



Orlando

Virginia Woolf, Rachel Bowlby (Editor)

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Virginia Woolf's exuberant biography' tells the story of the cross-dressing, sex-changing Orlando who begins life as a young noble in the sixteenth century and moves through numerous historical and geographical worlds to finish as a modern woman writer in the 1920s. The book is in part a happy tribute to the life' that her love for Vita Sackville-West had breathed into Virginia Woolf's own day-to-day existence; it is also Woolf's light-hearted and light-handed teasing out of the assumptions that lie behind the normal conventions for writing about a fictional or historical life. In this novel, Virginia Woolf plays loose and fast: Orlando uncovers a literary and sexual revolution overnight.

Orlando Details

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Author : Virginia Woolf , Rachel Bowlby (Editor)

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Download and Read Free Online Orlando Virginia Woolf , Rachel Bowlby (Editor)

From Reader Review Orlando for online ebook

Steven Godin says

I knew for sure I wasn't expecting anything like 'To the Lighthouse' with Orlando, but what I didn't know is just how much sheer pleasure Orlando would end up giving me, as this went right beyond my expectations, the days reading it seemed invigorated somehow. Woolf has broken with tradition and convention and has set out to explore a kind of fourth dimensional approach to writing. Not that she has abandoned the stream of consciousness method which she used with such conspicuous success in her previous novels, but with it she has combined what, for lack of a better term, we might describe as an application to writing of the theory of relativity. In this novel, or biography, however one chooses to see it, she is largely preoccupied with the time element in character and human relationships, and with a statement of the exact complexion of that intangible moment, a combination of past and future, of objective reality and subjective awareness, which we refer to as the present.

Woolf's hero-heroine, man-woman, he-she, is hundreds of years old, lucky him/her! At the beginning of the book Orlando is an adolescent male, melancholic, indolent, loving solitude and given to writing poetry; the age is the Elizabethan; the book ends on the 11th of October, 1928, and Orlando is a thoroughly modern matron of 36, who has published a successful book of poems and has evolved a hard-earned philosophy of life. Thus, to express her very modern fourth-dimensional concepts, Woolf has fallen back upon one of the most ancient of literary forms, the allegory. In doing so she has left the novel perhaps more confusing than was strictly necessary. However, I personally think nothing should have been any different. Woolf knocked me for six, here, there, and everywhere. Ultimately she written a book of genius.

Starting around the time of The Great Frost of 1608/09 where birds froze whilst flying and hurtled to the ground, Orlando moves on to languorous sunny afternoons spent in the shade of oak trees and the hot sun of Turkey. Even so, this could be classed as a winter read. As Orlando never leaves the ice entirely, since he, and then she, is simply frozen in time. Even hundreds of years later there remains the same person who fell in love on those winter days in the 17th century, and those heady days breathe their cold magic throughout this strange, sometimes bewildering but generally wonderful novel. Plus, Woolf can't resist returning to the cold now and again, most notably in her description of the permanent winter damp and black cloud that hung over the 19th century.

After Orlando's attempts to adjust herself to the conventions of nineteenth century England. Woolf excels with by far the most stimulating section of the book, describing Orlando at the present moment, and traces with breath-taking delicacy the influence of her past upon her present. It is deep in the book when suddenly Orlando springs startlingly to life, not that there was anything wrong previously, but up to a point it had seemed a pleasant narrative made notable by a number of passages of great beauty, love and attention, and by occasional bits of vivid description, but marred slightly by a rather self-conscious mischievousness on the part of the author. Having said that, even its worst bits were still seriously good.

In the closing pages she welds compactly what had seemed to be a series of loosely connected episodes. In them she seems to reach down into the rabbit hole for the whole superstructure of life and to lay bare a new, or at least a hitherto unperceived, arrangement of those ephemeral flashes of memory of perception that makes up consciousness. But she has carried the stream of consciousness technique a step further. Not being satisfied to present a succession of thoughts and sensations passing through the mind, she shows what is behind those thoughts and sensations, whence they spring, and how great their relative value. In attempting to describe such subtle and elusive qualities, Woolf has faced squarely one of the most puzzling technical

and esthetic problems that plague contemporary novelists. The mere fact that she has stated the problem as succinctly as she does in the course of this book is immensely stimulating, whether or not one feels that she has achieved the final solution to it.

I have to say, I could read all the writings of Virginia Woolf under the sun (which is unlikely, but you never know) and nothing else would be as rousing as this. She clearly put a lot of passion into writing this book, and in the case of the reader, me, I was completely won over. A dizzy and captivating reading experience. Just hope I don't wake up in the morning and find I am now Stephanie.

Lisa says

"I'm sick to death of this particular self. I want another."

Orlando to me is a dream come true in literature. Being able to move in time and space and to change my gender with my moods is a deeply satisfying idea. It is the quintessence of what reading means in my life - the opportunity to leave my own life behind and step into the body and soul of other people, only to move on again when I feel like it. I can be intensely engaged for a week, and then put the adventure safely into my memory and try something different.

Orlando is a hymn to reading and imagination and love. It is a break from conventions, and a story heavy as a heart and light as a feather.

Love it!

Sidharth Vardhan says

You know how people say that some books are ahead of their time. I think Woolf's Orlando is a book which probably won't be understood for another decade or so.

The sudden change of Orlando's sex and his several centuries old existence along with/her very easy acceptance of those things rings of magical realism. The fantastic bit that of Orlando's living through several centuries is used to develop the book into what looked like a poem on the spirit of Time. Through different ages, Orlando tastes the life and literary trends of each time, herself changing and maturing over time, and all this is portrayed in Woolf's beautiful prose.

This is also supposed to be a sort of tribute/love-letter to Woolf's friend, Vita, I don't know how.

However what was hardest for me to digest (really hard) was that Orlando didn't notice the change of her sex for several days (really, really hard.) And (s)he only noticed it when (s)he started getting in touch with other people, and his/her further experiences to seem to validate the theory that gender behavior is induced by social expectations (rather than something inherent), a nurture thing rather than nature. I don't think such a theory existed at the time the novel was written. Even the best psychologists like Freud thought the gender differences are inherent in sex.

Even now, we tend to use the words 'sex' and 'gender' interchangeably. Psychologists differentiate between

two, sex is a *biological characteristic* determined by one's private parts while gender is a *social construct* includes all the attributes (stereotypes, roles, behavior etc) that society expects from people of each sex.

