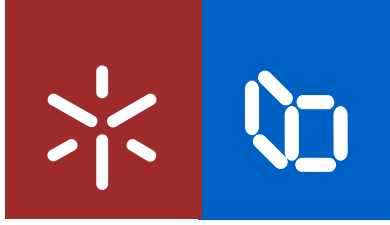


Universidade do Minho
Instituto de Letras e Ciências Humanas

Noémie Alloza

**Gender Issues in the Novel Orlando and its
Film Adaptation: Questions of Sexual and
Gendered Identity/ies**



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Dissertação de Mestrado
Mestrado em Língua, Literatura e Cultura Inglesas

Trabalho efetuado sob a orientação da
Professora Doutora Margarida Isabel Esteves Silva Pereira

julho de 2020

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Gender Issues in the Novel *Orlando* and its Film Adaptation: Questions of Sexual and Gendered Identity/ies

Abstract

This thesis deals with gender issues in *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf and its film adaptation by Sally Potter. It aims at studying the social place of women through the centuries, the implications of the change of sex, the construction of an identity and the fluidity of gender and sexuality. The change of sex, and by extension of gender, lived by Orlando (who was inspired in the person of Vita Sackville-West) is a way to reveal her own identity, her true self. Reading *Orlando*, one wonders if the gender identity defines the identity of a person, if the gender can reveal an identity. We will deal with these questions with reference to gender theory and criticism, namely, framing the analysis within the work of Judith Butler. Moreover, the originality of the character Orlando, who becomes a woman after being a man, reinforces the ambiguity of the identity and leads one to ask oneself about the representation of the sexual and gendered identity, male and then female, and about the differences in the treatment of a man and a woman, both in writing and in film. It seems fundamental to reflect upon androgyny, since Orlando could represent an androgynous mind. The fact that *Orlando* begins in the end of the sixteenth century and finishes in the twentieth century presents a good illustration for the study of the representation of an identity through the centuries; one can understand the impact of the centuries on an individual, firstly male, then, female. Finally, *Orlando* accounts for the place of the woman through the centuries and it seems relevant to mention that Virginia Woolf was a feminist. As such she might expose some of her ideas in her work and writing the story of Orlando is a way to show the differences between the genders and the inequities lived by the women over time.

Keywords: androgyny, gender, identity, Orlando, sexuality.

Questões de género no romance *Orlando* e na adaptação cinematográfica: questões de identidade(s) sexual e de género

Resumo

Esta dissertação trata de questões de género em *Orlando* de Virginia Woolf e na adaptação cinematográfica de Sally Potter. Visa estudar o lugar social das mulheres ao longo dos séculos, as implicações da mudança de sexo, a construção de uma identidade e a fluidez de género e sexualidade. A mudança de sexo, e por extensão, de género, vivida por Orlando (que foi inspirado na pessoa de Vita Sackville-West) é uma maneira de revelar a sua própria identidade, o verdadeiro ser. Lendo *Orlando*, nós perguntamo-nos se a identidade de género define a identidade de uma pessoa, se o género pode revelar uma identidade. Trataremos dessas questões com referência à teoria e à crítica de género, enquadrando a análise no trabalho de Judith Butler. Parece fundamental refletir sobre essas noções de identidade e género mas também sobre a androginia, dado que Orlando poderia representar uma mente andrógina. Além disso, a originalidade do personagem Orlando, que se torna mulher depois de ser homem, reforça a ambiguidade de identidade e leva-nos a questionar a representação da identidade sexual e de género, masculina e feminina, tanto na escrita como em filme .

O facto de *Orlando* começar no final do século XVI e terminar no século XX apresenta uma boa ilustração para o estudo da representação de uma identidade ao longo dos séculos; pode-se entender o impacto dos séculos em um indivíduo, primeiro homem e depois mulher. Finalmente, Orlando explica o lugar da mulher ao longo dos séculos e parece relevante mencionar que Virginia Woolf era feminista. Como tal, ela pode expor algumas de suas idéias em seu trabalho e escrever a história de Orlando é uma maneira de mostrar as diferenças entre os sexos e as desigualdades vividas pelas mulheres ao longo do tempo.

Palavras-chave: androginia, género, identidade, Orlando, sexualidade.

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Introduction

Nowadays, more than ever, the notion of gendered identity is called into question, particularly with the popularity of drag queens and also with the emergence of a third gender, a non-binary gender identity. The gender issue is indeed at the heart of the current debates; hence *Orlando*, which deals with these questions of gendered and sexual identities, is even more relevant than in the twentieth century, when it was written, and falls within the actual topics. Back in the first half of the twentieth century, Virginia Woolf was considered a precursor for her thoughts about women, her feminist ideas indeed concerned many women and even men, mostly educated people. She was asked to write essays about women, as was the case with her best-known essay *A Room of One's Own*, inspired by her lectures delivered in October 1928 at the University of Cambridge, especially at Newnham College and Girton College, two colleges for women. It was consequently an essay written by a woman addressed to women. But when she wrote *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf did not have this idea of exposing her convictions about women, it was more felt as a distraction from her other works, considered by herself as serious experimental books¹. However, the novel, described as a playful mock biography² that the author wrote for fun³, is actually an innovative work which shows her feminist convictions, as for the right of women over the centuries and denounces gender inequalities. *Orlando* is indeed a story, happening from the sixteenth century to the twentieth century, of a young noble man who becomes a woman at the age of thirty, and with this change the main character Orlando realizes the inequalities between men and women but also finds, in a way, her true self, as a woman. As reader, one realizes also the inequalities between the two sexes in a variety of areas. With this work Virginia Woolf provides a better understanding of the sexual injustice from the sixteenth century to the twentieth century. Therefore, this work approaches the themes of inequalities, but also of literature, of writing, especially poetry, of historical obligations due to royal power or prejudices, of love and more judiciously of identity, sexuality and gender. In relation to writing, the character of Orlando is a means to show the differences made in regards to the sex of the writer, as much as the social and historical obligations. One will indeed see that the sex and the social status of the writer change the possibility of writing and obviously the obligations compelled to each sex, here especially to men. Virginia Woolf discussed the women's constraints to write in her essays and diaries, but in *Orlando* she also highlighted the constraints for men of a certain social rank who wanted to write. A noble man, in the sixteenth century, was mocked if

¹ The Diary of Virginia Woolf -volume 3 1925-30-, page 131

² Back cover of *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf, edited by Brenda Lyons

³ The Diary of Virginia Woolf -volume 3 1925-30-, page 131

he liked to write poetry, because he had to go to war, fight for his family's honour and not be interested in poetry or he was considered weak; poetry was also considered to be an entertainment reserved for poor people. The theme of love is also important in *Orlando* because the main character is, in a way, governed by his/her love stories and each love story helps him/her to build his/her identity. Then, in terms of sexuality and gender the notion of identity is reconsidered, one has to omit one's prejudices and rethink these notions. The notion of identity is noticeably broad, it could be defined as the characteristics determining who a person is, one's class, one's race, one's ethnicity, one's feeling of belonging to a gender, one's sex etc. In *Orlando* most of these axes of identity are represented through the main character, who discovers progressively his/her identity, as it were, his/her true self. In this dissertation, the questions of sexual identity and gendered identity are central and will be defined and redefined throughout the different sections, with the help of theorist works, particularly of Judith Butler. Personally, I chose to study these notions in the novel *Orlando* and in the film adaptation of the same name because I find interesting the complexity of the terms gender and identity, I also have always been intrigued by the genders, the gendered identity, by everything that concerns these questions. The point of view of Virginia Woolf and of the film director Sally Potter about women makes this study even more interesting. These two women have in common their feminist convictions, they fought for the right of women and *Orlando* is a way to express their ideas while entertaining.

One could wonder how Virginia Woolf, by changing the sex of Orlando, questions the notions of sexual and gendered identities.

In the first place it is necessary to contextualize the setting, one will gain insight on *Orlando* if one knows the conditions of writing, why and how Virginia Woolf wrote this novel, what were her purposes and also one needs a brief summary of the story, of the relationships lived by the main character as a man and as a woman and of the gender issues in the novel. In a second part the construction of the identity of Orlando as a woman will be analysed, in other words the construction of the female identity, if there is one, with the revelation of the identity of the main character – her true self - with the change of sex, from man to woman. It will be interesting to understand by what occasion Orlando becomes a woman, besides her physical change. This part of the dissertation will also focus on the notion of identity, showing the different aspects of one's identity and particularly of Orlando, as regards his/her development through the novel. We will see that the genders, the sexual and the gendered identities are fluid, with respect to *Orlando* and other theoretical works, especially by Judith Butler. Moreover, we will see how the theory of "androgynous mind" and how the link between sexuality and gender prove this fluidity. Finally, we will analyse the gender issues in the film *Orlando*, how the

film director Sally Potter chose to represent, in a way, these notions of sexuality, of identity, and of gender and what changes she did in comparison with the novel that shows her own vision of sexual and gendered identities. This last part shows that everyone has their own vision of gender and of the identity and their own way to define it, this is what makes this thesis interesting.

1. How and why was *Orlando* written?

1.a) Contextual setting

In 1927, Virginia Woolf was struggling to write a new book after the success of her novel *To the Lighthouse*, she admitted in her diary that she felt unable to write, she lacked imagination, she indeed thought herself “virgin, passive, blank of ideas” (Woolf, 1982, p.131). On the night of the 13th March 1927, she finally conceived the idea of a new book which was originally called “The Jessamy Brides”, telling the story of two poor and solitary women. As she wrote in her diary⁴, she wanted to write a Defoe narrative, she thought “I might write a Defoe narrative for fun” (Woolf, 1982, p. 131), that is to write in the manner of the 18th century English author, which is described as “the art or craft by which Defoe has written history that sounds like fiction and fiction with the verisimilitude of history” (Harlan, 1931, p.55). *Orlando* is indeed subtitled “a biography”. Virginia Woolf played with this genre, she mixed history and fiction as Defoe did. She also wrote in her diary about the style of writing her new book, she wrote as a confession: “I am writing *Orlando* half in a mock style very clear & plain, so that people will understand every word. But the balance between truth & fantasy must be careful” (Woolf, 1982, p.162), this balance between truth and fantasy of which she spoke connects with the Defoe’s balance between history and fiction. She explained her need for newness and lightness, a book that everyone could understand, after her too “serious poetic experimental books” (Woolf, 1982, p.131), she felt the need for something different, a sort of experimental book, a fiction that she decided to write “for fun” (Woolf, 1982, p.131). This is how emerged the idea of *Orlando, A Biography*, even if Virginia Woolf had, at the beginning, another version of what it could be, it started with the will to mock her usual style, as she wrote herself: “Satire is to be the main note – satire & wildness. (...) My own lyric vein is to be satirised. Everything mocked.” (Woolf, 1982, p.131). But when she finished to write and she remembered that *Orlando* begun “as a joke” (Woolf, 1982, p.177) she wrote that “it may fall between stools, be too long for a joke, & too frivolous for a serious book” (Woolf, 1982, p.177), so the book was in this interval between serious and light, the idea of balance is still present and correctly describes *Orlando*. Moreover, this idea of balance also applies to the sex, between man and woman, the sexuality, between heterosexuality and homosexuality, the gender, between male and female, and a lot of themes in the book. This idea of balance, which could be associated with the idea of duality, expresses the main character Orlando, since (s)he represents the equilibrium between male and female, as it will be seen later.

⁴ The Diary of Virginia Woolf -volume 3 1925-30-, page 131

To get back to the timeline of writing, later this year, as Virginia Woolf was still thinking about her new work, she changed her mind about the story, she was no longer thinking about these two brides mentioned above but about her friends. Even if she had a different idea for the characters, she still had the purpose to write an “amusing book” and “fantastic” (Woolf, 1982, p.157). At this period, in September 1927, she had already invented the character of Orlando, inspired by her intimate friend Vita Sackville-West, with whom Virginia Woolf might have a love story: “Vita should be Orlando, a young nobleman” (Woolf, 1982, p.157). The fact that Orlando was inspired by Vita is interesting because of the ambiguous relationship she had with the author; Orlando also experienced this ambiguous bond with women as a woman. Moreover, Vita lived some injustices suffered by the character Orlando when she became a woman, it was a way for Virginia Woolf to denounce these injustices. In October, the idea became increasingly intelligible, she indeed wrote: “a biography beginning in the year 1500 & continuing to the present day, called Orlando: Vita; only with a change about from one sex to another.” (Woolf, 1982, p.161), she therefore had the type of book she wanted to write, a biography, the chronology, over the centuries, the name of the main character and the key aspect, the change of sex. She thought that she was going to write expeditiously, in less than 3 months, but she finally ended her book in March 1928 and it was published on 11 October 1928.

When she began to write *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf did not have the purpose of showing her convictions about women but she wanted to write “a most amusing book” (Woolf, 1982, p.157). However, her ideas and particularly her fight for women’s rights are exposed in the novel, when she presented the inequalities between the two sexes, after the change of sex of Orlando. She fought for women’s freedom of expression, in relation to writing she wanted women to write without bans determined by men, as she wrote in her paper “Professions for women” (Woolf, 2015, p. 196):

To speak without figure she had thought of something, something about the body, about the passions which it was unfitting for her as a woman to say. Men, her reason told her, would be shocked. The consciousness of — what men will say of a woman who speaks the truth about her passions had roused her from her artist’s state of unconsciousness. She could write no more. The trance was over. Her imagination could work no longer. This I believe to be a very common experience with women writers — they are impeded by the extreme conventionality of the other sex. For though men sensibly allow themselves great freedom in these respects, I doubt that they realize or can control the extreme severity with which they condemn such freedom in women.

In the essay "Professions for women" Virginia Woolf explains ironically her profession, that she called "literature". In this extract, she explains that women could not write what they wanted, particularly about sexuality, because of the conventions of men. Here, she denounces the 'extreme severity' of the men towards women's freedom of expression. She also fought for women's financial freedom, as developed in her essay *A Room of One's Own*, where she spoke of "the reprehensible poverty of our sex" (Woolf, 1995, p.29), here "our" includes her and the women for whom this essay is addressed. Finally, by denouncing the 'male control' over women's writings, over women's finances, she fought for women to have the same rights as the men, particularly in their professional activities. In some ways, *Orlando* is part of her fight for women, while entertaining.

1.b) Gender issues in the novel

The novel *Orlando* describes the life of the eponymous main character, since his childhood as a little boy of the sixteenth-century who longed for war until her writing career as a woman in the present. The book begins indeed with sixteen years old Orlando "slicing at the head of a Moor" (Woolf, 1993, p.11), dreaming of following in the footsteps of his fathers and going to the war. Despite his will to be a warrior some personality traits show his sensitivity, as his love for solitude, which is moreover inflated by the biographer: "Orlando naturally loved solitary places, vast views, and to feel himself for ever and ever and ever alone" (Woolf, 1993, p.14), for writing and his sort of obsession for the death: "All ends in death,' Orlando would say" (Woolf, 1993, p.32). From the outset, one understands that Orlando is not like other boys of his age, he thinks differently; as regards the rest of the story one could already imagine that he does not fit as a man. Indeed, his appearance is ambiguous. The description of Orlando is of a young boy, but the author uses words that are easily connected with pureness and innocence, characteristics normally associated with femininity. Reading the physical portrayal of Orlando, the reader could think about a boy or about a girl equally: "the red of the cheeks was covered with peach down; the down on the lips was only a little thicker than the down on the cheeks. The lips themselves were short and slightly drawn back over teeth of an exquisite and almond whiteness" (Woolf, 1993, p. 12). To summarize Orlando's life and thus the novel, the Queen Elizabeth I gave him the monastic house and made him her Treasurer and Steward when he was still a young man. At that time, he explored his sexuality outside the Court, in east London, but also inside the Court where he almost married three women, until his meeting the Muscovite Princess Sasha, during the Great Frost, who will be talked about later. Then, he slept for seven days, and when he awoke, he became melancholic, he chose "a life of extreme solitude" (Woolf, 1993, p.49), he was interested in reading

and then in writing, especially poetry. For this very reason he invited the poet Nicholas Greene who mocked him and wrote a satire about him, after that Orlando declared: "I have done with men." (Woolf, 1993, p. 67). He devoted his life to his dogs, to nature and to his house until his meeting with the mysterious Archduchess Harriet, who will be discussed later. Due to this meeting Orlando preferred to run away and become Ambassador in Constantinople. It was during this period that he changed sex. The night after his crowning as a Duke, Orlando married a gipsy dancer and remained asleep for the second time, but this time, he woke up as a woman. As told by the biographer "Orlando remained precisely as he had been." (Woolf, 1993, p. 98) This change of sex impacted only the sex of the character, not his/her identity. The rest of the story, Orlando's life as a woman, will be explained later, but at the end of the novel Orlando became a mother and a writer, she published her poem 'The Oak Tree' and won a Prize. For a better understanding of the dissertation, one needs some kind of summary of the gender issues present in the novel. First of all, as a boy, that is, as a male, Orlando inherited the monastic house through his father's inheritance, his mother was not even mentioned because of her gender, as a woman she could not inherit the property. At the age of Queen Elizabeth I, the women, particularly in the gentry, depended on their family and then on their husband. Virginia Woolf wanted to show the inequality of the female dependence on men, which she discussed in her essay *A Room of One's Own*. Firstly, the intellectual dependence – "nothing could be expected of women intellectually" (Woolf, 1995, p. 61); secondly, the social dependence – "they [the women of fiction] are shown in their relation to men" (Woolf, 1995, p. 88); and, finally, the financial dependence which she denounced by taking the example of Mrs Seton and her mother (Woolf, 1995, p. 31):

in the first place, to earn money was impossible for them, and in the second, had it been possible, the law denied them the right to possess what money they earned. It is only for the last forty-eight years that Mrs Seton has had a penny of her own. For all the centuries before that it would have been her husband's property.

