

György Kalmár

Parler-Entre-Elles

Possibilities of a Less Phallogentric Symbolic Economy in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*¹

This paper reads *Orlando* according to post-structuralist theories of literature and subjectivity, focusing on the textual characteristics and the theoretical possibilities of what Luce Irigaray called a 'female symbolic.' I claim that when read with post-structuralist theories of literature and subjectivity, *Orlando* shows its subversive and disseminative potentials. This disseminative activity is closely connected to certain narrative characteristics, its deconstructive rhetorics, and the role the body and eroticism play in the production of meaning and subjectivity. *Orlando* is a pleasurable read in which the body becomes a central site, source, inspiration, and medium of meaning. I argue that *Orlando* creates a textual and libidinal economy that is different both from the typical patterns of modernism and, more generally, from characteristic patriarchal symbolic systems of meaning. Relying on some feminist interpretations of Lacan, I will attempt to show how different texts may negotiate different relations to the 'paternal metaphor' and therefore create different subjectivities.

"The pleasure of the text is that moment when my body pursues its own ideas – for my body does not have the same ideas I do." (Roland Barthes)

Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* embarrasses many critics. Although each and every novel of Woolf is different in its own way, it is difficult to read *Orlando* in the same way as the others: it seems to evade those well-established methods of criticism that apparently work well in the case of Woolf's other novels. Nothing indicates this better than the fact that many critics neglect this novel in their works covering Woolf's oeuvre, amongst them such noted Woolf-scholars as Mitchell A. Leaska in his *The Novels of Virginia Woolf*, or John Bachelor in his *Virginia*

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Woolf: The Major Novels. Many of those who finally undertake analysing it – David Dowling, Howard Harper, or Makiko Minow-Pinkey, for example – basically fail to step out of the good-old category of modernism, which often prevents them from taking notice of such characteristics of the novel as its strong narrative drive, the importance of metafiction and its parody of different styles and discourses, not to mention the particular interrelations of love, desire and disseminative writing. As a few exceptional analyses like that of Keith M. Booker prove, these can only be productively accounted for in a critical framework that is *post* modernism and structuralism. This is precisely what this paper undertakes: reading *Orlando* according to post-structuralist theories of literature and subjectivity, focusing on the textual characteristics and the theoretical possibilities of what (following Luce Irigaray) I would hypothetically call a ‘female symbolic.’

I agree with Julia Kristeva that theories of textuality and narrative are always (already) theories of subjectivity as well,² therefore my aim is to relate the novel’s narrative-rhetorical characteristics to theories of subjectivity. I will try to demonstrate that *Orlando* is an odd one out in Woolf’s oeuvre, a text that works differently: one where the ‘typical’ questions with which criticism approaches her texts (such as gender, subjectivity, art and one’s relation to a social-symbolic order) are inscribed in a different, yet no less exciting or subversive way. I will argue that this ‘other Woolf’ (that criticism often avoided without any explanation, and Woolf herself also repudiated later) is at least as radical and productive from both theoretical and political points of view as the more characteristically modernist one.

I claim that when read with post-structuralist theories of literature and subjectivity, *Orlando* shows its subversive and disseminative potentials. This disseminative activity is closely connected to certain narrative characteristics, its deconstructive rhetorics, and the role the body and eroticism play in the production of meaning and subjectivity. *Orlando* is a pleasurable read in which the body becomes a central site, source, inspiration, and medium of meaning. I argue (*contra* Booker) that *Orlando* creates a textual and libidinal economy that is different from the typical patterns of both modernism and, more generally, typical patriarchal symbolic systems of meaning.³ Relying on some feminist interpretations of Lacan, I will argue that the field of meaning (*contra* Lacan) is not necessarily that of castration, but may also be something considerably different, what Derrida in

2. See Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1980), p. 124.

3. See M. Keith Booker, “What’s the Difference? Carnivalization of Gender in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*,” *Techniques of Subversion in Modern Literature: Transgression, Abjection and the Carnavalesque* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1991), 162–185, p. 173.

Writing and Difference characterised as “the joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of the world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin. . .”⁴

The Pleasure of the Text

In order to understand the playful joys of *Orlando*, and the ways pleasure may turn into an (dis-)organizing principle, it might be helpful to refer to the distinction that Roland Barthes makes between texts of bliss and texts of pleasure:

Text of pleasure: the text that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a *comfortable* practice of reading. Text of bliss: the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader’s historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation with language.⁵

I would argue that while most of Woolf’s writings are texts of bliss (and what is more, they are exactly the kind of texts of modernism that gave birth to these categories, that made critics distinguish between worthy and enjoyable texts), *Orlando* may either be a text of pleasure, or (in a more radical reading) one deconstructive of Barthes’s dichotomy. At first glance *Orlando* is an example of texts of pleasure. But if one takes a closer look and examines its rhetoric and figurativity, one may realise that in *Orlando* the ‘logic’ of texts of pleasure is taken to its ultimate point, creating what Luce Irigaray would call a ‘female symbolic system,’ driven by pleasure, love and desire. *Orlando* offers a symbolic economy different from the (patriarchal, repressive, phallogocentric) symbolic, a language that not only tolerates, but also notoriously accumulates logical contradictions, a language in which difference works in other ways than in (what Derrida and Irigaray call the) economies of the proper. The text constantly confuses basic dichotomies of the (patriarchal) symbolic and disregards such axioms of it as the unity of the self, the unity and univocal nature of sexual identity, and the ability of the narrator to exercise mastery over the text. In other words, while the novel may appear to please and entertain us without really challenging the existing order (like texts of pleasure), actually it takes the reader away from the properly castrated (that is, from what is castrated by the order of the

4. Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978), p. 292.

5. Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p. 14.

proper): in my opinion, *Orlando* is not simply a *fantasy* of wholeness, but it creates an economy of meaning, a different signifying economy.