Thus male and female are sexes, while masculinity and femininity are genders. Too technical, isn't it!. Woolf was pointing the difference between two and proposing that gender is a social construct (something society conditions us into through tools like clothes, language etc.), so loved by feminists, quarter a century before the term 'gender role' was coined. And she does it in subtle and, at times, hilarious manner.

Still, I think it is too big an exaggeration to say Orlando won't notice the change for days. Any guy will smell a difference when he wakes up one day and .. lo, he has breasts ... I mean obviously ...

Madeline says

I finished this book about a week ago, and have been trying ever since to figure out how I'm supposed to review it. I honestly can't think of anything to say except this:

Every single emotion I've ever felt and every thought I've ever had, had already been felt and thought and written down by Virginia Woolf decades before I was even born. There is not a single concept or feeling in any of her books that isn't already intimately familiar to me. Reading her books is like having someone look into my own mind, deeper than I ever looked, and discovering something that is simultaneously unheard of and completely recognizable.

Darwin8u says

"The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity."

- Virginia Woolf, Orlando

A beautiful, poetic look at gender, sex, poetry, time, love, living, etc. This gender-studies masterpiece was inspired by Woolf's relationship with Vita Sackville-West. According to Vita's son: *"The effect of Vita on Virginia is all contained in Orlando, the longest and most charming love letter in literature, in which she explores Vita, weaves her in and out of the centuries, tosses her from one sex to the other, plays with her, dresses her in furs, lace and emeralds, teases her, flirts with her, drops a veil of mist around her."*

This is one of the easier Woolf novels to read. Toward the end it gets a bit stream-of-conscious (as Modern writers were wont to do), but the narrative of this novel floats and folds through time and gender easily. It was an amazing way of looking at the female experience because Orlando's experience was first fundamentally experienced by Orlando regardless of their gender. So, the novel as biography allowed Woolf to mine the experience from the inside instead of the outside. It also allowed the fluidity of gender to be explored in a way that a less fanciful novel might not have been able to.

It is wild to think this book was published in 1928 AND here we are 90-years-later still working our britches into Puritanical bunches over gender and bathrooms. What a bunch of nonsense. One area of hope does exist. In my lifetime, I have seen a huge increase in the attention paid to the difficulties faced by those who don't fit

into the gender norms. Things ARE SLOWLY getting better for my friends and the children of my friends who might not fit easily into the pants or skirts society wants to drop them in. Hopefully, it doesn't take 400 years.

Dolors says

Orlando might have been devised as a mere divertimento, as a playful attempt to challenge the established views on sexuality or as a fantastical tale to confront the history of East and West by questioning the boundaries of space and time, but to this reader this novella meant much more. It meant a universe of fluctuating moods, characters and sweeping poetry that gives reason to be through the act of reading.

How to describe the nuanced melody of finely threaded irony prodigiously in tune with the most sophisticated sense of humor that entertains and prickles and urges to see the world without the limiting lenses of gender, class or social convention?

One can evolve unhindered when he suspends judgement and allows the flow of writing to give way to a solid account that sparkles because undeniable reality is better understood through the theatrical fiction of its form.

How to account for centuries expanding and contracting beyond human comprehension, decades that amount to *the fall of a rose leaf on the ground*, years that disappear in a flash?

The passage of time is of no consequence when love for the written word equals the all-consuming passion for the person who knows us best regardless of clothing or hair style, manners or social rituals that distract us from the true essence of our beings.

How to explain the ache spanning countless generations, eras and customs that is nestled in the heart of the artist who relishes the young, supple body, pure as driven snow; the fleeting grass under a blanket of blue or the stars reflected in pools of stagnant water both in London and Turkey?

Emily Dickinson says in her poem #466:

For Occupation – This –

The spreading wide my narrow Hands

To gather Paradise -

For Occupation – Writing –

Orlando claims a “room of her own” to write her life, a task that will also define her love, and infuse wholeness into the swelling tides that toss her multiple beings, her male and female groundings.

The result, be it an experimental biography, an unorthodox love declaration or a thought-provoking *roman à clef* to defy categorization at all levels, goes beyond its original purpose and becomes a fluid, ever-changing tapestry of voices answering other voices, speaking the universal language of poetry.

Paul Bryant says

What's the connection between Virginia Woolf and the Russian mafia? Easy - in 1991 Sally Potter decided to film *Orlando*, one of the loveliest, most ravishing novels in the English language. Somewhere in the middle of the story there, you have a truly extraordinary sequence about the remarkable Frost Fair of 1654, which

was when the River Thames itself froze over and they erected a fair with stalls and games and rides and greased pigs and whatnot on it, a carnival of the utmost brilliancy right on the river itself, and there was skating and flirting and people built fires, right on the river itself, and Orlando cut a dash amongst the Elizabethans and many curious and longing glances were thrown.

So Sally Potter needed a frozen river. Where do rivers freeze these days, what with global warming?

Kiev. The Dneiper.

So they went to Kiev and got permission to film from the newly elected Ukrainian local government. Signed all the forms in triplicate, paid their taxes. Great.

But then the hotel door banged open and some big guys came in and said to Sally Potter and her pals

We know you have made arrangement with the politicians. Now you must make arrangement with us.

Who?

Just the boys who really run Kiev, is who.

So they paid some more taxes. And didn't ask for a receipt.

I remember Sally Potter telling this story with great gusto when I saw her introduce this movie at Nottingham's arthouse. In retrospect, she thought it was hilarious. Not while it was happening.

Orlando is a lucent multicoloured gleam of a novel, bending the gending a few decades before we even realised that trannies weren't little radios anymore, before we realised that boys will be girls will be boys and that it's a mixed up muddled up shook up world.

Except for Orlando.

Michael says

Published in 1928, toward the end of the most productive stage of Woolf's career as a writer, *Orlando* doubles as national history and romance: the playful and ironic novel famously centers on the transformation of its protagonist's gender, near the start of the 18th century, but most of the story deals with Orlando's different loves and England's changing social norms over the course of three centuries. The gender change and kaleidoscopic setting afford Woolf the chance to examine themes especially relevant to women in the 1920s, such as bodily autonomy or marriage, from several historical and social vantage points. In contrast to Woolf's other works of fiction, the novel is rather fun to read as well as written in an accessible style, making *Orlando* the ideal introduction to her later work.

Edward says

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--Orlando

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Kelly says

My mom made me clean my room this weekend. No, not a teenage pain-in-the-ass cleaning of the room, this was THE cleaning of the room. As in, it was finally time to take apart the room I'd had in that house since we moved there somewhere around my thirteenth birthday.