Even if a woman earned money, this money would be her husband's property, thus it was impossible for a woman to have her own money in the nineteenth century ("about the year 1860"). Virginia Woolf was probably inspired by the story of Mrs Seton when she wrote Orlando, since as a woman she could not possess her money and her property, she would depend on her husband or on their male heirs or she would lose all that she had. To come back to the life of Orlando, when he was still a young man, shortly after the death of his father, the Queen made him her Treasurer and Steward and considered him her son. Orlando had this privilege thanks to his sex, because as a young girl he would never have been the protégé of the Queen. At the Court, he was predestined to an ambitious career but he got lost

because of love, as one will see later. Virginia Woolf approached the question of gender from a social and cultural point of view but also from a physical point of view. In the novel the motif of Orlando's legs is indeed recurrent, even as a young man, and the biographer often wrote about this physical aspect of Orlando, but the other characters are also fascinated by his legs, particularly women, as the Queen Elizabeth I or the King's mistress. For example, when he went to Constantinople to become an Ambassador, Nell Gwyn, the King's mistress, stated that it was "a thousand pities (...) that such a pair of legs should leave the country." (Woolf, 1993, p. 83). When he became Duke the envious people told it was thanks to his legs, so everyone was obsessed by his legs, and besides, from the very first pages, the biographer reinforced the beauty of his legs: "the shapely legs, the handsome body" (Woolf, 1993, p.12), "a pair of the finest legs that a young nobleman has ever stood upright upon" (Woolf, 1993, p.17). As a woman, her legs became an object of desire that she should keep covered because of men, she indeed almost killed a man when she showed off her calf aboard the Enamoured Lady, and here again the biographer mentioned that "her legs were among her chiefest beauties" (Woolf, 1993, p.110). It is interesting that, even if as a man he already had beautiful legs, it is only as a woman that her legs become a body part she had to cover, it becomes almost dangerous to show them. In this case the gender is connected with the sexuality, the same attributes - the legs - are handled differently depending on the gender and on the sex. Besides his legs, Orlando had a "manly charm" (Woolf, 1993, p.17), a body made, in a way, to fight and as a little boy and then as a man, he always admired his elders for their war careers. At the age of sixteen he already imitated them and trained by slice a head of a Moor in his attic room and "he vowed" (Woolf, 1993, p.11) that he would go to war, as they did. Once adult, he became Ambassador and even Duke, "he did what any other young man would have done in his place" (Woolf, 1993, p.82), therefore it was logical to become an Ambassador in relation to his sex and his social rank. Orlando indeed belonged to an affluent family and as a young man he had to represent his family by going to war and by becoming Ambassador abroad. By making Orlando Ambassador, Virginia Woolf questions gender at 'work'. Indeed, Orlando could be Ambassador because he was a man, if he were a woman at this time, he would be obliged to stay at home and take care of the house and the family. Virginia Woolf denounces this inequality in her essay "Professions for Women" (Woolf, 2015, p. 192):

I discovered that if I were going to review books I should need to do battle with a certain phantom. And the phantom was a woman, and when I came to know her better I called her after the heroine of a famous poem, The Angel in the House. It was she who used to come between me and my paper when I was writing reviews. It was she who bothered me and

wasted my time and so tormented me that at last I killed her. You who come of a younger and happier generation may not have heard of her — you may not know what I mean by the Angel in the House. I will describe her as shortly as I can. She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it — in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. Above all — I need not say it — she was pure. Her purity was supposed to be her chief beauty — her blushes, her great grace. In those days — the last of Queen Victoria — every house had its Angel. (...) Directly, that is to say, I took my pen in my hand to review that novel by a famous man, she slipped behind me and whispered: “My dear, you are a young woman. You are writing about a book that has been written by a man. Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex. Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own. Above all, be pure.” And she made as if to guide my pen. (...) I turned upon her and caught her by the throat. I did my best to kill her. My excuse, if I were to be had up in a court of law, would be that I acted in self-defence. Had I not killed her she would have killed me. She would have plucked the heart out of my writing. For, as I found, directly I put pen to paper, you cannot review even a novel without having a mind of your own, without expressing what you think to be the truth about human relations, morality, sex. And all these questions, according to the Angel of the House, cannot be dealt with freely and openly by women; they must charm, they must conciliate, they must — to put it bluntly — tell lies if they are to succeed.

Here, Virginia Woolf explains that to be able to write, thus to work, she had to kill the Angel in the House. She explains to her audience, who probably did not know the figure of the Angel because it existed more in the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century, that the Angel in the House prevented women from working and earning money on their own. She describes the Angel as “intensely sympathetic”, “immensely charming” and “utterly unselfish”, this is the description of the ‘perfect’ woman and wife at the time. She emphasises that the Angel in the House sacrificed herself for her family and never had a mind of her own, she always followed her husband or her father’s mind. She adds that the Angel of the House is defined by her purity, thus she could not write about subjects as human relations or sex; moreover it would be necessary to have a personal opinion, which the Angel does not have. At the age of the Queen Victoria, in the nineteenth century, almost all the women were the Angel in the House, they could not work, or even have an opinion because they had to be dedicated

to their husbands and their children. In *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf alludes to the Angel in the House, since Orlando, as a woman, had to find a husband with the aim to keep her own property. She is dependent on the men, as the Angel in the House. The fact that Orlando lived through the centuries enables Virginia Woolf to show these inequalities suffered by the women and the gender inequalities in the nineteenth century. Even if Orlando inherited the monastic house, she could not own it as a woman. As mentioned previously, Orlando was from a wealthy family, even a royal family since his father inherited from the Queen Elizabeth I, but this rank did not have only benefits and he realised it as a man and even more as a woman. As a young man he could not write poetry because he had to fight for England and furthermore it was not seen as honourable, it was more reserved to the poor. So he was mocked, he had to read and write poetry in secret. But if during that period - the sixteenth century - Orlando had been a woman and had wanted to write poetry it would have been worse, as explained by Virginia Woolf in her essay *A Room of One's Own*: "To have lived a free life in London in the sixteenth century would have meant for a woman who was poet and playwright a nervous stress and dilemma which might well have killed her." (Woolf, 1995, p.57) and she reinforced this idea by writing that "no woman could have written poetry then." (Woolf, 1995, p.65). However, Orlando succeeded in writing poetry as a woman, but only in the twentieth century, as if her immortality and her change of sex had been aimed at the opportunity of publishing her poem 'The Oak Tree'. But, in the nineteenth century, as a woman she lost the properties she inherited as a man; she had the same rights as a dead man. Virginia Woolf used the change of sex, in part, to prove the inequalities between men and women, and this loss of property showed the unfairness of the law for the women at that time. Orlando changed sex at the age of thirty, when he was Duke, after sleeping a whole week. The first time he slept for a week, it was after his love disappointment with the Russian Princess, Orlando "showed no consciousness of any such trance" (Woolf, 1993, p.48) even if it seemed that he forgot a part of his past. The biographer reflected upon this sleep and made an interesting assumption, he asked "had Orlando, worn out by the extremity of his suffering, died for a week, and then come to life again?" (Woolf, 1993, p.49) If this sleep is a sort of death, the awakening would be a rebirth. In the case of his second sleep, if one considers the biographer's theory, Orlando revives, he was born a second time, with a different sex, perhaps he was born with the wrong sex, he had to revive to be his/her true self, with the sex that corresponds to her. Even if the sex does not define his/her identity, one feels that Orlando could be herself more as a woman than as a man. But when he changed sex, at first, there were no changes in her personality or even in her identity, in the film she says "Same person. No difference at all. Just a different sex." (Potter, 1992). So, Orlando changed sex when she woke as a woman, after sleeping for a week, but she

realized this change aboard the *Enamoured Lady*, few weeks later. She indeed stayed with the gipsies, where thinking was poorly looked, before returning to England, and for the first time during the trip she took time to think about her change of sex. She began to realize “the penalties and the privileges of her position” (Woolf, 1993, p.108). Thus the position of being a woman, she listed the obligations of women but also the pleasures of being a woman and she deduced that the “greater ecstasy” (Woolf, 1993, p.109) is the woman’s; she also understood the power she had over the other sex, the men, when she showed her calf unintentionally and caused the fall of a sailor. Virginia Woolf used Orlando’s awareness to illustrate the thoughts that everyone had of women in the eighteenth century, as the fact that the women needed the men to be rescued, that they could not swear, that they had to spend hours getting ready, and Orlando finished by emphasizing “All I can do, once I set foot on English soil, is to pour out tea and ask my lords how they like it” (Woolf, 1993, p.113).

Once again, the author denounced the women’s dependence on men, the women were made only to serve the men, to ‘pour out’ their tea. Then, on her arrival in England, Orlando discovered that she was a party to three major suits and she could lose her properties, firstly because she was considered as dead, secondly because she was a woman, thirdly because she was married and his wife Rosina Pepita from Constantinople had three sons who wanted to inherit the properties. The biographer insisted ironically that the fact she was dead “amount[ed] to much the same thing” (Woolf, 1993, p.119) as being a woman. In this way, Virginia Woolf showed how little rights women had and the inequities between men and women because as a man Orlando inherited properties, which she lost as a woman and because a woman had the same rights as a dead man. Then, the lawsuits decided that her sex was female and thus her properties were addressed to “the heirs male of [her] body” (Woolf, 1993, p.176), since she was engaged to Shelmerdine and did not have son, she kept her properties at the moment. To return to Orlando’s love stories, before meeting her husband, when Orlando was still a man, he met an unusual woman, the Archduchess Harriet Griselda, who he began to fell in love with, and it was for that reason that he ran away to Constantinople. But when Orlando came back as a woman the Archduchess confessed that she was a man, the Archduke Harry and explained “that he was a man and always had been one; that he had seen a portrait of Orlando and fallen hopelessly in love with him; that to compass his ends, he had dressed as a woman and (...) that he had heard of her change” (Woolf, 1993, p.126). This is interesting because, in a way, the Archduke also changed of sex, but voluntarily in order to seduce Orlando. The Archduke impersonated the Archduchess through his clothes, and shortly after Orlando did the same to look like a man. One night, Orlando decided to dress with his old man’s clothes and “dressed in it she looked the very figure of a noble Lord” (Woolf, 1993,

p.149). After that, she liked to change frequently of clothes, sometimes she dressed with woman's clothes, sometimes with man's clothes, she played an ambiguity game. She decided, as it were, her own sex, her own gender, through clothes. It also shows how, in the eighteenth century, clothes defined categories, as the social class or even the gender. By changing her clothes Orlando made fun of social codes, her clothes did not define her identity but in the eyes of society she is treated differently and she even changed her sexual orientation, as one will see later. Thus, as a woman, Orlando frequented two social classes completely different, on the one hand the good literary society of London, on the other hand the prostitutes. At her arrival in England she began to be part of London society but she got quickly bored and felt disgusted. However, she kept fascinated by the poets, especially Addison, Swift and Pope, she indeed began to invite Mr. Pope at her home after a reception and continued by living in the company of the three poets, but it did not go on for a long time and after they left, Orlando chose to dress as a young man. It is dressed as a man that she would meet Nell, a prostitute who thought that Orlando was a man and therefore a client. After this misunderstanding the two women became friends and Nell invited Orlando in her own society: "These poor creatures, (...), for Nell brought Prue, and Prue Kitty, and Kitty Rose, had a society of their own of which they now elected her a member." (Woolf, 1993, p.152). In this society she stayed only with women, who did not belong to her social class. For the first time she made friends with women. Thanks to this experience, she learned a lot about her sex, that allowed her better knowledge of the women and thus of herself.

But with the arrival of the nineteenth century Orlando experienced a sort of pressure, the spirit of the century obliged her to find a husband, she began to see wedding rings everywhere she went, she became obsessed with the idea of marriage and to relieve herself she said "I have found my mate (...) I am nature's bride" (Woolf, 1993, p.170). But she finally met Shelmerdine with whom she engaged. This pressure seemed to be reserved to the women, it is because Orlando is a woman at this moment that she was concerned to find a husband.

During his/her life Orlando had two important love stories, one as a man and one as a woman, but he also had several love experiences, one of them was when she began to change clothes and seemed either a woman or a man. This experience is more important than others because she took advantage of her androgynous appearance to try the loves of both sexes. First, Orlando met the Russian Princess Sasha, and it is interesting to mention that when he saw her for the first time, he thought Sasha was a boy: "a boy it must be (...) the person was of his own sex" (Woolf, 1993, p.26). The ambiguity of Sasha's gender connects with the ambiguity of Orlando's gender, Orlando could indeed pose as a man only by changing of clothes. Then, Orlando met Shelmerdine, just as she was desperate to find a

husband, and fell instantly in love with him, or perhaps because of the social pressure she convinced herself that she was in love. The day after their meeting they simultaneously cry “You’re a woman, Shel!” and “You’re a man, Orlando!” (Woolf, 1993, p.174) and a few days later they had the same conversation (Woolf, 1993, p.178):

Are you positive you aren’t a man?’ he would ask anxiously, and she would echo, ‘Can it be possible you’re not a woman?’ and then they must put it to the proof without more ado. For each was so 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, that they had to put the matter to the proof at once.

They understood each other so well that they thought they were the same gender. If one takes their line of argument, one could conclude that two persons might be of the same gender to really understand each other, for this reason Orlando considered that Shelmerdine could not be a man but a woman and Shelmerdine considered that Orlando was a man. What is even more interesting is that Orlando was actually a man before meeting Shelmerdine but when she met him she felt herself a woman, since she asked if he was not a woman, so much so that she had a feeling that he was like her, he understood her, so he had to be of the same gender, that is female. To conclude this summary of the gender issues in the novel one has to come back to the ‘present’ time of writing when Orlando succeeded to publish her poem. In fact, since childhood Orlando was fascinated by poetry. at the age of sixteen years, during the Queen’s visit, he “stopped dead” (Woolf, 1993, p.16), staring at a man who, according to him, was writing poetry, he already was attracted to literature and specifically to poetry. Throughout his/her life Orlando wrote a lot and particularly the poem “The Oak Tree”. This was the only text she kept for his/her-self the whole life, most of the time carried it on herself. The change of sex and her immortality helped her to publish this poem, because as a man, and with his rank, Orlando could not be a writer, he had to be in the service of the Court and of his country; as a woman of the twentieth century, she could write without being mocked, the change was consequently positive for her writing. She could become a writer as a woman but not as a man due to the social codes.

Virginia Woolf chose to write a ‘biography’, which is in reality a novel, to depart from her serious works, but finally *Orlando* discusses serious subjects as women’s rights, love, sexuality and gender. The change of sex of Orlando enables the author to mention the gender inequalities and to approach gender and call into question the legitimacy of this notion. The notion of identity is also called into question, as it will be seen in the second section.

2. The reconstruction of Orlando's identity

This second part will focus on the notion of identity, particularly on the 'female' identity, how the change of sex of Orlando led to a gendered identity and how this identity has been 'constructed'. This part will show how an identity could be socially constructed but how it could also be reconstructed, since this is an individual feeling.

2.a) The notions of sexual and gendered identities

The notion of identity is a noticeably broad concept that this thesis will try to enlighten through the novel and the eponymous film *Orlando*. First of all, the notion of identity should be constantly called into question, since it defines a human being, always moving, always changing, always evolving. This thesis will focus on the sexual identity and the gendered identity. Firstly, the sexual identity might be the notion more complicated to explain, each person could indeed have one's own idea of the sexual identity and what it represents. But one could not define the sexual identity without mentioning the body, which is the essence of sex and sexuality, as recalled by the theorist Judith Butler. She explains in her book *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 2006, p.12) that:

"the body" appears as a passive medium on which cultural meanings are inscribed or as the instrument through which an appropriative and interpretive will determines a cultural meaning for itself. In either case, the body is figured as a mere instrument or medium for which a set of cultural meanings are only externally related. But "the body" is itself a construction, as are the myriad "bodies" that constitute the domain of gendered subjects. Bodies cannot be said to have a signifiable existence prior to the mark of their gender.

