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The Concept of Time in Virginia Woolf's Novels (Orlando, The Waves)

Koncepce času v románech Virginie Woolfové (Orlando, Vlny)

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Abstract

The focus of this Diploma Thesis is the work of Virginia Woolf as a representative of the literary modernism in England between the two World Wars. The Thesis also deals with the diaries of the famous writer, and it defines the basic philosophical concepts in the modernist experiment (concept of time, stream of consciousness technique) on the basis of the reading and analysis of her late novels.

Key words: Virginia Woolf, The Waves, Orlando, Modernism, Time, Stream of consciousness

Anotace

Předmětem zkoumání diplomové práce je románová tvorba Virginie Woolfové jako představitelky literárního modernismu v Anglii v meziválečném období. Práce se dále bude zabývat deníky známé autorky a na základě četby a rozboru pozdních románů V. Woolfové práce následně definuje základní filozofické koncepce v modernistickém experimentu (pojetí času a metoda proudu vědomí).

Klíčová slova: Virginia Woolfová, Vlny, Orlando, modernismus, čas, proud vědomí

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1. Introduction

I encountered the name of the writer Virginia Woolf for the first time due to the novel by Michael Cunningham, *The Hours*, when I was at the secondary school. I was interested in the book and I was fascinated by the fact that the author used a real writer in his work. I also wondered if Michael Cunningham somehow adjusted Woolf's life and her character for the purpose of his novel, or whether her life was really as he described it and as so serious and depressive all the time. Since then, I have wanted to know more about Virginia Woolf, and I have read some of her fiction. Later, I discovered her life story was very interesting and not as entirely described in *The Hours*, since the writer was focusing mainly on the topic of suicide in his fiction novel. Obviously, I had to encounter Woolf's name again when I was studying British literature, and when I was considering the topic of my Master's Thesis, I wanted to write about this strong and fascinating woman and her experimental fiction.

The topic of this Master's Thesis is the concept of time in the two novels of Virginia Woolf – *The Waves* and *Orlando. A Biography*. I try to put both novels into the context of the era when they were written and also into the context of Virginia Woolf's life. For this section, the biggest help was the book *A Writer's Diary* - a compilation of her own diaries selected by Virginia's husband Leonard Woolf after her death. When this book was published for the first time, many people mentioned in Woolf's diaries were still alive and it could not be published, so Leonard chose mainly the parts of her diaries which depicted Virginia as a writer. I used this book to put the novels and also her life into more complex framework.

First part of my paper is dedicated to Virginia Woolf herself. We cannot explore her work without knowing at least some basic facts about her life which was very complicated and interesting. It was very inspiring and helpful to read Woolf's biography by Hermione Lee, not only because this book is very thorough but also it is very entertaining and well-written. Another useful biography was a book by Virginia's nephew Quentin Bell.

The next part focuses on one very important part of her life which is the

Bloomsbury group. A group of friends and intellectuals met in Bloomsbury, a part of London, and discussed politics, philosophy, and other quite controversial topics. Among the members of this interesting and often extravagant group were many famous people, mainly Thoby, Virginia's brother, friends from Cambridge and friends of their friends. At their time they were not considered as proper society, their lives were scandalous and they wanted to break many taboos.

The aim of the fourth chapter is to summarize the modernist movement. I will concentrate on modernism as a cultural movement in literature and its features such as modernist experiments or the stream of consciousness. However, it is quite difficult to describe entire Modernism because it was very heterogeneous movement and their main common feature was that they wanted to do things and consider everything differently. They defined themselves mainly in opposition to the realism of the Victorian period.

The following chapter concerns a mock biography of *Orlando* (1928). It contains four sections. It begins with the diary entries about the novel, *Orlando*. The next part explains the plot as it is necessary to know the story of the novel when we want to analyse it. The third part is dedicated to the concept of time. It shows the devices used for expressing time and Woolf's perception of time. The last part of this chapter focuses on the modernist experiments involved in this piece of fiction. I analyse Woolf's usage of the stream of consciousness. For this section I used the Vintage Classics edition from 2004.

Sixth chapter is dedicated to the second examined novel – *The Waves* (1931) - and the structure is similar to the previous chapter. First, it contains the diary entries concerning the novel. In the next part, I briefly mention the structure of the novel which is more difficult to describe than in *Orlando* because the point of view here shifts very quickly from one character to another. Then, I examine the concept of time that is also different from *Orlando* because the duration of the novel includes only a human life, but the novel is also a metaphor of a human life as a day. In the last part of this chapter, I want to show how the stream of consciousness is performed. For this chapter I worked with the Penguin Classics edition from 1992.

In the final chapter I summarize the findings, compare both novels, and search for similarities and differences in their depiction of the passing time and also

in the usage of the stream of consciousness. The analysis of the novels and the concept of time will be based on the quotations from both novels.

2. Virginia Woolf (1882 - 1941)

2.1. Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf is one of the most outstanding female writers of the first half of the 20th century. She was not only a writer, but also a literary critic, a biographer and a feminist. Although her life was very complicated and sorrowful at times, she was a very strong and witty woman. Unfortunately, it was not enough, she suffered from a mental illness - bipolar disorder all her life, and tried to commit suicide several times. Finally, she drowned herself in the river Ouse in 1941. She herself used some of experiences from her life, her friends, and acquaintances in her fiction:

“Jacob’s Room is as full of Thoby Stephen as The Voyage Out is of Virginia’s painful adolescence, and Night and Day is of her sister’s character, her family, past, and her decision to marry.”¹

Or, for instance, her novel *Orlando* which is the concern of this Thesis is also called a love letter to her close friend Vita Sackville-West to whom the book is dedicated.

2.2 Woolf’s Parents

Adeline Virginia Stephen was born into an upper-middle class family of Leslie and Julia Stephen. Leslie Stephen was a typical Victorian man. He believed that a man is superior and socially more important, and a woman should serve him and help him with his career. He was also a writer – the editor of *The Dictionary of National Biography*.²

Both of her parents were married for the second time. Leslie’s first wife was the younger daughter of William Makepeace Thackeray, Harriet Marian. They had a

1 LEE, H., Virginia Woolf. London: The Random House Group Limited, 1997, p. 436.

2 BELL, Q., Virginia Woolf. A Biography. Volume I: Virginia Stephen 1882 to 1912. London: The Hogarth Press, 1973, p. 10.

daughter, Laura, who was psychically ill. She probably inherited some kind of mental disorder.³ In 1875 Harriet died, and Leslie became a widower. He was very upset by the death of his wife and also by the state of mind of their daughter Laura.⁴

Julia had been married before too. Her husband died, and Julia Duckworth was left alone with three children (Stella, George, and Gerald). Julia, as a family friend, helped Leslie to deal with the tragedy, and they both gradually fell in love and got married in March 1876.⁵ Julia and Leslie had four children together – Vanessa (1879), Thoby (1880), Adeline Virginia (1882), and later Adrian (1883).⁶

2.3 Woolf's Childhood

Virginia Stephen was born on 26th January 1882 at No 22 Hyde Park Gate in London. The house was occupied by many people – there were the parents, her half-brothers and a half-sister, and also her siblings (besides Laura who lived apart from the family).⁷ All children in the family were rather active members, even children wanted to contribute somehow to the family life and between 1891 and 1895, Virginia and Thoby wrote and issued their own newspaper called *The Hyde Park Gate News*.⁸ The siblings were educated first by their parents. Leslie Stephen read often to his children aloud. Later, the boys went to the university and both Vanessa and Virginia were taught by their father and his books.⁹

The relationship between Virginia's parents was not always simple, Leslie was a complicated man who often worried about money, and Julia's task was to comfort and help her husband. She was also in charge of the household. When she died in May 1895, it was a great tragedy for the family.¹⁰ Leslie was shaken by his

3 BELL, Q., *Virginia Woolf. A Biography. Volume I: Virginia Stephen 1882 to 1912.* London: The Hogarth Press, 1973, p. 11.

4 *Ibidem*, p. 12.

5 *Ibidem*, pp. 13-14.

6 *Ibidem*, p. 18.

7 *Ibidem*, p. 22.

8 *Ibidem*, p. 28.

9 DAUGHERTY, B.R., *From the Beginning: Virginia Stephen's Reading and Virginia Woolf's Essays.* In: *Voyages Out, Voyages Home: Selected Papers from the Eleventh Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf.* Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2010, p. 57.

10 BELL, Q., *Virginia Woolf. A Biography. Volume I: Virginia Stephen 1882 to 1912.* London: The Hogarth Press, 1973, p. 39.

second wife's death and was mourning and basically resigned to his life.¹¹ He was not able to take care of the household and comfort his children, and the Duckworth siblings had to do their best. Stella ran the household and comforted Leslie and took care of the younger children with the help of her brother George Duckworth.¹² Thirteen-year-old Virginia was shocked and astounded by her mother's death and soon after had her first mental breakdown. This was the beginning of her serious psychological problems.¹³

This was not the end of all difficulties. As I mentioned above, Stella Duckworth was now running the household, consoling Leslie and was great support for her younger sisters, Vanessa and Virginia. But she died shortly after her marriage in 1897.¹⁴ Since then, Vanessa, as the oldest child, had to take care of her father, her siblings, and the whole household.¹⁵ Meanwhile, Thoby, the oldest son from the Stephen siblings, began his studies at Cambridge University where he met interesting people who had a crucial importance for the future development of the life of all family: Lytton Strachey, Saxon Sydney-Turner, Clive Bell and Leonard Woolf.¹⁶

Since Vanessa and Virginia did not have a female companion in the society, George Duckworth took this responsibility and tried to introduce both girls to the right people. Neither of them really appreciated his effort because they considered the society snobbish and pretentious, and Vanessa revolted against George's attempts. Virginia liked it at the beginning, but later she realized that she did not belong to this society and refused to visit parties with George.¹⁷

The Duckworth brothers were not only Virginia's half-brothers but they also may have influenced her later sexual life because they sexually abused her. At that time, she did not know that what her half-brothers were doing to her was wrong because she had nobody to tell.¹⁸

11 BELL, Q., *Virginia Woolf. A Biography. Volume I: Virginia Stephen 1882 to 1912.* London: The Hogarth Press, 1973, p. 40.

12 *Ibidem*, p. 42.

13 *Ibidem*, p. 44.

14 *Ibidem*, p. 57.

15 *Ibidem*, p. 62.

16 *Ibidem*, p. 69.

17 *Ibidem*, p. 76.

18 COONRADT, N., *Editing Memory: Virginia Woolf's Memoir Identity and her Re-representation of the Traumatized Self.* In: *Woolf Editing/Editing Woolf. Selected Papers from the Eighteenth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf.* Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2009, p. 43.

In 1902 a doctor discovered that Leslie had cancer and despite the operation performed in December, it was soon clear that it did not stop the disease, and Leslie would die eventually.¹⁹ After a long and painful struggle, he finally died in February 1904.²⁰

2.4 After Leslie Stephen's Death

It was another major and disastrous incident and, consequently, the children felt the urge to escape from the house where all the painful events took place and to travel to someplace else. They went to Italy and then back to England via France. In Paris, they met some friends (among them Clive Bell).²¹ At the same time, Virginia's first serious mental breakdowns began. She collapsed and her only help were her friend Violet Dickinson and her sister Vanessa. Violet took her to her house and looked after her, but Virginia tried to commit suicide there for the first time – she threw herself from a window. Fortunately, it was not high enough to cause her death.²²

Stephen's siblings decided to leave the house at Hyde Park Gate and rent a new one – No 46 Gordon Square in Bloomsbury. The siblings moved there while Virginia was still recovering from her mental breakdown at Violet's place, and later at her aunt's place. After Woolf's recovery, she joined her family there as well.²³ This was the place where Thoby Stephen organized his Thursday Evenings – an occasion when a group of friends met on Thursday evening and discussed their issues – it later became what is now called the Bloomsbury group.²⁴

Virginia had known Leonard Woolf quite a long time before she married him. He was one of Thoby's friends from Cambridge, and they first met on 17th November 1904 when Leonard joined the Stephens for dinner before his departure to Ceylon as a colonial officer. Then, she did not see him until his return to England in 1911.²⁵

19 BELL, Q., Virginia Woolf. A Biography. Volume I: Virginia Stephen 1882 to 1912. London: The Hogarth Press, 1973, p. 84.

20 Ibidem, p. 86.

21 Ibidem, p. 89.

22 Ibidem, p. 90.

23 Ibidem, p. 94.

24 Ibidem, pp. 100-101.

25 Ibidem, p. 101.

Gradually, the relationship between Vanessa and Clive Bell developed. They shared their interest in arts, specifically in painting. In summer 1905, Clive proposed marriage to Vanessa but she rejected his offer.²⁶

In 1905, Virginia started to write reviews for the Times Literary Supplement.²⁷ She also wrote reviews for some other newspapers – the Guardian, National Review, or Academy and Literature.²⁸ Woolf was a very active reviewer. She took the opportunity seriously, and it was a good way of earning some extra money. She wrote more than 200 reviews and essays between 1904 and 1918, and by the time of her death, there were about 550 journalistic articles and reviews.²⁹ It was not her only contribution to the public sphere. Later she began to teach at Morley at the institute for working men and women.³⁰

2.5 Thoby's Death

The Stephen siblings decided to make an excursion to Greece; in summer 1906 all the Stephens (Vanessa, Thoby, Virginia and Adrian) and their friend Violet Dickinson made this journey.³¹ The long travel by train caused Vanessa to fall ill (the doctors could not agree on the diagnosis), and soon after their return, Thoby and Violet fell ill too.³² Both of them had typhoid fever and on 20th November 1906, Thoby died (later Thoby became a model for some of her novel's characters – e.g. Percival in *The Waves*). Another tragic event in the family was a horrible experience for all of them. Vanessa was devastated and turned to Clive Bell, Thoby's friend, for comfort, and two days after her brother's death, she accepted Clive's proposal.³³

26 BELL, Q., Virginia Woolf. A Biography. Volume I: Virginia Stephen 1882 to 1912. London: The Hogarth Press, 1973, p. 104.

27 Ibidem, p. 104.

28 STEC, L., Virginia Woolf and Time and Tide: Forays into Feminist Journalism. In: Voyages Out, Voyages Home: Selected Papers from the Eleventh Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf. Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2010, p. 84.

29 HARVEY, K., Tradition and Individual Talents: Rebecca West's and Virginia Woolf's Reviews and Essays. In: Voyages Out, Voyages Home: Selected Papers from the Eleventh Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf. Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2010, p. 113.

30 BELL, Q., Virginia Woolf. A Biography. Volume I: Virginia Stephen 1882 to 1912. London: The Hogarth Press, 1973, p. 105.