Look you guys, I get it. I'm twenty-four. That's another one of those Facts of Life that just happens to you, and most people would say I was far past time for this. And you know what? I was doing okay with it. It went slowly, but it wasn't as bad as I had thought it would be- I went through old clothes, trophies from various sporting events (yeah, I spent sometime laughing about the fact that I used to do sports, too), old pictures of friends and even boyfriends, and the major breakdown I was waiting for happily stayed away. Yessir, I was a-okay.

Then I got to The Wall. It was the last thing to be done, and I just couldn't bring myself to do more than look at it and then utterly lose my shit. Why that, when nothing else managed to get to me? Well, here's why: I started building that wall when I was thirteen years old. It's full of every person I was, thought I was, or hoped that I would become. It started on the back of the door which was plastered all over with quotes in ridiculous fonts from my favorite books (I can tell you the exactly the path I followed putting things up on that door by where the quotes are from) and three pages of plastered quotes describing my personality at sixteen that a friend gave me for Christmas. There's the label from my junior year birthday present from my friends that says "The flamboyant actress' box of stuff," which is right next to two posters of illustrated Shakespearean quotes I got in Stratford and over Glinda the Good Witch sitting on top of the lightswitch saying, "You've always had the power to go back to Kansas" (I didn't put that there, and to this day I have no idea who did). This gives way to black and white posters showing scenes of Paris, cutouts from about a bazillion travel magazines, pictures I took in Ireland and England (including a prominently placed one on top of Glastonbury Tor), a speculative genealogy chart out of the Arthurian legends, a painting by Magritte, a huge section of black and white glamour shots of old Hollywood stars (Grace Kelly, Elizabeth Taylor, Errol Flynn, a photo of Bogey looking down a totally unaware Marilyn Monroe's dress, a drunk Orson Welles bombasting to Tony Curtis), my headshots and professional photos from the various productions I was in, cast photos, and a picture of the voice teacher who was my second mother for many years.

In other words, it's the most fucking ridiculous part of the room! You'd think I'd be glad to get rid of the the embarrassing evidence of my bad taste, failed dreams, and terrible role models. And yet, that part was the only thing I gave a shit about. I really felt like crap about it, until I read *Orlando* and saw this:

"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 have many thousand...and these selves of which we are built up, one on top of the other, as plates are piled on a waiter's hand, have attachments elsewhere, sympathies, little constitutions and rights of their own... so that one will only come if it is raining, another in a room with green cutrains, another when Mrs. Jones is not there... and some are too wildly ridiculous to be mentioned in print at all."

and this:

"nature...has further complicated her task and added to our confusion by providing a perfect rag-bag of odds and ends within us-a piece of a policeman's trousers lying cheek by jowl with Queen Alexandra's wedding veil....Instead of being a single, downright, bluff piece of work of which no man need feel ashamed, our commonest deeds are set about with a fluttering and flickering of wings, a rising and falling of lights."

I wrote in an earlier Vita review about my envy of coherence and life stories that make sense, and how frustrated I was that I couldn't make my own follow a similar pattern. Woolf understands this frustration ("a single downright piece of work of which no man need feel ashamed"), and tells me why it isn't ever going to happen- the thousands of selves, and Queen Alexandra's wedding veil and the policeman's trousers- what sort of goddess thinks of that?- and then, gift of all gifts, she seems both to understand it and even sympathize with it (in her way)! And this isn't some poet off the street we're talking about, this is Virginia Woolf! She's okay with inconsistencies? Someone that smart is fascinated with absurdities, flights of fancy, illogical trains of thought, even slowness in someone that she loves this deeply? She's willing to write 300 pages celebrating it, even?

Screw bodice rippers, that thought is the best porn that literary devising could give me. She gave me back Glinda and Bogey, and made me feel proud to take them. Orlando is many things, but it is above all a story that tries to make a dozen fantasies seem possible, or even the inevitable result of a life that is lived with all those thousand selves really getting in their say. While Woolf's tone in this book is often light, mocking, wry, or even cutting, I don't think that this detracted from the sublime quality of the story that she's telling. If anything, her wry asides made the telling of Orlando that much more meaningful. By engaging with prosaic reality every so often- reminding us about the Nick Greenes of the world, the merchants, the couples walking two by Victorian two- she shows us why Orlando should be celebrated, if only for making it through the day, never mind the years on top of years, intact. There's nobody like Virginia Woolf for getting the most out of the heroic efforts of every last moment, and just why it tortures us so much: *"The present participle is the Devil,"* she says here, and speaks lovingly of the past and future that shield us from the terrifying fact that we are here and now and we're supposed to be someone doing something.

Time is the enabler of the novel, the vehicle through which all this exploration takes place, the administrative assistant that dispenses elfish magic when needed and sends out stern reminders of the rules when they are being ignored, but it's one of Time's children that's both the demon and the anti-hero of the whole thing: Memory. Memory is the both the cocoon that protects Orlando from the ravages of 'growing up' too much, and the beast that tries to tear her fragile defenses into shreds the second he isn't looking (don't get me for pronoun confusion, I know what I did there). It's a dangerous drug to pull out regularly. Because no, actually, you can't stop whenever you want to:

"... it has contrived that the whole assortment shall be stitched together by a single thread. Memory is the seamstress, and a capricious one at that. Memory runs her needle in and out, up and down, hither and thither. We know not what comes next, or what follows after. Thus the most ordinary movement in the world, such as sitting down at a table and pulling the inkstand towards one, may agitate a thousand odd,

disconnected fragments, now bright, now dim, hanging and bobbing and dipping and flaunting, like the underlinen of a family of fourteen on a line in a gale of wind..."

And no, there's no way of safely taking it, either:

"Every single thing, once he tried to dislodge it from its place in his mind, he found thus cumbered with other matter like the lump of glass which, after a year at the bottom of the sea, is grown about with bones and dragon-flies and coins and the tresses of drowned women."

There was a period in my life after a particularly traumatic experience that I would stop in the street sometimes, muttering, "Shut up, shut up, shut up!" My terrible therapist called me "weird", my mother decided I was talking to her, my friends made a nervous joke out of it. But Woolf understands the freakish intersection of memory and the present moment your body is in. It's guerilla warfare out there- the even scarier modern kind where there are even less decent barriers as to when and where it is okay for the enemy to try and fuck you up. It's not just running into an old friend, hearing a song with certain associations that'll do it. And don't think you can go searching the banks for something useful to you without paying compounded interest- there's no such thing as a free lunch, especially not in the Memory banks. One memory is part of another memory, and unless you are far better at compartmentalizing than me, even reaching for a good memory is going to involve pushing through the muck to get to it.

