RECLAIMING HISTORIES/REWRITING DESTINIES: MRS. WOOLF AND *ORLANDO* IN UNEARTHING THE BURIED

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Abstract: History is usually written by the winners; those who lose retain their own. The extent to which these differ and whether the differences affect the fate of mankind are all issues that require constant rendering and re-examination. The future confidently retains the answers, but do these answers change the circumstances? Can philosophy, feminist literary criticism or post-structural theories obscure the meaning of fiction? We are composed of strange particles that create our being and identity, which does not likely pave the way to our *becoming true* by solely 'static' existence, but by one that unites the past, present and the future. Such particles placed on the platform of literary expression sometimes have the character of a more permanent testimony to history, either written, or to-be-written. One figure, who struggled to raise our awareness and to remind us that the essay can represent a dialogue, that the reader carries special importance and a role in both the creation and reception of artistic skills, yet that language and meaning do not have a stable structure, was Virginia Adeline Stephen Woolf, who was rewriting and reclaiming both individual and common histories. Reflecting on the dilemmas and perplexities of both historical and fictional structural norms in literature, Mrs. Woolf unobtrusively portrayed an androgynous and ever-living creature in her novel *Orlando*, who seeks, among other feats, to re-evaluate the importance of witnessing and re-examining history.

Keywords: history, fiction, philosophy, feminist literary criticism, post-structuralism.

History and Time: The Intersection of Reality and Fiction

Historians should perhaps have the best and closest insights into what the past, present or future have dealt with and are to deal with: at least that is what we are mostly inclined to take for granted. They may consider, as Edward H. Carr noted in his book *What Is History?* (1961), that knowledge of the past "[h]as come down through one or more human minds, has been 'processed' by them, and therefore cannot consist of elemental and impersonal atoms which nothing can alter" (Carr 2). The exploration seems to be endless, he argues, emphasising that some impatient scholars take refuge in scepticism, or at least in the doctrine that, since all historical judgements involve people and points of view, this makes one become as good as another and there is no "objective" historical truth. This appears a difficult riddle to answer. Permeated by various

thinkers from philosophy to literature, science and medicine, law and anthropology, all seemingly intersect as embedded feats of duration and space in terms of history. One could believe that artists might perhaps possess the most vigorous weaponry to confront and/or harbour both fictional and factual verities if we scratch deeper into what their works disclose. But this rather raises questions of factuality or, to be more precise, whether the faces of history come to us “pure,” if they actually exist in pure form. What may appear as demanding or challenging to readers is understanding of the past through the eyes of the present.

When Henri Bergson argued that *raison* understood life only statically and not in its authenticity, that is, in its duration, the starting point for understanding traced from duration was intuitively revealed. History, therefore, should percept time in its “moments of being” what Virginia Woolf tried to demystify through her ever-living protagonist. As philosophy, on the other side, attempts to unveil the essence of the world manifested through creative works, intuition finds this in all manifestations of life. *Élan vital* therefore becomes the breaking point by which

[c]oncepts break up the continuous flow of reality into parts external to one another, they further the interests of language and social life and are useful primarily for practical purposes. But they give us nothing of the life and movement of reality; rather by substituting for this an artificial reconstruction, a patchwork of dead fragments, they lead to the difficulties which have always beset the intellectualist philosophy, and which on its premises are insoluble. (Bergson 6)

In an attempt to unify the categories of time and duration in the so-called *durée*, the principle suggests that “[t]he idea of homogeneous and measurable time is shown to be an artificial concept, formed by the intrusion of an idea of space into the realm of pure duration” (Bergson 7). If, therefore, the idea of space can determine duration, it is quite inevitable that one will not perceive the same concept which Virginia Woolf implied through her novel *Orlando: A Biography* (1928). In this neatly and devotedly wrapped present for her intimate friend, Vita Sackville-West, Woolf rounds off a world of existence in which life metaphorically presents an endless cycle of being and becoming: a cycle that in terms of history relieves our mind of any doubt that we are temporary. The search for “moments of being” as Woolf understands them, should prove that once we manage to “grasp” them – regardless of their extent – we grasp history. That is why contemplations on time throughout the novel seem to re-postulate the mapping of a narrative onto a philosophical platform of modern thought. It seems that not only was Woolf ‘playing’ fiction through *Orlando*, but she was also removing the layers of the past that had been laid down as sediment, leav-

ing only the very finest particles in suspension. These particles come as ideas on how an author, a biographer or a historian may trace his/her way towards ultimate truths. It is a search where answers are hardly or not at all revealed, yet Woolf suggests wittingly and somewhat satirically that truths are always visible between the written lines, and nowhere else. Thus the category of time intermingles Orlando's actions as undoubtedly enigmatic enough to trigger anyone's mind:

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. (Woolf 65)

Subsequently, Woolf presents her view of the secrets of poetry, literature, art, love and truth, through Orlando's deliberate choices which often leave the historian in perplexity. For example, Orlando asks Aleander Pope to join her on her walk home: here Woolf emphasises an important issue where duration reveals its (un)sustainability in history. It is easy to grasp the importance of historical heritage, but it is not easy to preserve its authenticity. As the cycle of existence is shown as endless and repeatable, it proves intriguing enough to develop further on different philosophical ideas and premises.

Classified as a subtle science-fiction satire which encompasses individual and common histories, *Orlando* incorporates portrayals of real people intermingled with personal impressions to reveal an overview or a retrospective of life which is predominantly determined by free will and limitless spaces. The idea of thinking up and preparing a present for a close friend has in fact unleashed Woolf's creativity to challenge all the buried truths and secrets, daring them to come to light and affect history, even fictionally. It never implied any indifference of hers towards many significant historical facts. Reflecting on the dilemmas of fictionalisation of history Woolf's ever-living protagonist also becomes a fictitious sublimation where transience and durability, space and identity, biographies and myths intersect with each other. Being more than entertainment and a joy to Woolf, the writing of *Orlando*, as Jane Goldman sees it, represented something that repeatedly "placed the reader on treacherous ground, between granite and rainbow,¹ between recognising portraits of real people at the same time as acknowledging the licence of fiction" (Goldman 66).

Wishing to emphasise the importance of historic values presented in fiction that in time modify due to different biographic interpretations, Virginia Woolf also emphasised the importance of anonymity, in which she finds one

1 The terms "granite and rainbow" refer to Woolf's work which L. Strachey and H. Nicholson referred to as inspiration for their work and creativity.

suitable form of perception. "Over the obscure man is poured the merciful suffusion of darkness. None knows where he goes or comes. He may seek the truth and speak it; he alone is free; he alone is truthful; he alone is at peace" (Woolf 67). In allowing the mind to act freely, it thereby pursues countless ways to explore its limits. Such unusual spaces are also illustrated by Perry Meisel through the significant influence in style and aesthetics from the 19th century essayist and artist Walter Pater. According to the vocabulary of assessment and analysis, we undertake

a search for the perfect fusion of form and matter in the work of art; the desire that superfluity be eliminated from the work of art; the requirement that the author or artist exercise self-discipline, or "asceticism" (Pater's term), the criterion that the author's or artist's work express his or her personality.

Again, the "problem" of expression that artists face undoubtedly unfolds before the reader. Seeking to uncover unpredictable forces that orchestrate the stream of consciousness, Woolf presents history as defenseless in terms of fiction. Therefore, she created Orlando's identity as a reminder to what we are liable to forget preserving the facts from the oppressive flow of time.

The "Finger of Death" as a Reminder of Things Past or Identity Wakening

As we often seem to find ourselves in search of lost time or simply in "remembrance of things past," it is logical to have our thoughts diverge into myriads of different paths. When Marcel Proust struggled to reveal art using involuntary memory as the principal 'tool' to prove its triumph over the destructive power of time, the nature of art appeared to point to a different theory. That theory tends to prove that we all are capable of producing art, if we take our experiences and transform them into understanding and maturity. One of the 20th century's radical philosophers, Gilles Deleuze, adopted Proust's ideas to his own thesis, which in this context represented no memory and no past, but the simple method of learning to use "signs" to understand and communicate ultimate reality, whereby an individual is placed in the process of becoming an artist. All life-changing events, through *Orlando's* half-dreaming trance or time slept through, inevitably affect human life by this phenomenon that Woolf called the "finger of death." Although it is present in almost all her works, the finger of death metaphorically tends to keep an individual awakened and alive; and history alerted. The alertness should not be aimed only at preserving historic facts, but also at "uneathing" those that failed notification. At the same time, such moments in fiction affect the stratification of identity, whereby the

layers always manage to regenerate. Thus, the finger of death in the flow of life presents a warning or a sign on the road:

Has the finger of death to be laid on the tumult of life from time to time lest it rend us asunder? Are we so made that we have to take death in small doses daily or we could not go on with the business of living? And then what strange powers are these that penetrate our most secret ways and change our most treasured possessions without our willing it? (Woolf 56)

Considering them highly productive, Woolf again symbolically sacrifices those points of interruption or reversal to the cycle of life. In such an occasional invoking of death, the ideas of purpose and continuity of existence recur, and identity is being renewed, appearing always altered. Woolf then assumes the role of memory in the process of repetition as the way towards the fulfilment of the transcendental. If we refer to Hellenic philosophy, we find repetition equated with memory, and according to Kierkegaard's idea of repetition, this phenomenon is characterised as the courage to confess to ourselves what we need to fulfil our spirits. Also, to some modern philosophers, literature provides more than a theoretical or philosophical background for our involuntary memory to develop and stand on. A peculiar fact that raises many philosophical issues is that Woolf's perception remained introverted. Proust's concept of the corrosion of being in the flow of time as the instability of interpersonal relations and the problematic nature of the structure of identity, encouraged Woolf's idea to prove Orlando's instability and vulnerability, his/her rationality and delusion as inseparable feats which emanate not only his/her temperament, but they reflect the changes in history. The effects of such changes may be disputable, but they are never irrational. Likewise, the reader encounters the idea of repetition as a phenomenon supposedly experienced and known, but, as Kierkegaard argues, repetition is rather an apt expression for what "recollection" represented to the Greeks.

Repetition and recollection are the same movement, only in opposite directions; therefore repetition, if it is possible, makes a man happy, whereas recollection makes him unhappy [...] In truth, the love of repetition is the only happy love. Like that of recollection it has not the disquietude of hope, the anxious adventuresomeness of discoverers, nor the sadness of recollection; it has the blessed certainty of the instant. (Kierkegaard 6)

Some modernist views predominantly preserved by philosophy and the arts develop the idea of the identity concept, either fictional or real, where I would refer to Deleuze's critique of representation. This term, assessed in his

metaphysical discourse *Difference and Repetition* (1968), postulated models of difference and repetition logically and metaphysically prior to any concept of identity. Claiming that all identities are the effects of difference, Deleuze argues that there exist differences in nature between things of the same genus. According to this idea, not only are two things never the same, but the categories we use to identify individuals in the first place derive from differences. Novica Milić developed this issue of organic repetition as the representations of identity. Through these representations, what is being repeated, Milić says, cannot be anything other than the same thing. Along with the copy, series or multiplication, they ultimately result as confirmation of *The One*. As Deleuze asserts – why should the sun be always new? The argument directly overshadows innovativeness, invention, production, genesis and eventually history. Milić suggests that:

Deleuze sets the reverse, radical hypothesis: repetition is not the re-production of One/The Same, but the creation from the different, for the different (only differences are repeated, and only repetitions differ). It is the idea of distinction without negation, confirmation of the Sun or Life, at the price of the day, whose meaning we still do not understand. (Milić)

What is interesting about this premise is that Deleuze's philosophical observation traces precisely Virginia Woolf as a subject or identity driven not only by the problem of maturing and aging, but by *becoming*, as one specific emanation of subject and identity. Continuing the main thought from his course on Nietzsche and philosophy, the main problem appears as the power or the force, i.e. the will to power and the eternal recurrence. The question of whether or not the eternal can always be new generates dilemmas as to whether it is or is not the same that can be "forever returning." As Deleuze thinks that what is the same can only be the repetition of difference, eternal recurrence can cancel the existence of both the first and last time – that is the source or the original, seeing the destination as the terminus or end. Relying on the treatise of *simulacra* by Jean Baudrillard, Milić develops this problem as caused by the absence of the original, which by replacing the copy model creates only a copy of a copy, where the "original face to be revealed" is missing. This is where the problem of beginning comes into focus. In Woolf's works generally, the problem of the beginning, or beginnings, gains a philosophical form in which her approach to writing reflects universal rules of the principles of identity. Such principles are however brought into doubt by Deleuze. Noticeably, identifications are here detected as priorities to be produced. Why? Because identity automatically becomes a simulacrum, which is neither the original nor a copy. Almost the same – if not original – 'identifications' in Woolf's works become recurrently new: "I meant to write about death, only life came breaking in as usual" (Woolf 1953, 43) an

entry in her diary reads. With its de-territorialisation² or point of intersection (rather than interruption), Woolf turns identification with death into priority-to-identity principles.