31 Ibidem, p. 107.

32 Ibidem, p. 109.

33 Ibidem, p. 110.

They got married in February 1906 at St Pancras Register Office.³⁴

Virginia was also shaken, and as a result, she wanted to get to know more about her older brother. She started to ask his friends about him. They were not really much help but it showed her the more human and friendly side of them. Gradually, Virginia befriended them and they continued meeting in the family house in London, Bloomsbury.³⁵

After Vanessa and Clive's marriage, they used the house at Gordon Square, and Virginia and Adrian moved to No 29 Fitzroy Square.³⁶ There, they tried to bring life back to the Thursday Evenings.³⁷

2.6 Vanessa's Marriage and Virginia's Considering Marriage

Vanessa and Clive were happy together but the situation changed when Vanessa delivered a son – Julian – in 1908. Clive and Virginia, were used to receiving much attention from Vanessa which changed radically after Julian's birth. Vanessa was fully absorbed in the care of the baby and did not have time to satisfy their need of intimacy and attention.³⁸ That resulted in an alliance between Clive and Virginia and led to flirtation. When Vanessa learned of that, she was really disappointed by the behaviour of her husband and her sister.³⁹

As Virginia grew older, she realized that she should get married. There were some possible husbands around her, mainly the members of the Bloomsbury group. Particularly, Lytton Strachey became her close friend, and in February 1909 he proposed marriage to her. At first, she accepted his offer, but later, she changed her mind and refused the marriage at their second meeting. This did not solve anything, and she still wanted to find a husband. She was tired of her life as it was, living with her brother Adrian with nobody to love and nobody to be loved by.⁴⁰

At the beginning of 1910 Virginia had another attack of her illness. She had

34 BELL, Q., *Virginia Woolf. A Biography. Volume I: Virginia Stephen 1882 to 1912.* London: The Hogarth Press, 1973, p. 114.

35 *Ibidem*, p. 113.

36 *Ibidem*, p. 115.

37 *Ibidem*, p. 120.

38 *Ibidem*, p. 132.

39 *Ibidem*, p. 134.

40 *Ibidem*, p. 141.

strong headaches, could not sleep and rejected food.⁴¹ Her family was worried about her physical health and state of mind and she spent couple of weeks in a nursing house in Twickenham.⁴² Her doctors recommended that she should spend more time in the country and avoid the lively and busy life in London. She took the advice seriously and around Christmas she began to search for a house in the country. Finally, she discovered a house in the village of Firle, near Lewes.⁴³

2.7 Reunion with Leonard Woolf

During 1911, Adrian and Virginia also moved to London, and they rented a new house at No 38 Brunswick Square. The Stephen siblings did not want to live and pay the rent alone, so they decided to live with some of their friends and run a kind of hotel (there was a strict schedule of meals and rules) – John Maynard Keynes, Duncan Grant and also Leonard Woolf later moved in with them.⁴⁴ It was a little bit scandalous arrangement, rejected in some social circles and by some of Woolf's friends and family members (mainly by the Duckworth brothers and Virginia's friend Violet Dickinson).

Leonard Woolf was Thoby's friend from Cambridge. After his studies, he left for India as a colonial officer and returned in June 1911 for a year's leave. At the beginning of July, he went to visit his friends and had dinner with Vanessa and Clive Bell and Virginia at Gordon Square.

Gradually, Virginia and Leonard were spending more and more time together, and he fell in love with her.⁴⁵ Soon after his proposal in January 1912, Virginia suffered another attack of her illness and had to go back to the nursing house.⁴⁶ He did not get any straight answer to his proposal. Virginia wanted to get to know him better and spend some more time together. She was well aware of the limits of her mental state so she did not reject him but also she did not agree to marry him. Later,

41 BELL, Q., *Virginia Woolf. A Biography. Volume I: Virginia Stephen 1882 to 1912.* London: The Hogarth Press, 1973, p. 162.

42 *Ibidem*, p. 163.

43 *Ibidem*, p. 166.

44 *Ibidem*, p. 175.

45 LEE, H., *Virginia Woolf.* London: The Random House Group Limited, 1997, p. 305.

46 *Ibidem*, p. 308.

Leonard decided to resign from his post in India and stayed in England to marry Virginia.⁴⁷ They got married on 10th August 1912 in St Pancras Town Hall. Their witnesses were Vanessa Bell and George Duckworth.⁴⁸

Until her marriage, the closest observer of Virginia's illness was Vanessa, her sister and close friend. When Virginia got married, her husband Leonard, became the one who took charge of her mental balance and tried to protect her.

Leonard and Virginia also decided deliberately not to have any children. At first Virginia wanted to be a mother like her sister Vanessa, but Leonard was against it because the children could inherit their mother's insanity. Pregnancy could be dangerous for Virginia as it could cause another attack of the illness. The Woolfs consulted doctors about their opinions but because of the possibility of the hereditary insanity, they finally decided not to become parents.⁴⁹

2.8 Married Life

The relationship between the Woolfs was not always easy. Leonard had to cope with Virginia's illness, and Virginia had to cope with his protectiveness and his effort to keep her from busy London streets, make her eat regularly and work only adequately to her state of mind. When she was very ill, she did not want to speak with him and was angry with him. But at the same time, when Virginia was sane, their marriage was a happy union of minds with deep feelings for each other. It can be shown in Leonard's Christmas present for Virginia in 1929, after 17 years of their marriage. Then, he gave her a 1927 edition of Rollin's sixteenth century anthology *The Paradise of Dainty Devices* with an inscription "What is, or may be mine, That is, & shall be thine".⁵⁰

2.9 Becoming a Writer and World War I

Virginia's journey as a novelist began in March 1913 when Leonard Woolf

47 LEE, H., Virginia Woolf. London: The Random House Group Limited, 1997, p. 309.

48 Ibidem, p. 322.

49 Ibidem, p. 336.

50 Ibidem, p. 562.

delivered her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, to the publishing house which was owned by Gerald Duckworth.⁵¹ Two months later, it was accepted to be published and it finally came out in March 1915. She was not able to enjoy her accomplishment because she was ill again at that time.⁵²

When the First World War broke out, the Woolfs and all their friends were strongly against it. They all were devoted pacifists. The Military Service Act became a law in January 1916 and all bachelors between 18 and 41 were enlisted and had to fight.⁵³ A few months later even married men should have enlisted, but Leonard got an exemption on the basis of his poor health.⁵⁴

During the war, they decided to start their own press, and in 1917, the first hand-press arrived at the Hogarth House in Richmond – hence the name of the publishing house, The Hogarth Press.⁵⁵ Their first publication were two stories: *The Mark on the Wall* by Virginia and *Three Jews* by Leonard published in July 1917.⁵⁶ One of the aims of founding their own press was to publish experimental authors and their friends, but Leonard also wanted to create a kind of therapeutic work for Virginia. They published mainly modern and experimental pieces such as Thomas Stearns Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and also Russian translations or translations of Sigmund Freud's works.⁵⁷ Woolf's next novel, *Night and Day*, was published immediately after the war, in 1919.⁵⁸

2.10 Moving to London

The whole time the Woolfs were arguing over living in London, Virginia did not want to live in Richmond. She desired to live in London with its busy and noisy streets but Leonard argued that for her mental state it was better to stay in quiet Richmond. Finally, it was more convenient for both of them to move back to

51 LEE, H., Virginia Woolf. London: The Random House Group Limited, 1997, p. 326.

52 Ibidem, p. 327.

53 Ibidem, p. 345.

54 Ibidem, p. 347.

55 Ibidem, p. 363.

56 Ibidem, p. 364.

57 Ibidem, p. 372.

58 Ibidem, p. 374.

London, and at the beginning of 1924, they rented a house at Tavistock Square.⁵⁹

In December 1925, Virginia's intimate relationship with Vita Sackville-West began. She was also a writer, and at that time more successful than Virginia.⁶⁰ Vita was a lesbian married to Harold Nicholson, a Member of Parliament.⁶¹ She was a big source of inspiration for Virginia. Virginia dedicated to Vita her fake biography, *Orlando*, which is an illustrated book with photographs – the photographs of Orlando as a young man are pictures of Sackville ancestors. Orlando as a woman is Vita, and the Russian princess, Sasha, is the picture of Woolf's niece Angelica Bell.⁶²

2.11 Woolf's Work and Upcoming War

Between 1929 and 1931, Virginia was writing another experimental prose, *The Waves*, with the thought that everyone possesses more than one self.⁶³ When the book was published, it was quite a success. In the first week, it sold more than 5 000 copies, and in the first half year, it sold over 10 000.⁶⁴ She also gave speeches and lectures from time to time. For instance, the speech in the National Society for Women's Service led to her two books – *The Years* (under the working title *Here and Now*) and *Three Guineas* (under the working title *Professions for Women*).⁶⁵

During the 1930's, the Woolfs were closely watching the developments in Europe. In 1933, they met a German conductor, Bruno Walter, and he spoke with them about Germany and Hitler. The developments in Germany were important for them not only because of the threat of occupation of the British Isles but also because of the fact that Leonard was a Jew and Virginia had mental illness. They both would probably be the first to be killed.⁶⁶

Meanwhile, Julian Bell who went to China after his studies, came back and wanted to leave the United Kingdom for Spain to join the Republican side against Franco. Both Vanessa and Virginia tried to stop him, but he was absolutely

59 LEE, H., Virginia Woolf. London: The Random House Group Limited, 1997, p. 473.

60 Ibidem, p. 486.

61 Ibidem, p. 489.

62 Ibidem, p. 512.

63 Ibidem, p. 577.

64 Ibidem, p. 621.

65 Ibidem, p. 599.

66 Ibidem, p. 645.

determined to go. Then, they came to a compromise. Julian left Britain as an ambulance driver but it did not save his life. In July 1937, his ambulance was hit and he died soon after.⁶⁷

2.12 World War II and Virginia's Death

In September 1939, the United Kingdom was at war with Germany. People had to cope with air-raid warnings, black-outs and the threat of German invasion – all Woolf's friends were making suicide plans for this case.⁶⁸

Virginia was often ill and depressed at the beginning of the war, and in January 1941, she became ill once again. But, with the everyday presence of the war, she thought that she might go mad again, and this time she would not recover. She did not want to go through that torture. She also wanted to save Leonard from the necessity of taking care of her. On the 28th March 1941, she wrote loving farewell letters to Leonard and Vanessa, went to the banks of the river Ouse, put stones in her pockets, and drowned herself in the river.⁶⁹ Her body was discovered on the 18th April near Asheham, and Leonard buried her ashes in the garden under the elms named Leonard and Virginia.⁷⁰

*“Five times in her life (four of them between the ages of thirteen and thirty-three) she suffered from major onslaughts of the illness and in almost all (possibly all) of these attacks she attempted to kill herself.”*⁷¹

2.13 Virginia as a Writer

Virginia began publishing her novels in 1915 with the help of her husband Leonard Woolf. Totally, she wrote nine novels in her life. Her first novel was *The Voyage Out* which she published in 1915, then followed *Night and Day* (1919),

67 LEE, H., Virginia Woolf. London: The Random House Group Limited, 1997, pp. 695-697.

68 Ibidem, p. 730.

69 Ibidem, p. 760.

70 Ibidem, p. 765.

71 Ibidem, p. 175.

Jacob's Room (1922), *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *Orlando* (1928), *The Waves* (1931), *The Years* (1937) and her last novel which was published posthumously, *Between the Acts* (1941). Not only did Woolf write fiction, but she also published non-fiction that included her essays in the collection *Common Reader* and her lectures on women and literature collected in *Room of One's Own* (1929). Woolf also wrote a biography of her friend *Roger Fry* (1940).⁷²

Virginia Woolf was a very clever, witty woman and all her novels are playful fiction. Her novels are experiments, each of them is an experiment of a different kind, e.g. *Orlando* is one of her most experimental novels – she plays with time, gender, and also the genre of biography.

Flush is a different type of biography. It is a biography of a dog of Woolf's friend Elizabeth Browning. It is very interesting and also funny to read the dog's thoughts and how it sees the world and the actions of the people.

The Waves is another experiment. Woolf uses interludes to divide the life-story of 6 children (or 7 if we count Percival too). The author plays with the metaphor of the day for the whole life of the characters.

The novel, *Mrs Dalloway*, is a story of one single day including inner dialogues and thoughts of several people involved in this one day.

Writing any novel was a time-consuming process. Probably, in the times of computers, we cannot imagine how difficult it was and how much dedication was needed when a writer had to write everything in hand and do all the corrections and rewriting in hand also. To illustrate the long-term process, Virginia recorded how much time it took her when she wrote *The Waves*:

"But my Waves account runs, I think, as follows:

I began it, seriously, about September 10th, 1929.

I finished the first version on April 10th, 1930.

I began the second version on May 1st, 1930.

I finished the second version on February 7th, 1931.

I began to correct the second version on May 1st, 1931, finished 22nd

72 BALDICK, C., *The Oxford English Literary History. The Modern Movement. Volume 10, 1910-1940.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 446.

June 1931.

I began to correct the typescript on 25th June 1931. Shall finish (I hope) 18th July 1931."⁷³

2.14 Virginia Woolf's Perception of Time

Virginia Woolf's perception of time was very special and modernist. She was influenced by some of the philosophers, particularly French philosopher Henry Bergson who was very popular at that time. Woolf wanted to break down the traditional perception of time and play with it more freely, and she was really successful. Virginia used some specific ways of passing time in many of her fiction, and she often recorded her thoughts about time in her diary. She wrote on the 23rd November 1926 what she was thinking of Mrs Dalloway:

*"... and time shall be utterly obliterated; future shall somehow blossom out of the past. One incident - say the fall of a flower - might contain it. My theory being that the actual event practically does not exist - nor time either."*⁷⁴

Woolf often did not express time directly and clearly. She preferred to use hints or other ways to show the passing of time. In her novels, we do not often find some clock or straightforward expression of time or specific note of how much time has passed. Woolf usually used nature for showing the time - the cycle of a flower, watching the snail, passing day...

"Now is life very solid or very shifting? I am haunted by the two contradictions. This has gone on for ever; will last for ever; goes down to the bottom of the world - this moment I stand on. Also it is transitory, flying, diaphanous. I shall pass like a cloud on the waves. Perhaps it may be that though we change, one flying after another, so quick, so quick, yet we are somehow successive and continuous, we human beings, and show the light through. But what is the light? I am impressed by

73 WOOLF, V., *A Writer's Diary*. New York: The New American Library, 1968, p. 164.

74 *Ibidem*, p. 104.

the transitoriness of human life to such an extent that I am often saying a farewell - after dining with Roger, for instance; or reckoning how many more times I shall see Nessa."⁷⁵

Even though Virginia Woolf was still quite young when she wrote this in her diary (it was in January 1929 when she was not even 50), we can understand it. She had tried to commit suicide several times, and she could not predict when, or whether, her illness would come back. She would then be in such a state of mind that it would be more reasonable for her to die.

But she did not necessarily have to write about death. Sometimes, everyone thinks about his or her own life and how fast it flies, how fast it changes under our hands and in front of our eyes. We are not able to perceive and catch all things which have changed and what has happened. We never know what will happen in the next moment. We can never say for sure if we will see these people again, and especially, when one is older, it is reasonable to consider that it might be the last time.

75 WOOLF, V., *A Writer's Diary*. New York: The New American Library, 1968, p. 137.

3. The Bloomsbury Group

"The Bloomsbury group had no formal creed, doctrine, or manifesto, but it cultivated a recognizably coherent set of values: liberal pacifism, feminism, and anti-imperialism in politics, agnosticism in religion, abstract form rather than moralizing content in art and literature, and the primacy of personal friendship over public obligations. It constituted a centre of "civilized" rebellion against the moral code of Victorianism, especially in its toleration of unorthodox sexual arrangements and in its endorsement of the unpopular pacifist position in the Great War."⁷⁶

Chris Baldick concluded very well what the Bloomsbury group was and how it worked. It could not be called an organization, or a movement, simply, it was a group of friends.

