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The quest for identity in selected works by
Virginia Woolf (*A Room of One's Own* and
Orlando: A Biography)

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Specializace v pedagogice
Anglický jazyk se zaměřením na vzdělávání – Německý jazyk se
zaměřením na vzdělávání (B AJ – NJ)

2016/17

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Chtěla bych poděkovat vedoucí práce Bernadette Higgins, M.A. za přínosné rady a trpělivost při vedení mé bakalářské práce a také za poskytnutí literatury k vypracování teoretické části.

Podpis:

TITLE:

The quest for identity in selected works of Virginia Woolf (*A Room of One's Own* and *Orlando: A Biography*)

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ABSTRACT:

This thesis explores the theme of the quest for identity in two works by Virginia Woolf. The theoretical part of the thesis focuses on the terminology of sex and gender, as well as the terms gender spectrum and androgyny. Also, the theoretical part examines the historical context relevant to the life and works of Virginia Woolf. Moreover, the theoretical part discusses the Bloomsbury Group as well as forerunners and other significant female authors preceding Virginia Woolf in Great Britain. The practical part analyzes the selected works of Woolf with regard to the quest for identity. The essay collection *A Room of One's Own* is mainly relevant to identity as an author, especially as a female author. In the essays, the author portrays the life of women (mainly writers) of the past. The novel *Orlando* regards gender identity as well as identity as an author.

KEYWORDS:

Gender identity, Women and Fiction, Androgyny, Gender spectrum

NÁZEV:

Hledání identity ve vybraných dílech Virginie Woolfové

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ABSTRAKT:

Tato práce se zaměřuje na téma hledání identity ve dvou dílech Virginie Woolfové. Teoretická část práce se zabývá terminologií gender, androgynie a genderové spektrum. Dále se práce zabývá historickým kontextem počátku dvacátého století, tj. doby, kdy Woolfová žila a působila. Práce obsahuje informace o Bloomsbury Group a výtah ze života Woolfové relevantní k tématu práce. Zároveň se teoretická část práce zabývá předchůdkyněmi Virginie Woolfové a průkopnicemi ženské literatury ve Velké Británii. Praktická část práce zabývá pojmem identita ve vybraných pracích této spisovatelky. Jedná se o díla *Vlastní Pokoj* (*A Room of One's Own*, 1929) a *Orlando* (*Orlando: A Biography*, 1929). Esej *Vlastní Pokoj* je prvním dílem rozebíraným v části praktické a zaměřuje se na totožnost spisovatelkou. Woolfová zkoumá životy žen, především žen autorek, v různých obdobích historie. Román *Orlando* navazuje na totožnost genderovou i autorskou.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA:

Genderová identita, Ženy a literatura, Androgynie, Genderové spektrum

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1. INTRODUCTION

Virginia Woolf, a prominent writer of Modernism, manifests all the modernist values in her literary works. She enriches her readers in many ways and her works feature a broad variety of themes, nevertheless, the focus of the thesis is foremost on the subject of the quest for identity. Woolf's works are often labeled as feminist, partly because she chose to write about the life of women as writers, and also because she wrote about the hardships of female authors in the academic world a dominated by men. One could consider Virginia Woolf as a writer far ahead of her time, because she also dealt with the topic of gender identity. She explored what it meant to live life as a woman throughout history. In her works, she attempted to depict the position that women held in various periods of history. Using her literary voice, Virginia Woolf described the life of women through fictional quests back in time. In short, what makes Virginia Woolf a feminist writer is mainly the unique way in which she identifies with the women of the past in her literary works.

The prime focus of this thesis is the quest for identity in Virginia Woolf's works. The thesis examines two works of Virginia Woolf – the collection of essays called *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and the novel *Orlando: A Biography* (1928). By a quest for identity I personally understand a journey to find yourself as a person. However, what is more pertinent and applicable to the selected works of Virginia Woolf, which are the centerpieces of this thesis, is the journey to establish yourself as a female author.

Also, both works examined in this thesis, approach the matter of the quest for identity differently. On one hand, in her essay compilation *A Room of One's Own* Woolf deals with the identity of a female author, or alternatively, her essays can be also viewed as quests for identity for a feminist. On the other hand, her fictional work *Orlando* may be regarded as a quest for gender identity.

2. THEORETICAL PART

2.1. The terms sex and gender

2.1.1. Terminology of sex and gender

The terms sex and gender have been frequently, and still very often are, used as words of identical meaning. However, the definitions of these words are in fact different. In essence, sex deals with a person's anatomy – sex is based on one's reproductive organs and is assigned to the individual at birth, whereas gender refers to the complex and social understanding of being female or male and as a matter of fact has more to do with non-physiological aspects.

But, although sex and gender are different in their meaning, culturally, no complete separation of these terms is possible. The reason for that is that historically and across culture society assigned different roles according to one's sex. So, sex and gender represent overlapping concepts, and it is crucial to understand that the idea of gender has developed as a result of environment interactions and biology (even though, the modern idea of gender – the gender spectrum - is trying to break through this concept).¹ In short, the terms are indeed related, but human anatomy corresponds to sex, and the label gender is based on the expectations connected with being male or female.²

During the 20th century the concept of gender became more explored and the terms sex and gender became more differentiated. The artificiality of gender is what the existentialist author Simone de Beauvoir describes in *The Second Sex*. Beauvoir famously states:

“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.”³

The term gender was no longer perceived as inherent and naturally ingrained in people from birth but was rather viewed as a socially manufactured concept.

1 “Understanding Gender.” *Gender Spectrum*, 17 Dec. 2016, www.genderspectrum.org/quick-links/understanding-gender/.

2 Lips, Hilary M., and Hilary M. Lips. “Chapter 1.” *Sex & Gender: an Introduction*, 3rd ed., Mayfield Pub., 1997, pp. 4–5.

3 Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Vintage Classic, 2015.

2.1.2. Sex and gender stereotypes

Stereotypes are social phenomena generally known as a set of ideas commonly ascribed to an individual based on their appearance, sex, sexuality, race, nation or social class. One of the fundamental ways how our society distinguishes and labels its members is according to a person's sex.

Stereotypes about men and women have a long history, which evolves mainly around the social hierarchy between males and females. From the historical point of view, men were more socially powerful than women. This power hierarchy in society is considered to be the root cause of stereotypes about sex.

Stereotypes about sex can be defined as society's commonly shared beliefs that one can be assigned certain personality traits and attributes according to being male or female. This distinction often implies that femininity and masculinity are opposites of one another, which leads to the contrasting and opposed portrayal in stereotypes based on sex. This can be observed throughout human history as males were often considered rational and strong, women on the other hand were seen as emotional and weak; in the same way. However, the polarized, binary understanding of the sexes is not necessarily natural and can be problematic. The strict categorization causes an almost phobia-like fear of violating the "norms" of sex and gender, even though the complexity of humans as individuals cannot possibly be covered by a single label.

Notably, the 20th century redefined human identity from many perspectives. The onset of the Modern era brought new philosophical ideas, scientific research and social changes, and all of these factors ultimately contributed to a shift in perception of human bodies and minds. Along with sex and gender identity, sexuality was also a topic discussed in the 20th century. For example, the shift in understanding of sexuality is evidenced in *The Kinsey Report*^{4 5}, two studies (*Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male*, 1948 and *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female*, 1953) by Alfred Kinsey. Importantly, the studies introduce the "sexual continuum". To put it simply, Alfred Kinsey describes human sexuality as a scale or a range of possibilities.⁶ *The Kinsey*

4 Kinsey, Alfred C., et al. *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male*. Indiana University Press, 1998.

5 Kinsey, Alfred C., et al. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*. Indiana University Press, 1998

6 *Historical Report: Diversity of Sexual Orientation*, 10 Apr. 2018, kinseyinstitute.org/research/publications/historical-report-diversity-of-sexual-orientation.php.

Report is one of the many indicators that the dichotomous and binary definition of sex, gender and sexuality became no longer acceptable in context of the 20th century.

Virginia Woolf achieved the breaking of the “norms” of society through her writing. Her bold and inventive approach to gender identity is for instance illustrated in *Orlando: A Biography* (1928). The author challenges the stereotypical perception of gender roles not just in her character Orlando, who at one stage becomes a woman (and which internally does not affect the character at all, only the societal approach to Orlando shifts),⁷ but also in other characters in her novel. For instance, the husband of Orlando, Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, is said to have many traditionally feminine traits, and his sensitivity and understanding is presumably one of the reasons for their successful marriage.⁸

2.1.3. Gender spectrum

During the 20th century the notion of a simple binary was disputed. A new understanding of gender has been introduced – “*the gender spectrum*”. The gender spectrum is described as a complex relation between a person’s body, identity and expression. In other words, gender is based on several aspects, namely, our relationship with our body, the way we internally identify and what we choose to express on the outside.

As mentioned above, the 20th century brought a new understanding of human identity, especially sexuality and gender identity. As depicted in *The Kinsey Report*^{9 10}, human sexuality is interpreted as a scale (also referred to as “sexual continuum”), which is in fact comparable to the term of the gender spectrum. In a similar manner to Alfred Kinsey’s definition of human sexuality the gender spectrum defines gender identity as a range as well. In other words, equivalently to the “sexual continuum”, gender consists of a continuum of its own.

The concept of the gender spectrum is revolutionary in the way it challenges the traditional binary and polarized idea of gender. Conventionally, there are two genders,

⁷ Woolf, Virginia. “Chapter 3.” *Orlando*, Praha: Argo, 1994, p. 88.

⁸ Woolf, Virginia. “Chapter 5.” *Orlando*, Praha: Argo, 1994, p. 160

⁹ Kinsey, Alfred C., et al. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*. Indiana University Press, 1998.

¹⁰ Kinsey, Alfred C., et al. *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male*. Indiana University Press, 1998.

which are viewed as polar opposites – male and female; however, the gender spectrum views gender rather as a range of possibilities.

Firstly, the gender spectrum does not gender bodies according to the reproductive organs, and explains, why that is in some ways exclusive to particular groups (for example, the classic idea of sex distinguishes two genders according to the anatomy, which does not include people with intersex conditions). To put it simply, according to the concept of the gender spectrum, gender identity is far more complex and is beyond the biological aspect of human bodies.

Secondly, how people identify when it comes to their gender is completely internal and is foremost a matter of their own feelings and comfort, rather than their body. Providing that an individual identifies with the same sex assigned to them at birth, they are considered to be cisgender. Whereas people, who do not feel comfortable with the gender they were assigned after they were born, are known as transgender. Furthermore, the gender spectrum allows one to simply not identify at all with the binary genders.

Thirdly, how a person expresses himself or herself also relates to the gender spectrum. However, how one decides to appear on the outside does not necessarily correlate to or speak for their internal gender identity. The concept of the gender spectrum allows an individual to express themselves according to their personal taste and preference. Basically, people who do not fit into traditional gender norms (e.g. girls or women, who are considered to be more masculine or boys or men appearing more feminine) are enabled to present themselves to their liking not according to the social standards.¹¹

All in all, the gender spectrum enables fluidity and allows people to have possibilities and also encourages diversity.

Another term related to the modern understanding of gender and gender identity is androgyny. An androgynous person is someone who has both male and female traits, and, according to the dictionary, related to either an individual's appearance or sexual identity.¹²

¹¹ “Understanding Gender.” *Gender Spectrum*, 10 Feb. 2017, www.genderspectrum.org/quick-links/understanding-gender/.

¹² “Androgynous.” *Dictionary.com*, Dictionary.com, 13 Feb. 2017, www.dictionary.com/browse/androgyny.

In the same way, gender fluidity also closely correlates to the contemporary perception of gender. Gender fluidity allows someone to escape from having to label himself or herself and provides them with the freedom to express themselves according to their personal preference and comfort at a particular moment.¹³

What is particularly interesting, is the relation between the modern understanding of gender and Virginia Woolf's works and her characters. For instance, the character of Orlando may be interpreted as an androgynous or even a gender fluid person from the modern point of view. Correspondingly, Orlando's husband Marmaduke shares this similarity with his wife and their mutual understanding is what created a bond between them.

The term androgyny is also mentioned in her essays *A Room of One's Own*. In Essay Six she depicts androgyny as a state of mind, in which the mind is undivided (not fractioned into female nor a male). By that, I believe she means, that the androgyny of the mind is a state when the mind is not conscious of the sex of the body.¹⁴ In this way, Woolf demonstrates her genius ability to speak to contemporary generations through her literary works.

2.2. Historical context

2.2.1. Life in the early twentieth century

The preceding Victorian era left its' descendants with a strong urge to transform the societal views on culture, literature and life in the society itself. The Modern era is often depicted as a transitional period between the 19th and the 20th century. The world has begun to change rapidly; there was an immense advance in science and technology, and doubts about the traditional ideas about God and human nature began to emerge.¹⁵

One of many historical aspects that changed life in society completely and sparked British Modernism was the greatest human conflict at the time – World War I, which

¹³ "Gender Fluidity." *Gender Diversity*, 10 Feb. 2017, www.genderdiversity.org/resources/terminology/#genderfluidity.

¹⁴ Woolf, Virginia, and Virginia Woolf. "Essay Six." *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

¹⁵ Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. "The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English." *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed. ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, p. 1205.

left a deep scar on humanity, and thus contributed to people's emphasis on their inner life. The technology of destruction, which was used in this war conflict and ultimately led to a higher fatality rate, destroyed people's belief in humankind.¹⁶ The degree to which The Great War affected life, is revealed in the new philosophy of living life, that people started to practice. Because the war left the society completely uncertain and even terrified of the future, "to live for the moment" or the motto "Carpe diem" sheltered people from their anxiety and helped them combat their shattered belief in humankind. Also, the Great Depression in the world's economy during the 1930's unfortunately only added to the feelings of despair in the society.

Furthermore, the contemporary philosophy and psychology as well as the popular culture, definitely contributed to the development of the modernist views too. In the same way, the psychology of Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud explained the importance of the libido, and the loosened mindset, the product of rejection of Victorian moral standards, most likely helped with the liberation of sexuality and gender identity as well.

Lastly, the advance in technology (e.g. the public television broadcasting, development in the automobile industry) also fueled the changes in society.¹⁷

2.2.3. Literature at the turn of the century

The time frame approximately between 1914 and 1939 is most frequently referred to as the "modernist" period.¹⁸

The impact of the war, the advances in technology and of the innovative approaches in social studies on the society of the early 20th century was definitely immense, and this huge effect and social change is mirrored in the literature of that time.

¹⁶ Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. "The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English." *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, p. 1208.

¹⁷ Chalupský, Petr, and Bernadette Higgins. "British Literature of the 20th Century (OB2301012)." 14 Nov. 2016, Prague, Celetná 13.

¹⁸ Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. "The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English." *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, p. 1205.