Orlando is not only fuelled by pleasure, but also by libidinal energies and desires (the desires of narrative, the body and the unconscious), and also that of a different kind of subjectivity. This is the basic set of notions which should open new spaces for the novel's meanings. Barthes's words at the beginning of this paper indicate how deeply all these above concepts are connected: he connects pleasure with the loss of control, the loss of mastery, and the body. In the pleasure of the text the (patriarchal) Law becomes a more flexible playfield, and the body (together with the drives connected to it) can join discourse. The reader is simply *lost* in the pleasurable text, one loses oneself in it. This seems to make sense from a psychoanalytical perspective in which it is only intensive joy or pain that can loosen the grip of the symbolic: in *Orlando* the mixing of the reader and the text (which is the crucial act of the birth of this kind of aesthetic experience) happens through intensive pleasure. Thus, the pleasure of the text is also an erotic pleasure as it stems from the pleasure of union, the union of the text, the reader and his/her (repressed) other. As Peter Brooks says, satisfaction is a "surrender to otherness,"⁶ where the reading self surrenders to the otherness of the text and (at least partly) to the formless inner otherness that is normally covered by the coherent (castrated) subject. This surrender to the other, this loss of the self is the satisfaction caused by and felt in the pleasure of the text.

I would argue that *Orlando* reveals something that most post-structuralist theoreticians forget; I think that *Orlando* and Barthes know something about the flexibility and openness of both meaning and subjectivity that Lacan does not seem to: that we like to play, and when we are absorbed in joyful play we feel and *are* different. The game we play refigures the symbolic for a time together with the subject. It is an ironic characteristic of psychoanalytical theory that while it presents a de-centred, split subject, it also conceptualises the symbolic order, the field of meaning in which that subjectivity takes shape, as (almost completely) unified and (potentially) trans-historical. Texts like *Orlando* may point out that the field of meaning and the subject may be much more flexible, open and shifting than mainstream accounts of psychoanalytic theory usually describe it.

Let us see how the game this text plays rewrites certain elements and mechanisms of the patriarchal symbolic. Maybe it is best to start with the most obvious one, the problem of gender identity. What may strike the reader first is that *Orlando* does not seem to have the coherent, unchanging, 'proper' identity that 'normal'

6. Peter Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993), p. 9.

people (or characters) have.⁷ “When you meet someone, the first distinction you make is ‘male or female?’ and you are accustomed to make this distinction with unhesitating certainty” – says Freud in his (in)famous lecture on femininity.⁸ Yet, Orlando’s gender identity – or better say the naturalness of ‘his’ gender identity – is questioned by the very first sentence of the novel: “He – for there could be no doubt about his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it – was in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor which swung from the rafters.”⁹ As Booker correctly notes, “this declaration of Orlando’s gender is highly ironic: there is in fact a great deal of doubt about his sex, and the entire fabric of the text is permeated with images of ambiguous gender.”¹⁰ In other words, by affirming something – Orlando’s gender identity – that should be obvious and natural, the text brings it into question and de-stabilises its very naturalness. The gender identity of Orlando, and the duality of his identity and appearance become an open question from the very first sentence of the novel on, an obscure place in the signifying process in which desire can be born. The text does not say that it could not be known whether Orlando was a boy or a girl, but creates a world in which these concepts need explanations, words, descriptions, and focus an erotically charged attention on the body. In this way *Orlando* does not simply subvert the patriarchal symbolic order (of “unhesitating certainty”) thematically, but also teaches the reader to think in terms of a language which is different from the Oedipal order.

The strong narrative drive, one of the most important characteristics of texts of pleasure, is also typical of *Orlando*, which never frustrates its reader, but always remains enjoyable, understandable and seductive, constantly feeding and teasing the reader’s epistemophilia and scopophilia. Through these pleasures the reader gets erotically invested in a text that French feminist writers would call a piece of *écriture féminine*, a text that diverges from the patriarchal symbolic on both the imaginary and symbolic registers. In Moi’s description,

It is a writing which finds its source and character in the half-repressed libidinal drives of the girl child for the mother. . . . Not only is such a writing essentially different from male writing, it is also a de-cerebralised writing,

7. Here and on the following pages I use the term ‘proper’ and ‘proper identity’ as it appears in Luce Irigaray’s and Jacques Derrida’s critique of phallogocentrism. In *This Sex Which is Not One*, Irigaray connects a certain philosophy of the ‘proper’ with the patriarchal myths of the one truth, one sexual organ, and one (proper) meaning. See *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1985), p. 26.

8. Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, trans. James Strachey (London: Penguin, 1973), p. 146.

9. Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (London: Penguin, 1993), p. 11.

10. Booker, p. 182.

which takes its energies from the sexual pleasures of the body. The phrase that recurs as a near synonym of *écriture féminine* is the phrase 'writing the body'. . . . To 'write the body' is to seek to recover the inhabited, repressed, forgotten, lost desire for the mother and the mother's body, which the Symbolic Order of language has superseded.¹¹

In my opinion, the most radical potential of the concept of *écriture féminine*, just like Derrida's concept of writing, is that these are theories of difference *within* the field of meaning: these concepts are capable of rewriting Lacan's binary system in which meaning, symbolic economies and subjectivity are always necessarily connected to being subjected to oedipalisation, castration, lack, and the phallus, while everything outside this (unhappy, phallogocentric) system are also placed outside meaning and subjectivity in general (and associated with fantasy or psychoses). I think *Orlando* calls attention to the theoretical necessity for us to replace this inside/outside model with one that is able to account for a variety of different economies of meaning and different subjectivities.

Desire and the Text

What can be known about the birth of *Orlando* (about the con-text, texts written by Woolf, contemporaries, critics, and biographers) seems to suit well the above-outlined ideas of pleasurable loss in a different order of meaning. What is more, the way the text and its con-text relate to each other in the case of *Orlando* may deconstruct our ('proper') ideas about the (theoretically) distinct categories of author, implied author and narrator.

Woolf started writing *Orlando* in the winter of 1927, when Vita (Victoria Sackville-West), who is usually referred to as her greatest love, went travelling with her husband. That is the reason why Nigel Nicolson could call the novel "the longest and most charming love letter in literature."¹² So, on the one hand, the text is a love letter, a piece of writing between two women in love, *parler-entre-elles*, as Irigaray would call it, a text written in the specific feminine language of the couple;¹³ on the other hand, it is also a substitute for the missing object of desire. One could say that

11. Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 6.

12. See Sherron E. Knopp " 'If I saw you would you kiss me?' Sapphism and Subversiveness of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*," in *Sexual Sameness: Textual Differences in Lesbian and Gay Writing*, ed. Joseph Bristow (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 111.