As gender the body is defined by the theorist as a construction. And, the fact that the bodies could not have a signifiable existence prior to the mark of their gender would mean that the gender is marked on the bodies and does not depend upon the sex. It gets particularly interesting with the story of Orlando because, in some ways, Orlando's body is the only concrete thing that becomes different with the change of sex. After the change it remains the same person, the body is in a way what makes the change, it switches between male attributes and female attributes, the body is thus marked by the gender, as specified by Judith Butler in the quote above. The body is also attached to the sexuality, since it embodies the human being with one's sexuality, as explained by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (Beauvoir, 2009, p.80): "The existent is a sexed body; in its relations with other existents that are also sexed bodies, sexuality is thus always involved; but as the body and sexuality are concrete

expressions of existence". According to Beauvoir's theory, the body and the sexuality would be the expression of the identity and the human being would be a sexed body, that is, one would be a subject guided by one's sexuality and by one's sexual relationships to others.

The sexual identity could also be connected to the sexual orientation, heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, etc., and here again Orlando experiences different types of sexuality, his and then her relationships are central in the construction of his/ her identity. As highlighted previously in the first section, Orlando had two important love stories, one with a woman when he was a man, Sasha, and one with a man when she was a woman, Shelmerdine, but she also experienced the love of both sexes when she was a woman, that is, she experienced homosexuality. In fact, even before beginning *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf already had the idea of writing about women's homosexuality, she indeed wrote in her diary: "Sapphism is to be suggested." (Woolf, 1982, p.131) when she was thinking about the writing of her new book. It is interesting that the homosexuality is approached only when Orlando is a woman (even if it was subtly evoked as a man), as if the change of sex allowed her to be freer about her sexuality.

Furthermore, Virginia Woolf might experience homosexuality with Vita Sackville-West and since the novel is inspired by her, it seems a way to pay tribute to their special relationship and to show that love and sexuality are not a question of gender. Finally, the homosexuality is more accepted between two women than between two men, even more at the time when Orlando was a man, and the fact that he was a noble reinforced this unacceptance. The author showed that a man of his rank and his time could not choose his sexuality, and even his partners, since he was judged when he fell in love with Sasha, who was not a respectable English woman of the Court. The sexual identity is indeed complex and comprises several aspects as the body, the relationships, the sexuality and the freedom to be oneself. Then, one cannot take an interest in the sexual identity without take an interest in the gender identity, both are complementary.

The gendered identity becomes recently a topical issue and is increasingly at the heart of the discussions nowadays. According to the Oxford dictionary⁵ the gender identity is a person's understanding of having a particular gender, which may or may not correspond to the assumed gender assigned to them at birth. In this way, the gendered identity could be an identity felt and chosen by each one, each person having one's own vision of one's gender. The gender identity could also be a construction, a sort of creation, if one considers Judith Butler's theory about gender, it would be a

⁵ https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/gender_identity

concept presupposed and not fixed. In that case, the notion of gender is completely reinvented, each one could have one's own perception of the gender.

The theorist calls into question the notions of sex and gender and wonders: "is there "a" gender which persons are said to have, or is it an essential attribute that a person is said to be?" (Butler, 2006, p.10). This distinction between have and be demonstrates that the gender could be seen as a personality trait or as a part of the body. If one has a gender it would mean that one's gender belongs to one's body but if a person is a gender it would mean that one's gender is what makes one oneself, the gender would define a person. Judith Butler develops this idea of being a gender, clarifying that it cannot be exhaustive (Butler, 2006, p.4):

If one "is" a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pregendered "person" transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities.

Here, she highlights the exhaustiveness of being a gender, one is much more than one's gender and she defines what makes an identity, as the race, the class, the ethnicity, the sexuality, the regionality and the gender, one could add the nationality, the religion, the education but this list could not be exhaustive. In her book *Undoing Gender*, she came back more specifically to this distinction between have or be a gender and wrote (Butler, 2004, p.42):

Gender is not exactly what one "is" nor is it precisely what one "has". Gender is the apparatus by which the production and normalization of masculine and feminine take place along with the interstitial forms of hormonal, chromosomal, psychic, and performative that gender assumes.

Here she explained that gender could not neither 'be' nor 'have' because it is not concrete, it is a sort of mechanism which could not work on its own. To come back to *Orlando* and to what makes an identity, in the novel, the reader could understand Orlando's identity since he knows about his/her race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender etc. but the gender changes during the novel and that involves a change of her class and also of her sexuality. So, her identity is reconsidered and, in some ways, reconstructed. The notion of gender is thus an essential component of the concept of identity, which leads up Judith Butler to wonder (Butler, 2006, p. 23):

To what extent do regulatory practices of gender formation and division constitute identity, the internal coherence of the subject, indeed, the self-identical status of the person? To what extent

is “identity” a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience? And how do the regulatory practices that govern gender also govern culturally intelligible notions of identity?

The theorist raises here the issue of cultural normality and normativity of identity and of gender. She wonders how the gender could define a human-being, ‘the person’, and how it could be culturally imposed, as the identity itself. She answers, as it were, to her question (Butler, 2006, p.23):

The “coherence” and “continuity” of “the person” are not logical or analytic features of personhood, but, rather, socially instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility. Inasmuch as “identity” is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, the very notion of “the person” is called into question by the cultural emergence of those “incoherent” or “discontinuous” gendered beings who appear to be persons but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined.

She explains that personhood is guided by social, cultural and even political norms. But nowadays, the notion of gender is more and more called into question by human beings who consider themselves non-binaries, by the transgenders and by everyone who does not accept one’s gender or more broadly the notion of gender, who Judith Butler references in this quote, the “incoherent or discontinuous gendered beings”. The notion is indeed regarded as a concept created by the society, meeting the social codes. It seems interesting to quote here an excerpt from an article written by a non-binary person, an ‘agender’ as this person called itself (Ford, 2015):

I have been out as an agender, or genderless, person for about a year now. To me, this simply means having the freedom to exist as a person without being confined by the limits of the western gender binary. I wear what I want to wear, and do what I want to do, because it is absurd to limit myself to certain activities, behaviours or expressions based on gender. People don’t know what to make of me when they see me, because they feel my features contradict one another. They see no room for the curve of my hips to coexist with my facial hair; they desperately want me to be someone they can easily categorise. My existence causes people to question everything they have been taught about gender, which in turn inspires them to question what they know about themselves, and that scares them. Strangers are often desperate to figure out what genitalia I have, in the hope that my body holds the key to some great secret and unavoidable truth about myself and my gender. It doesn’t. My words hold my truth. My body is simply the vehicle that gives me the opportunity to express myself. The pronouns I use, and that other people use to refer to me, are not “he” or “she” but “they”, “them” and “their”. These pronouns feel as neutral as I do [...] I also use only neutral terms to

describe myself including: person or human (not boy, girl, man or woman), child (not son or daughter) and sibling (not sister or brother).

This discontinuous gendered human being explains here that the notion of gender is a way to categorise the human beings and is thus created by the society and by the people who need to put each person in a class. For the author of this article, the gender does not define oneself, but on the contrary, it is a limit to be one true self. Then, the notion of gendered identity would be created and learned by the human beings themselves, the society — the social codes — and by the cultural codes to reassure them, it would be an imposed norm. Gender would be a cultural expression but would not be an identity. The author also told something interesting about the body, that it is only a “vehicle that gives [them] the opportunity to express [themselves]”, the body would be apart from the gender, which would not exist, and would be a tool to express one’s own identity. Lastly, the use of the neutral pronouns as ‘they’ and ‘them’ reminds the language theory of the French theorist Wittig exposed in *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 2006, p.29):

Wittig provides an alternative critique by showing that persons cannot be signified within language without the mark of gender. (...) According to Wittig, gender not only designates persons, “qualifies” them, as it were, but constitutes a conceptual episteme by which binary gender is universalized.

And according to the French theorist Irigaray “the only chance at escaping the “mark” of gender” would be “the possibility of another language or signifying economy” (Butler, 2006, p.36). Both theorists think that language is unable to come out of the binary pattern of gender — male and female, masculine and feminine, man and woman —, that the language obliges the mark of gender and in a way, it is what wants to remove the non-binary person, by using the pronoun ‘they’ to define ‘themselves’. The language would be the first marker of the identity of a human being, it would be prior to the body and the mind, to a certain extent it would define a human being even before one’s birth. In fact, the gender is assigned to a baby even before the birth. The identity would consequently be subjective. Furthermore, Judith Butler reflected upon the relation between the human beings and the language (Butler, 1997, p. 1-2): “Could language injure us if we were not, in some sense, linguistic beings, beings who require language in order to be?”. The human beings need language in order to be human-beings. To get back to the use of neutral pronoun, it is already adopted in the novel *Orlando*, at the time of the change of sex, the biographer indeed wrote that “The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity. Their faces remained, as their portraits prove, practically the same.” (Woolf, 1993, p.98). The pronoun ‘they’ has increasingly been used, even in the television series as the

well-known *Orange is the new black*⁴, this is a current topic. The question of the pronouns in the novel will be developed in the second point of this part.

Now that the notions of sexual and gendered identity(ies) are more clarified, it is important to reflect upon the awareness of Orlando after the change of sex and what it modified in relation to his/her identity.

2.b) How Orlando changed by becoming a woman

In the novel *Orlando*, the eponymous main character became slowly aware of her sex after becoming a woman. Shortly after the change, Orlando “showed no surprise at it” (Woolf, 1993, p. 98), it was a few times later, when she was aboard the Enamoured Lady, coming back to England, that she began to be aware of the change, “she realised with a start the penalties and the privileges of her position” (Woolf, 1993, p.108). After this first awareness, Orlando was, however, divided between the two sexes, as reminded by the biographer: “her ambiguous position must excuse her (even her sex was still in dispute)” (Woolf, 1993, p.162). We have indeed to remember that a lawsuit had to determine if Orlando was a woman or not. Ironically, the biographer reminded that ‘her’ sex was in dispute, using the feminine pronoun. As a matter of fact, the use of pronouns is important in the construction of Orlando’s identity. The first word in the novel is the pronoun “he” followed by the affirmation “for there could be no doubt of his sex” (Woolf, 1993, p.11), the biographer already played with the pronouns and with the reader, by specifying his sex the biographer wanted the reader to understand that Orlando’s sex will probably change or that his sex was not suitable for him. Right after the change of sex the biographer used the pronoun “their” as if Orlando was simultaneously a man and a woman in the same body, he continued by using the masculine pronoun “his” and he corrects himself by writing “but in future we must, for convention’s sake, say ‘her’ for ‘his’, and ‘she’ for ‘he’” (Woolf, 1993, p.98). After that, the biographer always uses the feminine pronouns to describe Orlando, except when he states “Orlando was a man till the age of thirty; when he became a woman and has remained so ever since” (Woolf, 1993, p.98). The pronouns, as a part of the language, define Orlando’s identity. The language, here the distinction between the feminine, the masculine and the plural pronouns, characterizes Orlando’s gender, from his childhood as a “he”, by the change of sex as a “they”, to her adulthood as a “she”.

At each stage of Orlando’s life, the language categorises him/her through the use of the pronouns but when the biographer used ‘they’, Orlando became genderless, even if it was for a short time. However,

⁴ Use of the pronoun ‘they’ in the season 7 episode 13 in *Orange is the new black*.

the more time passed, the more Orlando felt herself as a woman, as if she was always feminine but she was born with the wrong sex. As said above, the gender is an individual feeling. As explained in *Undoing Gender*, there is the Gender Identity Disorder (GID) which “requires that there be ‘persistent discomfort’ about one’s assigned sex or ‘inappropriateness’” (Butler, 2004, p.95). In this sense “the diagnosis presumes that one feels distress and discomfort and inappropriateness because one is in the wrong gender, and that conforming to a different gender norm, if viable for the person in question, will make one feel much better.” (Butler, 2004, p.95). Orlando could be in that case, he could feel inappropriate as a man and that would be the reason of his change of sex. Gender is however a small part of one’s identity, but it could reveal identity in the sense that if a person feels oneself with respect to one’s gender one could reveal oneself. During Orlando’s life, writing was always the main thread, besides he “was by birth a writer, rather than an aristocrat” (Woolf, 1993, p.58). As a noble man, however, Orlando could not be a writer; but as a woman she succeeded. It was as if his/her true self was to be a writer and the change of sex helped him/her to find her identity. The identity is not in the status but in the vocation. The notion of identity is always called into question in *Orlando*. Virginia Woolf had the purpose to question one’s convictions about identity, sexuality and gender, she wanted her readers to make their own opinion on the subject, she explained that there is not one truth but each one could have one’s vision of the truth (Woolf, 1995, p.14):

At any rate, when a subject is highly controversial - and any question about sex is that – one cannot hope to tell the truth. One can only show how one came to hold whatever opinion one does hold. One can only give one’s audience the chance of drawing their own conclusions as they observe the limitations, the prejudices, the idiosyncrasies of the speaker.

In *Orlando*, the author gave the readers the possibility of observing the limitations and the prejudices of the biographer to denounce these sexual and gendered prejudices and showed how the change of sex impacted Orlando’s life. Virginia Woolf gave the readers the opportunity to understand women’s disadvantages against men over the centuries, but also shows how the sex could change a life. It is true that as a woman Orlando lost her property, had to be a wife and then a mother, had to serve the men, so she was disadvantaged, but she succeeded to make her new sex a strength because she became a woman, she embodied the feminine gender.

As it is written in the novel, Orlando “became a woman” (Woolf, 1993, p.98), but one could wonder how one could become a gender, how it is possible. The French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir tried to answer this question in her essay *The Second sex*, which began when “she had tried to define herself [and] the first sentence that came to [her] mind was “I am a woman” (Thurman,

2010, p.8). The fact that she defines herself by her sex leads her to write “a book on woman” (Beauvoir, 2009, p.23) in which she wonders “what is a woman” (Beauvoir, 2009, p. 25). The philosopher begins by distinguishing the sex “woman” and the gender “female”, she writes that “not every female human being is necessarily a woman; she must take part in this mysterious and endangered reality known as femininity” (Beauvoir, 2009, p.23).

The notion of femininity is considered in the novel *Orlando* several times. Even when Orlando was a man, the femininity was mentioned in relation to his legs. Then, as a woman, the notion of femininity is firstly evoked during Orlando's awareness, aboard the Enamoured Lady, the femininity is defined by Orlando as “the most tedious discipline” and it includes a lot of actions as she assumed: “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” (Woolf, 1993, p.110). As for Simone de Beauvoir, the femininity is described in *Orlando* as something that the woman must develop and not as something innate. Moreover, the femininity would be a social code imposed on women, since it is seen by themselves as a ‘discipline’. On this subject of femininity Luce Irigaray wrote (Irigaray, 1985, p.84):

woman would also have to preserve and maintain what is called femininity. The value of a woman would accrue to her from her maternal role, and, in addition, from her “femininity”. But in fact that “femininity” is a role, an image, a value, imposed upon women by male systems of representation. In this masquerade of femininity, the woman loses herself, and loses herself by playing on her femininity. The fact remains that this masquerade requires an effort on her part for which she is not compensated.

According to Luce Irigaray the femininity is not imposed by the social codes but by the men themselves and their representation of the women. Women are consequently constrained to play the role of femininity in order to please the other sex. But in this theory the homosexuals, the transgenders, the genderless are forgotten; in fact, they do not need to play the role of the femininity but some of them are still feminine. The femininity is thus a norm which tends to disappear over the years.

The women are much less constrained than in the past centuries. For example, in the nineteenth century, Orlando, because she was a woman, could not dress black breeches: “suddenly she saw with a start that she was wearing black breeches. She never ceased blushing till she had reached her country house” (Woolf, 1993, p.161) and she had to buy specific clothing, imposed on women. Furthermore, women had to have children. As a woman, Orlando indeed became a mother. Nowadays, even if this is changing, the social and cultural norms still incite women to be mothers, as recalled by

Luce Irigaray: "The woman, for her part, owing to her seclusion in the "home," the place of private property, has long been nothing but a mother" (Irigaray, 1985, p.83). About this maternal role, Judith Butler tells the story of David who became Brenda because his penis was accidentally burned at the age of eight months. The child was raised as a girl until she began to realize that she was not a girl. To convince her that it was better for her to be a girl and then a woman, her doctor gives the 'argument' of the possibility of being a mother (Butler, 2004, p. 60):

Money tried to talk to her about getting a real vagina, and she refused; in fact, she went screaming from the room. Money had her view sexually graphic pictures of vaginas. Money even went so far as to show Brenda pictures of women giving birth, holding out the promise that Brenda might be able to give birth if she acquired a vagina.