It's sad to think that Woolf probably understood this due to her own troubles with the state of her sanity. She uses words like "assault," when talking about time, imagery of rushing waves when showing Orlando's memories intruding upon her again and again- you don't do that unless you know what the hell you're talking about. I can see why she went on to write a book called *The Waves* right after this.

It's actually a pretty funny book, though. I feel like I'm giving you the wrong idea of it. It's lighthearted most of the time, there are excellent jokes in the style of Wodehouse in an archly amused tone that I just loved. It comments on gender, women in society, the industry of writing, writers themselves, historians, the Victorian age, Romantic sensibilities, and does it in a style that's the most accessible I've ever seen her write. She openly invites you to be in on the joke and comment all you like as the *Vanity Fair* passes you by. I felt *quite* worldly observing things from her perch. It feels like her contribution to all the genres of literature that happened to be popular at the time- making use of all of them, getting trapped by the conventions of none. Parts of it just happened to give me some words I've been desperately searching for, so I did the fall on my knees and worship thing instead of attending the tea party afterwards. But don't worry, she still found time to help Bertie Wooster out of his latest engagement.

Praveen says

My second Virginia Woolf book.

This further improved my understanding of her work.

I loved this one too !

After *To the Lighthouse* and this one, I have decided to read *Mrs. Dalloway* in line to reach to a conclusion of my opinion about her books.

Only after completing this third book of her, I'll write detailed reviews on her all three books !

Bookdragon Sean says

Woolf did not write this book for her readers; she specifically wrote it for her close “friend” and fellow writer Vita Sackville-West. As such Woolf does things she would not normally do in her writing; it is not at all serious but instead takes on the form of a literary homage, homage to reading and writing. My case in point:

“For it would seem - her case proved it - that we write, not with the fingers, but with the whole person. The nerve which controls the pen winds itself about every fibre of our being, threads the heart, pierces the liver.”

“The taste for books was an early one. As a child he was sometimes found at midnight by a page still reading. They took his taper away, and he bred glow-worms to serve his purpose. They took the glow-worms away and he almost burnt the house down with a tinder.”

-Tilda Swinton as Orlando in the 1992 film adaptation

More significantly, it was also homage to someone she loved quite dearly. I do wonder if originally she intended for this to be published; it is clearly a piece of writing that is very personal and addressed to one person. There are just so many emotions in this novel. The story begins with Orlando, a young man living in the Elizabethan age who is about to be transformed. The story also ends with Orlando, a woman writer living in the 20th century. The entire novel is a fictionalised history of Vita Sackville-West, of an imagined past life she lived under the guise of Orlando several centuries before she met Woolf.

Orlando had his heart broken at a very young age; it is shattered beyond repair as he is abandoned and left in ruins. Life must go on. He finds solace in reading and writing, tools he uses to escape from the horrors of reality. He begins with poetry; thus, finding an appropriate channel for his self-pity and woe begotten thoughts. He strives for fame, for literary acknowledgment, by perfecting his craft. If he fails, if the idealised writer fails, the thoughts of suicide and inferiority begin to dog his steps. I need not mention how Woolf met her own end, but this read like an early foreshadowing. It was haunting.

“By the truth we are undone. Life is a dream. 'Tis the waking that kills us. He who robs us of our dreams robs us of our life.”

And as such he attempts to push forward. Indeed, that much so he goes into womanhood. On a plot level it didn't really make sense; it just kind of happened, though it did give Woolf a perfect opportunity to critique the nuances of gender roles within society. And it was described so beautifully. I can't fault her for it. I can't really fault the novel, only to say it lost a considerable amount of passion, energy and momentum once Orlando had changed his sex.

This is the weirdest, most imaginative, novel I've read in months. Despite the weirdness of the plot, the wackiest thing about it is the fact that Virginia Woolf wrote it. I hated *Mrs Dalloway*. I count it among my least favourite novels in existence. I hate the way Woolf wrote it, why she wrote it and the literary style she tried to produce. *Orlando* made me rethink my opinion of Woolf entirely. I've read a lot of her non-fictional essays along with her literary criticisms of other 20th century writers. This, oddly, goes against much of what she advocated. She was a staunch supporter of realism within her writing, that much so she took efforts to

make her plots less constructed so they mirrored real life: this is something else entirely.

So I've come to the conclusion that I didn't really understand Woolf (perhaps I still don't.) The pathway forward remains an obvious one: I simply must read everything she ever wrote in order to understand her better. Time to get busy.

Rakhi Dalal says

As always, Woolf has stunned me with the magic of her prose here. Telling this isn't important, neither that it is a biography; that it informs us about the affair of Vita and Violet. I guess much has been said about that. When I started reading, I had no idea about the references to people, places, their characters or their lives as are known to be mentioned in this work. In fact, as the novel proceeded from Orlando's gender change for the first time, I had a notion about the invisible layer of narrative which Virginia had experimented with, in this work. And as the work moved through centuries, I realized that the notion was making sense.

I didn't even read it as something related to gender issues, though they might as well have been mentioned or portrayed deliberately, specially with reference to Pope, Addison and Swift.

To me, Orlando, in its truest sense renders the spirit of literature of the respective times it refers to, as it proceeds in time. The different centuries starting from Elizabethan and Jacobean to Restoration, Augustan, to Age of Sensibility, Romanticism and finally to Victorian, have been depicted in the form of exploration of the human mind. In any age, as it holds true, the people are influenced by the spirit of the age, which in turn reflects in the literature of the respective age, so Orlando is one finest description of Zeitgeist.

Orlando's love affair with Sasha symbolizes the passionate extremism of Elizabethan period, while his engagement with reading and writing poetry attributes to characteristics of Jacobean period. During Restoration period, Orlando is sent as an ambassador to Constantinople, whereas the Age of Enlightenment or Augustan lets her see right through the poets like Pope, Addison and Swift and makes her wonder at their foibles. In nineteenth century or the age of realism, Orlando, as a woman, realizes that she needs to marry to secure her social standing. Her marriage to Shelmerdine might actually be a depiction of the European Romantic movement reaching America in early nineteenth century.

The Victorian age, witness the coming of Orlando in terms of herself as a woman or a writer and thus represents the increased role of women as a reader as well as a writer during that age. And the present time i.e. 11th October 1928, when the novel is published, we observe that Orlando is happy with the changing times, that she has finally arrived there, which cannot be neglected for the fact that the work was published when Woolf's writing was at its height in terms of its popularity.