13. See Margaret Whitford, *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 199.

Woolf wrote *Orlando* (for herself) because of the lack of Vita, as a surrogate. In this case the novel is a metaphor or textual displacement of the object of desire: the body of the text is analogous to the body of the loved one. Naming, telling, narrating something in this sense also means possessing it: telling (the story of) the object of desire means having that object.¹⁴ Obviously, this may be one of the sources of the pervasive pleasures of the novel, pleasures that spread easily from the narrator to the reader.

The crucial point to see here is that these are not ‘just’ metaphors of love, just as these pleasures are not bookish or dry at all. The object’s being made up of figures of speech does not differ much from ‘ordinary’ situations of love: according to post-structuralist theoreticians of love and desire like Lacan or Catherine Belsey, these feelings are very much based on seeing the object through certain kinds of figures of speech.¹⁵ In the Lacanian sense there is no language without desire (to tell, to know, to be recognised by the other), and there is equally no desire without language. As Lacan’s analysis of courtly love aptly demonstrates in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, distance and figurativity only increase desire, as they delay its fulfilment, so much so that courtly love may be called a “poetic exercise.”¹⁶

In other words, *Orlando* shows, displays, focuses on Orlando’s body, but this appearance of presence through words and figures of speech talks about the absence of the original object, which is the precondition of desire in the first place. This paradoxical situation is equal to saying that an object of desire is always present and absent, always bodily and figurative, whether encountered in a book or in a bed.

This way the novel also stages the acts of desire, ‘knowing,’ and the constant refiguring of subjectivity by desire, and desire by language. As the sight of the naked body is often less erotic than the gap between two pieces of clothes (to use Barthes’s example), the game of concealing and revealing also becomes more exciting and pleasurable than showing the object in its ‘nakedness’ would be. It also has to be noted that according to psychoanalysis the final object of desire can never be shown: it is unnameable and terrifying at the same time. The original object shown in itself is a Medusa-head, which can be watched only in the mirror of one’s shield, as it was by Hercules. This prohibition, and the necessity that the text be something that shields, mirrors, and refigures at the same time, defines the basic semantic and rhetorical strategies of the novel. As Peter Brooks puts it:

14. Brooks, pp. 19–20.

15. See Catherine Belsey, *Desire. Love Stories in Western Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 34.

16. Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Dennis Porter (New York and London: Norton, 1997), p. 148.

It is as if the frustrated attempt to fix the body in the field of vision set off the restless movement of narrative, telling the story of approach to, and swerve away from, that final object of sight that cannot be contemplated. Direct contemplation would be petrifying, producing a Medusa-body, as in some of Balzac's scenarios. Narrative is thus generated as both approach and avoidance, the story of desire that never can quite speak its name nor quite attain its object.¹⁷

Another reason why nudity is less exciting than the game that constantly conceals and reveals its *objet petit a*, as Lacan calls it, is that nudity may cut short fantasy and figurative meaning, the things that can transform the object into (the illusion of) the original object of desire.

The diary entries and letters of Woolf also show how closely connected *Orlando* is with love and pleasure: "I am so engulfed in Orlando I can think of nothing else. . . . I make it up in bed at night, as I walk the streets, everywhere. I want to see you in the lamplight, in your emeralds. In fact I have never more wanted to see you than I do now."¹⁸ It seems that the textualisation of desire liberates both the narrative and desire. Sexual and textual desires transform into each other. The strength of narration, the vigorous style of the work, the love of words and the unmistakable joy of the (implied) writer in her work all seem to come from this eroticism. This liberation and textualisation of her desires was as sudden a turn for (the implied) Woolf as the previous repression was strong: "[*Orlando* was] extraordinary unwilling by me but potent in its own right . . . as if it shoved everything aside to come into existence."¹⁹ All these words are very telling: *Orlando* was not intended by Woolf, and one can emphasise either the word "unwilling" here, as Woolf *did not intend it*, or the words "by me," as *it was not Woolf* who intended the birth of the work (but an internal *other*).

The way Woolf comments on her work is no less telling. She often calls it a joke, a farce, a writer's holiday or an escapade.²⁰ These expressions and the fact that she later distanced herself from her work emphasise the novel's difference from the rest of the oeuvre.²¹ Calling *Orlando* a joke is telling not only because it means that

17. Brooks, p. 103.

18. Knopp, p. 112.

19. Knopp, p. 125.

20. See Makiko Minow-Pinkey, *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1987), p. 118.

21. Woolf's ambiguous relation to her novel, her mad enthusiasm and later rejection can be well followed in her diaries; cf. Virginia Woolf, *A Writer's Diary* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 1982). On both 20 June, and 27 November 1928 she wrote that she was "sick of *Orlando*" (pp. 126, 131), but her entry on 21 April 1928 is also very telling (p. 124).

the novel is different, but also because such an underestimation of the work can also be read as a defensive technique to distance the text's pleasures from the subject who feels threatened by them. At the same time this underestimation sets the text free from the critical eye of the Law: the jester's cap may serve as defence, and may open spaces for a different (and more pleasurable) economy of writing.

This joyful view of life, the view that created *Orlando*, seems to have lasted only for a short time in Woolf's life. Apparently only love and free writing, and especially the alliance of the two, could bring about this sunny spell, when pleasure and her wishes and desires overcame anxiety and the strength of the Law. Woolf's diary, her many attempts to commit suicide and finally her tragic (ritualistic?) death seem to indicate that her 'real' life, her life under the Law (of the Father) was not like this. The writer of *Orlando*, the one celebrating life (celebrating 'Vita') was only the *other* Virginia Woolf, her *other*, unrealisable self, and so *Orlando* as well is an *other text* in her life. Woolf could not fashion her life like this text, or maybe she could only do so as long as the novel was being written. This could be the reason why she denied the novel when the (partly erotic) pleasures of writing were over.

