

HEDONISM VERSES QUEER NARRATIVES: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF ORLANDO BY VIRGINIA WOLFE AND THE CITY OF DEVI BY MANIL SURI

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Abstract

Queer theory comes in as a perspective for understanding gender and sexuality and sheds light upon oppressive sexual politics. The anatomical structure of the human body brings certain shackles with it. Ironically, these shackles define every heap of flesh as an individual and simultaneously are manmade horrors that continue to illuminate human existence with a shade of guilt and shame. Anatomy being the divine intervention between how proximity increases and decreases among human beings. Futile minds of present and past generations have made the mistake of attaching prestige to flesh as a form of pleasure and the price of this pleasure increases every time an individual stands up and stirs rebellion regarding their body as their identity marker and their method of pleasure seeking.

Keywords: Queer, Anatomy, Pleasure, Gender and Individuality

1.1 Introduction

According to the present century, the act of queerness means the act of representation where a person is unconsciously running after a projection of unfulfilled desires. Furthermore, after being classified by Foucault as a different species altogether, a very troubling aspect is the notion that people identified in terms of a number of sexualities not only destabilize oppositional categories of heterosexuality but also same sex labels of gay and lesbian etc. Thriving in its own paradox, Queer theory is playing to make two impossible ends meet where it plays the part of covering grey areas and simultaneously misnaming semantics through its own characteristics. (Goldman & Wolfreys, 225) To ease the tension between two drastic oppositions, Butler classifies gender as a societal construct altogether since the moment you say the word queer, you are calling into question what you mean. According to Goldman and Wolfreys, "Queer intervenes in already familiar debates, particularly the projects preoccupying feminist and gender studies to separate gender and sexuality and the issues regarding the politics of subjectivity (essentialist/ construction) of identity difference of modern/postmodern, of sexuality and textuality of margins and center, of race, class representation and so on. (226)

1.2 Theoretical Framework

The human body is inherently political. Every time an individual chooses to identify with a certain gender and chooses a sexual identity, intentionally or unintentionally they submit to the rules and regulations of those sets of individuals. *Orlando* by Virginia Wolfe began as an explosion regarding gender and sexuality. Wolfe makes sure that the dynamics of her protagonist's characteristics never go unnoticed despite the uproar that she gave birth to a very tricky ideology and that ideology being that looking at people as beings and stripping them of their gender still leaves room for them to be called as individuals. Since identity does not come from conforming to any set rules or regulations but a sound idea that there exists no falsehood regarding all that matters in the realms of personhood. It is essences that matter and the very essence of a person comes from their own self-awareness and consciousness rather than their biology or their tendencies to stick with certain desires while discarding others. As humans, we have been made to believe that there lies no attraction outside of our proposed sexes and personhood only exists when our gender and sexuality are coherent with a dominant belief of how they should be rather than how we want them to be. Our perception of ourselves comes from shared beliefs rather than our own sensory experience and Wolfe wants us to feel this heavy burden that we have entrusted upon ourselves of the fear of uncertainty and disbelief that lies beyond the set parameters of intimacy and desire.

1.3 Literature Review

Though Knopp begs to differ and calls it Wolfe's own flawed sense of bereavement regarding a failed marriage that led her to fall prey to set of affairs with various women of power. Since they

supported her self-interest of always having an upper hand in the literary world of the Victorian era, reason ceases to support her quest in bringing a sense of emancipation regarding the fluidity of sexuality. She wants the stage to be set on the flaws of leaving heterosexuality and the shackles that Wolfe put around her career for the sake of having a love affair with Vita Sackville who was a renowned Victorian poet and writer.

Through Orlando Wolfe puts a spell of disentanglement on her reader when it comes to understanding their sexuality and this is evident through the likes of an enormous amount of stress she puts in her war of words between the society and personal identity. Wolfe articulates, "He--for there could be no doubt of 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." (5) The life and times of Wolfe are evident to personify Wolfe's stance as a writer who celebrates the complexity of being and takes it as a challenge. Her words serve as written instructions written with caution and deep breaths for the reader to take in. When Orlando, a young boy, born in a noble Victorian household begins his journey as a person who wants to follow in his father's footsteps and slice off the heads of African savages. Wolfe justifies that in everyday routine actions of our lives, the things we choose to do subtly point towards our sexuality in one way or the other and our whole biography can be traced down from the most minute details of how a water droplet trickles down our cheek to the more savage or violent of beginnings where we slice off a person's head therefore sexuality and individuality are interdependent but they are not the same. While Manil Suri in *The City of Devi* puts in a good word for his character Ijaz who sets out to follow in the footsteps of his sexual desires even when the world is ending around him. He does not pay heed to building a character who looks beyond the veneer of body and flesh but prizes instant gratification over everything else as these lines suggest, "To think that a single chance encounter has led to this wood and metal coffin in which I brace for my doom. Sweet, innocent Karun, as alluring as a blossom of the deadly Datura and about as harmless. Samson had his Delilah, Adam his Eve, and the Jazter had you." (70) Ijaz, who is a gay Muslim individual, in Suri's novel is in a time of calamity as the world around him is getting destroyed because of enemy forces. He wants his world to be a satiation of his desires rather than something beyond the physicality of emotions. While Wolfe wants the protagonist to set foot as a naïve explorer in the ridiculousness of the world that turns into meaning, Suri wraps it up into a ball of intensified emotions that signify nothing.

