

**Gender Subversion in Virginia Woolf's Works: Comparing
*A Room of One's Own, Orlando, and To the Lighthouse***



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Abstract

This thesis aims to explore if and in what way gender and the subversion of gender roles are expressed in three of Woolf's works: *A Room of One's Own*, *Orlando*, and *To the Lighthouse*. This research is part of the academic field of studying modernist literature from a feminist perspective. The research question that will be answered is: How are Virginia Woolf's ideas regarding gender, as expressed in *A Room of One's Own*, reflected in two of her earlier works, *Orlando* and *To the Lighthouse*? To answer this question, I will carry out a textual analysis of *Orlando* and *To the Lighthouse*, looking at the gender-related themes in these texts and comparing them to the themes as expressed in *A Room of One's Own*. I expect that the ideas that are conveyed in *A Room of One's Own* may indeed also be present in *Orlando* and *To the Lighthouse*. Apart from using the three primary sources mentioned above, I will also use secondary sources to explain the theory of feminist literature, and to explain several themes in Woolf's works. In doing so, this research will not only provide more insight into these texts by Woolf and how they relate to each other, but also into how initial reconstructions of gender subversion were expressed in literature in the interbellum.

Key words: Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, *Orlando*, *To the Lighthouse*, gender-subversion, gender roles, feminism

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Introduction

Nowadays, Virginia Woolf is one of the best known modernist writers, but it has not always been this way (Snaith 1). For the thirty years following her death in 1941, her works were mostly neglected. It was feminism in the 1970s that rediscovered Woolf, reviving her as a major figure and subjecting her works to new analyses (Roe and Sellars xiv). One of these new directions in Woolf research concerns the way gender is conveyed in her works. Woolf herself grew up with the suffragette movement and the debates of this period strongly influenced her writing (Marcus 41). Woolf's feminism does not only include her explicit feminist politics, but it also involves her concern and fascination with gender identities, and with women's lives and their histories and fictions, which is also present in her works (Roe and Sellars 209). The first feminist wave, which occurred between 1880 and the 1920s, focused on legal issues and its main aim was to get women the right to vote. The second feminist wave started in the early 1960s and lasted through the 1980s. Its main focus was on equality and civil rights and it addressed a wide range of issues, for instance reproductive rights, the workplace, and domestic violence. Moreover, feminist literary criticism emerged during this period.

Feminist criticism addresses four issues in literary criticism: it wants to combat patriarchy by addressing the fact that male writers often represent women according to social, cultural, and ideological norms (i.e. women's oppression); it addresses the invisibility of women writers and creates a literary history that includes women; it offers readers new methods to confront the problem of the "feminist reader"; and it creates new writing and reading collectives to make the reader act like a feminist reader (Humm 7-8).

Before Woolf was rediscovered in the 1970s, studies mainly focused on her experimental aesthetics, while overlooking the context of her life (Snaith 3). Nowadays there is a lot of biographical material to be found about her, but the *Letters* and *Diaries* only started to appear in the 1970s because of the renewed interest in Woolf (Snaith 3). In the 1930s and 1940s, Woolf was criticised for being too narrow-minded. According to scholars, her work did not relate to the "real" world and was only relevant to people like her, which was "a class with inherited privileges, private incomes, sheltered lives, protected sensibilities" (Chambers 1). Woolf was also criticised for the plotlessness of her novels, with critics arguing that her characters are hard to grasp (Snaith 4). These years have been called "the dark ages" of Woolf criticism (Black 150). In the 1950s and 1960s, Woolf studies became popular. Narratology in her works became an often studied subject and many books have been written about Woolf's

stream of consciousness technique (Snaith 5). As mentioned before, feminist criticism in the 1970s “created and now sustains” Woolf studies (Snaith 6). Today, Woolf is seen and read as an important cultural theorist whose work anticipated many of the central ideas of, amongst others, feminist theory and lesbian studies (Snaith 7).

This research is part of the academic field of studying modernist literature from a feminist perspective, since the three works by Woolf that it will focus on were written during the modernist period and during the final years of the first feminist wave. A lot of research has already been done regarding Woolf and her works in relation to gender, especially *A Room of One's Own*, which is often seen as a key text for feminism because it specifically deals with women's literary development (Marcus 43). These studies mainly focused on how Woolf's works and feminism are intertwined, for instance Herbert Marder's *Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf* (1968) and *Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant* (1983) edited by Jane Marcus. Other scholarship in Woolf studies has combined attention for gender issues with for example narratology and modernism. This is the case in, for instance, Elizabeth Abel's article “Narrative Structures and Female Development: The Case of *Mrs. Dalloway*” (1983) or in Bonnie Kime Scott's *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology* (1990). More recent publications in Woolf studies such as Gay Wachman's *Lesbian Empire: Radical Crosswriting in the Twenties* (2001), have read Woolf's writing from a queer perspective. Others have taken a postcolonial approach, for instance Patricia Laurence's *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism, and China* (2003), which combines attention for Woolf's modernist aesthetics with postcolonial criticism. Topics in Woolf studies have rarely compared her works to each other, which is what this research will do. It is remarkable that this has not been done before, because Woolf often compares her own works in her diaries, for instance when she is discussing *To The Lighthouse* on Tuesday, 23 November 1926: “My present opinion is that it is easily the best of my books, fuller than J.'s R. [*Jacob's Room*] & less spasmodic, occupied with more interesting things than Mrs D. [*Mrs. Dalloway*] & not complicated with all that desperate accompaniment of madness. It is freer and subtler I think” (117). It seems that so far, many scholars have attempted to decide to what degree Woolf's works are feminist, but only a few have attempted to relate some of her works to each other. This is why this research focuses on comparing three of her major works and on trying to provide links between them. Apart from providing more insight into Woolf's work and more knowledge about feminist theory and criticism, this research also aims to generate more insight into how initial reconstructions of gender subversion were expressed in literature during the interbellum.

The aim of this research is to establish if and in what way Woolf's ideas on gender and gender roles, which were very strongly conveyed in *A Room of One's Own*, are expressed in her other works. Previous research mainly discusses Virginia Woolf as a modernist writer and as a feminist, and the three works that this thesis analyses either as modernist or feminist texts. This research tries to provide a link between the texts themselves, by comparing *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *Orlando: A Biography* (1928), two of her novels, to *A Room of One's Own* (1929), her most famous non-fictional work which was written shortly after the two novels were published, and see whether connections can be made between them in relation to gender. Little research has been done regarding this, apart from an article by Lisa Rado, in which *A Room of One's Own* and *Orlando* are compared: this essay deals with how androgyny, which is an important theme in *A Room of One's Own*, is represented in *Orlando*.