Firstly, as stated above, World War I caused people to turn to the inside, and this tendency is illustrated in literature as well. The literary men and women became to write their works with an emphasis on subjectivism; the personal, intimate and inner experience gained importance in the literature of the time.

Secondly, with the 1910 exhibition of Post-Impressionists (*Manet and the Post-Impressionists*) in London the perception of time and human life changed. A new way of preserving life in one single moment is documented for instance in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. In fact, Woolf herself wrote in an essay after the exhibition:

“On or about December 1910 the human character changed”.¹⁹

As mentioned above, contemporary philosophy and psychology affected life in the society as well. The philosophical ideas of Henri Bergson and William James contributed to the stream of thought finding its way to literature as well. The stream of thought technique embodies the ambition to depict the flow of time in the literary works and has become a crucial feature in the literature. In the same way, Vincent Van Gogh among other artists of that time captured single moments in his paintings.

The perception of time is a significant characteristic for the Modern era and its literature. Particularly interesting and innovative is the way the modernist authors distinguish chronological time from psychological time. This tendency can be illustrated as the distinction between “the time of the machine” as the time on the clock, and “the time of the soul” meaning the perception of time as we experience it personally.²⁰

Martin Hilský in his *Modernisté* compares the two approaches to time perception in two contemporary works – *The Time Machine* (1895) by H.G. Wells and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928). Although H.G. Wells lived in the Modern era, he is not considered to be a modernist author. In his book *The Time Machine* he deals exactly with what M. Hilský regards as “the time of the machine”; the main protagonist travels through time with the help of a time machine. On the other hand, Virginia Woolf approaches time as

¹⁹ “Culture Quake: Manet and Post Impressionism.” *The Telegraph*, Telegraph Media Group, 14 June 2004, www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/donotmigrate/3618913/Culture-quake-Manet-and-Post-Impressionism.html.

²⁰ Hilský, Martin. *Modernisté: Eliot, Joyce, Woolfová, Lawrence*. Praha: Torst, 1995, p. 12.

“the time of the soul” and perceives it from the psychological point of view. In *Orlando*, she ponders about the impact human mind has on time perception. The author examines how an hour can be stretched out to seem as if it were multiplied several times, and at the same time, an hour can seem extremely short in other cases.²¹ In short, Virginia Woolf (and other modernist authors) noticed the inconsistency between psychological time and the time of the clock and, and depicted this irregularity in her works.

All these events and circumstances influenced the literature of that time and are reflected in the works of contemporary writers – Edward Morgan Foster, James Joyce, and of course, Virginia Woolf.

2.2.3. Psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud

The psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939) from Austria also reflects the atmosphere of the early twentieth century in his works. His ideas about the human mind were a breakthrough and vastly affected the way people viewed humankind.

Sigmund Freud described the human self as layered and more intricate. Freud’s main point is that the human self has not only a conscious part – “the ego” – but has also an unconscious “id” as well as a moralistic and upper-conscious “superego”.²² The conscious part of the human personality is available to awareness, whereas the unconscious part can be explored through dreams, for example, and in his opinion, is the compelling force of the human nature. The “superego”, on the other hand is the moral element of the human mind.²³

Freudian theories had an impact on Virginia Woolf and her writing as well. Since Freud’s theories made people aware of the existence of the sub-consciousness, one may assume, that Woolf found inspiration in the works of the Austrian psychoanalyst on how people explore their identity and themselves as human beings. Gender identity and how people interpret gender and identity according to the social standards is most likely

21 Woolf, Virginia. “Chapter 2.” *Orlando*, Praha: Argo, 1994, pp. 62–63.

22 Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. “The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English.” *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, p.1210.

23 Lips, Hilary M., and Hilary M. Lips. “Chapter 1.” *Sex & Gender: An Introduction*, 3rd ed., Mayfield Pub., 1997, pp. 42-3.

engraved in the sub-conscious parts of the mind, and I believe, that Freud's works fueled Woolf's feminist opinions as well. The author explains in *Professions for Women*,²⁴ that in order to tell the truth as a writer and as a woman, one must stop behaving like the society taught women to behave. In other words, to be truthful about her experiences, Woolf challenged herself to stop subconsciously acting like she was preconditioned to through society's rules.

Sigmund Freud's works also mirror the literary technique of the stream of thought. His theories most likely partially inspired modernist authors to delve into the sub-conscious mind of their characters. Virginia Woolf herself called the stream of thought (also referred to as stream of consciousness) method "tunneling" and she described it as a technique, where she "excavated" dreams and deepest thoughts of her characters.²⁵

2.2.4. Virginia Woolf's background

Above all, what certainly had a great and essential impact on forming Woolf's viewpoints and surely led her to her conclusions on women and fiction are her own experiences.

Virginia Woolf was born as Virginia Stephen on 25th of January 1882 into an upper middle-class family in London. According to Alexandra Harris's *Virginia Woolf*, Woolf's parents, Leslie Stephen and Julia, represented a perfect example of Victorian ideals. Leslie and Julia Stephen were also fond of art and literature, and had connections to other prominent figures in the society. Virginia grew up among many family members – both of her parents had children from previous marriages, as well as the Stephen children. And subsequently, from a very young age, Virginia began to develop her writing skills.

The way in which Virginia Woolf received her education certainly formed her as a person and an intellectual as well. Firstly, both daughters of Leslie and Julia – Virginia and her older sister Vanessa - received their education at home, because at the time it

24 Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. "The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English." *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, p. 1347-8.

25 Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. "The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English." *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, p. 1216.

was not yet a custom for women to have the same education as their male counterparts. For this reason, Leslie and Julia Stephen taught their daughters at home, whereas their brothers went to schools. Very early on, young Virginia became extremely passionate about writing. Writing became a crucial part of Virginia's childhood, and throughout her whole life she kept many diaries.

Although Virginia Woolf never actually went to school, she was able to educate herself on subjects she was interested in in depth, so that she was enabled to discuss any topic in literature with her younger brother Thoby, who was a student at Cambridge University. Virginia's enthusiasm for literature and history was most likely strongly influenced by her father, who in fact was a prominent editor, literary critic and a writer himself (also the author of the *Dictionary of National Biography*).²⁶ Her father's library brought Virginia into the world of literature, and ultimately the books she borrowed from him and delved into shaped her future life as an author. So, all in all, what allowed Virginia Woolf to have her own space to develop her skills were her upbringing, financial stability, education and the time and place where she could work on herself and polish her talent.²⁷

2.2.5. The Bloomsbury Group

Next, another aspect, that strongly influenced Virginia Woolf as a person and an author, was The Bloomsbury Group. The Bloomsbury Group was a group of writers, philosophers and artists, who met for discussions in the Woolf's household in Bloomsbury.

The group was established during Virginia's younger brother Thoby's studies at Cambridge University around 1905. There, he befriended many of his colleagues and then introduced many of his acquaintances to his sister, and so the existence of The Bloomsbury Group began. Among the most prominent members were, for instance, Roger Fry (who organized the exhibition *Manet and the Post-Impressionists* in 1910), Lytton Strachey (a historian), Duncan Grant (a painter), E.M. Foster (a modernist writer), J.M. Keynes (an economist) as well as Clive Bell (an art critic and also husband

²⁶ Neradová, Alice Lily, and Tomáš Hejna. "Velké Osobnosti Britské Literatury." *Velké Osobnosti Britské Literatury*, Praha: Olympia, 2015, p. 119.

²⁷ Harris, Alexandra. "Chapter 1." *Virginia Woolfová*, Praha: Argo, 2013.

of Vanessa), her sister Vanessa Bell, her brother Adrien Stephen and of course Virginia and her husband Leonard Woolf. Woolf was also introduced to her literary muse and inspiration for *Orlando* – Vita Sackville-West.²⁸

Why did this group of intellectuals and artists play an important role in Virginia Woolf's life? The answer is that the members of the group unified in their views on society discussed taboo subjects and ultimately bonded over the shared celebration of diversity and optimism in life. The group was very open-minded about sexuality and sex and (characteristically for the Modern era) disapproved of Victorian morality and restraint. Also, the members emphasized the individual experience of life and believed in finding happiness in the most ordinary things in life.²⁹ The Bloomsbury Group mirrored the atmosphere of the world and the tendencies in literature too.

For Virginia Woolf, the group provided her with a safe environment to be outspoken about taboos in life and experiments in literature. The Bloomsbury Group also provided her with a place to discuss the subject of gender and gender identity without any restraints. This community of freethinkers probably gave Virginia Woolf the sense of belonging, which surely further helped her to develop as an author and a feminist.

Woolf was most likely also introduced to her husband Leonard Woolf owing to the Bloomsbury Group. The pair married in 1912.³⁰ Leonard proved to be an excellent partner for Virginia, because not only was he sensitive (and extremely helpful during her periods of mental instability), but he also shared her enthusiasm for writing and social studies. He himself was a journalist, writer and was outspoken in his political views.³¹ Together, the couple established their own publishing house, The Hogarth Press.³²

28 Chalupský, Petr, and Bernadette Higgins. "British Literature of the 20th Century (OB2301012)." 14 Nov. 2016, Prague, Celetná 13.

29 Chalupský, Petr, and Bernadette Higgins. "British Literature of the 20th Century (OB2301012)." 14 Nov. 2016, Prague, Celetná 13.

30 Neradová, Alice Lily, and Tomáš Hejna. "Velké Osobnosti Britské Literatury." *Velké Osobnosti Britské Literatury*, Praha: Olympia, 2015, p. 120.

31 Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopædia. "Leonard Woolf." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 30 Nov. 2017, www.britannica.com/biography/Leonard-Woolf.

32 Harris, Alexandra. *Virginia Woolfová*, Praha: Argo, 2013, p. 66.

One may assume, that the character of Marmaduke, the husband of Orlando in the novel *Orlando*, may have been roughly based on Leonard Woolf. The fictional character shares some of the characteristic traits with the real-life partner of the author; for instance, both are often described as melancholic, sensitive and empathetic.³³

2.3. Women and literature

2.3.1. Women in the early twentieth century

Interestingly, the beginning of the new century was an entirely different experience for men and women. For men, the new age embodied anxieties and shattered ideals; the first half of the twentieth century is even sometimes referred to as “Age of Anxiety” for men. On the other hand, the new century meant an increase in power and the promise of better life for women. Female emancipation was on the rise. This issue of women’s suffrage was documented, for instance, with the passing of the law that granted women the right to vote in political elections. Moreover, women were allowed to enter all professions in ever-greater numbers as well.³⁴

The late 19th century had been marked by debates about women’s economic oppression and legal constraints – after 1870, both boys and girls were allowed to receive elementary education and by 1883, women in England were free to own or inherit property.³⁵ The feminist historian Ray Strachey perfectly summarizes the improvement in the position of women in the society:

“By 1900, women had become, free both in their persons and their properties, their money and their consciences, their bodies and their souls.”³⁶

³³Woolf, Virginia. *Orlando*, Praha: Argo, 1994, p. 160.

³⁴Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. “The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English.” *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, p. 1205.

³⁵Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. “The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English.” *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, p. 970-1.

³⁶Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. “The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English.” *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, p. 961.

The technological progress, intellectual freedom as well as the Great War - all contributed to the shift in the position of women in the early 20th century.

Despite undoubtedly being a horror that destroyed people's ideals and belief in humankind, World War I had an enormously positive impact on women's lives. Most importantly, the war left society in need of female workers, who filled in the positions in working spheres left by men fighting in the war. Essentially, the grim reality of war had enabled women to have the opportunities to do meaningful work and by the end of the war, the number of women who worked had increased by a half. The work that women performed at home in England or the USA but also in medical services at the fronts was appreciated and ultimately led to further female liberation.³⁷ Finally, women were granted the right to vote (firstly only those of age 30 in 1918, later with the age restriction reduced to 21 in 1928).³⁸

2.3.2. Feminists of the early twentieth century

The feminist movement and the establishment of new female images in literature were definitely fueled by the extensive and hard work of countless activists for female rights.

The British and American suffrage leaders fought for almost a century for their right to vote. Among the prominent British suffragettes were the Pankhursts – Sylvia, her sister Christabel and her mother Emmeline. In 1913, the British feminists protested through hunger strikes in an attempt to gain their full citizenship. In the same way, Alice Paul led the American feminist movement.³⁹

But the female liberation was made possible not only through protests and demonstrations but through campaigns and innovations in many different areas of life. In 1850, for example, the American activist Amelia Bloomer designed the divided skirt. This simple invention became extremely popular in the years of the war conflict, because the skirt enabled women to comfortably work in every field. All in all,

³⁷ Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. "The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English." *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, p. 1221-2.

³⁸ Chalupský, Petr, and Bernadette Higgins. "British Literature of the 20th Century (OB2301012)." 14 Nov. 2016, Prague, Celetná 13.

³⁹ Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. "The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English." *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, page 1220.

women's clothing became lighter and more practical in comparison to the garments of the preceding Victorian era.⁴⁰

Whilst on the topic of clothes and appearance, Woolf herself discusses the role of garments and looks in *Orlando* as well. After Orlando is for the first time confronted with society as a female, she is bewildered at the expectations aimed at her to spend a huge portion of her day dressing and caring for her hair and skin. This relates to *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) by Mary Wollstonecraft, an 18th century British writer.⁴¹ Notably, Wollstonecraft criticizes J.J. Rousseau's idea, that women are naturally concerned with their appearances:

“His [Rousseau's] ridiculous stories, that girls are naturally attentive to their persons are beyond contempt.”⁴²

Moving on to the 20th century feminism, the birth control movement made way for the discussion about female sexuality for the first time in history. In Britain, Marie Stopes, the author of a book on birth control advice and scientist, opened the first clinic for birth control in 1921 in London. The debate about contraceptives sparked a discussion about female pleasure as well. Many books of that time began for the first time ever to encourage women to view sex as pleasurable and enjoyable and not as a submissive act of duty. Women started to explore their sexual desire and contemporary writings contributed to their newfound view on sex.⁴³

Lastly, even though female emancipation advanced immensely in the early 20th century, it encountered many setbacks along the way. For example, although women were granted the right to vote, many still did not register to vote or voted according to the advice and recommendations of their fathers and husbands. In the same way, although

40 Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. “The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English.” *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed. ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, page 1222.

41 Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. “Mary Wollstonecraft.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 8 Sept. 2016, www.britannica.com/biography/Mary-Wollstonecraft.

42 Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Jefferson Publication, 2015.

43 Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. “The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English.” *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed. ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, page 1223.

many women began to work, a great number of them preferred traditionally “feminine” positions in nurseries and teaching. Many women were conflicted over their desire to become mothers as well as have a career. Since having children and taking care of them was still considered to be primarily a woman’s task and even goal in life, many women had to decide between their desire to work and their wish to have a family.⁴⁴

2.3.3. “The Angel in the House” concept

As Virginia Woolf cleverly observes in her *Professions for Women*, the Victorian ideal of a female is precisely depicted in the poem *The Angel in the House* (1854) by Coventry Patmore (1823 – 1896).