This group arose from the Cambridge university semi-secret organization, The Apostles (or the official name was the Cambridge Conversazione Society). There usually were only 6 or 7 active members of the Apostles at the same time. These members – Apostles - played an important part in the formation of the Bloomsbury group because many of them were later Bloomsbury group members. The older generation of the Apostles included Roger Fry, Desmond MacCarthy, and Edward Morgan Forster. The younger members were Leonard Woolf, Lytton Strachey or John Maynard Keynes.⁷⁷

The Bloomsbury group was not an organized group. It began to form gradually and informally after the death of Leslie Stephen in 1904 when the Stephen siblings moved from Hyde Park Gate to Gordon Square. The recent graduates and friends of Thoby from Cambridge met on Thursday evenings. They drank, smoked, and discussed many things. The relationships between the members deepened after Thoby's death in 1906 when Thoby's friends slowly befriended the Stephen sisters.⁷⁸

In autumn 1906, Virginia and Adrian Stephen began to bring the Thursday

⁷⁶ BALDICK, C., *The Oxford English Literary History. The Modern Movement. Volume 10, 1910-1940.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 52.

⁷⁷ SELLERS, S. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 9.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

evenings back to life. From that time, it is possible to call it more confidently the Bloomsbury Group.⁷⁹ Virginia Woolf herself used the term Bloomsbury group by 1914 in a letter.⁸⁰ It included mainly the Stephens and Thoby's friends from Cambridge: Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), Vanessa Bell (1879-1961), Clive Bell (1881-1964), John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946), Edward Morgan Forster (1879-1970) and Roger Fry (1866-1934).⁸¹ Hermione Lee, in Woolf's biography, also listed Adrian and Karin Stephen, Lytton Strachey, Duncan Grant, Saxon Sydney-Turner, Desmond and Molly MacCarthy, later even Angelica and Quentin Bell and David Garnett.⁸² Although the group itself did not issue any manifesto, the values are summarized in the essay of the writer Edward Morgan Forster *What I Believe* from 1939.⁸³

The central meeting place changed with the moving of the central figures of the Bloomsbury group. At the beginning, it was at Gordon Square. After Vanessa and Clive's marriage, it was at Fitzroy Square where Virginia and Adrian lived and later, it was at Brunswick Square.⁸⁴

Because of the controversy the Group brought into the society, it had many opponents - for instance, Rupert Brooke and David Herbert Lawrence.⁸⁵ But even the members did not always agree with each other, and Virginia Woolf, herself, had sometimes strongly ambivalent feelings about the Group.⁸⁶

The Bloomsbury Group was well-known because of their artistic work - they produced different kinds of publications, art-works, exhibitions, interior decorations, et cetera.⁸⁷ But it was not only famous due to these things but also due to scandalous lives of their members.

One of the most famous scandals went into memoirs of its members as The Dreadnought Hoax – when Adrian Stephen and some of his Bloomsbury friends

79 BELL, Q., Virginia Woolf. A Biography. Volume I: Virginia Stephen 1882 to 1912. London: The Hogarth Press, 1973, p. 120.

80 LEE, H., Virginia Woolf. London: The Random House Group Limited, 1997, p. 263.

81 DAY, G., Modernist Literature 1890 to 1950. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2010, p. 7.

82 LEE, H., Virginia Woolf. London: The Random House Group Limited, 1997, p. 263.

83 DAY, G., Modernist Literature 1890 to 1950. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2010, p. 8.

84 CAINE, B., Bloomsbury Friendship and its Victorian Antecedents. In: Literature & History, Volume 17, Number 1, p. 49.

85 LEE, H., Virginia Woolf. London: The Random House Group Limited, 1997, p. 266.

86 Ibidem, p. 268.

87 Ibidem, p. 263.

decided to fool the British Navy. In 1910, they dressed up as the Emperor of Abyssinia and his suite and arranged a tour on the biggest and newest ship in Britain. No one recognized them and, at first, they did not want to tell anyone. When it got into the newspaper, it was an utter disgrace to the Navy.⁸⁸ The Admiral of the fleet wanted to start legal proceedings against them but the Admiralty Assistant Secretary believed that it would be better to avoid the suit because it could have started more rumours and brought even more public disgrace to the Royal Navy.⁸⁹

One of the reasons the members of the Bloomsbury group had decided to disgrace the Royal Navy was that they all were dedicated pacifists. They did not understand and did not approve of any war, and because of this attitude, they were often attacked during the First World War as being meaningless and selfish.⁹⁰

88 LEE, H., *Virginia Woolf*. London: The Random House Group Limited, 1997, p. 282.

89 JONES, D., *The Dreadnought Hoax and the Theatres of War*. In: *Literature & History*, Volume 22, Number 1 (Spring 2013), p. 87.

90 OLDFIELD, S., *The Obituraries' Verdicts "It is difficult to estimate what value posterity will put upon her work"* *John O'London's Weekly*, April 11, 1941. In: *Woolf: Across the Generations: Selected Papers from the Twelfth International Conference on Virginia Woolf*. Bakersfield: Center for Virginia Woolf Studies at California State University, 2003, p. 12.

4. Modernism in Literature

The Modernist movement, as well as any other movement, cannot be dated precisely. It gradually emerged from other movements and was inspired by other artists who were not considered Modernists, but they used some of the techniques which later became typical of the Modernist authors.

Even in the books focused on the Modernism, there is not accord as for the timing. Chris Baldick in his publication, *The Modern Movement: 1910-1940*, considered a narrower period than Gary Day in his book, *Modernist Literature: 1890 to 1950*. This movement defined itself against the previous era. It was an anti-Victorian movement. The authors tried to protest and show the difficult or controversial aspects of Victorian realism for them. They protested against its morality and imperialism, and against colonies all over the world which were led by the white men who considered themselves superior, and also against the patriarchal attitude towards life. Many women, and even some men, felt that women were not subordinate to men and they could act on their own and be equal partners.⁹¹

It would be helpful to mention some of the key thinkers who influenced the writers, philosophers and artists at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. Some of them are mentioned in the novels and other pieces of art. Some of them just inspired the authors. Among them were Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud.⁹²

Another movement which influenced the Modernism was the Aesthetic Movement. It was a movement which was at its peak from the 1860s to 1890s, and it defined itself against the Victorian beliefs that art should be moral. The authors emphasized the form of the work and their motto was "the art for art's sake." Among the famous protagonists of the Aesthetic movement were Walter Pater, Algernon Swinburne, James Abbott McNeil Whistler and Oscar Wilde.⁹³

Although the last mentioned, Oscar Wilde, was put into the Aesthetic Movement, he was very close in his thinking to the Modernism as well. He was very

91 BALDICK, C., *The Oxford English Literary History. The Modern Movement. Volume 10, 1910-1940*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 9.

92 DAY, G., *Modernist Literature 1890 to 1950*. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2010, p. 13.

93 *Ibidem*, p. 25.

well aware of the changes in society, and he considered how it would influence it and the lives of people and the literature. Even, Wilde did not consider himself to be the part of his current Victorian society, and he tried to keep his distance from it as much as possible.⁹⁴

Virginia Woolf belonged, along with Ezra Pound, James Joyce and Thomas Stearns Eliot, among the pioneers of the Modernism. As it usually happens with many innovations, it was not appreciated very much in its own period and it was in the minority.⁹⁵ The movement was not important and influential only in the literature, it also affected painting, philosophy and other aspects of life. In the context of English speaking countries, it had its climax between 1910 and 1925.⁹⁶

“Modernist literature is an attempt to find new forms of representation for a new kind of society, one that seems to be constantly changing.”⁹⁷

It is true that the literature had to adjust itself to the everyday and current life which was very fast developing. As I wrote above, Modernism is a movement of the first half of the twentieth century, a period which was full of changes, new discoveries and social reforms, not to mention the two world wars. Many people started to move from the country to the cities where more quarters for the poor grew, and inhabitants lived in horrible conditions. These conditions produced new topics for literature and art generally.

One of the most important categories for the modernist writers was the category of time:

“For the modernists time divided up the day and each day was the same as every other, except for Sundays when time come to standstill before running again on Monday.”⁹⁸

94 DAY, G., *Modernist Literature 1890 to 1950*. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2010, p. 166.

95 BALDICK, C., *The Oxford English Literary History. The Modern Movement. Volume 10, 1910-1940*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 3.

96 LEVENSON, M. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 9.

97 DAY, G., *Modernist Literature 1890 to 1950*. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2010, p. 5.

98 *Ibidem*, p. 110.

This is truth to some extent. The repetition was an important feature of modernism and modern life. It was closely connected to the everyday reality of many people. If we consider, for example, that many people in the cities at the beginning of the 20th century worked in factories where they usually did the same thing every day, every hour, then this perception is quite correct.

On the other hand, some of the modernists used the category of time rather playfully. Virginia Woolf was a master of this game. She experimented with the time perception quite often. Her mock biography *Orlando* is a great example. Orlando lives his/her life during more than three centuries and at the end of the book, the main character is still a woman in her thirties! Another book which is concerned with this Thesis is *The Waves*. It involves another time experiment - Woolf is comparing a human life to a day.

The movement itself was not homogeneous, some of the authors we today call modernists might not have agreed with this categorization of themselves. But even at that time, there were differences among the writers, sometimes even hostility.

In one of Woolf's first fiction, the short story, *Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown*, she divided the authors of her period into two groups. One group was called the Edwardians and included, according to Woolf, Arnold Bennett, Herbert George Wells and John Galsworthy. And the next group was called the Georgians, and she put there Edward Morgan Forster, David Herbert Lawrence, Lytton Strachey, James Joyce, Thomas Stearns Eliot and herself.⁹⁹

In comparison with the Victorian writers when most of the authors came from the higher classes and were full-time writers, the writers at the beginning of the 20th century came more often from the middle class. They had to earn enough money for their living, at least at the beginning of their career, until their work was so successful that they could leave their occupation and only write. But not all of them were so lucky to make enough money with their writing and they had to work, usually as teachers, reviewers or booksellers. Some of them also found a rich patron who believed in their abilities and financed their life.¹⁰⁰

99 BALDICK, C., *The Oxford English Literary History. The Modern Movement. Volume 10, 1910-1940.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 11.

100 *Ibidem*, p. 49.

Unlike the Bloomsbury group, there existed a kind of Modernist manifesto by Frederick Winslow Taylor called *The Principles of Scientific Management*. It said that the traditional forms of literature which are used so far are not suitable and appropriate for the world of the twentieth century, so it was necessary to develop and try new techniques. Humans are compared with the machines, so they should be as productive as machines, and they should eliminate anything that is unnecessary.¹⁰¹

But the modernist novels in Britain were not the only ones, they emerged from the other novels written on the continent. It is quite interesting that one of the authors who inspired British novelists was Franz Kafka, a Czech-born German who lived in Prague. Another famous writer whose work was modernist in some of its features was French novelist Gustav Flaubert and his novel *Madame Bovary*. He did not use the stream of consciousness but it was modernist in the theme of the novel - it concerned the bodily secretions, and also, it celebrated the new, scientific attitude rather than religious attitude.¹⁰²

The modernist literature was focused often on certain topics which were typical of the writers. They were interested in the primitive nations and their lives. The reason was that Britain and other countries as well, still had its colonies. For instance, in India some of the people started to realize that the native Indians were not inferior and they had their way of life which was equal to the British way of life and it could not be judged as something primitive and savage. There started to emerge such opinions that we (the Western civilization) cannot consider ourselves as the higher civilization, as the superior rulers, that we are equal to other ways of life.

Another characteristic theme was the relationship between intellect and instinct, it was little bit connected to the native nations. The writers were questioning the fast-moving technological advance, whether it was functional and beneficial or whether it was useless or even damaging to the society.¹⁰³

One of the new and suitable techniques for the depiction of the changes and advance was a stream of consciousness:

101 DAY, G., *Modernist Literature 1890 to 1950*. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2010, p. 10.

102 *Ibidem*, p. 93.

103 *Ibidem*, p. 5.

“The term ‘stream of consciousness’ was first used by William James in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890) where it describes the unbroken flow of perceptions, thoughts and feelings in the waking mind...”¹⁰⁴

But this technique also emerged from something which was used in the past by many authors and it was the free-flowing speech. The technique was used, for example, by Jane Austen and also by Charles Dickens. The difference was that in the modernist novels the technique was usually used for the main protagonists but in the previous works it was the technique for the minor and not so important characters.¹⁰⁵

The first writer who really used the stream of consciousness technique, even though she called it the interior monologue technique, was Dorothy Richardson in her novel *Pointed Roots* which was published in 1915.¹⁰⁶

This technique was used very often by Virginia Woolf in her novels to keep the thoughts of the characters and also hers flowing.

Another feature of the Modernism was that the artists tried to discover and depict life, real life without any embellishing. They wanted to show every aspect of life as it was.

“They explored the relation of the present to the past, they examined the difference between subjective and objective time and their work often contained little epiphanies, momentary manifestations of an order that transcended mundane existence.”¹⁰⁷

The experiments with time were favourite Woolf’s experiments, she played with the concept of time in many of her novels. In her dog biography, *Flush*, she describes how the time is depicted by the dog of Elizabeth Browning. *The Waves* is an experiment not only with the selves, but also with time – the human life there is described by the metaphor of a single day. We are born in the early morning, we live

104 DAY, G., *Modernist Literature 1890 to 1950*. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2010, p. 88.

105 Ibidem, p. 87.

106 Ibidem, p. 88.

107 Ibidem, p. 110.

during the day and we die at night. This is shown through lyrical soliloquies between each part – period – of the characters' lives. The mock biography, *Orlando*, explores the subjective depiction of time when the main protagonist Orlando lives through several centuries and he/she is still middle-aged at the end of the novel.

As I have mentioned above, it was not a movement which involved only prose, it was also a concern of poetry. The poets did not lead any big revolution as for techniques but mainly as for the subject matter.¹⁰⁸ Ezra Pound and Thomas Stearns Eliot were famous modernist poets, for example.

Short stories were also very popular and many novelists wrote short stories too. For example Virginia Woolf, David Herbert Lawrence and James Joyce were well-known for it. But there were also writers who specialized only in the genre of short stories as Hector Hugh Munro (also known as Saki), William Somerset Maugham and Alfred Edgar Coppard.¹⁰⁹

Since the years of the First World War, there were written many theoretical books, essays or lectures about the contemporary novels. After the War, there was even greater need to reflect the changes in the society and in the perception of the human. Many novelists were involved and wrote about their work and the work of their colleagues, such as Herbert George Wells's *The Contemporary Novel*, David Herbert Lawrence's *The Novel or Morality and the Novel*, Elizabeth A. Drew's *The Modern Novel* and Edward Morgan Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*.¹¹⁰

The literary criticism was also a popular genre. Writers tried to cope with their heritage from the previous periods but also wanted to evaluate the work of their contemporaries or to deal with criticism of their work. Poet Thomas Stearns Eliot wrote his essays *The Sacred Wood*, David Herbert Lawrence his *Studies in Classic American Literature*. Virginia Woolf also took her part in the criticism and evaluation of the modern writing, as in her article *The Modern Essay* which was published in 1925 or in the collected essays *The Common Reader*, *A Room of One's Own* or in the *Modern Fiction*.¹¹¹

Modernism was not only a period of innovations which were often

108 BALDICK, C., *The Oxford English Literary History. The Modern Movement. Volume 10, 1910-1940*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 79.