As a unique emanation of identity primarily regarding artistic achievements that Deleuze traced in Virginia Woolf's works, these theories were also developed by many contemporary critics. Claire Colebrook sees the problem as a process in which any confirmation of a woman as a subject must not be doubled or confronted to man's, but must confirm the self as an event in the process of becoming. All these theses considered, it is obvious that the process of becoming requires deeper insight into what this may unpack. Colebrook further analyses and interprets the problem of Deleuze's becoming a female author as that of becoming a woman. Since man is traditionally defined as a 'being in its existence', that is, as an obvious basis or base for identity politics and recognition, woman, as his 'other', offers the 'opening' of becoming, and she functions according to the principle of the thinking-woman not as a complementary being, but as the instability or insubordination that surrounds every being. Colebrook sees the idea as an incentive towards understanding the notion of "otherness" which, by becoming male, defines the female.

For a being – an entity, identity or subject – is always the effect of a universal becoming. What makes this becoming girl-like? Its radical relation to man: not as his other or opposite (woman) but as the very becoming of man's other. And so when Deleuze and Guattari applaud the style of Woolf, they do so not because she is a woman writer but because she writes woman. (Buchanan 2)

The two post-structuralist philosophers nicknamed *Les enfants sauvages* (probably after Truffaut's 1969 *L'Enfant Sauvage*, whereby a small digression here will point to Guattari's physical resemblance to Truffaut's protagonist) analyse Virginia Woolf's style in writing as an exemplar for the new mode of becoming. Aiming to establish a kind of isolated authenticity of any artefact, they suggest that the only possible procedure in the realisation of this process is by repeating the difference. This indisputably develops further into processes of repetition of diversity that do not originate from one direction, but spread out into several so-called rhizomatic networks, where repetition is what is actually being disguised to be constituted as such, and vice versa. The "rhizomatic thinking" that defines it, additionally produces becoming, and not being. As it is forever moving; the rhizome has no beginning or ending. Under the influence

2: "Deterritorialisation" is a term signifying the concept created by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their philosophical work *Anti-Oedipus* (1972). It first occurs in French psychoanalytic theory to refer, broadly, to the fluid, dissipated and schizophrenic nature of human subjectivity in contemporary capitalist cultures.

of chaos and complexity theories, Deleuze and Guattari transfer the idea to the study of subjectivity where it is appearing, societies where they are changing, and the world where it is being re-created. As stated earlier, due to the special relationship of women towards male standards, all becomings (of a child, an animal or a plant) begin with “becoming-woman.” But one significant point emphasised by Colebrook devises the binary opposition beyond it which is to confirm the “becoming-woman” by passing through to other becomings “[s]o that man and woman can be seen as events within a field of singularities, events, atoms and particles” (Buchanan 2). Then she refers to Deleuze’s arguments to confirm his commendation of Woolf’s style. Arguments suggest that “[t]he only way to get outside the dualisms is to be between, to pass between, the *intermezzo* – that is what Virginia Woolf lived with all her energies, in all of her work, never ceasing to become” (Deleuze and Guattari, 281). Observing *intermezzos* as a form of becoming, specifically through Virginia Woolf, may also point to her quest for identity inside the process of non-repetition as thinking the difference. In that way, the primacy of identity as well as the way in which identity is recognised is determined by the world of representation.

