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Framing Ethopoietical Writing in Virgina Woolf's *Orlando*

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1. Introduction – Turning the Kaleidoscope

A kaleidoscope resists determination, stasis and stagnation; instead, it blatantly fosters vicissitude, transformation and processuality. As an invention of the early 19th century, the kaleidoscope soon became an emblem for "a new way of seeing the world",[1] and it has subsequently been adapted as an appealing metaphor for notions of literary aesthetics. A shift in perspective, thereby slowly circulating and bending the tube slightly and carefully from one side to the other, will make the shapes change evermore; new and previously unconcerned perspectives can be revealed. What I intend to do in the course of this paper is adverting to a two-fold kaleidoscopic nature of Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando* (1928). By reading the novel against the backdrop of Foucauldian ethopoiesis, I want to supplement former research on Virginia Woolf by offering a new and so far mostly neglected perspective, namely the interpretation of Orlando's artistry as a means of ethopoietical writing. I contend that broadening the perspective by reading *Orlando* as an exemplary illustration of ethopoietical writing – of both its possibilities and its limits, but at no time as a mere mirror of theory – also unveils a fascinating and multifarious kaleidoscope of identities which is inherent in the novel itself. Kathryn Simpson calls for "turn[ing] the kaleidoscope as you will"[2] in order to meet the versatility appertain to Virginia Woolf and her works.

Orlando, published in 1928, in the midst of British Modernism, is frequently seen as the prime example of featuring Woolf's notions of the androgynous mind and of gender as a variable and fluent construct, which would later be theorised by numerous feminist critics such as Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler.[3]

[1] Helen Groth, "Kaleidoscopic Vision and Literary Invention in an 'Age of Things': David Brewster, Don Juan, and 'A Lady's Kaleidoscope'". In: *ELH* 74.1 (2007), p. 217.
[2] Kahryn Simpson, "Woolf's Bloomsbury". In: Bryony Randall/Jane Goldman (eds.), *Virginia Woolf in Context*. Cambridge 2012, p. 170.
[3] In her work *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler draws heavily on Simone de Beauvoir's pioneering work *The Second Sex* (1949), in which gender – as a fluid and culturally constructed continuum – is opposed to the hitherto essentialist assumption of sex as the antithesis of male and

However, a feminist and gender-oriented approach is by no means the only lucrative and revealing method that can be brought to the text. Instead, I will demonstrate that identity as presented in *Orlando* is predominantly shaped by signifying and constitutive processes of writing that bear heavy traces of what the French philosopher Michel Foucault refers to as ethopoietical writing in his final work on ethics. Foucault critically remarks that "art has become something that is related only to objects […], something which is specialized or done by experts who are artists"[4] and thereupon asks himself: "[C]ouldn't everyone's life become a work of art?"[5] For Michel Foucault, ethopoiesis is the transformation of oneself into a work of art – 'creating oneself', following the ancient Greek origin of the compound. Ethopoiesis comprises the essential "transformation of truth into ethos",[6] as Foucault points out in his lecture "Self-Writing". Against the backdrop of current discussions about the value of self-centred literary works such as Karl Ove Knausgård's sequence of autofiction entitled *My Struggle* – the original Norwegian title *Min Kamp* only adds to the controversy raised as it is –, it has become increasingly necessary to consider the role self-writing plays in processes of identity formation. Linking Woolf and Foucault thereby also shows in how far their writings tie in with contemporary debates.

A cross-section of the current state of research in Woolf studies reveals that *Orlando* has extensively been discussed by feminist critics with primary respect to the representation of gender as well as modernist precepts such as Woolf's poetics and her narrational experimentation with temporal and spatial constellations. However, little research has been done on Orlando's role as an artist and the act of poietic writing within the novel – even though scenes of writing and contemplation on language are ubiquitous at the very heart of the novel –, and even fewer critics have attempted to interrelate Woolfian and Foucauldian thought.[7] A promising issue entitled "Modernist Life Narratives: Bildungsroman, Biography, Autobiography" appeared in the journal *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies* in the year 2013. In one of the therein compiled articles, Pamela Caughie analyses *Orlando* as an outstanding example of modernist life writing and a prime example for Paul Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity. However, in regarding

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female. Woolf precedes de Beauvoir, Butler and similar critics in their thinking on gender construction.

[4] Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress". In: Paul Rabinow (ed.), *Ethics. Subjectivity and Truth*. London 2000, p. 261.

[5] Ibid., p. 261.

[6] Michel Foucault, "Self Writing". In: Paul Rabinow (ed.), *Ethics. Subjectivity and Truth*. London 2000, p. 209.

[7] In the course of working extensively on Woolf and Foucault, more similarities in thought ensue than might be apparent at first sight. I think that just as Foucault "was not an aesthetician but a student of what the ancient Greek called aesthesis, 'feeling', 'experience', 'felt experience'" (Faubion, "Introduction", p. XIII), so was Woolf herself. Similarities can most notably be seen in their perception of time and history being a conglomerate of multiple pasts rather than a coherent and hermetically shut entity. Both Woolf and Foucault were aware of the shaping forces of discourse and have furthermore succeeded in achieving momentousness as "transdiscursive writers" (Foucault, "What is an Author?", p. 217), thereby exceeding their single works and initiating new areas of discourse.

the novel as such only in the light of life writing and 'transgenre', Caughie mainly forfeits protruding one layer deeper so as to see Orlando's writing within the novel as a type of life narrative. Also, many critics have so far pursued a widely biographical take on Woolf's texts, which one might easily feel inclined to in the light of her essayistic and openly feminist writings such as *A Room of One's Own* (1929). *Orlando* has also often been read in the light of Woolf's relationship to Vita Sackville-West, whom the novel is dedicated to and who is said to be mirrored and fictionalised in the character of Orlando. The Penguin Classics Edition, for instance, contains numerous annotations on potential references to the Sackville-Wests as well as a lengthy introduction by Sandra Gilbert, who focuses on both of the above-mentioned themes. In this paper, however, I want to illustrate that – particularly with respect to *Orlando* – it is the combination and interrelation of seemingly rather distant theories and thereby being in relatively uncharted waters, which can be perceptive and enriching.

In order to elaborate on the significance of language in processes of identity formation, reference will primarily be made to the concept of ethopoietical writing as proclaimed by Michel Foucault and, in addition, to Julia Kristeva's notion of 'le sujet en procès'. Both theoretical concepts comprise the processuality of writing in identity development. In the ensuing chapters, I will reveal how *Orlando* can be read as featuring the concept of ethopoietical writing. It is by no means my aim to (re-)construct the novel as a flawless mirror of Foucauldian theory; what I intend to do instead is shed light on the correlation between Orlando's writing and the ever-changing framework set by the respective 'spirit of the age'. The life of Orlando as a character spans more than 300 years; he is travelling through the ages – the novel opens in the 16th century and closes in Woolf's present, the 1920s. I will thus proceed chronologically in investigating the changes of the general framework for writing in the course of the centuries. The particular external parameters such as the respective 'spirit of the age', conceptions of art and the artist, the literary scene, and processes of commodification differ fundamentally and influence the change in the style of writing Orlando undergoes in the course of his and her life. The tension between the external – the framework set by historical, cultural, social and political precepts – and the internal – Orlando's reaction manifesting itself in the process of writing – gives rise to a kaleidoscopic vision on identity formation over the course of an intensive writing process. Which image does the kaleidoscope reveal, and in how far does ethopoietical writing contribute to Orlando's identity formation?

2. Writing and Identity Formation – The Power(s) of Language

2.1 Writing as Ethopoiesis (Michel Foucault)

Against the backdrop of Foucault's seeming omnipresence in contemporary academia, it can be contended that his thinking likewise enchants, confuses and infuriates critics all over the humanities.[8] Foucault's style of writing is controversially promiscuous at times and his areas of interest are as diverse as ranging from his early writings on madness and the institution of the prison, techniques of normalisation and disciplining, to the linkage of power and knowledge, the constitution of society and sexuality, the discontinuities of history, to language and finally the constitution of the subject. It is mostly Foucauldian notions of knowledge, power and governmentality – the subject's position within and its submission to the larger apparatus of society and institutions – which have become common knowledge, also within the field of literary criticism.

However, it is crucial to consider the "aesthetic turn"[9] Foucault took in the later part of his life when he shifted his focus from a macro level of society and institutions to the micro level of ethics and the subject itself. In the afterword to Dreyfus's and Rabinow's pivotal monograph *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*,[10] Foucault states that his main objective of study has been "the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject".[11] Admittedly, Foucault's topical digressions and his change of mind are well known to readers of his works. However, there is a tendency towards ethics and the level of the subject recognisable in what Veyne calls 'the final Foucault'; therein, Foucault eminently turns to the past of Greek and Roman antiquity. It will be a compilation of those lectures delivered and interviews given in the years before his death in 1984 – collected and published in the two serial volumes *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* and *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology* – which will function as the material basis for the theory of ethopoiesis discussed. I thereby argue in line with James Lee's call to "rethink Foucauldian ethics in explicitly literary and poetic terms".[12]

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[8] The reactions Foucault's works evoke are eclectic. During, in his work *Foucault and Literature* (1992), interprets Foucault as an "activist intellectual" (p. 11), whose writing and thinking is eminently shaped by his study of literature. Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982), however, embed his work rather within the wider tradition of social and political philosophy (also see footnote 10).

[9] Simon During, *Foucault and Literature. Towards a Genealogy of Writing*. London and New York 1992, p. 12.

[10] For a very insightful study of Foucault's work, consult Hubert Dreyfus's and Paul Rabinow's monograph *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, in which the two scholars and fellow philosophers of Foucault's divide his work into four main stages: the early Heideggerian stage, the proto-structuralist stage, the genealogical stage and the final ethical stage (cf. During, *Foucault and Literature*, p. 7). This paper is concerned with the last stage mentioned, the ethical stage.

[11] Michel Foucault, "Afterword". In: Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (eds.), *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Brighton 1982, p. 208.

[12] James Lee, "Ethopoiesis: Foucault's Late Ethics and the Sublime Body". In: *New Literary History* 44.1 (2013), p. 183.

Foucault's definition of ethics is a specific one which differs in many respects from the commonly accepted philosophical definition of the field as being linked to a certain behavioural pattern. Ethics, in Foucault's terms, is defined as "the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself"[13] – "a set of self-practices that center on the linguistic reconstitution and remembering of the body".[14] He thereby adheres largely to the concept of ethics found in ancient Greek culture, namely one deeply informed by aesthetic as well as subjective components: an "aesthetics of existence".[15] The concept of ethopoiesis is most concretely alluded to by Foucault in his lecture "Self Writing" as well as in his work *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, while supplementary notes are also being made in a couple of other lectures. In the tradition of the ancient Greek biographer Plutarch, Foucault attributes a certain "ethopoietic function"[16] to writing as "an agent of the transformation of truth into *ēthos*".[17] "*Ēthopoiein* means making *ēthos*, producing *ēthos*, changing, transforming *ēthos*, the individual's way of being, his mode of existence".[18] Hence, ethopoiesis is the transformation of oneself into a work of art, "one's transformation into a subject by means of objectification".[19] The Greek term 'poiesis', meaning "that which produces or leads something into being"[20] or "poetry as making"[21], already implicates the essential sense of a (trans-)formative and constitutive power released in the very act of ethopoietical writing. Language functions as the material basis and the medium for this transformation. In this sense, ethopoietical writing places considerable emphasis on the notion of activity and processuality; the action of writing itself is more important than the final outcome. It is through the act of writing that the bridge between oneself and art can be fostered and crossed at once.

One notion which correlates with the concept of ethopoiesis is that of the so-called 'hupomnēmata'. A hupomnēmata consists of "quotes […], extracts from books, examples"[22] and can best be equated with a prototypical notebook. However, the hupomnēmata is not only a recollection of already existent material; what is more is that in arranging this material in a new and bricolage-like manner, the hupomnēmata functions as an "objectivation of the soul".[23] The work of art produced thus expresses itself as 'soul-as-object' since "[i]t is one's soul that must be constituted in what one writes".[24] Foucault does not regard the soul as a

[13] Foucault, "Genealogy", p. 263.
[14] Lee, "Ethopoiesis", p. 182.
[15] Foucault, "Genealogy", p. 261.
[16] Foucault, "Self Writing", p. 209.
[17] Ibid., p. 209.
[18] Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject. Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-82*. New York 2005, p. 237.
[19] Lee, "Ethopoiesis", p. 182.
[20] Derek H. Whitehead, "Poiesis and Art-Making: A Way of Letting-Be". In: *Contemporary Aesthetics* 1 (2003), n. pag.
[21] Richard A. Garner, "From Sovereignty to Ethopoiesis: Literature, Aesthetics, and New Forms of Life". In: *The Comparatist* 36 (2012), p. 100.
[22] Foucault, "Self Writing", p. 209.
[23] Ibid., p. 217.
[24] Ibid., p. 214.

transcendentally free-floating entity but rather as a frame for one's bodily existence.[25] If ethopoiesis denotes the transformation of oneself into a work of art, and the essence to all ethopoietical writing is the endogenously triggered constitution of the soul, then the work of art contains elements of that soul in question; it literally is a transformation of "the things seen and heard 'into tissue and blood' (in vires et in sanguine)".[26] Writing thereby "turns the subject into its own object".[27] Foucault, in proclaiming the concept of ethopoiesis, places great value on internality – by writing from one's inner self, one's own soul is both extracted and simultaneously formed. "[T]he soul must make them [the discourses] not merely its own but itself. The writing of hupomnēmata is an important relay in this subjectivation of discourse."[28] In the shape of "personal exercise"[29], as Foucault puts it, the hupomnēmata combines "the traditional authority of the already-said with the singularity of the truth that is affirmed therein and the particularity of the circumstances that determine its use".[30] Foucault hence adverts to writing as having a strong transformative power in that "[i]t is one's own soul that must be constituted in what one writes",[31] and he does so by attributing a strong sense of internality to the act of writing. As the notion of 'soul-as-object' can be brought in accordance with the concept of ethopoiesis, ethopoietical writing is a means of activating the immense power(s) inherent to language to render oneself into an object – a work of art – but simultaneously also remaining the acting subject. It is, above all, a means of "settl[ing] into oneself" and of "tak[ing] up residence in oneself".[32]

