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Time Flies When You're Having Fun: Queered Temporality in *Orlando*

Time travels in divers paces with divers persons. I'll tell you who Time ambles withal, who Time trots withal, who Time gallops withal, and who he stands still withal.
-Rosalind to Orlando, *As You Like It*

In Shakespeare's play, *As You Like It*, Rosalind explains to Orlando that time moves at different speeds for different people. In *Orlando*, Virginia Woolf nods to Shakespeare, as she takes up her pen to further manipulate time. Around the time of publication, Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity came into public view, and one can see the influences of the theorem in Woolf's work. The Theory purported that "in the world of physics, time was not a constant, but flowed at different rates for objects traveling at different speeds" (Briggs 199). Woolf takes this bit of science and weaves it into her novel, creating a character who manipulates time in a distinctly queer way. Time seemed to be on her mind. In an essay titled, "The Sun and the Fish," Woolf describes a lizard mounted on the back of another. Both animals are completely still, and she writes, "All human passion seems furtive and feverish beside this still rapture. Time seems to have stopped and we are in the presence of immortality" (Briggs 187). This particular extract is part of a coded message from Woolf to her lover, Vita Sackville West. Although both women were married, they were friends and romantic partners. Not only did Woolf dedicate *Orlando* to Vita, she was her muse. Vita inspired *Orlando*, which has been described as a "series of variations on the themes of rapture and stillness, sex, time and immortality" (Briggs 187). This note to Vita exhibits all the confusion of "still

*Because the character of Orlando switches genders and sex throughout the book, I will use the plural "they/their/them" as the pronouns of choice.

rapture,” stopped time and immortality that is found in *Orlando* and in the title character. Throughout the text, Orlando, the main character, has a queered relationship to time that, not only makes them* a queer character in this modernist novel, but makes the novel itself a work of queer literature.

Throughout *Orlando*, time takes on several different incarnations: Orlando’s time, other characters’ time, the narrator’s time, and the reader’s time. While other characters seem to disappear and reappear arbitrarily throughout, Orlando’s time is still outside of the normative structure surrounding them. One example of this is their weeklong sleep, where those around them worry over their comatose state. Within the narrative, their relationship to time is outside the realm of those with whom they interacts. The narrator also constructs his or her own timetable, as is shown during the multiple interruptions during the text. The narrative is arrested in order for the narrator to interject his or her own commentary into the storyline, often bringing the reader out of Orlando’s world, and into the “present” world of the narrator/biographer. These interruptions link directly to the reader’s time, which falls outside all of the aforementioned time constructs. The narrator may state how long a particular passage has taken to contemplate, or how much time has passed, in the eyes of a biographer, which differs both from the narrative (both Orlando’s and the other characters’) time and the reader’s time. And, of course, Orlando may live out a century, yet it will be contained within mere chapters of the novel, further distancing the reader’s time from all other times portrayed in the work.

Because *Orlando* was written as a pseudo-biography, and the narrator often refers to him/herself as a biographer of Orlando’s, it is of note to look at this novel as a historical narrative. In doing so we should not ignore the idea of how teleology plays into

understanding *Orlando* as a queer text. First let us look at what we mean by this term. Teleology can be defined as an ultimate goal, which “depends on a sequence leading to an end that can retrospectively be seen as having had a beginning” (Menon 28). Madhavi Menon purports that, “issues of time and consequence are paramount for such narratives” (28-29). We can therefore read *Orlando* as anti-teleological, for, even though time plays a major role in Orlando’s life, it is of no real importance to them. And, as we will examine, consequence implies goals, or at least, an end, in which Orlando also does not indulge.

Lee Edelman asserts that history can be shown as a linear narrative “in which meaning succeeds in revealing itself – *as itself* – through time” (Edelman 4). According to this theory, history is assigned meaning through time, placing time at the center of this definition. Continuing in the vein of historicizing, if we are to view *Orlando* as a fictional biography in which time is imperative to its structure, we can look to Glen Burgess’ argument that the past does not exist until it is reconstructed (Menon 32). Menon suggests, in response to Burgess’ work, that there are proper and improper ways in which to reconstruct this past, and, therefore, historicize.

