perform in same-sex acts.

Radclyffe Hall’s novel showcased blatant female homosexuality, despite it being veiled by the intense masculinity of Stephen, and while *Orlando* is far less obvious, lesbianism plays a pivotal, albeit subtle, role, just as it had in the lives of Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West. Orlando’s first act of lesbian desire occurs pre-transformation but is realized after the change. Sasha, though an androgynous character, is undeniably of the female sex. When Orlando, now a woman, reflects on Sasha as a woman, “she cried, she knew Sasha as she was” (Woolf 120); she knew her and loved her, now and then as a woman would, but having not been female then Orlando’s love was somehow tainted. After the transformation, “after this cunning

naturalization...this love is now purified of the epistemological distortions of gender division” (Minow-Pinkney 134). Since her love has not changed — and Minow-Pinkney calls it a “naturalisation” and falls into the category of critics who assume Orlando was always a woman — becomes an issue of lesbianism. Strangely, though, this is one of the instances of homosexuality where Orlando does not flee, suggesting that perhaps it was not that she had always needed to embrace femininity, but that the previously mentioned disgust of her former masculinity was the problem.

When Orlando could not determine Sasha’s sex, the thought that she might be a male put all forms of romance beyond his reach, a definite sign of the characters’ (and perhaps the author’s) reluctance to entertain male-male pairings, and this is strange, considering female homosexuality was far more controversial. She builds upon the ideas of lesbianism without being explicit, but she also has to combat the common notions associated with women and their desire. The ideas pervasive in society during Woolf’s time were based primarily off of male observations. Havelock Ellis postulated an idea, which became the popular belief of lesbians, that lesbians were the result of having a man’s soul trapped within a woman’s body, the opposite of what a gay man was. Woolf wanted to dismantle this notion and build it back up with feminine ownership, but with the ways of the day, she could not make the same mistake that Hall would eventually make. By dealing with the genders of her characters rather than making sex the concrete focus, Woolf can hide this new brand of lesbianism. Orlando is not perfect in his/her views of sex, gender, and relationships, and he comes built with the morality of Woolf’s age. This also helps to disguise her attempts to introduce a lesbian element to the text.

Lesbianism is not the only subtlety Woolf sought to embed in her text. Orlando’s eventual husband becomes the keynote lesbian coupling. If Shelmerdine was truly a woman

before she became a man, then there is an aspect of lesbianism to be considered. This implied lesbianism, along with the physical heterosexuality of the marriage, allows both of these androgynous characters to explore, not only their multiple genders, but the multiple sexualities that they are able to embody. Heterosexuality provides an adequate mask for the lesbian undertones, yet neither of them becomes the forefront for either Shel's or Orlando's sexualities. They build off of one another in order to create a scaffold on which to erect their sexuality. Their changes of sex create a situation where neither hetero- nor homosexuality can contain their relationship to one another. As Michel Foucault refers to in his introduction to *Herculine Barbin*, "Most of the time, those who relate their change of sex belong to a world that is strongly bisexual" (*Herculine* xiv). Foucault, because of his subject matter in *Herculine*, identifies change in sex as being uneasiness with one's former sex. Orlando's dysphoric nature was associated with a caged gender in the male form. Changing sex allows Orlando to meet with another androgynous figure and to engage in a relationship that would have previously been taboo. Orlando's world is strongly bisexual, but Woolf is able to camouflage their bisexuality, their androgyny, in an acceptable medium.

Radclyffe Hall performed an admirable and audacious act when she composed her novel. Facing the critique and prosecution of the law, she put lesbianism, inversion, and transvestitism on the front lines regardless. Woolf saw the pitfalls of such a bold move. She knew that her writing career would be affected if her tribute to her lover in *Vita* was too outspoken in its messages. Besides the lesbian and cross-dressing qualities, even androgyny needed to be treated with a light hand. Woolf designed her characters to be multifaceted; their genders, sexualities, roles, and even their natural sexes were layered and carefully constructed and placed. Orlando is not defined by any one overarching characteristic. From Stephen's birth, she was doomed to be

stigmatized as an invert, capable only of civil and moral unrest. Woolf's focus on the framework rather than the framing of sex, gender, and sexuality allowed her characters to thrive in their "bisexual world", and this foundation that Woolf lays out allows for flexibility and mobility within itself, for evolution, change, and incorporation.