Burns notes, "In her novel is destabilized and turns into parody through an emphasis fashions, cross-dressing, and undressing of "essential" bodies." (343) Burns calls Wolfe's *Orlando* a parodic biography since Wolfe mocks every aspect of the Victorian society except the individual. Wolfe excitedly denounces Orlando's sex change "Orlando stretched himself. He rose. He stood upright in complete nakedness before us, and while the trumpets pealed Truth! Truth! we have no choice left but confess-he was a woman." (137)

After living the life of an English nobleman Orlando served as an ambassador to Turkey during the reign of Charles and during this time, he became a woman. Burns narrative of Wolfe being a parodic writer stands true since the spirits of Purity, Chastity and Honesty come as witnesses to Orlando's sex change and even then, nothing changes in the characteristics of Orlando. Virginia wanted to reveal the truth behind the sense of self of every person which surpasses their gender and their sexuality and if nothing changes then what is the one true identity marker of a person. Which also points towards the question: why was Wolfe so profusely set on proving that gender is not an identity marker of an individual? Perhaps it is something else, if not gender that serves as an identity marker. If we put aside the body of a person then comes their worldly belongings and most important of all is the way they dress and their clothes as Orlando says, "Often only the clothes that keep male and female likeness". (186) Orlando wears women's clothing but often goes around wearing men's clothing and to his/her dismay no one really notices. The society identifies your gender through your clothes but not yourself according to Wolfe. Wolfe being the best of parodic writers, questions whether it is the clothes that wear us or do we wear clothes. She mocks Victorian society to the construction of its cathedrals to the smallest pin tucked in a pin cushion to emphasize the flaws in everyday social constructions of norms and values.

1.4 Analysis

Furthermore, when Orlando becomes a woman his/her memory still remain the same but even memory does not matter in terms of identification. The only true marker of Orlando's essence or internal state of affairs is the Oak tree according to Wolfe and that is Orlando's true identity marker. An autobiographical poem called the Oak tree is published by Orlando at the end of his/her exploration of the self. As the philosophy of essence suggests, this motif serves as the identity marker of Orlando's true nature. If, say a person's leg is amputated or their memory is taken away does that person become a different person? They certainly do not since there is something that they are passionate about that carries their spirit and in case of Orlando it was the art of writing. Orlando as a character fulfills the

criteria of humanness that needs to be fulfilled. If the same method of identification is applied to Suri's character Ijaz and the wish to pull out his essential self is made: there is little or no room for improvement. Ijaz as a young teenager could not identify with any group so his parents took him back to his Indian Muslim roots.

"To Mother India this time, which would unscramble my identity, fill my heart with pride in who I was, where I came from. That's how the young and still impressionable Jaz found himself sitting in the green-walled annex to the Byculla mosque in Bombay, fitted with a skullcap and equipped with a Koran." (78)

In our part of the world, religious doctrine, comes as the knight in shining armor for those who wish to find a direction in life and they are almost never left to their own devices out of the fear of a never-ending existential crisis and suicide. Ijaz's character has no core, all his actions convey the same meaning that above all pleasure and desire are to be worshipped and nothing can be compared to the satisfaction that one gets through the consummation of physical needs. He says, "Suddenly I didn't feel hopeless, suddenly I found myself in control, suddenly the answers to all my questions popped and burst like fireworks. My identity flashed on, my confidence powered up, the path to my fulfillment in life blazed in the sun." (78)

After having his first sexual encounter with another male cousin, he found the answer to all life's problems. Suri, not only left a grey area in identity formation but also marked the land for judgement to pour in when he constructed a character with scarce intellectual tendencies and a big room for sexual desires. He is reinforcing gender stereotypes through the likes of his work. According to Ijaz's character, there is no need for homosexuals to look for meaning in life since pleasure seeking is what they are born to do and they should look forward to it only. Meaning is being derived from a deprivation from a sense of belonging and that being said, other interpretations about life are futile.