109 *Ibidem*, p. 142.

110 *Ibidem*, p. 156.

111 *Ibidem*, p. 256.

misunderstood or too difficult for most of the common readers and the reader had to think deeply about what he/she had read. Many of the readers, and also some of the writers, needed to relax and read some lighter and easier genre. Besides love stories, the detective stories and novels were quite popular. It was the time when Sir Arthur Conan Doyle invented the character of the genius detective Sherlock Holmes and when Agatha Christie created the character of Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot and Gilbert Keith Chesterton the character of Father Brown.¹¹²

In the period after the First World War and before the Second World War, the authors tried to reflect on the war experience. The First World War was the first war which affected really everyone. Even the people who did not fight on the fronts were influenced. Many young men served as soldiers and defended their countries, and those who could not serve in the army drove ambulances or helped in the hospitals. Almost every family lost at least one member, and those who came back from the war suffered often from shell-shock, and they were psychically ill for the rest of their lives.

All these things needed to be reflected in the literature because it was everyday reality for many people. So, Thomas Stearns Eliot's *The Waste Land* can be also seen as the war criticism. In David Herbert Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the life of Clifford Chatterley is influenced by the war where he suffered an injury and remained paralyzed from the waist down. Virginia Woolf also could not avoid this topic, and in her novel in one day, *Mrs Dalloway*, is a character of Septimus Warren Smith who fought on the front and suffered from the shell-shock. At the end, he committed suicide.¹¹³

Another very important feature in the period of Modernism was the ownership of the presses. Many writers were too experimental for the regular presses whose only aim was to make as much profit as possible and the publishers did not want to take the risk of publishing unknown and rather experimental writers. It resulted in the establishment of many new independent presses whose main focus was not only the profit itself but also to give the chance for the new authors and to themselves.

112 BALDICK, C., *The Oxford English Literary History. The Modern Movement. Volume 10, 1910-1940.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 273-6.

113 *Ibidem*, p. 325.

One of the best-known independent presses is the one founded by Virginia and Leonard Woolf in their drawing room in the Hogarth House in Richmond-upon-Thames. The first book which was published by them was *Two Stories* which contained a story by Virginia and a story by Leonard. At the beginning they did 150 copies and within a month 124 of them were sold, and it was the start of their success. From its beginning the Hogarth Press concentrated on the new experimental writers or translations of some foreign authors. They published the early works of Thomas Stearns Eliot, Laura Riding, Katherine Mansfield and John Maynard Keynes. They also printed the translations of Russian writers and of Sigmund Freud.¹¹⁴ Among other independent presses were, for instance, the Black Sun Press, and the Hours Press.¹¹⁵

A different way to publish experimental works was to publish it as a series in magazines. If it was successful in the magazine and found its readers, then there was a chance that it would be published by one of the famous publishing houses. Some of the now very significant novels or poems were first published in the magazines. As example, *The Waste Land* by Thomas Stearns Eliot, and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce were published in the *Egoist* and *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake* by the same author were published in the *Little Review*.¹¹⁶

114 DAY, G., *Modernist Literature 1890 to 1950*. New York: Pearson/Longman, 2010, pp. 218-219.

115 *Ibidem*, p. 221.

116 *Ibidem*, p. 229.

5. Orlando

5.1. Woolf's Diary Entries

Woolf began to write *Orlando* in October 1927. It was an instant idea that came to her mind. She reported to her diary:

*"... And instantly the usual exciting devices enter my mind: a biography beginning in the year 1500 and continuing to the present day, called Orlando: Vita, only with a change-about from one sex to another..."*¹¹⁷

While she was writing it, she was describing her intentions and feelings about the story to her diary. It was clear from the beginning that it will be dedicated to Woolf's close friend Vita Sackville-West. Vita really visited Turkey where the main protagonist Orlando was as an Ambassador. She accompanied her husband, Harold Nicholson, when he worked in Turkey in a similar position as Orlando - he was a member of the British diplomatic staff.¹¹⁸ Later, when Virginia was dead, Vita Sackville-West admitted in public that the novel was written about and for her. She did it on a BBC radio program in 1955. The script was published in *The Listener*.¹¹⁹ Woolf even used her picture and also pictures of her ancestors as illustrations in the novel. She really put an effort in making her fiction a biography that resembled a real, non-fiction biography.

The narrator is also a fiction biographer, possibly Virginia Woolf herself as she was wondering about the borders between fiction and biography for most of her life. She doubted whether it was possible to write a biography since no one knows anybody else perfectly. Finally, the biography could be only a reconstruction of someone's life from the letters, diaries, and memories, but it did not have to

117 WOOLF, V., *A Writer's Diary*. New York: The New American Library, 1968, p. 116.

118 DUBINO, J., *Turkish Tales: Mary Wortley Montagu's Turkish Embassy Letters and Virginia Woolf's Orlando*. In: *Woolf: Across the Generations: Selected Papers from the Twelfth International Conference on Virginia Woolf*. Bakersfield: Center for Virginia Woolf Studies at California State University, 2003, p. 132.

119 KELLERMANN, F., *A New Key to Virginia Woolf's Orlando*. In: *English Studies*. Apr 78, Vol. 59 Issue 2, p. 138.

necessarily be the truth about the person and her/his true life story.

*“I am writing Orlando half in a mock style very clear and plain, so that people will understand every word. But the balance between truth and fantasy must be careful. It is based on Vita, Violet Trefusis, Lord Lascelles, Knole, etc.”*¹²⁰

Even though Woolf tried hard to make her book resemble a real biography, at the same time, she wanted it to be clear that the novel is kind of a clever joke.

She had a very clear idea how to express and write about some parts of Orlando’s life. The paragraph where Woolf described the last moments of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century is really impressive, and the reader can feel the excitement of the passage as it was something she had aimed for from the beginning:

*“... So I shall get some effect of years passing; and then there will be a description of the lights of the eighteenth century burning; and the clouds of the nineteenth century rising. Then on to the nineteenth. But I have not considered this. I want to write it all over hastily and so keep unity of tone, which in this book is very important.”*¹²¹

It was very difficult for her to write the last chapter. She wanted it to be the best, the fastest, the ideal ending of the story but she struggled with it quite a lot.¹²² Finally, she finished it on 17th March 1928.¹²³ As usual, she gave the manuscript of *Orlando* to Leonard and anticipated eagerly his comments and impressions. She relied much on his opinion:

120 WOOLF, V., *A Writer’s Diary*. New York: The New American Library, 1968, p. 117.

121 *Ibidem*, p. 119.

122 *Ibidem*, p. 122.

123 *Ibidem*, p. 122.

*“L. takes Orlando more seriously than I had expected. Thinks it in some ways better than the Lighthouse: about more interesting things, and with more attachment to life and larger. The truth is I expect I began it as a joke and went on with it seriously. Hence it lacks some unity. He says it is very original.”*¹²⁴

After publishing the book, there was a little complication that it had the name biography in the title so it was given at the booksellers’ in the shelves with other biographies even though it was a fiction novel. Finally, in spite of these obstacles, *Orlando* was a great success, Virginia Woolf became a famous writer, and at the end of 1928, they began to prepare the third edition of the novel because there had been sold over 6 000 copies so far.¹²⁵

124 WOOLF, V., *A Writer’s Diary*. New York: The New American Library, 1968, p. 126.

125 *Ibidem*, p. 136.

5.2 The Plot

The boy Orlando was born in the 16th century and he belonged to aristocracy, to an old and respectable family. He wanted to be a poet – he wrote a poem called *Aethelbert: A Tragedy in Five Acts*. After writing the poem, he went for a walk and in the evening the Queen of England came. He watched her coming from a hill and ran home to get ready and get properly dressed for such an important visitor. Then, he rushed to the hall to meet Queen Elizabeth who was very fond of him.

Two years later, he received an invitation to visit her at Whitehall. He travelled there and at first the Queen searched his appearance closely, and then she gave him her ring and named him her Treasurer Steward. He was also her companion for next years, she spared him from troubles and took care of him. The Queen was in love with Orlando and tried to make his life easier and more comfortable so she helped him in his career, gave him money and property. She wanted Orlando only for herself, and she was very jealous when she saw him kissing another girl.

Orlando had a wild period in his life when he slept with many women of low origin, but later he returned proudly back to the Court of King James (meanwhile, Queen Elizabeth died). But Orlando was still very successful with women. He was engaged three times. As a poet, he also celebrated women in his sonnets. First, he was married to Clorinda. She was a gentle lady, very religious and sympathetic to poor people and she tried to change Orlando's behaviour. However, she died of small-pox soon after their marriage.

Then, he was engaged to Favilla, a daughter of a poor gentleman, but he broke their engagement when he discovered that she was very cruel to animals.

Since Orlando was a very attractive man he soon got engaged again. This time, it was to Euphrosyne, a lady from a very old and respectable family. Then, the Great Frost changed everything. The climate in England was severe, but in London the King turned it to his advantage and the frozen Thames became the centre of entertainment. On one such evening, Orlando noticed a person coming from the Muscovite Embassy and the character attracted his attention. He did not know whether it was a man or a woman because of sex disguising clothes. Soon he discovered that it was a woman, and he was really attracted to her. At the same time,

Euphrosyne was still his fiancée. The name of the strange woman was Princess Marousha Stanilovska Dagmar Natasha Iliana Romanovitch.

Orlando and the Princess got acquainted by accident because they were seated opposite each other at the table. They both enjoyed the evening. They could talk freely since no one else spoke French well enough to understand them. They soon spent more and more time together, and since everybody knew that Orlando was engaged to Euphrosyne, his behaviour caused quite a big scandal at the Court.

He fell in love with her deeply, and they enjoyed the moments together. They often went skating on the frozen Thames. Orlando wanted to give up all his business in England and leave with the Russian princess whom he called Sasha. They agreed that they would run away together. One night that was completely dark, he used their signal for escape. They arranged a meeting at midnight near an inn in Blackfriars. He was there long before midnight and even long after, but Sasha did not show up. That night the frozen river began to melt and the Thames got its freedom again. Orlando could see the Muscovite ship on the river heading towards the sea.

Orlando had to leave the Court because of the scandal with Sasha and Euphrosyne and began to live alone in the country. In his mansion, he fell into a trance for 7 days, and when he woke up again, he was a little bit different person. Suddenly, he was interested very much in death and he began to visit the tomb of his ancestors often and thought about death and decay. He was always very keen on books. But after the trance, he became even more obsessed with reading, and he also had a strong urge to write his own great book. He had always had a desire to write a book and by the time he was 25, he had written about 47 plays, poems and novels.

He arranged a meeting with a famous writer, Mr. Nicholas Greene, and had high expectations from him. Orlando sent him a note and soon Mr. Greene accepted his invitation to his mansion. At first, Orlando was very disappointed by the writer's appearance and mainly by his opinions - he said that the great age of literature was over now, even though Shakespeare was still writing, Marlowe had just died and other outstanding authors were still writing. Gradually, he began to like him. Greene told him many anecdotes about famous writers whom he knew personally, and he was such a great story-teller that Orlando was very well entertained all evening.

Nick Greene stayed in Orlando's house for 6 weeks and finally, he began to be bored and felt that he could not live his life there and that he needed to return to London. Greene obviously did not like Orlando very much and after his visit he wrote a pamphlet called *Visit to a Nobleman in the Country* about him. Orlando was furious about it and began to avoid people. Instead of people, he made dogs his companions. Since he was disgusted with Greene, Orlando also quit writing and burnt all his writings except for the poem *The Oak Tree*.

As he was not distracted by people, Orlando thought about life, death, friendship and love. Suddenly he felt strong desire to create something which would outlive him. So he worked on his mansion, had it refurbished but he sensed that it lacked something. Abruptly, an idea struck him, the new mansion would be nicer with people in the new sofas, chairs and rooms. So, Orlando decided to hold parties and socialize with his neighbours, but he still kept his distance from the poets and unknown women.

Often, when the party was at its height, Orlando disappeared to his room and worked on his poem *The Oak Tree*. While writing it, he saw a figure in the court. A few days later he saw it again and then, he caught a lady. That is how he met a Roumanian Archduchess Harriet. There was a love tension between the two of them, and Orlando was afraid of falling in love again because of his previous experience with Sasha. Since he wanted to prevent it, he asked King James to send him to Constantinople as an Ambassador Extraordinary.

Under the reign of Charles I, Orlando worked as an Ambassador. As the biographer points out, we do not have much information about this part of his life since many documents were destroyed during the revolution which broke out later. He also did not have any friends or acquaintances. He worked so hard that he did not have time for making any attachments whatsoever. After two years of his dedicated work, he was promoted by King Charles who rewarded him with the title of Duke.

In tribute to the British nobility, he organized a big party in the Embassy. As before, he was admired by many women for his appearance and his manners but he did not care. After the great party, he slept and slept. His servants were worried, and they entered his room which was a terrible mess.

Orlando slept on, and his secretaries examined the papers on his table. They found poetry, state papers and papers about the management of his property in England. Suddenly, they also found a paper declaring that he was married to a Gypsy dancer Rosina Pepita. Later, they discovered that he was not sleeping but he was in a trance.

Turkish uprising began on the seventh day of his trance. The rebels got into the British Embassy too, but Orlando looked like a dead person so they let him be. Three women appeared in Orlando's room while he was in the trance – Lady of Purity, Lady of Chastity and Lady of Modesty. They spoke above Orlando, and then they held their hands and danced. The Ladies used their charms and left the room.

When Orlando woke up and stretched from his long sleep, he was naked and it could be seen that he had become a woman: not a different person because his memories were preserved, but then he was a she. So Orlando at the age of thirty became a female. She dressed up in Turkish clothes which do not differentiate the sexes from each other. Next, she had to think about her position because she could not be the Ambassador any longer. She behaved very reasonably, although it would be totally understandable if she had fainted or panicked considering her complicated position. But she was able to think and look through the papers on her table, feed her dog, take some pistols and choose some jewellery. She whistled and in a while a Gypsy was waiting for her in the courtyard, and she left Constantinople unnoticed.

Orlando joined a Gypsy tribe and rode for several days to get to their main camp near Broussa. She felt an unknown freedom since she did not have to do any paperwork, and she just followed the tribe. She enjoyed their nomadic way of life and helped them, and they accepted her as one of them and wanted to teach her everything she needed. The only problem was that she was thinking too differently from them. She admired and worshipped Nature, and they could not understand it which made the old men of the tribe angry. Gypsies thought that Orlando was starting to behave strangely because she was writing and was not so eager to learn and help them. Suddenly, they wanted her to leave but they also appreciated the value of her jewellery.

One evening she was speaking about her property and her family and was boasting about the fact that her family is four or five hundred years old. The Gypsies

were a little bit uneasy when she said this. Later an old man explained to her that it is very new family for them and that their pedigrees go back thousands of years into history. It was the beginning of real conflicts between Orlando and the Gipsies - they did not accept the pedigree of her family, and she preferred nature to animals and food.