Chapter 3: The Androgynous Zero: The Ionization of Genders and the Neutralization of the Androgyne

The androgynous character faces a particularly difficult task of incorporating the stereotypical accepted genders of society — those of male and female — without canceling out their effects and being rendered genderless, and thus sexless. With a motley assortment of genders to express, it is easy for readers (or characters) to, rather than define a new place for androgynes in the gendered and sexual hierarchy, remove all traces of gender from their perception and either leave the subject without a gender or redefine them under acceptable sex-gender parameters. The view that the male and female genders “oppose” each other implies contention, which leads to bitter competition over an individual’s identity. When a suitable match cannot be obtained, the individual is left essentially castrated by their peers. In this void of sexlessness, however, in the realm of the androgynous zero, an androgyne can choose to either remain as they have been deemed or build up a new gender under their androgynous potential. Many characters in *Orlando* are able to place themselves in the latter option, but the line they must toe between identity and nonidentity is one that not all androgynous individuals come out so successful in. The genderless space they are thrust into must first be reconciled.

The transformation’s suddenness leaves Orlando without a gender to cling on, in a sex that is wholly foreign. She cannot look to her former masculinity as a basis for her to construct a new gender, at least not at the outset. Having been disturbed so deeply by Henrietta’s reflective masculinity, Orlando seeks to embrace femininity first. The transition from male to female, not of female to male, is vital, given the already androgynous qualities of the female. In an examination of Lord Alfred Tennyson’s poetry, Diane Long Hoeveler explores the idea of woman as an avatar to convey both sexes: “Androgyny in Tennyson’s poetry ‘liberates’ the sexes

from restricting notions of sexual roles, while it also confirms the image of the woman as sexual ‘Other,’ the Eternal Feminine whose sole function is to complement the dominant masculine figure” (1). This analysis holds two separate notions, the first being that androgyny, at least in the scope of Tennyson’s work, frees the sexes from their prescribed roles. Orlando regularly challenges what is expected of her female sex, often through her dress and later when she questions what the true nature of marriage can be for a woman. This makes the androgynous and female Orlando particularly suited to redefine the roles of women while remaining an “other” through her masculine heritage. The idea of the “Eternal Feminine,” however, this subservient figure opposite of the masculine, betrays the proposed otherness of the female as labeling it antagonistic to masculinity, assumed to be in contention with each other.

Orlando’s system of androgyny, much like the androgyny of Tennyson’s Princess, runs the risk of becoming inimical, causing a rivalry between the genders, and this is not a pessimistic notion Hoeveler presents. Unless one is able to harbor both sexes simultaneously, sex and gender will be at odds with each other, especially if there are both male and female in either case, but the hermaphroditic solution is not necessarily the right one. Society demands one sex to one gender. *Herculine Barbin* is a prime example of this. Visibly having ambiguous genitalia, Herculine was assigned to the female sex, yet later examination proved that she had the biological characteristics of a male, despite the feminine façade. Throughout her writing and her description, she harbors masculine desires and wishes, but she regularly shows that she is more comfortable in her femininity. Wanting her lover Sara to feel comfortable with their relationship, she often ties their troubles together, once by saying, “Try to imagine, if that is possible, what our predicament was for us both!” (*Herculine* 51). She lumps their problems into one category, not distinguishing between their later separate problems. Herculine, then referred to as Alexina,