For Orlando, attraction does not come as a solution to all that remains unsolved in the mind and heart rather it serves as a spark for future clarity and as a lesson to be learned when it comes to human interaction. After being married to an English noblewoman of a very high stature when Orlando was a man. He fell in love with a Russian princess named Sasha. The intriguing part being that he fell in love with the person without gender in question. At first, he thought she was a man because of her heterogeneous clothing. (38) Later on, closer to the start of the twentieth century, homosexual love is also accepted by him by a man named Harry who was disguised as a woman named Harriet. (115) Orlando subdued his/herself to the spirit of the times when it came to courtship or the general demeanor of being with someone but he chose his attractions by his own free will while Ijaz subdued his attraction the millennial mindset of mindlessly choosing sexual partners since the society has given a deviant label anyway to the one who bears the mark of being a homosexual.

Though this argument points towards a complex phenomenon, if the problem is not whether you choose to identify as a man or a woman then why does judgement follow suit if your biological attire does not match your physical attire. Wolfe, being one of the best feminist writers, conceptualized androgyny as an ultimate solution to personal identification. If it is characteristics that define one's essence then simply put all human beings have masculine and feminine characteristics which break binaries of gay and lesbian as well. It is unclear whether Orlando is a man or a woman, the reason being that Wolfe wanted his/her characteristics to be a bundle of both sexes and still continue to function in the society as an individual. (Rado, 1997) Though societal constraints still make life difficult for Orlando, an androgynous discourse of this character provides clarity regarding pragmatics of the novel.

Wolfe wanted the world to know that to reach the epitome of human productivity and art, one must embrace both their male and female characteristics. If Orlando and all the major characters in Orlando are seen as androgynous beings instead of men or women or homosexuals, we can get closer to solving the delinquency of Queer identity as a derogatory phenomenon. To leave the shackles of female subjectivity in the Victorian era, Wolfe theorized sexual indeterminacy as a celebration of the human spirit. Orlando's father was a nobleman who took pride in taking the lives of savages while his mother was a cold, and beautiful woman who was distant from him. (50) Both these extremities of character disturbed him as a young boy that is why he looked forward to the life of androgyny. When he meets the love of his life Sasha, it is not that she is a fairly beautiful woman unlike any other woman that Orlando has ever seen. She had masculine legs and feminine eyes and breasts. (36) It is only because she invokes in him the desire for transcendence beyond male or female embodiment of power and beauty. "Images, metaphors of the most extreme and extravagant twined and twisted in his mind" (37)

Therefore, Orlando was not only sexually aroused by Sasha, there was a satiation of an aesthetic pleasure that he got from coming to close proximity to someone who embodied a similar androgynous attire like him. Sasha was Russian, strong built, and could skate like anything on the ice

and this excited his imagination. (47) His own sexuality has always been kept disguised by Wolfe, the reason is: she wanted it to be left to the reader's imagination whether strength is a male or female characteristic or a combination of the two. There is no visual description of Orlando except his face and legs while his sex is left disguised. (13)

In his next encounter with Archduchess Harriet, who Orlando called a six-foot hare. Orlando starts falling for Harriet's physical embodiment since there was something about this disproportionate body that evoked his sexual desires and this displeased him heavily. For Orlando, his writings and art were far more a greater priority than physical likeness and he called the feelings for Harriet, a bird of lust rather than love. (116) Then he fled to Constantinople but escaping the body is not that easy. While Harriet is still chasing after him, he has another affair with a woman while his surroundings are hit by a flood.

This follows Orlando's ultimate escape of transforming his sex in order to escape the burdens of sexual desires that is when he becomes a woman. The emphasis is more on his spiritual transformation rather than physical since the spirits of Purity, Chastity and Modesty serve as motifs for disengaging Orlando from the physical realm and even after his transformation into her, the description is of a naked body rather than any detail of sex or sexuality which the narrator calls as an odious object to be quitted. (137)

For Orlando, another aspect of his personality greatly veils his sexual desires and that is a likeness of low company. Orlando belongs to the upper class but he spends most of his time with common people. He likes observing the poor poet with his beer in hand and he escapes a royal ball with Sasha to attend the London carnival where they find "apprentices; tailors; fishwives; horse dealers; pony catchers; starving scholars; maidservants in their wimples; orange girls; ostlers; sober citizens' bawdy apsters; and a crowd of little ragamuffins". (58) He spends time with the poet Nick Greene as his apprentice even though this poet has quite a low social standing as compared to Orlando. (156) In Constantinople, after becoming a woman Orlando lives among gypsies and follows them around.