Another crucial notion which Foucault frequently alludes to[33] and which is closely linked to transformative modes of subjectivation is that of the "care of oneself"[34] or the "care of the self [*epimeleia heautou*]".[35] Foucault relates caring for oneself to the classical Delphic principle of "*know[ing]* [one]self"[36], while the former is no epitome of narcissism or egotism but rather a means of acquiring "wisdom, truth and the perfection of the soul".[37] The centrality which needs to be assigned to the care of the self is enhanced by it being neither temporary nor

[25] Cf. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*. New York 1995, p. 30.
[26] Foucault, "Self Writing", p. 213.
[27] Lee, "Ethopoiesis", p. 194.
[28] Foucault, "Self Writing", p. 210.
[29] Ibid., p. 211.
[30] Ibid., p. 212.
[31] Ibid., p. 214.
[32] Michel Foucault, "The Hermeneutic of the Subject". In: Paul Rabinow (ed.), *Ethics. Subjectivity and Truth*. London 2000, p. 96.
[33] Foucault had already developed and worked on this concept in the later parts of *The History of Sexuality* (French, 1976-1984; English translation, 1978-1986), the multi-volume study which he could not entirely finish due to his early and sudden death.
[34] Michel Foucault, "Subjectivity and Truth". In: Paul Rabinow (ed.), *Ethics. Subjectivity and Truth*. London 2000, p. 88.
[35] Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self". In: Paul Rabinow (ed.), *Ethics. Subjectivity and Truth*. London 2000, p. 226.
[36] Ibid., p. 226, emphasis added.
[37] Ibid., p. 226.

marginal; instead, it is a "constant practice",[38] "lifelong work on one's body, mind, and soul"[39] and ultimately a "form of living".[40] Caring for oneself is like a ritual, constantly being taken up and occupying an important role in the subject's life. However, the ritualistic character mentioned here is not to be seen in a religious context. Instead, Foucault sees a link between a ritualistic care of oneself and the constant act of writing in ancient Greek and Roman culture: "Taking care of oneself became linked to constant writing activity. The self is something to write about, a theme or object (subject) of writing activity".[41] The term 'subject' added in parentheses correlates with the already explicated notion of 'soul-as-object'. By transforming oneself into a work of art, one is likewise the acting subject and part of the created object. In invoking a parallelism to Foucault's concept of the 'will to knowledge' that constitutes itself through "principles of exclusion and inclusion",[42] Faubion refers to poiesis as the "will to become".[43]

What results from the aspects mentioned so far is a strong sense of internality inherent to ethopoiesis. Indulging in ethopoietical writing implicates the care of one's inner self, which in return directs the "gaze upon itself, to recognize itself in what it is and, recognizing itself in what it is, to recall the truths that issue from it and that it has been able to contemplate".[44] This heightened sense of self-perception and individuality[45] of a kind of writing as endogenous as ethopoietical writing is in keeping with notions of artistic autonomy and art for art's sake. Even though ethopoiesis is predominantly marked by turning in on oneself, 'caring for oneself', it is by no means an expression of egocentrism. It is in fact bidirectional and reciprocal in its nature. As one of the few scholars discussing the impact of Foucauldian ethopoiesis on literary studies, James Lee writes that "the self writing of the body does not take place in isolation from the other, but instead relies upon the body of the other as its basic condition".[46] In "Subjectivity and Truth", Foucault adds that writing is "the government of the self by oneself in its articulation with relations with others".[47] Ethopoiesis thus has its origins within the writing subject him- or herself, albeit while being in continuous relation to the external forces.

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[38] Foucault, "Hermeneutic", p. 94.
[39] Stephanie M. Batters, "Care of the Self and the Will to Freedom: Michel Foucault, Critique and Ethics". In: *Senior Honors Projects*. Paper 231. 2011, p. 2.
[40] Foucault, "Hermeneutic", p. 94.
[41] Foucault, "Technologies", p. 232.
[42] Michel Foucault, "The Will to Knowledge". In: Paul Rabinow (ed.), *Ethics. Subjectivity and Truth*. London 2000, p. 12.
[43] James D. Faubion, "Introduction". In: James D. Faubion (ed.), *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984. Volume Two. Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*. London 2000, p. xxxvi.
[44] Michel Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom". In: Paul Rabinow (ed.), *Ethics. Subjectivity and Truth*. London 2000, p.285.
[45] When I use the term 'individuality' throughout this paper, I do this with regard to identity formation and the establishment of a self, even though I am aware of the semantic differences of the term within the different centuries elaborated on in Luhmann's essay "Individuum, Individualität, Individualismus".
[46] Lee, "Ethopoiesis", p. 189.
[47] Foucault, "Subjectivity and Truth", p. 88.

The notion of ethopoietical writing as a continuous work carried out onto the self mirrors Foucault's general avoidance of definite and rigid categories; as Justen Infinito remarks, he particularly refuses to proclaim "any theory of ethics that posits a 'fixed' human nature".[48] Foucault's mindset can probably best be understood when one assumes that "[t]he individual is not a fixed identity […] but a historical, cultural and linguistic construction […] which comes about *in* the process of speaking, acting, thinking".[49] An equal mode of thought can also be found in the later seminal work *The Revolution of Poetic Language* (1984) by the Bulgarian-French philosopher Julia Kristeva.

2.2 Writing as Identity in Process (Julia Kristeva)

It has been demonstrated that ethopoiesis as the transformation of oneself into a work of art is decisively based upon notions of processuality and writing as a "constant practice";[50] it is a process rather than an easily delimitable act. Even though a signifying practice is "produced in language, [it] is only intelligible *through* it".[51] Foucault's thinking, in this respect, partly correlates with that of Julia Kristeva. It is her notions of the 'subject in process' – 'le sujet en procès' in the French original – and the distinction between the 'symbolic' and the 'semiotic' which require further elaboration.

In her work *The Revolution of Poetic Language*,[52] Kristeva "investigate[s] the workings of 'poetic language' […] as a signifying practice, that is, as a semiotic system generated by a speaking subject within a social, historical field".[53] For the purpose of this paper, it is sufficient to note that the concept of 'poetic language' is meant to entail the sheer possibilities of language in general and not only with regard to poetry in particular. While Kristeva's use of the term 'semiotic' takes its origin in Saussurian semiotics, it nonetheless also bears decidedly different connotations. While de Saussure drafts a concept of language as a semiotic system – a system of signs –, Kristeva's understanding of the 'semiotic', not to be mistaken for the entirety of semiotics, needs to be viewed in delineation from what she

[48] Justen Infinito, "Ethical Self-Formation: A Look at the Later Foucault". In: *Educational Theory* 23.2 (2003), p. 167.
[49] Marli Huijer, "The Aesthetics of Existence in the Work of Michel Foucault". In: *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 25.2 (1999), p. 62, emphasis in the original.
[50] Foucault, "Hermeneutic", p. 94.
[51] Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language.* New York 1984, p. 15, emphasis in the original.
[52] Unfortunately, only the first third of Kristeva's dissertation has been translated from the weighty French original *La Révolution du langage poétique* (1974) into the English language. This is partly due to the fact that the chapters following the theoretical part of the book contain detailed analyses of the late 19th century works of Comte de Lautréamont and Stéphane Mallarmé, to whom Kristeva attributes an extraordinarily strong "semiotic rhythm within language" (Kristeva, *Revolution*, p. 29). Since the theoretical notions Kristeva enriches semiotics with are sufficient for my purpose, I take the liberty to work with the translated parts only.
[53] Leon S. Roudiez, "Introduction". In: Julia Kristeva, *Revolution of Poetic Language*. New York 1984, p. 1.

names the 'symbolic'. Language as "a systematizable given, and observable object"[54] is out of the question for Kristeva and an "embarrassment"[55] as such.

In considering writing as a constitutive signifying process, Kristeva distinguishes between the 'symbolic' and the 'semiotic'[56] and thereby also heavily draws on Jacques Lacan's threefold distinction between the imaginary, the real and the symbolic. A combination of the 'symbolic' and the 'semiotic' amounts to the signifying process. The symbolic part consists of those verbal elements which depend entirely on the complex rules of core linguistics, including syntax, morphology and the like; the 'symbolic' thus stands for language as a system of signs in the original Saussurian notion. The 'semiotic', in contrast, includes the entire range of extra-verbal elements such as human drives and articulatory sounds which, strictly speaking, do not follow those linguistic rules mentioned above; music, dance and last but not least the genre of poetry are spheres of art in which, as Kristeva argues, the 'semiotic' prevails over the merely 'symbolic'. The more the language of a text deviates from everyday language, the greater is "the influx of the semiotic"[57] into the 'symbolic'. In alignment with Kristeva, Foucault also argues that "literary writing would allow language to break free from the normalizing figure of man".[58] 'Signifiance', speaking in Kristeva's terms, therefore stands for meaning being produced by the 'semiotic' as well as the 'symbolic'; meaning-making is at all times a "heterogeneous process".[59] The fact that both the 'symbolic' and the 'semiotic' need to be considered in relation to each other is fortified by the existence of the 'semiotic' "only within the symbolic and [hence] requir[ing] the symbolic break to obtain the complex articulation […] associate[d] with it in […] poetic practices".[60]

At the core of Kristeva's thinking as to how subjectivity is designed lies the conviction that "we become who we are as a result of taking part in signifying processes".[61] Kristeva sees the subject in itself as complexly heterogeneous and constantly in the process of changing and developing. With respect to the writing subject, she further contends that "linguistic changes constitute changes in the *status of the subject*".[62] By attributing supremacy to the 'semiotic' and to rather unstable elements in poetry, she concludes that the subject as such cannot be a static entity but is constantly in the process of becoming; the subject is no fixed construct but 'le sujet en process' – a "subject in process".[63] Like the care of the self, writing is a continual activity which longs for a never-to-be-achieved com-

[54] Kristeva, *Revolution*, p. 13.
[55] Ibid., p. 13.
[56] For further information on the distinction between the 'semiotic' and the 'symbolic', see the first chapter, entitled "The Semiotic and the Symbolic", of Kristeva's *Revolution of Poetic Language*.
[57] Kristeva, *Revolution*, p. 62.
[58] Qtd. in Claire Colebrook, "Woolf and 'Theory'". In: Bryony Randall and Jane Goldman (eds.), *Virginia Woolf in Context*. Cambridge 2012, p. 65.
[59] Kristeva, *Revolution*, pp. 17; 38.
[60] Ibid., p. 68.
[61] Noelle McAfee, *Julia Kristeva. Routledge Critical Thinkers*. New York 2004, p. 29.
[62] Kristeva, *Revolution*, p. 15, emphasis in the original.
[63] Ibid., p. 22.

pletion, always letting the subject hover in the process of becoming. As Huijer fittingly remarks, "[t]he 'I' is not a unity but a wide range of experiences, intentions, desires, powers, movements, souls".[64] Just as the subject is steadily in process, so is the work of art: It "is not a final state but a fragile thing that in turn can give rise to dissatisfaction and resistance".[65] Garner, in bringing ethopoiesis in line with Kristevan thought, defines ethopoietical writing as "the construction of new spaces within discourse where the relative material poverty of the symbolic order cannot give voice to the individual".[66] The 'semiotic' and poetry as a genre with a strong focus on the 'semiotic' have the role of filling those "new spaces"[67] opening up. Since Kristeva perceives the text primarily as practice and the work on a given text as working with and within language – both symbolic and semiotic –, she also notes a certain reciprocity of the text and its author.[68] She thereby rejects the idealised distance between an artist and his or her work in favour of the notion that each of the two creates the other by permanently changing and working within an "open system".[69]

3. Virginia Woolf and the Composition of *Orlando*

It is generally up to the par to rate Virginia Woolf among the most seminal, striking and innovative writers of British modernism. In the mode of impressionist realism, supplemented by tinges of subjectivity, "Woolf regularly evokes […] the limits of that we face, because of *restrictive institutions and attitudes*, concerning *human potential* and *human freedom*, and she projects *new forms of agency*, despite and because of those limits".[70] In his biography on Virginia Woolf, Quentin Bell, the son of Woolf's sister Vanessa Bell, decries *Orlando* as follows: "I think she saw well enough that *Orlando* was not 'important' among her works".[71] Notwithstanding, I contend that with the publication of *Orlando* in the year 1928, readers and scholars alike are confronted with a powerful and iridescent account of a life-narrative, in which the dimensions of the externally restrictive 'spirit of the age' with its dominant discourse as well as political and cultural institutions is brought face to face with the internally impelling act of ethopoietical writing. The

[64] Huijer, "Aesthetics of Existence", p. 66.
[65] Ibid., p. 80.
[66] Kristeva, *Revolution*, p. 10.
[67] Ibid., p. 101.
[68] As Kenney remarks, "[Woolf's] emphasis is on personal relations, but her point is that changes in personal relations go on 'at the same time' as changes in the more public forms of life, each influencing the other" (Kenney, "The Moment", p. 48).
[69] Kristeva, *Revolution*, p. 41./ also cf. Reinold Werner, "Einleitung". In: Julia Kristeva, *Die Revolution der poetischen Sprache*. Frankfurt am Main 1978, p. 10.
[70] John Paul Riquelme, "Modernist Transformations of Life Narrative: From Wilde and Woolf to Bechdel and Rushdie". In: *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 59.3 (2013), p. 468, emphasis added.
[71] Qtd. in Makiko Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf & the Problem of the Subject*. Brighton 1987, p. 117.

tension between those two factors kaleidoscopically gives rise to new forms of agency addressed by Woolf herself.

By placing *Orlando* within the temporal framework that ranges from the late 16th to the early 20th century, Woolf simultaneously narrates the story of our modern age, starting off at the verge of modern times and finally reaching the period which is nowadays known as the prime of modernity. With the idea of creation as a procedure steadily in process, Woolf is in line with the processuality Foucault and Kristeva attribute to writing and the formation of the subject. The instance that concepts of subjectivity, identity and the writing subject found their way into human consciousness around the 17th century – During entitles modernity as "the age of man"[72] – supports the necessity of reflecting upon modes of identity and subjectification.[73]

The concept of the 'spirit of an age' is a controversially debated one and by making use of it, I do by no means intend to smooth the range of cultural, social and ideological diversity that is undoubtedly present in each span of time subsumed under the heading of an epoch. Foucault's strict rejection of a collective historiography is indebted to the fact that "[a] dominant culture is by no means the only culture, and history is experienced differently by the different people who live through it".[74] However, I take the liberty to use the concept for the sake of doing justice to an analysis of *Orlando* since Woolf herself plays with the 'spirit of the age' and superimposes it in the shape of a grid and central plot devise onto the novel.[75] She embeds the main character within different ages, throws him or her from one cultural and social setting into another, and it is solely Orlando's writing that reoccurs constantly and gives the reader a certain sense of stability and permanence. Providing her readers with no less than 350 years of personal and national history, Woolf creates a microscopic picture of the macroscopic history of literary England – and she does so by zooming in on a single character. With her critical take on the concept of the 'spirit of the age', Woolf is in line with Kristeva's concept of non-conscious elements, which are those elements "not subject to repression but not within the reach of consciousness either".[76] Myths and cultural beliefs set up the dominant ideology of a given age, whose constructedness oftentimes tends to be neglected.