The research question that will be answered is: How are Virginia Woolf's ideas regarding gender, as expressed in *A Room of One's Own*, reflected in two of her earlier works, *Orlando* and *To the Lighthouse*? The following subquestions will be answered: how are gender and the subversion of gender roles expressed in *A Room of One's Own*?; how are gender and the subversion of gender roles expressed in *Orlando*, and how does this compare to *A Room of One's Own*?; and how are gender and the subversion of gender roles expressed in *To the Lighthouse*, and how does this compare to *A Room of One's Own*? I expect that the ideas regarding gender and the subversion of gender roles that are conveyed in *A Room of One's Own* may indeed also be present in *Orlando* and *To the Lighthouse*. This hypothesis is based on the fact that these works were written in three consecutive years (1929, 1928, and 1927 respectively), so it makes sense to believe that these ideas must already have been present in her mind when she was writing the novels. However, I do expect that *Orlando* contains more of these ideas than *To the Lighthouse*, because gender is a major theme in *Orlando* (the main character switches gender), and because a minor character in *Orlando*, Nick Greene, is mentioned in *A Room of One's Own* (*A Room of One's Own* 66). *To the Lighthouse* is often cited as a key example of the stream-of-consciousness technique but it is not seen as a feminist work per se (Snaith 38), so it might be harder to find gender-related themes in this novel.

This research will be placed in a theoretical framework based on feminist literary criticism, since this is a major theme in Woolf's work, and on close reading. Feminist literary criticism is very broad. It emerged in the 1970s and many different aims have been added since, which has as a result that it includes a lot of features today (Snaith 100). This research will focus on evaluating the representation of women, recovery and revision of literature by

and about women, female sexuality, and evaluating the qualities that are generally stated as feminine (Snaith 100, Culler 58). In the first chapter, I will carry out a textual analysis of *A Room of One's Own*, and an overview of the major gender-related themes that are presented in this work will be provided. Central themes in *A Room of One's Own* are the need to create a female tradition and history, androgyny, spaces and houses, money, and creativity. In the second chapter, I will analyse *Orlando*, focusing on the gender-related themes in this text. These themes will be compared to those expressed in *A Room of One's Own*. In chapter 3, I will do the same as in chapter 2, but I will compare the gender-related themes in *To the Lighthouse* to the ones in *A Room of One's Own*. Apart from these primary texts, secondary sources will also be used. These secondary sources will be used to explain the abovementioned features of feminist literary criticism, and to explain several themes in Woolf's works.

Chapter One: Gender and Gender-Subversion in *A Room of One's Own*¹

A Room of One's Own is based upon two lectures on “Women and Fiction” Woolf presented to female students at Newnham and Girton, two colleges in Cambridge in October 1928 (Minogue 5-6). Together with *Three Guineas*, this non-fictional, book-length essay forms the core of Woolf's feminist writings (Roe and Sellars 217). It is said that it is “an example of feminist criticism at its best” and that it was almost a sacred text for all feminists in the 1970s (Snaith 101). It had an enormous influence on academics in various fields: on feminist literary critics, on students from many different disciplines, and on writers (Snaith 101).

The main point of *A Room of One's Own* is that women need to have psychological and financial independence (i.e. a room of their own) to be able to write. When Woolf was writing this essay, only very few women were privileged enough to have this. Woolf imagines a narrator who is in the same position as her: she has to write about women and fiction. The narrator starts her research by going to the fictitious Oxbridge, an all-male university modelled on the existing Oxford and Cambridge Universities, where she has lunch. The same day she also visits an all-female college, named Fernham. She spends the next day in the British Library examining what academics have written about women, but everything she finds is written by men, and these men were biased. The narrator decides to look if history can give her some knowledge about women and fiction, but she finds very little information about the lives of women. Literature about women is not the only thing that is missing, there is also no literature written by women. Because of this, she decides to reconstruct their lives herself.

Creativity

When she is in the British Library, the narrator thinks of the words of a bishop who declared that it was impossible “for any woman, past, present, or to come, to have the genius of Shakespeare” (60). She agrees with him to a certain extent: she thinks it would have been impossible for any woman to have written like Shakespeare in the age of Shakespeare. She imagines the character of Judith Shakespeare, William's “wonderfully gifted sister”, and her life (60). William would be educated, but Judith, had she existed, would have remained at home. Although she was “as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world as he was”, she would not go to school (61). She would not even have the time to read a book. She would

¹ Numbers between brackets refer to pages in: Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Wordsworth Editions, 1929). Print.

have no intellectual and financial freedom or the advantages William had. Her father would have wanted her to marry, but “marriage was hateful to her”, so she decided to flee to London (61). There she would be laughed at because she wanted to become an actress. She would get pregnant, thereby losing her chances for a career as an author. Then, she “killed herself one winter’s night” (62). The narrator continues her story by saying that this story about Judith Shakespeare would never have happened, because “it is unthinkable that any woman in Shakespeare’s day should have Shakespeare’s genius” (62). A genius like him is not born among labouring and uneducated people, and since all women in Shakespeare’s age had domestic responsibilities and did not receive similar education, there is no chance that one of these women would be as gifted as Shakespeare was.

After this, she thinks of a few actual women writers. She believes that all their books are ruined because the writers are filled with bitterness and anger towards men. There was one exception: Jane Austen. The narrator describes *Pride and Prejudice* as written “without hate, without bitterness, without fear, without protest, without preaching” (76); she even says that this is how Shakespeare wrote. Other women writers, like Charlotte Brontë, might have had “more genius in her than Jane Austen”, but “she will never get her genius expressed whole and entire” because “she is at war with her lot” (77). This is one reason why it is hard for women to write literature. Another one is that they have no literary tradition.

The need to create a female literary tradition and history

When the narrator is looking for books written on women in history, she is shocked that there is almost nothing to be found. There is nothing in history books about the middle-class and working-class women, only about “an Elizabeth, or a Mary; a queen or a great lady” (59). She says that someone should put together a history of women with all the facts, so they will create a female history. Woolf suggests that the female students of Newnham and Girton, the colleges she was visiting to present her paper on “Women and Fiction”, might try to do this, because “the life of the average Elizabethan woman must be scattered about somewhere” (60).

Apart from not having a history, women also do not have a distinctive literary tradition because there have not been many Judith Shakespeares. This is problematic, because this is another, and perhaps the biggest, obstacle women have to overcome if they want to write. They have no female tradition they can look back on, no ideas or imaginings, or language shaped by and for women only, which is something men do have. She explains its importance by talking about the male literary tradition: “Shakespeare could [not] have written without

Marlowe, or Marlowe without Chaucer, or Chaucer without those forgotten poets who paved the ways and tamed the natural savagery of the tongue” (74). Their literary tradition started centuries ago. For women, it is useless to look at the male literary tradition, “for we think back through our mothers if we are women” (82). Men’s life experiences have been fundamentally different from women’s, so it is disadvantageous for women to use their literary tradition. An aspect of the different life experiences between men and women concerns their spaces and houses.