This quest was not to repress his/her sexual desires but to observe sexuality from a distance. Orlando spent time with the people whom he/she thought were different versions of him/herself that he did not wish to explore. According to Orlando, there is more to life than instant gratification. As the novel draws to a close, the writer says, "she had only escaped by the skin of her teeth. She had just managed, by some dexterous deference to the spirit of the age ... to pass its examination successfully" (268) Time and time again in the novel, the spirit of the age and Orlando are seen to be on opposing ends, while the lords and ladies of Orlando's times kept their marriage and affairs separate and kept a neat appearance in the public eye. Orlando could not care less about public appearances. He/she defied the spirit of the age in a way that despite courtship and marriage with a number of people, there remained a sense of self separate from his/her partners in which he/she explored various aspects of the sense of self separate from the norms of the society hence the publishing of the poem the Oak tree in apprenticeship of the poet Nick Greene. For Orlando, androgyny came as a celebration of the fusion of sexes. One of the most critiqued passages of the novel as it draws to a close is this,

" as she watched the toy boat climb the ripple, she thought she saw Bonthrop's ship climb up and up a glassy wall; up and up it went, and a white crest with a thousand deaths in it arched over it; and through the thousand deaths it went and disappeared—'It's sunk!' she cried out in agony—and then, behold, there it was again sailing along safe and sound among the ducks on the other side of the Atlantic. 'Ecstasy!' she cried. 'Ecstasy!'" (288)

According to Rado, Wolfe had clearly laid out the gist of her novel as hedonism being a balance between pleasure and pain. Wolfe set out to create a balance between pleasure and pain through an androgynous approach towards life but she failed since she sought more from life than it had to offer in the sphere of logic and reason. (1997) Though what Rado failed to notice was that Wolfe did not mean ecstasy as a physicality of being but as an imaginative phenomenon where the last of her partners, her husband returns from Cape Horn unharmed. Ecstasy here signifies a state of mind which champions imagination over reality and that imagination is not achieved through submission of one's physical desires but through a realization of one's potential as a living being. Wolfe clearly set out to convey that the restraints of patriarchy can be broken if one can draw parallels between him/herself and the society and this is clearly not a hedonistic approach towards life but the realization that pleasure and pain can serve as the motivation to see beyond pleasure and pain into the inner workings of the mind and realize one's true essence.

As for Ijaz, the whole personification of his character reeks of hedonism and that too not positive hedonism but only pleasure as a method of attaining more physical pleasure. Though a strong argument which diminishes Orlando's position as a revolutionary character is that he belonged to the Victorian era and upper class while Ijaz is part of a marginalized minority. Religion did not come as an

issue for Orlando since the attitudes of his time were letting religion take its own course while in the Middle Eastern world, religion can hardly ever be separated from an individual's identity. Religion for Ijaz, served no great value, and it was not an identity marker at all. Him being a Muslim gay man had little to do with his inclusion in a minority group and more to do with his homosexuality. As Rahman points out Muslim gay identities are not monolithic, they are part of the bigger picture and they overlap with other cultures and identities specifically eastern and western identities. (2010)

If the principle of androgyny is applied to Ijaz's character and he is seen as a feminine man with masculine characteristics or vice versa, the vagueness in his identity becomes clear but it also points towards a disturbing state of ambivalence regarding Suri's character development where he is set on reinforcing gay as a confining category of identification rather than as an identity marker stemming from self-determination. He says, "Sex was my true calling, my *raison d'être*—as guilt-free as yoghurt, as natural as rain. Such was the self-affirming sweetness of those days that looking back, even my most brazen exploits seem choreographed by Norman Rockwell himself." (79) These were his words while narrating his story as promiscuous gay man prior to a war that was waged by Pakistan on India. Promiscuity existed in Orlando as well but it did not become the reason for his/her existence. Moreover, when Suri brings to light the life and times of a gay Muslim man in the form of fiction, essentially, he is carving out a caricature of how some people leave their roots and religion behind to live on their own terms. This can be achieved merely by disassociating oneself from their heritage altogether, then why is it that he is stuck being called a Muslim gay man, why not just a gay man or a man or likes other men for that matter. The reason being: once a person's identity is confined to a few predefined labels, it becomes easier to sensationalize their identity for the sake of monetary value of a written work while in the case of Orlando, the sheer audacity of Wolfe's words made it impossible to win her a lot of readers and she won fame almost a century later for her book.