regularly establishes her connection to femininity: “As I was Sara’s *intimate girlfriend*, nobody was constrained in my presence,” both of them working in a female-rich environment, “naturally, I was initiated into all those secret little details that are exchanged among persons of the same sex” (*Herculine* 73). The use of the term “naturally” indicates that there is a connection to the female sex, or at least feminine ways, and aside from seeking social justification for loving another woman (she, noting biological limitations, later abandons this notion), she does not show an indication that she has suppressed masculinity that would justify a change. Thus, once her own change does occur, her newly established male sex must contend with her socially silenced femininity. Herculine is not able to identify with her assumed masculinity and is no longer allowed to express what she acquired as a female. Orlando’s use of gender-neutral clothing allows her to ease into the roles of women and learn the subtleties that come with it. She does not have this same contention that Herculine does; Orlando draws on the experience she has being both sexes, whereas Herculine can only long for what she once had. Orlando transitioned from one sex to another, but Herculine loses all sex completely by admitting to her hermaphroditism and androgynous desire.

The loss of sex is a castration that extends to both sex and gender. Balzac’s *Sarrasine* deals heavily with castration, both physically and figuratively. The castrato forces us to look at the nature of sex and our partitioning of various genders and those who subscribe to them — also in relation to their sex — by comparing them to someone who no longer has a sex. La Zambinella is our castrato, yet s/he, fooling Sarrasine, is the ideal embodiment of physical female beauty. Being an opera singer and an actor, she is also able to study and imitate the role and behavior of a female. Zambinella’s sexless body, though beautiful, is stooped in nothing, just like the very definition of beauty, which “(unlike ugliness) cannot really be explained: in each

part of the body it stands out, repeats itself, but it does not describe itself” (Barthes 33). If beauty cannot be described, then what function does it play? Barthes goes on to say that beauty becomes an idea of “catachresis...a basic figure, more basic perhaps than metonymy, since it speaks around an empty object of comparison: the figure of beauty” (34). The beauty that *Sarrasine* derives inspiration from is in itself a derivation of nothingness. The feminine beauty suggests androgynous potential, and the beauty emphasizes both the lack of sex and the incorporation of both genders. The castrato again, draws attention to both sexes and our need to classify characters into these very distinct categories.

Sarrasine represents a character wholly obsessed with depicting the sexes and the genders as two aspects that have distinct qualities and are tied concisely. Being of multiple sexes and genders, Orlando has a difficult time fitting into any set category. Barthes describes how *Sarrasine* presents the various sexes:

At first glance, *Sarrasine* sets forth a complete structure of the sexes (two opposing terms, a mixed and a neuter). This structure might then be defined in phallic terms: (1) to be the phallus (the men...); (2) to have it (the women...); (3) to have it and not to be it (the androgynous: Filippo, Sappho); not to have it or to be it (the castrato). (35)

Barthes, arguing that though many characters could fill each role, remarks on how this division is “unsatisfactory.” They do not occupy the same symbolic value. Take Orlando, who has occupied all of these categories. Strictly in terms of sex, Orlando, having been both man and woman, has possessed the assumed male phallus and had it. She has also had it without being it (her marriage to Shel) and been the castrato (living in gender-neutral clothes among the gypsies). However, looking at just Orlando’s female self, she possesses, and therefore is, the phallic object in the

clitoris, while still remaining undeniably female in sex. As Burns states, “If one might assume that sex is one of the single most essential attributes of identity, the self here is a collection of many possible sexualities” (350). Zambinella, like Orlando, represents these many sexualities. Capable of imitating one, the castrato is able to draw in Sarrasine, whom is tricked both by Zambinella and himself. To Sarrasine, the feminine beauty of Zambinella must be tied to a feminine sex, so when it revealed that the castrato has no sex, he must immediately ascribe a sex to the singer, which happens to be the sex which he was born with. Sarrasine takes it upon himself to impose sexual identity onto this non-sexed, multi-gendered being, yet in the process, he loses his own sexuality.