Woolf's novels generally show a strong tendency towards internalism. The narrative technique used as well as the point of view the reader has to take let the single elements coalesce into a whole like dots of paint on canvas do in an impressionist painting. In her essay "On Re-reading Novels" (1922), Woolf notes

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[72] During, *Foucault and Literature*, p. 18.

[73] Also cf. Niklas Lukmann, "Individuum, Individualität, Individualismus". In: *Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik*. Frankfurt am Main 1993.

[74] Lena Cowen Orlin (ed.), *The Renaissance. A Sourcebook*. Basingstoke 2009, p. 1.

[75] I am indeed aware of the fact that *Orlando* largely is a parody and pastiche of the style of different epochs as well as of the concept of the 'spirit of the age' as such. However, as will be shown, I argue for a reading of the 'Zeitgeist' topic that goes beyond mere parody and pastiche.

[76] Roudiez, "Introduction", p. 8.

that "the 'book itself' is not form which you see, but emotion which you feel".[77] Even though *Orlando* was published in the height of modernism, it touches upon the issue of "reconnect[ion] with the headily abandoned past".[78] Alexandra Harris hence counts Woolf among those modern writers whom she subsumes under the heading of 'Romantic Moderns',[79] as the eponymous title of her monograph suggests. It is an occupation with the past, the link between past and present and thereby a deviation from the high modernist doctrine of abandoning anything old and traditional which Harris attributes to those writers. But how does Orlando interrelate with the external stimuli of the ages and how do the latter influence his process of ethopoietical writing?

4. Changing Frames in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*

> Consider what immense forces society brings to play upon each of us, how that society changes from decade to decade […]; well, if we cannot analyse *these visible presences*, we know very little of *the subject* of the memoir; and again *how futile life writing becomes.* I see myself as a fish in a stream; deflected; held in place; but cannot describe the stream.[80]

The decision to proceed chronologically despite the novel's composition as "a narrative of development, but in a generically hybrid way"[81] stems from a certain correlation between the external conditions, be they historical, social or political, on the one hand, and the internal stances of the protagonist Orlando, on the other hand. A thorough analysis of "these visible [external] presences"[82] is irremissible presuming that "literature is what happens 'in' a man, certainly, [but w]hat can happen 'in' him, however, will be partly conditioned by what has happened 'to' him in virtue of his place and behaviour".[83]

The notion of 'frames' for identity formation best finds expression in Foucault's essay "What is Enlightenment?", in which he formulates the idea that all

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[77] Virginia Woolf, "On Re-Reading Novels". In: Andrew McNeillie (ed.), *The Essays of Virginia Woolf, Volume III. 1919-1924*. London 1988, p. 340.

[78] Alexandra Harris, *Romantic Moderns. English Writers, Artists and the Imagination from Virginia Woolf to John Piper*. London 2010, p. 11.

[79] Harris also attributes a strong alignment with nature to the 'Romantic moderns' in her eponymous work. Woolf's use of the oak tree symbolism as well as her usage of the climatic conditions as narratological devices go in line with Harris's argument, namely that "all these Romantic geographers […] are making themselves part of their landscape, and their landscape part of their art" (p. 158).

[80] Virginia Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past". In: Jeanne Schulkind (ed.), *Moments of Being. Unpublished Autobiographical Writings*. Sussex 1976, p. 80, emphasis added.

[81] Riquelme, "Modernist Transformations", p. 462.

[82] Woolf, "Sketch", p. 80.

[83] John F. Danby, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Poets. Studies in Sidney, Shakespeare, Beaumont & Fletcher*. London 1952, p. 16.

human beings are to a certain extent historically determined; it is this partial determination which sets the different frames against the backdrop of which human beings act out their freedom. As Justen Infinito also argues in his article "Ethical Self-Formation", achieving subjectivity by means of ethopoiesis and art-making is closely related to the concept of freedom. If "[t]he current situation provides the conditions and the possibilities for our freedom",[84] it is rigorous to investigate the changes that take place in the historical and temporal setting by reason of the changing frames displayed throughout the novel. In the light of the Foucauldian notion that each subject is entrenched in a network of power structures, I argue along the lines of Richard Garner that in order "[t]o understand the ethopoiesis of any other subject, we must understand the discursive strata which conditions their statements and the practices of power in which they are enmeshed",[85] because resistance to power gives rise to emerging subjects.[86] As follows, ethopoiesis and the formation of the subject are grounded in and ensue from the "discursive strata"[87] of the respective temporal framework. Art, as Garner remarks, "exists in the interstices of the shifting geometries of society"[88] – and it is the shaping force of those interstices which I will shed light on in the following.

4.1 The Renaissance Age, or "everything was different"

> The brilliant amorous day was divided as sheerly from the night as land from water. Sunsets were redder and more intense; dawns were whiter and more auroral. […] The sun blazed or there was darkness.[89]

Woolf opens her novel in the year 1586 and in this fashion at the beginning of the early modern period. The decision to begin in the Renaissance period is an interesting one since the tension between a slowly developing sense of individuality and the adherence to tradition and models of ancient imitation and citation was eminently strong in that era. The so-called 'long' sixteenth century, ranging from the coronation of Henry VII in 1485 to the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603, was an age of exceptional cultural and economic prosperity. Notions of Englishness and England as a nation state were formed and became "distinctive ideological"[90] markers, coming along with a steadily rising self-consciousness. The image of England as an ideologically occupied nation state is omnipresent from the very beginning of the novel; an "oak tree" as the national plant embodying the longevity of the empire dominates a place from which can be seen

[84] Infinito, "Ethical Self-Formation", p. 160.
[85] Garner, "From Sovereignty to Ethopoiesis", p. 103.
[86] Cf. Infinito, "Ethical Self-Formation", p. 159.
[87] Garner, "From Sovereignty to Ethopoiesis", p. 103.
[88] Ibid., p. 90.
[89] Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*. London 2000, pp. 19f.
[90] Gary Waller, *English Poetry of the Sixteenth Century*. London and New York 1993, p. 60.

"nineteen English counties", the "English Channel", "castles […] and […] a fortress; and again some vast mansion like that of Orlando's father" as well as "the spires of London"[91] as the emerging centre of plenitude and social life. The sense of nationhood is also reflected in a dominance of the "Elizabethan World Picture […] – a philosophical conglomerate supposedly believed by all Elizabethans, that the universe was a divinely created organism, characterized by unity, harmony and hierarchy".[92] The monarchy with the Court as the "rare concentration of power and cultural dominance"[93] as well as the 'Chain of Being' as an embodiment of the divinely given order and harmony are the decisive landmarks of this "philosophical conglomerate".[94] As a reflection of the cosmic order of the planets and the hierarchy of nature, the 'Chain of Being' manifests a hierarchical and stratified order of the world, in the system of which "each citizen of the commonwealth, each member of a family, and each part of the human body"[95] has a fixed place.

Throughout the entire novel, the climate figures as an indicator of the external characteristics of an age – changes in climate bring about changes in time, culture and history. In this sense, the strict order is mirrored in the cosmic order of the clear delineation of night and day, land and water, sun and darkness.[96] As a descendant of nobility, Orlando is officially assigned a high-ranking status within Elizabethan society. The novel rightly opens by embedding Orlando within the history of his noble family, the "fathers [of which] had been noble since they had been at all [and t]hey came out of the northern mists wearing coronets on their heads".[97] His predetermined and fixed place within society carries not only privileges but also a great range of obligations; both his noble birth and his splendid outward appearance of "youthful beauty"[98] are supposed to make him fit for "some such career [… going] from deed to deed, from glory to glory, from office to office".[99] The philosophy of a hierarchically fixed identity, mostly already determined through one's birth is also mirrored in Orlando's way of thinking about the nature of artists. Here, he thinks in hermetically marked-off categories: He delineates the "sacred race"[100] of poets from the "noble race"[101] among which he also rates himself.

Within this set order of the world lies embedded the monarchy, whose supremacy is justified as "divinely ordained".[102] The Court, characterised by its "vanity",[103] then clearly constitutes "the dominant 'apparatus […]' of the age",[104]

[91] all Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 14.
[92] Waller, *English Poetry*, p. 5.
[93] Ibid., p. 15.
[94] Ibid., p. 5.
[95] Cowen Orlin, *The Renaissance*, p. 123.
[96] Cf. Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 19.
[97] Ibid., p. 11.
[98] Ibid., p. 12.
[99] Ibid., p. 12.
[100] Ibid., p. 58.
[101] Ibid., p. 58.
[102] Cowen Orlin, *The Renaissance*, p. 123.
[103] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 30.

in which, like in a mirror, "we may best see the face of that time, and the affections and temper of the people in general".[105] *Orlando* stages a line of different monarchs – the novel opens with the reign of the Tudor Queen Elizabeth I, who, after her death in 1603, is succeeded by King James I,[106] who is described as "young […], rich [… and] handsome"[107], followed after again by Charles I, who finally sends Orlando to Constantinople.[108] The supremacy of the Elizabethan Court is mirrored in the fact that Orlando, at that time, doesn't write "a word […] as he himself would have said it"[109] – instead, he works entirely on behalf of and in accordance with the Court and thereby contributes to the prevalence of the ideology of that culture, being that "Kings and Queens of impossible territories [and] noble sentiments suffused them".[110] Instead of having a certain agency to transform his environment into art, into poetry, it is rather the Queen who "read him like a page"[111] and "kept him with her".[112] Orlando mainly "followed the leading of the climate, of the poets, of the age itself"[113] and thus adheres to the image of Renaissance poetry as constituting a universally accepted picture of love and of the Court – for instance, "Sukey's bosom was almost as white as the eternal snows in Orlando's poetry".[114]

From a very early age on, Orlando has taken pleasure and comfort in reading, and "[t]he taste for books was an early one".[115] Being empathetic to literature is, however, connoted with the negative implications of diseases and infection; reading is feared to blur the reader's vision of reality by substituting the latter with "a phantom".[116] Hence, an intensive perusal of and engagement with literary texts is also seen as a prohibiting force to noblemen expected to sturdily and dutifully play their part. In the eyes of the Renaissance public and most notably the Court as the cultural, social and political leading force, "[a] fine gentleman like [Orlando] had no need of books".[117] Simultaneously, literature also allows for a new contrast between the external – Orlando's accumulation of wealth, commodities and his belongings – and the internal – his inner self. Reading a book would turn "the whole vast accumulation […] to mist"[118] and expose him as "a

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[104] Waller, *English Poetry*, p. 17.
[105] Ibid., p. 15.
[106] King James I also symbolises the increasing sense of national identity and Englishness – he openly embodies national pride and identity by, as the first of kings, deliberately calling himself 'King of Great Britain' (cf. Cowen Orlin, *The Renaissance*, p. 5).
[107] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 22.
[108] Cf. Ibid., pp. 82f.
[109] Ibid., p. 13.
[110] Ibid., p. 13.
[111] Ibid., p. 18.
[112] Ibid., p. 18.
[113] Ibid., p. 20.
[114] Ibid., p. 22.
[115] Ibid., p. 52.
[116] Ibid., p. 52.
[117] Ibid., p. 53.
[118] Ibid., pp. 52f.

naked man".[119] The sheer number of "twenty tragedies and a dozen histories and a score of sonnets"[120] is indicative of Orlando working either under patronage or under his own pressure so as to please the public by delivering as many quantifiable works within a given period of time as possible. When he reveals the manuscript hidden in the drawers of his mansion in the countryside, it becomes apparent that all his works treat famous figures from ancient Greek mythology – for instance Pyramus, Hippolytus, Odysseus –,[121] which was usual along the lines of the Renaissance turn to the ideal of antiquity.

Orlando's position within Renaissance society is contrasted with his withdrawal from precisely that society – either into entire remoteness and solitude or amongst the company of socially lower-ranked people. When Orlando feels the urge to fully retreat, he is "careful to avoid meeting anyone"[122] and "naturally loved solitary places, vast views, and to feel himself for ever and ever and ever alone".[123] Even though he is undoubtedly constructed as a character of his age, deeply pervaded by the spirit of the Renaissance, his urge for self-referentiality and his deliberate withdrawal already lay the foundation for ethical writing and "the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself",[124] as Foucault proclaims. Orlando hastens from one occasion to the other, continuously busy fulfilling his courtly duties. Although writing under the patronage of the Queen would normally have been a major honour, he still has to write for someone other than himself, entirely in keeping with the Queen's expectations. Instead, "he had hidden behind his mother's bedroom [very early on] which had a great hole in the floor and smelt horribly"[125] since publishing "for a nobleman [is] an inexpiable disgrace".[126] Not only does the lack of artistic freedom reveal the Renaissance stamp firmly resting on Orlando, but also his contemplations on fame and immortal artistry suit the age's focus on appearance and outward appeal. Even though the negatively connoted figures of the harridan, the witch and the strumpet appear as personifications of the concepts of ambition, poetry and fame respectively,[127] Orlando, in the fashion of a "King appoint[ing] Ambassadors",[128] still "vowed that he would be the first poet of his race and bring immortal lustre upon his name".[129]

After moments of having artistically swayed back and forth, Orlando decides to return into society, even if only in order to meet the literary critic and "very famous writer at that time"[130] Nick Greene, from whom he, last but not least,

[119] Ibid., p. 53.
[120] Ibid., p. 18.
[121] Cf. Ibid., p. 54.
[122] Ibid., p. 13.
[123] Ibid., p. 14.
[124] Foucault, "Genealogy", p. 263.
[125] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 54.
[126] Ibid., p. 54.
[127] Cf. Ibid., p. 57.
[128] Ibid., p. 71.
[129] Ibid., p. 57.
[130] Ibid., p. 59.

fondly expects to get into contact with the leading writers of his age. Symbolically, Nick Greene's contrasting attitude to that of Orlando is revealed several times by Greene's, be it implicit or explicit, aversion or indifference towards oak trees. Firstly, Greene is standing where an oak tree had just been "burnt to ashes",[131] and secondly, Greene's botanical knowledge does not suffice for the sole sake of distinguishing an oak tree from a birch tree.[132] One might argue that Greene already embodies 'the other' which Foucault sees as a necessary supplement to the strong focus on the internality of ethopoietical writing at this early stage of the novel. However, I rather argue that Orlando, at this early stage, has only prepared the ground for ethopoietical writing, but not fully instigated the process as such yet. The conviction of one's inner self as the driving force is still missing. What Orlando seeks from Greene is not a fruitful interrelation providing inspiration but rather the contact to other highly esteemed artists. 'The Oak Tree', which will become his epic poem later on, is metaphorically "burnt to ashes".[133]

What follows is Nick Greene's sequence of elaborations on the supposed nature of poetry and condescending criticism of the entire cultural elite of that time – including Shakespeare, Donne and the like –, at the end of which he compassionately contends that "the art of poetry was dead in England".[134] At first sight, one might expect him to be intrinsically motivated in saying that one ought to write for glory –"Glawr"[135] – instead of simply adhering to the demands of the larger reading public. However, Nick Greene's approach to literature reveals superficial verbosity and a firm alignment with the ancient Greek models as well as imitation and mimesis rather than innovation, for he "would imitate [Cicero's] style so that [one] couldn't tell the difference between [them]. That's what [he] called fine writing".[136] Ethopoietical writing, in contrast, presupposes the artist's attempt to transport parts of him- or herself into the work of art. Nick Greene paradoxically still has a noteworthy impact on Orlando's writing, though only implicitly conducive. It is after the encounter with Greene that Orlando burns all his works of great imitation, all his "impassioned sonnets"[137] save for 'The Oak Tree'.