I am in awe of Woolf for her eagerness and will to experiment with the style of prose and her aversion to the well accepted norms of written word during her times. A profound expression of her ideas about how to write, what to write and for whom to write i.e. the relationship between a writer and a reader, can be witnessed in her essay Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown.

Rowena says

I absolutely adored this book. The style is definitely different from the other Woolf books I've read so far. What stood out for me was the beautiful use of the language, maybe more than the story. The novel had an almost fairytale-like feel to it, and I was definitely enchanted from the start.

I don't think the following is a spoiler as it is included in the book's blurb : this book is about a 16 year old boy, Orlando, a favourite of Queen Elizabeth I, who one day wakes up to find that he has become a woman! The investigation of gender following Orlando's metamorphosis is especially amazing as now it is widely accepted that gender is a societal construct. I really feel Woolf was way ahead of her time.

The book was written in an experimental biographical style, and the biographer threw in a lot of humour and wit that caused me to burst out laughing more than once. It is also satirical which I loved, especially the part where Orlando shows her calf to a sailor, who almost falls to his death! Also, the challenges and insight of writing a biography are included, things I had never really considered previously.

The book was so surreal at times especially as it wasn't restricted by either gender or time. I feel that, as straight-forward as the story is to read, there are so many issues incorporated that I think there are also as many different approaches for reading this book.

Now I'm in the mood for more Woolf and I think a re-read of Mrs. Dalloway is in order.

Miriam says

Orlando was much funnier than I expected, and much less fantastical. Since I was familiar with the plot before beginning the book and had heard much literary criticism concerning the famed transformation, I was expecting the focus to be on gender issues. While these were certainly present, Woolf presents them fairly gently. Orlando is so strongly an individual that his/her sex hardly matters from a readerly standpoint. Indeed, I found it harder to believe that he was a successful ambassador than that he became a woman. But we don't see Orlando being an ambassador, and hardly more do we see her being a literary hostess. Despite the pretense at biography, we are really inside Orlando's head, experiencing a thought process and a personality rather than actions. To be sure, many people probably seem quite different inside their heads than in our workaday experience of them.

My favorite aspect of this novel was the commentary on writing, most of which is simply hilarious. The depictions of Orlando's struggles with creativity showcase Woolf's talent for combining painfully astute mockery with personal sympathy, and the snippets she uses to illustrate the styles of various periods are perfect. The scene where Orlando finds herself helplessly writing missish verse is a side-splitter.

She was so changed, the soft carnation cloud
Once mantling o'er her cheek like that which eve
Hangs o'er the sky, glowing with roseate hue,
Had faded into paleness, broken by
Bright burning blushes, torches of the tomb,

but here, by an abrupt movement she spilt the ink over the page and blotted it from human sight she hoped for ever.

Paul says

I first read this many years ago; before I knew very much about Virginia Woolf and her relationship with Vita Sackville-West, to whom this is dedicated. The background is vital because it adds so much and because it helps the reader to reach an understanding of Woolf's generosity. It is as ever, beautifully written and drifts splendidly through the centuries and the key is Vita and their circle.

As Woolf was writing this her affair with Vita was beginning to wane as Vita was moving on to other lovers. The two women were very different and Vita was much more sexually active and interested in a variety of people. For Vita the thrill of the new was important. Woolf recognised this.

One of the keys to the book is Vita's ancestral home, Knole. It is faithfully represented as Orlando's home estate in the book, down to the heraldic leopards and the visit of Queen Elizabeth the First. Vita had lost Knole because a woman could not inherit; here Woolf gives her it back.

Many of the characters represent people both knew. The Russian princess Sasha is Violet Trefusis, Nicholas Greene is Gosse, Archduchess Harriet/Archduke Henry was Lord Lascelles (one of Vita's many admirers), Shelmerdine is Vita's husband Harold Nicholson. Orlando's poetic work The Oak Tree is equivalent to Vita's poetic work The Land.

There is a great deal of imagery here; some of it in the form of private jokes/codes. The "porpoise in a fishmonger's shop" is one such (no idea what that one means). The imagery around the goose that crops up a couple of times even confused Vita (Vita was much more literal than Woolf)! It is interesting to consider that originally Woolf had conceived it as an illustrated book with photographs and pictures. Woolf's portrayal was an accurate one. Harold Nicholson found it difficult to conceive that anyone else could know the private Vita that he knew and thought it was a lucky accident (it wasn't, Woolf was very perceptive). Mary Campbell (another of Vita's lovers) was also surprised how accurately the private Vita was portrayed.

On top of this being a love letter to Vita, it is so much more besides. The nature of gender and biography are explored. It is also interesting to note that Woolf was also writing the lectures that became A Room of One's Own. Orlando is part of the train of thought Woolf had about the revolutionary potential of women's friendship. A new world opens when like each other and are no longer seen as rival's for men's affection/approval.

It is a tender and humorous love story/letter, almost a fairytale, not meant to be taken in the same vein as more serious work (To The Lighthouse), but it captures the imagination and sold much more than anything Woolf had written previously. It is a work of brilliance with a lightness of touch.

Fionnuala says

I like nothing better than when two books I happen to be reading overlap, even if briefly, so I was really pleased when Virginia Woolf's fictional character, Orlando, suddenly mentioned Jonathan Swift, whose Journal to Stella I've been reading recently. Orlando, who in some sections of Woolf's book uses the title Lady Orlando, has just been receiving a visit from Joseph Addison, Swift's one-time bosom pal and fellow political essayist, when there's an interruption:

..and when Mr Addison has had his say, there is a terrific rap at the door, and Mr Swift, who had these arbitrary ways about him, walks in unannounced...Nothing can be plainer than that violent man. He is so

coarse and yet so clean; so brutal, yet so kind; scorns the whole world, yet talks baby language to a girl, and will die, can we doubt it? in a mad house.

The '*talks baby language to a girl*' remark is a direct reference to the letters Swift wrote to his young friend, Esther Johnson, whom he called Stella. Those letters have been incorporated into his Journal to Stella which I've just been reading. Esther/Stella lived at Swift's house in Ireland with a companion, Mrs Dingley, while Swift spent time in London engaged in politics, pamphleteering, political satire, and visiting Lords and Ladies such as Orlando. Whenever Swift was in Ireland, Esther moved to lodgings nearby for the sake of propriety. There was a rumour that Swift and Esther were secretly married but it is still a rumour, three hundred years later. Esther suffered from ill health, which Swift worried about constantly, and he, though fifteen years older, outlived her by nearly twenty years, suffering from a form of what we now know as Alzheimer's in the end. So not quite, but almost, as Lady Orlando foretold.