The doctor was desperate to give a determined gender to the little girl, which shows how the social norms could be dangerous. Moreover, the doctor thought that the promise of being a mother could change the gender feeling of Brenda, as if the maternal role was the only accomplishment for a woman. But this 'maternal role' imposed on women, as a mark of femininity, is evolving and disappearing thanks to the evolution of the norms, but also thanks to gender's newness. The fact that gender is henceforth not limited to the binary pattern frees, as it were, the women of these sexual obligations. To get back to Beauvoir's essay *The Second Sex*, another important point developed is that "the female is a woman, insofar as she feels herself as such" (Beauvoir, 2009, p.73). Then, gender would be an individual feeling, dependent on each one. Gender would also be separate from anatomy; a woman could have a male body if she feels herself as a woman. About the differentiation between gender and anatomy Judith Butler took the example of intersexual surgery for children to explain the complex relation between gender and anatomy (Butler, 2004, p.63):

Her view (...) is that although a child should be given a sex assignment for the purposes of establishing a stable social identity, it does not follow that society should engage in coercive surgery to remake the body in the social image of that gender. Such efforts at "correction" not only violate the child but lend support to the idea that gender has to be borne out in singular and normative ways at the level of anatomy. Gender is a different sort of identity, and its relation to anatomy is complex.

In the case of Orlando, the differentiation between sex, gender and anatomy is subtle because as a child – a boy – Orlando was masculine, felt himself as a boy and had male's anatomy, then he grew up and felt himself as a man but when he changed sex Orlando became more and more feminine, she began to feel herself as a woman and had female's anatomy. Thus, Orlando's sex, gender and anatomy

are almost always complementary. In a way, Orlando adapted himself/herself to his/her sexed body. When he changed of sex 'he' became a 'she' but also a woman. Simone de Beauvoir explains how one becomes woman (Beauvoir, 2009, p.330):

One is not born, but rather becomes, woman. No biological, psychic, or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilization as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called feminine.

The French philosopher tries to show that it is civilization which defines being a woman. Once again, the social and cultural norms – the civilization – define what a woman is. The notion of woman and more broadly of gender are determined by the codes of the society. But as outlined by the theorist Judith Butler, this concept of norms is not so simple, she takes the example of gender regulations, the fact that gender is normed, standardized, institutionalized and wonders how gender could be regulated (Butler, 2004, p.40-41):

If gender were to exist prior to its regulation, we could then take gender as our theme and proceed to enumerate the various kinds of regulations to which it is subjected and the ways in which that subjection takes place. The problem, however, for us is more acute. After all, is there a gender that preexists its regulation, or is it the case that, in being subject to regulation, the gendered subject emerges, produced in and through that particular form of subjection? Is subjection not the process by which regulations produce gender?

One indeed does not know if the norm is prior to gender or if gender is prior to its norm. If the notion of gender is only a regulated norm one could wonder how it will evolve since a norm changes with time and society and how some people get rid of the norm.

The notions of identity, of gender, of sexuality, of sex, of body are notions of which each individual has his/her own vision, his/her own definition, it is consequently difficult to suggest a common definition but by combining a lot of theorists', philosophers', authors' opinions one is able to understand that the sexual and gendered identities are conditioned by the society. However, these identities are fluid.

3. The fluidity of gendered and sexual identities

As said above the gendered and sexual identities are fluid, this thesis will demonstrate how and why.

3.a) Gender is a construction

As established in the previous sections the notion of gender is a norm which follows some social and cultural codes, in that case this is a construction. But if gender casts the norms off, it would be a personal, individual feeling, in that case gender is fluid. To illustrate how gender could be a construction, the theorist Judith Butler mentions the distinction between sex and gender and the construction of the binarity of gender (Butler, 2006, p.8-9):

the distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex. (...) If gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way. Taken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. Assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of "men" will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that "women" will interpret only female bodies. Further, even if the sexes appear to be unproblematically binary in their morphology and constitution (which will become a question), there is no reason to assume that genders ought also to remain as two. The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it. When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one.

Firstly, the theorist reminds that gender is not fixed as the sex and that the anatomy/the body does not define the gender. Regarding the body, she explains that a female body could belong to a man as a male body could belong to a woman. The distinction between sex and gender indeed enable the gender to be different of the sexed body and not mirror the sex. Secondly, she reminds that gender is culturally constructed and also culturally presupposed because it does not result of sex, it is binary because of the binarity of the sexes – the sexed bodies – but there is no physical reason – morphology, anatomy –

to have only two genders which correspond with the two sexes. As said above, gender does not have to mirror sex, those are the social codes that imposed this restricted vision. Furthermore, gender is a construction since it conforms to social and cultural conventions which encourage thinking the binarity as the normalcy. About normalcy, the sexual orientation also was and still is restricted to heterosexuality, there are indeed a lot of people who do not dare assume their sexuality due to other people's opinions, even nowadays. This notion of normalcy excludes all of those who are non-binaries and/or who are not heterosexuals. In *Undoing Gender*, Judith Butler gave the example of intersex children to illustrate the negative aspect of this notion of normalcy (Butler, 2004, p.4): "consider the intersex opposition to the widespread practice of performing coercive surgery on infants and children with sexually indeterminate or hermaphroditic anatomy in the name of normalizing these bodies.". She explained later in the book the "case of a person who was determined without difficulty to be a boy at the time of birth, then determined again within a few months to be a girl, who decided in his teenage years to become a man" (Butler, 2004, p.58-59), this case highlights two important aspects of this notion of normalcy. Firstly, the sex and also the gender of the child, David Reimer, was determined by the doctors because of this principle of normalcy, David indeed lost a major portion of his penis so it was decided for him that it would be better to remove the rest of the penis and his testicles and to be a girl. Even if (s)he did not have a boy's body David still felt as a boy so the doctor wanted him to take female hormones. According to the doctor, to be normal meant to feel as a girl since he had a girl's body and anatomy. Secondly, it is related with the first aspect, the doctors forced the child to have a defined gender since it is abnormal to have a body which does not correspond to the gender. As a matter of fact, the child did not have, strictly speaking, sex because of the loss of a significant part of his male genital but he was not a girl neither because he did not have a vagina. The doctor decided for him that he would be a girl because he thought he would be happier with a concrete sex and thus a gender. If the doctor had this thought it is due to the social and cultural codes, the norms whereby the normalcy is to be a girl or a boy, is to have/be a gender. Then, this notion of normalcy could be almost dangerous for those who do not fit in this normalcy as the transsexuals, the transgenders, the agender persons because they could feel obliged to choose a gender or worse still, they could feel rejected, abnormal. Judith Butler mentioned an "oppressive social world for the otherwise gendered and for sexual minorities of all kinds" (Butler, 2004, p.25). The human-beings indeed need the acceptance of society and of the others, even when they think they do not, it is in the nature of human beings. Judith Butler approached this theory by writing about the 'longing for recognition' of the human beings and explained that recognition "is the condition under which the human subject achieves psychic self-

understanding and acceptance” (Butler, 2004, p.131). The recognition is the fact that the human being wants to be reflected on the other and wants to be understood by the other. Due to this need of recognition the human being could fake her/his attitude to fit what society expects of one’s gender. In this way, gender is constructed also by the human beings who follow the social norms. This idea is represented in *Orlando*, when Orlando, dressed as a man, meets Nell the prostitute who will become her friend. At the moment of the meeting, both were acting what it is expected of their gender. Orlando, because he was dressed as a man, acted as a man and “swept her hat off to her in the manner of a gallant paying his addresses to a lady of fashion in a public place” (Woolf, 1993, p.150); and Nell, because she thought that she was in the presence of a man, behaved as a sensitive and feminine woman: “through this silver glaze the young woman looked up at him (for a man he was to her) appealing, hoping, trembling, fearing” (Woolf, 1993, p.150). The narrator specifies that Nell believed that Orlando was a man, and that was for this reason she behaved like this. But just as she discovered that Orlando was actually of the same sex, that she was also a woman, she changed: “it was remarkable how soon, on discovering that they were of the same sex, her manner changed and she dropped her plaintive, appealing ways” (Woolf, 1993, p.151). This scene illustrates the fact that men and women behave differently towards their interlocutor according to their gender, as a man Orlando had to be courteous with a woman and as a woman Nell had to exaggerate her femininity in front of a man. It is the society – the social and cultural codes – that make human beings behave in a certain way so one’s behaviour is socially and culturally influenced. Virginia Woolf, by writing this scene, criticized this ‘influence’ of the society and showed that gender is acting, that it is a performance. Virginia Woolf indeed put forward the idea of the performativity of gender even before Judith Butler’s theory about gender as a performance and that is why it is interesting to analyse this theory. The theorist writes in the preface of *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 2006, p. xv):

the performativity of gender revolves around this metalepsis, the way in which the anticipation of a gendered essence produces that which it posits as outside itself. (...) performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration.

She explains that gender is mainly performed out of habit, it is a repetition of what society and culture expect of a particular gender that becomes a performed habit. She reinforces this idea when she writes that “there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results” (Butler, 2006, p.34). The gendered identity is performative since gender expressions are performative. This notion of performativity is linked

with the notion of habitus explained by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu as a mediation between social and cultural practices and the objective structures of the social spheres in which they take place⁷. The notion of habitus refers to the fact that as human one learns by socializing and observing other human beings, their behaviour, their way of speaking but it brings out the social inequalities, because it separates people depending on their social classes. Each one behaves according to what she/he thinks 'normal', that is, what she/he observed during her/his childhood and then during adulthood. The same phenomenon occurs with the performativity of gender, since one learns that gender is binary one would behave in accordance with this binarity, one would perform one's gender even if it is not what one feels. Everyone is, to a certain extent, influenced by what she sees around, on-screen, online, in magazines, all these images conveyed by the society and which become a norm. In this case, the norm is a social standard, particularly for the women, an image of an ideal woman who would be feminine, attractive, discreet, etc. but this image leads women to feel inferior, 'not enough' and reduce the female gender to this ideal. Pierre Bourdieu, however, explains in *Language and Symbolic Power* that this norm is self-consciously followed (as cited in Butler, 1997, p. 134-135):

All symbolic domination presupposes, on the part of those who submit to it, a form of complicity which is neither passive submission to external constraint nor a free adherence to values. The recognition of the legitimacy of the official language has nothing in common with an explicitly professed, deliberate and revocable belief, or with an intentional act of accepting a 'norm.'

Here P. Bourdieu writes about the language, but his theory can apply to any kind of norm. Even if it is not intentional, one accepts the norm, one becomes accomplice of the acceptance of the norm and contributes to normalize it, each one is the subject of the norm before being an object. According to this point of view, the norm is essentially created in the society by the human beings, more than by the society itself. As regards gender norms, the same phenomenon appears. Each one behaves according to what he thinks is the norm, thus does not reflect upon the notion of gender, what it could be if it was not binary. The notion of gender becomes socially and culturally normative, as the notion of sexuality – but which begins to emancipate from its norms. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler explains that sexuality and gender norms are linked and the fact that the notion of sexuality is less and less normative leads to a profound questioning of the notion of gender. To stress her point, the author draws from Gayle Rubin who seeks to “establish that normative sexuality fortifies normative gender” (Butler, 2006, p. xi). The norms of gender are indeed reinforced by the norms of sexuality, since the sexuality of a human being

⁷ <https://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/habitus/2-l-habitus-selon-pierre-bourdieu/>

is part of one's gender identity. The norm whereby 'normal' sexuality is heterosexuality – a man with a woman – leads one to define gender in accordance with this binarity – a male and a female, masculine and feminine – and creates a sort of anxiety, as Judith Butler explains: “the fear of losing one's place in gender or of not knowing who one will be if one sleeps with someone of the ostensibly “same” gender” (Butler, 2006, p. xi). For the reason that sexuality and gender are intrinsically linked, if someone reflects upon his/her sexuality he/she will unconsciously reflect upon his/her gender and could call into question his/her own gender with respect to his/her sexuality. If one is not heterosexual, one could wonder if one's gender corresponds to oneself, one could also be afraid of being rejected by the society and question society's norms. But nowadays sexuality norms begin to change: homosexuality, transsexuality begin to be accepted and be included in the norms, with the homosexual marriage for example. In that sense, gender norms are also called into question; if one is recognised as a transsexual, one could be recognised as a transgender or an agender/genderless person. One could be genderless but one could also be both genders and be androgynous.

3.b) The notion of androgyny

In Woolf's novel, Orlando appears as an androgynous being, in the sense that (s)he is never completely a man or a woman but seems to be both of them. The word androgynous means “not clearly male or female” but also “having both male and female features”⁸, an androgynous person would be neither a male nor a female but a mixture of both.

Virginia Woolf was interested in the androgynous mind and tried to explain Coleridge's theory in her essay *A Room of One's Own* (Woolf, 1995, p. 103):

If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this 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

According to this quote, the mind – to be great – is not gendered, it is genderless, even if here the binarity of gender is still generalised – masculine and feminine. Virginia Woolf raises the issue of creation in relation to gender and thinks that a 'mono-gender' mind cannot create correctly. This point of view is interesting regarding the character of Orlando since (s)he succeeded in writing a masterpiece of poem when she was a woman, but after being a man Orlando indeed began to write as a man; but

⁸ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/fr/dictionnaire/anglais/androgynous>

without her feminine perception he was mocked, it was the combination of his masculinity and of her femininity which allowed him/her to write the poem 'The Oak Tree'. About writing, V. Woolf reiterates the same idea later in her essay and qualifies "fatal" the process of writing being a man or woman 'pure and simple' (Woolf, 1995, p.108):

it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly. It is fatal for a woman (...) to speak consciously as a woman. (...) It ceases to be fertilized. Brilliant and effective, powerful and masterly, as it may appear for a day or two, it must wither at nightfall; it cannot grow in the minds of others. Some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the art of creation can be accomplished. Some marriage of opposites has to be consummated.

If the writer has the consciousness of one's own sex/gender while one is writing, one cannot create. As said above the mind needs to be androgynous to write and more broadly to create. In the case of Orlando, he has lived as a man and as a woman, therefore his/her mind is androgynous and able to create. The expression 'man-womanly' applies to the character of Orlando because as a man he already had a 'feminine' temperament; his way of doubting everything, his quietness, his love for loneliness and for writing are viewed as feminine characteristics. His feminine sensibility, if one could say, helped him to begin to write his poem but it was as a woman that she succeeded to finish it. The poem, and its creation, are essential in the evolution of Orlando's identity and particularly of his/her gender identity. It is, to a certain extent, the only thing that (s)he kept throughout all the novel and therefore all his/her lifetime. The act of writing enables Orlando to know him/herself and to accept the combination of the two sexes which make him/herself. It is this combination, equally physical and mental, that we can call a form of androgyny.

In *A Room of One's Own* the author addresses this idea of androgynous mind several times, as when she saw a man and a woman getting together into a taxi and started thinking about a possible union of the two sexes/ genders in one mind (Woolf, 1995, p.102):

One has a profound, if irrational, instinct in favour of the theory that the union of man and woman makes for the greatest satisfaction, the most complete happiness. But the sight of the two people getting into the taxi and the satisfaction it gave me made me also ask whether there are two sexes in the mind corresponding to the two sexes in the body, and whether they also require to be united in order to get complete satisfaction and happiness? And I went on amateurishly to sketch a plan of the soul so that in each of us two powers preside, one male,

one female; and in the man's brain the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman's brain the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually cooperating.

Here, Virginia Woolf deconstructs the heterosexual cliché of happiness by defining it as 'irrational'. This idea of happiness is indeed reductive, firstly because it would mean that a man has to unite with a woman, therefore the other sexualities, as homosexuality, could not bring happiness, and secondly because it reduces the notion of gender to its binarity. Furthermore, the essayist wonders if one's sexual/gendered identity is mental – the mind – or physical – the body – and if these two 'sides' correspond to one another. These two sexes in the mind that she mentions here would be the two genders, male and female and she imagines the two genders living in one brain, which would define an androgynous brain. Virginia Woolf promotes the androgynous mind in the sense that each human being could be both woman and man, without affecting one's gender but increasing one's creativity, even one's intelligence since one would have more possibilities. Regarding the androgynous 'point of view', Elaine Showalter, in a chapter entitled "Virginia Woolf and the Flight into Androgyny" speaks about "a new literary sensibility – not feminine, but androgynous" (Showalter, 2009, p.215), which would mean that Virginia Woolf was not a feminist, at least in her works, but more in favour of androgyny. However, feminism and androgyny are similar, since feminism advocates a gender equality and this notion of equality is also found in androgyny, but androgyny goes further because it advocates the fusion and the disappearance of both sexes for the benefit of a gender which would be 'neutral', simultaneously male and female, man and woman. Androgyny, in accordance with Virginia Woolf's opinion, would not be man or woman but man and woman in one human being and Orlando would be the perfect example of this, since the character of Orlando embodies this manly-woman and this womanly-man whom the author speaks about in her essay *A Room of One's Own*. From the very beginning of *Orlando*, the eponymous character and his body are described as asexual, and even as feminine, with "the red of [his] cheeks was covered with peach down" (Woolf, 1993, p.12) and with the recurring motif of his beautiful legs. When Orlando changed of sex, the author used it to question the notions of male and female (Woolf, 1993, p.132-133):

Different though the sexes are, they intermix. In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place, and often it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness, while underneath the sex is the very opposite of what it is above. Of the complications and confusions which thus result everyone has had experience

Here, Virginia Woolf wants to deconstruct this image of 'male' or 'female', which is often determined by the clothes a human being wears. She explains that, most of the time, the appearance — the clothes — does not reflect what the human being is truly. Under the narrator's mockery, she makes fun of some philosophers' opinions about how the clothes are gendered and how they influence one's behaviour (Woolf, 1993, p.132):

If we compare the picture of Orlando as a man with that of Orlando as a woman we shall see that though both are undoubtedly one and the same person, there are certain changes. The man has his hand free to seize his sword, the woman must use hers to keep the satins from slipping from her shoulders. 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. Had they both worn the same clothes, it is possible that their outlook might have been the same. That is the view of some philosophers and wise ones, but on the whole, we incline to another. The difference between the sexes is, happily, one of great profundity. Clothes are but a symbol of something hid deep beneath. It was a change in Orlando herself that dictated her choice of a woman's dress and of a woman's sex. And perhaps in this she was only expressing rather more openly than usual -openness indeed was the soul of her nature- something that happens to most people without being thus plainly expressed.