The ideology of femininity in the 19th century was heavily relying on women being useful to and caring of their male counterparts; the necessary traits of women were to be foremost pure, submissive, selfless and. Patmore’s verses depict the self-sacrifice of an ideal female:

“Man must be pleased; but him to please

Is woman’s pleasure; down the gulf

Of his condoled necessities

She casts her best, she flings herself.”⁴⁵

The poem suggests that the ideal female was supposed to be completely devoted to her husband, and the author described the ideal woman as absolutely selfless, weak, fragile and almost angel-like. Women were mainly valued for their “purity”; the absolutely most important aspect of the female of that time was her virginity. If a woman failed to fulfill her submissive role in life, she would be considered a “fallen woman”, an outcast from the society. The economic oppression women endured in that time was immeasurable; women themselves were even considered property.

⁴⁴ Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. “The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English.” *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, page 1223-4.

⁴⁵ Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. “The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English.” *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, page 289.

Virginia Woolf explains in her *Professions for Women*, a speech Woolf delivered in 1931,⁴⁶ that in order to be truthful in her writing, she had to kill this concept of an ideal woman portrayed in *The Angel in the House*. Woolf describes how the ideology of femininity from the previous century bothered her and almost impeded her own identity. She explains that it is crucial that women rid themselves of this image of falsehood and ask themselves, what it really means to be a woman. In summary, Virginia Woolf demonstrates the harmful nature of “The Angel in the House” idea and urges women to explore themselves, express themselves and establish their own identity.⁴⁷

2.3.4. Female writers preceding Virginia Woolf

As Virginia Woolf acknowledges in *A Room of One's Own*, writing for women of the 20th century was not difficult owing to the women of the preceding centuries. The women of history had no tradition behind them, which could support them but still some of them managed to live as authors.

Woolf gives credit for making the path smoother for future female writers especially to Aphra Behn (1640 – 1689), who was the first professional woman writer in Britain. Aphra Behn was not only a writer and a poet, but also a member of the intelligence services of King Charles II and a traveler. Although she produced literature for most of her life, she died in poverty not long after the publication of her *Oroonoko* (1688), which is presumably based on her real-life experiences in protests against slavery in Surinam.⁴⁸ Virginia Woolf argues that it was exactly Behn's doing that caused other middle-class women to write too. Woolf celebrates and emphasizes Behn's pioneering for female authors by stating:

46 "Professions for Women" by Virginia Woolf, 12 Mar. 2017, s.spachman.tripod.com/Woolf/professions.htm.

47 Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. "The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English." *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, page 1345.

48 Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. "The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English." *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, page 109.

*“All women together ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn, for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds.”*⁴⁹

Anne Finch (1661 – 1720), Countess of Winchilsea, was yet another example of a prominent female literary figure in British history and an author recognized by Virginia Woolf. Finch was a poet coming from an upper-class family and is known for her verses about nature’s beauty and the hardships of a female writer. In her poems, she also depicts the feelings of confusion she experienced as a female intellectual in her lifetime.⁵⁰

The works of Jane Austen focus on the lives of women in the late 18th century and often depict the disillusionment of women who thought they are the mistresses of their own fate. Austen, also respected by Woolf, wrote about women’s dependency on marriage; in her novels she ironizes her heroines, who strive for male approval, and places a mirror in front of the society to point out the problems of the position of women at the time.⁵¹

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, although she is mostly known for her love poems *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850), she was a prominent intellectual, feminist and abolitionist, who was even considered for the post of poet laureate after Wordsworth’s death.

In summary, the position for women as writers was gradually improving throughout the centuries owing to many female authors, some of them (among them Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, Anne Finch, Aphra Behn and many others) Virginia Woolf herself mentions and praises reassuringly in her own works. All these women of the past lived their lives trying to improve the situation for women and especially for female authors of the future. They helped to make way for those who would decide to follow in their steps. Virginia Woolf deeply appreciated the hardships the women writers of the past

⁴⁹ Woolf, Virginia. “Essay Four.” *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

⁵⁰ Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. “The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English.” *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, page 167.

⁵¹ Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. “The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English.” *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, page 328-330.

had to endure, and she respected their hard work. They inspired her and ultimately helped Woolf to find her own literary voice and gain her identity as a female writer.

2.3.5. Modernist images of women

In the early 20th century the image of women in literature began to change. The new concept of femininity was fueled by many social changes – war, the suffrage movement, educational and professional opportunities and advance in technology – but also by the desire to transform the society and the need to abolish the rules of the preceding Victorian period.

The loosened moral standards (as the reaction to the Victorian strict standards) were also the result of the American “Jazz age” or “The Roaring Twenties”. The deliberate refusal of Victorianism also made way for and allowed the liberation of sexuality and female emancipation to exist. Women were granted their full citizenship and were finally allowed to vote. Moreover, the discussions about sex and contraceptives contributed to the debate about female sexual desire and identity. Actually, the “Jazz Age” also helped establish the new image of a female – a flapper girl, who was able to express herself through makeup and fashion as well as enjoy herself freely to the popular music at the time.⁵²

The depiction of female characters in the literary works of that time reacted to the social changes as well. As mentioned above, the new century left men feeling anxious and unsettled, whereas women felt empowered. The modern images of women written by men were in many cases depicted as powerful yet destructive; the dangerous and intimidating image of the “*femme fatale*” found its way to literature. An example of the problematic heroines can be found in the works of Ernest Hemmingway as well as Francis Scott Fitzgerald. Frequently, the sexuality of female characters is emphasized and the modern heroines written by men tend to be flawed, careless and even borderline narcissistic – as illustrated in the character of Daisy Buchanan in Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (1925) or Hemmingway’s Brett Ashley in *The Sun Also Rises* (1926).⁵³ The

52 Chalupský, Petr, and Bernadette Higgins. “British Literature of the 20th Century (OB2301012).” 14 Nov. 2016, Prague, Celetná 13.

53 Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. “The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English.” *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed. ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, page 1217-8.

British modernist author D.H. Lawrence in his essay *Matriarchy* also expressed the anxiety of the male part of society in the new century. In *Matriarchy* (1928), he implies, that women negatively affected the male loss of dominance in the new century and caused the feelings of lost mastery in men.

On the other hand, many female writers at the time expressed in their works the absolute need for women's independence and autonomy; their characters seem more realistic and complex. Since the female authors experienced themselves the changes and improvements in the society for women, they found themselves free of constraints and were able to write about female issues honestly. The female writers depicted the newly achieved freedom that women had experienced – as illustrated in the novels of Kate Chopin or Virginia Woolf herself.⁵⁴

Another image, relevant to the works of Virginia Woolf, is the “*New Woman*”. Although this concept emerged in culture and literature before the turn of the century⁵⁵, it still corresponds to the Modern era. According to *The New Women Movement of the 1890s in England*, this image is a symbol of a redefined femininity and independence. Similarly, at the beginning of the 20th century the idea of the “*New Woman*” portrays precisely the quest for the recently acquired identity. Many of the works of Virginia Woolf – for example, *Professions for Women* or *A Room of One's Own*– embody the journey women had to endure throughout history in order to gain their new identity. In *Professions for Women*, Woolf describes the killing of *The Angel in The House*, which enabled the birth of her authentic and truthful literary voice. Likewise, *A Room of One's Own* deals with the fictional fate of Judith Shakespeare, whose womanhood would impede her literary talent.

⁵⁴ Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. “The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English.” *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English*, 2nd ed., New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996, page 978.

⁵⁵ Schindler, Nicole, and Julia Oesterreich. *The New Women Movement of the 1890s in England*. Grin Publishing, 2007.

3. PRACTICAL PART

3.1. Re-visioning

The American poet and feminist Adrienne Rich in her essay *When We Dead Awaken* (1971), elaborates on her journey to find her own literary voice. She comes to the conclusion that women writers had to change their literary voices according to the mainly male public that judged their works.⁵⁶

Rich argues that in order for a female writer to be heard, she had to adapt her voice in writing. So, she challenges female writers to acknowledge the assumptions that affect them and their writing, break through the said assumptions, and search for their own identity. She illustrates this tendency on the act of “re-visioning”, which can be understood as the act of looking back through the history of women in literature, accepting the past and moving on to establishing the new identity of women as authors.

*” Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – is for woman more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for women, is more than a search for identity: it is part of our refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society.”*⁵⁷

Rich’s quote can be analyzed in correspondence to Virginia Woolf’s writing. One may interpret the works of Virginia Woolf as acts of “re-visioning” too. Woolf’s works are a gaze back in history, in which she images the circumstances in which women lived, and in this way, she is able to vision women’s quest for identity. The author in a way almost brings women from history back to life and she does so in many of her works; the search for identity of women is the main theme in *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) as well as *Orlando: A Biography* (1928).

⁵⁶ “‘When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision’, by Adrienne Rich.” *C’est La Vie!*, 28 Jan. 2011, emeire.wordpress.com/2011/01/28/when-we-dead-awaken-writing-as-re-vision-by-adrienne-rich/.

⁵⁷ “‘When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision’, by Adrienne Rich.” *C’est La Vie!*, 28 Jan. 2011, emeire.wordpress.com/2011/01/28/when-we-dead-awaken-writing-as-re-vision-by-adrienne-rich/.

3.2. A Room of One's Own

The first work discussed in this thesis is the extended essay *A Room of One's Own*, which was first published in 1929. Virginia Woolf during the preceding year gave lectures at two female colleges at Cambridge – Newham College and Girton College. These lectures were the basis for the essay written the following year. The central focus of the work is the topic of “Women and Fiction” throughout history.

3.2.1. Essay One

Essay One mainly functions as an introductory essay to the whole of *A Room of One's Own*. The author familiarizes the reader with the concept of having a “room of one's own”, which is naturally where the title for the entire essay compilation came from, and she also writes about the relation between the historical poverty of the female sex and education and the impact of the First World War on humanity.

Essay One of *A Room of One's Own* (1929) is introduced with the famous statement “*a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction*”⁵⁸ and the author proceeds to explain, why she cannot hope to tell the exact truth about the matter. Woolf challenges the reader to think critically and for himself or herself; she warns the readers to decide for themselves if her opinion is of any value to them.

Next, the text of Essay One proceeds with the introduction of Mary Beton (or Mary Seton or Carmichael), which I believe, again illustrates the author's attempt to disassociate herself from the narrative voice of the essay. She presumably creates the distance between her and the essay in order not to force her own opinion on the reader. The narrator also then proceeds to remind the reader about the essay being based on solely the writer's opinion, and therefore should be thought of critically.

The author uses the stream of consciousness (also referred to as a stream of thought) to describe her coming to the conclusion on the subject. The description of autumnal nature and the imagery of the narrator almost grabbing an idea (which is compared to a little fish in a stream) are combined with being interrupted by men at the fictional college of Oxbridge. Firstly, the narrator is intercepted by a Beadle, who with a horror-

⁵⁸ Woolf, Virginia. “Essay One.” *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

struck expression advises her to stay on the path and avoid the lawn. That causes the narrator to lose her train of thought. She then thinks of prominent essayists, Charles Lamb, William Thackeray and Max Beerbohm, and while thinking of their works she remembers that some of their manuscripts are placed in the Oxbridge library. However, at the door to the library, she again finds herself interrupted by a gentleman, who informs her that she either needs to obtain a letter of introduction or is to be accompanied by a Fellow of the College in order to gain access to the library and the scripts.

There are so many interruptions in the first essay, that one has to wonder if they have any hidden meaning behind them. It is as if Woolf intentionally writes scenes of herself, a woman walking through the grounds of an educational institution, being constantly interrupted by men. Metaphorically, these interferences could be understood as the traditional power of the patriarchy working against women who are interested in education and the academic world. It seems to me that it serves as a great introduction to the whole of the essays, which deal with the problematics of “Women and Fiction” in history, where female authors struggled to fit in the society and be acknowledged for their talent and be given a place in the intellectual world.

Moving on, Woolf follows with wondering about the history of the men’s colleges and describes the importance of money in education; because of course historically, money was always poured into the educational institutions for men. Another interruption is by the clock striking, which makes her think of luncheons.

Next, the author reads a few verses of the poetry of Tennyson and ponders about the influence World War I had on people’s lives. This change is mirrored in poetry and explained the difficulty of poetry after wartime; the writer uses a depiction of a tailless cat to perhaps illustrate the feeling of something missing in the post-war years.

The latter part of Essay One deals with the poverty of the female sex. Woolf acknowledges that women themselves were also unfortunately passive in their efforts to support and educate their daughters:

“What had our mothers been doing then that they had no wealth to leave us? Powdering their noses? Looking in at shop windows?”⁵⁹

The author also realizes that women for many generations were unable to even grasp the importance of having their own money and the significance of education. The impact poverty and tradition has on the person’s mind is enormous. Here, in my opinion, the author expresses the state many generations of females lived in– the blissful ignorance. By that I mean, that people tend to be afraid of innovation and choose to be blind to the positive outcomes of potential changes. So, Woolf realizes that the blame for women not being properly educated is collective and the whole society was responsible.

Another problem when it comes to women and education, was the societal reinforcement of gender roles. Naturally, bearing and bringing up children and receiving extensive education are things uneasily combined. And since of course, the stereotype of women being first and foremost mothers was a dogmatic rule and a complete norm in the society, there was simply no time nor space nor money left for an academic life for a female.

With regard to the quest for identity, which is the focal point of this thesis, even though the first essay of *A Room of One’s Own* is mainly introductory from my personal point of view, the text is still relevant to the question of identity.

Firstly, Woolf establishes the paramount role of having a room to yourself when writing. Also, in a very dexterous manner she supports the claim, that having your own creative space is absolutely crucial, by having her own train of thought in the first essay be sporadically interrupted. These interferences demonstrate the hindering or at times even vexing effect on her stream of consciousness. Why is this important? In my opinion, the author in essence provides potential future writers with a sort of tutorial. She stresses that throughout history, it has been challenging or at times even impossible for women to find a place for themselves to create and express themselves. Thus, Woolf points out all the quintessential aspects of being a fulfilled and even acknowledged author. Secondly, the foundation on which a potential writing career may lay, is naturally education. In the first essay, Woolf emphasizes the substantial impact of

⁵⁹ Woolf, Virginia. “Essay One.” *A Room of One’s Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

education, which has been lacking in women's lives still in her lifetime. Overall, in my opinion, Essay One is mainly relevant to the quest for identity as a female author. In brief, Woolf essentially describes the steps which one has to take towards achieving the identity as an author – and those are education and having a room of one's own.

3.2.2. Essay Two

The focal point of the second essay of *A Room of One's Own* is the relationship between money and fiction, the portrayal of women in the works of men as well as Woolf's own life experience with financial stability and living as an author.