In a world of courtly duty and order, Orlando feels torn and out of place. In the scene of lonely wandering through the darkness of the night, Orlando resembles the motive of the lost wanderer – lost in time and space, and self-exiled from society. Orlando is saliently akin to the character Harold of Lord Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto III*, even though the year of its composition is 1816 and thus the Romantic period. Both Orlando and Harold are driven out into the world by their restlessness and loneliness. As an embodiment of the Byronic

[131] Ibid., p. 59.
[132] Cf. Ibid., p. 64.
[133] Ibid., p. 59.
[134] Ibid., p. 61.
[135] Ibid., p. 62.
[136] Ibid., p. 63.
[137] Ibid., p. 28.

hero, Orlando, too, has metaphorically broken the chains;[138] in Byron's fantastic poem, the image of the broken chain is a twofold one, connoting breaking free and losing grip of one's own past at once. As an outcast, the Byronic hero is exiled – partly out of necessity, partly out of his own initiative – and thereby does not suit the Renaissance concept of the macrocosm being mirrored in the microcosm. The chain (of being) runs the risk of losing one of its links and in this way being left broken. Without his writing, Orlando could indeed embody the whole, but since his writing lies at the very heart of the novel, the image created here, in relation to the Byronic hero, is actually a fairly modern one. The Court itself still is a mirror of the cosmic order in the mundane, but through his writing, Orlando breaks the straight line of order by inserting stitches of deviation and individuality. On the one hand, his mindset promoted by the notion of wandering precedes ethopoietical writing as a necessity. On the other hand, stark solitude and isolation do not live up to it either,[139] as will be seen more clearly in the following.

Orlando undoubtedly is a child of his times and he will become one of every single century he travels through, be it to a smaller or larger extent under the influence of the common conventions of artistry. However, and even though he cannot turn theory into practice yet, he already shows clear signs of a rather metaphysical striving for means of communication and language far beyond the ideal of imitation and the variation of already existent forms such as the sonnet, which was widely considered to be the finest form of poetry.[140] Orlando does already reveal a high sense of metalingual reflexivity on the nature of language as well as on the process of writing as such. His reflections on language – since "[g]reen in nature is one thing, green in literature another"[141] – show his yet not fully developed sense of poetry which, according to Julia Kristeva, is characterised by a domination of the 'semiotic' over the 'symbolic'. Solely linking signifier and signified in the most commonly constructed and still arbitrarily artificial sense does by no means suffice to write poetry, and Orlando seems to feel this. Exile and illusions of escape are a topic once again. The 'symbolic' alone – the verbal elements stemming from the rigid rules of linguistics – is not adequate to capture the essence of "something hidden [… and] something concealed",[142] which Sasha, the Russian princess, connotes. However, Orlando undergoes the different stages of writing that, in turn, reveal the processuality inherent in writing and in identity formation in particular: "[H]ow he wrote and it seemed good; read and it seemed vile; corrected and tore up; cut out; put in; was in ecstasy; in despair".[143] He does not find his balance in himself – Orlando is still too much led and triggered by the age as well as cultural and artistic opinion leaders. He

[138] In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto III*, Harold wears "the shattered links of the world's broken chain" (st. 18, l. 162) – he is self-exiled and embodies the above-mentioned twofold implication of the 'broken chain'-symbolism.
[139] Cf. Foucault, "Subjectivity and Truth", p. 88.
[140] Cf. Cowen Orlin, *The Renaissance*, p. 211.
[141] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 13.
[142] Ibid., p. 32.
[143] Ibid., p. 57.

"wanted another landscape, and another tongue" since the "words failed him".[144]

The first mention of the poem 'The Oak Tree' introduces a different stage of writing, and Orlando's take on ethopoietical writing already differs from his previous tragedies, histories, romances and sonnets in that the poem is plainer and "the only monosyllabic title"[145] amongst all his works. When, in a rush of despair and anger, – "[l]ove and ambition, women and poets were all equally vain [and l]iterature was a farce"[146] –, Orlando burns all of his manuscripts, he intuitively spares 'The Oak Tree'. The supposedly minor quality of the poem in terms of aesthetic and literary standards finally proves to be its saving attribute. It is monosyllabic and inconspicuous, though only on the surface, as shall soon be made clear.

Another theme which is introduced early on and revisited frequently throughout the novel is not only Orlando's spiritual attachment to the poem but also his corporeal attachment to the literal oak tree which he "flung himself under".[147] There he feels a profound connectivity to earth, nature and thereby also to himself: As it were, he becomes one with the flow of nature and the circular succession – "how spring follows winter and autumn summer"[148] – of the seasons.[149] The corporeal link between the literal oak tree, the poem, and Orlando himself is already hinted at by his longing to connect his body to the tree, "to feel the earth's spine beneath him" and to have "something which he could attach his floating heart to".[150] But as the "long winter" holds its firm grip on the country, "[e]very tree […] was lined with frost".[151] The external spirit is still too strong a formative power, holding too firm a grip on Orlando's mindset as to direct the gaze onto or rather into himself.

The Emersonian connection to the oak tree undoubtedly also evokes contemplations on the part of Orlando, such as on the character of time,[152] solitude and nature. Orlando's imagination is stirred by this connection, and no social encounter could equally have the power to do so. The literal flowering of the oak tree is accompanied by the figural flowering of Orlando's imagination; he thinks with the rhythm of nature as "the oak tree flowered and faded".[153] States of interior contemplation are triggered and thereby lead to the state which is crucial for ethopoietical writing and the care of the self:[154]

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[144] Ibid., p. 32.
[145] Ibid., p. 54.
[146] Ibid., p. 67.
[147] Ibid., p. 67.
[148] Ibid., p. 67.
[149] For further information on Woolf's modernist occupation with nature, also see Bonnie Kime Scott's article "Regionalism, Nature, and the Environment" in Randall and Goldman, pp. 243-253.
[150] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 15.
[151] Ibid., p. 19.
[152] Cf. Ibid., p. 69.
[153] Ibid., p. 70.
[154] Ibid., p. 68.

For not only did he find himself confronted by problems which have puzzled the wisest of men, such as What is love? What friendship? What truth? but directly he came to think about them, the whole past, which seemed to him of extreme length and variety, rushed into the falling second, swelled in a dozen times its natural size, coloured it a thousand tints, and filled it with all the odds and ends in the universe.

As the above quoted passage shows, Orlando falls into mental states in which he reflects on higher metaphysical and metalingual issues. Reflections on the limitations of language arise; he is in a state of desperation and turmoil – "Why not simply say what one means and leave it?"[155] – which is substantially caused by the few instances of the 'semiotic' in his writing, that part of language which according to Kristeva prevails over the merely 'symbolic' in the case of poetry.

Within the considerable amount of time Orlando spends contemplating under the oak tree and indulging in reflections about the very nature of language, a momentous change as to the process of ethopoietical writing can be noted in his disposition. Within only half a page, Woolf has Orlando range from estimating the "true poet" as being one who "has his verses published in London"[156] to an outspoken denunciation of Nick Greene as a "sardonic [and] treacherous man"[157] to "one of the most remarkable oaths of his lifetime".[158] For the analysis of ethopoietical writing, the latter note is by no means a hyperbolic one but true in its strictest sense. "Bad, good, or indifferent, I'll write, from this day forward, to please myself"[159] – Orlando's resolution carves the way for ethopoietical writing to unfold itself and simultaneously releases him to some extent from the pressure of finding a supposedly universal truth; it is personal choice which ethics is occupied with.[160] This epiphany is similar to that which Lily Briscoe experiences in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927); it is only when Lily succeeds in accepting her subjectivity that she is capable of finishing the painting she had started, just as Orlando has started his poem earlier on in the novel. Orlando takes a step towards accepting his subjective view on art, and in doing so he also starts to take 'care of [him]self'. By drawing his attention to himself and by initiating a link between his writing and himself, he loosens the link between his art and the external circumstances.

Partly freed from the firm doctrine of criticism and commodification, Orlando renounces the concept of fame; having seemed like a Byronic hero beforehand,

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[155] Ibid., p. 70.
[156] The focus on London as the rising cultural capital of the early modern age is in keeping with Danby's description of the public as the new patron to whom artists then had to adhere in order to be successful in their work (Danby, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Poets*, cf. p. 16). London had the impact of a lodestone attracting "members of the [cultural] elite [… who] mingled with their social peers, conducted business, enjoyed urban amusements and pleasures" (Cowen Orlin, *The Renaissance*, p. 147).
[157] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 71.
[158] Ibid., p. 71
[159] Ibid., p. 71.
[160] Cf. Foucault, "Genealogy", p. 260.

he now despises fame as "a braided coat which hampers the limbs, a jacket of silver which curbs the heart, a painted shield which covers a scarecrow".[161] Fame is to denote constriction and prohibition rather than lustre and wealth. Again, Orlando resembles Byron's *Childe Harold* in this other version of fame; Harold also comments on and suffers from the transitory nature of fame which is "fleeting too".[162] Orlando's writing thereafter gets more and more in line with the processuality of writing – finding one's own voice while trying to resist the moulding through external aesthetic conventions demands revision and a "lifelong work on one's body, mind, and soul".[163] His plea for personal freedom in his writing, since only he "may seek the truth and speak it",[164] is finally framed by the previously mentioned corporeal connection between himself and the oak tree whose hard roots are described as the material part of the linkage.

From very early on, the novel is permeated by steadily recurring and resurfacing 'moments of being' – a concept of conscious experience that Woolf proclaims in her unfinished and posthumously published memoir "A Sketch of the Past" (1939). She therein contemplates questions on the transitory nature of human experience and the selectivity of memory, and asks herself why some instances can still be recalled in all their conciseness while others seem to blur into the obscurity of some "vast space".[165] The difference in the intensity with which certain moments can be experienced is what accounts for the juxtaposition of 'moments of being' to 'moments of non-being', the former of which are experienced by a person with such high a degree of consciousness that they can retrospectively be perceived as "more real than the present moment"[166] even though time passes. Woolf also directly links 'moments of being' to the virtuosity in the creation of art, most notably that of literature:[167] "I make it real by putting it into words. It is only by putting it into words that I make it *whole*; this wholeness means that *it has lost its power to hurt me*".[168]

The ethopoietical notion of transforming something or someone, especially oneself, into a work of art leads to a shift of power relations and to a shift from passivity to activity on the part of the writer. Furthermore, the previous stance shows how Woolf attributes a certain sheltering power to the act of writing. At the same time, the futility of life writing, which Woolf also hints at in "A Sketch of the Past", mirrors the image invoked by her; single 'moments of being' are

[161] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 71.
[162] George Gordon Lord Byron, "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, Canto III". In: *The Norton Anthology of English Literature. Volume 2*. New York 2006, st. 18, l. 157.
[163] Batters, "Care of the Self and the Will to Freedom", p. 2.
[164] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 72.
[165] Virginia Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past". In: Jeanne Schulkind (ed.), *Moments of Being. Unpublished Autobiographical Writings*. Sussex 1976, p. 79.
[166] Ibid., p. 67.
[167] 'Moments of being' can be found in numerous of Woolf's novels – Lily Briscoe and her act of painting in *To the Lighthouse*, for instance, can be seen as embodying the creation of visual art as a means of capturing 'moments of being' by transferring them onto canvas and hence materialising them and rendering them to a certain degree persistent.
[168] Woolf, "Sketch", p. 72, emphasis added.

encompassed by the "vast space"[169] of oblique 'moments of non-being' – the "stream [which Woolf] cannot describe".[170] The vastness of consciousness seems to escape the attempt of any universal explanation through the medium of language. However, it has to be noted that 'moments of being' are only one element influencing ethopoietical writing; as Kristeva remarks in relation to the 'semiotic', it is not only the conscious but also the unconscious elements which find their way into writing.