What was about to come was inevitable. Orlando realized that she missed England very much and found a merchant ship on which she sailed to England to return.

Until the arrival of the merchant ship, Orlando did not have much time to think about her new sex. She first considered her changed sex when she had to obtain new clothes. Her impressions were at first a little bit confused. She was upset by the inferior status of women in society, and she also had to think about her chastity which is something of great importance for women, not for men. It took her the whole journey home to consider her contemporary situation. She also thought about the expressing of things properly because as a woman she could not use vulgar language or be too direct. She was also considering what was expected from her now. She had to adopt a completely new role during the voyage home. She had to become accustomed to the fact that she will only be a kind of servant, to pour tea and entertain men from now on.

Suddenly, the merchant ship anchored at the shores of Italy and Orlando realized that she will be soon in England. She went with the Captain ashore, and when she returned on board the next morning, something had changed and she felt more like a woman. She began to think as a woman and identified herself with females. She was happy that she did not have to ride a war-horse or struggle for power. Orlando now appreciated more the gentle character of women who are concentrated on love and solitude.

Orlando had very mixed feelings as the merchant ship was approaching London. She was thinking of the things she experienced there as a man, a great success at the court, and his passionate love for Sasha.

London had changed a lot while Orlando was the Ambassador in Constantinople – there was the Great Fire in London, the Monument to the Great Fire

was built and St. Paul's Cathedral was rebuilt by Christopher Wren. She was very moved when she saw all the changes in her beloved city, but Orlando also was very happy that she was back.

As a woman, Orlando had troubles in getting back her property. In her absence, there were three suits against her - no one in England was sure what had happened to Orlando. Some thought that she was dead, some thought that she was a woman and could not own any property and others believed that she married a Gipsy dancer and had sons with her and they were declaring their rights to the mansion.

But finally, she could return to her estate and was enthusiastically welcomed by her servants and by her elk-hound Canute. After a warm-hearted welcome, Orlando went through her estate and enjoyed every piece of furniture and every aspect of being home. She sat down into an armchair and opened the Prayer Book. She was going through the pages and thought about the religion, her poem and life in general. After a short time of contemplation, she went to her ancestor's tombs. But she was different, she did not admire them as before because she knew that her ancestry was not really old in comparison with the Gipsies or Egyptian pyramids.

The next morning she began to write *The Oak Tree* again but suddenly there a woman appeared. When she recognized the person, she was very happy because it was her old acquaintance Archduchess Harriet Griselda from the Roumanian territory. But as Orlando turned to get some wine, the Archduchess became a man, the Archduke standing in the heap of his clothes. He admitted that he saw a picture of Orlando as a man and fell in love with him so he pretended to be a woman, the Archduchess. When Orlando fled to Constantinople, he was desperate, then, when he heard that Orlando was back and was a woman he hastened to see her and to tell her about his feelings. So Archduke Harry told her about all his property and proposed marriage to Orlando.

They spent a few evenings together but Orlando was a little bit bored by Archduke Harry. She came up with a game where she could win without much trouble and get rid of the Archduke. But Orlando got bored again and began to cheat. She came to the conclusion that the Archduke would reveal her cheating and would not have anything in common with her. It took him long time until he figured it out. He was shocked and insulted by her behaviour and left her. Suddenly, she felt lonely

and wanted some company, so Orlando went to London

She stayed in her father's house at Blackfriars. Orlando came to find life and a lover. Two days after her arrival to London she went out. She was recognized by a woman in the street and the woman shouted at her because Orlando was the heroine of the famous lawsuit. Soon, there was quite a large crowd looking at her. Fortunately, the Archduke appeared and saved her by offering her his arm. Soon, she was invited by many great British ladies to different events - banquets and dinners, and she joined the London society.

Historically, Orlando now lived under the reign of Queen Anne. She attended many parties. In the beginning, she was enthusiastic about them and loved the life of society, but later she was disappointed and angry with the people there. Once, there came an invitation to a special party by one Lady who had a reputation of being attended by genius writers. She was very excited to attend in such great company. From then on, she attended this company a couple of times and expected extraordinary things.

After one evening, she invited one of the genius writers, Mr. Pope, to go home with her. Gradually, she started to spend her evenings with the writers – Mr. Pope, Mr. Addison and Mr. Swift. But after some time, she found herself bored by these great men and after they left her she was glad.

At times, she missed being a man, she missed the freedom of her previous sex and occasionally she disguised herself as a man and enjoyed the free life again. Once, she went to the city and picked up a woman, Nell. They went to Nell's home and Nell was ready to seduce Orlando but Orlando disguised herself and showed her that she was also a woman. They both were laughing at this discovery.

Nell and Orlando got along very well that night. Orlando was happy with the company of a normal, simple woman when she compared it to the company of the famous writers. They talked all night long. Nell brought some other friends and they enjoyed the time together, drank punch and talked about their lives and their adventures.

In this period of Orlando's life, she really enjoyed changing her sex. Once she was a woman, then she was a man and even people around her were often confused because sometimes she pretended that she is her own cousin and published poetry

under his name. She experienced many adventures and enjoyed fully the advantages of both sexes. After one such adventure, she was watching London from her window at midnight, the last day of the year, the last day of the century. Suddenly, she was living in the Nineteenth century.

The Nineteenth century introduced dramatic changes in England. No one could mark the real starting point but still it happened. The climate was different, there was dampness everywhere, the food habits changed also, now coffee was served after the dinner instead of port wine and many other manners changed. She returned to her country house, the house was damp like all the houses in England and ivy grew up everywhere, some windows could not be seen through, inside it was cold and dark.

Also, there was a change on the throne, Queen Victoria was the ruler now. But even these days, in the 19th century, Orlando still had her manuscript of *The Oak Tree*, the first lines of the poem were written in 1586, so she has been working on it almost three centuries now.

When Orlando saw a wedding ring on the hand of her servant she began to think about marriage. She had been considering it closely for some time and came to the conclusion that she must also buy a ring and wear it as the others do. Orlando was still young – she was about 31 or 32 – and, as a woman, it would be an appropriate age to get married. She decided that there was no help, and she really must marry someone. It was not a natural thing for her. She saw it more as a necessity than pleasure. Later that evening, she felt alone, lonely and felt that she did not have anyone to rely on.

One afternoon she went for a long walk in the forest and broke her ankle. She laid under a tree and thought about her life. She also threw away the wedding ring since she believed that she was not meant to be someone's bride. Later, still laying there, she was discovered by Marmaduk Bonthrop Shelmerdine.

He took care of her and few minutes after their meeting, they got engaged. Shelmerdine was a sailor, and he was about to sail to the Horn.

One day officials from the Queen came to Orlando and brought her a very official document. It was a settlement of her lawsuits and other issues. Property was

returned to her, her sons were pronounced illegitimate, and she was considered to be a female.

She spent a lot of time with Shelmerdine. They talked about the Horn and their lives. Before Shelmerdine left for the Horn, they got married.

After Shelmerdine left, she tried to write again. Her status of a married woman confused her a little bit, and she tried to see if she still could do it. Finally, she finished her poem and went with it to London.

One day, when she was strolling through the London streets, she accidentally met a long-time acquaintance - Nick Greene, who was now a famous critic of the Victorian age. He invited her for lunch, and while they were talking, the manuscript of *The Oak Tree* fell from her dress. Greene was very interested in it, and later, he said he liked it very much. He wanted to publish it immediately and told Orlando about a publisher, royalties, reviews and so on, and when they parted he took the manuscript with him.

She wired to her husband Shelmerdine about this accidental encounter, and while she was waiting for the reply, Orlando entered a bookseller's shop. She was amazed by the shop because until then, she knew only about manuscripts. She was so enthusiastic that she ordered the shop to deliver everything of any importance from the shop.

Later, Orlando came home, and there had already been delivered books from the shop. She immediately started to go through them. Moments later, Orlando delivered a boy and became a mother.

Orlando again shifted in time, and now King Edward was on the throne. The world had changed a lot. It had shrunk, and the ivy on the houses had disappeared and even the climate was different again. The book ends in Woolf's present moment in October 1928 when Orlando is 36 years old and after such a long life is very tired and indifferent to everything.

5.3 Time in *Orlando*

Obviously, time perception is one of the clearest motifs of the novel. We are present to the birth of the boy Orlando in the 16th century, and then we are leaving her in her thirties in the first half of the 20th century. We sense that something with the time is different, or wrong. From our personal experience, we know that time is quite a subjective category even though we can measure it very precisely. We know that the time can be really fast-moving if we have fun and enjoy ourselves, and on the contrary, the time can pass very slowly, if at all, when we need to do something boring. Virginia also experienced this, and she noted it a couple of times in her diaries, and she wanted to put this knowledge into her writing.

The length of Orlando's life is one of Woolf's time experiments, and in the course of the novel, it is interesting to follow how she depicts that time is passing. Even though she says in one passage that it is possible to express passing time very simply and briefly, she describes it very impressively and beautifully for us on almost half a page in the book:

*“Here he came then, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. He saw the beech trees turn golden and the young ferns unfurl; he saw the moon sickle and then circular; he saw – but probably the reader can imagine the passage which should follow and how every tree and plant in the neighbourhood is described first green, then golden; how moons rise and suns set; how spring follows winter and autumn summer; how night succeeds day and day night; how there is first a storm and then fine weather; how things remain much as they are for two or three hundred years or so, except for a little dust and a few cobwebs which one old woman can sweep up in half an hour; a conclusion which, one cannot help feeling, might have been reached more quickly by the statement that “Time passed” (here the exact amount could be indicated in brackets) and nothing whatever happened.”*¹²⁶

During the novel, Woolf describes the passing of time so very well that we

126 WOOLF, V., *Orlando*. A Biography. London: The Random House Group Limited, 2004, p. 59.

can perfectly imagine the situation and we can see it in front of us. Even more so, she does not picture only the end of a year, but it is the end of the century and the beginning of the nineteenth century. She describes it not only as the end of one era, but at every end there is a kind of new start, a new chance. She follows the thoughts coming with each strike of the clock:

*“She heard the far-away cry of the night watchman - “Just twelve o’clock on a frosty morning”. No sooner had the words left his lips than the first stroke of midnight sounded. Orlando then for the first time noticed a small cloud gathered behind the dome of St. Paul’s. As the strokes sounded, the cloud increased, and she saw it darken and spread with extraordinary speed. At the same time a light breeze rose and by the time the sixth stroke of midnight had struck the whole of the eastern sky was covered with an irregular moving darkness, though the sky to the west and north stayed clear as ever. Then the cloud spread north. Height upon height above the city was engulfed by it. Only Mayfair, with all its lights shining, burnt more brilliantly than ever by contrast. With the eighth stroke, some hurrying tatters of cloud sprawled over Piccadilly. They seemed to mass themselves and to advance with extraordinary rapidity towards the west end. As the ninth, tenth, and eleventh strokes struck, a huge blackness sprawled over the whole of London. With the twelfth stroke of midnight, the darkness was complete. A turbulent welter of cloud covered the city. All was darkness; all was doubt; all was confusion. The Eighteenth century was over; the Nineteenth century had begun.”*¹²⁷

The above-mentioned examples were very colourful and captured also the mood of the moment. But sometimes, as a contrast, Woolf merely gave the list of months to show the time passing and it works well enough for the purpose:

“It was now November. After November, comes December. Then January, February, March, and April. After April comes May. June, July, August follow. Next is September. Then October, and so, behold, here we are back at November again,

127 WOOLF, V., Orlando. A Biography. London: The Random House Group Limited, 2004, pp. 144-145.

with a whole year accomplished."¹²⁸

In another passage, she discusses the above-mentioned relativity of time. No matter how many minutes have passed, the length of the moment could occur totally differently to each person and these differences in the subjective perception of time cannot be precisely measured as the objective time depicted by hours and minutes. Human mind can play with us and with our perception of time:

*"But Time, unfortunately, though it makes animals and vegetables bloom and fade with amazing punctuality, has no such simple effect upon the mind of man. The mind of man, moreover, works with equal strangeness upon the body of time. An hour, once it lodges in the queer element of the human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock length; on the other hand, an hour may be accurately represented on the timepiece of the mind by one second."*¹²⁹

It is argued similarly in the following quotation. She brilliantly demonstrated the relativity of time on the life of Orlando. Some experiences made him/her much older, and some did not. Again, it is very close to our everyday experience. We often say that some incident or tragic event made us way older than we had been before.

*"Some weeks added a century to his age, others no more than three seconds at most. Altogether, the task of estimating the length of human life (of the animals' we presume not to speak) is beyond our capacity, for directly we say that it is ages long, we are reminded that it is briefer than the fall of a rose leaf to the ground."*¹³⁰

It was difficult even for Orlando to find himself/herself in time, to realize which era does he/she lived in. Since he/she lived for three centuries, outlived several kings and queens, experienced various societies and saw the technological advancement, he/she was a bit confused about it and everything, every society and social order occurred to him/her as a normal situation:

128 WOOLF, V., Orlando. A Biography. London: The Random House Group Limited, 2004, p. 174.

129 Ibidem, p. 59.

130 Ibidem, p. 60.

*“Orlando had inclined herself naturally to the Elizabethan spirit, to the Restoration spirit, to the spirit of the eighteenth century, and had in consequence scarcely been aware of the change from one age to the other.”*¹³¹

Orlando’s extraordinarily long life is part of the confusion expressed by the biographer in the next quotation. The narrator knows that the length of life can possibly be measured very precisely, it begins with birth and ends with death. But what is between these two definite points can be very different for every person. It depends on each of us how many things we do during our life-time. Someone can be very passive, with no interest in new experiences and activities and, as a consequence, his/her life is almost empty and can be perceived as quite short without any excitement, and the biographer would then have nothing to report and to write about.

On the other hand, if someone lives life full of experiences, actively, it may seem to us that he/she lived many lives or an exceptionally long life. It is also the case of Orlando, the story has many historical references to different eras, kings or queens and historical events so it is clear that it takes places in the course of three centuries. But what if there were no such references? Then, I believe, we could say that Orlando had lived a very active and full life with many experiences. So the length of someone’s life is very subjective when measured by experiences and knowledge and not by the clock.

*“The true length of a person’s life, whatever the Dictionary of National Biography may say, is always a matter of dispute.”*¹³²

Since Orlando is a biography, we usually listen to the voice of the narrator, of the biographer who clearly sees the limits of his work (as Woolf in her diaries, the narrator often questions the possibilities and limits of a biography as a genre). But sometimes we can also hear the voice of Orlando himself/herself speaking about

131 WOOLF, V., Orlando. A Biography. London: The Random House Group Limited, 2004, p. 158.

132 Ibidem, p. 200.

time. Orlando does not seem to catch time, to notice the passing time until he/she is in the thirties. And he/she feels that the time flew over him/her before he/she could look around and he/she feels a bit uneasy about that:

“Time has passed over me,” she thought, trying to collect herself; “this is the oncome of middle age. How strange it is!”¹³³

Time is something of crucial importance for Woolf and that is the reason why she plays with it in her work. In *Orlando*, she adjusted the genre of biography to her purposes. She wanted to show the differences among various eras, and she also wanted to show the differences between the two sexes. However, the time concept in this novel is very prominent from the beginning for the reader. Usually, if the writer wants to speak about the differences among eras, the author uses a kind of family chronicles as for example, John Galsworthy in his *Forsyte Saga*, and many others. But Woolf put all into one novel, into one story experienced only by a single person - Orlando.