This passage is essential for several reasons. Firstly, the narrator begins to explain that the difference of sex of Orlando, as a man and then as a woman, is noticeable in the pictures in his and then in her way to stand or to look and that is because of the clothes but the narrator disproves this point of view. The clothes do not impact one's point of view but could impact others' points of view about oneself, in this sense it would be a symbol, some clothes would represent a sex but the narrator insists that the difference between the sexes is much more serious than the difference between gendered clothes.

The symbolism of clothes is important in *Orlando*, as in the scene with the Archduchess becoming the Archduke: "she turned to present the Archduchess with the salver, and behold – in her place stood a tall gentleman in black. A heap of clothes lay in the fender. She was alone with a man" (Woolf, 1993, p.126). It was only by removing his clothes that the Archduke became a man in the eyes of Orlando. To come back to the explanation of the previous quote: the change of sex of Orlando is discussed by the narrator and for the first time a 'rational' explanation is given, in contrast to the fantastic side of the novel (with the change of sex but also with the time). The change of sex is explained as a choice made by Orlando him/herself, Orlando would decide to be a woman — physically —, (s)he would decide to change from one sex, man, to another, woman.

In the continuation of the quote, the narrator writes that most individuals feel the same as Orlando, that is, a willingness or a need to change of sex, to assume a gender which does not correspond to their birth sex, but in the case of Orlando this was expressed physically. Orlando would have this capacity of becoming what she feels, what (s)he is inside. Under the narrator's words, Virginia Woolf expressed her theory that gender was a choice and that was the society which made it binary and fixed, she "suggests here that gender roles are not biological givens, but societal constructs" (Ermens, 2016, p.24). Since Orlando lived for centuries (s)he is less affected by social rules and because (s)he is 'more open' than most people (s)he would express him/herself more openly. At the age of thirty years, Orlando probably felt that he was not himself as a man and decided to be a woman but it was also a way to "intermix" (Woolf, 1993, p.132) the sexes and become an androgynous person physically, since Orlando already had an androgynous mind. As written by B. Ermens "it does not matter if the body is male or female, her mind is both" (Ermens, 2016, p. 24). Orlando's physical appearance does not matter; (s)he has an androgynous mind. As discussed above, Orlando, as a man, had both masculine and feminine character traits and as a woman she could pose as a gentleman without no one noticing, only by changing clothes. Orlando's mind is 'complete' when (s)he accepts both genders, it is what Virginia Woolf wanted to be understood when she wrote: "the mind felt as if, after being divided, it had come together again in a natural fusion. The obvious reason would be that it is natural for the sexes to cooperate." (Woolf, 1995, p.102). In Orlando's mind the two sexes are 'working' together, as if it was a 'team', that is what describes the narrator when he writes about Orlando's mind (Woolf, 1993, p.133):

For it was this mixture in her of man and woman, one being uppermost and then the other, that often gave her conduct an unexpected turn. 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? And then they would say, still, she has none of the formality of a man, or a man's love of power. She is excessively tender-hearted. [...] Yet again, though bold and active as a man, it was remarked that the sight of another in danger brought on the most womanly palpitations. [...] Whether, then, Orlando was most man or woman, it is difficult to say and cannot now be decided.

This passage is after her change of sex and before the trial that pronounced Orlando was a woman, which explains that Orlando's sex 'cannot now be decided'. But there is a more important reason, Orlando does not have a defined sex. She has both man and woman features, she is bold and active as a man but she has a tender heart as a woman, it seems she keeps the best of each sex; hence, the

binarity of sexes and also of genders disappears to give way to this androgynous mind of which Virginia Woolf wrote so much about. Orlando would not be either a man or a woman, but a mixture of the two and his/her body would express it by changing of sex during his/her life. Moreover, Virginia Woolf already spoke about this mixture of sexes in *A Room of One's Own* (Woolf, 1995, pp.107-108):

I want to stretch my faculties on a book, to seek it in that happy age (...) when the writer used both sides of his mind equally. One must turn back to Shakespeare then, for Shakespeare was androgynous; and so were Keats and Sterne and Cowper and Lamb and Coleridge. Shelley perhaps was sexless. Milton and Ben Jonson had a dash too much of the male in them. So had Wordsworth and Tolstoy. In our time Proust was wholly androgynous, if not perhaps a little too much of a woman. But that failing is too rare for one to complain of it, since without some mixture of the kind the intellect seems to predominate and the other faculties of the mind harden and become barren.

She thought that this mixture of man and woman was essential for the mind, that it could increase the mind faculties. She took the example of the writer who used both sides of his mind, the two sides are the two sexes, the man and the woman. She explained that if the writer used the two sides equally, he would use all the faculties of his mind and she gave names of many writers that had androgynous minds, according to her. However, she quoted here only men since women who wrote were rare at that time but it impedes a comparison. Orlando is therefore the representation of a manly woman writer who succeeded to publish her poem 'The Oak Tree'.

About androgyny, Elaine Showalter dedicated a whole chapter of *A Literature of Their Own* to write about Virginia Woolf and about androgyny, with the title 'Virginia Woolf and the Flight Into Androgyny'. Indeed, Elaine Showalter affirmed that Virginia Woolf was obsessed by androgyny because, as a woman, she could not be restricted (Showalter, 2009, p. 216):

But whatever the abstract merits of androgyny, the world that Virginia Woolf inhabited was the last place in which a woman could fully express both femaleness and maleness, nurturance and aggression. For all her immense gift, Virginia Woolf was as thwarted and pulled asunder as the women she describes in *A Room of One's Own*. Androgyny was the myth that helped her evade confrontation with her own painful femaleness and enabled her to choke and repress her anger and ambition. Woolf inherited a female tradition a century old; no woman writer has ever been more in touch with – even obsessed by – this tradition than she.

According to E. Showalter, androgyny is a means to help and protect oneself as a woman. She discredits androgyny by comparing it to a 'myth', thus to something that would not exist but was

created to 'repress' one's anger and ambition. Elaine Showalter seems to have a pejorative point of view about androgyny. However, she acknowledges that at the time of Virginia Woolf one could not 'express both femaleness and maleness'. Androgyny was not accepted but neither were transsexuality, transgender, or anything that was opposed to the binarity of sexes. Virginia Woolf, who was ahead of her time, did not believe in this binarity and showed with her works, *A Room of One's Own* and *Orlando*, that it could exist much more than this common binarity, that the human being is much more challenging than society's norms.

Moreover, Elaine Showalter mentioned *A Room of One's Own* several times and compared the writing style of it with *Orlando*: "the techniques of Room are like those of Woolf's fiction, particularly Orlando, which she was writing at the same time: repetition, exaggeration, parody, whimsy, and multiple viewpoint" (Showalter, 2009, p.231). Surprisingly, the author emphasises that *A Room of One's Own* is "the most famous of Woolf's statements about androgyny" (Showalter, 2009, p.231), but does not mention *Orlando* as another effective statement about androgyny; she mentioned *Orlando* only in relation to the techniques even if the fictional biography is equally relevant as *A Room of One's Own*. She only mentioned *Orlando* once more in the chapter, but briefly (Showalter, 2009, p.239):

In 1928, androgyny, which she had also celebrated in the tedious high camp of Orlando, represented her ambivalent solution to the conflict of wishing to describe female experience at the same time that her life presented paralyzing obstacles to such self-expression.

Elaine Showalter alluded to *Orlando* vaguely by writing that Virginia Woolf celebrated androgyny in the novel, but she did not insist on the androgynous characters, as Orlando and the Archduke Harry, and how androgyny is highlighted in the novel and in the film adaptation. Furthermore, the author presented androgyny as a solution for Virginia Woolf, as if androgyny was an escape for her and not a conviction. E. Showalter seemed indeed to have a pejorative viewpoint about androgyny, as it can be understood in this passage (Showalter, 2009, p.236, 237):

The androgynous mind is, finally, a utopian projection of the ideal artist: calm, stable, unimpeded by consciousness of sex. Woolf meant it to be a luminous and fulfilling idea; but, like other utopian projections, her vision is inhuman. Whatever else one may say of androgyny, it represents an escape from the confrontation with femaleness or maleness. Her ideal artist mystically transcends sex, or has none. One could imagine another approach to androgyny, however, through total immersion in the individual experience, with all its restrictions of sex and anger and fear and chaos. A thorough understanding of what it means, in every respect, to be a woman, could lead the artist to an understanding of what it means to be a man. This revelation

would not be realized in any mystical way; it would result from daring to face and express what is unique, even if unpleasant, or taboo, or destructive, in one's own experience, and thus it would speak to the secret heart in all people.

Once again, the author addresses the idea of androgyny as an escape for Virginia Woolf, she ridicules Woolf's opinion and calls into question the seriousness and even the possibility of androgyny as seen by Virginia Woolf. Elaine Showalter seems to be ironic towards Woolf's theory of androgyny and suggests her own definition of what would be an androgynous mind. Even if she disagrees with Virginia Woolf, her approach of androgyny and the androgynous consciousness reminds Orlando's experience, who had a "thorough understanding of what it means, in every respect, to be" a man before becoming a woman. According to Showalter's definition Orlando would be the perfect example of an androgynous mind.

Besides androgyny another idea shows the fluidity of gender, the idea of different selves. At the end of *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf indeed addresses the idea of different 'I', different selves, different identities in one mind, this passage being relevant it might be a little bit lengthy (Woolf, 1993, p. 212-213):

Then she called hesitatingly, as if the person she wanted might not be there, 'Orlando?' For if there are (at a venture) seventy-six different times all ticking in the mind at once, 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. 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. I want another [...] these selves of which we are built up, one on top of another, as plates are piled on a waiter's hand, have attachments elsewhere, sympathies, little constitutions and rights of their own, call them what you will (and for many of these things there is no name) so that one will only come if it is raining, another in a room with green curtains, another when Mrs. Jones is not here, another if you can promise it a glass of wine - and so on; for everybody can multiply from his own experience the different terms which his different selves have made with him - and some are too wildly ridiculous to be mentioned in print at all.

So Orlando, at the turn by the barn, called 'Orlando?' with a note of interrogation in her voice and waited. Orlando did not come.

'All right then', Orlando said, with the good humour people practise on these occasions; and tried another. For she had a great variety of selves to call upon, far more than we have been able to find room for, since a biography is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have as many thousand. Choosing then, only those

selves we have found room for, Orlando may now have called on the boy who cut the nigger's head down; the boy who strung it up again; the boy who sat on the hill; the boy who saw the poet; the boy who handed the Queen the bowl of rose water; or she may have called upon the young man who fell in love with Sasha; or upon the Courtier; or upon the Ambassador; or upon the Soldier; or upon the Traveller; or she may have wanted the woman to come to her; the Gipsy; the Fine Lady; the Hermit; the girl in love with life; the Patroness of Letters; the woman who called Mar (meaning hot baths and evening fires) or Shelmerdine (meaning crocuses in autumn woods) or Bonthrop (meaning the death we die daily) or all three together – which meant more things than we have space to write out – all were different and she may have called upon any one of them.

Perhaps; but what appeared certain (for we are now in the region of 'perhaps' and 'appears') was that the one she needed most kept aloof, for she was, to hear her talk, changing her selves as quickly as she drove – there was a new one at every corner – as happens when, for some unaccountable reason, the conscious self, which is the uppermost, and has the power to desire, wishes to be nothing but one self. This is what some people call the true self, and it is, they say, compact of all the selves we have it in us to be; commanded and locked up by the Captain self, the Key self, which amalgamates and controls them all. Orlando was certainly seeking this self

This quote contains a lot of ideas. Firstly, the narrator mentions the 'different people' in the human spirit, beginning by writing that what the person Orlando wanted might not be here. Orlando would have multiple selves whom she could call in when needed. This idea of multiple selves applies to everyone, each one has in oneself a multitude of 'ones' and the combination of all these selves constructs one's identity. As written by the narrator, each self has one's own personality, each self has in some ways one's conditions to 'appear' in one's mind, and besides, the narrator makes fun of these conditions by giving the example of the self who only appears in a room with green curtains or if one promises a glass of wine. Each person being different, the selves would appear under certain conditions and depending on their state of mind.

Secondly, the narrator details the selves of Orlando known by the readers since he wrote about in the biography, these selves are the boy cutting the nigger's head down, the boy stringing the nigger's head up, the boy seeing the poet, but also the young man, the Ambassador, the girl, the woman, thus Orlando is the combination of all those selves and (s)he is simultaneously the boy, the man, the girl, the woman. The particularity of Orlando is that those selves are not limited in the mind but manifest

themselves physically, each self has one's own existence in the mind but also had one's own existence in 'real life', physically, contrary to other human beings. Each self would be a sort of memory and is thus linked to the body.

Finally, the narrator mentions the conscious self who would be the self who has power on all the other selves and he explains that some people call it the true self, the self gathering all the selves. This self, also called the Captain self or the Key self, would control all the selves and would be the true identity of a person. One could thus wonder what would be this true self, if it would be, as seen above, a combination of all selves or one particular self who predominates over the other selves. In the case of Orlando, the narrator wrote that she was "certainly seeking this self", but one could wonder what is the true self of Orlando, if it is the boy, the man, the woman or a combination of all of them. The true self of Orlando would probably be the person she is at the end of the novel, that is, the woman who lived as a boy, as a man, as a woman, through the centuries, everything she has lived through built her true self. Later in this chapter, the narrator wrote that "the Orlando whom she had called came of its own accord" "when she had ceased to call" it (Woolf, 1993, p. 216), as if when she had ceased to concentrate on herself, when she forgot about herself, she could be herself, truly and entirely. This last self, who enabled Orlando to be in some ways complete, appeared when she was entering the park of her house, as if she could only be herself in the house where she grew up. With the apparition of this last self Orlando changed (Woolf, 1993, p. 216):

she was now darkened, stilled, and become, with the addition of this Orlando, what is called, rightly or wrongly, a single self, a real self. And she fell silent. For it is probable that when people talk aloud, the selves (of which there may be more than two thousand) are conscious of dis severment, and are trying to communicate, but when communication is established they fall silent.

The addition of all her selves enabled her to become a single self, a real self, that is the true self discussed above is a union of the selves. The true self of Orlando would be the union of all his/her selves, that is the boy, the man, the Ambassador, the woman, the lover, the writer etc. without a self over another. Once Orlando became a real self, she fell silent, as if she did not feel the need of speaking alone anymore, as the narrator wrote "the communication is established" inside herself and this is felt outside. With this last self Orlando feels finally complete, she stopped speaking because she is peaceful at this moment. This notion of true self / real self makes sense in the case of Orlando since each self built his and then her identity until she finds herself, as it were. That is thanks to the addition of all the selves together that Orlando could feel herself and, in a manner of speaking, be her true self.

In comparison with the theory of androgyny, Orlando would not have a male self and a female self in his/her mind but a boundlessness of selves. The androgynous mind would be a form of this true self, in the sense that the addition of the male self and of the female self enables the mind to be complete. Even if the androgynous mind is limited to its binarity, it meets the same criteria as the theory of the true self, that is a person's mind is comprised of multiple selves who, once they are accepted and unified, build one's identity and enable to be oneself, no matter one's sex or gender. Actually, the androgynous mind and the true self are related, as explains Nancy Bazin in her book about the androgynous vision of Virginia Woolf⁹ (Bazin, 1973, p. 3):

In her opinion, however, to be truly creative one must use the "whole" mind. In keeping with this, the greatest writers are "androgynous": they use and harmonize the masculine and feminine approaches to truth (pp. 147-148, 156-157). They do not suffer from what T. S. Eliot calls the "dissociation of sensibility" or what Carl Jung calls the "split consciousness" of modern man; for, in Jungian terms, they have discovered the "self", "a point midway between the conscious and the unconscious" in which there is a reconciliation of opposites. Like Jung, Virginia Woolf felt that neither an individual nor an age can find its point of equilibrium without frankly confronting and understanding the exact nature of the opposing forces. Thus, her interest in what it means to be a male or a female was related to her quest for the self or the point of balance that would stabilize her personality and give her the sense of wholeness and unconsciousness which characterizes the androgynous writer.