Sexualizing all aspects of life strips meaning from the context all together. Ijaz improvises all the time to find places for him and his partner for intercourse. Of all places, he comes across a central library in Mumbai. "The heart of the city, and no one knows we're up here. This is perfect, I said." (88) For Orlando, intercourse does not come as a reward or punishment for anything, it is an inevitable part of life like many other. For Ijaz, he acts like a jealous woman to his man who he must engage in sexual activities for the sake of making their bond strong.

Although another interesting character development of Queer identities in Suri's work are cross dressers. Ijaz's cousin, who was his first sexual experience is a cross dresser and is also attracted to men. After many years when he meets up with him to take refuge from the war, he is startled at his own choice. He says, "I'm unprepared for how rotund he's become in the decade or so since I last laid eyes on him. His cheeks have acquired an unworldly ruddiness, his lips an ethereal gloss; his mascara addiction, so startling at the party at his house all those years ago, seems decidedly out of control. Could this have really been my first heartthrob?" (96)

People who are not comfortable in their own skin and their biological features exist on the farthest end of the periphery especially in modern day Middle Eastern cultures. In Orlando's time a spectrum of defined or coined terms did not exist to identify such individuals therefore their descriptions remain vague. Ijaz, mistakenly while defining the features of a cross dresser, also beautifully described the ambiguity that lies in physical appearances and sexuality. He admits that he was attracted to a cross dressing man in the past but he is not attracted to women. Therefore, androgyny serves a softer and more humble term in housing all sexualities rather than giving fixed labels to cross dressers such as hermaphrodites. Moreover, even though he is attracted to men, Ijaz notices the detailing in his cousin's makeup and describes it pleasantly which also points towards an androgynous approach to life. Though Ijaz ends up choosing a manly man named Karun as the love of his life who he tries to find in the advent of war. Suri, exemplifies all forms of queer identities through his work but the choice of a dominant homosexual identity over the others points towards a disturbing state of affairs as it points towards one identity being better over the others in terms of social acceptance.

Moreover, a huge niche in the conception of Orlando is homophobia which is hushed away by Wolfe as she wanted to produce an aesthetically pleasing piece of art rather than one with violent experiences as she wanted to elevate androgyny rather than demoralize it through the Victorian society's reaction. Ijaz explains his painful ordeal while dealing with a homophobic land lord, "When I told Harjeet I couldn't imagine having sex with him again, he flew into a rage and punched me in the face, then kicked me several times as I writhed on the ground." (115) Ijaz ends up cheating on his partner with a neighbor's son who is secretly gay but keeps demoralizing Ijaz and Karun since they live in his house and cannot hide that they are gay. Harjeet and his friends make their lives miserable by verbally abusing them and make their lives difficult. Though, one day when Harjeet is drunk he storms in on Ijaz and they have a sexual encounter and Karun ends up leaving Ijaz because of this.

The portrayal of homophobia is dreadfully black and white by Suri. It may stand true for some cases that homophobic people are sexually frustrated therefore they have a deep settled hatred against same sex relationships but the truth of the matter is more violent since it is not only sexual frustration but also a difference of religion, race and class that comes into play. Harjeet was a practicing Sikh and sodomy is considered a sin in all the dominant religions of the world. The act of wrapping things up with a sexual encounter veils the actuality of the situation regarding queer identities and gives way to hedonism as a temporary solution to all related to sexuality that if sexual frustration is the problem it can be curbed with engaging in forceful sex. Pleasure and pain are personified to the extent of human beings in Wolfe's *Orlando* but in case of Ijaz, the ultimate savior and god is pleasure.

Since Wolfe's written work is filled with her stream of consciousness, Orlando engages in little or no dialogue with other people only the ones who have a direct impact on his/her life like the servants in the mansion who are confused when she comes back as a woman. In confusion, they address her as "My lord! My lady" (165) as they are perplexed about his/her gender but no one questions his/her gender. But in case of Ijaz he hides his preferences from Karun's wife, "You mean men? You're asking if I sleep with men? Not that it's any of your business, but no." (120) He hides the intimate details of his life to feed her ignorance regarding her husband's sexuality. While she gives a baffled response to his defensive reply that she got confused about his preferences as his cousin was clearly interested in him when they sought refuge from him.