Androgyny as a Social or Individual Phenomenon: Effects on Literary and Theoretical Valuation

Not only through *Orlando*, but through all her works, Virginia Woolf often strikes the reader as being unable to differentiate or separate rationality from delusion. It can be concluded therefore that she seems to “plunge” into the literary subject of androgyny having one aim in mind: to build a paravane for superseded cultural differences. In reference to this, Emily Dalgarno argues that “a culture that does not tolerate what is foreign forces the writer to flee, in order to create another world in the written language, [...] a world that Proust figured as the world of an androgynous race” (Dagarno 13). *Orlando*, as a biography, allowed Woolf to re-enact the actual circumstances as the convergence of multiple possibilities of our relationship with history. Either general or personal, the relationship towards history, and the past in this case, locates the property of Knole, Vita’s aristocratic ancestry in Kent. Being a girl, she could never inherit the house to which her imagination and soul were in thrall. Growing into a free-spirited and emancipated woman involved in a modern marriage of the time, she served as a justifiably perfect model for an androgynous character that Woolf had developed. Parallel to portraying her personality, she saw Vita’s historical background as neglected and factually important, restoring Vita to Knole, although in reality it broke Vita’s heart when it was handed over to the National Trust. During the blooming and lavish Elizabethan era, life depicted through Orlando’s eyes was a world where, “[t]heir morals were not ours; nor

their poets; nor their climate; nor their vegetables even. Everything was different [...] The brilliant amorous day was divided as sheerly from the night as land from water" (Woolf 2006, 41). Yet life was demanding answers to the mysteries of Nature too: "she asked herself what this beauty was; whether it was in things themselves, or only in herself; so she went on to the nature of reality, which led her to truth, which in its turn, led to Love, Friendship, Poetry..." (Woolf 2006, 41) in reminding us of the very need to reclaim our rightful ownership over our denied property, it seems to be not just "property" we have been deprived of – it is the space of our living pulse, one un-lived and unexplored but abandoned in its tenant-like status inside the standstills of our memory.

No longer questioning his/her sex, Orlando escapes the world and returns to it, escapes from him/herself and returns to him/herself. Numerous encounters and acquaintances with the geniuses who pass through her life apparently re-inscribe histories, both personal and general. By counterbalancing the dimensions of space with perpetual changeability, Melba Cuddy-Keane suggests that it depends on our perception – not of objective factualities, but of the way that either variables or continuities, progress or stagnation, loss or abundance will develop. In order to unearth and change our connection with history related to the meaning of the text itself, she envisages:

Since the text can mean different things at different times, to different readers, historical reading means not getting at the authoritative original meaning but finding a way, through the multiplicities of the text, to discover the meanings of most value for the present. It is this quality of excess in the relation between the written work and the reader that gives to literature its perpetual life. (Cuddy-Keane 157)

This can also serve as a model for 'abstract' categories such as death, as Deleuze alludes to in his metaphysical discourse. But if we place it within the philosophical spectrum, we shall inevitably fall for that seemingly perplexing philosophy of difference, which no term can still adequately articulate. The problem actually suggests that, if repetition by itself is transgression and difference, simulacrum and mask are our existence and life. Deleuze asserts that "[r]epetition is truly that which disguises itself in constituting itself, that which constitutes itself only by disguising itself" (Deleuze 17). He claims that there is:

[t]herefore nothing repeated which may be isolated or abstracted from the repetition in which it was formed, but in which it is also hidden. There is no bare repetition which may be abstracted or inferred from the disguise itself. The same thing is both disguising and disguised. (Deleuze 17)

This is to indicate how Virginia Woolf had been more than aware of Deleuze and Guattari's equating of the modern world with a simulacrum. Her suspicions that, in the modern world all identities are simulated, she is ready to defeat by transcending the subject with the very substance of identity. Considering history, whatever truth we might strive for or whatever truth we apparently acquire, uncertainty occurs as the only possible form of either the material or metaphysical. Concretely, Woolf's trepidation that an artistic nuance of a complementary meaning cannot be caught and left unprofaned is in line with Deleuze's thesis of her writing-woman and her becoming. This also points to her artistic method again corresponding with the repetition of difference. In that case, due to a more subconscious struggle with words and their accommodation into appropriate positions, she was regaining the effect of a non-simulated identity, because her subject always transcended the identity of the substance. It appears evident enough how her ideas of literary and theoretical valuation all aim to re-examine the effects not only of historical backgrounds, but of life in general, and they are emphasised even more strongly as they originate from a neutral, i.e. androgynous, narrative perspective.

If I Rename History, Do I Reclaim My Destiny?