Spaces and houses

The main point of the essay is that “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (29). Woolf implies that a woman should have some place of her own, where she is alone with her thoughts and will not be distracted constantly. Because when the writer is distracted, the work suffers. However, for a woman, “to have a room of her own, let alone a quiet room or a soundproof room, was out of the question, unless her parents were exceptionally rich or very noble” (64). Towards the end of the eighteenth century, middle-class women began to write, but almost all of the works were novels. This is because writing prose and fiction requires less concentration than writing poetry or a play. If women wanted to write, they would have to do it in the common sitting-room, where they “never have an half-hour ... that they can call their own - she was always interrupted” (75). This implies that although women started writing in the eighteenth century, their writing was still restricted by their gender and its roles.

A different aspect of this theme is the exclusion from certain spaces. The narrator experiences this more than once, for example when she wants to visit the library at Oxbridge: “[a gentleman] regretted in a low voice as he waved me back that ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction” (32). She is not allowed to go into the library, solely because she is a woman. Right before this incident, she is sent off the grass of the college yard, because “only the Fellows and the Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me” (31). After these two events, she walks by a chapel. She “[has] no wish to enter had I the right”, as if she accepts being an outsider (32). This series of exclusions not only bar her way physically, but these barriers also interrupt her thoughts and her intellectual growth (Roe and Sellars 218). The narrator is thinking of how thoughts and ideas are like fish: they are small and slippery, which makes them hard to grasp. She has a thought herself and walks rapidly across the college lawn because she wants to write it down before she forgets it. She is sent off the grass

by a guard, and afterwards she realises that her “fish” escaped: “what idea it had been that had sent me so audaciously trespassing I could not now remember” (31). Judith Shakespeare would have had the same problem: she would have been excluded from the theatre, because the manager believes that “no woman could possibly be an actress” (61).

In the second chapter of the book, the narrator explains how women unknowingly also exclude themselves. She also explains how men can be angry, although they have everything. She states that women are like mirrors, “reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size” (52). This means that women are always reassuring men of their potential and their greatness, because women were seen as inferior to men. Men’s self-confidence would grow when they would compare themselves to women, who could not do anything. Men thought of women as inferior to them. As a result, they would become angry if women would criticise them, because they felt as if their superiority was being threatened. This results in women being afraid of having their own opinion and criticising their husbands, which results in women being excluded once again. However, the narrator does argue that this is not necessarily a bad thing, because it helped mankind towards civilisation: she even says that without it, “probably the earth would still be swamp and jungle” (52). She also argues that the looking-glass vision is important, because without this “illusion”, men may die (53). Here, she tries to explain that women do play a prominent role in their husbands’ lives, while arguing that even this one bit of womanly importance results in exclusion of women themselves, without them realising this. Apart from being excluded from certain spaces, women are also excluded from having their own money.

Money

After the narrator has had lunch at Oxbridge and dinner at Fernham, she thinks about the different experience and the material differences between men and women. For example, the food at the luncheon party at Oxbridge, an all-male university with mixed company, was very good, but the food she gets at Fernham, an all-women’s college, is plain and “sufficient” (39). She argues that “a good dinner is of great importance to good talk. One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well. The lamp in the spine does not light on beef and prunes [which is what she got at Fernham]” (40). This is her first argument of why it is so hard for women to write. Oxbridge is very wealthy, so the food and the facilities are good. Fernham is rather poor, so there are no luxury food and facilities (40). The narrator is wondering how it is possible that there is such a difference between the wealth of men’s and women’s colleges: “We burst out in scorn at the reprehensible poverty of our sex. What had

our mothers been doing then that they had no wealth to leave us?" (41). Women could not work because they had to take care of the family and the children, so they did not have the time to work and donate money to all-female universities. Apart from this, society did not allow women to make money, and, until 1882, the money they did make would be the property of their husbands (43, United Kingdom Legislation). As a result, men could focus on studying and gaining more intellectual and later financial freedom, while women mainly had to help their college with fundraising efforts, without being able devote all their attention to their studies (41).

The narrator herself has nothing to worry about when it comes to money: she inherited 500 pounds a year from her aunt who died (53). Woolf herself also inherited "sufficient capital to give her an income something approaching the famous 500 pounds a year, enough for her financial independence, a vital condition for the autonomy of the woman writer" (qtd. in Marcus 7). This part of the story is based on her own life, so when the narrator says "Of the two - the vote and the money - the money, I own, seemed infinitely the more important", this might also be Woolf speaking (53). The narrator says that because of this financial independence, she "adopt[ed] a new attitude towards the other half of the human race" (54). She does not need a man to support her financially and men cannot take anything from her, so she is not threatened by the male sex. Because she is not dependent on men, she gets to see things how they really are, without prejudice, and she is able to have her own opinion (55).

The narrator also argues that poverty of women is the reason that they have had no opportunity to write: "intellectual freedom depends upon material things. Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom. And women have always been poor, not for two hundred year merely, but from the beginning of time" (104). To support this argument, she states that nine out of twelve of the great poets of the last hundred years were University men: they were wealthy and educated (103). She also argues that money is not the only thing that is necessary to write great literature; a writer should also have an androgynous mind.

Androgyny

Towards the end of the book, the narrator sees a couple get into a taxicab. She says that "the mind felt as if, after being divided, it had come together again in natural fusion" (96). It seems as if Woolf believes that the differences between men and women are essentially based on bodily differences and that their minds are similar, which would mean that the inequality between the two sexes is constructed. She says that each mind has two sides: a manly side and a womanly side. You should try to find a balance between the two, which results in an

androgynous mind, which is the best mind according to the narrator: “It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilised and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine” (97). This shows that she believes all minds have aspects of both men and women, and that it is not a struggle between the two genders, but harmony between the two sexes in the brain that is necessary to create great literature.

In the previous chapter, however, the narrator argues that “It would be a thousand pities if women wrote like men, or lived like men, or looked like men” (90). From this, it can be concluded that although men and women have similar minds, there also are a lot of differences between them, and that these should be celebrated: for instance, when she says “Ought not education to bring out and fortify the differences rather than the similarities? For we have too much likeness as it is” (90). By proposing the idea of the androgynous mind, Woolf does not argue that men and women are the same, but that they are equally competent and should be treated accordingly. Men and women do things differently, but that does not necessarily mean that one is better than the other.

The theme of androgyny is not only present towards the end of the book. At the beginning of the second chapter, the narrator already hints towards this. As she is examining what academics have written about women, she finds that all the works were written by men and were written “in the red light of emotion and not in the white light of truth” (50). During the 1920s, and the centuries before, men were traditionally seen as rational beings, and women as emotional, irrational beings. Although being emotional was seen as a feminine trait, the writings of these male scholars are filled with emotions. The narrator shows that educated men also have emotions, even when they are writing scientific texts, and that this is not only a women’s characteristic. Apart from this, the narrator, a woman, is portrayed as having the male trait of being rational and objective. She is doing her research objectively and identifies these works as “worthless for her purpose ... [and] worthless scientifically” (50).