Essay Two is set in London. In order to discover more on the topic of women and fiction, Virginia Woolf decides to visit the British Museum. She explains that the luncheon in Oxbridge on the preceding day made thousands of questions arise in her head, because she noticed obvious differences in behaviour between the sexes. Mainly, the writer kept asking herself, what effect does poverty have on fiction?

Next, she describes the way to the British Museum. Interestingly, London is compared to a machine:

*“London was like a workshop. London was like a machine. We were all being shot backwards and forwards on this plain foundation to make some pattern. British Museum was another department of the factory.”*⁶⁰

This comparison aligns perfectly with the awe that many people at the time experienced and writers portrayed in their works. With the rise of industrialization and rapid development in technologies, London truly became a machine in a certain sense.

Inside the British Museum the author is amazed by the mass of books and paper and is determined and desperate to find grains of truth about women in literature. She then in a witty manner elaborates on the notion that men very often write about women, whereas women hardly ever write about men. After choosing a few random titles for research she asks the reader:

⁶⁰ Woolf, Virginia. “Essay Two.” *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

“Have you any notion of how many books are written about women in the course of one year? Have you any notion how many are written by men? Are you aware that you are, perhaps, the most discussed animal in the universe?”⁶¹

A pile of books sliding on to the desk in front of her, where a student enthusiastically copied from a scientific manual, unfortunately interrupted her train of thought. This interruption made her think of how the student and his male colleagues in all academic fields are trained in research and she compares the neat and assiduous manner of the writing student to her own notes, which indicate her current messy state of mind.

This interference can be interpreted as a clash between the traditionally male dominated academic world and the new progressing modern world, which included female artists and intellectuals as well. It may be assumed that during Modernism, when women slowly became included into the academic sphere, they might have felt like outsiders at first. Women were for the first time in history allowed to establish their identity as academics too. Virginia Woolf herself often portrays this outsider feeling in her works as well, which might have been influenced by her own experience in life, since her brothers were enabled to study at universities, whereas she was educated at home.

Later in Essay Two the author analyses various quotes by men about women (quotes by Pope, Johnson and Butler) and she feels disappointed to have not found anything worthwhile after a whole morning's work. Woolf concludes that it was a waste of time to seek answers in books written by gentlemen. However, in her desperation she begins to draw a picture of a figure, which she calls Professor X. She imagines Professor X as an author of a monumental work “The Mental, Moral, and Physical Inferiority of the Female Sex”. She depicts him with an angry expression and inspects the causes of his anger. Because of that, she mentions Sigmund Freud and his psychoanalytic theory and states that truth emerges to the top from the subconscious mind in our dreams and idleness. Therefore, she decides that the angry expression of the imaginary Professor X she drew actually reflects her own anger. In a way, the furious expression of Woolf's sketch is almost like a Freudian slip, by that I mean, she did not intend to draw him in

61 Woolf, Virginia. “Essay Two.” *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

this way, but the expression emerged from her subconscious mind anyway. Clearly being impacted by Freud's theories, she states that anger is often disguised and complex and rarely simple and open.

After leaving the British Museum, she goes to find luncheon and while reading a paper a previous owner has left on the table, she observes the power and influence the patriarchy has. Therefore, she comes to the conclusion that the reason for the anger (on the fictional Professor's face and real-life men protesting against female emancipation) is a concern of male superiority and not with female inferiority. In fact, according to the author, many of these "angry" men were actually exemplary and loving in their private life. Woolf states, that the illusion of superiority created confidence and thus enabled men to deal with the pressure of ruling. Moreover, women served men as reflections – meaning that through the looking glass vision of women, men were able to believe in their power.

Then the author is interrupted a second time. A waiter comes and so she pays the bill. With the subject of money on her mind she expresses her gratefulness for the legacy her aunt left her. Owing to her aunt she has 5 hundred pounds per year, which again enabled her to have more freedom and therefore, she was able to adopt a new way of thinking and a new attitude to both sexes.

*"No force in the world can take from me my five hundred pounds. Food, house and clothing are mine forever. Therefore, not merely do effort and labor cease, but also hatred and bitterness. I need not hate any man; he cannot hurt me. I need not flatter any man; he has nothing to give me. So imperceptibly I found myself adopting a new attitude towards the other half of the human race. It was absurd to blame any class or any sex, as a whole."*⁶²

Money allowed her to think for herself and form her own opinions. In other words, financial stability freed her from unnecessary negative feelings and enabled her to view

62 Woolf, Virginia. "Essay Two." *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

people with humility and kindness. Most importantly, she expressed her deep respect to others and appreciation of hardships and faults of all humankind.

In my opinion, Essay Two is an example of a quest for identity as a feminist. As Virginia Woolf writes, owing to the legacy from her aunt she acquired a different perspective on patriarchy and both sexes as the whole. Specifically, she states that she was enabled to view both genders equally, she accepts that men and women are both imperfect and have their own struggles. Although feminism is often misinterpreted, Woolf conveys an exemplary feminist message based on foremost equality, humanity and kindness.

3.2.3. Essay Three

In the third essay of *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf chooses to seek the truth about women in history instead of literature. She draws attention to the historical facts instead of the opinions of other writers and the presumptions of her own. In addition, in the third essay she focuses predominantly on the Elizabethan era. The main emphasis of Essay Three is the real situation of women in the Elizabethan era in contrast to the portrayal of women in literature. Above all, Essay Three is recognized for the part dealing with the character and life of Judith Shakespeare, a fictional sister of William Shakespeare.

In the second paragraph of Essay Three the author states that it is a perpetual question of hers, why did women not engage in literature and write (especially sonnets or songs in the case of Elizabethan era) when literally every other man was capable of it? Generally speaking, art is oftentimes intertwined with the fates of artists, and correspondingly fiction is closely connected to the life of writers too. Mainly the conditions, in which they live, directly and strongly impact their works:

“...Fiction is like a spider’s web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners. Often the attachment is scarcely perceptible... But when the web is pulled askew, hooked up at the edge, torn in the middle, one remembers that these webs are not spun in mid-air by incorporeal creatures, but are the work of

*suffering human beings, and are attached to grossly material things,
like health and money and the houses we live in.*"⁶³

Because of this connection between literature and history, Virginia Woolf chooses Professor Trevelyan's *History of England* to continue her research. However, the book offers only scarce information on women's position in society, and what is more, it mentions wife beating, forced marriages and women's apparent lack in personality and character. This notion, according to Woolf, stands in opposition to the portrayal of women in many of the works in the Elizabethan era. Women in literature at the time were often portrayed as of utmost importance – they were idealized and a source of inspiration. So, imaginatively, women like Shakespeare's Cleopatra or Lady Macbeth were powerful and influential, whereas the reality of women of Elizabethan era is for the most part undocumented and absent from history. Woolf in her own words describes the situation and life circumstances for a woman in the Elizabethan times as:

*"She pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact, she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and was a property of her husband."*⁶⁴

Turning to the next section, Woolf imagines, what would have happened had Shakespeare had an equally gifted sister Judith. On one hand, Shakespeare himself went to a grammar school, learned grammar logic and Latin. Later he married early and had a child, so he went to London, where he began working in the theatre and eventually became an actor there. On the other hand, Judith Shakespeare, although born as creative, talented and interested in literature as her brother, she received no education

63 Woolf, Virginia. "Essay Three." *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

64 Woolf, Virginia. "Essay Three." *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

and if she attempted to read her brother's books, she was likely scolded by her parents. Perhaps she wrote as well but in secret. Soon, however, she was betrothed and if she refused or tried to argue, she was presumably beaten by her father. Because of that Judith, at the age of seventeen, ran away to London, where she was laughed at if she expressed her wish to work in the theatre or act. Not only did she possibly experience humiliation, she also might have faced sexual abuse. Eventually, according to Woolf, Judith might have ended up pregnant, and ultimately, the despair of her situation might have led her to ending her own life.

To put it simply, the imaginary character of Judith Shakespeare depicts what might have been happening to talented women in history. Gifted women were mocked, laughed at, feared and often in the course of the time driven to mental health issues or suicide. Female authors of the past were often hidden as anonymous authors and as a result were never acknowledged for their work. In some cases, women with talent attempting to express themselves might have been even accused of witchcraft. For gifted women in the Elizabethan era and other periods in history the conditions, in which they lived, and presumably common sense and the reality of life as women prevented them from using their skills and acting upon their gifts.

In my opinion, the imaginary story of Judith Shakespeare is the most thought-provoking act of and the most striking example of re-visioning in Woolf's essays. In order to comprehend the situation of women in the Elizabethan era, Woolf literally brings the fictional character of Judith to life, and with her help paints the picture of desperation and frustration, which many talented women at the time had to endure. This again fits in perfectly with the writings of Adrienne Rich, who claimed, that these acts of looking back through history were in fact essential for women in order to discover themselves and establish a new identity as writers and perhaps feminists. These gazes back in history, as Woolf does with Judith Shakespeare, could be understood as quests for identity in themselves. Through the character of Shakespeare's sister, Woolf relives the struggle of women in the past, acknowledges their hardships, and in a sense, renews the identity of female writers. And moreover, in her essays, Virginia Woolf inspires her readers to educate themselves about the past, just as Adrienne Rich urges female writers to establish their own identity and voice.

Lastly, in Essay Three of *A Room of One's Own* Virginia Woolf points out the general hardships of writing. By that she means not only that health and money influence writers, but also the interruptions. To be active as a writer, one needs a room of one's own. And, in the author's view, to have a space to be creative was often easier for men than women. The world is indifferent if writers find the right words to use for their works, however, it was unfortunately undoubtedly harder for women to engage in literature. These difficulties, according to Woolf, do not cover just the material things. In other words, and as implied in the work, the world is indifferent to the male authors, but it is hostile to female authors.

3.2.4. Essay Four

Essay Four includes analysis of female authors from the 17th to the 18th century, and the author inspects the way of writing of Anne Finch, Dorothy Osborne, as well as Aphra Behn. Also, Essay Four deals with novel writing and the role of emotions (specifically negative emotions) in the writer's ability to express themselves in their work.

The fourth Essay begins with the author analyzing the state of mind of women throughout centuries, who wanted to or wrote literary works. Woolf states, that finally only in the 17th century could some women (those of the upper class mainly) write. Whilst still in the library, Woolf picks some of the works by these women and examines them. However, even those women, who had the means and time to write, had to face the fear of being viewed as monsters by the society. This additional fear of what might happen if they as females decided to write often translated into feelings of bitterness, frustration in anger in the literary works of these women. Virginia Woolf chooses a poem, *The Introduction* by the Lady of Winchilsea (Anne Finch, the Countess of Winchilsea, a poetess, who lived in the 17th century ⁶⁵). The Lady of Winchilsea clearly depicts the division between women and men, and the struggle of female poets to even write in the first place:

*„Alas! a woman that attempts the pen,
Such an intruder on the rights of men,*

65 “Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea.” *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, 24 Mar. 2017, www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/anne-finch.

*Such a presumptuous creature, is esteemed,
The fault can by no virtue be redeemed.
They tell us we mistake our sex and way;
Good breeding, fashion, dancing, dressing, play
Are the accomplishments we should desire;
To write, or read, or think, or to inquire
Would cloud our beauty, and exhaust our time... “66*

All in all, Virginia Woolf concludes, that these feelings of anger, indignation and even hatred often barred the talent and did not allow female writers to fully concentrate on their work. In other words, women, as for example Lady Winchilsea, were so consumed and tortured by these negative feelings that they were unable to completely express their literary skills. According to the words of Woolf, it is a great shame that these women received no tutoring or education in their craft. Then, Woolf proceeds to compare Lady Winchilsea to another female writer – Margaret Cavendish (Duchess of Newcastle, who was a contemporary of Lady Winchilsea)⁶⁷. And yet again, in the works of the latter poetess, the feelings of rage and frustration are just as prominent as in the poetry of Lady Winchilsea. Both of these women lived in solitude and were even regarded as obscure or even insane, as it was in the case of Margaret of Newcastle. Next, the author mentions Dorothy Osborne (Lady of Temple, who lived in the 17th century⁶⁸), who although she had the ability to write, believed that women are not fit for this task and deemed it ridiculous.

Whilst looking at the works of Dorothy Osborne on the shelves of the British Museum, Woolf stumbles upon a letter of Osborne’s addressed to Aphra Behn. Most importantly and as mentioned above, Behn was a pioneer for professional female writers. Behn worked in equal conditions to men and had made her living by writing as a middle-class

66 Winchilsea, Anne Finch Countess of. “The Introduction by Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea.” *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, 24 Mar. 2017, www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/50564/the-introduction.

67 “Duchess of Newcastle Margaret Cavendish.” *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, 25 Mar. 2017, www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/margaret-cavendish.

68 Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. “Dorothy Osborne, Lady Temple.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 28 Jan. 2014, www.britannica.com/biography/Dorothy-Osborne-Lady-Temple.

female. And that, was a milestone for many if not all of the following women writers, because Behn proved, that women as well as men are capable of making money solely from writing. Aphra Behn opened a gateway for many others to follow and caused a shift in people's view on female writers:

*“Aphra Behn proved that money could be made by writing at the sacrifice, perhaps, of certain agreeable qualities; and so by degrees writing became not merely a sign of folly and a distracted mind, but was of practical importance.”*⁶⁹

As a result, many women began to make money through translations or essay writing in the second half of the seventeenth century and continued to do so in the next hundred years as well. Owing to Aphra Behn and other forerunners like herself, Jane Austen, George Eliot and the Bronte sisters were able to write their works in the following centuries.

With regard to the pioneers of the 18th century, Woolf finds it interesting, that these authors mainly focused on novel writing. Why predominantly novels? In the opinion of Woolf, novels do not require as much concentration and since women of the eighteenth century rarely had their own studies to write without interruptions, their novels were written in the common sitting rooms, where there were interferences galore. Woolf also mentions, that the way of living at that time also contributed to women writing novels – women were observers in the society, in other words people's emotions and relations were the main aspect to be inspected in the life of a woman in that time. So naturally, novel writing came easy to women of that time.

Lastly, in Essay Four the author states, that although the second half of the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century were times of flourishing for many female writers, the situation was far from ideal still. The interferences still endured and women wrote only certain genres and avoided experimenting for the most part. Finally, Virginia Woolf makes predictions and recommendations to the future writers – she advises

⁶⁹ Woolf, Virginia. “Essay Four.” *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

shorter works for women and also encourages everyone to work hard to find their literary voice.

In conclusion, the main thought of Essay Four is that although some women in the 17th and also 18th century had the means to produce literary works, their judgement and clarity of mind were often clouded by negative emotions caused by their living situation. This again ties into the idea of the quest for identity as an author, as Virginia Woolf states, these female authors were often unable to express their talent completely, because it was hindered by their outrage and resentment. In other words, to establish one's identity as an author, one has to let go of negative feelings to write unobstructed.