Indeed, this quote shows that Virginia Woolf's quest for the self was related to her vision of androgyny and the androgynous mind. The true self would be characterized by the wholeness, which is achieved through the androgyny, through this acceptance and this addition of all the selves, male and female. The description of the androgynous writer seems to correspond to the character of Orlando, as if Orlando was the perfect representation of the androgynous writer as seen by Virginia Woolf. Indeed, Orlando experimented what is to be a man and what is to be a woman and (s)he always had in him/herself a part of male and a part of female, which enables him/her to be 'whole' at the end of the novel, she became a "single self, a real self" (Woolf, 1993, p. 216). Orlando could confront and understand the nature of the opposing forces described by Carl Jung since (s)he lived as a man and as a woman, and above all for several centuries. In Jungian terms androgyny would be "a point midway between the conscious and the unconscious" "in which there is a reconciliation of opposites". The androgyny would be an exploration of oneself and an acceptance of both sexes and of all the selves,

⁹ The book is comprised of six chapters, of which four are about Virginia Woolf's works, such as *To the Lighthouse*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, but curiously *Orlando* is not one of them.

regardless the sex or the gender of the self. Androgyny is accepting one's part of male and one's part of female, which should not be confused with man and woman, as wrote Nancy Bazin (Bazin, 1973, p. 166-167):

Virginia Woolf's male and female "powers" are traditionally designated as the male and female principles, what the Chinese refer to as yang (male) and yin (female). As Linda Thurston points out in an excellent article, "On Male and Female Principle", "Male and Female, as cosmic principles, should not be confused to mean men or women." These terms provide us with a useful metaphor based upon the reproductive process; unfortunately, the terms seem confusing to us at first because "what our society has been doing is defining the total person by [his or her] reproductive process when we are, in fact, much more than this function." Indeed, whereas in biology "neither Male nor Female is productive by itself", likewise, each human being must embody both the male and the female powers. The androgynous mind utilizes rational (...) as well as intuitive (...) faculties; it strives not only to dissect but to connect. In terms of Virginia Woolf's aesthetic, the androgynous mind perceives both the multiplicity and the underlying unity.

The author compares the male and female to the yang and yin, which could be described as two principles, one positive, bright and masculine (yang) and one negative, dark and feminine (yin), whose interaction influences the destinies of creatures and things¹⁰. However, Virginia Woolf did not seem to associate feminine with negativity but rather with positivity. In fact, V. Woolf advocated a union of the female and the male, as the Chinese yin and yang, but without this notion of darkness. Nancy Bazin also reminds that male and female should not be confused with men and women because each man could be able to embody the male and female powers as each woman could be able to embody the male and female powers. The sex, man or woman, is physical, whereas the gender, male or female, is mental, and that is for this reason that one could be male and female, as the androgynous mind. The author specifies Virginia Woolf's aesthetic, the androgynous mind is a connection between male and female, a union which enables the mind to be complete.

To conclude on this point, Orlando had an androgynous mind, (s)he had both male and female powers. The union of all the selves of Orlando's mind enabled the creation of the poem 'The Oak Tree' but also enabled the character to be oneself. The theory of the androgynous mind as well as the theory of the true self show that the gendered identity could not be restricted to the binarity male or female. As for the gendered identity, the sexual identity could not be restricted to heterosexuality.

¹⁰ Definition from <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/yin-and-yang>

3.c) Sexuality and gender

The sexual identity, as described in the previous section, encompasses the body, how a human being is a sexed body and how it is sexualized, and also the sexual orientation, heterosexuality, homosexuality, etc. In this section, however, the main issue will be the sexuality, as far as sexual orientation is concerned, and how sexuality and gender are linked in general terms and in *Orlando*. As written by Adam Burgess, gender, sexuality and time are, in some ways, the true characters of the novel *Orlando* (Burgess, 2017, p. 3):

One could argue, though, that the true characters are actually gender (identity), sexuality, and time: these are the ideas explored most intricately and most often throughout the course of the book and they are certainly front-facing; the narrator/biographer views time and Orlando in opposition to how opinions and practices of sex and gender are viewed differently at various points in history.

A. Burgess explains that the story of Orlando enables Virginia Woolf to discuss the opinions and practices of sex and gender across the centuries. However, in the novel, sexuality is barely covered and subtly, nevertheless, it is a main point in regard to the construction of Orlando's identity. In fact, sexuality is mainly suggested more than exposed. It was firstly addressed when Orlando was in Wapping Old Stairs, by the time he was a young boy, and of his discovered sexuality; then, at the Court, but even if sexuality is evoked as in the phrase "their loves had been active" (Woolf, 1993, p. 21) the biographer does not emphasise Orlando's sexuality. Similarly, when Orlando fell in love with the Russian Princess Sasha, even if their intimacy "became the scandal of the Court" (Woolf, 1993, p. 29) and even if Orlando murmured to her that he knew for the first time "the delights of love" (Woolf, 1993, p. 31), the sexual act is never mentioned as such. Later in the novel, when Orlando is a woman and she begins to frequent prostitutes, it is suggested once again that Orlando had sexual relations but never explicitly. Lastly, when Orlando met the man who will become her husband, Shelmerdine, the narrator is silent on their sexual relations but in the film adaptation the film director chose to name the section of their meeting "Sex". Even if the narrator chose to not mention Orlando's sexual relations, his/her sexuality is central in the novel and is closely linked with the construction of his/her gendered identity. Moreover, sexuality and gender build together, sexuality leads to gender and gender leads to sexuality. As regards these two notions, Judith Butler reflects upon the link between gender and sexuality in the preface of *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 2006, p. xii-xiii):

But what is the link between gender and sexuality that I sought to underscore? Certainly, I do not mean to claim that forms of sexual practice produce certain genders, but only that under

conditions of normative heterosexuality, policing gender is sometimes used as a way of securing heterosexuality. Catharine MacKinnon offers a formulation of this problem that resonates with my own at the same time that there are, I believe, crucial and important differences between us. She writes:

Stopped as an attribute of a person, sex inequality takes the form of gender; moving as a relation between people, it takes the form of sexuality. Gender emerges as the congealed form of the sexualization of inequality between men and women.

In this view, sexual hierarchy produces and consolidates gender. It is not heterosexual normativity that produces and consolidates gender, but the gender hierarchy that is said to underwrite heterosexual relations. If gender hierarchy produces and consolidates gender, and if gender hierarchy presupposes an operative notion of gender, then gender is what causes gender, and the formulation culminates in tautology.

Here, the theorist recalls that both sexuality and gender are subject to social norms, which causes a misunderstanding and even an inappropriate perception of these notions. Indeed, the principal norm of sexuality, which is normative heterosexuality, makes gender a sort of extension of sexuality, that means that gender becomes a share of sexuality. Judith Butler quotes the feminist Catharine MacKinnon to explain that 'sexual hierarchy produces and consolidates gender', that is, in normative heterosexual relations gender tends to create hierarchies just as sexual hierarchy. In that sense, sexual hierarchy and gender hierarchy follow the same pattern, which, in a way, reinforces the inequality between men and woman. In these hierarchies, the masculinity prevails over the femininity, the heterosexuality prevails over the other sexualities as the homosexuality or the transsexuality, the norm prevails over the differences. However, these hierarchies enable the consolidation of sexuality and gender, as written by J. Butler "gender is what causes gender". The notion of homosexuality is discussed in the novel, and one should take an interest in Orlando's heterosexuality. As a woman, but dressed as a man, Orlando met Nell and her friends, described as prostitutes. After admitting she was a woman, Orlando became friend with these women and became herself a prostitute, as indicated by the phrase "receiving a client or two (for she had many scores of suppliants)" (Woolf, 1993, p. 153). During that same period, she would as well "more often than not become a nobleman complete from head to toe and walk the streets in search of adventure" (Woolf, 1993, p. 153), and among her adventures there was a flight with a married woman. Thus, Orlando experienced, for a short time, sexual relations as a prostituted woman, probably as a noble woman in Richmond and as a nobleman, she experienced sexual relations within different social classes and "enjoyed the love of both sexes equally" (Woolf, 1993, p. 153). By

changing of sex, Orlando allows herself to explore her sexuality, as if by becoming a woman she had more freedom in her sexuality and could no longer restrict herself to the normative heterosexuality. As a man, homosexuality was not directly addressed, but one could understand that Orlando was attracted to masculine features in his relations, with the Princess Sasha and with the Archduchess Harriett. Furthermore, Sasha represents gender fluidity since Orlando fell in love with her despite the fact that “the loose tunic and trousers of the Russian fashion served to disguise the sex” (Woolf, 1993, p. 26), he was attracted by “the extraordinary seductiveness which issued from the whole person” (Woolf, 1993, p.26). The seductiveness of Sacha did not come from her gender or her femininity but from her whole person. With Sasha and the Archduchess, Orlando is attracted by male features but is also unable to discern, in these potential lovers, male from female. To come back to female homosexuality, Virginia Woolf benefits from Orlando’s sexual experiences to discuss Sapphism, which was still a taboo subject at this time (twentieth century), as written by D. Cohler “in the 1910s, birth control, free love, and male homosexuality appeared frequently as topics alongside women’s suffrage in the pages of the *Freewoman*. Yet, any significant discussion of female homosexuality is notably absent among these frank discussions.” (Cohler, 2010, p. 73). Female homosexuality was ignored and Virginia Woolf, who fell in love with a woman herself and who fought all forms of inequality and discrimination affecting women, wanted to highlight this sexual orientation and make it standard, ‘normal’. In *A Room of One’s Own*, she wrote about an unknown writer and what seems to be her first book, in which there is an allusion to female homosexuality (Woolf, 1995, p. 87):

I turned the page and read... I am sorry to break off so abruptly. Are there no men present? Do you promise me that behind that red curtain over there the figure of Sir Chartres Biron is not concealed? We are all women you assure me? Then I may tell you that the very next words I read were these – ‘Chloe liked Olivia...’ Do not start. Do not blush. Let us admit in the privacy of our own society that these things sometimes happen. Sometimes women do like women. ‘Chloe liked Olivia’, I read. And then it struck me how immense a change was there. Chloe liked Olivia perhaps for the first time in literature.

Before declaring what she read, Virginia Woolf wanted to make sure that there were no men present and she seemed shocked. Indeed, she needed to make a break to tell what she read; the subject was so unusual. But the questions about the men are ironical, by doing this she wanted to expose social norms and men who acted as if female homosexuality did not exist. Since she was only with women, she could admit that lesbianism exists, that women could love women and have sexual relations with women. She also explained that a woman, Chloe, liked another woman, Olivia, in literature for the first

time, it shows and proves that female homosexuality was ignored in society and even in literature. By speaking of Mary Carmichael – the unknown author who wrote about Chloe and Olivia – Virginia Woolf gave visibility to one of the first English women writing about lesbianism. When she wrote *Orlando*, shortly before *A Room of One's Own*, she probably already had this idea of the inexistence of female homosexuality in literature and by deflecting the codes of the biography, she questioned the notions of gender and sexuality. By changing the sex of the main character, she could discuss women's sexuality and female homosexuality. Homosexuality is also mentioned when Orlando was a man, he was indeed attracted to the Muscovite Princess, thinking she was a man (Woolf, 1993, p. 26):

When the boy, for alas, a boy it must be – no woman could skate with such speed and vigour – swept almost on tiptoe past him, Orlando was ready to tear his hair with vexation that the person was of his own sex, and thus all embraces were out of the question.

Here the biographer highlights that male homosexuality, in the seventeenth century, was not accepted, if the Princess was a man an embrace would have been 'out of the question'. Moreover, Orlando felt attracted to the Archduchess Harriet, who was, in reality, a man. Later, when Orlando was a woman, it was female homosexuality which was not accepted but the author chose to mention it, even briefly, with the aim of bringing in the norm female homosexuality.

As mentioned by herself in *A Room of One's Own*, Sapphism is not represented in literature, therefore she chose to represent it in her own way. She presented it as something normal, in the telling of Orlando's adventures, but as for Orlando's sexual relations, the author does not emphasise homosexuality. However, the presence of homosexuality makes it possible to open the debate, particularly about female homosexuality and how it was seen at this time – in the eighteenth century but also at the time of Virginia Woolf – and raises questions about queer theory.

Indeed, one could associate Queer theory to Virginia Woolf's ideas and to *Orlando*. To define the term queer, it referred to a homosexual but in an offensive way but it also could refer to anyone who is not fitting traditional ideas about gender or sexuality, especially the idea that everyone is either male or female or that people should only have sexual relationships with the opposite sex¹¹. Both meanings bring to mind Orlando, who had homosexual relations and above all, who not fitted traditional ideas about gender and sexuality. However, the connotation of the term queer changed over the years, to become the contrary of its first meaning and be used in the queer theory. Judith Butler reflects upon the change of meaning of the term (Butler, 2011, p. 169):

¹¹ Definition from online Cambridge dictionary: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/fr/dictionnaire/anglais/queer>

the temporality of the term is precisely what concerns me here: how is it that a term that signalled degradation has been turned – “refunctioned” in the Brechtian sense – to signify a new and affirmative set of meanings? (...) Is this a reversal that retains and reiterates the abjected history of the term?

As noted by J. Butler the term has been subject to a reversal over time, it changed from a negative signification – it was synonym to strange, abnormal, it was even used as an insult to describe a homosexual – to a more positive one, which designates the fight of everyone who does not fit traditional ideas of sexuality and gender (Butler, 2011, p. 172):

The term “queer” emerges as an interpellation that raises the question of the status of force and opposition, of stability and variability, within performativity. The term “queer” has operated as one linguistic practice whose purpose has been the shaming of the subject it names or, rather, the producing of a subject through that shaming interpellation. “Queer” derives its force precisely through the repeated invocation by which it has become linked to accusation, pathologization, insult.

People who have been persecuted through the use of this term make it a strength, in the sense that they transform this term to denounce the standards imposed of gender and sexuality and to undo sexual and gendered categories. Judith Butler explains how this reversal is possible in *Bodies That Matter* (Butler, 2011, p. 177):

Within queer politics, indeed, within the very signification that is “queer”, we read a resignifying practice in which the desanctioning power of the name “queer” is reversed to sanction a contestation of the terms of sexual legitimacy. Paradoxically, but also with great promise, the subject who is “queered” into public discourse through homophobic interpellations of various kinds takes up or cites that very term as the discursive basis for an opposition. This kind of citation will emerge as theatrical to the extent that it mimes and renders hyperbolic the discursive convention that it also reverses. The hyperbolic gesture is crucial to the exposure of the homophobic “law” that can no longer control the terms of its own abjecting strategies.

The “queered” use the term queer and thus appropriate it, which leads to the loss of its original homophobic meaning. This is also thanks to this reversal that the Queer theory emerged. As explained by Patricia Waugh, this theory aims to show how sexuality could be fluid (Waugh, 2007, p. 444):

sexualities are conceptualized in terms of fluidity, contradiction, and indeterminacy; desire is bodily and embodied, but it is also linguistic and discursive and sex is de-linked from gender such that sexuality is no longer understood within the framework of the heterosexual matrix.

In this quote Patricia Waugh describes the Queer theory and explains that the notion of sexuality should get rid of the normative heterosexuality, that sex should be de-linked from gender and that these notions are fluid. The Queer theory tends to remove normative categories, such as heterosexuality, male and female, and to remove the link between the biology (the body, the sex), the gender and the sexual orientation, this link is indeed considered by Judith Butler as a forced performance. Regarding *Orlando*, it could be read and analysed from the perspective of the Queer theory because it counters gender binarity and also this link between gender, sexual orientation and the body/ the sex. The main character is not locked into a specific gender or a specific sexual orientation, even Orlando's body is not restrained to one specific sex. As stated by Judith Butler, if the distinction between sex and gender tends to disappear "it would make no sense, then, to define gender as the cultural interpretation of sex, if sex itself is a gendered category." (Butler, 2006, p. 10). Gender should not be an interpretation of sex, neither sex should be a gendered category. Each notion – sex, sexuality and gender – should exist by itself without depending of other notions, much like in *Orlando*. However, a sort of connection should be maintained between these notions, as explained by Judith Butler (Butler, 2011, p. 182):

It is important to emphasize that although heterosexuality operates in part through the stabilization of gender norms, gender designates a dense site of significations that contain and exceed the heterosexual matrix. Although forms of sexuality do not unilaterally determine gender, a non-causal and non-reductive connection between sexuality and gender is nevertheless crucial to maintain. Precisely because homophobia often operates through the attribution of a damaged, failed, or otherwise abject gender to homosexuals, that is, calling gay men "feminine" or calling lesbians "masculine", and because the homophobic terror over performing homosexual acts, where it exists, is often also a terror over losing proper gender ("no longer being a real or proper man" or "no longer being a real and proper woman"), it seems crucial to retain a theoretical apparatus that will account for how sexuality is regulated through the policing and the shaming of gender.