Swift addressed the letters in the Journal to both Esther and her companion Mrs Dingley, again for the sake of propriety, although neither Esther nor Swift could have envisaged them being published. That Woolf's fictional Lady Orlando knew of the contents of the letters even while Swift was writing them should not surprise us; Orlando is a most exotic creation, the ability to see the future only one more surprising trait.

But to return to that brief conversation which these two books have had: I felt that Swift should have an opportunity to comment in his turn on Lady Orlando, a kind of quid pro quo as it were, so I couldn't resist creating a *semi*-fictional letter from Swift's Journal to Stella. And it serves as a review of Woolf's Orlando at the same time though more in satire than in conventional review form.

London, Dec. 23, 1710

I have sent my 11th letter tonight as usual and begin the dozenth.

I told you I dined at the Lady Orlando's, and I will tell you no more at present, guess for why; because I am writing the text of a Proposal I mean to publish, a new theory on the problem of overpopulation and poverty. *So sit still a while just by me, while I am writing, and don't say a word, I charge you, and when I am going to bed, I will take you along, and talk a little while, so there, sit there.....*

Come then, let us see what we have to say to these saucy brats, that will not let us go sleep at past eleven, and must have news of the famous Lady Orlando. The last letter was so written over and under and sideways and crossways, that there was no room for the Lady, she being exceedingly tall and in need of more space about her than most. I had told you that Addison had made me an introduction to her before our friendship ended, indeed I met him coming out as I was going to call on her t'other day, and he never spake a word as if I was but the under-butler, and all because I've chosen a different political direction. How cross it made me! But enough of that, *you know I never write politics to you. Turn over the leaf.*

To return to the Lady Orlando: 'tis true as you've heard that she is *curious company*, but still there is in her a *happy conjunction of civility, freedom, easiness, and sincerity* that I have met but once before; indeed I think that the Lady Orlando and Madam Stella would go on famously together, 'tho perhaps not, and you shall tell me your impressions in your next letter, *Stellakins*.

What is certain, in any case, is that the Lady can talk on every subject, seemly or otherwise, and the list of her acquaintances is as long as---the last century, and maybe the next one too. 'Twere as if she breakfasted but yesterday with Old Bess and supped with Shakespeare the same evening. And though she simpers and smiles enough, she has a sharp eye and a sharper tongue. And when she crosses a room, she leaves a wind in her wake. If it weren't for the simpers and the skirts, I would say I was nekatsim in the yes, and 'tis a nam. There now, that's out, enough to shock the *saucy sauce boxes* for a month of Satiredays.

But thinking about the Lady Orlando has set my mind, nonetheless, on the *modest proposal* I mentioned above, a proposal that would shew how to keep the population under better control than at present. And the meat of it would be that we breed an entire race of Orlando's as would live forever without need of further propagation. *Are you bit, or are you not, sirrahs?* These wo-men would be capable of switching from one sex to t'other according as the times required - men for battle, women when we'd no need of soldiers. Nay, I hear Stella's voice, chiding me, saying there'd be no little children in such a world. But then there'd be no lying-in, and no dying of it, and a pox of other ills besides that are not for *little rogues' ears, sirrahs!*

And think on the accumulation of knowledge there would be in such an age, where nothing was forgotten but everything known at the same time by the same minds. For these wo-men's minds would be all of the same cast, as I'm inclined to think they are already, though 'tis little acknowledged. They'd all read Latin and Greek and all write verses as a pastime. And there would be no need for governance since they would all be equally educated and wise; what a saving in scribes and sealing wax!

So there you have it, my modest proposal, though some will say 'tis more immodest than any I've made before!

Paaast twelve o'clock and so good-night, myownlittledearsaucyinsolentrogues.

Well, but this is a long one?

No, sirrahs, I warrant you: too long for naughty girls.

Go, sauceboxes, good-night.

Swift did write A Modest Proposal: *for preventing the children of poor people in Ireland from being a burden on their parents and the country, and for making them beneficial to the publick.*

That proposal was much more outrageous than the one I've invented here!

(view spoiler)

Violet wells says

My second reading of Orlando bore out my overriding impression the first time I read it – that this is a brilliant comic performance until Woolf, before finishing, runs out of steam. Towards the end it becomes apparent she's no longer in the same spirit with which she began the book. What begins as pure parody ends up a serious attempt to understand her subject. The delicious light skip of her lyrical irony no longer seems at the beck and call of her wit towards the end. You can sense, even see that she's already beginning to formulate both A Room of one's Own and The Waves. Her lightly handled mischievous mockery of the conventional historian and biographer is replaced by a more heavy handed feminist polemic and awkward, overly lyrical philosophical musings on the nature of fame and multiple incarnations of self. She's lost the original spirit. It's as if a children's play about pirates and mermaids ends with a religious sermon. As Shakespeare demonstrated, if you start off silly, you should probably end silly. Imagine if at the end of As You Like It all the characters held forth on the psychological and philosophical connotations of why they changed sex during the play. Basically, Virginia tries to force a resolution on this novel that is completely at odds with its spirit. And for that reason all the tension goes out of it in the last fifty pages.

The first half of Orlando pastiches the traditional historian/biographer as mischievously and hilariously as Nabokov's brilliant Pale Fire pastiches establishment's literary critic. It's the work of a writer inspired, on a roll and thank heavens we have this evidence of Woolf's comic genius. Anyone who thinks of Woolf as a rather pretentious humourless prig clearly hasn't read Orlando. Of all her books it's the one which most gives you an idea of what she was like at a dinner table. Thus, ironically, the most biographical in terms of

giving us some essence of the social Virginia – offhand, witty, versatile, self-deprecating, a show off, intellectual, silly, indignant, giggling. Orlando is like a guided tour through VW's likes and dislikes. We learn what pleases her and what angers her - and of course she writes beautifully of her love of England, its countryside, its history and its capital. There's also a sense that she's sometimes showing off with certain friends in mind – you realise while reading this book that there's a subtle but hugely significant difference between genius in full stride and showing off: even though genius in full stride can seem like showing off it never quite does. You don't see the performance. Here you sometimes can see the performance. You can see the anatomy of the dance steps rather than one continuous fluid motion. So who was she showing off to? I don't think it was Vita at all. It might have started as a bit of fun with Vita in mind but to my mind it's Lytton Strachey she's often thinking about while writing this. He was the writer who sought to revolutionise biography as a form and probably the male intellect among her brother's formally educated friends she was most intimidated by. It's like she's now found the confidence to feel herself his equal, which she didn't feel as a young woman. While he was receiving his Cambridge education she was compelled to read many of the countless biographies in her father's library. No wonder she hates conventional biography so much. Orlando was her revenge on all those dull male minds who believed identity was constructed from dates, battles, rank and official documents. The same kind of men who believed women were better seen and not heard. What does all this have to do with Vita? For me far too much has been made of her relationship with Vita. Nearly all my female friends have had lesbian crushes at some point in their lives. It's something we laugh about; not something that history should use to define who we are. The idea that had Woolf lived in more tolerant times she would have lived happily in a lesbian relationship to my mind is just daft, as daft in its way as the convictions held by the historians and biographers she mocks in this book.