3.2.5. Essay Five

In contrast to the preceding essay, the fifth essay of *A Room of One's Own* deals with the books of women, who were contemporaries of Virginia Woolf, namely with a fictional book *Life's Adventure*, by a fictional author, Mary Carmichael. Essay Five additionally focuses on the topic of female characters in literature in the Modern period and creative differences between male and female authors.

In the 20th century women began writing on subjects no women before could have touched. Also, the genres that female authors write vary much more than in the preceding centuries.

The character of Mary Carmichael (alternatively also Mary Seton or Beton), who has already been introduced in Essay One of *A Room of One's Own*, serves a purpose of analyzing how women engaged with literature in different centuries throughout history. It can be assumed that Mary Carmichael has not only an explorative but also distancing function – in other words, the creation of Mary gives Woolf space to as accurately as possible depict the historical context, and also provides a certain disassociation between the author and the fictional character, which I feel provides Mary Carmichael with a sense of realness and credibility. Just as in the case of Judith Shakespeare, Virginia Woolf examines the circumstances in which women wrote and lived through the character of Mary Carmichael. However, unlike Judith, Mary occurs in the essays several times in depictions of different historical periods. So, Mary Carmichael is possibly a parallel to the character of Orlando (*Orlando*, 1928), both of them in essence

travel through centuries and are tools of drawing the reader's attention to specific aspects of living life as a woman in various historical periods.

What is also interesting is Woolf's approach to literary works, which in a way connects to the characters of Mary Carmichael and Orlando as well. Her understanding of literature is as if literary works were endless continuations of one another:

*"For books continue each other, in spite of our habit of judging them separately."*⁷⁰

This is presumably the reason, why the author uses Orlando and Mary in her works – what in reality many different people would have faced throughout time, Woolf applies to a single fictional persona, and thus efficiently portrays the variety and progression of literature. To put it simply, through these characters Virginia Woolf neatly depicts the continuation of literary works.

First, the author analyzes sentences in *Life's Adventure* by Mary Carmichael. According to Woolf, the sentences in the works of this exemplary fictional author are not smooth, and it almost feels like the flow of the text is being interrupted. Moreover, Woolf makes a revolutionary discovery in Carmichael's work – the relationships between women are changed in the modernist literature. The fact that "*Chloe liked Olivia*"⁷¹ is important mainly because female characters were usually portrayed exclusively through their relationships (predominantly romantic) with the male characters:

*"It was strange to think, that all the great women of fiction were, until Jane Austen's day, not only seen by the other sex, but seen only in relation to the other sex."*⁷²

⁷⁰ Woolf, Virginia. "Essay Five." *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

⁷¹ Woolf, Virginia. "Essay Five." *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

⁷² Woolf, Virginia. "Essay Five." *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

The portrayal of two female friends was quite rare until the Modern era and it added depth, variety and complexity to female characters. Woolf illustrates the immense significance of this change in depiction of women in literature:

“Suppose, for instance, that men were only represented in literature as the lovers of women, and were never the friends of men, soldiers, thinkers, dreamers; how few parts in the plays of Shakespeare could be allotted to them; how literature would suffer!”⁷³

Next, Virginia Woolf deals with the problematics of praise of her own sex. She acknowledges that so far (especially in her time) achievements in politics, science, trade and army were mainly accomplished by men; so naturally, there is still a lot of time and work necessary for women to be active in the same way, in the same fields and to the same degree as men.

Later in the text, Woolf comments on the subject of creative power and how it varies in men and women. Importantly, she states that the dissimilarities make us thrive, inspire us and perhaps even stimulate further creativity. In other words, I believe she means, that other approaches to life and other ideas to our own offer us a new perspective on life. In addition, Woolf also claims, that education should in fact encourage differences between individuals, and thus contribute to diversity.

In the latter part of Essay Five, Virginia Woolf summarizes Mary Carmichael’s abilities as an author in the twentieth century and predicts her future. She urges Mary Carmichael to write truthfully and authentically, to pay no heed to the authorities and interruptions and to stay loyal to herself. Next, Woolf urges the necessity of recording of women’s lives, even if only domesticity is in question. Because for centuries, ordinary lives of women remained unrecorded.

Woolf also recommends Mary should jump into the unknown, to explore new techniques and themes. She also compares her with Charlotte Bronte and Austen, and claims, that the biggest difference between these authors is the difference in circumstances – for in the case of Mary Carmichael there is no opposing fraction

⁷³ Woolf, Virginia. “Essay Five.” *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

between men and women, which is obviously a great advantage. Basically, Woolf urges Mary to write as a human, not as a woman – in other words she wants her to free herself of constrictions caused by gender:

“She mastered the first great lesson; she wrote as a woman, but as a woman who has forgotten that she is a woman, so that her pages were full of that curious sexual quality which comes only when sex is unconscious of itself.”⁷⁴

To conclude and in reference to the quest for identity, Essay Five stresses the effect of sex-consciousness on the mind of the writer. In order to write truthfully and to express yourself to full extent and the whole capacity of one’s literary skills, one must cease to be aware of their gender. Also, as mentioned above, Woolf again with aid of the character of Mary Carmichael further develops the concept of finding one’s identity in the 20th century. By this I mean that, through Mary Carmichael the reader is able to experience the way of living as a female author and as a contemporary of Virginia Woolf. In short, Essay Five elaborates on how female authors changed in the 20th century and provides the reader with more in-depth information on the identity as female authors in the Modern era.

3.2.6. Essay Six

The predominant concerns of the sixth essay are the human mind, the unity of the mind, androgyny and sex-consciousness of a writer’s mind; the author works with these terms in correspondence to contemporary works –Woolf uses fictional generalized examples (Mr. A and Mr. B in the same way as she writes about Mary Carmichael or Seton or Beton). Moreover, she further comments on the topic of wealth and fiction.

The last essay of *A Room of One’s Own* begins with a description of a morning in London on 26th of October 1928. Again, in a very modernist manner and similarly to Essay Two of *A Room of One’s Own*, London is compared to an igniting engine or a personified awakening factory.

⁷⁴ Woolf, Virginia. “Essay Five.” *A Room of One’s Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

The narrator observes a scene out of her window of a man and a woman getting into a taxi. Interestingly, this scene causes her to think of a metaphoric understanding of the cooperating sexes, and this cooperation of the observed couple makes her think of how the mind of a human operates. A person's mind works in complex ways, and in the words of Virginia Woolf, a mind constantly changes its focus and shifts its perspectives. Also, a mind may function quite differently depending on a situation – it can think of itself as a sole individual or a part of a crowd or a simple observer, just like the narrator does in the situation of observing the couple getting into a taxi. But most notably, a mind of a person is capable of thinking through and in association with his or her mothers and fathers.

What I suppose Woolf means by this is that people learn through imitation, and that may be true in the case of how we think – humans copy the behavior, and thus maybe to an extent also thought patterns of their mothers and fathers. This state of the mind in which we copy or reference our parents or ancestors, is the most relevant way of thinking to the topic of “Women and Fiction”. So, for instance, women who write very often think back through their mothers. This way of thinking relates again to the “gaze back in history”⁷⁵ (as mentioned previously in 3.2 Re-visioning) and the quest for identity in general. Through thinking back through our ancestors, we sympathize, identify and are able to re-establish our own identity based on these references back in history, just like Virginia Woolf does with Judith Shakespeare, Mary Seton and others.

Also, the author mentions the term “unity of a mind”. In short, Woolf believes each mind consists of two parts – male and female. The distinguishing feature between a mind belonging to a man or a woman, is the predomination of one of the sides inside the mind (e.g. in the man's mind, the male side predominates the female, and vice versa). Moreover, the interferences between these two parts in the mind, may cause disruptions in the unity of the mind. Virginia Woolf supports the theory of androgyny inside the mind; meaning that the two opposing fractions of the mind should ideally work together. To put it simply, in order for a mind to operate fully, effectively and satisfyingly, the two divisions need to cooperate and complete one another, rather than conflict and interfere with one another.

75 “‘When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision’, by Adrienne Rich.” *C'est La Vie!*, 28 Jan. 2011, emeire.wordpress.com/2011/01/28/when-we-dead-awaken-writing-as-re-vision-by-adrienne-rich/.

The unity of the male and female sides inside the mind bring the author to the topic of the unity of two sexes of the body. She asks herself, whether the unity of the sexes of the body is also necessary to achieve complete fulfillment and happiness? To answer this question, the author simply mentions, that the two sexes need to coexist (not necessarily complete one another) in harmony, almost like in the case of the Chinese philosophy concept of Yin and Yang (as mentioned previously in 2.1.2 Gender stereotypes), and she moves on to the topic of androgyny. And before she proceeds to illustrate the androgyny of the writers' minds in literature, she references Coleridge:

*“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, I thought.”*⁷⁶

As mentioned above, Woolf defines a term of androgyny as a mind that is undivided or rather a mind that sees less distinction between the feminine and masculine poles.

First, according to Woolf, her contemporaries (especially male writers) are extremely aware and sensitive to the differences between male and female parts, which is caused by the societal changes (e.g. the Suffrage movement). To further explore this point, she chooses a new novel by Mr. A, a fictional general example created by Woolf and in her opinion the author predominantly uses his “male side” of the brain. This creates a friction, especially between the male author and his female readers, because it is harder for them to identify with his writings. Mr. A blocks an important part of his mind, and thus impeded the creative energy and basically worsened his literary skills. In short, Woolf implies, that in order for a literary work to be of greater value, the mind of the author needs to work in harmony with both of its sides, which is exactly what Mr. A did not do.

Second, the author analyses the works of a critic, Mr. B, (yet another fictional persona, used to illustrate Woolf's arguments and to make a general statement). Mr. B suffers

⁷⁶ Woolf, Virginia. “Essay Six.” *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

from the same problem Mr. A does, which is not fully using his whole mind capacity to be creative:

“... taking Mr. B the critic in my hand and reading, very carefully and very dutifully, his remarks upon the art of poetry. Very able they were, acute and full of learning; but the trouble was that his feeling no longer communicated; his mind seemed separated into different chambers; not a sound carried from one to the other. Thus, when one takes a sentence of Mr. B into the mind it falls plump to the ground – dead; but when one takes a sentence of Coleridge into the mind, it explodes and gives birth to all kinds of other ideas, and that is the only sort of writing of which one can say that it has the secret of perpetual life.”⁷⁷

Woolf then also argues that authors and other men of influence, who write and think in such manner, may be completely foreign to a female reader – since they only deal with a subject matter closer to a man’s point of view. In short, works of people in general, who lack the ability to use their creativity of the both poles in the mind fully, are lacking and insufficient. In other words, sex-consciousness is fatal for anyone who writes, regardless of the author’s gender. She urges all creative minds to turn back and to be inspired by the likes of Shakespeare and other geniuses:

“All who have brought about a state of sex-consciousness are to blame, ... 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. In our time Proust was wholly androgynous; if not perhaps too much of a woman.”⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Woolf, Virginia. “Essay Six.” *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

⁷⁸ Woolf, Virginia. “Essay Six.” *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

The author again stresses the importance of an androgynous and sex unaware mind:

*“Some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and the man before the art of creation can be accomplished.”*⁷⁹

Next, Virginia Woolf returns to the character of Mary Beton, who has been accompanying the author’s train of thought throughout the main part of the essays, and subsequently a general recapitulation of previous essays is stated. One could say, that Mary Beton has undergone a quest for identity (specifically, identity as a female writer) through the text of *A Room of One’s Own* as well. As a female author, she reached the conclusion, that she needs money and a room to herself, to create, and in order to inform herself on other female authors, she researched in the British Museum and sought for truth everywhere.

What is interesting, is that in the next paragraph, Woolf deals with comparisons of the genders. She finds comparing the abilities between men and women is pointless and unnecessary, and importantly, as much as it may sound as a cliché to the readers of the 21st century, she stresses the significance of writing of what your heart desires and staying true to yourself.

Turning to the next section of Essay Six, the author observes, that she may stress the importance of material things too exceedingly, and that may not apply truthfully to the reality, because many great poets were in fact poor. To further explain her point of view on the relationship between wealth and poetry, she quotes Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (a prominent British novelist and poet ⁸⁰) and his work *On the Art of Writing* (1916). Quiller-Couch states, that out of all the great poets (such as Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Tennyson, Keats, Browning, and others) of Great Britain, the only one, who was “*not fairly well to do*” ⁸¹, was Keats. So, as a matter of fact, according to

⁷⁹ Woolf, Virginia. “Essay Six.” *A Room of One’s Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

⁸⁰ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. “Sir Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 1 Mar. 2017, www.britannica.com/biography/Arthur-Thomas-Quiller-Couch.

⁸¹ Woolf, Virginia. “Essay Six.” *A Room of One’s Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

Quiller-Couch, the idea, that “*the poetical genius bloweth where it listeth, and equally in poor and rich*”⁸² is entirely untrue. In conclusion, poor poets have very little chance of becoming successful and children of poor families have equally little chance of reaching intellectual freedom. To put it more simply, Woolf writes: “*intellectual freedom depends on material things*”⁸³. Naturally, this statement applies to the topic of *Women and Fiction*, because women, who had fewer rights, less finances, and thus less intellectual freedom, have throughout history had far fewer chances of having opportunities to write, and that is exactly why Woolf emphasizes the significance of money and a room of one’s own to such an extent.

In the latter part of Essay Six of *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf asks herself the question, why is it important to read, write and engage with literature. First, she admits that she urges young women to write partly out of selfish reasons. Funnily enough, she claims, that she has grown slightly bored of history books, biographies, poetry and modern fiction. And therefore, she believes, that new authors will refresh the literary world and contribute to diversity in the art of fiction. Secondly, Woolf states that her reasons for emphasis of the importance of literature are not completely selfish. Virginia Woolf believes that books are the tools given to humanity to improve the world and that is why it is almost our duty to read, write and use our minds. In addition, whilst dealing with the topic of the importance of reading, the author also states her belief, that reading allows us to view the world around us clearer; in other words, literature offers us a new and broader perspective on life.

The very last few pages of Essay Six of *A Room of One’s Own* include the conclusion or rather the peroration, as Woolf herself wrote. She addresses her summary of the essays to all of the womankind, and she urges the youth to not take the opportunities for granted, to educate ourselves, think for ourselves and use the privileges, we were given as a result of the hard work of people before us.

Furthermore, she accentuates her final message with a reminder, that at the time, when *A Room of One’s Own* was written, women had at least two colleges in England, that

82 Woolf, Virginia. “Essay Six.” *A Room of One’s Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

83 Woolf, Virginia. “Essay Six.” *A Room of One’s Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

married women could possess their own property since 1880, and that in 1919 women were allowed to vote. She uses these significant dates to illustrate the importance of actually using the privileges, that women acquired, and of course she expects women to do even more in the future.