1.5 Conclusion

Coming out or revealing your sexual preferences has become a taboo for most people but it is met with much discontentment in Ijaz's case and the fact that he makes up elaborate schemes to hide his sexuality reinforces the stigmatization of the society towards non normative sexualities. Suri creates an elaborate storyline to keep his readers thrilled but little does he realize that sexuality serves as a symbol that could turn the tables in terms of discourse since hiding your sexuality points towards a discourse where it is subtly conveyed to the reader that his/her sexuality must always be in coherence with dominant religious or societal beliefs otherwise they have good reason to hide it.

Orlando is not a one dimensional character but someone who evolves from one age to another and one experience to another without any stench of entitlement or made up façade attached to his/her name while Ijaz likes to be known by multiple names like Jazzter and Jazz Bond to make him seem like a trendy gay character who fits the role. He muses "So here I am, moonstruck lover turned action hero—Superman plunging through the air, Jaz Bond dropping into the villain's lair. (Perhaps I could write my Jazternama as a comic strip, ensure the first bestseller after the apocalypse.)" (159) Ijaz thinks these lines to him himself while escaping a life and death situation in a war torn region of India. He gives himself several titles with the prefix of his name to inflate his ego. It fits the storyline but it also sends out the message to the masses that to cover up your sexual orientation you should put up the role of a macho man to ensure better inclusion in others. It also points towards a very unidimensional character that does not evolve through the course of the novel.

As for Orlando, it is already established that the vacillation from one sex to the other gave air to Wolfe's own theory of sexuality in which she is neither man nor woman while she encompasses the strengths and weaknesses of both. (Parkes, 1994) Though there lies still an unexplored realm of female subjectivity where Orlando is seen solely as a lesbian but instead of this being traced back to Wolfe's own misplaced life, it aims to portray the distorted mannerisms of the Victorian patriarchy that are still dominant in almost all regions of the world which affect men and women both. Wolfe wished to demonstrate that no matter what you are man or woman, the patriarchy will way you down if you are a man or woman of substance.

In case of Sasha the one true love of Orlando's life, if Orlando's love for her is seen through a non-heterosexual lens, it gives more meaning to their love affair since as a woman loving a woman she could understand things about Sasha that as a man she could not as these lines suggest, "If the consciousness of being of the same sex had any effect at all, it was to quicken and deepen those feelings which she had had as a man. For now, a thousand hints and mysteries became plain to her that were then dark ... At last, she cried, she knew Sasha as she was." (165) Wolfe being one of the best parodic and witty writers of the century mocked the way love was seen in the Victorian society as with Orlando's hilarious encounter with Arch duke Harry who gave up his disguise as woman when he learned that Orlando is now a woman and after exchanging the vows of love with one another Orlando exclaimed that if this is what love is supposed to be, it is ridiculous. (156) Through these lines Wolfe wanted to irradiate that if what is between a man and woman can only be called love then so be it, both of them will perpetually keep changing roles as man or woman until one or the two get tired of one another.

Wolfe's best mockery is of the ultimate Victorian rule for a woman to get married and bear a child and so Orlando did but it did not pacify Orlando's character rather it added more to his/her life

experience as Wolfe exclaims that marriage was only a solution for the sensation Orlando felt on her ring finger and once Orlando got married that sensation was gone. Her marriage with Shelmerdine was a success even though both their sexes remained ambiguous. Thus, according to Wolfe there is no substance in the conventionalities of a society and neither does marriage or the succession of a ring on one's finger bring about any change in one's persona as a man or a woman. Marriage is nothing more than a written contract on paper.

If the binaries of gender are broken, sexuality comes into question and if sexuality is also defined as a predominantly social construct then what is the ultimate marker of one's identity. While Suri reinforced gender stereotypes through his work, Wolfe brought about a collective consciousness of how much of our self is truly ours whilst how much of it is defined by the society. For Orlando, the quest for an identity precedes time and space while for Ijaz his identity is the identity in fashion with the present-day century. Then again for Orlando, nothing remains in the end neither his/her gender or sex or the way he/she dresses all that remains is the essence of the word Orlando, that is the only consistent identity mark of Orlando is the name that which is unlike any other and symbolically it aims to represent two meanings: one is the autobiography of Orlando and the other that life exists outside of the cycle of pleasure and pain only if living beings come to realize their essences that surpass bodily capabilities. The flesh, memory and the sensation of physical pleasure is only a mark of appearance while different flavors of consciousness that reside beyond a physical realm truly define a person.

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