Orlando recurrently experiences 'moments of being', for instance when he is "exalted"[171] by the sights of nature; he does perceive "the birds and trees"[172] with a distinctly heightened degree of awareness and sensuousness. This supreme 'moment of being' is directly followed by the novel's first instance of Orlando's writing: "Soon he had covered ten pages and more with poetry. He was fluent, evidently, but he was abstract".[173] However, in such early stages of his writing, there still is a clear sense of disruption and discordance between Orlando's perceptiveness and his writing. The transformation of "the things seen and heard 'into tissue and blood'"[174] is still obstructed. Just as 'moments of being' are generally followed by instances of writing, Orlando's overly conscious experience of temporal perception under the oak tree directly precedes the most pivotal scene for ethopoietical writing, namely his decision to "write […] to please [him]self".[175] By implication however, Orlando's heightened sensitivity likewise makes him vulnerable and prone to extreme mood changes ranging from sheer ecstasy to utter despair and thoughts of death – "Orlando was strangely compounded of many humours – of melancholy, of indolence, of passion, of love of solitude".[176]

Another aspect which correlates with the shift between the two opposing dimensions of the external and Orlando's retreat into the internal is that of the temporal structure within the narrative. When Orlando contemplates, time seems to slow down, nearly coming to a standstill, and thereby also opening up spaces in the fashion of slow-motion for such 'moments of being' – "gradually, the flutter in and about him stilled itself".[177] In contrast, the arrival of the Queen and Orlando's return into the realm and the influence of the courtly spirit are accompanied by an acceleration of time. Short, jerky and paratactical sentences follow one another in an anaphoric fashion: "He was ready. He was flushed. He was excited."[178]

As could be seen, Orlando's life as an ethopoietical writer at the very beginning of modern ages has to be divided into two periods. In the time prior to the

[169] Ibid., p. 79.
[170] Ibid., p. 80.
[171] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 12.
[172] Ibid., p. 12.
[173] Ibid., p. 13.
[174] Foucault, "Self Writing", p. 213.
[175] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 71.
[176] Ibid., p. 52.
[177] Ibid., p. 15.
[178] Ibid., p. 16.

significant decision to write out of his own convictions and for himself,[179] Orlando's take on poetry is still largely determined by the common aesthetic principle of mimesis as well as imitation and the adaptation of Classical topics. Deeply embedded within courtly culture and the Renaissance decorum, he starts writing under the patronage of Queen Elizabeth I. The decisive period for ethopoietical writing starts precisely with Orlando's decision to write out of internal convictions – he starts to 'care for himself' and to direct the gaze inwards and to seek intrinsic motivation, both of which here function as precursors to transporting parts of himself into the work of art. However, his former adherence to established aesthetic norms reveals similarities to the hupomnēmata and the collecting and re-arrangement of already existent material.[180] He sets himself in relation to his age, though still submissively, and thereby prepares himself for the later process of ethopoietical writing. The wave-like movement of Orlando's moments of ethopoietical writing and those of adherence to the 'spirit of the age' still occurs with a high amplitude. Instead of bringing his thoughts clearly onto paper, Orlando is confronted with "a thousand odd, disconnected fragments".[181] Vicissitude – "a fluttering and flickering of wings, a rising and falling of lights"[182] –, abstraction and mental overload determine Orlando's process of writing. The irregular and fragmentary nature of human experience addressed here links to the tradition of metaphysical poetry which foregrounds the poet as the person who is able to condense all the images arising from a myriad of heterogeneous impressions in 'discordia concors' and an array of conceits. He shows a noticeable tendency towards extremism in terms of his mood changes. Orlando's writing early on in the Renaissance is still hugely experimental; revising, erasing, crossing words out here, inserting words there – all those actions denote the processuality of writing and work in process and progress. Orlando himself is a subject in process, to speak in Kristevan terms. Working on the poem also initiates working on the self, it is "enormous labour"[183] at times.

4. 2 Enlightenment and the Age of Romanticism, or "the nature of a vision"

> Upon this serene and orderly prospect the stars looked down, glittering, positive, hard, from a cloudless sky […] in the extreme clearness of the atmosphere […].[184]

Woolf's 18th century begins with Orlando returning from Constantinople and recently having undergone the change into a woman. Just as she encounters a

[179] Cf. Ibid., p. 71.
[180] Cf. Foucault, "Self Writing", p. 209.
[181] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 55.
[182] Ibid., p. 55.
[183] Ibid., p. 77.
[184] Ibid., p. 155.

profoundly changed England – the architectural boom after the Great Fire of 1666 is symbolised by the building of St. Paul's Cathedral in the later 17th century by Sir Thomas Wren –, so does the 18th century see the rise of the modern paradigm of 'high culture' and the fine arts as opposed to 'low culture'. Orlando's return also signifies a clear demarcation of the new century from the preceding one: "[L]ight, order, and serenity"[185] stand in sharp contrast to the "danger and insecurity, lust and violence, poetry and filth"[186] of the previous ages. The 18th century is both divided spatially and temporally into the time Orlando spends with the gypsies and her return to England. In her time with the gypsies, who are associated with "anarchic liberation and energy"[187] of a possible counter-culture, Orlando foreshadows the eccentric Romantic poet who withdraws from society into "extreme reserve"[188] and writes poems "in the Romantic[189] vein".[190] Her flight with the gypsies from Constantinople is another crucial period in her writing. Deprived of any external duties, she perceives the simple peasant-like life of the gypsies as opening up spaces for "food for thought".[191]

In line with the concept of nature which becomes prominent in the course of the 18th century, Orlando experiences a full range of 'moments of being'. Her senses are overly alert when she steps out into nature, and she "cr[ies] out in ecstasy at the goodness, the beauty of [it]".[192] The compulsion towards extremism takes severe shapes in this period of her life; her mind even bears traces of a "phantasmagoria [… a] meeting-place of dissemblables".[193] Even though her behaviour is highly hyperbolic in that she exaggeratingly "saluted each star, each peak, and each watch-fire",[194] those 'moments of being' do again lead, as did the ones she experienced in the Renaissance period, to metaphysical and philosophical reflections. Her objects of thought are universal concepts such as love and friendship,[195] but the take she has on them comes from the very inside now.

Once again, it is after such 'moments of being' and intensified sensual perception that Orlando takes to writing. The fact that she "carries out a dialogue with herself"[196] correlates with the ethopoietical notion of having a relationship to and with oneself; she is working on herself. Orlando thus lifts her writing from the confining forces of external expectations and the audience, and places it right within herself instead. Her subsequent longing "for pen and ink"[197] initiates

[185] Ibid., p. 155.
[186] Ibid., p. 155.
[187] Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf*, p. 126.
[188] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 90.
[189] Broadly speaking, I interpret Orlando's resemblance to the first generation of Romantic poets, though temporally preceding Neoclassicism, as a sign of Woolf's endeavour to deconstruct the linearity and strict periodisation of literary history.
[190] Linden Peach, *Virginia Woolf. Critical Issues*. London 2000, p. 147.
[191] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 99.
[192] Ibid., p. 101.
[193] Ibid., p. 125.
[194] Ibid., p. 101.
[195] Cf. Ibid., p. 102.
[196] Ibid., p. 102.
[197] Ibid., p. 102.

processes of ethopoietical writing – the Renaissance ideal of mimesis is slowly turning into the late 18th century ideal of poiesis and the art of creating something new. Even though the conditions are far from perfect, she improvises and puts down her ideas in the fashion of bricolage with berry-ink into the margins of the manuscript.

Moreover, the 18th century brings along a profound shift from the courtly culture of the Renaissance to a culture of the public. The rise of a public literary sphere is shaped by a reading public as well as the establishment of the author as a public persona[198] – Addison, Dryden and Pope are presented as the prime figures of the Augustan period –, and it is right on her return to London that Orlando observes "Mr. Addison taking his coffee"[199] in a coffee-house together with Pope and Dryden. It is an age in which individuals such as Addison and Pope start to "aspire to be identified as members of the polite classes and [seek] ways to demonstrate their refinement".[200] Times have changed, the hermetically shut courtly culture of the 17th century has turned into a rapidly advancing age of public opinion, cheating and debating. Orlando is undoubtedly attracted by those figures and there are several hints in the narrative that unlike soldiers, statesmen and the like, who do not concern her at all, "the very thought of a great writer stirred her"[201] to the utmost degree.

The direct link between Orlando and the Augustan Age is established by her encounter with Alexander Pope, one of the leading English Augustan poets. Orlando's slight unfitness for the upcoming age of reason and rationality is seen in the proliferation of visions[202] and illusions[203] Orlando experiences. Illusions are crucial in supplementation to rational and more scientific thinking as the former "are to the soul what atmosphere is to the earth".[204] Darkness and opacity give rise to illusions and visions since "[t]he less we see the more we believe".[205] Kenney notes the importance of "those privileged moments of personal vision [in Woolf's novels], for defining the subjective reality of her characters".[206]

The encounter between Orlando and Pope, as depicted in the novel, is preeminently shaped by the way Woolf juxtaposes scenes of light and darkness. Most importantly, the age of Enlightenment and the superiority of reason are metaphorically alluded to through the invention of lightning: "[T]he lightning was a great improvement upon that of the Elizabethan age".[207] Darkness and obscurity, in contrast, evoke illusionary pondering on Orlando's part such as about

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[198] Cf. John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century*. London 2013, p. 2.
[199] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 119.
[200] Paul Goring, *Eighteenth-Century Literature and Culture*. London 2008, p. 47.
[201] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 138.
[202] Cf. Ibid., p. 138.
[203] Cf. Ibid., pp. 140; 142.
[204] Ibid., p. 142.
[205] Ibid., p. 142.
[206] Edwin J. Kenney, "The Moment, 1910: Virginia Woolf, Arnold Bennett, and Turn of the Century Consciousness". In: *Colby Literary Quaterly* 13.1 (1977), p. 43.
[207] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 142.

Pope's forehead, which is metaphorically countered by the drawing nearer of another streetlamp and a return of reason.[208] Nonetheless implicated lies the notion that rationality alone cannot account for everything. This idea is already captured in the implicit criticism of the unblemished clearness of the atmosphere – in its literal as well as metonymical sense. Between the "lamp-posts […] lay a considerable stretch of pitch darkness"[209] – "[t]he light of truth beats […] without shadow, and the light of truth is damnably unbecoming".[210] In contrast to permanently blazing light, genius and insight in writing are symbolically compared to a lighthouse. The lighthouse does not permanently shed light on its surroundings but only sends momentary beams of brilliance out into the atmosphere, and so does genius. Genius comes and goes in waves of different height and intensity. Most importantly, genius is an endogenous quality, just as ethopoietical writing. Only those moments, those intermediate flashes of blazing light – be they in quick succession or only rarely sent – distinguish genius from ordinary people. Witty as Pope and his contemporaries might be, "their wit is all in their books".[211] This is an important lesson Orlando learns in the midst of the period of Enlightenment, namely that reason alone does not account for what life has to offer. His previous devotion to famous poets, which has occasionally resembled the veneration of saints, is thereby attenuated.

Orlando's fondness of Alexander Pope can additionally be taken as a denunciation of the critic Nicholas Greene, whom Orlando has met roughly a century earlier in the midst of the Renaissance period. Nick Greene has hugely valued Greek culture and its literature above everything else and as the cradle for all fine art. Pope, although he clearly worked in the Neoclassicist tradition, also resorted to material from the ancient Greek,[212] but he did so in adapting and revising the given material, transforming it into his own words. It does not come by chance that an explicit allusion to his famous mock-heroic epic poem *The Rape of the Lock* (1712) finds its way into the novel.[213] The rise of literary journals as opinion-making instruments is addressed by the appearance of Joseph Addison, the founder of *The Spectator*.[214] Woolf's criticism on the emerging culture of

[208] Cf. Ibid., p. 143.
[209] Ibid., p. 142.
[210] Ibid., p. 144.
[211] Woolf here opens the discussion on whether the attributes one tends to give to a certain period, such as the attribute of reason is generally given to the period of Enlightenment, are really valid or rather shallow and superficial instead.
[212] Pope for instance published several translations from ancient Greek such as of Homer's *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In his great work *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (2013), John Brewer talks of "emultation" rather than "imitation" (p. 4) with reference to Thomas Sheridan. The same, however, also accounts for Pope's way of approaching ancient material, namely an adaptation "for modern purposes" (Goring, *Eighteenth-Century Literature and Culture*, pp. 69f.).
[213] Cf. Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 145.
[214] In *The Spectator*, a literary magazine compiling essay-writing on political, philosophical, social and cultural topics, Addison once wrote that he has "brought Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables, and in Coffee Houses" (qtd. in Goring, *Eighteenth-Century Literature and Culture*, p. 46).

public wit and politeness, so characteristic of the upper society of the Neoclassicists, precedes Orlando's return to internalism and the process of writing.

Furthermore, Foucault's notion of the 'soul-as-object' comes much more to the fore in the current era. Orlando still carries the poem with him when he leaves for Constantinople to fulfill his duties as Ambassador Extraordinary. Implications of a bodily nature of the poem and a closer corporeal connection between Orlando and the poem – both in material as well as in spiritual terms – proliferate. The material bond is established by Orlando carrying the manuscript "in the bosom of his cloak"[215] and thus close to his own bosom. What is more, after the sex change, the first thing Orlando feels prone to do is "secret [the poem] in her bosom"[216] where it is "hidden safe".[217] The spiritual bond becomes especially strong when Orlando is seen praying the words written, since the act of praying deeply involves the soul.[218] Attributing to it the power of a "talisman"[219] emphasises both the corporeal and most notably the spiritual bond between Orlando and the manuscript. The distance between her and the poem diminishes – "our words [must be shaped] until they are the thinnest integument for our thoughts",[220] until soul and art seem to nearly touch one another. The writer's soul is even explicitly alluded to when it goes that "every secret of a writer's soul, every experience of his life, every quality of his mind is written large in his works".[221]

Orlando's previous experiences with the limitations of language and the restricted linguistic inventory early on in the novel[222] resurface and manifest themselves in the 18th century experiences of the discrepancy between reality and the way language allows Orlando to capture those impressions. This ambivalence is what makes her discover the power of metaphorical language, and she notes that "[e]verything […] was something else".[223] She contemplates not only the semiotic quality of language but also the melodious quality of poetry and the sensation of sound which lets the acoustic waves travel through the ear as "an antechamber"[224] straight into the soul. An increasing reflection on language is accompanied by a growing self-awareness on the part of Orlando. In Kristevan terms, she is a 'subject in process', "in process of fabrication",[225] because "[c]hange was incessant, and change perhaps would never cease".[226] Whatever development Orlando undergoes in the course of ethopoietical writing, there is no ending point to strive for; her development rather is a boundless one that is

[215] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 89.
[216] Ibid., p. 99.
[217] Ibid., p. 117.
[218] Cf. Ibid., p. 89.
[219] Ibid., p. 117.
[220] Ibid., p. 123.
[221] Ibid., p. 145.
[222] Cf. Ibid, p. 13.
[223] Ibid., p. 101.
[224] Ibid., p. 123.
[225] Ibid., p. 124.
[226] Ibid., p. 124

open to change and new impulses. Self-awareness is part of and also arises as a consequence from inwardly turned ethopoietical writing.