Woolf's exceptional attempt to unveil the mystery of a solid author aimed to emphasise the importance of the androgynous form of writing, which was something she later developed in her discourse *A Room of One's Own*. According to the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, a transcendental or what-is-general-and-necessary philosophy, the targeted study of "essence" presupposes the obtaining of intuitive "evidence," in order to perceive so-called "intentional objects of consciousness." Thus, the problem of becoming undergoes analyses that induce theories of molar and molecular politics as the two dynamic and motivating systems. Deleuze and Guattari claim that the molar is political as it represents the basis, identity or subject, while the molecular represents the mobile, active and continuous challenge of becoming. Colebrook again reveals these ideas as a process in which every confirmation of a woman as a subject is important in the process of becoming:

Both Kristeva and Deleuze refer to Woolf as an exception to a set of normative models understood as psychoanalytic, an exception located in her characterisations but also in her style and in her life. Woolf produces this "girl" as an escape from Oedipalised territories and, as *Orlando* exemplifies, from any other fixing of the girl in relation to sexual difference concretised as a binary opposition located in either the body or identity. There is no girl in *Orlando*, only a boy who becomes a woman. While

Kristeva would see this as symptomatic of the girl's traumatic struggle with the paternal symbolic, the girl might otherwise be seen, as Deleuze and Guattari infer in *A Thousand Plateaus*, as a name for Orlando's process of becoming-woman. (Buchanan and Colebrook 78)

Through such a process, Orlando still does not grow up, and Deleuze says that women urgently need to lead their molecular politics by regaining their own organism, their own history, their own subjectivity. But he also claims that it is dangerous to limit oneself to an object that does not work without "drying up a spring or stopping a flow" (Deleuze and Guattari, 276). Hereby we face another problem in reclaiming our destinies: Orlando's femininity is based on androgyny which points to an intimate love act that can define a woman in *her* process of becoming. Possible self-disclosure appears as a condition that, in the case of a man, results in his "freeing-of-the-burden." On the other side, she remains a stability that is always alone in her self, but unlike man, she again connects with herself through his imprint. This position transforms her identity and through such repetition of difference she never appears the same. This confirms the unique structure of the female psyche, as well as the superiority of her physique over the male one. Perhaps it is a central question about how a woman succeeds in "preserving" her identity by becoming through the repetition of difference. The French feminist theoretician, Luce Irigaray, examines how a woman can break free from the subordinate position of an accompanying "other" so that she becomes an expression of different difference, pure difference, a completely new plan of becoming, from which difference can be multiplied and these differ in particular from one another. Here, the idea centres around the potential becoming of a real-life woman, in all her various ways of understanding and inhabiting the position of her subject – which is what we find in an analysis of the bifurcation between a woman as a presentation and a woman as an experience, given by Teresa de Lauretis.

The historical definition of "life lived" with the concepts of social formations did not succeed in determining the identity of Orlando as belonging to any social group. While religion historically uses the knowledge of the self to – as Michel Foucault says – "alter behaviour, to train or correct individuals" (Foucault 203), his essay *Technologies of the Self* (1988) reveals that since the 18th century, "[t]he techniques of verbalisation have been reinserted in a different context by the so-called human sciences in order to use them without renunciation of the self but to constitute, positively, a new self" (Luther, Gutman, and Hutton, 49). Consequently, the modern "proliferation" of the way to talk about sex would be the key to understanding the "new" self. For Catherine Driscoll, the same problem appears as a manifestation of the technology for producing and managing the special force of the self. It is confirmed by its 'secret' repre-

sentation not only in psychoanalysis but also in contemporary discourses on new morality and sexual education. *Orlando's* production of the new technology of the self gives rise to the absurdity of the marriage vow as an imposed conformist position. Identity transformations also rise under the same effect: the wilderness, in its most solemn form, ceases to 'live the identity' and one is left with either resignation or death. Orlando is aware that marriage involves support, responsibility and companionship in a life that is not in the least like all those solid props found in brief encounters with sun and rain, people and animals, arts and the spaces she has been ruling. Everything has been taken away from her: becoming tamed and naked, wrapped by unsolvable mystery, all the answers lie equally far from the (un)truth. This "(un)truth" actually appears to be as ancient as life itself: it was, it is, and it will be; but its secret is impenetrable to any human. "I have sought happiness through many ages and not found it; fame and missed it; love and not known it; life—and behold, death is better" (Woolf 2006, 121).