In the next chapter, these themes will be discussed regarding *Orlando: a Biography*, and they will be compared to how they are expressed in *A Room of One’s Own*.

Chapter Two: Comparing *Orlando: A Biography* and *A Room of One's Own*²

After Woolf wrote some “serious poetic experimental books”, such as *To the Lighthouse*, she decided “to kick up my heels & be off” (*Diary* 3 131). Within a year *Orlando: A Biography* was published and Woolf described it as “a writer’s holiday” (*Diary* 3 177). It is a mock-biography as well as a satire of historiography (Marcus 117). Woolf’s inspiration for the character of Orlando was Vita Sackville-West, with whom she had an affair (Pawlowski vi).

Orlando lives from the 1580s until 1928. At the end of the novel, Orlando is 36 years old and has changed gender, from being a man to becoming a woman. He, a handsome young nobleman, meets a Russian princess, Sasha, whom he falls in love with. Unfortunately, she goes back home and leaves Orlando heartbroken. He goes to his castle and writes a lot of poetry. After a while, he invites an actual poet, Nicholas Greene, to talk about Orlando’s poetry. Nick writes a satire on Orlando and publishes it, which leaves Orlando shattered again. He decides to burn all of his work, except for one poem: “The Oak Tree”. A girl named Harriet starts stalking Orlando and wants to marry him, so he decides to leave town and go to Constantinople. When Orlando wakes up, he has turned into a woman and is thirty years old. She decides to go home to England, where she learns about the different ways in which men and women are treated and are expected to behave. When she arrives, she receives several lawsuits saying that she could not hold her property anymore. Harriet turns out to be a man named Harry who still wants to marry Orlando. She is still not interested and leaves for London. Orlando is bored by the nobility and the eighteenth-century wits and starts to spend time with London prostitutes, whose stories she finds interesting. Then, the nineteenth century begins. It is a very dark age, and Orlando feels pressured to get married. She cannot find a husband and turns to nature instead. As she is walking through nature, she twists her ankle and falls, and she is rescued by a man whom she calls Shel. They get engaged, and right before Shel has to leave for Cape Town for his job, they get married. Orlando finishes “The Oak Tree” and Nick Greene reads it again. He is impressed and says he will publish it. The novel ends on 11 October 1928, with Shel coming home by aeroplane.

Androgyny

Androgyny is omnipresent in the novel. From the very first chapter, the characters are described as androgynous. Although Orlando is male, the description of him is rather

² Numbers between brackets refer to pages in: Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (London: Wordsworth Editions, 1928). Print.

feminine: he is beautiful, with “eyes like drenched violets”, red cheeks “covered with peach down”, and “shapely legs” (6). Similarly, the gender of the Russian princess Orlando meets is not clear at first sight. He thinks she is a boy because “no woman could skate with such speed and vigour”, and “legs, hands, carriage, were a boy’s” (17). When she comes closer, however, Orlando notices her mouth, her breasts, and her eyes and concludes that “she was a woman” (17). Both characters seem to have manly and womanly features.

Halfway through the novel, Orlando wakes up and has changed into a woman. Woolf seems to argue that this change of gender does not affect the mind or the personality: “Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity” (67). Orlando herself is not even shocked, she “showed no such signs of perturbation” (68). She takes a bath and feeds her dog without questioning what happened, as if her mind had reached a level of perfect androgyny: it does not matter if the body is male or female, her mind is both.

The biographer discusses how Orlando has changed since she turned into a woman, and she blames clothing for it. Although she is the same person inherently, clothes “change our view of the world and the world’s view of us”: because of her women’s clothing, she acts differently because she is expected to, and she is treated differently. An example of Orlando being treated differently as a woman is shown when she is on a boat on her return to England: when the captain saw Orlando’s skirt “he had an awning stretched for her immediately, pressed her to take another slice of beef, and invited her to go ashore with him in the long-boat. These compliments would certainly not have been paid her had her skirts, instead of flowing, been cut tight to her legs in the fashion of breeches” (92). It is also argued that “it is possible that their [men’s and women’s] outlook might have been the same”, had they both worn the same clothes. This means that it is the clothing that restrains them, “it is clothes that wear us and not we them” (92). After this, the biographer discusses the idea of the androgynous mind, much like it is described in *A Room of One’s Own*. “Different though the sexes are, they intermix” (92); she says, implying all humans have elements of both males and females in their body and mind, though others tend to identify us only by our clothes. The biographer argues that this is problematic because “underneath the sex [might be] the very opposite of what it is above” (93). Because of this distinctive division between being a man or a woman, the androgynous traits are lost. Although our minds are a mixture of both male and female mental traits, a person can only be either male or female on the outside not a combination. Woolf suggests here that gender roles are not biological givens, but societal constructs. Orlando acts differently, for instance when the captain compliments her: “Orlando

curtseyed; she complied; she flattered the good man's humours as she would not have done had his neat breeches been a woman's skirts, and his braided coat a woman's satin bodice" (92). The narrator argues that Orlando only does this because she is treated differently, even though she is still the same person on the inside.

The novel also ends with an example of androgyny: the marriage between Orlando and Shel. As described in *A Room of One's Own*, an androgynous mind is achieved when the manly and the womanly side of the brain are united (97). Orlando and Shel's marriage is similar: it is a perfect union and there is harmony between the two sexes. Orlando has found an androgynous partner, like herself. They even think alike and talk the same time: "No sooner had the words left her mouth than an awful suspicion rushed into both their minds simultaneously, 'You're a woman, Shel!' she cried. 'You're a man, Orlando!' he cried" (124). This harmony between the two also causes them to observe the other sex more carefully: "and it was to each such a revelation that a woman could be as tolerant and free-spoken as a man, and a man as strange and subtle as a woman" (127). Because of their harmonious marriage, they look at the other sex in a different way, more openly. As a result, Orlando's marriage to Shel also helps her with her creativity.

Creativity

Nick Greene is present in both *Orlando* and *A Room of One's Own*. In both works, he ruins lives: in the novel he satirises Orlando and hurts his feelings, so the latter decides to burn all his poetry; and in *A Room of One's Own* he impregnates Judith Shakespeare, causing her to commit suicide. He is the barrier between the characters and creative development. There is an enormous difference between how the man, Orlando, and the woman, Judith, deal with their problems, which shows that women had fewer options than men: Judith is pregnant and has no other option than to commit suicide, whereas Orlando is mocked publicly and only burns his poems.