On her return to England, Orlando metaphorically sails on towards Enlightenment England – "to perceive and to reason",[227] those are the "sublime"[228] activities of the mind. At this stage of the novel, however, Orlando is already in need of freedom in order to 'care for [her]self' in the Foucauldian sense. She fears confinement and mental imprisonment, which are linguistically denoted by the choice of words at her return: "conventionality", "slavery", "deceit", "denying", "restraining".[229] Still tending towards extremism, her flying imagination of "the glory of poetry"[230] and the London Cathedral are shattered by sober reality as the image turns out to be "nothing more and nothing less than the dome of a vast cathedral".[231]

What is also eminently apparent at this stage of development is Orlando's reluctance to be seen let alone disturbed while working on her poem. When a shadow is cast upon her paper, she "hastily hid her manuscript".[232] The importance of this vehement act is emphasised by an explicit comment in the narrative voice: "[I]t may have been observed that Orlando hid[es] her manuscripts when interrupted."[233] Her mental as well as literal flights from the company of other people continue, and even when meeting the Archduchess, who turns out to be an Archduke in truth and who is the cause of her horrible lovelornness and the reason for her flight to Constantinople, she is "looking at her writing-table".[234] Similarly, when she is expected to fulfill the roles imposed on women by society, she is "apt to think of poetry"[235] instead.

Another topic that finds its way into the novel here is that of the material necessities for writing, admittedly an issue Foucault does not touch upon in his theoretical writing on ethopoiesis,[236] though nonetheless crucial and worth to be elaborated on. However free one might be in one's mind, writing does indeed largely depend on the material circumstances and necessities as well. As Woolf notes in her seminal essay *A Room of One's Own* (1929), "[i]ntellectual freedom

[227] Ibid., p. 116.
[228] Ibid., p. 116.
[229] Ibid., p. 116.
[230] Ibid., p. 117.
[231] Ibid., p. 117.
[232] Ibid., p. 125.
[233] Ibid., p. 131. What follows is one of the numerous instances of Woolf's sharp criticism of the binary opposition of man and woman. She satirically remarks that Orlando "was becoming a little more modest, as women are, of her brains, and a little more vain, as women are, of her person" (Woolf, *Orlando,* p. 131).
[234] Ibid., p. 128.
[235] Ibid., p. 136.
[236] The partial omission of economic and material factors in Foucauldian thought is an issue which can be, indeed has to be, criticised with regard to several of his seminal writings. One example is his frequently applied theory of heterotopias elaborated on in the essay "Other Spaces" (1986). Even though Foucault talks about certain entry requirements, he only does so in terms of rituals and social obligations to be fulfilled. The material and economic conditions are not addressed at all.

depends on material things".[237] Orlando herself sees the "impossib[ility] to remain for ever where there was neither ink nor writing paper".[238] After her return to England, she appreciates the material conditions for writing to the full since "to have ink and paper in plenty when one has made to do with berries and margins is a delight not to be conceived".[239] In order to link Woolfian and Foucauldian thought, the economic and material perspective to writing needs to be added as a supplementation to Foucault's writings on ethopoiesis.

It can be concluded that the 18th century and especially the age of Enlightenment shape Orlando's ethopoietical writing in a two-fold manner. Firstly, indications for the corporeal and spiritual connection of Orlando and 'The Oak Tree' amplify after his momentous decision towards the 'care of the self' in the midst of the Elizabethan Age.[240] Secondly, the relation between Orlando and the externally working forces of the 'spirit of the age' remain tense. Nonetheless, by setting herself in relation to the age, she starts to reverse seemingly fixed external standards and gains epiphanies such as insights about the inadequacy of reason alone to account for truth.[241] However, Orlando's commitment to actual ethopoietical writing rather slides into the background in the age of Enlightenment and in the context of the Augustan period. This testifies to the rise of a public sphere and the author as a literary persona now having to bear the audience's expectations as well as their public effectiveness in mind. A certain educational aim can clearly be found in the works of satirical writers such as Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope; Orlando, though, has been involved neither in the politics nor the social developments of England within the last decades. Self-exiled from society and civilisation, she has spent a considerable amount of time with the gypsies and some remaining time in Constantinople, still away from England. Neither do the 'spirit of the age' and the conventions of writing go in line with the interiority of ethopoiesis, nor do they fit Orlando's temper. Instead of actual writing, metalingual reflections and considerations of the rise of the opinion-making apparatus predominate.

[237] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*. London 1984, p. 101.
[238] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 105.
[239] Ibid., p. 125.
[240] Cf. Ibid., p. 71.
[241] Cf. Ibid., pp. 142-149.

4.3 The Victorian Era, or "the antipathetic spirit"

> [A] huge blackness sprawled over the whole of London. […] All was darkness; all was doubt; all was confusion. The Eighteenth century was over, the Nineteenth century had begun.[242]

Woolf's 19th century opens with a tremendous change in climate conditions, just as the preceding ones did. The emergence of a prodigious thunderstorm[243] foreshadows the firm and rigid grip Victorian values and morals will have "upon those who lived beneath its [Victorianism's] shadow".[244] The new century is bordered and confined bilaterally; the mundane border of the earth and the cosmic border of the sky enhance the sense of change. Below, down on earth, the "more positive landscapes of the eighteenth century"[245] have altered for the worse; above, the sky differs from the "clear and uniform skies of the eighteenth century"[246] and covers "the whole of the British Isles"[247] with clouds and rain. The colours seem to be dimmed and blurred as shadows and damp are the dominant forces; both are "imperceptible, ubiquitous".[248] "A change seemed to have come over the climate of England"[249] – as follows, the meteorological climate equals the cultural climate of the age. A change in weather conditions symbolises cultural and political change; the 'spirit of the age' has become a different one. The literal damp caused by heavy rain falls metaphorically possesses the people's minds with its blurriness – "the damp [was] in their minds".[250]

Against the backdrop of rigid Victorian codes of moral conduct and behaviour deemed proper for the ideal female, Orlando's actual writing fades further into the background. However, the corporeal and spiritual connection between her and the poem in process still prevails and the entrenchment even intensifies. This connection can notably be seen in the fact that the notion of the poem as Orlando's 'soul-as-object' finds its confirmation in the 19th century. Just as Orlando is under extreme impact of the Victorian ideology, so is the oak tree depicted as specifically prone to external influences; marks can easily be left on its

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[242] Ibid., p. 156.
[243] In *Virginia Woolf, The Common Ground* (1996), the critic Gillian Beer interprets the narratological use of the weather conditions as mere pastiche of John Ruskin's *Modern Painters* (1843), most notably chapter 26 entitled "Of Modern Landscape". Even though Woolf might also allude to Ruskin's style here, changes in climate occur at other instances of the narrative as well and are therefore analysed as concurrently denoting changes in the spiritual, cultural and political climate.
[244] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 157.
[245] Ibid., p. 157.
[246] Ibid., p. 160.
[247] Ibid., p. 157.
[248] Ibid., p. 157.
[249] Ibid., p. 157.
[250] Ibid., p. 158.

bark that has become too soft to resist shaping forces.[251] The Victorian spirit does not only leave its "finger prints"[252] on the actual tree, but it also decisively affects Orlando and her art. Kept by her bosom, the manuscript shows traces of the preceding ages, and in its condition as "sea-stained, blood-stained, travel-stained"[253] reflects Orlando's journey. In addition, Caughie notes that writing makes the present appear as if it was the future of the past in that the latter is overly present in whatever we write – the present can hence only be the past transported into its own future.[254] Kristeva's grasp of the work of art as processual rather than definite[255] and Huijer's remark on the fragility of the written word[256] support this claim.

Furthermore, the beginning of the Victorian Age foregrounds the author as a public persona situated within the vastly growing and developing literary market sphere. A steadfastly burgeoning awareness for the materiality of writing and the writer him- or herself brings the latter into the situation of being "'owned' by the general public".[257] Orlando knows that she, as a woman, ought to be confined to the duties propagated by the dominant gender ideology of Victorian womanhood: the selfless, pure, chaste, obeying housewife and mother. It is only when the "spirit of the age […] lay dormant for a time"[258] that she gains the opportunity to unfold her manuscript. However, the alternation between scenes of writing, or rather the attempt to write, and external intrusions upon Orlando's spatial and artistic freedom passes off quickly in the 19th century. Intrusions as such are accompanied firstly by corporeal and secondly by mental confinement. Woolf thereby implicitly alludes to those concepts developed in *A Room of One's Own* (1929), the essay basically drafted concurrently with *Orlando*. In there, Woolf discusses female authorship and the access to the public literary sphere which she sees as aggravated for women due to strong restrictions in education and the material conditions for writing. Any writer, be it man or woman, needs a 'room of his or her own', in the literal as well as a metaphorical sense:[259] "Intellectual freedom depends upon material things [and p]oetry depends upon intellectual freedom".[260]

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[251] This is only one of several instances, in which Woolf "engage[s] flora and fauna in challenging the contexts of her transitional era" (Scott, "Regionalism", p. 243); more instances are analysed in Harris (2010).
[252] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 161.
[253] Ibid., p. 163.
[254] Pamela L. Caughie, "The Temporality of Modernist Life Writing in the Era of Transsexualism". In: *MFS Modern Fiction Studies* 59.3 (2013), p. 502.
[255] Cf. Kristeva, *Revolution*, p. 22.
[256] Cf. Huijer, "Aesthetics of Existence", p. 80.
[257] Josephine M. Guy and Ian Small, *The Routledge Concise History of Nineteenth Century Literature.* Abingdon 2011, p. 30.
[258] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 162.
[259] In this respect, Beverly Ann Schlack refers to *Mrs. Dalloway* as depicting a "many-chambered mansion" (Schlack, *Continuing Presences*, p. 77) instead of a single room only. This, I argue, also suits *Orlando* since the multiplicity of rooms accounts for the multitude of influences and the assemblage of different pasts found in this novel.
[260] Woolf, *Room*, p. 101.

In this sense, the marginalisation and confinement of women to the private sphere leads to a proliferation of intrusions upon Orlando's spatial and subsequently her intellectual freedom. The sacredly charged occupation of poetry is contrasted with the profanity of external duties; when Orlando attempts to "indite some reflection upon the eternity of all things",[261] she is interrupted by the housekeeper Bartholomew. The intruding force is materialised by the "blot [of ink]"[262] slowly spreading over the manuscript. The confinement – the Victorian gender conceptions – is so strong that all of a sudden, "[s]he tried to go on with what she was saying; [but] no words came".[263] Expectations of marriage and the impersonation of the ideal Victorian 'Angel in the House' affect her mental capacities intensely in that "she could scarcely keep her ideas in order […], ogling like a housemaid's fancies".[264]

The surpassing power of the dominant ideology and the age's confinements reach a peak when the pen, as an instrument of the age's discourse, "began to curve and caracole with the smoothest possible fluency",[265] thus letting the age's words, the age's poetry flow out of the pen onto paper "in cascades of involuntary inspiration".[266] It is not Orlando anymore who is writing, but she is overtaken by the age itself, deprived of any causal and artistic potency. There is no doubt that the degree to which Orlando's actual writing contributes to identity formation through ethopoiesis reaches its anti-climax in the height of Victorianism. One of the very few instances of actual linguistic material from the poem is presented here, and it is not even Orlando's own material the reader is given but "dreary verse"[267] written by the spirit of the Victorian age and in this sense reproducing gender discourse through degrading woman as "a vile link | Amid life's weary chain".[268]

The pivotal symbol of the chain, which has already been encountered in relation to Orlando's resemblance to Byron's *Childe Harold*, reoccurs at this stage. While the ambivalent symbol of the broken chain had borne the implication of a voluntary, though temporary, secession from society in the Renaissance period, the chain now signifies captivity instead. "[L]ife's weary chain"[269] shackles women even though they are degradingly labelled as "vile".[270] The age has taken possession of Orlando, leaves her "quiver[ing]"[271] and finally forces her to "yield completely and submissively to the spirit of the age".[272] The two levels of confinement – mental and corporeal – merge when the crinoline, the dominant

[261] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 163.
[262] Ibid., p. 163.
[263] Ibid., p. 164.
[264] Ibid., p. 167.
[265] Ibid., p. 164.
[266] Ibid., p. 164.
[267] Ibid., p. 164.
[268] Ibid., p. 164.
[269] Ibid., p. 164.
[270] Ibid., p. 164.
[271] Ibid., p. 164.
[272] Ibid., p. 167.

symbol for confining clothing, prevents her from "fling[ing] herself beneath the oak tree".[273] Orlando is hence restrained from artistic endeavour and, in the sense of the literal oak tree symbolising her poem, from a part of herself. The oak tree is a symbol of artistic freedom, mental reclusiveness and self-expression for Orlando, all of which are prerequisites for ethopoietical writing. Losing grip on those aspects has a pivotally disturbing effect on her and her writing.

Throughout the period of high Victorianism, which is thematised by Woolf over a length of roughly 25 pages only, Orlando's writing shrinks to a minimum. The only instances of actual writing foreground the age as the actively productive force whilst repressing Orlando against the backdrop of the Victorian marginalisation of women. She is passive and even more determined by the 'spirit of the age' than she had been before; influence more and more turns into overwhelming determination and "the spirit work[ed] upon her"[274] with all its force. "It was not Orlando who spoke, but the spirit of the age".[275] The dominant Victorian spirit – the marriage literally happening to her included – is "antipathetic to her in the extreme".[276]

However, and even though actual writing in the ethopoietical sense is thwarted by the age's overwhelming influence, the Victorian age is indeed given a crucial role in Orlando's process of ethopoietical writing. A certain sense of stability is evoked at this point of the novel – paradoxically in the midst of the age of "darkness […] doubt […] confusion"[277] –, namely when Orlando notes that "[y]et through all these changes she had remained, she reflected, fundamentally the same".[278] This insight, this mindset, stems from the very nature of ethopoietical writing itself. By transforming oneself into a work of art, one preserves the essence of oneself, thereby continuously creating, forming and seeking identity.

This idea of stability in the process of creation also correlates with the interrelation of language and death, which Foucault elaborates on in his essay "Language to Infinity". He therein makes reference to the female trickster Scheherazade and her narrating in order to evade death by continuously repeating and renewing the story she tells. The fact that there is no scene of death depicted in the novel, least of all Orlando's own death, strengthens the notion of writing as directed towards infinity. I do by no means deny the so clearly evident change; what I contend instead is that Orlando's process of continuous albeit fluctuating writing creates a sense of continuity and if not linear then at least wavelike movement, both of which are easily obliterated by the novel's jerkiness.

The insight Orlando has already gained, back then as a man, in the midst of the Elizabethan age nearly 300 years earlier – "[to] write, from this day forward, to please myself"[279] –, has indeed initiated a process of self-writing that aims at capturing the very essence of the self. The mere fact that this insight comes to

[273] Ibid., p. 168.
[274] Ibid., p. 168.
[275] Ibid., p. 169.
[276] Ibid., p. 168.
[277] Ibid., p. 156.
[278] Ibid., p. 163.
[279] Ibid., p. 71.