The proper way involves distancing the past adequately so that it does not become a version of the present, even as we might need the present to be the teleological end for the past that we have reconstructed. The improper way of doing history is the non-teleological way...which threatens to conflate past and present, ends and means. (33)

Orlando historicizes in just this improper way, conflating time, gender, death and goals. Orlando ignores the passing of centuries, commenting briefly, from time to time on historical moments, while ignoring others. They vacillate freely between the sexes, literally changing genders, as well as moving fluidly between man and woman within society, as the whim strikes. Death touches Orlando at moments, coming and going as

needed, ignoring the normative constraints of being an end to life. Instead, death works as a respite from the weariness of life, floating in and out of Orlando's existence as deemed necessary. And while death may not be the ultimate *goal* of life, in a normative and "proper" time structure, it is the ultimate end. For Orlando, they have no ultimate goal, and as they appear to border on the edge of immortality, death, for them cannot even be considered a stand-in for an end. They do not live a goal-oriented, purpose-driven life, going against Edelman's argument that a historical, linear narrative ought to reveal meaning through itself, and do so through linear time. It is for these reasons that, when trying to reconstruct the past through Orlando's story, the narrator (and the reader) ends up doing so improperly, and, therefore, queerly.

Menon also delves into the reconstruction of the past in relation to how the past, present and future are tied together in order to create meaning. She argues that reconstruction of the past is not needed to give it existence, but, instead, it is "the present that needs teleological cords with which to connect itself with a past that must be seen as a version of what has eventually become the present" (Menon 33). This statement is followed by the assertion that the central, or "stable point of the reference" is the historian, who stands as the "measure against which the blur of the past might be recognized as being in need of reconstruction" (33). The narrator/biographer in *Orlando* continually interrupts the narrative in order to pull us out of Orlando's time, and place us in his or her time. Near the end of the novel, Orlando wakes to the striking of a clock. "Orlando leapt as if she had been violently struck on the head. Ten times she was struck. In fact, it was ten o'clock in the morning. It was the eleventh of October. It was 1928. It was the present moment" (Woolf 298). This passage is disconcerting on many levels, as

we are shown each version of time at once. We see Orlando's time as being ten in the morning, yet, the narrator then tells us the year, and ends with the rather discombobulating statement of: "It was the present moment." Is this the present moment for Orlando? Is it the present moment for the narrator/biographer? As a reader today, we know that it is not our present moment, yet, we are being told that it is. This conflation of time creates a confusion of how the past should be told, or reconstructed, as the past has now just crashed into the present. Time is queered once again, as we are unable to make meaning of the past, since it has not been properly connected to the present moment, and the historian, our "stable point of reference," has let us down, as he or she has added to our confusion by conflating the past and the present and displaying all four incarnations of time in one moment.

By looking at some specific examples in *Orlando*, we can see how Orlando queers time, and, in doing so, is also a queer character. The story opens with Orlando as a sixteen-year-old boy at the end of the 16th century. The reader follows the course of the main character until the book ends with Orlando as a 36 year-old woman in 1928. Judith Halberstam explains that,

Queer subcultures produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience – namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death. (2)

We will later examine Orlando's relationship to marriage and reproduction, but here, let's look at how Orlando queers time through the longevity of their life.

Early in the novel, Orlando falls asleep for seven days, unable to be awoken by any external factors. Once Orlando wakes up from their trance, the narrator/biographer steps outside the narrative to contemplate death. "Has the finger of death to be laid on the

tumult of life from time to time lest it rend us asunder? Are we so made that we have to take death in small doses daily or we could not go on with the business of living?"

(Woolf 68). The narrator disrupts the flow of the story in order to discuss the deeper implications of Orlando's extended, and inexplicable, slumber. Continuing on, the reader is faced with more queries, specifically the relationship between life and death.

Had Orlando, worn out by the extremity of his suffering, died for a week, and then come to life again? And if so, of what nature is death and of what nature life? Having waited well over half an hour for an answer to these questions, and none coming, let us go on with the story. (Woolf 68)

By halting the story to ponder these questions, the narrator places importance, not only on death, but also on the relationship of death within, and during, life. Instead of viewing life as a linear thrust, which begins with birth and terminates in death, the reader is asked to consider a fluid construct of life, one that can be occasionally interrupted by death.