Towards the end of the novel, Orlando feels as if she cannot write anymore. She feels pressured to yield to "the spirit of the age", which is getting married. Before she was married, a spirit, which is the personification of writer's block, kept on criticising her works and stopped her from writing. A woman is unable to write if she does not do what is expected of her. When the spirit visits after she is married, he says "'You have a husband at the Cape, you say? Ah, well, that'll do.' And so the spirit passed on" (131). As soon as she is married, she can write again, "and write she did" (131). She conforms to society, so she is not restricted anymore. It can also be argued that Orlando can write again, because now her mind can

express its androgyny. As discussed above, the marriage between Orlando and Shel is a perfect harmony and is an example of a unity of a man and a woman. Because her spirit is now also in a state of perfect harmony, she can write great literature again. An androgynous mind, however, is not the only thing that is needed to write great literature, one should also have a place to write.

Spaces and houses

As Woolf argued in *A Room of One's Own*, “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (29). She argues that the work suffers if the writer is distracted, so they need a private room to work in. However, in *Orlando*, Nick Greene starts writing in a messy room while his wife “was giving birth to a baby in one room” (45). This is a parallel: both he and his wife are creating something, but their form of creativity is marked by their gender, which emphasises the restrictions on the female sex. This scene also shows that Greene is of lower class: his only private room is small and chaotic and his inkpot is an egg-cup. One could argue that Woolf states that a private room is absolutely necessary to write great literature, since Nick starts writing his satire on Orlando in this cramped and messy room (46). Class does not seem to be an impediment to success. As a comparison, Orlando writes when he is in “his private room alone”, and is shocked when he sees the shadow of a lady, because it “was the most private room of the courts” (54-55). Although Orlando has the most private room of his castle he is distracted easily, so even when a writer has financial and psychological freedom, it is hard to create great literature. Even towards the end of the novel, the idea of needing privacy to be able to write is repeated: Orlando tries to write, but it is impossible. She concludes that “writing poetry with Basket and Bartholomew [her servants] in the room, it was impossible”. She needs complete privacy when she wants to write poetry, but she is constantly distracted by her domestic tasks although she has no children: she needs to provide her servants with tasks.

When Orlando arrives in England again, she notices that men and women are treated differently. A crucial moment is when she returns to her home: she loses all her titles, and she is a party of three lawsuits:

The chief charges against her were (1) that she was dead, and therefore could not hold any property whatsoever; (2) that she was a woman, which amounts to much the same thing; (3) that she was an English Duke who married one Rosina Pepita, a dancer; and had had by her three sons, which

sons now declaring that their father was deceased, claimed that all his property descended to them. (82)

These lawsuits want to take away all her property. Because she is a woman, she has no right to own any of the things she had when she was a man. She might as well have been dead, since a woman has no right to own anything until 1882 (United Kingdom Legislation). Later in the novel, it is suggested that the one place she still owns, is not even hers completely. Orlando invites Mr Pope [Alexander Pope] into her house, and when she drops the sugar into his tea too loudly, Mr. Pope insults her in such a way that “she felt as if the little man had struck her” (105). Although Mr Pope was a guest in Orlando’s own home he insulted her, perhaps making her feel unsafe in her own abode. Woolf probably uses this poet as a character on purpose: he was known to be a misogynist. He is also mentioned in *A Room of One’s Own*, where he is portrayed as a man who does not believe women are equal to men: he is quoted, saying that “most women have no character at all” (*A Room of One’s Own* 48). Later in the novel, he is said to have laughed at Lady Winchelsea, a female poet of high class who wrote about serious topics, and satirised her only because she was a woman (*A Room of One’s Own* 71). The character of Pope is used to show that there were men who did not approve of women writing, which holds back women’s potential. Apart from having a room of one’s own, money also plays an important role in the development of a writer.

Money

In *A Room on One’s Own*, the narrator inherited 500 pounds a year from her aunt, giving her financial freedom and the opportunity to go to college (*A Room of One’s Own* 53). In *Orlando*, Nick Greene argues that writers are not writing for glory anymore, but to pay the bills. He says “had I a pension of three hundred pounds a year ... I would live for Glawr [glory] alone” (43). He discusses that great poetry only emerges when the writer writes for glory, but that “it’s necessary to have a pension to do it” (43). This means that even men’s writing was challenged, because they needed financial freedom to be able to achieve “fine writing”, which was not there.

There is great barrier between Orlando and Nicholas Greene based on their class at the beginning of the novel. Orlando is wealthy, but Nick is a poet of a lower class and has not received the education that Orlando has. Towards the end of the novel, Orlando meets Nick again. Instead of a “slouched hat”, he is now wearing a “silk hat” (40, 136). The reader is informed that “he was a Knight; he was a Litt.D.; he was a Professor. He was the author of a score of volumes. He was, in short, the most influential critic of the Victorian age” (137).

Greene has been climbing the social ladder throughout the centuries, whereas Orlando has become poorer. Although changing gender did not affect her class, it did change her social position. She is still of high class, but it is useless to her because she is a woman: she cannot own her property. The biographer seems to draw a parallel between changing class and changing gender. Orlando “could hardly believe that he was the same man”, because he looks different from the outside (137). It is only when he starts talking that she is sure it is the same man. The same happens to Orlando: her physique changes, but “the change of sex ... did nothing whatever to alter their identity” (67).

The need to create a female literary tradition and history

Although literature itself plays a big role in *Orlando*, this theme is not very applicable to the novel. *Orlando* does, however, seem to give an explanation on why there is no distinct female literary tradition. While describing life in the nineteenth century, the biographer explains that “the sexes drew further and further apart. No open conversation was tolerated” (113). Men and women did everything separate from each other, and the only thing they did do together was being intimate. As a result, “the life of the average woman was a succession of childbirths. She married at nineteen and had fifteen or eighteen children by the time she was thirty; for twins abounded” (113). Because women were busy delivering and raising their children, they had no time to write. In the meantime, the male literary tradition increased greatly: “sentences swelled, adjectives multiplied, lyrics became epics, and little trifles that had been essays a column long were now encyclopaedias in ten or twenty volumes” (113). As described similarly in *A Room of One’s Own*, men had the intellectual freedom and privacy that is needed to write good literature, whereas women did not: they did not even have half an hour to themselves, because they were taking care of the family (*A Room of One’s Own* 75). This sentence also suggests unnecessary exaggeration on the men’s part in their literary creativity, suggesting their abundance of confidence. On the one hand, this emphasises the differences of between the male and female literary traditions, and on the other hand can be interpreted as mockery of men: men exaggerate their accomplishments to feel better about themselves because they have achieved more than women have.

Creativity also plays a big role in *To the Lighthouse*, as we will see in the next chapter, where the same themes will be discussed, and will be compared to how they are expressed in *A Room of One’s Own*.