Pleasurable Antecedents

The category of pleasure points towards the sub-literary and pre-literary antecedents of the novel. If one compares the way language works in folk- and fairy-tales (for example, the pleasurable and self-confident position offered by the genre to its narrators and readers/listeners)²² to *Orlando's* way of narcissistically wallowing in styles and words, one may come to the conclusion that the tradition of oral story-telling is as important an antecedent to the novel as the works of Defoe and Sterne.²³

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to assume a strict analogy between tales and this "radically antigeneric" novel,²⁴ in which "the subversion of genre conventions" is so pervasive.²⁵ Although the way the text creates its symbols is similar to the symbolism of tales and its world-view and treatment of time are also often magical, the free flow of *Orlando's* narration is far from observing the strict formal

22. According to many folk-tale critics, narrative pleasure, the ease of story-telling, and the confident relationship to language are essential components of the folk and fairy tale genres. See, for example, Richard Mercer Dorson, *Folktales Told around the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. xvii.

23. Defoe's 'readerly' texts may be regarded to be antecedents because of their love of 'strong' narration and love of the exotic, while Sterne is influential in the importance of meta-fiction and ironic tone.

24. Booker, p. 164.

25. Booker, p. 165.

(morphological) rules of fairy tales (as analysed by Vladimir Propp). Another difference is that the fantastic element is always accompanied by the irony of the intellect, which makes the figure of irony undercut the most frequent rhetorical devices of the text. This playful, half-serious, half ironic tone results in the play of assertion and denial, which does not let the semantic field become restricted to any homogenous 'message' or style: "the combination of seriousness and comedy in a single work is . . . one of the many ways in which normal hierarchical distinctions are abolished in this subversive book."²⁶ Undercutting, ridiculing, and deconstructing its own statements, the text also deconstructs the tradition of taking a coherent speaking position. Whereas fairy tales create a coherent anti-world with its own laws, *Orlando* plays with the symbolic, asserts it, denies it, ridicules it, then questions its denial and so on, *ad infinitum*. As a result of this rhetorical strategy, by way of constantly changing its viewpoints, leaving a hint of irony or playfulness behind every statement, playing off one argument against the other then *vice versa*, by way of leaving no rule unchallenged, no speaking position unquestioned, *Orlando* negotiates a specific relation to the patriarchal symbolic, and writes (amongst other things) difference, pleasure, and the possibility of complete happiness into it.

It is worth mentioning that in the original edition (as well as in the Penguin edition) photographs of Vita were to illustrate the events of Orlando's life, and many at the time – those in the know – criticised the novel for relying too much on the history of Vita's family and her personality. Counter to these arguments, I would suggest that mixing 'reality' with fiction may be a subversive strategy that actually liberates the text from the law of the proper. Orlando is (always already) Vita, just as Vita is always already Orlando, made of words, figures, language: the self and the other, life and fiction are inextricably interwoven. It is this mixing of (theoretically) distinct and separated orders that liberates the narrative, that enables it to present a different Vita, *Vita* (life) *avec différence*, that sunny, loving, joyous other that flirts with the Law and makes fun of it at the same time.²⁷ The symbolic cannot be deconstructed by creating an (imaginary) anti-world that simply opposes it, as these worlds are easily appropriated by the symbolic, placed into the categories of fiction, myth, wishful fantasy or fairy-tale. Nevertheless, using the elements of the symbolic construct called 'reality' while speaking from a position that makes 'proper' identification impossible may change the symbolic from the inside.

There is another literary tradition that can strongly be felt in *Orlando*, one that becomes especially significant when seen from the perspective of pleasure: the

26. Booker, p. 169.

27. I use the term 'other' in the Lacanian sense, where the other as object of desire (as opposed to the 'big' Other of the Law) is usually written as 'other' (autre).

genre of the picaresque. *Orlando* is often called a picaresque novel, and it is not only the motif of the travelling hero going through loosely connected adventures and the simple, linear plot that makes it that, but something more significant as well: the status of the hero in the narrative, and, inseparably from this, the relation of the hero to the narrator.

The *picaro* is the centre of the picaresque world. (S)he is a kind of alter-ego of the narrator, what is more, usually one enjoying the goodwill of his/her creator. This playful and pleasurable multiplication of the 'proper' self is precisely what happens in the novel: the alter-ego hero is 'alter', that is an/the *other* and 'ego', that is, connected to the self at the same time. The erotically invested play of these (at least) two has been recognised as the (dis-)organising principle of the text. As I have already argued, the symbolic cannot be transgressed or changed either by the discourse of the well-organised self, or by that of the absolute other, the Real Thing, since it is unnameable (the Medusa head). But *Orlando* does not use the strategy of opposition: it rather multiplies the characters of a play of love in a way that makes clean and proper distinctions impossible.

The *picaro* ("for there could be no doubt about his sex") lives and travels in a world from which all limiting forces (for example patriarchal Law) are either excluded, or subjected to the rules of this world: familiarised, 'processed' through figurativity, and tamed. Thus, the picaresque presents a world that is particularly restricted 'vertically': in its world written by love and desire the superego and the Father lose their strength and fearfulness. In other words, love and desire (understood, following Lacan and Belsey, as always already textual, rhetorical and figurative operations) may create intelligent discourses, characters, and subjectivity that are different from the ones produced under the reign of the Name of the Father. It is only the pre-oedipal mother and the (not properly gendered) child that live here, side by side, in this space of pleasure, play, and continuous, "innocent" becoming. There is nothing in the novel that could really hurt the hero(ine), that could take away his or her pleasures. Whatever may happen, (s)he will be safe as (s)he cannot lose the narrator's love.

The narrator's and the hero(ine)'s closeness and inseparability become particularly apparent in certain cases. For example, on one of the first pages of the novel one may read about Orlando writing his works. The text talks about him in the third person singular; the relation of the narrator and the hero does not apparently transgress the traditions established by the 19th-century novel. Then the narrator, explaining what Orlando does, starts discussing the relationship between nature and art, during which the roles of the narrator, the hero and the implied reader – which a minute ago were connected only by the intimate tone – get peculiarly mixed:

He was describing, as all young poets are for ever describing, nature, and in order to match the shade of green precisely he looked (and here he showed more accuracy than most) at the thing itself, which happened to be a laurel bush growing beneath the window. After that, of course, he could write no more. Green in nature is one thing, green in literature, another. Nature and letters seem to have a natural antipathy; bring them together and they tear each other to pieces. The shade of green Orlando now saw spoilt his rhyme and split his metre. Moreover, nature has tricks of her own. Once look out of a window at bees among flowers, at a yawning dog, at the sun setting, once think 'how many more suns shall I see set', etc.etc. (the thought too well known to be worth writing out) and one drops the pen, takes one's cloak, strides out of the room, and catches one's foot on a painted chest as one does so. For Orlando was a trifle clumsy.²⁸

In this paragraph the roles of narrator, hero and implied reader slide into each other. First, the narrator talks about Orlando, then a change comes, which can be interpreted in different ways. "Once look out of the window..." may still be the words of the narrator, it may refer to all three of them, including the reader. In this case the final sentence of the paragraph would signify the implied reader's (Vita's) being close to Orlando.²⁹ But there is another possible interpretation, according to which during the discussion of the relations of nature and art the point of view changes from that of the narrator to that of Orlando. In this case the part starting with "Once look out of a window..." is the direct internal monologue of Orlando, which changes back only with the last sentence.