Even more telling is the idea that this fatal interruption is not viewed as a negative event. Life is described as a "tumult." Death is the positive force in this dilemma, allowing us respite from the turmoil of living. The narrator creates a rather strange paradox, as we are asked to consider the idea that perhaps a "small dose" of death is necessary to continue living "lest it rend us asunder." In other words, we must die a little bit, from time to time, in order to continue living. Otherwise, we will die. Death is keeping us from death. These intercessions into the narrative force the reader to pause and consider how Orlando's queered relationship to death produces a queered relationship to time.

Edelman states that the "death drive refuses identity or the absolute privilege of any goal" (Edelman 22). When Orlando falls into their extended slumber and awakes seven days later, something important has happen to them. "He stretched himself. He

rose. He stood upright in complete nakedness before us, and while the trumpets pealed Truth! Truth! Truth! we have no choice left but confess – he was a woman” (Woolf 137). In this instant, Orlando’s body has literally queered time by changing from a man to a woman. The presence of the death drive is apparent in this moment, as Orlando refuses an identity on the most basic level of denying a fixed sex. In fact, it is not that they refuse to identify fixedly with either, but that they move effortlessly between the two.

And here it would seem from ambiguity in her terms that she was censuring both sexes equally, as if she belonged to neither; and indeed, for the time being she seemed to vacillate; she was man; she was woman; she knew the secrets, shared the weaknesses of each. (Woolf 158)

Having slept for seven days, and risen as a woman (being made into a woman from a man), one may be wont to assign biblical significance to Orlando’s transformation. However, after we see the vacillation that occurs within Orlando, it is apparent that this metamorphosis is not a fixed creation of woman from man, but an ambiguous and fluid movement that disallows a set and static identity. The narrator continues to express this fluctuation in an attempt to explain Orlando’s relationship with gender. “Different though the sexes are, they intermix. In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place, and often it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness, while underneath the sex is the very opposite of what is above” (Woolf 189). We are told that identity, and specifically Orlando’s identity, cannot be defined as easily as by assigning a sex to the person. In addition to being unwilling to identify with one, and only one, sex, Orlando further complicates their identity by refusing to participate in a heterosexual framework of love.

And as all Orlando’s loves had been women, now, through the culpable laggardry of the human frame to adapt itself to convention, though she herself was a woman, it was still a woman she loved; and if the

consciousness of being of the same sex had any effect at all, it was to quicken and deepen those feelings which she had had as a man. (161)

The further the reader sees into Orlando's character, the more we see that Orlando rejects one, concrete identity. The death drive is apparent here as it refuses identity, and, for Orlando, the refusal of an identity comes in the form of a refusal of one sex and a refusal of heterosexual love.

In addition to refusing an identity, Orlando also refuses an ultimate goal. As the novel continues, and we learn that they live for centuries, yet accomplishes almost nothing, it becomes more and more difficult to identify their goal in this long, complex life. Neither death, nor the accomplishment of something substantial, seems within reach, as an aim for a purpose does not seem to be important. We, as readers, are never allowed the privilege of seeing Orlando's life come to fruition, as the novel gives us no closure at its end. They do finish their manuscript and gets it published, near the end of the novel, but we are given the impression that this has not always been Orlando's paramount aim in life. Despite being published, Orlando realizes it does not matter, as praise and fame do not give value to what is written, and so "she let her book lie unburied and dishevelled on the ground" (Woolf 325). Originally they were going to bury it as a tribute to nature, as nature had been their muse for all these centuries, but then they decide none of it holds any importance. This is not a moment of Orlando reaching their goal, and instead, the novel finishes with an open end and no loose strings tied up. They continue to live on, and, we presume, move through their world, but we are given no conclusion. Orlando embodies the death drive in this way, refusing both a static identity and an attainment of an ultimate goal.

After establishing the existence of the death drive in Orlando, and a refusal of identity, we are then plagued with the opposite notion that, while rejecting an identity, Orlando seems to have, in fact, fully embraced a queer identity. Although Orlando has changed sexes, we're told that their identity has not been altered.