And lastly, Virginia Woolf again mentions Shakespeare's sister, who lived in the shadow of her brother, her tragic fate and untimely death. What is important is the hope which Woolf transfers to her readers in the last paragraph: although Judith Shakespeare died, she lives within each woman and awaits her rebirth patiently. She survives and she will be reborn, if women live as individuals, are free, have their own space, are brave to write what they think and are independent, then another female poet will be born. In other words, if women continue to actively engage with and participate in arts and literature, the growth of creativity, success and subsequent recognition not only in the art of fiction, will be inevitable.

3.3. Orlando: A Biography (1928)

The second work of Virginia Woolf discussed in this thesis is *Orlando: A Biography*. The novel was published a year before the essay collection *A Room of One's Own* and in essence, as is stated in the preface of the book, it explores the role and perception of gender throughout history, namely from the Elizabethan period to the Early Twentieth century.⁸⁴

Interestingly, the book is also dedicated to Vita Sackville-West, who was a friend and also reportedly a lover of the author and a great source of inspiration for the main character Orlando and the whole novel in itself.

3.3.1. Chapter 1

The first chapter of the novel opens with the scene of a young noble boy, Orlando, pretending to slice the heads of Moors, medieval inhabitants of the Iberian Peninsula and other regions⁸⁵, as his male ancestors used to do. Already on the very first page, the reader is confronted with one of the main themes of the novel, especially the first few chapters – nobility and tradition. Also, in a similar manner to the gaze back in history or

⁸⁴ Woolf, Virginia. "Preface." *Orlando*, Praha: Argo, 1994.

⁸⁵ "Moor." *The Free Dictionary*, Farlex, 10 Mar. 2018, www.thefreedictionary.com/moor.

“re-visioning”⁸⁶, one could say that Orlando pictures his predecessors and their lives, identifies with them and looks up to them, as is depicted in the opening scene of the novel.

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the character of Orlando – his love for literature and reading is stated, as well as his adoration of nature, which surrounds his mansion in the English countryside. Importantly, an oak tree located closely to Orlando’s home, plays an essential part in his life. It seems, that the tree not only serves as the literal manifestation of Orlando’s connection to the natural world, but also *The Oak Tree* is the title of Orlando’s literary work, on which Orlando works and adds to throughout the course of the novel. Another defining feature of Orlando is his beauty, which is repeatedly highlighted throughout the book. Notably, the protagonist’s good looks have often great influence on his surroundings, mainly people he interacts with – Orlando frequently gets treated advantageously (especially by women) and receives perks, because of his looks. For instance, in Chapter 1 Orlando is visited by Queen (Elizabeth I., ruled 1558 – 1603⁸⁷), who likes him and adores his youthful beauty and subsequently names him royal treasurer at the English Court.

To sum up, the first half of Chapter 1 showcases the Elizabethan period and Orlando’s youth and his introduction to life at Court.

The second half of the Chapter 1 displays life in London under the rule of King James I. (ruled 1603 – 1625⁸⁸). Under King James’s rule, Orlando writes sonnets according to the fashion of the time, and courts noble ladies. Next, The Great Frost of 1608 is mentioned, during which the River Thames froze, and Londoners had a Frost Fair⁸⁹ on the ice of the river. During the Great Frost, Orlando meets Sasha, a Russian princess, and they have a romantic relationship, despite Orlando’s engagement to another and the Court’s disapproval. Notably, the scene of Sasha’s first appearance introduces the

86 “‘When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision’, by Adrienne Rich.” *C’est La Vie!*, 28 Jan. 2011, emeire.wordpress.com/2011/01/28/when-we-dead-awaken-writing-as-re-vision-by-adrienne-rich/.

87 “England: Archontology.” *Archontology.org*, 12 Feb. 2018, www.archontology.org/nations/uk/england/.

88 “England: Archontology.” *Archontology.org*, 12 Feb. 2018, www.archontology.org/nations/uk/england/.

89 *Gallery Exhibit (Printing on a Frozen Thames)*, 19 Mar. 2017, she-philosopher.com/gallery/frostfair.html.

reader to another hugely important theme explored in *Orlando* – androgyny. The character of Sasha is described as having the strength of a male and the grace of a female, which is mainly portrayed in the scene where Sasha is skating on the frozen river Thames and Orlando is immediately infatuated with her (in spite of not knowing her gender because of Sasha’s neutral clothing). However, although the pair planned to elope together someplace else, their affair ends with Orlando’s heartbreak and his subsequent return to his countryside mansion, which was caused by Sasha’s unexpected departure to Russia presumably with another man.

Overall, there are several themes explored in the first chapter of *Orlando*. Firstly, tradition and nobility are emphasized. Orlando’s noble birth and ancestry is often mentioned and provides Orlando with a sense of pride and at times, in my opinion, even arrogance and pomposity.

Secondly, what also plays an important role in Chapter 1, is the Court during the Elizabethan era. The Elizabethan court is portrayed as strict and heavily impacted by traditions and social conventions. The author establishes the importance of poetry (especially the popular sonnets), and women of that era are depicted as fragile and flower-like. The notion of women as “delicate flowers” is mainly displayed through the character of Clorinda, who is Orlando’s fiancé before she dies of smallpox. Correspondingly, marriage is an essential part of life in the Elizabethan period, Orlando himself is thrice betrothed before he meets Sasha.

Thirdly, nature is a predominant theme of the novel. As mentioned above, I believe, the oak tree is the manifestation of the main characters deep-rooted connection to the English nature. Likewise, the river Thames and the Great Frost as well as the sea are yet another examples of natural themes in the work.

And lastly, androgyny, sex and sexuality are also themes explored not only in the first chapter, but in the whole book. The reader is faced with this theme repeatedly throughout the text – the scene of Sasha’s skating is a certain example of androgynous descriptions, but also the depictions of Orlando himself showcase this theme. Orlando is a character described as beautiful and slender, which may be based of author’s lover and friend Vita Sackville-West, and these descriptions may also be interpreted as

androgynous. The Russian princess Sasha, who is dressed neutrally when the two first meet, represents the power of attraction not limited by gender.

Also, since the book itself is titled as a biography, throughout the literary work the biographer is frequently mentioned. Seemingly, the biographer in *Orlando* and the narrative voice in *A Room of One's Own* share similar features. Mainly, the ultimate goal of both the biographer and narrator is to convey the absolute truth – in the essay compilation it is the truth about Women and Fiction, and in the novel, it is the truth about Orlando's life. On the whole, truth-seeking and truth-conveying are important parts of both of the works.

When it comes to the quest for identity, Chapter 1 of the novel is possibly mainly relevant to the gender and/or sexual identity. The protagonist comes of age in the first chapter and experiences a sexual relationship and attraction to another person - Sasha. Also, since the first chapter deals with Orlando's growing up and introduction to the court life, one could say that Orlando's coming of age is a quest for identity in itself – he leaves his childhood home to live in London amongst the other noble ladies and gentlemen, which can be metaphorically understood as him literally leaving his childhood behind.

3.3.2. Chapter 2

The second chapter of the novel tells about Orlando's exile from London and the Court back to his countryside home. The protagonist deals with the heartbreak described in the preceding by secluding himself.

What is interesting is the topic of sleep, which is discussed in this chapter. In the novel, one day Orlando simply fails to wake up and remains in a sleep-like state for 7 days continuously. Sleep is depicted as “*small doses of death*”⁹⁰ and it seems that the prolonged sleep-like states, which occur several times in the novel, help the protagonist deal with impactful events in his life, as in this case in dealing with emotional pain after the affair with Sasha. One could say that Woolf uses sleep to stress the importance of taking care of one's mental health. Perhaps, the second chapter demonstrates emotional wounds may be just as severe and damaging as physical ones, and thus it is just as

90 Woolf, Virginia. “Chapter 2.” *Orlando*, Praha: Argo, 1994, p. 39.

important to recover from emotional pain as from physical. So, it can be interpreted that sleep is perhaps a means to heal and regain mental stability. It appears to me that this is very characteristic of the time the novel was written, because at the time modernist authors started paying more attention to the human consciousness and mind as a result of Sigmund Freud and his psychoanalytic theories. Furthermore, the topic of sleep and emotional pain in Orlando is a modernist feature, because countless authors including Woolf, were impacted by the First World War, and therefore realized the severity of trauma, be it physical or mental.

After Orlando wakes up, he still chooses to spend his days mainly in solitude and often wanders around his mansion, especially in the tombs, where his ancestors lay, and where even his servants are afraid to go. At this stage, themes of death, decay and mortality are prominent – Orlando comes to the realization of life's brevity and whilst walking among his ancestors' skeletons he comes to the conclusion, that in death all humans are alike. Importantly, Orlando becomes fascinated with literature again, and under influence of Thomas Browne (a physician and an author of the 17th century⁹¹) and his works, Orlando decides, that in order to achieve immortality, one has to become an author.

Next, Orlando invites Nick Greene, a fictitious influential poet whom Orlando admires, to discuss literature with him. Both men dine together, however, Orlando finds Greene unpleasant for the most part and they disagree on the state of contemporary poetry – despite many literary geniuses (W. Shakespeare, Ch. Marlowe, Ben Jonson, T. Browne, ...) living and writing or just having written at the time, Greene seems to think that poetry is dead, which Orlando finds nonsensical. Nevertheless, despite their differences in beliefs and opinions, Orlando decides to give Greene one of his works, namely his play *Death of Hercules* to review. However, Nick Greene writes a satirical poem *Visit to a Nobleman in the Country* about his visit to Orlando, which naturally upsets the protagonist and causes him to isolate himself again. What is more, as a result of the dispute with the poet, Orlando also decides to burn all his literary works except for *The Oak Tree*.

⁹¹ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Sir Thomas Browne." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 10 Mar. 2018, www.britannica.com/biography/Thomas-Browne.

Moving on, Chapter 2 also provides the reader with an interesting and also very modernist view on time and its influence on and relationship with the human mind. Woolf writes about time on the clock and time in the mind and how it can differ:

*“An hour, once it lodges in the queer element of the human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock length; on the other hand, an hour may be accurately represented on the timepiece of the mind by one second. This extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time of the mind is less known than it should be and deserves fuller investigation.”*⁹²

This disruption between the time of the clock and of the mind had also a fascinating effect on Orlando’s mind. The author writes, that Orlando spends the vast majority of his time thinking in solitude, and the time which he spent in his mind thinking could actually correspond to months and years of his life:

*“It would be no exaggeration to say that he would go out after breakfast a man of thirty and come home to dinner a man of fifty-five at least. Some weeks added a century to his age, others no more than three seconds at most. Altogether, the task of estimating the length of human life (of the animals’ we presume not to speak) is beyond our capacity, for directly we say that it is ages long, we are reminded that it is briefer than the fall of a rose leaf to the ground.”*⁹³

Later on, in the second chapter, Orlando reaches a decision that if he ever writes poetry again, it will be purely and only for his own pleasure. Turning to the last section of Chapter 2, Orlando decides to open himself to the public again, and invites nobility to his mansion. Amongst others, he meets a mysterious Lady Harriet Grieselda, who falls in love with him deeply. However, Orlando sends her away and under King Charles’s I. rule (1625 – 1649⁹⁴), he becomes his Ambassador and sails for Constantinople.

92 Woolf, Virginia. “Chapter 2.” *Orlando*, Collins Classics, 2014, p. 60.

93 Woolf, Virginia. “Chapter 2.” *Orlando*, Collins Classics, 2014, pp. 60–61.

Overall, the themes explored in Chapter 2 of *Orlando: A Biography* are the truth, literature as a means to immortality, time and mind and sleep. First, the truth is again discussed in correspondence to the biographer and his mission to state authentic and accurate information about the main protagonist. Thoughts about mortality and death guide Orlando after his seven-day-long mysterious sleep to the conclusion that literature is the only possible way to attain immortality.

As far as the quest for identity is concerned, the second chapter is in my opinion most correlated to the quest for identity as a poet. Literature has a deep impact on the main character and it is clear, that it is his passion to read as well as write. In the second chapter, Orlando attempts to connect with a literary person he looks up to, Nick Greene. On the whole, Chapter 2 can be understood as Orlando's journey to become a poet or a writer.

3.3.3. Chapter 3

Chapter 3 begins with the biographer's claim that the record of Orlando's life is incomplete at this stage. The vast majority of information about the protagonist and his life in Constantinople comes from diary entries or letters of others and also rumors, legends and anecdotes; and since a lot of information is absent, there is space left to use our imagination to fill in the missing blanks. The role of imagination is very typical of the writing of Virginia Woolf, who is notably a highly imaginative author and highlights the importance of imagination in many of her works.

In Constantinople, Orlando mainly keeps to himself and his work as an Ambassador of Great Britain at the Court of the Sultan. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Lady Harriet still keeps pursuing Orlando, who still keeps ignoring her. Next, Orlando is also granted a Dukedom from the King, and he celebrates his new title by inviting a great number of noble guests to his place. In the book, in my opinion, the celebratory fireworks and the overall grandeur of the gathering are associated with the English nobility demonstrating their superiority, and through that, the author perhaps satirizes the practices of the aristocratic class in England and their pomposity. Importantly, later on that night Orlando is seen with a woman in an alleged loving embrace on his balcony

94 "England: Archontology." *Archontology.org*, 12 Feb. 2018, www.archontology.org/nations/uk/england/.

and the next day he again fails to wake up from his sleep. Whilst Orlando is sleeping, his servants look through his room and find a document signifying marriage between him and a gypsy dancer, Rosina Pepita, who is presumably the woman, who was seen with Orlando the previous night. Just as in the preceding chapter, Orlando again keeps sleeping for a period of seven days, during which there is a rebellion against the Sultan and the English in Constantinople. Many English flee, if not, they are killed; Orlando is thought to be dead, and therefore is left untouched.

Again, the author uses a long sleep after a significant event in Orlando's life; in this case it can be either the protagonist's newly attained Dukedom or his marriage.

Turning to the next section, three Ladies visit Orlando in his sleep – the Lady of Purity, of Chastity and of Modesty. The three lead a dialogue together and perform a sort of ritual and on the seventh day of his sleep-like state, Orlando wakes up a woman.

Here again, the author demonstrates her uncanny ability to write about androgyny– she expresses the attractiveness and absolute beauty of Orlando's body and most notably, states the complete nonchalance and the utter lack of discomfort at suddenly having a body of a different sex:

“The sound of the trumpets died away and Orlando stood stark naked. No human being, since the world began, has ever looked more ravishing. His form combined in one the strength of a man and a woman's grace. ... Orlando looked himself up and down in a long looking glass, without showing any signs of discomposure, and went, presumably, to his bath.”⁹⁵

Next, Woolf writes about the relationship between the gender and sex of Orlando:

“Orlando had become a woman – there is no denying it. 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. His memory – but in future we must, for convention's sake, say “her” for “his”, and “she” for “he” – her memory then, went back

95 Woolf, Virginia. “Chapter 3.” *Orlando*, Collins Classics, 2014, p. 88.

*through all the events of her past life without encountering any
obstacle. ... The change seemed to have been accomplished painlessly
and completely and in such way that Orlando herself showed no
surprise at it.*⁹⁶

In the most efficient and eloquent manner, the author characterizes the way in which sex and gender may intertwine and complement one another, without interferences. Woolf conspicuously establishes the independence of one's gender identity in relation to their sex; in other words, the way a person may identify does not necessarily need to correspond to their physical sex.