Treating the roles of the narrator, the hero(ine) and the implied reader in such a way is an important strategy of the playful and joyful freedom of the text (which is connected to that of the hero(ine) and the narrator). What we see at such points of the text is a dissolving of identity and fixed structural positions, an abolition of the clean boundaries of dichotomies (constitutive of logocentrism) similar to what the Barthes-motto described in connection with the pleasure of the text. In order to understand the possibility and the workings of such a discourse distanced from the reign of the phallus, let us examine the novel from the point of view offered by French feminism.

28. Woolf, p. 13.

29. This also seems to underline the similarities between *Orlando's* rhetorics and that of love letters. When writing love letters, one also often addresses the same person one is writing about (e.g. adoringly): I love you, I describe in a letter how I see you, and finally I send it to you with the hope that it will make you love me too.

The Female Imaginary

The above textual processes often give the impression of a free, joyful play to the reader. As I have argued, the novel can be seen as a different kind of writing that is practiced by (or produces) different forms of subjectivity. This space created by this other kind of writing is structured differently than ‘proper’ (logocentric, oedipalised) novels: *Orlando* makes sense, yet it seems to manage to maintain a distance from what Lacan calls the Name-of-the-Father. *Theoretically* this verges on the impossible – at least according to Lacan’s original doctrine. In the classical Lacanian sense, access to meaning and subjectivity is granted only through the paternal metaphor and the paternal Law. It is this phallic Law that separates the child from the mother, that oedipalises him/her, and without this there is no meaning, no symbolic, no structure, and no ‘proper’ (castrated) subject.

I would argue that it is exactly this rigid view that *Orlando* challenges. In my opinion, the novel may give us clues about how a distance from the paternal metaphor may be negotiated, how a different textual economy (producing different forms of subjectivity) may work. This way the novel may be of key theoretical importance regarding the reinterpretation and feminist appropriation of Lacanian psychoanalysis.

Distance from the Name-of-the-Father appears on many levels, not only in the novel’s rhetoricity (seen above), but also thematically. The most outstanding thematic characteristic is probably the (almost) complete absence of Orlando’s father in the novel. But it is not only the biological father, the physical embodiment and executive of the Law that is missing from the text, but also all his substitutes and metaphors, first of all what Western philosophy calls *logos*. There is nothing in the text that could limit Orlando in his freedom: no father, no mother, no law, no customs, and no regularities of the ‘real world’ such as being bound to one gender identity or to the human life-span rendered to ordinary beings. Apparently, Orlando is not subjected to history, rationality, social norms, or gender roles. (S)he changes roles and identities with ease: (s)he can be male, female, romantic poet and perfect ambassador, English lord or wandering gypsy. And – as it has been shown above – the same goes for the language of the text as well, with its “highly literal heteroglossic mixtures of languages,”³⁰ its shifting speaking positions that deconstruct traditional dichotomies, and the notion of any kind of fixed speaking position. Thus, Orlando the character and *Orlando* the novel seem to enjoy the same kind of freedom.

In my opinion, this different textuality and different subjectivity can still be explained in (more or less) Lacanian terms. According to Lacan, it is language that

30. Booker, p. 178.

creates and maintains the (paternal) symbolic order, what tears the child from the pre-oedipal world while giving it a 'proper' identity, but this does not necessarily mean that the space of writing is entirely under the reign of the phallus. One thing that may point towards this openness of texts is that in Lacan's account language is always the "discourse of the Other" in which different (imaginary and symbolic, conscious and unconscious) elements may mix, enabling language always to say something other than what it appears to say.

Numerous Lacan texts would support such an interpretation. The connection between language and subjectivity does not only mean that the subject is "a slave of language,"³¹ but also that this subject is defined through one's utterances. When Lacan argues that "[t]he form in which language is expressed itself defines subjectivity,"³² this also means that subjectivity changes together with the linguistic forms that create it. In other words, if (phallogocentric) language is performative in the sense of creating (oedipalised) subjectivity, why could not different linguistic forms create different (less oedipalised, more pleasure-oriented) kinds of subjectivities? As Booker convincingly argues,

if, as Lacan has emphasised, the human subject is constituted in and by language, then these assaults on the integrity of monologic language should have incontestable implications for the traditional notion of the stable, autonomous self as well. Indeed, Woolf's attack on conventional models of subjectivity is the most subversive element in *Orlando*. . .³³

The following passage from Lacan discusses precisely this problem:

In order to know how to reply to the subject in analysis, the procedure is to recognize first of all the place where his *ego* is, the *ego* that Freud himself defined as an *ego* formed of a verbal nucleus; in other words, to know through whom and for whom the subject poses *his question*. So long as this is not known, there will be the risk of a misunderstanding concerning the desire that is there to be recognized and concerning the object to whom this desire is addressed.³⁴

This passage defines subjectivity through language, desire, and the other that the subject turns to with her or his question. In Lacanian theory subjectivity is always defined in relation to an *other* or others (like Mom, Dad, the mirror image, the

31. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York and London: Norton, 1977), p. 148.

32. Lacan, *Écrits* p. 85.

33. Booker, p. 179.

34. Lacan, *Écrits* p. 89.

object of desire, the psychoanalyst, etc.). Although psychoanalysis, I would argue, tends to define and prescribe which ‘other’ has to be the focal point of the subject’s identity at a certain stage of development, the importance of these different ‘others’ may very well vary in the case of different subjects, texts, or situations. I would argue that extraordinary situations, like being in love, or reading Virginia Woolf may easily entail the re-organisation of these structures of subjectivity and otherness: being human may be a being-towards-another, but it makes a whole lot of difference whether the other that the subject poses one’s question and desire to is the Father of the Law (the Lacanian ‘Other’), the pre-oedipal mother (the Lacanian other), or (as in *Orlando*) a same-sex object of desire (a sort of otherness that may undermine the phallogocentric edifice).