Orlando had become a woman – there is no denying it. But in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity. Their faces remained, as their portraits prove, practically the same. His memory – but in future we must, for convention's sake, say 'her' for 'his,' and 'she' for 'he' – her memory then, went back through all the events of her past life without encountering any obstacle. (Woolf 138)

Edelman states that, “queerness can never define an identity; it can only ever disturb one” (Edelman 17). How, then, can we reconcile the fact that Orlando has now changed, physically from a man to a woman, but still kept their identity exactly the same? If we are to argue that Orlando is a queer character (which I am), then how can their identity not be disrupted by a change in sex? And, if Orlando refuses identity, as has previously been argued, how do they claim to maintain one now? Orlando's character is queer to the point that a change in physical sex is not enough to disrupt their view of themselves. Woolf uses the term “identity,” but looking at Orlando through a queer lens, and following the previous argument that they refuse to conform to one identity, I read “identity” here as a sense of self. If Orlando's self is queer before their body changes form, then this change is not a queering, but, instead, falls within their “normal,” framework of how life ought to function. If Orlando were not a queer character, this change would disrupt and rupture their sense of self. The mere fact that Orlando finds this transformation ordinary, attests to their queerness.

Also, after disrupting the story to pose these queries, the narrator admits that s/he doesn't know the answers. It takes the reader a few minutes to read the list of questions on the page, but then our own time becomes skewed as we are told that the narrator has just taken more than half an hour to consider the answers, but none have been forthcoming. Our own time, as readers, has been manipulated as we are told that a few minutes passing for us has been equivalent to more than half an hour for the narrator. This manipulation of time by the biographer/narrator happens throughout the novel, as we are continually taken out of the flow of the narrative and made aware of how time is passing for Orlando, in contrast to how time is passing for the narrator, which is also in contrast to how time is passing for reader.

At one point in the narrative, as Orlando is spending time writing, the narrator explains how time passes. Instead of just stating that a year has passed, s/he lists all the months in progression, explaining how one comes right after the other, until a year has gone by. Once again, the narrator halts the narrative and explains his/her reason for telling the story in this way, as well as making the reader self-conscious of his/her own time spent reading these pages:

This method of writing biography, though it has its merits, is a little bare, perhaps, and the reader, if we go on with it, may complain that he could recite the calendar for himself and so save his pocket whatever sum the publisher may think proper to charge for this book. But what can the biographer do when his subject has put him in the predicament in which Orlando has now put us? (267)

The narrator disrupts the story to tell the reader that time is passing, and s/he has nothing to write about, as his/her subject is not doing anything of significance. Once again, we are made aware of the fact that Orlando has just spent a year sitting in a chair thinking and writing, while the narrator is patiently watching, waiting for something to happen. Instead

of skipping ahead and using one sentence to convey that a year has passed, during which Orlando has spent their time thinking, the narrator chooses to take up almost two pages of text describing that nothing has happened. It takes the reader only a few minutes to read these few paragraphs, which is obviously less than a year, but it is still longer than if the narrator had merely skipped ahead. While this may not seem of immense importance, it is just another example of how time is queered within the novel, creating different layers of time that seem to fall onto one another, creating temporal conflation and confusion.

Later, as Orlando is working on their book, we are given descriptions of how they are manipulating time daily, over the course of months and years.

Some weeks added a century to his age, others no more than three seconds at most. Altogether, the task of estimating the length of human life [...] is beyond our capacity, for directly we say that it is ages long, we are reminded that it is briefer than the fall of a rose leaf to the ground. (Woolf 99)

Here, again, the reader is given an example of Orlando's queered relationship with time. Instead of a life taking the form of a linear model of years marching in procession, Orlando's relationship to time and, ultimately, death, is more fluid and vacillating. In conventional constructs of time, a week is always measured the same, and always adds the same quantity of time to a person's age. For Orlando, this is not the case, as a week does not always add the same quantity of time to their age. Halberstam discusses the idea of a family time, "the normative scheduling of daily life" (Halberstam 5). Orlando demonstrates their queerness by showing how they are unable to interact conventionally with normative measurements of time. Because a week could add a century to their age, they fall outside the category of being able to participate in a rigid, timetable of normative daily life.

Pulling back, we can also see that this fluidity in relationship to time passing, and aging, creates a lifespan that then too, becomes highly unknown. The narrator states that, “Life seemed to him of prodigious length. Yet even so, it went like a flash” (Woolf 100). This unknowingness then creates an uncertainty in regard to Orlando’s relationship with death, which, as has been previously discussed, reflects Orlando’s queering of time in the larger capacity of a lifespan.

