

Useful Background for Virginia Woolf, Orlando, ch. 1-3

Orlando is full of humor that depends on a knowledge of English history and literature. The following web sites offer a glimpse of some of the allusions Woolf playfully tosses off as her “biographer” narrates Orlando’s life.

pp. 20-22

Queen Elizabeth I (reign 1558-1603):

<https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw02079/Queen-Elizabeth-I-The-Ditchley-portrait>

The Elizabethan Progress: <https://www.elizabethi.org/contents/travels/>

p. 21, 90, 94

Poetry and patronage:

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/cambridge-companion-to-english-literature-15001600/poetry-patronage-and-the-court/3A1E917D8AD77AD64F38F8078B4E6570>

pp. 31-32,

Examples of Elizabethan love sonnets: <https://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/delia-vi>,  
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/50048/amoretti-xv-ye-tradefull-merchants-that-with-weary-toyle>

pp. 33-36

The Great Frost Fair of 1608:

<https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/discover/frost-fairs#:~:text=In%201608%20C%20the%20Thames%20froze,it%20be%20at%20the%20Lotterie.>

p. 42

“Blackamoors” in Tudor England: <http://www.narrative-eye.org.uk/blackamoors/>,  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black\\_British\\_people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_British_people)

pp. 70-73

Memento Mori:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memento\\_mori#/media/File:StillLifeWithASkull.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memento_mori#/media/File:StillLifeWithASkull.jpg)

Hamlet in a graveyard meditates on death: Hamlet Act 5, scene 1, lines 62-202;

[http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/hamlet\\_5\\_1.html](http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/hamlet_5_1.html)

Sir Thomas Browne, Urn Burial (the discovery of Anglo-Saxon pots in Norwich prompts a meditation on funerary customs and death, 1658):

<https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/1283534-hydriotaphia>

pp. 74-75

Robert Burton, The Anatomy of Melancholy (1621-38), “Love of Learning, or overmuch Study, With a Digression of the Misery of Scholars, and why the Muses are Melancholy”:  
“. . . hard students are commonly troubled with gout, catarrhs, rheums, cachexia, bradypepsia, bad eyes, stone, and colic, crudities, oppilations, vertigo, winds, consumptions, and all such diseases as come by overmuch sitting; they are most part lean, dry, ill-coloured, spend their fortunes, lose their wits, and many times their lives, and all through immoderate pains and extraordinary studies.”

p. 97

Miniature of Sir Herbert of Cherbury as a “fashionable, romantic, melancholic young lover”:

<https://www.nhmf.org.uk/news/one-finest-jacobean-portraits-purchased-nation-and-will-remain-its-historic-home-wales>

p. 105ff

Knole, ancestral home of Vita Sackville-West, who inspired Orlando:

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/knole/features/a-brief-history-of-knole>

p. 107

Ben Jonson, “To Penshurst,” in praise of the English country house:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/50674/to-penshurst>

p. 118

Nell Gwyn, mistress of King Charles II (reign 1660-85):

<https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/Nell-Gwyn-Gwynne/>

p. 126

Order of the Bath:

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Most-Honourable-Order-of-the-Bath>

pp. 134-37

The Masque of Truth: <https://www.britannica.com/art/masque>

pp. 142-46

Orlando’s musings about Nature: “Modern systematic philosophical aesthetics not only first emerges in the context of the Enlightenment, but also flowers brilliantly there. . . . the eighteenth century . . . thinks of itself as the ‘century of philosophy’ . . . . Philosophical aesthetics flourishes in the period because of its strong affinities with the tendencies of the age. . . . ‘Aesthetics’ is derived from the Greek word for ‘senses’, because . . . a science of the beautiful would be a science of the sensible, a science of sensible cognition. . . . The Enlightenment also enthusiastically embraces the discovery and disclosure of rational order

in nature . . . . It seems to many theorists in the Enlightenment that the faculty of taste, the faculty by which we discern beauty, reveals to us some part of this order, a distinctive harmony, unities amidst variety. Thus, in the phenomenon of aesthetic pleasure, human sensibility discloses to us rational order, thus binding together two enthusiasms of the Enlightenment.” (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/enlightenment/#BeaAesEnl>)