But this is not all (*pas tout*). The above analysed formal (rhetorical, grammatical, narratological, and stylistic) characteristics of the text do not fully explain the theoretical background of why and how a piece of writing may negotiate a distanced, dis-placed position from the Name-of-the-Father. I believe that the best answers are to be found in French feminism. As Julia Kristeva and other (mostly feminist) psychoanalytic thinkers have argued, the (m)other and the body always remain there in language, behind it, woven into it, haunting it. As is well-known, in *Desire in Language* Kristeva tries to theorise this “heterogeneousness to meaning and signification” through the concept of the semiotic (*le sémiotique*), as a “signifying disposition”³⁵ or “activity”³⁶ that is different from the symbolic one,³⁷ a disposition that Kristeva (in surprising agreement with what has been established about *Orlando*) associates with the maternal, “the instinctual drives’ body,”³⁸ and a more heterogeneous form of subjectivity that she calls the “subject-in-process.”³⁹

Probably the other most important attempt at theorising spaces of meaning ‘beyond the phallus’ is that of another French feminist psychoanalytical thinker, Luce Irigaray, who in *Speculum of the Other Woman* and, especially, in *This Sex Which is Not One* explicitly tries to lay the theoretical bases of a “feminine symbolic system.”⁴⁰ In Irigaray’s view (just as in that of Hélène Cixous) the imaginary plays a central role in this project, since it may work as the source of a potentially

35. Kristeva, p. 133.

36. Kristeva, p. 136.

37. Kristeva, pp. 133–134.

38. Kristeva, p. 135.

39. Kristeva, p. 135.

40. See Rosi Braidotti, “The Politics of Ontological Difference,” in *Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Teresa Brennan (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 89–105, p. 96 and Margaret Whitford, “Rereading Irigaray,” in Brennan, 106–126, p. 118.

subversive resignification and reshaping of the symbolic. This is possible because, according to Lacan, the child preserves the imaginary (that organised the subject in its pre-oedipal dyadic closeness with the mother) in itself all its life; it is preserved in the unconscious together with the image of the pre-oedipal ('phallic') mother. In *This Sex* "Irigaray begins to use the term more extensively"⁴¹: it signifies less and less "the unconscious phantasy of any one individual," and it refers more and more to "a social, cultural, and philosophical fantasy, implied by the symbolic order in which we live: the unconscious phantasies⁴² of the dominant discourse and their concrete embodiments."⁴³ In post-Lacanian psychoanalytic theory the imaginary often becomes a potentially subversive register: it is made of unconscious fantasies (often connected to the pre-oedipal stage) that shape and influence the symbolic structures in which they are (more or less secretly) inscribed. This concept of the imaginary enables theory to conceptualise the field of meaning as more flexible, heterogeneous, and changing; open and flexible enough to be able to account for such divergences from dominant (thoroughly oedipalised) discourses as *Orlando*.

The way the imaginary works according to Lacan – that it disregards logic and dichotomies, that it is entirely pleasure-driven, that it knows no lack, that it is always being related to the (m)other, to the loved one – seems to be very similar to the way *Orlando* works. One of the notable places that can strongly support the interpretation of the novel as a discourse strongly influenced by the imaginary, the body, and desire is the scene in which Orlando changes sex. Obviously, in *Orlando* "the boundaries of gender itself are challenged, carnivalized, and exposed as arbitrary social constructions" (Booker 163), so much so that one has the feeling that "Woolf also prefigures Lacan in her emphasis on the multiple and split nature of the psyche."⁴⁴ By way of changing his sex (and by way of keeping his/her gender identity undecidable), Orlando successfully avoids a fixed, 'proper' place and identity in the symbolic order and marks his/her affinity with another, more open and heterogeneous signifying economy. Together with Irigaray, in whose writings the demarcation between the imaginary and the symbolic becomes blurred, I would argue that the idea of a female imaginary is not only theoretically feasible, but also entails the possibility of a female symbolic, that is, a relatively different symbolic order influenced and shaped by the fundamental fantasies of a female imaginary. I agree with Whitford that "one cannot think the

41. Whitford, "Rereading Irigaray," p. 118.

42. In Lacan, 'phantasy' is a psychoanalytical *terminus technicus* that usually refers specifically to unconscious phantasies, while 'fantasy' is used in a more general sense.

43. Whitford, "Rereading Irigaray," p. 118.

44. Booker, p. 181.

female imaginary without thinking the female symbolic,"⁴⁵ and if the body shapes thinking and fantasies as Peter Brooks argues,⁴⁶ then characteristically different bodies may shape thinking in characteristically different ways.

Metonymic Speech and the Body

From the perspective of the above theoretical considerations *Orlando* appears like a highly eroticised text where (in the constitutive distance from the phallus) the imaginary, the unconscious, and the drives of the body take unusually active parts in producing joyful, disseminative writing. It may be fruitful to recall at this point that Barthes's favourite metaphor in the description of the pleasure of the text is also the eroticised body:

Is not the most erotic portion of the body *where the garment gapes?* . . . it is intermittence, as psychoanalysis has so rightly stated, which is erotic: the intermittence of skin flashing between two articles of clothing (trousers and sweater), between two edges (the open-necked shirt, the glove and the sleeve); it is this flash itself which seduces, or rather: the staging of an appearance-as-disappearance.⁴⁷

One may perceive a very similar economy of pleasure, seeing, and knowledge in *Orlando*: the play of showing and concealing the object of desire and/or knowledge is a recurrent strategy (such as in the descriptions of Orlando or the Russian princess), but this strategy also seems to regulate the relationship of the Law and the subject of pleasure, or the economy of knowledge and uncertainty. That is the reason why omission becomes one of the most important rhetorical vehicles of the novel: the reader often does not get fully satisfying descriptions, explanations, or motivations of characters of the kind that realism made us grow accustomed to. Consequently, *Orlando* creates the impression that there is nothing like ultimate truth, psychological coherence, or a deep essential logic behind events. The same may be said about the erotic parts: it is not only in the more intimate scenes that the narrator cuts away, but she also avoids the overtly erotic parts in the (frequent) descriptions of Orlando's body.