The function of the castrato is also to castrate, to remove sex and sexuality from other individuals. Zambinella is set up to remove sexuality from all that encounter her and fall for her ruse. Her own name suggests danger, as Barthes puts it: “...on its way to the subject’s patronymic, the Z has encountered some pitfall. Z is the letter of mutilation...the letter of deviation...the initial of castration” (106-7). Sarrasine sees in Zambinella a projection of himself, much like Orlando sees in the Archduchess. He sees — not so much a foretelling of his castration — a mirror by which he can observe his own castration, but he is blinded by the feminine beauty Zambinella exudes. When Barthes recognized this, he titled his examination *S/Z* to show that there was a correlation between Sarrasine’s feminine name and Zambinella’s castrating name: “S and Z are in a relation of graphological inversion: the same letter seen from the other side of the mirror...Hence the slash (/) confronting the *S* of SarraSine and the *Z* of Zambinella has a panic function: it is the slash of censure, the surface of the mirror, the wall of hallucination...” (107). Castratos do not always exercise their ability to castrate others; in the case of Zambinella, she acts merely as a mirror for Sarrasine. It is also very likely that

androgynes can perform self-castration, but Orlando is able to avoid remaining sexless and genderless.

The idea that Orlando's body cannot define her gender and sexuality has been explored — her clothing and behaviors being substituted for her lack of physicality — but Orlando also willingly disillusioned herself from that lack of body as well. By denying the limits her physical self, “Woolf exposes [Orlando's] ‘androgyny’ as a kind of female castration, a forced lack, a requisite sublimation that precipitates a terrifying void of sexless absence” (Rado 165). Against Rado's analysis, Orlando does not give in to being sexless. She remains undeniably female, but her dual-gendered experiences combine to fill in this supposed void. Zambinella helped Sarrasine to recognize his own castration, hence his own androgynous potential, but he fell to being a sexless being, unable to cope with his own masculinity or his notions of femininity. He dies, but Orlando does not “die,” as Rado suggests. Orlando does undergo a physical castration. When she transforms, she is forced to abandon her physical male self. However, in becoming a woman, she re-establishes herself under the banner of a new sex, a type of anti-castration. She is not given a describable physical body, covering her in a veil of castration, and she does reject much of her own physicality, allowing for a self-imposed identity of castration; she does, though, embrace her androgyny and saves herself from becoming a permanently lost castrato, like Sarrasine and Herculine, while still operating under some of the conventional expectations of her gender, often contingent on her clothing.

Orlando's shifting between the genders is similar to her transformation from male to female. It is this ability to construct one's gender as they need or are able to in the time they occupy that determines whether an individual's or character's androgyny will be successful. As has been seen with Orlando's use of gendered clothing, an androgynous individual has some

measure of control over how their gender, linked to their sex, is viewed. Orlando is able to shift “from woman to man, from man to woman, as easily as she changes clothes, metamorphosing in a permanent flux. The author does not present androgyny as a Hegelian synthesis of man and woman; Orlando lives alteration not resolution” (Minow-Pinkney 131). Her androgyny is not fixed. It is defined by its lack of permanency, its flow. This androgyny is a form of “superfluidity,” being able to shift seamlessly between genders, sexual roles, and sexes — though most changes of sex occur only once. All androgynes possess the ability to change gender (at times even legal sex), often having to pass through the realm of castration first, but many still come through their gender or sexual transformations singularly gendered beings. Orlando’s superfluidity allows her to flow in both directions. The ionizing quality of genders and sexes neutralizes itself in the medium of androgyny, and they are then redefined as their own entities, not as opposites, which is the popular way to script gender. Orlando seamlessly employs this skill, but she still has moments where she falls into the roles of her gender or sex, whichever it may be at the time. In J. J. Wilson’s chapter of *New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf*, he states, “...the change in gender, and of costume, becomes more than just a tourist trap,” then making a reference to Carolyn Heilbrun’s work, “...our hope for the future salvation in androgyny, ‘a movement away from sexual polarization and the prison of gender toward a world in which individual roles and the modes of personal behavior can be freely chosen’” (Wilson 179). Orlando’s ability to freely choose her gender that she will express is important to Heilbrun’s analysis of Woolf’s ideal androgyny. She does become a victim to her own society, as she is called to settle within the confines of her roles as a woman, both sexually and in a gendered sense.