She probably wanted to shock the reader, and to make the perception clearer and more precise. Each of us is a different individual and no one perceives the same things in the same way. So if we want to record how people see the society and changes in it in their life-time, it is better to see it through the eyes and from the point of view of the same person. In reality, it is not possible to record the thoughts of one person about the things around us in the course of three centuries. But this is exactly what Virginia Woolf did. She recorded these big changes, which took place in the course of such a long time through the viewpoint of one person.

133 WOOLF, V., *Orlando. A Biography*. London: The Random House Group Limited, 2004, p. 199.

5.4. The Stream of Consciousness in *Orlando*

The technique of stream of consciousness is one of the crucial techniques of the Modernist movement. Virginia Woolf used it playfully, and we can find the examples in her mock biography *Orlando* as well. She used it for expressing Orlando's feelings and moods in his/her inner dialogues.

Quite often the technique was also used as a commentary by the biographer. The novel is very interesting for the status of the biographer. The biographer is there as a narrator, but he/she also questions the objectivity of the biography. The narrator asks himself/herself whether it is possible to write and retell the life of someone else when there is some document missing and we have never been in the mind of the given person. The stream of consciousness expresses the opinions, observations, or doubts of the biographer.

As in the following quotation, which takes place after Orlando's first trance. The narrator is thinking freely about what it actually was - long sleep, temporary death or something else?

*"But if sleep it was, of what nature, we can scarcely refrain from asking, are such sleeps as these? Are they remedial measures - trances in which the most galling memories, events that seem likely to cripple life for ever, are brushed with a dark wing which rubs their harshness off and gilds them, even the ugliest and basest, with a lustre, and incandescence? Has the finger of death to be laid on the tumult of life from time to time lest it rend us asunder? Are we so made that we have to take death in small doses daily or we could not go on with the business of living? And then what strange powers are these that penetrate our most secret ways and change our most treasured possessions without our willing it? Had Orlando, worn out by the extremity of his suffering, died for a week, and then come to life again? And if so, of what nature is death and of what nature is life? Having waited well over half an hour for an answer to these questions, and none coming, let us get on with the story."*¹³⁴

134 WOOLF, V., *Orlando. A Biography*. London: The Random House Group Limited, 2004, p. 40.

In the following section, we encounter the inner dialogue of Orlando. He was very sad that the Princess had left him, and he cannot prevent himself from thinking about it. He wanted to find out what had happened, why she had left him:

*“Thus it was that Orlando, dipping his pen in the ink, saw the mocking face of the lost Princess and asked himself a million questions instantly which were as arrows dipped in gall. Where was she; any why had she left him? Was the Ambassador her uncle or her lover? Had they plotted? Was she forced? Was she married? Was she dead?”*¹³⁵

When Orlando was in Turkey and fell into the trance, an uprising broke out. And this is the moment when the narrator-biographer considers what to do - he/she can end the story and spare us some time or he/she can tell the rest of the story. But some inner voice tells him/her that the truth needs to be said and it cannot be omitted:

*“And now again obscurity descends, and would indeed that it were deeper! Would, we almost have it in our hearts to exclaim, that it were so deep that we could see nothing whatever through its opacity! Would that we might here take the pen and write Finis to our work! Would that we might spare the reader what is to come and say to him in so many words, Orlando died and was buried. But here, alas, Truth, Candour, and Honesty, the austere Gods who keep watch and ward by the inkpot of the biographer, cry No! Putting their silver trumpets to their lips they demand in one blast, Truth! And again they cry Truth! and sounding yet a third time in concert they peal forth, The Truth and nothing but the Truth!”*¹³⁶

Another crucial moment comes when Orlando, as a woman, is reaching the British isles. She thinks very closely of her new status and in her mind it causes quite a turmoil. She understands very well what is expected from her as a female as she

135 WOOLF, V., Orlando. A Biography. London: The Random House Group Limited, 2004, p. 47.

136 Ibidem, p. 84.

was once a man and knew exactly what he expected from women. At the same time she regrets things she cannot do once she gets to Britain. Orlando needs to cope with her new duties and accept her inferior status as compared to her previous status as a man and as an Ambassador:

“And that’s the last oath I shall ever be able to swear;’she thought;’once I set foot on English soil. And I shall never be able to crack a man over the head, or tell him he lies in his teeth, or draw my sword and run him through the body, or sit among my peers, or wear a coronet, or walk in procession, or sentence a man to death, or lead an army, or prance down Whitehall on a charger, or wear seventy-two different medals on my breast. All I can do, once I set foot on English soil, is to pour out tea and ask my lords how they like it. D’you take sugar? D’you take cream?’”¹³⁷

The narrator did not consider only his/her thoughts but also the possible objections of other people on the nature of Orlando’s sex. Orlando was not a typical female or a male. She possessed some of the features of both sexes and the biographer tried to put it straight. But I do not think that it was really necessary, almost no one is a real typical representative of his/her sex. But the narrator tries to make the case clear:

“The curious of her own sex would argue, for example, if Orlando was a woman, how did she never take more than ten minutes to dress? And were not her clothes chosen rather at random, and sometimes worn rather shabby? And then they would say, still, she has none of the formality of a man, or a man’s love of power. She is excessively tender-hearted. She could not endure to see a donkey beaten or a kitten drowned. Yet again, they noted, she detested household matters, was up at dawn and out among the fields in summer before the sun had risen. No farmer knew more about the crops than she did. She could drink with the best and liked games of hazard. She rode well and drove six horses at a gallop over London Bridge.”¹³⁸

137 WOOLF, V., Orlando. A Biography. London: The Random House Group Limited, 2004, p. 100.

138 Ibidem, pp. 121-122.

After the accident in London streets where the Archduke saved her life in front of the crowd, she had to think about her safety. When she was a man, she could go wherever she wanted and she also could fight for herself without any shame but now, as a woman she could not do it. She was dependent on favours of other men who would defend her and her honour:

*“What with the crowd, what with the Duke, what with the jewel, she drove home in the vilest temper imaginable. Was it impossible then to go for a walk without being half-suffocated, presented with a toad set in emeralds, and asked in marriage by an Archduke?”*¹³⁹

As I showed above, the technique of stream of consciousness is a perfect method of showing the inner feelings of the characters. Otherwise, it is very difficult to say exactly what the protagonists are feeling or what they are thinking about at the given moment. I believe that it is quite essential to know the motivation for our understanding of the characters and we can also identify with them easier and justify their behaviour.

139 WOOLF, V., Orlando. A Biography. London: The Random House Group Limited, 2004, p. 123.

6. The Waves

6.1 Woolf's Diary Entries

The novel *The Waves* was first published in 1931 as another Woolf's literary experiment. She played again with time, and she wanted to write into the music, to capture the rhythm of symphonies in her novel. It shows the life of six people (seven if we count Percival as well, even though he does not speak directly in the novel, he is in the thoughts of the other characters) from their childhood until their middle age. Each part of their lives is separated in the book by a short interlude. Totally, there are ten interludes if we include also the last, very short interlude - "*The waves broke on the shore.*"¹⁴⁰

The six characters which are present in the novel are not entirely based on Virginia's imagination. As I mentioned at the beginning, she was often inspired by her friends and she included them in the novels. It is the same with *The Waves*. Louis can be seen as Thomas Stearns Eliot, Neville can be seen as Lytton Strachey and the character of Susan was inspired by her sister Vanessa Bell.¹⁴¹

Virginia Woolf first considered writing a new type of novel in June 1927. Then she called it *The Moths* because moths follow the light which will eventually burn them - she had an idea of a play-poem:

"... *Now the Moths will, I think, fill out the skeleton which I dashed in here; the play-poem idea; the idea of some continuous stream, not solely of human thought, but of the ship, the night, etc., all flowing together: intersected by the arrival of the bright moths.*"¹⁴²

She wanted it to be "*an abstract mystical eyeless book*"¹⁴³. At the beginning, the novel idea was not quite clear to her because she had many thoughts and many

140 WOOLF, V., *The Waves*. London: The Penguin Group, 2000, p. 228.

141 SELLERS, S. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 73.

142 WOOLF, V., *A Writer's Diary*. New York: The New American Library, 1968, p. 109.

143 *Ibidem*, p. 134.

things she wanted to capture. What she was sure of was that her new book would be difficult to read - *The Moths* “must include nonsense, fact, sordidity: but made transparent.”¹⁴⁴ We can observe very closely in her diary how the whole concept of the book slowly crystallized and emerged:

“... However, I now begin to see *The Moths* rather too clearly, or at least strenuously, for my comfort. I think it will begin like this: dawn; the shells on a beach; I don't know - voices of cock and nightingale; and then all the children at a long table - lessons. The beginning. Well, all sorts of characters are to be there. Then the person who is at the table can call out any one of them at any moment; and built up by that person the mood, tell a story; for instance, about dogs or nurses; or some adventure of a child's kind; all to be very *Arabian Nights*; and so on; this shall be childhood; but it must not be my childhood; and boats on the pond; the sense of children; unreality; things oddly proportioned. Then another person or figure must be selected. The unreal world must be round all this - the phantom waves. The Moth must come in; the beautiful single moth. Could one not get the waves to be heard all through? Or the farmyard noises? Some odd irrelevant noises. She might have a book - one book to read in - another to write in - old letters. Early morning light - but this need not to be insisted on; because there must be great freedom from "reality." Yet everything must have relevance.”¹⁴⁵

It is very interesting to see what she intended to write at the beginning and how she recorded all her ideas in her diary. We can see that some of these ideas did not appear in the novel but some of them became even more significant - she omitted later the symbol of moths but the waves became more prominent. The noise of the waves was so essential for her that she named the novel after it.

In September 1929, she realized that the name of the book cannot be *The Moths* since moths do not fly during the day.¹⁴⁶ Later, she discovered that *The Waves* would be a fitting name for her new form novel. It would be appropriate to the topic. At times, Woolf was struggling with the plot, she wrote mere sketches and was not

144 WOOLF, V., *A Writer's Diary*. New York: The New American Library, 1968, p. 136.

145 *Ibidem*, p. 140.

146 *Ibidem*, p. 142.

sure if she could make it more coherent and put all these pieces into one story. But as the work on the novel was progressing, she found out that her form and her short sketches would create an appropriate story in the correct rhythm as she intended at the beginning:

*“The Waves is, I think, resolving itself (I am at page 100) into a series of dramatic soliloquies. The thing is to keep them running homogeneously in and out, on the rhythm of the waves. Can they be read consecutively?”*¹⁴⁷

Woolf was not sure about the success of the book. She did not believe it would sell well. She knew very well that it was quite difficult to read and she did not want to spend much time on it but she was so absorbed by it:

*“But I shall drop very heavily, I think. The Waves won’t sell more than 2,000 copies. I am stuck fast in that book - I mean, glued to it, like a fly on gemmed paper. Sometimes I am out of touch; but go on; then again feel that I have at last, by violent measures - like breaking through gorse - set my hands on something central.... The interludes are very difficult, yet, I think, essential; so as to bridge and also give a background - the sea; insensitive nature - I don’t know.”*¹⁴⁸

She finished the last sentence of *The Waves* in April 1930 and from then on, she only corrected and re-read the manuscript.¹⁴⁹ In February 1931 she finished re-reading it,¹⁵⁰ and she was re-typing the novel until June.¹⁵¹ On 18th July Woolf gave the book to her husband Leonard to read it and tell her his opinion.¹⁵² She did not expect a great success of the book because it was very experimental and it was quite difficult reading for common people but more than 7, 000 copies were sold by the end of November 1931.¹⁵³

147 WOOLF, V., *A Writer’s Diary*. New York: The New American Library, 1968, p. 153.

148 Ibidem, p. 148.

149 Ibidem, p. 152.

150 Ibidem, p. 161.

151 Ibidem, p. 163.

152 Ibidem, p. 165.

153 Ibidem, p. 168.

6.2 Structure

Novel *The Waves* is a story of six people – Jinny, Bernard, Susan, Rhoda, Neville and Louis. There is also the seventh person – Percival – but he never speaks or acts in the novel. He is only in the minds of the other characters and he influences their thoughts quite a lot.

The novel is divided into nine parts – each part stands for a different life period of the characters. The parts are divided by the interludes that represent the day from the morning until the night. The day is the metaphor for the human life from birth (morning) to death (night). I will explore this metaphor in the text below more deeply, in the section about time in *The Waves*.

We are not usually the witnesses of the story but we can merely hear about it from the characters as they reflect it in their minds and comment upon it or see it through their eyes.

The novel began when the characters were children at school. The relationships between them were a bit tensed and complicated as each of them was from a totally different background. We saw the children for the first time on one morning before the start of the lessons. They were all in the garden, enjoying free time and watching the morning and waking day.

Louis was thinking about his past because he believed that he had lived many times before. Alongside, he was hidden behind a hedge and was watching Bernard, Neville, Jinny and Susan who were trying to catch butterflies in the flower beds. But eventually, Jinny discovered him there and kissed him. Susan saw it and Jinny's action made her jealous. Consequently, she did not want to go to the lessons and sit next to both of them since it was too painful for her.

Bernard saw upset Susan passing him while he was making boats out of wood and followed her to comfort her. She ran to the wood where Bernard found her, and while he was trying to comfort her, she told him what she had seen. Susan and Bernard went together through the wood until they discovered Elvedon, a house in

the wood with a beautiful garden. It was a forbidden area for them but they peeped over the wall. But a gardener saw them, and they had to run away and return back to the school garden.

Rhoda was enjoying her inner world and throwing flower petals in a basin and pretended that they were boats.

Then, suddenly we became the witnesses of a lesson with Miss Hudson, Louis did not want to conjugate a verb until Bernard did it – since he is an Englishman and Louis would copy him and his accent. Rhoda felt inferior when the children had a mathematics lesson because unlike the others, she could not find the right answer. So, Miss Hudson left her alone in the classroom after lessons to find it out. Louis felt sorry for her - he was not afraid of her like he was of everybody else because she was also an outsider. They had something in common. Louis felt inferior because of his Australian origin and Rhoda because she was not clever enough.

Meanwhile, the other children crawled under a currant bush and told stories to each other. After a while, Miss Curry blew her whistle and the children were taken for a walk. Neville did not join them, since he was easily tired and it usually resulted in his sickness. At tea time, all children were together again, having bread and butter and milk. After dinner, they were singing together, and later, they went upstairs to the bathrooms and to their bedrooms.

The second part is dedicated to the school again but now the children are educated separately, and it captures the two most crucial parts of the school year. It began with the first day of school and each of the characters said his/her own story. As the children were rather different, also the stories and their feelings were different. Louis, Bernard and Neville met at the station in London at the beginning of the school year. Bernard and Neville were boasting about their upper-class families but Louis felt inferior because he was not a native English gentleman. His father was a banker in Brisbane, and he lacked the correct accent and the right family pedigree.