The latter part of Chapter 3 of *Orlando: A Biography* deals with the main protagonist's life with a gypsy tribe. At first the Romani tribe accept Orlando, but as the time passes the differences between the tribe and Orlando cause friction and lead to suspicions and arguments. The greatest difference between the two is their relationship to nature – on one hand, the tribe sees the cruelty and harshness of nature; on the other hand, the main character adores nature dearly and, as the Romani in the novel said, she views nature as her God.⁹⁷ Interestingly, Orlando's adoration of the natural world is described as "*the English disease*"⁹⁸, and towards the end of the chapter, Orlando has a vision of the English landscape and becomes increasingly homesick, until eventually, she decides to sail back to England.

On the whole, themes examined in Chapter 3 are nature, sex and gender and androgyny. Firstly, nature again has a deep impact on Orlando and reminds her of her roots and home. Also, nature, according to the book, is closely intertwined with poetry, therefore the main character wishes to start writing again, after spending time in nature. Secondly, androgyny, sex and gender are analyzed in the relation to Orlando transforming into the body of a woman. As stated above, Virginia Woolf demonstrates, how gender identity is not unavoidably correlated to a person's sex of the body.

96 Woolf, Virginia. "Chapter 3." *Orlando*, Collins Classics, 2014, page 89.

97 Woolf, Virginia. "Chapter 3." *Orlando*, Collins Classics, 2014, page 93.

98 Woolf, Virginia. "Chapter 3." *Orlando*, Collins Classics, 2014, page 91.

Regarding the quest for identity, fundamentally, the gender identity of the protagonist is what is analyzed in the third chapter. As mentioned above, the author of the novel inspects the relationship between the sex of the body and the gender of one's mind, and how that may or may not affect one's identity.

3.3.4. Chapter 4

Chapter 4 begins with Orlando's journey back to England. During the travel home, she grows increasingly aware of her sex, which is caused not only by the new clothes she wears, but also by the treatment she receives from others. She is treated delicately, politely and with care (as a lady of noble birth at the time was expected to be treated) by men on the ship and the fact, that the sight of her bare ankle might cause a complete havoc amongst the seamen, is amusing and bewildering to her. Over the course of the journey, Orlando grows to like and at the same time despise her gender and the circumstances around it – on one hand, she enjoys her new-found femininity, but on the other hand, she experiences the uncompromising demand to behave modestly, passively and rather submissively, which does not really align with her personal character and free-spirited attitude.

In fact, the role of clothes in a person's life is a theme hugely explored in the fourth chapter. Throughout history clothing has been a matter of social customs and etiquette, and therefore has been an essential component of life, although in the 21st century the impact they have on a person and their behavior may not be so profound.

In addition, during the voyage back home Orlando becomes conscious of the ways she is supposed to behave as a woman, and throughout the course of the Chapter 4, she progressively realizes the difference between her past life as a man and her present life as a woman:

“Must I then begin to respect the opinion of the other sex; however monstrous I think it? If I wear skirts, if I can't swim, if I have to be rescued by a blue-jacket, by God! I must!”⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Woolf, Virginia. “Chapter 4.” *Orlando*, Collins Classics, 2014, page 101.

Moreover, she comes to the realization, that her past views on women have been quite ignorant and unjust; she sadly remembers how she, as a young man, ordered and expected women to be obedient, nicely dressed and modest, which she now as a woman realizes is rather demanding and oppressive. She then proceeds to list steps, which a woman at the time has to take in the morning to be considered presentable, including hair care, skin care, makeup and the process of dressing. To summarize, Orlando arrives to the conclusion, that one cannot truly and fully enjoy one's life, if one is constantly pressured to behave, look and be a certain way.

Upon the ship's arrival to London, Orlando realizes, that she might have to prove her identity and reclaim her property, since she now is a woman. Also, London has changed greatly in her absence – St. Paul's Cathedral was built, King William III. (ruled 1689 – 1702¹⁰⁰) has died, and London has survived plague and The Great Fire in 1666. And, just as Orlando expected, the problems with proving her identity did arise. She is faced with a lawsuit – because she was thought to be dead she cannot own property, or alternatively, since she is now a woman, she also cannot own property. Moreover, her alleged sons from her marriage with the dancer in Constantinople are claiming her property as well, because Orlando is supposedly dead. The lawsuit is not settled until the next chapter.

As soon as Orlando arrives at her countryside mansion, she is recognized by her dogs, which eliminates any suspicions about her identity on the side of her servants and she is completely accepted. During her stay at home she proceeds to work on *The Oak Tree*, that has traveled with her everywhere and that she keeps constantly with her.

What is more, Orlando again meets with Archduchess Harriet, who still continues to relentlessly romantically pursue Orlando. However, when they finally meet and talk, it is revealed that Archduchess Harriet is in fact Archduke Harry, who in order to win Orlando's affection dressed as a woman, when Orlando left for Constantinople and transformed. Orlando finds the whole situation ridiculous and awkward and for the most part wishes to go back to writing. She continues to ridicule him by cheating in games they play and mock him until he leaves.

100 "England: Archontology." *Archontology.org*, 12 Feb. 2018, www.archontology.org/nations/uk/england/.

At this point, the role of clothes is again analyzed. According to the biographer, since Orlando has spent some time being a woman in society now she appeared to be more “womanly” in her behaviour and life. Woolf again hints that clothes bear significant social symbolism and that “*clothes wear us and not we them*”¹⁰¹. In other words, there were certain differences in Orlando as a man and as a woman, caused by her living in the society, which heavily leans on gender roles and conventions. The character of Orlando clearly depicts the oscillating and varying nature of gender, which as it seems corresponds to what in the context of the 21st century can be described as the gender spectrum or gender fluidity. Woolf yet again demonstrates that she understands gender not as polarized and fractioned in two, but rather as a range of possibilities. In the novel, she writes regarding clothes and differences of genders:

*“The difference between the sexes is, happily, one of great profundity.
Clothes are but a symbol of something hid deep beneath. ... Different
though the sexes are, they intermix.”*¹⁰²

Next, Orlando decides to go back to London and is invited to gatherings by noble ladies of the time. However, she finds them rather boring, until she meets the literary geniuses of the time – Alexander Pope, Joseph Addison, Jonathan Swift and John Dryden. She idolizes these men and begins to spend time in their company, nevertheless, as time goes by, Orlando realizes that she mainly pours tea for these gentlemen and as a result she grows increasingly bored in their presence.

Moving on, the main protagonist meets Nell and the two become good friends. I believe the author uses the character of Nell and their friendship with Orlando to contrast the lack of connection between her and Pope, Dryden, Addison and Swift. Female friendship is an important theme in Woolf’s works, in *A Room of One’s Own* as well as *Orlando: A Biography*. She emphasizes the deep connection two people can form despite being of the same sex; as was mentioned in the essay collection, at the time, female friendship was rarely ever written about.

101 Woolf, Virginia. “Chapter 4.” *Orlando*, Collins Classics, 2014, page 123.

102 Woolf, Virginia. “Chapter 4.” *Orlando*, Collins Classics, 2014, page 124.

Lastly, at the very end of the chapter, Woolf again uses a clock ticking for dramatic and highlighting purposes. The main protagonist is on a nighttime walk through London, when the clock announces midnight and the beginning of the nineteenth century.

On the whole, what is explored in Chapter 4 is Orlando's return to England and her experiencing society as a member of the female sex. The main protagonist explores her femininity, and at the same time is for the first time subdued to social expectations and norms which she is supposed to fulfill and obey. Whilst on the subject of social norms and standards, Chapter 4 also deals with the role of clothing in the lives of people of the 18th century. Lastly, the author also writes about friendship between two women.

With regard to the identity quest, Chapter 4 again focuses on the gender identity the most. Orlando is faced with what it means to be a woman in the society of the 18th century. In other words, in the fourth chapter, the author examines the challenges women had to overcome in history. Woolf hints at the unjust legal issues, for instance, Orlando is confronted with the fact that she now is unable to own any property, since she is a member of the female sex.

3.3.5. Chapter 5

Chapter 5 describes life in the 19th century in England and the first few pages deal with the noticeable, rather unpleasant or even disquieting change in the world, which in the words of the author approached the British Isles like a great cloud. With Queen Victoria (who reigned 1837 – 1901¹⁰³) now on the throne, the lifestyle of people changed and not even the main character managed to avoid the effects of the grim development in the society. According to the book, “*the sexes drew further and further apart*”¹⁰⁴ during this time, life for women and men was as different and divided as ever.

The author then moves onto what life for people and especially for women consisted of during the Victorian era:

“No open conversation was tolerated. Evasions and concealments were sedulously practiced on both sides. ... The life of the average woman

103 “England: Archontology.” *Archontology.org*, 12 Feb. 2018, www.archontology.org/nations/uk/england/.

104 Woolf, Virginia. “Chapter 5.” *Orlando*, Collins Classics, 2014, page 153.

*was a succession of childbirths. She married at nineteen and had fifteen or eighteen children by the time she was thirty; for twins abounded.”*¹⁰⁵

Orlando, who is at this point back in her countryside home, is extremely sensitive to the change in the world. It is especially demanding for the protagonist to adapt to the way of life in the Victorian era, because she has already lived through several hundred years, her personal identity is mostly formed, and the free-willed and outspoken nature of hers feels extremely suppressed by the 19th century and its morals.

She looks back through *The Oak Tree*, her work, on which she has worked since childhood and which by now is almost 300 years old. She comes to the conclusion, that although she has lived in several centuries by now, she has travelled and known life from the extraordinary perspective of a man and now a woman, she remained fundamentally the same – her identity and personality stayed unaltered.

In addition, she also sensed the extraordinary pressure of marriage, which is heavily pushed by the Victorian society. Never before did Orlando feel as alone and in need of a husband as in the 19th century. Moreover, clothing changed in the Victorian era as well, and the Victorian garments are the heaviest and the most movement-impeding, according to Orlando.

In general, the feelings of defeat, tension and melancholy are very prevalent in the first section of Chapter 5. Undoubtedly, the Victorian era is depicted in a rather inhospitable and adverse manner, which is understandable, considering where Virginia Woolf was coming from. Woolf, as a child of the Victorian era and a member of the modernist Bloomsbury group, was quite outspoken about and critical of the Victorian morals and values. This most likely is the reason for the gloomy and critical portrayal of the period in the novel.

Moving on, Orlando's feelings of loneliness brought her back to her connection to nature. She spends her time walking in the forests and even dramatically proclaims to be “*nature's bride*”¹⁰⁶ as a reaction to the Victorian pressure to be married. During one of

105 Woolf, Virginia. “Chapter 5.” *Orlando*, Collins Classics, 2014, page 153.

106 Woolf, Virginia. “Chapter 5.” *Orlando*, Collins Classics, 2014, page 166.

her walks through the forest, she happens to injure herself and stays unmoving on the ground. However, she is found by Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine, they immediately fall in love and become engaged the same night.

The latter part of Chapter 5 is focused on their relationship and later on also on their marriage. Most importantly, Marmaduke and Orlando's love and relationship blurs lines between the traditional distinction between what is socially considered to be masculine or feminine. By this I mean, that Woolf stresses the conventionally feminine side of Marmaduke and correspondingly the traditionally masculine side of Orlando's personality; she abolishes the notion, that there exists a division between the specifically feminine or masculine and rather reinforces the idea of the androgynous mind, which she examines in *A Room of One's Own*. As mentioned before, what Woolf means by androgyny of the mind, is that minds have actually two poles (equivalents of what we understand as gender), however, they interplay and work in harmony. The two characters express their euphoria over their shared androgyny of the mind:

*““You're a woman, Shel!” she cried.
“You're a man, Orlando!” he cried.”¹⁰⁷*

In the same way, the author rephrases the pair's absolute mutual understanding and gives the reader further evidence that this is in fact, a case of the androgyny of the mind, which both of the characters possess:

*“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.”¹⁰⁸*

Also, in contrast to the statement mentioned above, that the sexes in the Victorian period were as divided as ever, Orlando forms a deep and loving connection to a person of the opposite sex and is able to successfully overcome the said division. It may be

107 Woolf, Virginia. “Chapter 5.” *Orlando*, Collins Classics, 2014, page 168.

108 Woolf, Virginia. “Chapter 6.” *Orlando*, Collins Classics, 2014, page 173.

assumed that this is the author's way of stating that love, understanding and partnership are incomparably more prevalent and significant, than social friction, norms and standards. To put it more simply, what I believe is the message of Chapter 5 is that love and human connection are not necessarily inhibited by gender, sex or social division.

Lastly, in Chapter 5, the lawsuit regarding Orlando's property is finally resolved in favor of Orlando.

To sum up, the subject matter of Chapter 5 is mainly the Victorian era and its customs, life for women in Victorianism and marriage. As far as identity and its quest are concerned, I would say, that Chapter 5 further delves into female identity, namely and specifically female identity in the Victorian period. Through the main character's perspective, the reader is enabled to witness the enormous pressure on women to lead a domestic and rather a passive lifestyle. In addition, the author cleverly demonstrates the restrictive nature of the era through clothing that people wore. For instance, the crinoline, which is a type of petticoat worn under skirts to keep them voluminous and shapely¹⁰⁹, is mentioned frequently and it is emphasized how hindering and constricting garments in general were at the time, as reported by Orlando.

3.3.6. Chapter 6

The last chapter of the novel aims attention at Orlando's life and identity as a married woman living in the Edwardian and Modern era and a female author.

Most importantly, in the last chapter, the protagonist finally establishes and embraces her identity as an author to the full extent, she indulges in writing strictly and only for her own pleasure and makes a conscious effort to not be unnecessarily concerned with the approval or disapproval of society and other writers. What is more, unlike during the preceding century, in the 20th century, when it comes to literature, Orlando completely disregards the tone and atmosphere of the current age, and focuses solely on her writing:

109 "Crinoline." *Dictionary.com*, Dictionary.com, 15 Mar. 2018, www.dictionary.com/browse/crinoline.

“...she need neither fight her age, nor submit to it; she was of it, yet remained herself. Now, therefore, she could write, and write she did.”¹¹⁰

In other words, in Chapter 6, Orlando experiences a sort of liberation as an author, she is truthful and authentic to herself and is not limited by any external factors.