Chapter Three: Comparing *To the Lighthouse* and *A Room of One's Own*³

To the Lighthouse is seen as one of the biggest achievements in modernist fiction (Pease 1). It is Woolf's most autobiographical novel, with characters loosely based on her parents and the storyline based on her parents' and sister's early deaths (Pease 6). Woolf's own opinion on *To the Lighthouse* was that "it is easily the best of my books" and her husband Leonard Woolf, also an author and publisher, said "it is a 'masterpiece'" (*Diary 3* 117, 123). It was a hugely successful novel, which earned the Woolfs enough money to buy a car, and won her the *Prix Femina Vie Heureuse*, which is the only literary prize awarded by an all-female jury (*Diary 3* 147, 178; Pease 162).

To the Lighthouse is divided into three sections: "The Window", "Time Passes", and "The Lighthouse". The novel focuses on the Ramsay family and their friends and their trip to the Isle of Skye in Scotland. "The Window" is set on one single day, a few years before the First World War in the Ramsay's summer home on the Isle. Mr and Mrs Ramsay have eight children, and they have been joined by some friends: Lily Briscoe, a young painter; Charles Tansley, one of Mr Ramsay's students; William Bankes, an old friend of Mr and Mrs Ramsay; Augustus Carmichael, a poet; and Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle, who are engaged. The Ramsays youngest son, James, wants to go to the Lighthouse that is across the bay from their summer home, but his father is sure that the weather will be terrible. Lily Briscoe tries to make a portrait of Mr and Mrs Ramsay, but she constantly doubts herself, mainly because of Charles Tansley, who believes that women cannot write or paint. Mrs Ramsay hopes that Lily will marry William Bankes. At the end of the day, the family and the guests have dinner together. Paul has proposed to Minta, Lily starts working on her painting, and Mrs Ramsay comforts James, who is still upset that they will not be visiting the Lighthouse.

In "Time Passes", ten years are discussed in less than twenty pages. In these years, Mrs Ramsay died suddenly during the night; Prue, her daughter, got married and died in childbirth; Andrew, her son, died when a shell exploded in France during the First World War; and Augustus Carmichael became a successful poet. The family does not visit their summerhouse at the Isle of Skye for ten years.

In "The Lighthouse", the family and some of the guests return to the summerhouse. Mr Ramsay decides that he and two of his children, James and Cam, will visit the Lighthouse.

³ Numbers between brackets refer to pages in: Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (London: Harper Press, 1927). Print.

In the meantime, Lily stays at the house. She never married, but remained friends with William Bankes. She finishes the painting she started working on ten years before.

Androgyny

The marriage between Mr and Mrs Ramsay is an example of androgyny. Both characters seem to have traditional male and female character traits that together form perfection. In the first few pages of the novel, the reader learns that Mr Ramsay is a restrained, rational man who only tells the truth, whereas Mrs Ramsay is depicted as an emotional, caring mother who tries to comfort everybody. When James asks his parents if they can visit the Lighthouse, his father tells him that the weather will not be good enough to do so. His mother tries to console him by saying that “it may be fine – I expect it will be fine” (2). James’ reaction supports this: he thinks of his mother as “ten thousand times better in every way than he [Mr Ramsay] was” because she is kind, but he also has to admit that “what he [Mr Ramsay] said was true. It was always true. He was incapable of untruth” (2). Mr and Mrs Ramsay are also described as opposites regarding communication. Mr Ramsay “found talking so much easier than she did”, whereas Mrs Ramsay has trouble expressing her emotions: “She never told him that she loved him. But it was not so – it was not so. It was only that she never could say what she felt” (115). The male and female minds are united in this happy marriage, which creates balance and harmony between the two.

Whereas Mrs Ramsay lives by the feminine ideal, Lily Briscoe in a way moves away from her femininity and strives for an androgynous mind, that is achieved when the male part and the female part of the brain “live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating” (*A Room of One’s Own* 97). Lily’s painting symbolises androgyny and is an androgynous work of art. Not only does she unite a man and a woman in this painting, being Mr and Mrs Ramsay, but she also unites symbols of the masculine and the feminine (Maze 97). While painting, Lily tries to solve the problem of “how to connect this mass on the right with that on the left” (49). The mass on the right consists of trees, which are a symbol of male sexuality, and the mass on the left is a house, which is strongly linked to femininity (Maze 97). By solving this problem, she connects the male and female domains of power, which results in androgyny.

As discussed previously, being a female artist at the beginning of the twentieth century was a constant struggle and women artists had to overcome a lot of obstacles, one of them being the norms dictating that women could not be artists (Martinsson 18). This is why moving away from her femininity and having an androgynous mind will help Lily to complete her painting (Topping Bazin 54). At the beginning of “The Lighthouse”, the last section of the

novel, it becomes clear that Lily has moved towards an androgynous mind in the ten years that have passed. She does not feel comfortable anymore in the summerhouse: “the house, the place, the morning, all seemed strangers to her. She had no attachment here, she felt, no relations with it” (135). She feels distanced from this feminine place, which shows that she has succeeded in stepping away from her femininity. The idea of the house being feminine will also be examined in the next paragraph.

Spaces and houses

As stated above, houses are a feminine space. The house has strong female connotations, because this is the place where women spend most of their lives, and where they take care of their families and the household (Martinsson 19). Likewise, the Ramsay’s summerhouse is a feminine place, where Mrs Ramsay hosts a dinner party and comforts her children and husband. Mr Ramsay says that she is the one who “fills the rooms with life”: “she created drawing-room and kitchen, set them all aglow; bade him take his ease there, go in and out, enjoy himself” (34). Mrs Ramsay possesses the house with domestic creativity and makes rooms for men’s creativity: the private rooms where men can write. It seems as if Mrs Ramsay is the soul of the house. In the ten years that no one visits the summerhouse and Mrs Ramsay dies, the house is taken over by nature and it “was gone to rack and ruin”, which symbolises that the house cannot function without her (129).

The summerhouse being a feminine place is also expressed through the style “Time Passes” is written in. This section is not written in a traditional style, but it is a sequence of thoughts and emotions, and is mostly about nature, which is traditionally seen as feminine, and has very little action, which is associated with masculinity. The linearity of history, which is also associated with masculinity, is not important and put in the background, by putting the events between brackets at the end of the chapters:

And now in the heat of summer the wind sent its spies about the house again. Flies wove a web in the sunny rooms; weeds that had grown close to the glass in the night tapped methodically at the window pane. ...

[A shell exploded. Twenty or thirty young men were blown up in France, among them Andrew Ramsay, whose death, mercifully, was instantaneous.]

(124)

The page is filled with descriptions of how nature is slowly taking over the house, but the most important information, Andrew dying and World War I occurring is only mentioned in three lines. This section can be seen as an example of *écriture féminine*, which is “a practice

of writing ‘in the feminine’ which undermines the linguistic, syntactical, and metaphysical conventions of a Western narrative” (Showalter 9). It is not a masculine style of writing, and the section focuses on the objects that have feminine connotations, while putting the masculine linear history in the background.