The boys had to attend the church where Percival was mentioned for the first time. After mass, they went to play cricket, and Bernard was entertaining the others with his invented story about Dr. Crane, the schoolmaster, what he did in his bedroom and how he spoke to his wife.

Susan was missing home very badly and hated school days and counted the days until the end of the school year and eagerly tore down each day from her calendar. Rhoda felt insecure. She did not know the other girls and she lived in her own invented world. She did not know how to react to other people so she copied their behaviour. Jinny was still very vain and without any interest in other people, and she only thought about dresses and proper clothing and behaviour.

Next, we saw Susan expecting eagerly the end of the school when she pictured what she would do at home. Jinny was expecting a completely new life after school – a life where she would be the centre of everything, with balls where men would be charmed by her but she would not want to be attached to only one man.

The boys were present at the final school ceremony. Neville was secretly in love with Percival. All the boys were going home together by train, but Louis was the only one who would not go to the university.

The boys left for the college. Neville tried to write poetry, and he gave it every time to Bernard who would read it and express his opinion about it. Their friendship was a little bit complicated. They were friends but at the same time, also rivals, since both of them were trying to write literature. Percival decided at college that he would go to India.

While the other boys were at college, Louis was sitting in a cafe and was watching people going around. He was still preoccupied with his origin. He still felt that other people judged him according to his accent, and so he tried to imitate their accent.

Susan finished her education in Switzerland and now was back at their farm. She enjoyed the surroundings and the early mornings there. At the end of the day, she thought of Rhoda and Jinny, and what they were doing at that moment. Jinny was going to a party in London at that time. She was enjoying male company very much and met some new people. Rhoda was with company as well but it was not a natural way of enjoying herself because she was feeling very insecure and lost.

In the next section, the characters were in the middle of their twenties. All of them met once again in London when they had a good-bye dinner with Percival who

was leaving for India. Bernard was travelling to London from north, and he was engaged.

Neville was the first one to arrive for dinner in the restaurant, and as he was waiting for the others, he enjoyed the moments of excitement and anticipation. In a while, Neville saw Louis coming. Later Louis was watching for Susan to arrive - she was not dressed up, and she was moving like a wild animal, not comfortable with the environment. Then, Louis was watching Rhoda who was a bit fearful and scared. Susan was watching for Jinny to arrive. When she entered the door, everything seemed to stop and everybody was looking at her like she was the centre of the universe. Neville was watching for Bernard to arrive, he seemed like he was there by an accident. Percival then showed up last. He took a seat next to Susan whom he loved.

They were sharing memories of school, of their teachers, and in the course of the evening, they were talking about what they had thought before they entered the restaurant. They were also thinking about what Percival would do in India and what the future would hold for him and for all of them. As with many reunions, the evening ended in melancholy.

Then, suddenly Percival died when he fell off his horse. Neville was touched very much by his death, and he felt like his world ended because Percival was the love of his life. Bernard had very mixed feelings because his son was born but also Percival died, and he could not cope with both feelings at the same time. For all the characters it was a crucial moment because one of them was gone, and Percival had been a very influential person to all of them. It was also a moment when they all realized their own mortality and the fact that life is passing fast.

Now, the protagonists were a bit older. They were in their thirties, and each of them moved on somehow with their lives. Louis was fully absorbed with his work and did not have time to do anything else. Louis and Rhoda became lovers (but not partners), and she sometimes visited him in his attic room. Susan got married and was a mother. She enjoyed her life in the country and being a parent. Jinny could not settle with anyone for too long, and she enjoyed her life with rich men. Neville was

desperate because of his life. He was not satisfied with his relationship because he had a partner whom he did not trust.

In the next section, we get to know that Bernard realized he had lost his youth and an important part of his life was over and he would not have time to do the things he wanted to do anymore. He decided to catch the last bits of his youth and went to Italy to think about it.

Susan was very happy in her life. She had a beautiful garden with fruit and sons and daughters, and she felt that it was the peak of her desire although she felt sometimes tired and sick because of all of this. She also sometimes thought of Percival and Rhoda.

Jinny was living in London. But suddenly, she felt old and not so beautiful. She still did not want to attach herself to one man. She was always expecting someone better so that feeling was not the reason to settle for her.

Neville also felt that he was not young anymore. Rhoda was disappointed by the behaviour of society. She felt that she got dirty from people, and that they did not have enough courage and were too servile. She was considering death and suicide.

After couple of years the characters arranged a meeting in Hampton Court. They all were middle-aged. All of them arrived – Susan, Louis, Rhoda, Jinny, Neville and Bernard - and had dinner together in an inn. Neville was nostalgic and felt sorry because Percival would never join them again. They all were talking and thinking about their lives, and they considered what they had done and what had happened to the children they used to be. They were also thinking about what would follow, and what would happen next in their lives. But also, they went on in their relationships – Neville tried to impress Susan, but he saw that they could not do whatever they wanted with their lives. It was too late for them. Bernard was talking about his sons and daughters but he still felt lonely. All of them went for a walk in the gardens. Louis and Susan were going hand in hand, Bernard and Neville went arm-in-arm.

The last section of the book is the part dedicated to Bernard who was speaking for all of his friends and companions. He was discussing his life with a total

stranger – he summed up his life and the lives of his friends. Rhoda committed suicide. Later, the listener left Bernard alone.

6.3 Time in *The Waves*

Woolf's novel *The Waves* is, as well as *Orlando*, an experiment with time for the first sight. The division of human life itself by the interludes makes the novel different from the others. She compares a single day to the life of a human being. It is a very interesting idea, because if we consider the age of the Earth or the Universe, a human life is really short and it could be compared to a day, maybe even to a shorter period, in the life of our planet.

I really like this comparison because if we think of it, the cycle of the day is also very similar to the cycle of the human life. In the morning we are full of strength, energy and also hope, and we can do anything we want with the day. It is the same with the human life, when we are children we are energetic, hopeful, and we can be whatever we want to be and we can do whatever we want to do with our lives. We are not limited by anything, all life is ahead of us.

Later, around the noon, we have a part of the day behind us, we have done some things but we still have much time in front of us, and we can still make big changes. Similarly, when we are middle-aged, we have done some things – we grew up, studied, found jobs, got married and possibly had children, but there are still many things to do. We can see new opportunities, new doors open in front of us, and even though we do not have so much energy as we had when we were children, we still have plenty of it.

In the evening, we can see the end of the day coming, and it is a beautiful part of the day but also a little bit melancholic. We often look back and replay and remember the day we have had. It is the same when we are old and our life is coming to an inevitable end. Old age can be a beautiful age, we can see the people who grew up from our own children and our grandchildren. We often recapitulate and replay our life, we are melancholic and think about things we could have done better or just differently.

And then, the day ends in darkness, as the human life ends and comes to some unspecified darkness too.

The day parallel is not Woolf's only play with time. She is also using another form. The usage of the characters in the novel is very much different as well. Woolf lets them talk about the same events in sequences. We can hear Bernard talking about one event, and in the next paragraph, Susan is talking about the same event from the beginning, and in the next one, Rhoda is talking about the same thing all over. Each of the characters expresses his/her own point of view of the events without any big gap – just a different paragraph.

Woolf's narrative and approach to time and stream of consciousness is praised by many authors or researchers, for example:

*"...Woolf in The Waves, has created a dynamic field of language in which time and space are synthesized in the varicoloured flow of consciousness."*¹⁵⁴

Woolf's conception of time was also the topic of one of the contributions from the Twentieth Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf:

*"Often in Woolf's fiction, different modes of time intersect; or rather, ordered (masculine) time interrupts moments of being. For instance, at one point in The Waves, Bernard and Neville's moment of being is interrupted by clock time. Bernard blames Neville, "who had been thinking with the unlimited time of the mind" but then "poked the fire and began to live by that other clock." This "other clock" is one of habit (or, "non-being" as Woolf puts it in Moments of Being). The "other clock" represent specialized time that orders our lives into seconds, minutes, hours, translating our qualitative experience into something quantitative."*¹⁵⁵

In each interlude, it is clear that time passes, each of them is a beautiful and colourful description of nature, of time passing during a given part of the day. Each interlude begins earlier and does not stop time somehow to depict the picture at some

154 STEWARD, J.F., Spatial Form and Color in The Waves. In: Twentieth Century Literature 28: 1 (1982), p. 102.

155 MATTISON, L., The Metaphysics of Flowers in The Waves: Virginia Woolf's "Seven-Sided Flower" and Henri Bergson's Intuition. In: Selected Papers from the Twentieth Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf. Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2011, p. 72.

particular moment. The gradual changes of the scenery are described in the following part – it is the first interlude at the beginning of the novel. We are early in the morning when the day has not begun yet. Gradually, the sun is rising and the day and the situation get their colours:

*“The sun had not yet risen. The sea was undistinguishable from the sky, except that the sea was slightly creased as if a cloth had wrinkles in it. Gradually as the sky whitened a dark line lay on the horizon dividing the sea from the sky and the grey cloth became barred with thick strokes moving, one after another, beneath the surface, following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually.”*¹⁵⁶

We can measure passing time differently, we can use the clock, or the hourglass, or as Woolf does – the waves – she uses the waves approaching the shore for time measuring. In my opinion, the waves are usually a calmer and definitely more natural way of measuring time. If we compare the waves to the ticking of the clock, then, the clock might be considered a little bit aggressive and unnatural way:

*“As they neared the shore each bar rose, heaped itself, broke and swept a thin veil of white water across the sand. The waves paused, and then drew out again, sighing like a sleeper whose breath comes and goes unconsciously.”*¹⁵⁷

*“The waves broke and spread their waters swiftly over the shore. One after another they massed themselves and fell; the spray tossed itself back with the energy of their fall. The waves were steeped deep-blue save for a pattern of diamond-pointed light on their backs which rippled as the backs of great horses ripple with muscles as they move. The waves fell; withdrew and fell again, like the thud of a great beast stamping.”*¹⁵⁸

The aggressivity of the clock is shown in the next section. It measures time mercilessly – the hands are two convoys – they are not anything natural, moving

156 WOOLF, V., *The Waves*. London: The Penguin Group, 2000, p. 3.

157 *Ibidem*, p. 3.

158 *Ibidem*, pp. 112-113.

through the desert. This metaphor is expressing her opinion quite clearly - desert is not a nice place in spite of the existence of the oases. It is a hostile and merciless land. Woolf does not perceive the ticking clock as anything likeable:

*“The clock ticks. The two hands are convoys marching through a desert. The black bars on the clock face are green oases. The long hand has marched ahead to find water. The other, painfully stumbles among hot stones in the desert. It will die in the desert.”*¹⁵⁹

Woolf shows us in some parts the character's perception of time: for instance, Susan hated school, and she wanted to go back home. She counted the days necessary to survive at school and showed the passing time in the calendar by tearing the days off and showing herself that her days there would be over soon:

*“So each night I tear off the old day from the calendar, and screw it tight into a ball.... You are dead now, I say, school day, hated day.”*¹⁶⁰

*“I have torn off the whole of May and June, 'said Susan, 'and twenty days of July. I have torn them off and screwed them up so that they no longer exist, as a weight in my side. They have been crippled days, like moths with shrivelled wings unable to fly.”*¹⁶¹

Woolf knew very well that the life is a never-ending cycle, day after day, month after month, year after year, summer follows spring and so on. And also people do the same things again and again, even people in different historical eras do similar or the same things – they have to eat, breathe, die... It was rather difficult or impossible to find any activity which no one had done before. And all the characters have similar feelings. In the first quotation, Louis speaks about his feelings, in the second Susan speaks, in the third and in the fourth it is Bernard:

159 WOOLF, V., *The Waves*. London: The Penguin Group, 2000, p. 14.

160 *Ibidem*, p. 29.

161 *Ibidem*, pp. 38-39.

*“Life passes. The clouds change perpetually over our houses. I do this, do that, and again do this and then that.”*¹⁶²

*“‘Summer comes, and winter,’ said Susan. ‘The seasons pass. The pear fills itself and drops from the tree. The dead leaf rests on its edge.’”*¹⁶³

*“That is the happy concatenation of one event following another in our lives. Knock, knock, knock. Must, must, must. Must go, must sleep, must wake, must get up – sober, merciful world which we pretend to revile, which we press tight to our hearts, without which we should be undone. How we worship that sound like the knocking together of trucks in a siding!”*¹⁶⁴

*“Tuesday follows Monday, then comes Wednesday. The mind grows rings; the identity becomes robust; pain is absorbed in growth. Opening and shutting, shutting and opening, with an increasing hum and sturdiness, the haste and fever of youth are drawn into service until the whole being seems to expand in and out like the mainspring of a clock. How fast the stream flows from January to December! We are swept on by the torrent of things grown so familiar that they cast no shadow. We float, we float...”*¹⁶⁵

Even the characters were aware of the passing time of their lives. As in the next extract, Neville is sitting in a room and listening to the clock and thinking about his life, but he seems quite satisfied, he does not have any high ambitions. He is perfectly happy when he is sitting with someone, or maybe alone and speaking to himself:

“‘Why, look,’ said Neville, ‘at the clock ticking on the mantelpiece? Time passes, yes. And we grow old. But to sit with you, alone with you, here in London, in

162 WOOLF, V., *The Waves*. London: The Penguin Group, 2000, p. 129.

163 *Ibidem*, p. 130.

164 *Ibidem*, p. 180.

165 *Ibidem*, p. 198.

this firelit room, you there, I here, is all....''¹⁶⁶

But not all time perceptions are necessarily negative. Bernard can even see the nice, poetic side of time when he compares it to a sunny pasture. The time is bright and dancing around but still it points to one thing. The beam is becoming narrower and narrower until it is a small point. But what is that point? Can we expect anything positive or negative? Is the aim of this point death? Or rather an eternal after-life?

*“Time, which is a sunny pasture covered with a dancing light, time, which is wide-spread as a field at midday, becomes pendant. Time tapers to a point. As a drop falls from a glass heavy with some sediment, time falls. These are the true cycles, these are the true events.”*¹⁶⁷

Bernard also could see the passing time in front of his eyes when he was sitting and dining with his friends from childhood. Even though he should have been preoccupied in conversation with them, he could perceive the sound of the world and the flying time. Maybe, even more, when he saw how his friends had changed, he could see how much time had passed since they left school:

“‘Silence falls; silence falls,’ said Bernard. ‘But now listen; tick, tick; hoot, hoot; the world has hailed us back to it. I heard for one moment the howling winds of darkness as we passed beyond life. Then tick, tick (the clock); then hoot, hoot (the cars). We are landed; we are on shore; we are sitting, six of us, at a table....’’’¹⁶⁸

Time is one of the dominant motifs in *The Waves*. Not only because of the metaphor of the day which is compared to the human life, but also how we can see changes of the characters. We watch them and their thoughts very carefully from childhood to their adulthood, and it is the main indicator of the passing time.

We usually notice how nature changes throughout the year and we can see the

166 WOOLF, V., *The Waves*. London: The Penguin Group, 2000, p. 135.

167 *Ibidem*, p. 141.

168 *Ibidem*, p. 173.

changing seasons. However, the most obvious sign of passing time is when we see how children became adults and what they have done with their lives.

6.4 The stream of consciousness in *The Waves*

The stream of consciousness is one of the important techniques used by modernist authors. Virginia Woolf used this technique very often because it was a perfect way to capture the inner feelings and thoughts of the individual character and follow the passing time.