She demonstrates that even if sexuality does not determine gender, a connection should be maintained between the two notions only to protect homosexuals, transsexuals and every human being who does not fit normative heterosexuality. Moreover, she reminds us that gender exceeds the heterosexual matrix, even if the society still has difficulty to accept it, which causes what she calls the homophobic terror and also the fear of losing one's specific gender. The connection between sexuality and gender enables a sort of protection of homosexuals, transsexuals etc. but it should be necessary to not confuse the need of this connection and the link imposed by the society between sexuality, sex and gender, even

if the connection exists because of the society. Perhaps, this connection would not be needed if social and cultural norms did not 'shame' human-beings without specific gender or human-beings who are not heterosexuals. If the fluidity of gender and of sexuality was accepted as normal, the link between these notions would not even exist.

To conclude this part, gendered and sexuality identities are fluid because these notions are fixed only by social norms but, in reality, each one could feel one's gendered identity and one's sexual identity, one could be agender, androgynous, homosexual and could change through one's lifetime, there is no limitation to gender or to sexuality, these notions are fluids.

As said by Virginia Woolf "when a subject is highly controversial – and any question about sex is that – one cannot hope to tell the truth." (Woolf, 1995, p. 14), there is indeed no universal truth about sex, about sexuality, about gender, each one could have a different opinion on these notions but the social and cultural norms impel a lot of people to believe in the binarity of gender and in the heterosexual matrix and to behave as if these norms were the truth. But nowadays these norms are increasingly called into question and the idea of fluidity of the notions as gender or sexuality is increasingly accepted, even if the social and cultural norms have not been sufficiently evolved. Virginia Woolf was indeed far ahead of her time, since she wanted these norms to evolve, from the beginning of the twentieth century. With *Orlando* she succeeded to prove that gender and sexuality are not fixed notions and that it was possible for a human-being to not be confined in only one gender or one sexuality, despite the fictional nature of her book.

4. The film adaptation *Orlando*

This part will be dedicated to the film adaptation *Orlando* and to the gender issues in the film. As in the book, gender norms are challenged by the film director, through Orlando's story but also through the choice of the actors, as it will be seen later. About the film, it was released in 1992 and lasts ninety-four minutes. It was adapted by Sally Potter (who is both the writer and the director of the film), who stated: "My task with the adaptation of Virginia Woolf's book for the screen was to find a way of remaining true to the spirit of the book and to Virginia Woolf's intentions, whilst being ruthless with changing the book in any way necessary to make it work cinematically" (Levy, 2010).

4.a) Purposes of Sally Potter and her choice of actors

The first phrase of the film, pronounced by the voice-over, reflects the same words of the book but without the pronoun "he", the voice-off says "there can be no doubt about his sex" and adds "despite the feminine appearance that every young man at the time aspires to" (1:06, 1992). From the first sentence of the voice-off the spectator knows that Orlando's sex and gender will be called into question throughout the film. The film is divided in seven sections, named Death, Love, Poetry, Politics, Society, Sex and Birth, each section has a date except the last one 'Birth', as if it was timeless. Each section will be analysed more deeply in this part.

Sally Potter was born in 1949. Considering that Virginia Woolf died in 1941, she could not know the author of *Orlando* when she adapted it; she had to adapt and change the text of her own and create a new text, the screenplay [Figure 4]. Furthermore, she couldn't know if Virginia Woolf would have agreed with the film adaptation, the author indeed declared her disagreement with film adaptation on the whole, in an essay about the theme of Cinema, in 1926: "Virginia Woolf, commenting on the fledging art of cinema, deplored the simplification of the literary work that inevitably occurred in its transposition to the new visual medium and called film a "parasite" and literature its "prey" and "victim" (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 3).

However, since her early teens — fourteen years old — when she read *Orlando* for the first time, Sally Potter knew that she wanted to adapt it in a film. She indeed declared: "It had an incredible effect on me as a book, because I remember feeling I wasn't just reading it, I was watching it... I could see it" (BBC, 2017). Thus, she decided to adapt the story of Orlando because of her personal feeling, she thought it was a story to watch and not only to read. In some ways, Virginia Woolf would agree with Sally Potter on this issue since she stated that "cinema has within its grasp innumerable symbols for

emotions that have so far failed to find expression in words” (as cited in Hutcheon, 2006, p.3), S. Potter indeed succeeded to show characters’ feelings and emotions while keeping the words by using a voice-over.

As Virginia Woolf, Sally Potter is feminist but she refuses to describe her films as feminist (Lodge, 2017):

Potter may strongly identify herself as a feminist (...) but she has long been leery of ascribing the same term to her work.

“This is a complicated one,” she says with a half-smile, raising an index finger as if to warn of an imminent screed. “I am a feminist in life. I would expect you, or Ken Loach, or Martin Scorsese, to be a feminist in life. But I object to having my films called feminist, implying they’re only for a certain audience of like-minded people and that the film itself would preach that line. Feminist is somehow different from saying ‘anti-racist’. I would think of my films, or my life, everything in my life, as anti-racist, but you don’t hear that as a label. But feminist film is seen as specific.”

It’s the attachment of the term to a single gender of film-maker, she continues, that really rankles – liberal-minded men can make female-driven stories without ever being so defined.

“Why aren’t Ken Loach’s films called feminist? ‘The feminist film-maker Ken Loach’ or ‘the feminist film-maker Mike Leigh’ – why don’t we read that? And if not, why not?”

She takes a breath. “I’m completely proud of the word. The feminist movement is one of the most vibrant, extraordinary political movements of the 20th century, and now there’s a younger generation who’s taken it up again with great joy and pleasure, and that’s wonderful to see. But I object to the way it’s used as a prefix to my work, to ghettoise it, often as part of a criticism rather than an appreciation. I just want to occupy a free space without a prefix.

Indeed, she does not want to qualify her films as feminist because it would reduce them to a concept and to ‘a certain audience’. She also explains that, because she is a woman her films could be defined as feminist but if she had been a man and she had done the same type of film, the films would not be defined as feminist. She wants her films to be seen without prejudices/ stereotypes, as if it was a man film-maker who did the film. The fact that she is a woman film-maker and that she is feminist should not affect one’s perception of her work. As she said, she does not want feminist to be used as a prefix to her films because it would be more used as a critic than as an appreciation, she wants her work to be appreciated or judged without thinking about her personal ideas. She wants to be neutral when she makes a film. Yet, many films she chose to direct relate to feminism and gender issues. For example,

her short film *Thriller* (1979) with the deconstruction of the heroine's role and its gender reversal or *The Gold Diggers* (1983) with the exploration of women as icons and exchange objects (Kuhn, N/D). Even if Sally Potter did not want the film *Orlando* categorized as a feminist film, it would be categorized into the movement of the New Queer Cinema (Koresky, N/D):

Thus, onscreen Orlando's queerness—and eventual transformation at film's midpoint into a woman—becomes something like a source of pride, which helps situate the film well and cleanly into the ethos of the New Queer Cinema. That political and aesthetically forward-thinking movement was partly defined by B. Ruby Rich this way: “In all of them, there are traces of appropriation, pastiche, and irony, as well as a reworking of history with social constructionism very much in mind. Definitely breaking with older humanist approaches and the films and tapes that accompanied identity politics these works are irreverent, energetic, alternately minimalist and excessive. Above all, they're full of pleasure.” All of this applies to *Orlando* the movie, which uses Woolf's novel—itsself full of pleasure, as well as irony and satire—as a springboard for an inquiry into the politics and standards of its own time, and toggles between narrative minimalism and visual excess.

Indeed, if she chose to adapt *Orlando*, it was because of her feeling when she first read it but it was also because it allows her to approach gender issues. She takes advantages of the film to make people think about the questions of sex inequalities, gender and sexuality. Her choices about the actors is the 'first step' in this reflection about gender issues.

Sally Potter did not choose the actors for the film *Orlando* arbitrarily, but each actor represents something in relation to gender issues. Firstly, the lead actress, Tilda Swinton, plays Orlando as a woman but also as a man. The film director said that a lot of people warned her that it was impossible to make a film of the book since the main character was born as a man and became a woman and that she needed two actors but she made the choice of one actress to play the two sexes of Orlando (BBC, 2017):

One of the reasons that people thought it was unfilmable was that you've got one character, he's living for four hundred years, not only that, but living for the first two hundred years as a man and then, the second half of the story as a woman. A lot of people said you've got to have two actors; you've got to have a male act the first and then a female. Soon I've seen Tilda something in my heart, there was absolutely nobody else in my mind's eyes, that was the person who could embody this sort of gender fluidity.

Sally Potter stated that Tilda Swinton was the only person who could embody the gender fluidity that represents Orlando. Indeed, she does not correspond to the 'physical standards' imposed by social norms to the women, as the femininity feature, so she could play both genders. She has short hairs, her facial features are out of the ordinary, she has an androgynous appearance [Figure 5]. This year (2019) Tilda Swinton wrote about *Orlando* (Darling, N/D):

I have come to value the landscape of this beloved book far less as being only about gender and far more as being about the profound flexibility of the fully awake and sensate spirit... I have come to see Orlando as a story about the life and development of a human striving to become liberated entirely from the constructs of prescriptive (tired old binary) gender or social norms of any kind.

She thinks that Orlando is a sort of example of a human being who would be released from the social and cultural norms about gender, about sexuality, which impose the 'binarity'. She said in an interview that she identifies herself with the character, that she feels personal with the film because this is about growing, about the development of a human being¹².

Secondly, to play Queen Elizabeth I, the film director chose a man. Quentin Crisp was homosexual and physically 'feminine', he experimented make-up, nail polish and women's clothes, he also worked as a prostitute. Thus, the actor was confronted with gender issues, he was injured by strangers because he was not following the gender norms. Moreover, the fact that he was a prostitute and the fact that he changed clothes reminds the character of Orlando, even if he played the Queen, he could identify himself to the character of Orlando.

Then, the singer at the beginning and at the end of the film is Jimmy Somerville. He is not an actor but a singer and he is homosexual. He is known for the song "Smalltown Boy" (with his group The Bronski Beat) which denounces the oppression that homosexuals are subjected and the song was semi-autobiographical. Thus, J. Somerville was also confronted with the unfairness of the social norms because as a homosexual he was not accepted by the society. For the last song of the film, the singer is dressed as an angel and he is in the sky. The angel belongs to Sally Potter's choices to 'represent' gender issues because the angel, as celestial being, does not have sex. Some people believe that angels are androgynous or that the angel chooses the gender under which it appears on Earth. As well, some people think that there are gender-specific angels, different from the genders attributed to human beings¹³.

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-zC870Xcxc>

¹³ <https://www.learnreligions.com/are-angels-male-or-female-123814>

This last point, the existence of genders different from the binarity norm, shows why Sally Potter decided to involve the angelic figure in Orlando. The angel sings: "Here I am. Neither a woman, nor a man. We are joined, we are one, with the human face. We are joined, we are one.", which could apply to the angel but also to Orlando, the angel is 'one' with Orlando. The androgyny applies both to Orlando and to the angel. Each choice of actors is consequently thought by the film director to lead to some reflection from the spectator about the gendered identity and about the sexuality since some actors are homosexuals. Moreover, the fact that some actors play a sex different from theirs, as Quentin Crisp playing a woman, the Queen, and Tilda Swinton, playing a man and a woman, Orlando.

4.b) Focus on the gender issues

As stated at the beginning of this part, each section should be 'dissected' to understand how Sally Potter includes reflections about gender and sexuality while maintaining the original text. The film director chose to add or remove some scenes to make the spectator think about gender. As said above, the film is divided in seven sections. Each section is dated but these dates are invented by the film director since, in the book, the narrator does not give specific dates, there is only the indications of some of the centuries, as the beginning of the Nineteenth century.

The first section, Death, is associated with the date 1600, it recounts the death of the Queen and then the death of Orlando's father. At the beginning of the film – which is out of section, it is a sort of introduction – and in this first section, the notion of gender is discussed thanks to the first sentences of the voice-over, since it repeats the words of the novel, which are "There can be no doubt about his sex. Despite the feminine appearance that every young man at the time aspires to." (1:04, 1992) when in the novel the first sentence is "He – for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it – was in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor which swung from the rafters." (Woolf, 1993, p. 11). In the film the personal pronoun 'he' has been removed and, more importantly, the activity of Orlando changed from the novel to the film. In the novel *Orlando* is 'in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor' whereas in the film he's reading a poem he wrote for Queen Elizabeth I. By changing Orlando's pastime, the film director is already questioning gender and social norms. In the novel *Orlando* spars for the war, this is a way of conforming to the expectations of the society of the century but also of his family, since all the men of his family fought for their country. In the film the fact that this scene with the head of a Moor has been removed shows that Sally Potter wanted to highlight the obligations for a nobleman in the sixteenth century, indeed Orlando could not appreciate poetry, he could not recite his poem to the Queen. This scene of recitation is a scene added by the film director,

which replaces, as it were, the scene in the novel of Orlando admiring secretly a poet, which was removed in the film.

The second section is named Love and is dated 1610. This section mainly tells the meeting with the Muscovite Princess. Contrary to the novel, Princess Sasha is feminine in the film and could not be confused with a man. The film director opted for removing this physical aspect of Sasha but this leads to the removal of a possible homosexuality of Orlando as a man. Moreover, the film director also removed the friendship with the prostitutes, thus Orlando as a prostitute and Orlando experimenting homosexual loves as a woman. Indeed, in the film the eventuality of Orlando's homosexuality has been omitted, as a man and also as a woman, the homosexuality is not discussed, except through the choice of some actors. One could wonder why Sally Potter chose to omit homosexuality in the film, knowing that sexual orientation, and particularly homosexuality, was an important issue for Virginia Woolf. Yet, the love relationship between Orlando and the Princess is played by two women, Tilda Swinton as Orlando and Charlotte Valandrey as Sasha, which introduces the topic of lesbian love in the film. The very fact that he chooses a woman for the part of man and woman also has implications on the possibilities of homosexuality.

The third section, named Poetry, is dated 1650. In this section Orlando focuses on his passion for the literature and the poetry after being heart-broken by the Muscovite Princess. When he awoke after seven days of sleeping, he expressed his disillusion about the female sex and began to be committed to poetry. In this section he met the poet Nicholas Greene, who also will disappoint Orlando but who will be important in the end of the film, as it will be seen later. This section adds little to the questioning about gender, this is more about Orlando's passion for literature, which is rejected because of his social rank.

The fourth section, Politics, is dated 1700. In this section, in the forty-sixth minute, his Turkish host in Constantinople gave to Orlando his point of view about women after he saw that Orlando suffered because of love (45:47, 1992):

Women... it is said... man should... reverence his guarding lord who created them. And from a single being created of like nature his mate. Then from those two scattered like seeds countless men and women.

Orlando's friend explains to him that men should be grateful for the existence of women and that men and women are destined to be together. This point of view about women as essential for men reminds androgyny, the two should be united to 'flourish' (if one borrows the floral metaphor of the quote). Then, in this section, the Archduke Harry first appeared for the coronation of Orlando as a Duke but he

appears as a man and there is no allusion to their meeting before. Indeed, in the book, the Archduke posed as a woman to try to seduce Orlando and he almost succeeded, that is why Orlando fled from England, for fear of falling in love and suffering as in the past. As stated in the previous sentence, the Archduke Harry was representing the sexual obligations of the century and the gender fluidity in the book, as a man he could not love another man so he had to pose as a woman and only by changing clothes he could change of sex. However, in the film the Archduke Harry only appears as a man, this notion of changing of sex in order to seduce Orlando has been removed by the film director. Once again, the notion of homosexuality is avoided in the film since the Archduke only shows his love for Orlando when she is already a woman (however, in the previous section we are made aware that the Archduke is infatuated with Orlando. There is a mild implication of homosexual love, rather vague). The film director stated that she wanted to highlight Orlando's essential innocence¹⁴, perhaps that is the reason for not showing Orlando's homosexuality when he was attracted to Sasha, thinking she was probably a man, when he began to fall in love with the Archduchess who was in reality the Archduke, and in the eighteenth century when she frequented the prostituted and enjoyed the loves of both sexes. All these scenes have been removed in the film, only the sexual desire between Orlando and Shelmerdine is maintained as if the film director wanted to associate sex with love and focus on gender issues more than on sexual orientation. To return to the section Politics, Orlando is upgraded to Duke but the ceremony is interrupted by the assault of Turks' enemies. This assault enables the film director to show the weakness of Orlando when facing war, and to give an explanation to his change of sex. Indeed, this assault represents a crisis of masculine identity, Orlando is unwilling to conform to what is expected of a man¹⁵ and particularly of an Ambassador – becoming a Duke – which leads to his change of sex, within the logic of the film. The film director indeed tries to give a reason for Orlando's change of sex, first with the declarations of the Queen Elizabeth I who made Orlando promise to not grow old: "But on one condition. Do not fade. Do not wither. Do not grow old." (11:16, 1992), and then with the episode of the assault and the incapacity of Orlando to conform to masculine war obligations.