Orlando in times of severe confinement testifies to a remarkable degree of self-reflection on her part. She thereby raises herself into a position of power, namely that of self-mastery: Identity becomes more and more an issue decided within Orlando herself. It is this revelation, this instance of the recognition of a sense of stability and continuity, which both links Orlando's role as a writer, though suppressed by the confining forces of the age, to that of the preceding age and paves the way for the following age. Continuity, as terminologically applied here, is not supposed to connote any sense of historical continuity. What it is supposed to signify instead is a Bergsonian sense of continuity with a subject at its centre that "reflectively, selectively, and pragmatically […] stabilize[s] the world and [himself] as a result of this creativity".[280]

4.4 The Turn of the Century – on the Verge to Modernism, or "the present moment"

> The sky itself […] had changed […]. The clouds had shrunk to a thin gauze; the sky seemed made of metal.[281]
> The cold breeze of the present brushed her face with its little breath of fear.[282]

Orlando metaphorically enters the transitory space between the centuries[283] by going indoors – "she went in".[284] This symbol of retreating indoors can be read as a simultaneous retreat into herself and therein functions as the condition needed for ethopoietical writing. Once again, the terminating 19th century is also accompanied by changes in the climate – the transitory nature of autumn brings about the marriage of Orlando and Shelmerdine; it brings "movement and confusion"[285] and "the words went dashing and circling like wild hawks together among the belfries and higher and higher, further and further, faster and faster".[286] The quick succession of sentences linked in polysyndetic parallelism creates a movement of perpetual acceleration that finally leads into the 20th century and Woolf's time of modernity.

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[280] Paul Hamilton, "Reconstructing historicism". In: Patricia Waugh (ed.), *Literary Theory and Criticism*. Oxford 2006, p. 402.
[281] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 205.
[282] Ibid., p. 227.
[283] Even though I have strictly separated the preceding chapters century-wise, I think it fit to investigate the end of the Victorian age, the transition to modernity and finally modernity as such in unison, since the fin de siècle culture foreshadows notions which will become relevant when the "present moment" (Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 206) finally strikes Orlando in the year 1928.
[284] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 181.
[285] Ibid., p. 181.
[286] Ibid., p. 181.

Orlando's reflections on herself can be read in the light of modernist thinking. The "present moment"[287] of the novel mirrors Woolf's present at the point of composition – an age shaken by the repercussions of WWI and shaped by the ever-increasing modernisation, industrialisation and artificial nature of society. Having watched the crowds of early 20th century London move forward, shoulder to shoulder in the steadily popularising city, Orlando "came to the conclusion that there was neither rhythm nor reason in any of it".[288] In an age so unstable in its external conditions, stability can only be found in oneself – "the issue was the survival of the self"[289] –, and this survival can only be achieved by means of subjective consciousness and the "personal states of consciousness [that] constituted 'reality'".[290] Continuity, as connoted here, does not stand in contrast to Kristeva's notion of the subject in process; it is precisely in the act of writing and of continuous work on the self that subjective identity and a sense of continuity, stability and awareness of the self find expression. However, this fragmentary nature and the sense of wholeness sought after is a painful state to experience and by no means glorified. Orlando is full of struggle, despair and a sense of being lost.

With the reoccurrence of Nick Greene, the professionalisation of criticism finds its way into the novel as well. It is already in the 19th century that leading intellectuals endeavour to put literary criticism on an equal footing with scientific research; the notion of the 'expert' comes into being. However, Greene appears as one of what Collier terms "layers of literary middlemen",[291] who are harmful to the writer since they are dedicated to the public in the sense of being paid for their job. Knighted and academically educated, Sir Nicholas Greene is "the most influential critic of the Victorian age".[292] As to the continuum between artistic self-enclosure and commercialism labelled by Collier,[293] Orlando has occupied the former end early on and for long periods. Orlando's realisation that "[h]uman beings had become necessary"[294] and that the dichotomy between artistic self-enclosure and the sell-out to the commercial market has to be abandoned, puts him into a symbolically powerful position. It is because his abandoning of the binary opposition in favour of a self-positioning on the part of the author in between both poles that I attribute a considerable degree of symbolic power to him.

Greene's attitude, however, has not changed at all in the course of the previous ages. Still, he praises the models of preceding authors and literary periods. Just as he had denounced Elizabethan literature to the advantage of the truly

[287] Ibid., p. 206.
[288] Ibid., p. 191.
[289] Kenney, "The Moment", p. 66.
[290] Ibid., p. 61.
[291] Patrick Collier, "Virginia Woolf in the Pay of Booksellers: Commerce, Privacy, Professionalism, *Orlando*". In: *Twentieth Century Literature* 48.4 (2002), p. 376.
[292] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 193.
[293] Cf. Collier, "Virginia Woolf", p. 372.
[294] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 190.

"great age of literature"[295] of the Ancient Greece, he now praises precisely those authors which he had spoken of so derogatorily before – Shakespeare, Marlow, Johnson; Dryden, Pope, Addison – and denounces the then contemporary writers instead.[296] One can even talk of "intellectual pretension"[297] in so far as there is little substance in what Greene says. It is his frantic occupation with the greatness of the past and his strong alignment with public praise and commerce that stand in contrast to Orlando's pivotal discretion of facing the age one lives and works in.

What is additionally crucial for ethopoietical writing and which has so far only been touched upon briefly is a sense of interaction with one's surroundings. It follows that bidirectionality and reciprocity are needed instead of mere isolation: "[T]he transaction between a writer and the spirit of the age"[298] has to take the shape of a reciprocal exchange in which the writer, here Orlando, "need [sic] neither fight her age, nor submit to it; she was of it, yet remained herself".[299] What Orlando has to do instead is work "within multiple pasts and always in relation to the present moment".[300] In his seminal essay "Individuum, Individualität, Individualismus", Niklas Luhmann remarks that individuality is a concept which is yielded precisely in relation to society and not in isolation from it, since individuality entails the delimitation of somebody or something else.[301] This relation, in *Orlando*, can be of such "infinite [a] delicacy",[302] that it fosters and furthers writing instead of prohibiting the writer from being artistic: "Now, therefore, she could write, and write she did. She wrote. She wrote. She wrote."[303] The final age we encounter, Woolf's present, thus gives us the last piece which has been missing so far in the ethopoietical collage of the novel. Orlando changes her take on the 'spirit of the age' by turning the tube of the kaleidoscope, and what she encounters is a revelation – "a deep sigh of relief".[304] It is precisely after this revelation, after the finding that one's relation to the external 'spirit of the age' must be shaped by reciprocity, however guided by one's own set of beliefs, that Orlando is able to finally finish the poem she had been working on for roughly 350 years – "Done!",[305] she exclaims.

The successive finishing of Orlando's life-long project is accompanied by the poem's increasing transformation into the Foucauldian 'soul-as-object'. By having transformed herself into a work of art – into the poem –, Orlando has given the latter a life-like quality. The poem occurs as a 'soul-as-object', but it does so

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[295] Ibid., p. 61.
[296] Ibid., pp. 193f.
[297] Guy and Small, *The Routledge Concise History*, p. 48.
[298] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 184.
[299] Ibid., p. 184.
[300] Caughie, "The Temporality of Modernist Life Writing", p. 503.
[301] Cf. Luhmann, "Individuum, Individualität, Individualismus", p. 156.
[302] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 184.
[303] Woolf herself argues that literary "masterpieces are not single and solitary births [… but that] the experience of the mass is behind the single voice" (Woolf, A *Room of One's Own*, p. 61).
[304] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 184.
[305] Ibid., p. 189.

in a twofold nature. On the one hand, the poem has gradually developed a life of its own. The manuscript is now "fluttering above her heart",[306] "shuffling and beating as if it were a living thing [… and] Orlando [… can even] make out what it was […] saying".[307] When Orlando meets Nick Greene, who is excited to see her manuscript put into print and published, it is chiefly "the fervent desire of the poem itself"[308] to open up to the reading public and to the literary market. This is one of the instances in which "[t]he splitting of the ego into public and private selves"[309] comes to the fore. On the other hand, there in an increasing sense of Orlando and the poem being one single entity; her sense of loss, disorientation and alienation when being without the poem in 20th century London confirms this claim.

The demand of the poem to be read and perceived by the reading public additionally illustrates the necessity of a reciprocal relationship between the author and his or her age. Orlando finally recognises that "[h]uman beings had become necessary"[310] – the link to society and the commercialised 'spirit of the age' is of a reciprocal nature now. Woolf's continuum of artistic self-enclosure on the one hand and commercialism on the other hand opens up,[311] and Orlando is given the chance to position herself at any point on this scale. Moving on the scale between sheer radical individualism and submission to the age gives rise to movement and action. However, Orlando's relation is by no means simplified.

Through its publication, the poem literally comes into contact with the dominant ideology and the press as an external opinion-making instrument. The focus is hence placed on the poem's state as a final product – 'ready' to be published – while the process of creation fades behind the seemingly finished work. This does not accord with Kristeva's thinking and it is in the "Prologmenon" to *Revolution of Poetic Language* that she laments that "the kind of activity encouraged and privileged by (capitalist) society represses the process pervading the body and the subject".[312] The narrator's explicit comments and especially his remarks on issues of philosophy, metaphysics and the subject of writing can cautiously be brought in line with Virginia Woolf's own voice. "[L]ife […] has nothing whatever to do with sitting still in a chair and thinking",[313] which Orlando only does for a very short instance. In lieu, life is change, movement and processuality – the subject is never stable and motionless but continuously in process.

The question of which audience to write for and how to find a common ground for the audience's needs and one's own artistic endeavours was undoubtedly a pivotal one for Woolf herself. Within the essays compiled in *The*

[306] Ibid. p. 192.
[307] Ibid., p. 190.
[308] Ibid., p. 196.
[309] Maria DiBattista, *Imagining Virginia Woolf. An Experiment in Critical Biography*. Princeton and Oxford 2009, p. 33.
[310] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 190.
[311] Cf. Collier, "Virginia Woolf", p. 373.
[312] Kristeva, *Revolution*, p. 13.
[313] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 184.

Common Reader (1925) – ranging from "Modern Fiction"[314] to "The Common Reader" to "The Patron and the Crocus" –, the relation between an artist and the possible audiences is a frequently recurring one. In the latter of the essays mentioned, Woolf writes:[315]

> The Elizabethans, to speak roughly, chose the aristocracy to write for and the playhouse public. The eighteenth-century patron was a combination of coffee-house wit and Grub Street bookseller. In the nineteenth century the great writers wrote for the half-crown magazines and the leisured class […] *for whom should we write?*

The crocus as a symbol for the work a writer endeavours to shape in compliance with his or her own maxims of aestheticism, while simultaneously addressing the reading public, can be found at the turn of the century, when Orlando picks up "one of those autumn crocuses […] and put it […] into her breast".[316] In her essay, Woolf continues pondering the effect of firstly, a writer's superiority and detachment from the reading public, and secondly, a writer's total submission to the audience's demands. She partly answers the previously raised question, which correlates with the difficulties addressed by Collier, by contending the following:[317]

> The patron we want, then, is one who will help us to preserve our flowers from decay. But as his qualities change from age to age, and it need [sic] considerable integrity and conviction not to be dazzled by the pretensions or bamboozled by the persuasions of the competing crowd this business of patron-finding is one of the tests and trials of authorship. *To know whom to write for is to know how to write*.

Not only is it the question of the addressee which Orlando contemplates, but she also ponders the relation between reality, literature and truth. It is through the transformation of herself into a work of art that Orlando preserves parts of herself and acquires subjective truth against the problematic conception of "truth as something of granite-like solidity".[318] By means of ethopoietical writing, which bears traces of Woolf's impressionist realism and subjective impressionism, Orlando finally experiences a catharsis triggered by the very process of writing itself. Banfield argues that "[t]he mind's power to wander disconnects it from bi-

[314] In "Modern Fiction", Woolf's mode of subjective impressionism crystallises out and it is Kenney who refers to her message that "social reality was not real at all, that only personal states of consciousness constituted 'reality'" and thereby foregrounds "the sensations of perception on consciousness" (p. 61).
[315] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 206, emphasis added.
[316] Ibid., p. 180.
[317] Ibid., p. 208, emphasis added.
[318] Virginia Woolf, "The New Biography". In: *Granite and Rainbow. Essays*. London 1960, p. 149.

ography".[319] After Orlando has fallen silent[320] and has seemingly become "one and entire",[321] it is when her "mind began to toss like the sea"[322] that she is freed from the prison of silence and brought back "to live again".[323] In "A Sketch of the Past", Woolf herself notes that "we are the words, we are the music"[324] – the poem incarnate one with the writer.

The mode of subjective impressionism contributes to bridging the discrepancy between the writer's internal mindset, his or her perceptions, on the one hand, and the external circumstances and artistic codes of the respective age, on the other hand. It also provides one possible answer to the search for a voice capable of expressing oneself and equally capturing the essence of life: namely that truth can be neither objective nor universal. All the struggles Orlando undergoes in the course of more than 300 years add up to the processuality writing necessarily has to entail in order to be what writing should be: identity-establishing. "Life? Literature? One to be made into the other?",[325] Orlando asks herself. The perusal of works of early literary criticism gets Orlando into a conflict of identity resembling that of the painter Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse*. The struggle is one between imitation, between the urge "always, always [to] write like somebody else",[326] and originality, the firm resolution to "write […] to please [one]self".[327] It is at the intersection of those two poles – at the intersection of imitation and originality, of subjective individualism and the appeal to the mass audience, of remaining true to oneself and selling out to the market – that the struggle of identity is finally decided.