The principle of this method is that the writer depicts every thought that crosses the mind of the protagonist as the flow of thoughts. It does not have to be logic. Its purpose is to show the associations of the characters, how their reasoning and thinking work. It helps the writer to show the real inner life of the protagonist and the chain of thoughts, the conversation which we have with ourselves in our minds and which is not or cannot be always directly expressed by our words or actions.

Woolf was a master of this technique. As Justyna Kostkowska pointed out in her contribution to the 18th annual conference on Virginia Woolf about Mrs Dalloway:

*“There, and later in The Waves, she develops a non-linear, multcentred stream of consciousness that approximates the real-life, associative thought process.”*¹⁶⁹

For instance, as one of the female protagonists of *The Waves* is describing the sequence as she is leaning out of the window and sees her father. The writer does not have to describe the scene, it is just necessary to follow the chain of thoughts:

“Now women kiss each other and help with baskets. Now I will let myself lean out of the window. The air rushes down my nose and throat – the cold air, the salt air with the smell of turnip fields in it. And there is my father, with his back

169 KOSTKOWSKA, J., Cinematic Editing of Virginia Woolf: Mrs. Dalloway and Stephen Daldry's *The Hours* as Reflective Ecosystems. In: *Woolf Editing/Editing Woolf. Selected Papers from the Eighteenth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*. Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2009, p. 138.

turned, talking to a farmer. I tremble. I cry. There is my father in gaiters. There is my father."¹⁷⁰

Jinny also describes her perception and her thoughts when she is going to a party in London:

*"Now the cars slides to a stop. A strip of pavement is lighted. The door is opening and shutting. People are arriving; they do not speak; they hasten in. There is the swishing sound of cloaks falling in the hall. This is the prelude, this is the beginning. I glance, I peep, I powder."*¹⁷¹

Another section shows a different sequence of thoughts, emphasizing each point in time by means of the repetition of the word "now" (underlined by the author of the Thesis). It begins every new moment and every new perception, new thought:

*"Now I feel the roughness of the fibre of the curtain which I push; now I feel the cold iron railing and its blistered paint beneath my palm. Now the cool tide of darkness breaks its waters over me. We are out of doors. Night opens; night traversed by wandering moths; night hiding lovers roaming to adventure. I smell roses; I smell violets; I see red and blue just hidden. Now gravel is under my shoes; now grass. Up reel the tall backs of houses guilty with lights. All London is uneasy with flashing lights. Now let us sing our love song – Come, come, come. Now my gold signal is like a dragon-fly flying taut. Jug, jug, jug. I sing like the nightingale whose melody is crowded in the too narrow passage of her throat. Now I hear crash and rending of boughs and the crack of antlers as if the beasts of the forest were all hunting, all rearing high and plunging down among the thorns. One has pierced me. One is driven deep within me."*¹⁷²

We can follow the inner thoughts of the characters thanks to this technique. Usage of the word "now" by Woolf makes the thoughts even more urgent.

170 WOOLF, V., *The Waves*. London: The Penguin Group, 2000, p. 46.

171 *Ibidem*, p. 75.

172 *Ibidem*, p. 135.

7. Conclusion

Virginia Woolf could have been a romantic heroine of some novel but she was a real person. It is quite difficult to imagine her real life. It was so complicated and full of obstructions and tragic moments, not only in her family when her mother died, her half-sister died, her father died and her brother died. She herself suffered from a mental illness. She was sexually abused by her half-brothers. The torment of her life is almost unimaginable. It would affect any sane person. You cannot lose so many people and things without being influenced somehow. But she was very sensitive and had inclinations for mental disorders from the beginning, and it was only logical that it broke out after her first big loss.

She was quite lucky that she met Leonard Woolf and married him. Even though their relationship was not always an easy one, I would say that their marriage was a union of two great minds and considering all circumstances, it was quite a happy union, too. They took care of each other, and in spite of Virginia's mental illness, they did their best with their lives and travelled, set a small press and wrote and both of them were successful.

Virginia was one of the pioneers of a new movement - Modernism. She probably did not consider herself as a pioneer of something. She only wrote how she rightly felt. She wanted to invent something new, not only to surprise readers, she knew that some of her novels would be difficult to read but she did not care much. She invented new techniques and styles just for the fun of it and for her pleasure. She was very happy when she was successful, and other people appreciated her work too.

Although she used new techniques, for instance the stream of consciousness, she knew very well that it may not be understandable for the readers. She was very sensitive to criticism. Mainly, she relied much on her husband Leonard's opinion, then the opinions of her close friends whom she respected also very much. After finishing every book, she promised herself that she would not torment herself by reading the reviews in the newspapers, but still she read them and sometimes it was very hurtful for her.

As a writer she experimented very much. Almost every book by Virginia was

an experiment of some kind. It was very difficult to exclude the author's personal experience from his/her work, and also, Virginia often used her experience and pictured her friends and acquaintances in her novels. *To the Lighthouse* is a novel concerning the Stephen family, and Virginia tried to cope with her past there. The biography *Flush* is about the dog of her friend Elizabeth Browning. She experimented there with the point of view - the life of Elizabeth Browning is seen in the novel through the eyes of her dog. Novel in one day, *Mrs Dalloway*, is also an experiment with time - the whole story is told during one day. But, we do not know only about this day, from the thoughts of the characters we can see their all lives. Woolf tried to experiment in each novel differently and she was very successful.

It is clear from the beginning that *The Waves* and *Orlando* are completely different books and necessarily, it has to lead to very different perception of time as well. We cannot perceive time the same way when we speak about the course of life of the characters who live common and ordinary life, and when we speak about a noble person who lives in three centuries, and is still quite young.

The biography of Orlando plays with many things quite unusually. Not only time is something unsure and shifting, but also the sex of the main protagonist is not a permanent and stable category. Orlando was born in the 16th century and in the first half of the 20th century he/she was still in his/her thirties. He was born as a man, a little boy and lived that way for several decades. He experienced many events, when he was a little boy, his family was visited by the Queen and later he was even invited to the Court to be the Queen's companion.

After an affair with Sasha, he left to the country and held parties, at one he met a woman and was afraid of falling in love so he asked the Queen to send him away from the British Isles. That is how he became the Ambassador Extraordinary in Turkey. The night when Turkish Uprising broke out, Orlando fell into a trance.

Suddenly, when he woke up from the trance he was a woman and she joined a Gipsy tribe. When Orlando realized that she cannot accept their way of life, she left them and boarded on a merchant ship heading towards England. After her return she got married and delivered a boy.

The story is rather untypical, as many of Woolf's books are, and the time is of crucial importance for the plot. The first thing we should notice is that Woolf's

perception of time is highly subjective in the biography of Orlando. We have there specific hints of historical events, the Queen or the King on the throne. In each chapter of the book, it is quite clear in which period we are. But what if there are not such straight points? Would we also think that Orlando has lived for three centuries? I do not think so. Time is really a subjective category. Some people live their lives to its fullest and enjoy every moment and at the end of it they did so many things, participated on so many events and took advantage of every opportunity. It can seem that they lived more than one life.

On the contrary, for some people who lived their lives without any interests whatsoever or without children, concentrated only on themselves but not participating in anything, it can seem that they did not live at all, or their lives can appear very short.

Woolf also knew that the time is passing fast and with its speed it brings also big changes. She saw very well around how society has changed, what was possible for her was not possible for her mother fifty years ago. She tried to capture also this progress in her work. At the beginning, Orlando used only horses and ships if he wanted to go somewhere but when the book ends, the streets are full of cars, and she is mesmerized by these changes but also a little bit scared.

The Waves is an experiment of a different kind. At the time when Woolf wrote it she was fully absorbed by listening to symphonies. There emerged an idea that she would write her next novel using the rhythm of a symphony, of the music. The idea gradually crystallized, the name of the novel was originally *The Moths*, but then she realized that moths do not fly during the day, only at night. On the other hand, the motif of the waves was there from the beginning but not as prominent as it later became.

The novel tells the story of 6 people and one non-speaking character. In this novel she plays with the thought that everyone has multiple selves and no one has only one inner voice - there are always more. The novel has a plot which is narrated by the characters, they take turns and tell the story in sequences. When there are more of them, it is narrated from the point of view of each of them so we can see clearly the motivation of each acting character. The diversity of the stories is given mainly by the fact that each personality is from a different background and of a

different origin. For instance, Louis's father is a banker in Australia and Louis felt inferior because he did not have the proper British accent. Rhoda also felt inferior but for a different reason. She was not as clever as the others and she knew it. Susan grew up in a village, and she liked life in the country and her family. She then very enjoyed being a mother later in the novel. Her exact opposite was Jinny - she loved living in the city, she enjoyed male company but she did not want to settle with anyone. Neville and Bernard were both interested in literature which made them both friends and rivals at the same time. Percival, even though he does not speak in the novel, influenced the actions of each character and was often in their thoughts. The relationships are and remain complicated among all characters throughout the novel.

Time in this novel is something of high importance, too. The novel is divided into several sections by the interludes. The interludes show the day, from the early dawn to the sunset. Each part of the day is a parallel to the part of a human life. The book begins with the description of the morning and then follows the part which captures the childhood of the children at school. And it goes on until the children are the adults, not particularly old but are middle-aged. The day is slowly ending as it is approaching the evening. I very like this metaphor, in my opinion it is a very accurate comparison.

One human life is not the central point of the universe or of the cycle of our planet. It is only a small period of time in comparison with the age of the universe or of the Earth. So we can see a day in a human life also as a metaphor for one human life in the cycle of the planet.

The last, shortest interlude is also suggesting the cycle of everything. It says: "*The waves broke on the shore.*"¹⁷³ It is a repeated, periodical movement which is never-ending. The sea is there for hundreds and thousands years, and the waves have never stopped to break on the shore. Many things have changed, many hours have passed, but the movement of the waves is something we can rely on, something which continues and will continue until the end.

Woolf was not the supporter of the clock. As I mentioned above, in one quotation the ticking of the clock was described as something unfavourable, even hostile. On the other hand, she described very nicely the passing time in nature. In

173 WOOLF, V., *The Waves*. London: The Penguin Group, 2000, p. 228.

the novel, *The Waves*, we can see the passing time on the metaphor of the day, or we can also measure time with the waves - how many times it had broken on the shore before something happened.

As it is probably clear from the previous lines, the depiction and concept of time in both novels is completely different. And it is only logical because each novel deals with a different story, with different ages. Nevertheless, *The Waves* and *Orlando* have in common that perception of time in both is very original and also very typical of Modernism. In both, time is not a category which we should take for granted, it must be thought of it very carefully because time is not always an objective category.

8. Resumé

Tématem mé magisterské práce je koncepce času ve dvou románech Virginie Woolfové - ve Vlnách a Orlandovi. Ve své práci se snažím zařadit obě díla do kontextu doby, kdy byla napsána a také do kontextu života Virginie Woolfové. Pro psaní této části mi byla nejvíce užitečná kniha Deník spisovatele. To je kompilace deníkových záznamů samotné spisovatelky, která byla pořízena manželem Virginie, Leonardem Woolfem, po její smrti. Tehdy ještě nebylo možné vydání kompletních deníků, protože mnoho lidí, kteří se v nich objevují, stále žilo a jejich publikování by mohlo některým z nich uškodit. Leonard Woolf tedy vybral především části, kde je zachycena Virginie Woolfová jako spisovatelka. Tuto knihu jsem často používala, abych mohla začlenit její romány do komplexnějšího rámce v jejím životě. V kompilaci deníků také bylo možné dobře sledovat, jak veškerá díla Woolfové postupně krystalizovala až do podoby publikovaného díla.

První část mé diplomové práce je věnována samotné Virginii Woolfové. Není možné zkoumat její práci, aniž bychom věděli alespoň základní fakta o jejím životě. Ten byl hodně komplikovaný, ale zároveň velmi zajímavý. Biografie Woolfové od Hermiony Lee byla velmi cennou a zajímavou literaturou. Nejenže je kniha velmi podrobná, ale také dobře napsaná a čtivá. Další užitečnou knihou byla biografie Woolfové z pera jejího synovce Quentina Bella.

V další části práce se zabývám důležitou částí spisovatelčina života a tou byla skupina Bloomsbury. Byla to skupina přátel a intelektuálů, kteří se scházeli v části Londýna zvané Bloomsbury a diskutovali o politice, filosofii a dalších, často kontroverzních tématech. Mezi členy této zajímavé a často extravagantní skupiny patřilo mnoho slavných lidí, především Thoby, bratr Virginie, jeho přátelé z univerzity v Cambridge a přátelé jeho přátel. Ve své době nebyla skupina Bloomsbury považována za spořádanou společnost, životy jejích členů byly často skandální a oni sami se snažili rozbít mnohá tabu.

Ve čtvrté kapitole stručně shrnuji, co bylo modernistické hnutí. Je zde popsán především modernismus jako literární hnutí a jeho prvky, jako je modernistický experiment nebo technika proudu vědomí. Nicméně je docela složité obsáhnout celý

modernismus vzhledem k tomu, že to bylo heterogenní hnutí. Hlavním cílem modernistických autorů bylo vše dělat a zvažovat jinak, než všichni ostatní. Snažili se vymezit především vůči předchozí éře - období Viktoriánského realismu.

Následující kapitola se zabývá biografií Orlando (1928). Obsahuje čtyři podkapitoly. V první části jsou obsaženy deníkové záznamy Woolfové, které se vztahují k danému románu. Pokud chceme analyzovat příběh románu, bylo nutné jej v další podkapitole popsat. Třetí část je věnována koncepci času. Jsou zde popsány metody použité pro popis času a také vnímání času Woolfovou v daném románu. Poslední část kapitoly se zabývá modernistickým experimentem v tomto díle, technikou proudu vědomí. V této části jsem pracovala s edicí Vintage Classics z roku 2004.

Šestá kapitola je věnována druhému zkoumanému románu - Vlnám (1931) a struktura je podobná té předchozí. Začíná deníkovými záznamy zabývajícími se Vlnami a jak postupně nápad na román krystalizoval. Dále je zde stručně vylíčen příběh románu, který je obtížnější popsat. Vypravěči se zde rychleji střídají a úhel pohledu na stejnou situaci se často mění. Poté je zkoumána koncepce času, která je také velmi odlišná od Orlando. Trvání tohoto románu zahrnuje pouze jeden lidský život, nicméně je zde ale více postav. Navíc Woolfová užívá metaforu lidského života jako jednoho dne. V poslední části kapitoly je popsáno, jak Virginia Woolfová pracovala s technikou proudu vědomí v tomto románu. V této části jsem používala knihu z edice Penguin Classics z roku 1992.

V závěrečné kapitole jsou shrnuty veškeré závěry a poznatky a srovnány oba romány. Okomentovány jsou také jejich rozdíly a podobnosti v zachycení ubíhajícího času a také v použití techniky proudu vědomí.

Dostupnost literatury byla horší, protože jsem se rozhodla psát svou magisterskou práci v anglickém jazyce. Veškeré knihy se mi nakonec podařilo získat, také jsem pracovala s EBSCO katalogem. Materiály z každoročně konané konference o Virginii Woolfové byly volně dostupné na internetu.

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