Within this queered relationship to time, we can also see that *how* Orlando spends their time is outside the normative structure of productivity. After their writing is ridiculed by a famous author of the time, Orlando tears themselves from their pages and finds solace in nature, as “he flung himself under his favourite oak tree and felt that if he need never speak to another man or woman so long as he lived [...], he might make out what years remained to him in tolerable content” (Woolf 97). They decide to take refuge in nature and live as a hermit, ignoring all human contact. Here, not only do we see how Orlando is spending their time, but we also get a glimpse of their contribution to society and the future. Edelman describes the death drive as, “the negativity opposed to every form of social viability” (Edelman 9). By making the decision to live alone, with no human contact, let alone any sort of reproductive urges, Orlando once again embraces the idea of the death drive. They are not concerned about the future, for, even though, they mention the remaining years of their life, their only desire is to live them in “tolerable content.” Because their desire does not involve any other humans, they appear to be a negative force to social viability.

Let’s return, however, to Orlando’s use of this time that they spent in isolation. They come back to this spot under the oak tree, “day after day, week after week, month

after month, year after year” (Woolf 97). The reader is then given a long description of seasons coming and going and of time passing. In the end, however, we’re told, “and nothing whatever happened” (Woolf 98). For years, Orlando chooses to spend their time alone, sitting under a tree, doing nothing. This ties into Halberstam’s discussion of David Harvey’s work, as Harvey explains that time “is organized according to the logic of capital accumulation” (Halberstam 7). Orlando is not participating in a capitalistic structure, and in fact, the narrator states that they are doing nothing, and nothing has happened during all those years. The narrator states that “when a man has reached the age of thirty, as Orlando had now had, time when he is thinking becomes inordinately long; time when he is doing becomes inordinately short” (Woolf 98). Their time is not dictated by capitalistic demands, and therefore, they hold no value in the normative capitalistic system. Halberstam goes on to explain Harvey’s argument that time has value, by stating:

These formulaic responses to time and temporal logics produce emotional and even physical responses to different kinds of time: thus people feel guilty about leisure, frustrated by waiting, satisfied by punctuality, and so on. (7)

She describes these responses as being coded as “natural” (7). Because Orlando does not have these same responses, their interaction with time and productivity is queered. They spend years producing nothing and rejects the idea of being socially viable. By not adhering to the logics of a normative capitalistic structure, they create their own way of spending time that is considered unnatural by normative society.

Not only does Orlando queer the relationship between time and productivity, they queer the time within their own lifespan. Halberstam also asserts that, “in Western cultures, we chart the emergence of the adult from the dangerous and unruly period of adolescence as a desired process of maturation” (Halberstam 4). According to this theory,

the period of transition between youth and adulthood is dangerous and unstable and, in normative societies, it is best to move through this stage as quickly as possible. In writing about queer subcultures, Halberstam continues this argument:

[Q]ueer subcultures afford us a perfect opportunity to depart from a normative model of youth cultures as stages on the way to adulthood; this allows us to map out different forms of adulthood, or the refusal of adulthood and new modes of deliberate deviance. (174)

By extending the period of adolescence, those participating in a queer subculture put off the inevitability of becoming an adult for as long as possible. Becoming an adult, in the heteronormative sense of the word means getting married and having children. Those people that chose to delay this next step are queering the normative timeline that is expected of them. Orlando can be seen as participating in this extended adolescence, as they postpone getting married and having children for centuries. Although it is difficult to equate or compare Orlando's time to the reader's time, we still observe that they have let an extraordinary amount of time pass before succumbing to marriage and children. If we are to clumsily compare Orlando's lifespan to that of the average reader, the final concession to both of these events comes late in their life.

Shortly after Orlando changes from a man to a woman, they leave their post as Ambassador to Constantinople and joins a band of gypsies, journeying through the desert. "They rode for several days and nights and met with a variety of adventures, some at the hands of men, some at the hands of nature, in all of which Orlando acquitted herself with courage" (Woolf 140). After returning to England, as a woman, Orlando continues to vacillate between the sexes, often dressing in men's clothing, in order to embrace their past lives and freedom, under the disguise of a man. "[F]or her sex changed far more frequently than those who have worn only one set of clothing can conceive; nor can there