Although the summerhouse is Mrs Ramsay’s, she does not feel safe there. When she is listening to the sound of waves on its own, it sounds “like a ghostly roll of drums remorselessly beat the measure of life, made one think of the destruction of the island and its engulfment in the sea” (13). She fears it is not her house anymore, but that it will be taken by the sea and by the passing of time. The sound of the waves overwhelms her, and she feels as if something is going to happen. She turns out to be prophetic: World War I occurs, which kills her son, but also marks her own and her daughter’s deaths.

In “The Lighthouse”, it becomes clear how Mrs Ramsay’s death influences the domestic and familial sphere. It seems as though Mrs Ramsay was the link that brought everyone together, and the family is falling apart without her. James and Cam are cold towards their father: “They came, lagging, side by side, a serious, melancholy couple. ... [Lily] could not help feeling annoyed with them; they might have come more cheerfully” (143). For Lily, the summerhouse has become a more creative space, where she can finally finish her painting: the first day she is back at the house, “it seemed as if the solution had come to her: she knew now what she wanted to do” (136). This might be because the summerhouse has become less of a domestic space without Mrs Ramsay. However, the fact that Lily finally “had her vision”, might also be because her mind has become more androgynous, as discussed previously (194).

In the first chapter of this thesis, a rather abstract aspect of the theme “spaces and houses” has been discussed, namely the exclusion of women not only from certain spaces, but also from life. In this section, the idea of women as looking glasses as debated in *A Room of One’s Own* was considered. The characterisation of Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* is an example of a woman as a looking glass. Mr Ramsay constantly needs her to reassure him of his potential, needs her sympathy and her encouragement: “It was sympathy he wanted, to be assured of his genius, first of all, and then to be taken within the circle of life, warmed and soothed, to have his senses restored to him, his barrenness made fertile, and all the rooms in the house made full of life” (33). Mr Ramsay himself is an illustration of the idea that men need this “illusion”, because he feels like a failure without it (*A Room of One’s Own* 53). Again, Lily acts differently from Mrs Ramsay: she is not like a looking glass. Years after Mrs Ramsay’s death, Mr Ramsay has a moment “when an enormous need urged him, without

being conscious what was, to approach any woman, to force them, he did not care how, his need was so great, to give him what he wanted: sympathy” (139). The woman he approaches is Lily, but “she could not do it” and “remained stuck”, even when he releases “such a groan that any other woman in the whole world would have done something, said something – all except [herself]” (139-140). This shows that men get angry when women stop magnifying their greatness and when they do not do what is expected of them. Lily and Mrs Ramsay also disagree concerning creativity.

Creativity

Lily can be seen as the antithesis of Mrs Ramsay: whereas Mrs Ramsay is a caring mother who lives for her family, Lily is an unmarried artist. Their ideas about marriage and art also differ. Mrs Ramsay does not think highly of Lily’s career as an artist and believes it would be best for her to focus on finding a husband, because “an unmarried woman has missed the best of life” (45). She believes marriage is more important than art, and she even suggests that Lily’s art would not be taken seriously because she is unmarried, when she thinks about how “she would never marry; one could not take her painting seriously” (14). Lily, however, prefers art over marriage. She says that many have tried to change her mind about marriage, but that “they’re happy like that; I’m happy like this” (162). It seems as if she believes it would be justified that she is not married if she would be a successful artist and would finish her painting: “it had flashed upon her that she would move the tree to the middle, and need never marry anybody, and she had felt an enormous exultation” (163). The novel suggests that, for women, marriage and art cannot coexist (Anderson 11). A woman has to choose. Most women choose marriage, but Lily prefers art. This idea is also present in *A Room of One’s Own*, where it is discussed that women cannot be artists, because they have domestic tasks. Lily is unmarried, so she has time to develop as an artist and create art.

In *A Room of One’s Own* it is also explained that men are not indifferent towards female writers, but that they are hostile towards them (64-65). Women are discouraged by men to be artists. The same happens to Lily in *To the Lighthouse*: Mr Tansley tells Lily that “women can’t write, women can’t paint” (79). When she is painting, these words are repeated over and over again in her mind: “she heard some voice saying she couldn’t paint, saying she couldn’t create, as if she were caught up in one of those habitual currents which after a certain time experience forms in the mind, so that one repeats words without being aware any longer who originally spoke them” (147). After this thought, “[the paintbrush] was now heavier and went slower”, symbolising that she is unable to paint after hearing this discouragement (147).

Although she knows that Mr Tansley does not believe this himself, but that he only uses this to feel better about himself, she starts doubting herself and is unable to finish her painting (79, 147).

Apart from Lily, there is one other artist present in *To the Lighthouse*: Mr Carmichael. At the beginning of the novel he has little success, but during the First World War he gains “unexpected success” after he published a volume of poems (125). Mr Carmichael wrote many poems in those ten years and became famous, whereas Lily Briscoe only finished one painting during this time. This shows the different experiences of men and women regarding art and creativity: a man can easily go from being an unknown opium addict who writes some poems, to becoming famous in a few years, but a woman has to overcome so many obstacles, that she needs a lot more time to be able to create one great work of art. There is one advantage Lily does have over many other women: she has money.

Money

It is discussed in *A Room of One's Own* that in order to be a successful writer one “must have money and a room of [one's] own” (29), which women often did not have. Assuming that Woolf was talking about all arts and not just writing, painting also requires money and a private room to work in, which means not many women had the opportunity to paint. Lily, however, is privileged: she has a wealthy father and is an only child which gives her the possibility to be an artist. Her money and is provided by her father, so she is supported by a man, even if she cannot provide for herself. Although she does have money, she is still struggling to finish her painting. She does not have her own private room, so she paints outside, and she feels restrained by the men in her surroundings, for instance when Mr Ramsay is standing next to her: “But with Mr Ramsay bearing down on her, she could do nothing. Every time he approached ... ruin approached, chaos approached. She could not paint” (137). This illustrates that even if a woman has money, it is still incredibly difficult for her to create great art. Although Mr. Carmichael did not receive any help from his parents, he is the one who became successful and created many more works of art than Lily. As discussed before, this symbolises how easy it is for a man to be an artist and become successful in comparison to how hard it is for a woman. One of the reasons why it is so hard for women to write or paint, is that they do not have a female tradition.

The need to create a female literary tradition and history

It is described in *A Room of One's Own* that women have no tradition to follow or fall back on (82). This problem affects Lily greatly. She is insecure about her work and is never satisfied. When she looks at her painting for the first time “she could have wept. It was bad, it was bad, it was infinitely bad!” (44). The lack of tradition is emphasised when Lily is talking to Mr Bankes, who tells her about all the art he has seen; Rembrandts, Giotto's, and the Sistine Chapel by Michael Angelo (66). These works are all made by men, he does not mention one work that was created by a woman. This demonstrates that there is indeed no female tradition. Perhaps this lack of tradition made Lily even more insecure, because she had no idea what she was supposed to do; there was not even one example she could follow or could try to improve.