One of the most conspicuous poetic vehicles of the text is in close connection with this. In the subtly eroticised text of *Orlando* the object of desire is something highly rhetorical and figurative. We never see 'the essential thing' or the ultimate truth in its 'nakedness': things are always covered, displaced, substituted by decep-

45. Whitford, "Rereading Irigaray," p. 118.

46. Brooks, p. 17.

47. Barthes, pp. 9–10.

tive figurations. The text, in a radically anti-essentialist manner, keeps talking about Orlando's *body* instead of him/her. However, Orlando's body is not shown naked either; the most often used metonymy (or synecdoche) of his/her body is that of the legs, which appear many times and often play important roles in the story. Sometimes, however, the text does not stop even here, but talks about desire through another metonymy – Orlando's clothes. This is another sense in which the novel establishes the discourse of the body: the signs of the novel are written on the bodies of the characters. In other words, the text (dis-)places the object of desire (and knowledge together with it) in a series of substitutions, displacements, metaphors and metonymies.

The scene when Orlando meets Queen Elizabeth may be a fine example. In the discourse of the body in general, and here as well, the spectacle is of prime importance, as the desired body is put on stage in the field of vision. The importance of the sight of the body and the logic of metonymy are spectacularly connected here:

Such was his [Orlando's] shyness that he saw no more of her [the Queen] than her ringed hand in water; but it was enough. It was a memorable hand; a thin hand with long fingers always curling as if round orb or sceptre; a nervous, crabbed, sickly hand; a commanding hand, too; a hand that had only to raise itself for a head to fall; a hand, he guessed, attached to an old body that smelt like a cupboard in which furs are kept in camphor; which body was yet caparisoned in all sorts of brocades and gems; and held itself very upright though perhaps in pain from sciatica; and never flinched though strung together by a thousand fears; and the Queen's eyes were light yellow.⁴⁸

The passage illustrates perfectly how the body speaks. Basically it uses metonymies, and with the help of synecdoches it shows the whole in the part. If one is to believe Freud and Barthes, behind this characteristic of the discourse of the body one finds the prohibition of showing the whole and the naked: revealing the ultimate object of desire is not only a blasphemy, a taboo, but more importantly an essentialist gesture of someone (like Nietzsche's "dogmatic philosopher" in *Beyond Good and Evil*) who does not know anything about woman or knowing. Such a clumsy (essentialist, dogmatic, metaphysical) gesture could no doubt extinguish desire. It is also interesting in the above passage that even death is signified by a synecdoche from the field of the body, when instead of an execution it mentions the fall of a head.

One might ask why this high extent of rhetoricity and figuration is there in the representation of the Queen, why the signifying chain is extended to such a length

48. Woolf, pp. 16–17.

by the metonymies of the body. The Queen is not the object of desire for Orlando, or for the narrator. I think it is exactly this characteristic of the text that should call our attention to the importance of the Queen's character. The Queen as a symbol may signify the great mother (of life), the starting-point of all life and things, power, wisdom, and the *phallus*. She is the one who donates lands to Orlando, to her favourite; in a way she is the one who sets the story off. She is the ancestress and the donor of Orlando's story, and as there is not much about Orlando's mother in the novel, she also fulfils that function. In other words, it is the main character of the imaginary that the reader meets here, the (pre-oedipal, 'phallic') mother. The attention paid to her hand may also suggest that the figure of the Queen may also represent the Writer: she is the origin of the story, she loves Orlando, and decides in questions of life and death by a movement of her fingers.⁴⁹ This is the reason why the Queen cannot be caught sight of, why she cannot be touched and why all the vehicles of rhetorics are there: her immediate presence would stop words and signification, her sight would freeze the narrative.

The discourse of the body has another feature that may be relevant in this context. According to French feminist thinkers, the body (and its drives) can be a place of resistance to the symbolic order. It may resist the 'proper' places and meanings prescribed for it, it differs from them, always threatens with transgression, and keeps producing a surplus of (semiotic) meaning that cannot be integrated into the symbolic. As Brooks argues, the body "often presents us with a fall from language, a return to an infantile pre-symbolic space in which primal drives reassert their force. Yet the earliest infantile experiences . . . may be foundational of all symbolism."⁵⁰

This is where the body as the place of transgressing the symbolic meets the body as the foundation of symbolism. In the child's world the main analogy for the understanding of experience is the body. That is the reason why the language of returning to the pre-oedipal world of the girl child can also be described as the language of the body. Therefore this textual strategy cannot only be regarded as a return to the early stages of the psyche, but also to one of the early stages of language. Language was partly built of the body, when it was built on it to hide it. And as the mother is ever present behind language, as source, inspiration and something to conceal, so is the body:

49. I am grateful to the editors of *The AnaChronisT* for pointing this out for me.

50. Brooks, p. 7. It may be worth noting apropos of this quotation that metaphorisation's being based on bodily phenomena does not mean biological determinism: a given bodily phenomenon may be used for different metaphors of different meanings. Therefore, at this point Brooks seems to be compatible with French feminism and my own argument about the role of the body in the novel.

the body furnishes the building blocks of symbolisation, and eventually of language itself, which then takes us away from the body, but always in a tension that reminds us that mind and language need to recover the body as an otherness that is somehow primary to their very definition. . . . the body as at once a cultural construct and its other, something outside of language that language struggles to mark and to be embodied in.⁵¹

As the Woolf-passage quoted above may indicate, the basic trope of the discourse of the body is metonymy. Of the two basic psychical mechanisms of the unconscious in Freudian psychoanalysis – condensation and displacement – it can be connected to the latter, which Lacan explicitly connects to the way desire works.⁵² The main idea of displacement – like that of a metonymy – is to transfer a thing's meaning to another thing in close connection with it, and to conceal the first thing/signifier by this. It is also important, that there is no hierarchical relation between the two things; the old and the new signifiers (unlike in the case of a metaphor or condensation), are both on the same level. “Little Hans” in Freud's famous case-study uses a metonymy when he transfers his hatred and fear of his father – which he feels in the street when walking with him – to the horses he sees there in almost the same way as Woolf does when talking about Orlando's stockings instead of talking about his/her body. In the first case it is rather fear or anxiety that drives or moves forward the signifying chain, while in the second it is desire.