In relation to VW's other books I'd give this four stars but because it's clearly better than 99% of the books on Goodreads it has to get five.

Renato Magalhães Rocha says

This was my first time reading Orlando. It was also my second time.

I like to think that everything happens for a reason - not that I believe it was planned or decided by a powerful creature for me - but because the idea that everything effects what surrounds it sounds about right to me. So I see a purpose in this reading experience that Virginia Woolf provided me and take it as an important lesson to carry with me from now on - and how appropriate that it came just at the beginning of a new and exciting year.

I've always liked to plan things to the last detail in my life. With reading, unfortunately - and I say that because sometimes it becomes *too much* to follow-up on - it is the same. I had a strict schedule to read Orlando and I wanted to finish it by January 9th. The day arrived and I only had twenty pages or so left to finish the book, so great, another thing was on the right track. And then I realized nothing was on the right track. I had been racing through the book to comply with a deadline that I stipulated - for no authentic reason, really - in my head and I wasn't enjoying it at all. Yes, I saw glimpses of brilliance here and there, and I loved the idea of the book since the beginning, plus the fact that I've always admired both Woolf and **her** writing style, so it surprised (and bothered) me that I wasn't actually having a great time with it. I put it down and analyzed the situation for two minutes - it was a no brainer, I know, but when you're caught up in it, it may take a while to realize things - and then decided to start over. To read everything once again, including the Introduction that I skipped the first time. Oh my! What about my schedule? It would have to give in. So I went back to the beginning, with hopes of a better read this time and without a deadline. After

thirty pages or so, I realized the blur I had read for racing through the words felt really different and so much better now, as if I had just put on my reading glasses.

Forget mostly everything you know from Woolf and expect to find here based on previous works - it's a departure from them, almost completely. Mrs. Dalloway became famous for being an account of a single day of a person's life; to counter that, we read in this book more than three hundred years of Orlando's life. To the Lighthouse is known for its stream of consciousness style that is intertwined with the plot and characters' lines and actions, making it a complex read; this novel is straightforward and presented in the format of a biography of the character Orlando - one would say the novel is actually semi-biographical as it's been widely known that the protagonist is based on Vita Sackville-West, an English writer who's been romantically involved with Woolf; because of that, the novel is seen as a love-letter to Vita. More than that, it is a love letter to literature, to the exercise of writing and to writers. It takes us on a grand literary journey throughout the centuries - kind of an expanded *Oxen of the Sun* from Ulysses - where Virginia emulates some styles and eras in **her** writing - although still making **her** book easily accessible as opposed to what Joyce did in the specified episode.

This biography tells us the story of Orlando, an individual born as a biological male who lives for more than three hundred years. Seems interesting enough, right? There's more: at around thirty years of age, **he** wakes up to find out a change has occurred: **he**'s mysteriously been transformed into a woman; **he (she)** is now biologically female. This is the basic frame of the novel.

But truly, what I most admired and enjoyed in this work was Woolf. I love how **she** comprehended and created **her** protagonist as someone constituted of dissimilarities and paradoxes all throughout the times. If we, inside of one year, change our minds so often, imagine someone living for three centuries. Not only did this give a touch of realism to this distinct story, but it also kept Orlando's character as being fresh, not determined from beginning to end and, above all, unpredictable.

What I mostly got from Orlando's character was the sense of solitude and constant search. Despite being surrounded by people throughout centuries, Orlando was really in search of **herself**, of who **he** was, of what **she** was - really, in search of a meaning, of a purpose, of **her** individuality. It didn't help, of course, that on the times **he** opened up and trusted people, **she** ended up being betrayed by them, only renewing **his** sense of loneliness. Notwithstanding, **she** still seemed to worry so much about people's opinions and conceptions about **him**, for **she** was longing to fit somewhere.

Orlando's freedom - for so to speak - came from an epiphany **he** had while struggling about **his** writings, when **she** realized that in need to be true to **himself**, **she** needed to write first and foremost for **herself**, leaving all glory aside that for a moment **she** considered seeking for **herself** - again proving **his** need to fit, to be accepted. Following this moment, Orlando found the necessity of taking care of **his** house, which I interpreted as a clear metaphor that **she**, from that moment on, wanted to value **himself**, **his** story, **her** lineage, the foundation: **he** was, for once, proud of being who **she** was.

"He stretched himself. He rose. He stood upright in complete nakedness before us, and while the trumpets pealed Truth! Truth! Truth! we have no choice left but confess — he was a woman."

Although Virginia made a decision to not explain or address too much the sex change - and I applaud **her** for that, for it was treated naturally (despite the amazing scene, one of the best in the novel, where the three sisters Chastity, Purity and Modesty tried to cover the beautiful transformation) as all gender issues should

be, for they're not, in my opinion, much more than a simple detail that constitutes us such as our height and weight -, I wanted to at least acknowledge here on my humble review how brilliant **she** was for writing so bravely - and yet with a much admirable lightness - on a subject that still, in 2015, is such a taboo to our society. Virginia wrote as if the sexually defined roles were no more than fantasies that could easily be stripped off for the benefit of another that better suited the individual.

Still on Woolf's levity in addressing the change, the reflections made by Orlando right after becoming a woman were really fun and interesting to read. **His** comparisons between the genders and **her** efforts in learning how to act, be and think had a subtle but undeniable touch of sarcasm. Orlando trying to readjust **her** behavior after becoming a woman, to comply to what was expected of **her** - and this was a constant for **him** because, outside the gender issue, the character goes through a lot of different eras and times, each one with silly defined roles by society - , felt like someone who needed to learn to walk again, or rather someone who's been through a short period of blindness and regains sight, only to find out, this time, that the world is under different lights and colors, as if the sun had been changed to blue, or pink.