be any doubt that she reaped a twofold harvest by this device; the pleasures of life were increased and its experiences multiplied” (221). Dressing as a man was not just a way to clutch at a freedom once had, it was a way to enjoy pleasures as both sexes. “[W]hen night came, she would more often than not become a nobleman complete from head to toe and walk the streets in search of adventure” (221) At this point in the narrative, we can roughly estimate that Orlando is probably in their twenties. We are witnessing a rejection of the normative timeline, as, at this point in their life, they ought to be settling down with a husband and raising children. Halberstam states that, “Within the life cycle of the Western human subject, long periods of stability are considered to be desirable, and people who live in rapid bursts...are characterized as immature and even dangerous” (4-5). Orlando’s actions throughout the novel are an extension of adolescence. Instead of desiring domesticity, Orlando escapes from their home, and often their sex, in order to travel the desert with gypsies and embark on journeys and adventures in the streets. And, despite the fact that Orlando’s life encapsulates longevity, they still live it in a manner that is composed of rapid bursts of dangerous activity, with an aversion to responsibility and a proper relationship to time.

Halberstam continues to explain the theory of an extended adolescence as:

The notion of a stretched-out adolescence...challenges the conventional binary of formulation of a life narrative divided by a clear break between youth and adulthood; this life narrative charts an obvious transition out of childish dependency through marriage and into adult responsibility through reproduction. (153)

Orlando lives their life as an extended adolescent, without even realizing that this is what they are doing. Throughout the novel, they admit to knowing that they ought to be getting married and having children, but the idea repulses them. They know what is expected and

encouraged by normative society, yet they push against these norms, doing what they feel is “natural.” They wait for a much longer period of time than is normally acceptable to get married and have a child, as they would prefer to live alone and enjoy the pleasures of life, through the lens of both sexes. After returning to England as a woman, they are pursued by an Archduke who is in love with them. He visits Orlando often, hoping to woo them and convince them to marry him. For Orlando, these visits are short of enjoyable.

Orlando was at her wit’s end what to talk about and had she not bethought her a game of called Fly Loo, at which great sums of money can be lost with very little expense of spirit, she would have had to marry him, she supposed; for how else to get rid of him she knew not. By this device, however...the embarrassment of conversation was overcome and the necessity of marriage avoided. (Woolf 181)

We can see Orlando’s aversion to marriage, as they use the words “had” and “necessity” in relation to the idea of marriage. It is not a road upon which they wish to travel, but is afraid they will be forced to, due to the demands of society. It is through their own creativity and ingenuity that they dream up a game to play, in order to pass the time, and which saves them from having to admit defeat and surrender to the institution of marriage.

During one of these interminable visits, amidst a game of Fly Loo, Orlando decides to cheat, as they are, once again, bored to tears, and just wants to be alone. Luckily, their strategy works, and the Archduke, aware of Orlando’s deception, leaves in a hurry, angry and vowing to never return.

As the sound of the Archduke’s chariot wheels died away, Orlando felt drawing further from her and further from her an Archduke (she did not mind that) a fortune (she did not mind that) a title (she did not mind that) the safety and circumstance of married life (she did not mind that) but life she heard going from her, and a lover. “Life and a lover.” (185)

When the Archduke departs, Orlando lists all the reasons that they are not upset about him leaving. They do not care about not having his company any longer; they do not care about the loss of a potential fortune and title; they do not care about losing the opportunity to be married and have security and comfort. These things do not matter to them in the least. It is the thought of giving up a chance at having a lover and the idea of a missed opportunity in life that upsets them. This revelation that their object of affection (in the strict lines of sex only) could be anybody makes Orlando a remarkable character in their time period. We are shown that this object of affection is of no consequence, other than a missed opportunity. Marriage is not the goal for Orlando and should, if possible, be avoided at all costs.

When Orlando finally submits to the normative structure of marriage, it comes as a surprise and a shock. They start to have trembling feelings that they must get married and have a mate, which entirely bewilder and disconcert them. “That this was much against her natural temperament, has been sufficiently made plain” (Woolf 243). The desire for marriage is a shock to Orlando, and they immediately want to fight against this urge, despite the fact that they are in their thirties and ought to want to be married, even prior to this, according to society. Halberstam often discusses the “natural” timetable of the heteronormative structure, which includes a seamless and appropriately timed transition between childhood, adolescence and adulthood. According to normative time, one should leave the danger of adolescence at the proper time and continue on to maturation, which includes marriage and children. By delaying this transition into adulthood, Orlando continues to queer time.