If a piece of text is metonymic, one of the first things that may draw one's attention to this fact is the lack of hierarchical relations. The individual episodes cannot be connected to anything common floating somewhere above them as an omniscient perspective, it is not inner affinity that connects them, but rather their succession in time, or the presence of the main character('s body). These texts do not have any parts standing above or structuring the others, like the last two lines of the Shakespearean sonnet or the final outcome of the *Bildungsroman*. Of course, this brings about the freedom and playfulness of meanings, since the individual episodes may live their own lives without being limited by anything external to them. In the metonymic text meaning is less centred, more fluid, constantly on the move. *Orlando* does not take even its own figures of speech seriously; it often forgets them and starts creating new ones which do not necessarily converge with the previous ones. The situation is very similar in the case of the character of the protagonist. Metonymic texts are anti-essentialist; they deny all forms and notions of essence behind the surface that could limit the free play of meanings coming from the body, and as such they also subvert the idea of any coherent self. In one of the *par excel-*

51. Brooks, pp. xii–xiii.

52. Lacan, *Écrits* p. 176.

lence metonymic genres – that is, the already mentioned picaresque – one cannot find characters with psychological “depth.” Voltaire’s *Candide* or Sade’s *Justine* are not “deeply” characterised protagonists. Orlando is their true companion in this respect. These characters seem to lack what is so central in European thinking, the Cartesian core of the personality that would hold them together, make them self-identical, and would keep them from changing in space and time, under different circumstances. These typical, metonymically structured anti-heroes may represent the repressed *other* side of our traditional (metaphysical, phallogocentric) view of the self.

The influence of history and external circumstances on Orlando’s personality are often mentioned and demonstrated in the novel. Orlando changes together with the world; his/her nature, temperament and behaviour are determined by these “external” conditions, for example by his/her clothes. The novel talks about Orlando’s variety of selves over many pages. The only problem (Orlando’s only problem) is that (s)he cannot find a central (Cartesian) self that would unite or organise the others:

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

‘All right then,’ Orlando said, with the good humour people practice on these occasions; and tried another. For she had a great variety of selves to call upon, far more than we have been able to find room for, since a biography is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have as many thousand. Choosing then only those selves we have found room for, Orlando may now have called on the boy who cut the nigger’s head down; the boy who strung it up again; the boy who sat on the hill; the boy who saw the poet; the boy who handed the Queen the bowl of rose water. . .

Perhaps; but what appeared certain (for now we are in the region of ‘perhaps’ and ‘appears’) was that the one that she needed most kept aloof, for she was, to hear her talk, changing her selves as quickly as she drove – there was a new one at every corner – as happens when, for some unaccountable reason, the conscious self, which is the uppermost, and has the power to desire, wishes to be nothing but one self. This is what some people call the true self, and it is, they say, compact of all the selves we have it in us to be; commanded and locked up by the Captain self, the Key self, which amalgamates and controls them all. Orlando was certainly seeking this self. . .⁵³

53. Woolf, pp. 213–214.

Thus, Orlando's identity is an open one, it is formed by accidental circumstances, and there is no "Captain-self" that would control the others. One gets to know most about Orlando from the style and the metonymies of the text: from the image of the castle that (s)he lives in, that of the oak tree that (s)he likes lying under, and the poem *The Oak Tree* that (s)he has written and always keeps by. In this respect (s)he resembles the novel too: in its metonymic slidings and displacements the basic constituents of 'proper' symbolic systems (such as the binary oppositions of essence and appearance, male and female, or internal and external) are dislocated. In *Orlando* the "one of form, of the individual, of the (male) sexual organ, of the proper name, of the proper meaning" that Irigaray lists in *This Sex* as the characteristics of patriarchal phallogormorphism⁵⁴ are all missing. The difference between appearance and essence collapses, and the subject is always only what we can see at the moment, in that particular situation. The subject is neither a master of being, nor that of the world: (s)he is inseparable from it, has no existence without it.

Conclusions

In his already quoted essay "Structure, Sign and Play" Derrida names two (more or less) psychoanalytical terms, joy and anxiety, as the main modes of the subject's possible relation to structurality.⁵⁵ He argues that "anxiety is invariably the result of a certain mode of being implicated in the game, being caught by the game,"⁵⁶ and the reason why philosophy favours fundamental grounds and centred structures is that through these anxiety can be mastered.⁵⁷ This is a point that Freud, who connected civilisation with a necessary amount of repression, discontent, and anxiety, would definitely agree with. Nevertheless, anxiety is not the only possible way of relating to structure, meaning, civilisation, or the symbolic. Following Nietzsche, Derrida argues that joy and play are also crucial, because (while anxiety and centring lead to a closure of meaning) these are the drives of the production of the new.⁵⁸ Towards the end of his essay Derrida distinguishes between "two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, of play,"⁵⁹ one driven more by anxiety, the other driven more by a joyful free play of the signifier.

In my opinion, Derrida makes a point that is most relevant for psychoanalysis, literature, and feminism: his model may also indicate that different texts can relate

54. Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, p. 26.

55. Derrida, pp. 279–280.

56. Derrida, p. 279.

57. Derrida, p. 279.

58. Derrida, p. 292.

59. Derrida, p. 292.

to the paternal function in different ways, some through more anxiety (that is, more submission to the Law of repression and sublimation), some through more joy and play (less submission to the Law). In more Freudian terms this would mean that some texts are more inspired by the Superego, some more by the Unconscious. If one compares the description of the Unconscious in Freud with what has been established about *Orlando*, this analogy definitely seems to stand: the lack of logical contradiction, the lack of 'normal' time, the primacy of the Pleasure Principle all seem to fit the novel well. These theoretical considerations seem to be in accord with the theories of Kristeva and (more importantly) of Irigaray, who are looking for ways of conceptualising textual and symbolic economies that are less strictly phallogocentric. Irigaray's concepts of feminine writing and *parler-entre-elles* seem to be particularly useful metaphors for understanding how such a 'female' symbolic economy is possible in *Orlando*, where it is also connected to a privileging of metonymy over metaphor, desire and joy over anxiety, and the discourse of the eroticised body over the disembodied (Cartesian) mind.