*"Memory is the seamstress, and a capricious one at that. Memory runs **her** needle in and out, up and down, hither and thither. We know not what comes next, or what follows after. Thus, the most ordinary movement in the world, such as sitting down at a table and pulling the inkstand towards one, may agitate a thousand odd, disconnected fragments, now bright, now dim, hanging and bobbing and dipping and flaunting, like the underlinen of a family of fourteen on a line in a gale of wind."*

Other aspect that was surely to please me was Woolf's addressing to memory, time and consciousness - topics I've been reading about for quite some time. Still, **she** was able to add **her** own twist to those and seemingly inverted Proust's approach: instead of showing the moment that the past resurfaces through an involuntary memory, **she** shows us the present fighting back to regain the mind's control, mostly through sounds that awake Orlando again, as if the present was actually screaming for attention.

Back to the first time I attempted to read this book, and also one of the changes I made that contributed to my new-found enjoyment of it was about reading the notes included in my edition. I seem to have a love/hate relationship with notes; while they're completely essential in some books, practically part of the narrative and elucidative to the comprehension of the work, in others they are simply too distracting without adding much to the experience. My edition has 262 notes (for a book that has about 240 pages.) Most were about the parallels between Vita's life and Orlando's, and those I found to be unnecessary. After I stopped reading all of them and only payed attention to the ones that promised to add to my understanding, my reading flow also improved.

Film adaptation: although it hasn't been acclaimed either by critics nor the public, I was very much curious to watch the film from 1992, directed by Sally Potter, to see how Woolf's narrative would de adapted into the screen. While it had some nice moments, and most of them provided by Tilda Swinton's talents who plays Orlando greatly, others were a great disappointment: to justify Orlando's longer than usual life by making it a gift from the Queen is completely unnecessary; after that, I was scared they would also try to justify the sex change - gladly, that wasn't the case. Having Orlando constantly looking at the camera in attempts to connect to the viewer felt forced and became very predictable and - what I think must have been the sole reason the director decided on using those - also didn't match the wit that Woolf achieved by having the biographer addressing the reader in several occasions. It was a fun time watching the film, but it doesn't stand on its own like the novel gracefully does.

Rating: for a book that, under 300 pages, packed not only a great story, with wonderful wit and humor, written brilliantly, but also taught me an important lesson: 5 stars.

Samadrita says

The most prudent way to review a Virginia Woolf book, perhaps, would be to write 'THIS IS STUPENDOUS. GENIUS. AMAZING. WHY HAVEN'T YOU READ THIS YET?' and leave it at that. Because not only does this relieve you of the responsibility of casting about for appropriate words to serenade Woolf but also because you know no review in the world does justice to the sheer magic that she is capable of creating with words.

But since I have a thing for self-flagellation(not really), I wish to undertake precisely this mammoth task of writing about *Orlando*.

After having closed the book and put it aside, the first predominant emotions are that of being overwhelmed by the all-encompassing nature of its inherent themes, then awestruck, then of being very close to tears. One is compelled to sit quietly in a corner, still under the heady influence of *Orlando*'s poetic prose, and brood over all the discrete human sentiments, actions and events that make up life as we know it, letting precious minutes trickle by.

Our hero-heroine, *Orlando*, seems not only to be a representation of the human spirit, a union of *yin and yang* in all its imperfect glory, but also a lasting testament to the perpetual flow of time. His-her pronouncements sound almost like a chorus of voices, echoing all the dichotomies that characterize our existence and the transience of our emotions.

Orlando begins the journey of life as a man of wealth and social standing in Elizabethan era England, comfortable in the skin of his vanity, amorous in his dalliances with women. And the book ends on 11th of October, 1928, in modern England where *Orlando* is a married woman, a mother, an accomplished writer and finally at peace with life's many ironies and caprices. I will refrain from going into all that takes place between these two distant points in time because for that one can always read the book.

It will suffice to say that *Orlando* swings back and forth between craving and shunning love, between pursuing his-her literary interests and trivializing the urge to write, between seeking the august company of men of letters like Pope, Addison and Swift and then belittling them. And even though hundreds of years pass by as *Orlando* goes through the many myriad experiences that life had in store for him-her, it seems like everything has remained essentially the same. The reader is struck by a sense of passivity in motion, of an enduring constancy even though the sights and sounds and scenarios, that *Orlando* flits through, keep varying.

Thus in a way *Orlando* is not different from Woolf's other works just because of the noticeable absence of a stream of consciousness(which, again, is not totally absent here) but because here, she attempts to grasp at an amorphous entity like time and enclose it within a few pages. And I am mightily pleased to say that she pulls off this feat with an elan, one associates only with her.

What makes *Orlando* really stand out among other VW works is the dual gender of its protagonist. *Orlando* keeps oscillating between his-her manly and womanly bearings and towards the very end, what nullifies the differences between the sexes is his-her humanity, his-her detachment from the material world and a crossover into the realm of the spiritual.

"The whole of her darkened and settled, as when some foil whose addition makes the round and

solidity of a surface is added to it, and the shallow becomes deep and the near distant; and all is contained as water is contained by the sides of a well. So 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."

The narrative does seem a bit disjointed at certain points, especially when Woolf foregoes conventions and goes into intricate detailing of events which seem of little importance in the greater scheme of things or inserts her witty observations on society's prejudices concerning women, chastity and more.

"Orlando, who was a passionate lover of animals, now noticed that her teeth were crooked and the two front turned inward, which, he said, is a sure sign of a perverse and cruel disposition in women, and so broke the engagement that very night for ever."

"I am she that men call Modesty. Virgin I am and ever shall be. Not for me the fruitful fields and the fertile vineyard. Increase is odious to me; and when the apples burgeon or the flocks breed, I run, I run, I let my mantle fall. My hair covers my eyes, I do not see. Spare, O spare!"

"Truth come not out from your horrid den. Hide deeper, fearful Truth. For you flaunt in the brutal gaze of the sun things that were better unknown and undone; you unveil the shameful; the dark you make clear, Hide! Hide! Hide!"

See what I mean? This is probably Woolf at her funniest and wittiest. So not a single sentence or passage can be devalued even though it may appear a little out of place or slow down the progress of the narrative.

In essence, *Orlando* is a summation of all the irrepressible instincts of both the man and woman - their quest for love and true wisdom, their search for meaning in chaos, their feelings of inferiority aroused by the vastness of the universe and their desire to find an eternity trapped within their brief lifetimes.