Once Orlando finally does find a mate, a pilot who seemingly trips over Orlando as they are lying on the moor, their relationship does not fall within the walls of a conventional and traditional marriage. Even though they get married, Orlando still does not comply to the rigid rules of sex and a fixed gender identity. In fact, neither does their mate. If possible, Orlando has found someone else who also lives outside the confines of normative gender construction. During one conversation, Orlando's new husband asks, "Are you positive you aren't a man?" (258). And Orlando responds with, "Can it be possible you're not a woman?" (258). For them both, sex and gender is fluid, and, even though Orlando finally succumbs to the confines of marriage, they do so in a way that is outside conventions. Later, they describe their doubt at whether they are truly married, as it doesn't seem to be as constrained as "normal" marriage is portrayed.

She was married, true; but if one's husband was always sailing round Cape Horn, was it marriage? If one liked him, was it marriage? If one liked other people, was it marriage? And finally, if one still wished, more than anything in the whole world, to write poetry, was it marriage? She had her doubts. (264)

Although Orlando does eventually marry, their marriage falls outside the normative structure of traditional marriage. They question the definition of marriage and compares and contrasts their relationship with that of what society has told them about matrimony. Orlando takes an extremely long time (centuries) to finally surrender to the institution of marriage, extending their adolescence far beyond what is traditionally acceptable, and when they finally marry, it is queered, as the very definition of marriage is questioned, as well as the sex of their partner.

Once married, Orlando should then submit to the theory of reproductive temporality. Halberstam states, "The time of reproduction is ruled by a biological clock

for women and by strict bourgeois rules of respectability and scheduling for married couples” (5). According to this, once married, Orlando ought to produce a child. In fact, according to a heteronormative timetable, one ought to want to get married so that reproduction can happen. Within heteronormative society, it is the desire to procreate and leave heirs that produces the idea of futurism. There is a distinct longing to look forward within a normative culture, which is absent from queer subcultures, and from Orlando’s life. Time plays a constant role in the novel, but, as has been established, Orlando’s relationship to it falls outside its traditional constructs. Near the end of the book, they do, in fact, give birth to a child. What is of note here is that the mention of the child is confined to two sentences within the walls of a 329-page novel. “It’s a very fine boy, M’Lady,’ said Mrs. Banting, the midwife. In other words Orlando was safely delivered of a son on Thursday, March the 20th, at three o’clock in the morning” (Woolf 295). This is the only mention of the child, and he is never brought up again, in the remainder of the novel. If one were not diligent in reading, it would be easy to miss the fact that Orlando gives birth at all. There is no mention of Orlando ever desiring a child, nor is there any mention of their biological clock ticking. The birth seems to come out of nowhere and disappear just as quickly. At this point in the story, Orlando is in their thirties, and they have waited centuries before conceiving of a child. In this way, they are rejecting Halberstam’s assertion that “most people believe that the scheduling of repro-time is natural and desirable” (5). I contend that despite the fact that Orlando does get married and have a child, they are still a queer character for the aforementioned reasons. The child is not a symbol of the future, nor is he Orlando’s ultimate goal. The child does not stand for the future, and because he is so quickly mentioned and then just as quickly

dropped, we can see that he is of little, to no importance. He is, in fact, of no consequence to Orlando, or to the narrative.

By examining Orlando's almost obsessive relationship with time, we can continue to delve into them as a queer character, and, therefore, see how *Orlando*, as a whole is a queer work of literature. Edelman argues that, "what is queerest about us, queerest within us, and queerest despite us is this willingness to insist intransitively – to insist that the future stop here" (31). It is just this resistance to the future and a manipulated and distorted sense of time that make Orlando a queer character. Just as we discussed the novel as a sort of faux biography, setting up several different tiers of time, we see the book conclude in the present moment. There is no epilogue wrapping up loose ends or pointing us to the future. As the novel comes to a finish, Orlando is sitting under their favorite Oak tree, lost in thought once more, unaware of the passing of time. "At this moment some church clock chimed in the valley. The tent-like landscape collapsed and fell. The present showered down upon her head once more" (Woolf 326). We end in the present moment, as it tumbles down upon Orlando. There is no façade of looking forward or opening the narrative up to a far-reaching future, held up by Orlando's child. None of this happens. Instead, we are left with the present crashing down on us. As Edelman states, this is the queerest part of us. The future, for Orlando, for the biographer, for the reader, has all stopped when the book comes to an end. It is in all these ways that Orlando's relationship with time falls outside the normative conventions of temporality, making them a queer character, as well as making *Orlando* a queer text.

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