Orlando comes to find that her androgyny is not complete. She has to accept the fact that she does have insurmountable limitations. She needs an acceptable and safe outlet for her desires, and she finds that in her androgynous complement. Shelmerdine enters the fray of Orlando's androgynous life in order to quell the potentially dangerous conflicts that come from an androgynous mind occupying a sexed, potentially castrated, body. Feeling the twinge of femininity taking control, Orlando seeks a husband, a complement to her female self. She finds in Shelmerdine an androgynous complement, instead, as they both rightly identify what the other used to be. Though Shel remains aloof after their marriage, and though "Orlando thinks she joins her lover," which she has in a sense, Shel mostly acts as a mirror, "essentially a projection of herself" (Rado 163). It is easy to assume that both are merely slipping into the roles dictated by their sexes and current genders, but their androgyny feeds into each other's, as Woolf's original intent may have been. When Woolf first drafted her manuscript, the ending that she had planned was entirely different than the version she chose for the publication. Her original ending was as follows, according to Wilson:

Shel cried Orlando!
...the wild goose —
the secret of life is...

THE END March 17th, 1928

The deliberate ambiguity of the first line is the key. Who is calling to whom? Due to the lack of quotation marks, we cannot see if it was Shel calling to Orlando or vice versa, and we must assume that, because of their androgyny and similarity to each other, the reader should see that they are calling out to each other in unison. Their androgyny flows to each other, no longer becoming distinguishable amongst them. Their sexes and genders become as fleeting as the wild goose, and Woolf leaves the secret of life to be determined by her readers.

Conclusion

The use of the androgyne by Woolf was risky. In *Orlando*, she exposed herself to the persecution that came from questioning the established canon of sex and gender relations and definitions. She also faced the possibility that her portrayal of these androgynous individuals would fall to permanent and damning castration. She may have not realized it at *Orlando*'s conception, but the joining of Orlando and Shelmerdine completed the androgynous circle. The male and female genders have been at odds, possessing qualities seemingly contradictory to the other (being treated as though one was a positive value and the other was negative). In combining, characters like Orlando become androgynous zeroes, applying the values of both sexes but being subject to their neutralizing effects. Orlando's ability to shift between the genders — also between sexes, though this transformation occurs only once in Orlando, the second transformation being of Shelmerdine — and her exploration of these various sexualities, sexes, and genders allowed her to construct an androgyny that was sufficient in itself for a while. In order to combat the constant castrating nature of her condition, she needs Shel to alleviate the radiational effects produced by combining ionized genders. He can portray and act as she wishes, and he also allows her to see that she is able to function outside the normal parameters and roles imposed by marriage upon her sex and her stance as a woman in the relationship. The biographer began the process by showing Orlando in a light that he/she deemed appropriate. Orlando contends against her portrayal and, like her questioning of sex and gender, fights against notions imposed upon her by devaluing them and imposing a new quantity to a gender, altering the outcome and sum of genders that an androgynous character is capable of. Perhaps we may never know exactly what Woolf wished to instill in her readers, as critics are still arguing over whose interpretation is the correct one. The reader may only observe as the characters in a work such as

Orlando, their actions being galvanized in ink, contend with themselves and the societies they emulate. Despite being given the limited scope of language, Orlando is able to define herself as a new type of being, a new type of androgyne, one that still has the ability to evolve through the years and influence viewpoints that, like the chronology of her world and biography, might do better if they were to break down the notions and the very concept of time of an age.

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Education

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- Major: English with an emphasis in Creative Writing, Bachelor of Arts with Honors
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Experience

- **Library Reference Assistant** University Park, PA May 2009 – Present
- **Editing Internship** University Park, PA May 2010 – Present
 - Dr. Cheryl Glenn

Awards

- **Phi Kappa Phi** University Park, PA May 2010 – Present
- **Dean's List**

Activities

- **ENRA (Eastview-Nittany Residence Association)** August 2009 – Present
 - Activities Chair: May 2010 - Present