After Nick Greene's intent commercial interest in publishing the poem, Orlando is left wandering through the England of 1928 – Woolf's 'present moment' –, disoriented and overwhelmed by the sheer number of new inventions such as the engine car and the department store. The literary prize she has won for her poem is only one additional aspect of external influence, namely appraisal by the literary market, which as a commercial force is not capable of judging Orlando's internality rightfully.[328] She even asks herself "what […] praise and fame [have] to do with poetry".[329] The literary market,[330] for Orlando as for artists in general,

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[319] Ann Banfield, *The Phantom Table. Woolf, Fry, Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism*. Cambridge 2000, p. 200.
[320] Cf. Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 216.
[321] Ibid., p. 216.
[322] Ibid., p. 223.
[323] Ibid., p. 223.
[324] Woolf, "Sketch", p. 72.
[325] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 198.
[326] Ibid., p. 198.
[327] Ibid., p. 71.
[328] Cf. Ibid., p. 215.
[329] Ibid., p. 225.
[330] It has to be noted here that Woolf herself was by no means entirely down on publishing. As a public writer and co-publisher of the Hogarth Press, she herself was aware of the economic success of a writer to earn a living with his or her art. However, it can be contended that Woolf enjoyed a safer space for publishing than most authors did at her time; "[w]ithout fear of censorship, without fear of bewildered editions, writing solely to please herself [not the literally

"is both an opportunity and a threat".[331] In addition, it is her sex and her status as a woman which withhold public appraisal and fame in the sense of honest admiration from her; even "[a] porpoise in a fishmonger's shop attracted far more attention than a lady who had won a prize".[332] Numerous alliterations convey an atmosphere of ever-increasing acceleration; Orlando seems like a token in the massive game of modernity while "the motor-car shot, swung, squeezed, and slid".[333] Images of self-alienation and fragmentation proliferate and reveal the state of dividedness Orlando finds herself in. "People spilt off the pavement"[334] and she herself feels spilt into the modern world, missing the poem which has become and contains a part of her. She is desperately seeking "this self [the true self]".[335]

A notion of internality in writing and a sense of subjective impressionism become apparent in Orlando's thinking about fame and external judgement on art. "Was not poetry a secret transaction, a voice answering a voice?",[336] she asks herself. The answer given here is affirmative; poetry is a secret and intimate transaction in that it contains as well as elicits subjective truth and can only be the answer to one voice but not to the universal worldly voice. Still it has to be noted that the notion of one voice only is challenged when Woolf alludes to Orlando answering "the old crooning song of the woods".[337] If the woods, in relation to the oak tree, are seen as a symbol for the nation of England,[338] then poetry does indeed have the power to answer the voice of a nation and to embed itself within a larger framework. Orlando's initial attempt to "return to the land what the land has given [her]"[339] supports this claim. I even contend that both options, firstly, answering a single subjective voice only, and secondly, answering the voice of a nation, are compatible in that they refuse the blind adherence to external standards given by critics, commercial interests and the rising market sphere. Poetry has indeed the power to give an answer, but it does not do so in the context of "all this chatter and praise and blame and meeting people who admire one and meeting people who did not admire one".[340] What is also captured in Orlando's sense of being lost in the midst of modernity is the function of

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ethopoietical implication in here] and Leonard, she became free" (Drew Patrick Shannon, "Woolf and Publishing: Why the Hogarth Press Matters". In: Bryony Randall and Jane Goldman (eds.). *Virginia Woolf in Context*. Cambridge 2012, pp. 318-319) – the Hogarth Press had the function of a "gift-sphere" (Simpson, "Woolf's Bloomsbury", p. 174) for her.

[331] Collier, "Virginia Woolf", p. 369.

[332] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 215.

[333] Ibid., p. 211.

[334] Ibid., p. 211.

[335] Ibid., p. 214.

[336] Ibid., p. 225.

[337] Ibid., p. 225.

[338] The oak as a plant can for instance be found in the official march of the Royal Navy, entitled "Heart of Oak", in which oak symbolises the longevity, fortitude and power of the British nation state.

[339] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 225.

[340] Ibid., p. 225.

the poem as reconciling both the present and the past by creating a reciprocal relationship between the poet and the external stimuli.

The sense of identity found in Orlando roaming the streets of 20th century London is one of bricolage and vicissitude – different selves make their entries and their exits on the stage of identity –[341] rather than one of coherence and unity. There is a myriad of different "selves of which we are built up"[342], and it is those different selves which Orlando has also captured in her ethopoietical writing in the course of approximately 350 years. The different styles she had tried her hand at, the different stages of being human she had undergone – man, nobleman, woman, wife, artist, lover – and the changing frames of mind make up for what Orlando is, namely a person in process, just as her poem is a work of art in process.[343] The sense of a personal tradition[344] could be interpreted as a means of fighting the crisis and alienation triggered by modernity. What still lies at the heart of a compilation of identities rather than one central identity is the search for a voice to capture the essence of life and what it means to be human. The issue of truth has already been pivotal in earlier stages of Orlando's writing, for instance in the Elizabethan age when the struggle between imitation and innovation finally provided him, still a man back then, with the epiphany that one has to write more endogenously.[345]

Orlando revisits the oak tree she has flung herself under as early as in the late 16th century "on the top"[346] of the hill, and it is not only literally but also metaphorically that the poem itself occupies a position of heightened centrality in Orlando's life. This case of final framing shows that just as the natural tree has "grown bigger, sturdier, and more knotted",[347] so too has the poem as 'soul-as-object' absorbed more and more of Orlando's life. The corporeal connection of Orlando to nature and most specifically to the humanised tree she attaches herself to becomes most powerful when "she felt the bones of the tree running out like ribs from a spine".[348] After Orlando's decision not to bury the poem, "[the] book lies unburied and dishevelled on the ground".[349] What follows is a detailed description of the scenery – both natural and artificial or urban – in which images of light and darkness alternate. Analogous to the alternation of light and darkness in the Neoclassicist Age,[350] it can be argued that the non-burial of the poem in combination with the changing light conditions signify the middle-ground be-

[341] Cf. Ibid., pp. 214f.
[342] Ibid., pp. 212f.
[343] Cf. Ibid., p. 216.
[344] Woolf works in a twofold way with the notion of tradition. On the one hand, she deconstructs the idea of a coherence in literary and cultural tradition by debunking and questioning the classification of history and literature into neatly separated periods. On the other hand, she condenses the tradition of roughly 350 years of literary and national history within a single character, and thus creates a sense of a 'personal tradition' as argued for above.
[345] Cf. Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 71.
[346] Ibid., p. 224.
[347] Ibid., p. 224.
[348] Ibid., p. 224.
[349] Ibid., p. 225.
[350] Cf. Ibid., pp. 142ff.

tween reason and fancy. The frequent occurrence of adjacent pairs such as the dark river and the patches of light caused by the reflection of the moon on the water surface, or the flickering torches and the thereby cast shadows can be interpreted as a sign for the combinability of light and darkness, reason and fancy.

In noting that Woolf leaves "single-sex identity and time as linear, irreversible progress"[351] behind, Riquelme obliviates that Woolf also gives up on the idea of a stable identity as such. As Banfield argues, the true self is "by definition wandering".[352] Woolf is deeply entrenched in modernist thinking about the fragmentary nature of the subject, and it is in this mindset that she largely adheres to Kristeva's conception of 'le sujet en procès' and the processuality of writing. The present moment might undoubtedly be fragile and transient for Orlando, but it is by no means "empty",[353] as Beer argues. Both Michel Foucault and Virginia Woolf show an extensive occupation with the phenomenon of the present. As Foucault notes, "[m]aybe the most certain of all philosophical problems is the problem of the present time, and what we are in this very moment".[354] Woolf, in addition, alludes to the present as "a platform to stand upon"[355] from which the past that "is much affected by the present moment"[356] has to be viewed in all its intensity.

And here, we have arrived – it is "Thursday, the eleventh of October, Nineteenhundred and Twenty Eight".[357]

5. Conclusion

It has been shown that reading *Orlando* against the backdrop of Foucauldian ethopoiesis does indeed offer a picture resembling that caused by the kaleidoscope, namely one which "illuminate[s] the relation between 'scattered intensities'".[358] It has also become clear that Virginia Woolf's take on biography and life-writing, though not specifically focused on in this paper, is mirrored in the form of mise-en-abyme in the act of ethopoietical writing conducted by Orlando him- and herself. The different (st)ages Orlando goes through influence and shape his and her writing to a different extent and in a different manner. Each century thereby has one crucial epiphany on the part of Orlando at its centre, which lets the threads converge in "the present moment".[359]

The Renaissance reveals the contrast between a starkly fixed external framework and the patronage of Queen Elizabeth I, on the one hand, and Orlando's tendency towards endogenous ethopoietical writing, on the other hand; the lat-

[351] Riquelme, "Modernist Transformations", p. 468.
[352] Banfield, *The Phantom Table*, p. 200.
[353] Gillian Beer, *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground*. Edinburgh 1996, p. 26.
[354] Foucault, "Afterword", p. 216.
[355] Woolf, "Sketch", p. 75.
[356] Ibid., p. 75.
[357] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 228.
[358] Groth, "Kaleidoscopic Vision", p. 222.
[359] Woolf, *Orlando*, p. 75.

ter manifests itself in his reflectiveness and the experience of 'moments of being'. The frequent change from society into solitude and back again also contains the most momentous decision, which lays the foundation for the further development of all ethopoietical writing: "Bad, good, or indifferent, I'll write, from this day forward, to please myself."[360]

Orlando's encounter with the rising public culture of the 18th century – profoundly shaped by Enlightenment and Neoclassicist thinking – forces her more and more to set herself in relation to her age; Orlando, now a woman, gains the epiphany that reason alone does not account for truth and that visions triggered by endogenous, and thus ethopoietical, writing are necessary so as to establish a thorough picture of things. The corporeal and spiritual link between Orlando and the poem constantly intensifies and it is through ethopoietical writing that the poem increasingly takes the shape of the Foucauldian 'soul-as-object'.

The 19th century, then, with its confining Victorian gender ideology is most warring to Orlando's process of writing; her actual writing reaches its nadir and her status as a woman further prevents her from public reputation. However, those times of strongest confinement add the notion so far missing to ethopoietical writing, namely that of the insight that reciprocity and the setting of oneself in relation to one's age are crucial for endogenous writing as well.

The turn of the century leading up to the present moment in 1928, I argue, is the most ambiguous and multifarious of the ages mentioned. Proto-modernist notions of fragmentation and alienation are interrelated with a heightened urge for internalism and thus for ethopoietical writing; the interrelation between the poem as 'soul-as-object' and Orlando herself tightens. The insight already initiated during Victorianism now reaches its climax when Orlando notes that she "need [sic] neither fight her age, nor submit to it".[361] "[S]he was of it, yet remained herself",[362] and the emerging reciprocity is used as a fuelling rather than a hampering force to writing.

The present might seem like the pinnacle of meaninglessness; images of alienation, confusion and nonsense find their way into the narrative. However, the present gives us an answer and lets the necessity for ethopoietical writing arise in the form of a crescendo, and a blatant forte fortissimo accompanies Orlando's necessity for self-expression. The development across the different centuries and the irrefutable contemporary relevance of ethopoietical writing show that "Orlando's composition of 'The Oak Tree' over more than three centuries is not [only] fantastic, a temporal aberration, but *emblematic of how writing and reading work*".[363]

Through the gradual act of writing, Woolf denies the notion of stability but not so of personal continuity, as I have argued. Stability and historical continuity are supplemented by the Kristevan notion of the 'subject in process'. Within this process and the continuity of meaning- and identity-making in relation to the

[360] Ibid., p. 71.
[361] Ibid., p. 184.
[362] Ibid., p. 184.
[363] Caughie, "The Temporality of Modernist Life Writing", p. 502, emphasis added.

external circumstances, writing captures a sense of continuity. If regarded as the outcome of ethopoietical writing, the latter works against the fragmentation and disillusionment frequently associated with modernity. The notion of creating a holistic entity against fragmentation and the functional differentiation between different partial identities arising with modernity is also alluded to by Luhmann.[364] However much one might change, the change is endogenous and lies within the writing self. In *La Prose du Monde* (1969), the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty fittingly comments on the causal powers achieved through writing: "A chaque instant, il [le langage] me rappelle que, 'monstre incomparable' dans le silence, je suis, au contraire, par la parole, mis en présence d'un autre moi-même"[365] – endogenous and hence ethopoietical writing is said to attribute a certain value to Orlando's existence and doings.

Finally, ethopoietical writing is a means of and an answer to finding one's own voice, an issue that troubled Woolf to a great extent and that pervades many of her writings, *Orlando* being one of them. Ethopoiesis allows for a sense of writing which may be called subjective impressionism in that truth can only be subjectively experienced by turning in on oneself – as done in ethopoietical writing – and is prone to change and a never-ending process of the construction of meaning and identity. Orlando finally strives for "establish[ing] her *own* reality [and not for universal truth] in *personal* identity":[366] "those truths which transmit personality".[367] Ethopoietical writing, when seen as artistically independent, endows Orlando with a sense of power; she is the active agent writing her own self and not merely a token externally controlled by historical forces. The tradition she invokes is undoubtedly shaped by the general historical conditions, but ethopoiesis allows her to select from and arrange those in a bricolage-manner. Ethopoiesis – defined as "the transformation of truth into ethos"[368] – hence shows that is it a subjective truth, namely that deriving from endogeneity which is transferred into ethos, into 'disposition' or 'character'.

When now thinking back of Knausgård mentioned at the beginning, it can be concluded that taking a look at facets of life-writing, of which ethopoietical writing is one of the most intriguing ones, proves particularly fruitful with regard to "our ever-changing world".[369] The writings discussed put Virginia Woolf and Michel Foucault in the perspective of transdiscursive writers showing a strong sense of permanent significance. Further investigation could be done on the correlation between Orlando's writing and the temporal structure of the novel. In this respect, it would also be interesting to set Foucauldian and Woolfian concepts of history and most notably historiography in relation to one another.

Bringing identity formation in line with the nature of kaleidoscopic vision, Foucault notes in an interview that "in the course of history, human beings have

[364] Cf. Luhmann, "Individuum, Individualität, Individualismus", p. 175.
[365] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *La Prose du Monde*. Paris 1969, p. 29.
[366] Kenney, "The Moment", p. 46, emphasis added.
[367] Woolf, "The New Biography", pp. 149f.
[368] Foucault, "Self Writing", p. 209.
[369] Batters, "Care of the Self and the Will to Freedom", p. 2.

never ceased to construct themselves, in other words to perpetually alter the level of their subjectivity and constitute themselves in *a manifold and infinite series of differing subjectivities* that will *never reach a final point*".[370] Just as a kaleidoscope resists any state of definiteness, so is ethopoietical writing a process which never ceases to (re)shape identity. All the epiphanies and revelations triggered through ethopoietical writing add up to a catharsis-like effect found in literature. In recalling the initial question if "everybody's life [could] become a work of art",[371] one can answer with a definite yes. As Garner notes, "literature can, *perhaps*, become the ethopoietic creation of new forms of life".[372] Orlando, at any rate, favours subjective innovation and originality over imitation; she favours poiesis over mimesis, and even more so ethopoiesis.

[370] Qtd. in Huijer, "The Aesthetics of Existence", p. 65, emphasis added.
[371] Foucault, "Genealogy", p. 261.
[372] Garner, "From Sovereignty to Ethopoiesis", p. 103, emphasis added.

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