It is also in this section that Orlando wakes up as a woman, the film director chose to show Orlando naked, the nudity enables the spectator to understand the change of sex. Orlando woke up, washed her face and looked at herself in the mirror, she is naked and has a female body, she says "same person. No difference at all" before looking at the spectator to say "just a different sex" (57:23, 1992). The fact that Orlando looks at the camera as if she was looking at the spectator gives the impression that she wants to justify herself, she changes of sex but she remains the same person. The film director kept the

¹⁴ https://www.uah.edu/woolf/Orlando_Potter.htm

¹⁵ https://www.uah.edu/woolf/Orlando_Potter.htm

idea of the book which is that Orlando is the same person: "Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity." (Woolf, 1993, p. 98). Orlando's identity does not depend on his/her sex, there is "no difference at all" with the person she was as a man.

The fifth section is named Society and is dated 1750. In this section the poets of the reception attended by Orlando – including the poet Mr. Pope – give a definition of women (1:04:30, 1992):

Women have no desires, only affectation. Indeed, women are but children of larger growth. Ah, but I consider woman to be a beautiful romantic animal. Who should be adorned in furs and feathers, pearls and diamonds. Apart from my wife of course. Will insist upon attempting to learn Greek. It's so very unbecoming I can hardly tolerate her company at the breakfast table. Why do they do it? Oh, every woman is adverse to contradiction and frankly, most women have no characters at all.

Orlando remains silent when hearing poets describing women pejoratively, she is shocked. She replies to them and begins a debate with them about women and their place in the society (1:05:24, 1992):

- Gentlemen. I find it strange. You are poets, each one of you, and speak of your muse in the feminine. And yet you appear to feel neither tenderness nor respect towards your wives nor towards females in general.
- Madam. I have only the highest regard and purest respect for females.
- I find no evidence of that sentiment in your conversation.
- Conversation is a place where plays with ideas my dear lady. The one forges them quite alone.
- Quite so.
- Quite. Quite.
- The intellect is a solitary place. And therefore, quite unsuitable a terrain for females who must discover their natures through the guidance of a father or husband.
- And if she has neither?
- Then... However charming she may be, dear lady. She is lost.

Through this conversation the film director showcases the opinion of men and of the society about women at that time - eighteenth century -, that is, women are lost without men and have no character, no point of view by themselves. In the eighteenth-century women were dependent of men, but Orlando does not accept this social norm, she prefers remaining alone. Orlando is against social and cultural norms and does not want to conform to these norms. Indeed, she refused the marriage proposal of the Archduke Harry, who said to her that "There is only one solution in [her] current predicament", that he

would offer her a house and he tried to frighten her: "With your history quite frankly who else will have you? Do you realize what you're turning down? With your ambiguous sexuality which I am prepared to tolerate. This is your last chance of respectability." (1:07:56, 1992). The words of the Archduke express the thoughts of men in the nineteenth century, a woman who is not married is not respectable and is lost without a husband. But Orlando still refused the demand and preferred not to conform to these norms which compelled her to marry. Already as a man, Orlando was not following social norms, he preferred literature and poetry to war, as a woman she continues to not accept the standards imposed to her gender. As a female she should be guided by a father or a husband but she refused. The film succeeded to show social norms through the centuries, by the interruption of Orlando's poem as a boy, by the conversations of the poets about women, by the marriage proposal of the Archduke and also by the loss of the property by Orlando at the end of the film. The film director succeeded to represent each century through its social norms.

The sixth section is named Sex and is dated 1850, it tells the meeting and the love story with Shelmerdine. In a conversation with him, Orlando visualizes herself as a man: "If I were a man (...) I might choose not to risk my life for an uncertain cause. I might think that freedom won by death is not worth having." (1:15:08, 1992), to which Shelmerdine answers "you might choose not to be a real man at all" (1:15:29, 1992). This conversation proves that 'a real man' had the obligation to risk his life, to kill etc. to be accepted as such. It seems important to remind that, in the film, Orlando became a woman after being unable to fight and kill a man. The film director continues with this metaphor of the crisis of masculine identity. Orlando could not be a real man, thus she became a woman. She also questions gendered identity, since Shelmerdine affirms that a man has to fight, his point of view is influenced by social norms. Nowadays these norms changed and a man is not obliged to fight or to kill to prove that he is a real man. Moreover, the film gives specific dates, thus helping the spectator to link the dates – the historical context – with the norms. Yet, the last section does not have date.

The seventh and last section is named Birth and, as said above, does not have date. There are a lot of possible reasons for this absence of a date: it could be a strategy of the film director to make this section timeless, but it could also be because it happens in the present time, which is different for each spectator watching the film, thus it would allow the spectator to place the end of the film in one's own present time. Moreover, the end of the film changed in comparison with the book. In the film Orlando, is driving a motorcycle and her daughter is in the sidecar. The film director indeed chose to change the sex of the child from a boy to a girl. Once again, this change is made to give a logical explanation for the fact that Orlando lost her property, she could keep her house only if she had male heirs. Just before the

scene on the motorcycle Orlando was with Nicholas Greene, who is in the present a publisher and compliments Orlando for her book. Perhaps this is her poem 'The Oak Tree'. The film director chose to keep the same actor for the past and the present, but the present Nicholas Greene does not remember Orlando. The film ends with Orlando and her daughter visiting the house that Orlando lost because of her sex; then, they are together under the tree where Orlando was reading his poem at the beginning of the film. This last scene is a reinterpretation of the film director, who brings in the film an angel who is singing "neither a woman, nor a man (...) at last I'm free" (1:29:10, 1992). This ecstatic scene, between heaven and earth, leads to reflect upon gender, since the words of the angel's song represent Orlando who is crying when she listens to what the angel sings. Orlando feels the words of the angel. Even if her sex is at the present female: "She. For there can be no doubt about her sex. (...) She is tall and slim, with a slightly androgynous appearance that many females at the time aspire to. (...) She is no longer trapped by destiny. And ever since she let go of the past... She found her life was beginning." (1:26:50, 1992). The voice-off specifies that Orlando has an androgynous appearance, but more importantly, her life is beginning since she is no longer trapped by destiny. Orlando is crying tears of happiness in front of the androgynous angel because she is free of gender, she could be what she wants to be in this ecstatic moment.

To conclude this part, the film director tries to be faithful to the book *Orlando* for the film adaptation, while questioning gender issues. However, even if she wanted to be faithful to Virginia Woolf's ideas, her own point of view emerges in the film adaptation, since the notion of gender seems to be more important than the notion of sexuality. Homosexuality is barely approached in the film, while in the novel Virginia Woolf tried to deliver a message about the acceptance of the homosexuality.

Conclusion

Orlando is a unique and new work since this is a fantastic novel that Virginia Woolf passes off as a biography with the aim of mocking biography codes, writing a book lighter than her previous books, but also of discussing gender and sexual issues without being censored. Indeed, Virginia Woolf was way ahead of her time and approached subjects as queerness, androgyny, which were not discussed and not even accepted in the twentieth century. With *Orlando* she could write about gender and sexuality more freely and she succeeded to make people think about identity, gender and sexuality.

The film adaptation of *Orlando*, by Sally Potter, leads to an increase of the audience knowing the story of Orlando and it encourages more people to reflect upon the notions of gender, identity and sexuality. The film director tried to remain true to the spirit of the book and to the author's ideas, thus the film also questions gender and sexuality.

As discussed in the first part, *Orlando* is a book made of duality. There is a balance between biography and fantastic, between seriousness and entertainment, between man and woman, between heterosexuality and homosexuality and between male and female. Indeed, the character of Orlando suffered him/herself these dualities but also made a strength of them. As a woman she decided to accept the duality of her sex and dressed sometimes as a man, sometimes as a woman, thus she could be what she wanted to be. By changing clothes, Orlando played with social and cultural norms which impose feminine clothes to women and masculine clothes to men. Furthermore, Orlando experienced sexuality with men and also with women. There are indeed some allusions to Orlando's homosexuality in the book. Moreover, the story of Orlando enables Virginia Woolf to denounce the gender inequalities through the centuries. *Orlando* could be seen as a committed book defending the rights of women, but also sexual freedom, gender fluidity and androgyny. The book also calls into question social and cultural norms.

In the second part, the focus was on the notion of identity and on the gendered identity. The identity of a human being is always evolving, changing, since the human being is permanently changing. As for the gendered identity, it has been seen that it is a construction, since one constructs one's gender by acting, talking, thinking as one's gender with an act of repetition and also because gender is guided by social and cultural norms. The female identity would consequently be a repetition of actions and words seen as feminine, of the development of femininity, imposed by the society. However, gendered identity is a personal feeling, which could be different for each human being. In the case of Orlando, he was a man who became a woman but remains the same person, and Orlando finds him/herself, if we may

call it that, as an androgynous mind, neither male, neither female, but a mixture of both. This brings us to the third part, about the fluidity of gendered and sexual identity and particularly about androgyny. The story of Orlando enables the deconstruction of the binarity of gender, since Orlando is never a male or a female; the fluidity of gender is present from the beginning of the book. The third part also approached the notion of normalcy and showed that it could lead to a feeling of being outside of the society for the people who do not fit in this normalcy. Moreover, as stated in the second part, gender is performative, this means that nobody is a gender from the start, that this is a phenomenon being produced and reproduced all the time¹⁶, but not an innate feature. To come back to gender fluidity, androgyny represents the non-binarity of gender, since this is a mixture between male and female. Orlando has an androgynous mind, as described by Virginia Woolf; (s)he has a man-womanly or a womanly-man gender. The theory of a multitude of selves also reinforces this idea of gender fluidity. In short, there is no universal truth about gender, about sexuality and neither about identity; the binarity of gender and the normalcy of heterosexuality are only created by social and cultural norms, but do not define either gender or sexuality, which are not fixed.

In the last part, the gender issues were approached in the film adaptation *Orlando*, by Sally Potter. The film director chose to focus on gender and neglected to focus on sexuality, particularly, on homosexuality. Indeed, sexuality is present in the film with the love story between Orlando and Shelmerdine but homosexuality is not mentioned, as if the film director wanted to keep Orlando's innocence and, to a certain extent, conformed to social norms. However, Sally Potter challenged gender and sexuality norms, notably with her choice of the actors, who are not fitting in these norms. The film director also wanted to be faithful to Virginia Woolf's intentions, which were to call into question gender, sexuality, identity, in an entertaining way. That is why, at first reading of *Orlando* and at first sight of the film adaptation, one could not understand all gender and sexual allusions, but by focusing on these notions one would reflect upon these notions. *Orlando* is a distraction but also a questioning.

To conclude this dissertation, we should consider that gender is finally a personal appropriation, each one should have the choice of one's gender. In the case of Orlando, the character is simultaneously androgynous and genderless, one could not appropriate a specific gender to the character Orlando. Orlando is outside the norms, as (s)he is outside time.

One could still wonder what would be the story if Orlando was a woman who became a man, if it would have made a difference, and how Orlando would react waking up as a man after being a woman, since when she woke up as a woman she was not surprised, almost relieved. One could also wonder what

¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo7o2LYATDc>

would happen if Orlando became again a man or if her/his body and her/his sex conformed to her/his gender and became asexual.

Nowadays, as human beings, we are able to change our body to conform to our gender, our own feeling of gender, as we could keep our body and feel a gender which does not conform to our attributed gender. As mentioned in the introduction, the issue of gendered identity is increasingly discussed and called into question, particularly by the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) community who do not recognize themselves in this imposed gender binary. Therefore, the social and cultural norms are progressively accepting the differences about sex, gender, sexuality and, in a way, Virginia Woolf and *Orlando* contributed to this change of mind.

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Orlando, Dir. Sally Potter, France, Italy, Netherlands, Russia, UK, 1992 [94 min.]. Adventure Pictures, Lenfilm Studio (co-production), Sonny Pictures Classic, European Fund UK (co-production), Mikado Film (co-production), Rio Sigma Film Productions (co-production)

Appendix

Figure 1: A photograph of the agender Tyler Ford, an agender



Figure 2: A photograph of the actress of Orlando, Tilda Swinton



Figure 3: The scene of the change of sex in the film



Figure 4: Extracts from the screenplay and the script of the film Orlando

Screenplay

1

FRONT TITLES begin.

FADE TO:

Scene 1: Ext/Day: English Landscape (1592)

An English landscape in late summer. ORLANDO paces back and forth beneath an oak tree, holding a book in his hand. He is murmuring, looking at the book occasionally, learning some verse. He wears the clothes of a young Elizabethan man: doublet and hose, a ruff at his neck.

ORLANDO
(voice-over)

There can be no doubt about his sex - despite the feminine appearance that every young man of the time aspires to. And there can be no doubt about his upbringing. Good food, education, a nanny, loneliness and isolation.

ORLANDO sits down at the base of the tree, puts down his book, and stares out at the landscape.

ORLANDO
(voice-over)

And because this is England, Orlando would therefore seem destined to have his portrait on the wall and his name in the history books. But when he -

ORLANDO turns and looks into the camera.

ORLANDO
(to camera)

- that is, I -

He then turns away as the voice-over continues.

ORLANDO
(voice-over)

- came into the world, he was looking for something else. Though heir to a name which meant power, land and property, surely when Orlando was born it wasn't privilege he sought, but company.

Script

"That fair her seems...

That fair her seems the

less ye see her may.

Lo see soon after how...

Modesty.

There are things that she'll see.

Lo see soon after how... more

bold and free her bared bosom...

A see the virgin rose...

How sweetly she...

...doth peep forth

with bashful modesty."

There can be no

doubt about his sex.

Despite the feminine

appearance that...

...every young man at

the time aspires to.

And there can be no doubt

about his upbringing.

Good food.

Education.

A nanny.

Loneliness and isolation.

And...because this is England...

Orlando would therefore

seem destined...

...to have his

portrait on the wall.

And his name in the history books.

But when he...

That is...

I:

Came into the world.

He was looking for something else.

Though heir to a name that meant

power, land and property...

Surely when Orlando was born...

...it wasn't privilege he sought...

...but company.

Eliza ...

... Eliza's eyes are

blessed stars, ...

... Inducing peace,

subduing wars. ...

... O blessed be each

day and hour ...

... Where sweet Eliza

builds her bower. ...

... O blessed be each

day and hour ...

... Where sweet Eliza

builds her bower. ...

... Eliza ...

... Eliza ...

... Eliza is the

fairest queen ...

... That ever trod

upon the green. ...

... Eliza ...

... Eliza's eyes are

blessed stars, ...

... Inducing peace,

subduing wars. ...

... O blessed be each

day and hour ...

... Where sweet Eliza

builds her bower. ...

... O blessed be each

day and hour ...

... Where sweet Eliza

builds her bower. ...

... Eliza ...

... Eliza ...
... Eliza is the
fairest queen ...
... That ever trod
upon the green. ...
... Eliza ...
... Eliza's breast is
that fair hill, ...
... Where virtue dwells,
and sacred skill. ...
... O blessed be each
day and hour ...
... Where sweet Eliza
builds her bower.
More wine my lord?
A see the virgin rose.
How sweetly she doth
first peep forth
With bashful modesty.
That fair her seems the
less ye see her may.
Lo see soon after how..
more bold and free her bared
bosom she doth broad display
Lo see soon after how she fades...

...and falls away.
so passeth in th..
Is this a worthy topic?
From one so clearly in
the bloom of youth.
To one who would desire it still?
Fair virgo gracious majesty,
Your bloom is legendary,
and these were of course not
the sentiments of our son,
but of a poet.
Now what would please you?
All that is mine is
here for your pleasure.
All you call yours is mine already.
Come.
Your leg.
I want you here in England with me.
You will be the son
of my old age...
...and the limb of my infirmity.
My favourite.
My mascot.
Come.
Aah, this is my victory.

Come, your handsome leg.
For you and for your heirs Orlando.
The house.
Your Majesty.
I'm forever I...
But on one condition.
Do not fade.
Do not wither.
Do not grow old.
Very interesting person.
First the queen and now his father.
It is too sad.
Mourning so becomes him.
One can quite see why
he was the favourite.
My dear friends how can you?
In his time of grief.
That way.
Sasha.
Who's that?
I believe she is the daughter
of the muscovite ambassador.
How the delightful.
If that's to your taste.
What ever can you mean?

Oh, smearing themselves with
candle wax to keep warm.
Wearing beards as they get
older, that kind of thing.
Perhaps in this you're
mistaken, Moray.
Told me on good authority
by Lord Francis Vere.
Does he travel to muscovite.
He knows someone who did.
Aah.
This is the Lady Euphrosyne.
The Lord Winchelsea.
The Lord Orlando.¹⁷

Figure 5: A photography of Tilda Swinton, which shows her androgynous appearance



¹⁷ Retrieved from https://www.scripts.com/script/orlando_15370