Perhaps Mrs Ramsay can be seen as a precursor for Lily, but not as an artist in the traditional sense. Lily remembers a day at the beach, when there was nothing to do, but Mrs Ramsay made it into a beautiful memory: “she brought together this and that and then this, and so made out of that miserable silliness and spite ... something ... which survived, after all these years, complete ... and it stayed in the mind almost like a work of art” (148-149). This memory makes her realise that art is about “making of the moment something permanent” (149). Immediately after Lily found this form of history or tradition made by Mrs Ramsay, she starts painting.

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to explore in what way gender and the subversion of gender roles are expressed in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), and if and how these ideas are also conveyed in her earlier novels *Orlando* (1928) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927). This was done by analysing the texts and creating an overview divided by themes.

In all three works, androgyny is the key to great art. An androgynous mind is achieved when the male and the female part of the brain are in harmony. It is argued in *A Room of One's Own* that an androgynous mind is necessary to create great literature, and the two novels are examples of this. It is only when Orlando is married and her spirit is in balance that she can express her androgyny in her works and is able to write again, and Lily Briscoe has to step away from her femininity and strive for an androgynous mind before she can finish her painting.

A man and a woman coming together can also be a form of androgyny. In *A Room of One's Own*, this happens when the narrator sees a man and a woman get into a taxicab together, and in the novels androgyny is achieved by marriage. Orlando and Shel are both androgynous, so their marriage is balanced, but also the marriage of Mr and Mrs Ramsay is in harmony, because they are exact opposites of each other.

Woolf discusses two different forms of androgyny in her works: an androgynous mind, which involves an individual, and an androgynous marriage, which includes a man and a woman. The first variety is the traditional idea of androgyny, and is the one Woolf describes in *A Room of One's Own* and in *Orlando*. The marriage between Mr and Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* can thus be seen as a more subversive representation of androgyny, where the marriage symbolises the mind of the family. If the parents, who are the "mind" of the family, are in harmony, a happy family and well raised children will be the outcome, similar to an androgynous mind resulting in great art.

Creativity was also an important theme in Woolf's works. In *A Room of One's Own*, the imaginary life of Judith Shakespeare is discussed to demonstrate why there were no women who wrote like Shakespeare in the Elizabethan age. These women did not receive any education and had domestic responsibilities, so there was no chance for them to become writers. This idea is also demonstrated in *To the Lighthouse*, where it is suggested that a woman should choose between marriage and art, because the two cannot co-exist. It seems that Woolf was hesitant about this idea, since the opposite is depicted in *Orlando*: Orlando is

even unable to write because she is unmarried, and her ideas start to flow as soon as she finds a husband.

Nick Greene is a minor character in both *A Room of One's Own* and *Orlando*. In these works, he is a barrier between the protagonists and creative development. Mr Pope in *Orlando* and in *A Room of One's Own*, and Mr Tansley in *To the Lighthouse* have a similar role: Mr Pope does not approve of female artists and does not believe men and woman are equal, and Mr Tansley tells Lily that it is not possible for women to create good art. In *A Room of One's Own*, it is discussed that men discourage female artists, which impedes women's creativity. In the three works, this discouragement is personified by the characters of Mr Greene, Mr Pope, and Mr Tansley.

Spaces and houses played an important role as well. The main argument of *A Room of One's Own* is that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (29). Women were denied this, because all their property was their husband's, like in *Orlando*: when she changes gender and returns to England, all her titles and properties are taken away from her because she is a woman. Both Orlando and Lily have to rewrite a domestic space: Orlando only has one house left, and Lily is the only woman left at the summerhouse after Mrs Ramsay dies. Both women use this moment of rewriting to make their houses more creative, and in the end these are the houses where both women can finish their works of art. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the women complete their works in the modernist age, which was the age Woolf was also writing in. It might be suggested that Woolf did this, because she believed that the modernist age was more open towards female artists.

A different aspect of this theme that has been discussed is the exclusion of women, and especially the idea of women as looking glasses, as expressed in *A Room of One's Own*. This concept is used in all three works. Mr Ramsay is a perfect example of a man who constantly needs to be reassured of his competence and needs to be encouraged by any woman. In a way, Mr Pope and Mr Tansley also use women as looking glasses, but in a more negative way. They do not ask women to glorify them, but instead they try to bring women down so they can feel better about themselves.

In addition to a room of her own, a woman also needs money to write. The three works all argue that money is important. The narrator of *A Room of One's Own* is privileged enough to have this: she inherited 500 pounds a year from her aunt, and is now writing a story. Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* also has this advantage: she has a wealthy father who can provide for her, so she can be a painter. In *Orlando*, Nick Greene argues that a writer should get three hundred pounds a year, because only then will writers be able to write great

literature. However, he is of lower class, which does not prevent him from writing. This suggests that gender is a bigger obstacle for being a writer than money.

One of the biggest obstacles women have to overcome when they want to write, is the lack of a female literary tradition. Women have nothing they can fall back on, no imaginings, or ideas, or language, because women were never allowed to write. Men have had a literary tradition for centuries. *Orlando* seems to give an explanation on why there is no female tradition: the biographer says that women were too busy having children and raising them, so they did not have the time to write. This is also discussed in *A Room of One's Own* when the narrator explains that women always had domestic tasks and never had time for themselves. In *To the Lighthouse*, Lily is an example of how the lack of a female tradition affects women. Because there is not a single example of a painting by a woman, she is insecure about her painting and is never satisfied, but as soon as she remembers a form of female tradition, she starts painting.

It can thus be concluded that *Orlando* and *To the Lighthouse* both include many ideas that are expressed in *A Room of One's Own*. Because *Orlando* is more concerned with gender and the differences between genders, there are more similarities between this novel and *A Room of One's Own* than between *To the Lighthouse* and *A Room of One's Own*, as was expected. However, although *To the Lighthouse* seems to only present traditional gender roles, it discusses more gender issues than anticipated, mostly through the character of Lily Briscoe. The omnipresence of these themes and ideas shows that they were very important to Woolf.

It can also be suggested that Woolf used these novels to try out several of her ideas on gender, before she would combine them in her manifesto *A Room of One's Own*. This would also explain why she is very consistent in rewriting gender: almost all topics are looked upon similarly in Woolf's works, except from the idea that art and marriage cannot coexist in the life of a woman.

In future studies on Virginia Woolf and gender subversion, Woolf's diaries or her essays could be further explored and compared to her novels, which would present more information on her personal ideas. Moreover, a study that compares how gender is reflected in her first and her last novel, *The Voyage Out* and *Between the Acts*, might be interesting because it would provide more insight into the development of feminist themes in Woolf's works.

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