In this chapter, Orlando also finishes her literary work – *The Oak Tree*. After the work’s completion, she is filled with a sudden urge to have it read by someone, and for that reason she subsequently decides to travel to London. In London, she stumbles upon Nick Greene, the author and now also an acclaimed literary critic, who previously wrote a satirical poem about Orlando, which caused a dispute between them. Nevertheless, the two greeted each other and lunched together and after a while, Greene read *The Oak Tree*. Greene thought the work to be fantastic and wanted to publish it, but Orlando mistrusted him and the two went their separate ways.

What is striking is that Orlando is no longer concerned with fame and success derived from her literary career, which in my opinion is not only more liberating but also satisfying, owing to the fact, that she now writes purely for her own joy. Furthermore, the protagonist is no longer naively idolizing prominent literary figures (as in my opinion was the case with Greene, Pope, Addison and others), she is now able to simply accept opinions of the literary society and think critically and individually for herself.

Throughout the whole of the last chapter, the change brought by the new century is eminent. For example, after deciding to travel to London, Orlando is faced with a realization that people now commute by trains to the capital. The steam engine and the steam turbine are now in full use and changed the face of not just the British Isles, but the whole of Europe. The change described in Chapter 6 is brought with the onset of the Edwardian era (King Edward VII., reigned 1901 – 1910¹¹¹) and is, for example, apparent in the way the sky transformed, as reported by the protagonist. The sky, in fact, looked as if made out of metal and the clouds, as well as everything else in the world, have shrunk, according to the novel:

¹¹⁰ page 179, Chapter 6. WOOLF, Virginia. *Orlando*. Collins Classics, 2014. ISBN 978-000-7558-087.

¹¹¹ “Edwardian Period and Era 1837–1910.” *Intriguing History*, 21 Mar. 2018, www.intriguing-history.com/periods-history/edwardian-period/.

“The clouds have shrunk to a thin gauze; the sky seemed made out of metal, which in hot weather tarnished verdigris, copper colour or orange as metal does in a fog.”¹¹²

As a matter of fact, Virginia Woolf on several occasions throughout her novel manifests the shift in the world through the sky above it. As in the case of Chapter 6, it may be that the sky, which is seemingly made out of metal, symbolizes the rising technological development prompted by the Modern era.

Moreover, whilst looking out of her window, Orlando marvels at the lights in all of the windows. She thinks of how bewildering it actually is that at a single touch a whole room can be lit due to electricity. In the novel, Orlando characterizes the 20th century and the related transformation in her thinking and sensing the world around:

“There was something definite and distinct about the age, which reminded her of the eighteenth century, except that there was a distraction, a desperation – as she was thinking this, the immensely long tunnel in which she seemed to have been travelling for hundreds of years widened; the light poured in; her thoughts became mysteriously tightened and strung up ...; at the same time her hearing quickened; she could hear every whisper and crackle in the room so that the clock ticking on the mantelpiece beat like a hammer.”¹¹³

In fact, the clock ticking described in the quotation above is so violent and loud to her, that when it strikes, Orlando is shocked and she becomes extremely aware of the present moment, which is 10 o'clock on the eleventh of October 1928.

After the clock ticks and Orlando is thrown into the present moment, she heads off outside to the streets of London. First of all, it is apparent, that there are crowds of people everywhere on the streets; the protagonist compares them to swarms of bees in a beehive. During an elevator ride, Orlando yet again realizes the massive development in

112 Woolf, Virginia. “Chapter 6.” *Orlando*, Collins Classics, 2014, page 200.

113 Woolf, Virginia. “Chapter 6.” *Orlando*, Collins Classics, 2014, page 201.

technology and society. She compares the situation of the current age and life before this vast change:

“In the eighteenth century, we knew how everything was done; but here I rise through the air, I listen to voices in America; I see men flying – but how it’s done I can’t even begin to wonder. So, my belief turns to magic.”¹¹⁴

It is probable that this is still relevant to a reader of the 21st century, since now we still wonder and are left in awe at the daily scientific and technological achievements which one can barely comprehend. In this sense, the only aspect which has in this day and age changed, is that the growth is even more extreme and rapid in comparison to the beginning of the 20th century.

Next, in Chapter 6, the author deals with the topic of associations in the thought process. Whilst Orlando is shopping, she comes across a certain scent, which reminds her of Sasha, the Russian girl, with whom she had fallen in love centuries ago. The scent affects her so powerfully, that she is able to visualize young Sasha right in front of her. In my opinion, Woolf uses the associations and distractions of the world outside to realistically portray the way people think – our minds are constantly interrupted by what we see, hear and touch, which causes the focus of our thinking to shift at all times. However, right after Orlando is reminded of Sasha, she encounters an old lady in grey fur, who she thinks might be Sasha. In contrast to the young Sasha who Orlando remembers, the old lady is described as rather lethargic and passive and has almost nothing in common to the person Orlando met in her youth.

Orlando comes to the realization that her thinking has changed, and the author yet again reinforces the notion of associations and the hasty and constant exchange of thoughts:

““How strange it is? Nothing is any longer one thing. I take a handbag and I think of an old bumboat woman frozen in the ice. Someone lights a pink candle and I see a girl in Russian trousers. When I step out of doors – as I do now,” here she stepped on to the pavement of Oxford

114 Woolf, Virginia. “Chapter 6.” *Orlando*, Collins Classics, 2014, page 203.

*street, "what is it that I taste? Little herbs. I hear goat bells. I see mountains. Turkey? India? Persia?"*¹¹⁵

Turning to the following point, Orlando leads an inner monologue about her identity. Mainly, she ponders about existence, the meaning and understanding of "self". According to Orlando, the self of each person often consists of not one but many selves. To explain this, Orlando imagines, what her own selves are – her identity is consisted of the boy pretending to strike the heads of Moors in the opening scene, the young man who fell in love with Sasha, the Ambassador, the Courtier, as well as a young woman living with Gypsies or a girl in love with life and many others. Through this stream of consciousness, the reader is introduced to the idea of multiplicity of self. Thus, Woolf efficiently conveys the message of the complexity of human character. To put it simply, the author envisions the self as a mosaic or a collage, which is slowly built and expanded on during the course of life.

And finally, Orlando travels back home to her countryside mansion. She goes for a walk and lays under the oak tree. Her work named after the tree she loves has become successful and Nick Greene has even publicly compared her talent to that of John Milton. Orlando stays outside until nightfall, her husband Shelmerdine arrives home, the clock strikes midnight and the book ends on Thursday, the eleventh of October 1928.

To sum up, the subject matter of Chapter 6 of *Orlando: A Biography* covers Orlando's identity as an author, the meaning and complexity of the human self, and life and perception of time in the Modern era.

Firstly, life during the Modern era is depicted. Woolf accurately portrays how life at the beginning of the 20th century quickened – the technological development did not only impact people's way of living, but it also influenced the way they thought. Chapter 6 mainly consists of the main character's stream of thoughts, through which the reader can experience a day in London from her perspective. The role of distractions and associations is emphasized, which yet again underlines the realistic approach of the novel to the human thought process. Also, the perception of time is shifted. There is a

115 Woolf, Virginia. "Chapter 6." *Orlando*, Collins Classics, 2014, page 206.

great emphasis on the present moment; Orlando is constantly reminded of how time is passing through clock ticking.

Secondly, identity and “self” is a significant theme of the chapter as well. The book describes the notion of the existence of not one single self, but multiple selves, which constantly interplay. Woolf shows, that human identity is not necessarily defined by a single word, situation or experience; the author perceives identity as a complex mosaic of selves.

And lastly, in Chapter 6, Orlando finally fully embraces her authenticity in writing and she truly lives by her belief that writing should be done mainly for one’s pleasure. Additionally, she ceased to chase fame and recognition from other acclaimed writers and literary society, which only led to her completely concentrating on her own skills and mind. In fact, Orlando’s journey as an author is a parallel to *A Room of One’s Own*. In the novel as well as in the essay collection, the author promotes the idea that writing is a skill, which, along with hard work of course, demands a personal creative space or a room to yourself, and authenticity unhindered by any other factors. All of this contributes to *The Oak Tree* being successful and recognized in the literary world. As far as the quest for identity is concerned, in my opinion, the last chapter mainly relates to the quest for identity as a writer.

4. CONCLUSION

First of all, with regard to the genres of the work in correspondence to the identity quest, the quest for identity in *A Room of One’s Own* and *Orlando* is one of the fundamental themes. However, the approach in *A Room of One’s Own* towards the topic of the quest of identity is more theoretical, historical and rather fact based, which is as can be expected mainly because of its essay form. The novel *Orlando*, on the other hand, is a work of fiction, so naturally it addresses the topic in a slightly different manner. In *Orlando* Woolf addresses the quest for identity from the perspective of a single character, and although the author surely uses a historical context, the focus is mainly on the character of Orlando and his/her thought process. So, to put it simply, *Orlando* deals with the quest for identity from a single person’s point of view, and *A*

Room of One's Own approaches the identity quest as a gaze back in history with a focus on female authors.

Also, as mentioned in the introductory part of this thesis, the selected works of Virginia Woolf can be interpreted differently with regards to the quest for identity. The essay compilation can be viewed as a quest for identity from a feminist or female author perspective, whereas the novel may be interpreted from a viewpoint of the quest for gender identity.

Secondly, as far as *A Room of One's Own* and the identity quest are concerned, there are many aspects to be considered. The essays are centered around the topic of female rights (or rather the lack of those in history) in regard to Women and Fiction. Importantly, the author explains, why throughout history it has been challenging and even unthinkable for women to write or make a living out of being an author. With the aid of other works of other authors, history books and her own imagination, Woolf epitomizes the lack of civic rights, the long-standing intellectual oppression and general poverty which led women to be without any achievements outside domestic life and be completely absent from history.

Thirdly, along with general lack of rights, women's lives were also impacted heavily with traditional views on gender, stereotypes and sexism. Not until Virginia Woolf's lifetime did women gradually start to become included more frequently into the world of intellectuals and academics. She herself states a few important milestones for women – in Essay Six she writes that women who were married were enabled to possess their property since 1880, women were allowed to vote in 1919 and there were also colleges in England that permitted female higher education.¹¹⁶ Yet despite all of the progress being made, Woolf still implies that there is more to be done. She suggests that women actually use the privileges they were given in order for a significant change in the society to occur.

Next, although the right to vote and education are crucial for women's rights and equality in the society, there is more. The work's centerpiece statement is “*a woman*

¹¹⁶ Woolf, Virginia. “Essay Six.” *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction”¹¹⁷, which as mentioned previously also functions as instructive to the future female authors. In other words, the relation between physical comforts to literary activity is in fact very prominent. Moreover, in her work Woolf also shows that even if one has a room to themselves, in order to write truthfully and authentically, one has to be free of any frustration or anger. The handful of female poets and authors of Great Britain (mainly of the upper class, like Lady Winchilsea or Dorothy Osborne), who managed to have their own creative space, were in their works often preoccupied by the pressure of the patriarchy and were still unable to fully demonstrate their literary skills, according to Woolf.

On the whole, undoubtedly, the essays can be labeled as feminist, because they reveal the historical oppression and hardships of the female sex and why it is important for everyone to be equal regardless of gender. So, in this way, in *A Room of One's Own* the author in essence takes the reader on a journey of becoming a feminist or at least understanding the complexity of this issue and grasping the importance of gender equality.

Throughout the whole of the essay compilation, Virginia Woolf explains the challenges of being a female author in a traditionally male dominated world. So, I personally perceive *A Room of One's Own* from the quest for identity as a female author point of view. Also, notably, through look-back's in history – either with the help of fictional examples as in the case of Judith Shakespeare, or through facts and examples of real life authors or poets like Aphra Behn, Lady Winchilsea and others – Woolf paints the picture of identity as a writer. Personally, I find her way of identifying with fictional and non-fictional people fascinating and gripping; and they extend the whole idea of being a female author, because they add so much historical information, complexity, empathy and humanity. So, the essays are quests of identity themselves, not just for the readers but for the author as well, because it seems to me that Virginia Woolf herself was through her work able to gain a whole new perspective on living as a female writer.

Finally, *A Room of One's Own* does not regard only the female authors of the past, but also those of the future as well. The text resonates with the reader strongly, gives hope

117 Woolf, Virginia. “Essay One.” *A Room of One's Own*, 1929, ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/w/woolf/virginia/w91r/index.html.

and is inspirational. The message of the entire work is kind, empathetic and humane, Woolf shares her knowledge in a very unique way and her legacy of equality can be appreciated by anyone, regardless of gender. With regard to the quest for identity the novel may be interpreted from two different perspectives – gender identity and identity as an author.

Undoubtedly, the main concern of the novel *Orlando: A Biography* is gender identity. It is apparent, that Virginia Woolf uses her work to mirror society's artificial approach to gender and also, the author examines the perception of gender in different points of history.

Through Orlando's fantastical life, which extends through several hundred years, Woolf is enabled to analyze social attitudes to and treatment of gender. In a female body, Orlando is acquainted with social life and the etiquette of the 18th century, she lives through the strict and uncompromising morals of the Victorian age and is astonished at the technological advances in the beginning of the 20th century.

What is striking and absolutely admirable about the work and Woolf's writing, is how she handles Orlando's change from a male to a female body. Importantly, the main character is initially not surprised or shocked or really affected by the transformation in any way; it is absolutely clear, that the author differentiates between the sex of the body and gender of the mind and that the two may not align completely. In other words, it is obvious, that Orlando's inner life and state of mind have not been impacted, although her body changed sex.

Woolf's understanding of sex and gender, which is relevant even ninety years later, corresponds to androgyny and the gender spectrum, discussed in the theoretical part of this thesis. As is perceived by the author, one's identity is separable from one's physical sex, as depicted in the novel and the protagonist's life.

Second, the other perspective of the novel is the quest for identity as a writer. Orlando's journey from the author's point of view is especially fascinating because his/her life spans several centuries. Orlando experiences what it is like to be a poet writing sonnets in the Elizabethan period, she becomes acquainted with and spends time among some of the most prominent literary intellectuals of the 18th century (including Pope, Addison, Swift and others) and finally she establishes her own literary voice in the Modern era.

Similarly, *A Room of One's Own* and *Orlando: A Biography* are alike in the way, in which Woolf promotes authenticity as the most necessary feature of a successful and content writer. The protagonist begins her literary endeavor as a poet writing sonnets, which were highly popular in the Elizabethan age, she chases fame and views literature as means to attain immortality, but only after coming to the realization that she should write purely out of her joy and pleasure, while staying true to herself, does Orlando obtain her literary voice.

In conclusion, *A Room of One's Own* and *Orlando: A Biography* complement each other despite being of different genres. The highly imaginative style of Virginia Woolf's writing conveys a realistic, detailed and touching picture of womanhood from various perspectives throughout history.

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