What Friedrich Nietzsche saw as the positivity of nihilism, Virginia Woolf represented through her poetic discourse. Nothing particularly grandiose separates life from death, they are almost on the same longitude of subjectivity and objectivity. Difference may occur only as an effect of individual interpretation. According to existentialism, either as emanation of fiction or a correlative concept related to life itself, death becomes the utmost possession of a being. "For what more terrifying revelation can there be than that it is the present moment" (Woolf 2006, 141). The present moment becomes terrible in any form, the past is haunting and the future shaded and obscured. Not only do times collide "posthumously," but different eras also collide, bringing about the regress of civilisation, uniformed men and women resembling each other, night becoming day under illumination: we seem to be mislaying the fundamental definitions of identity and space. Like Proust's storage of impressions inside the subconscious, as a comfort for times lost, we can always restore the level of consciousness of the body's sensual memories, remembering not only events, but also passions and emotions that have passed. The empirical being has the intelligence of a mature narrator, and life according to this "rule" becomes a masterpiece itself. However, time, being the cause of all metamorphoses or modifications of identity, loses the battle in its quest for meaning. Proust's idea of the corrosion of being through the flow of time mainly determines the body's psyche – Orlando has lost one identity in order to acquire another, has outlived time to overcome the nonsense of life. She shapes the art of living according to the art of taming the flow of the present.

While attempting to rename personal histories, we are often inclined to re-think the possibilities of the different existence or existences that we have failed to experience. Hence, encountering the possibilities and chances

we never took, some unexpected decisions mark our lives without any special wonder. Is it or is it not hard to understand Virginia Woolf's determination to take her own life and terminate it by drowning herself in the River Ouse? Does "her story" begin right there and then? Some might agree that, circumstances being what they were, no alternative was left for her, and she could have figured out no better way. One is for certain: she had mastered the art of eternalising life. Moreover, there are those who claim that by such an act she had made the "key cultural impression" to die a feminist above all. I would say she died a woman who was bold and courageous enough to take her own life for the sake of saving one. Philosopher Svetlana Slapšak suggests that, besides leaving that key cultural impression on her work and life, Woolf's suicide indicated a "perfect trick" to drown a skinny and tiny body with her pockets full of stones. And the stones she says preserve the text, the one about women and cultural anthropology. Not only does this unusual metaphor eternalise Woolf's words, both written and unwritten, but it also reveals her relationship with death. Life and death carved in stone remain one – encrypted in history they represent unity; maybe that is the reason she used to cherish her relationship with death as a curious host towards an *invitée*.

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PONOVNO PRISVAJANJE ISTORIJE I ISPISIVANJE SUDBINA: VIRDŽINIJA VULF I ORLANDO U OTKOPAVANJU ZAKOPANOG

Istoriju obično pišu pobjednici; oni koji izgube čuvaju svoju. Koliko se dvije strane razlikuju i da li razlike utiču na sudbinu čovečanstva, pitanja su koja zahtijevaju preispitivanja. Budućnost sa sigurnošću drži odgovore, ali da li ti odgovori mijenjaju okolnosti? Mogu li filozofija, feministička književna kritika ili poststrukturalne teorije zamagliti smisao fikcije? Sastavljeni smo od čudnih čestica koje stvaraju naše biće i identitet, ne čineći naše *oistinjene* isključivo "statičnim", već onim koje ujedinjuje prošlost, sadašnjost i budućnost. Takve čestice postavljene na platformu književnog izraza ponekad imaju karakter trajnijeg svjedočanstva povijesti, bilo ispisanog ili onog-što-će-se-pisati. Jedna figura, koja podiže našu svijest i podsjeća nas da esej može predstavljati dijalog, da čitalac nosi poseban značaj i ulogu u stvaranju i primanju umjetničkih vještina, ali i da jezik i značenje nemaju stabilnu strukturu, bila je Virdžinija Edlina Stiven Vulf. Razmatrajući nedoumice složenost istorijskih i fiktivnih strukturnih normi u literaturi, ovaj rad ima za cilj da pokaže kako Vullfova nenametljivo uvodi androgino i "vječito" biće romanom *Orlando*, koje nastoji da odmjeri značaj svjedočanstva i preispitivanja date istorije.

Ključne riječi: istorija, fikcija, filozofija, feministička književna kritika, poststrukturalizam.