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# A CRITIQUE OF SOCIAL SYSTEM IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S MRS DALLOWAY*

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## ABSTRACT

Virginia Woolf knew that the patriarchy suppressed both women's mind and freedom; however, she could not ignore male power which was at the helm of everything. Woolf crafted her novels in such a way that while not attacking the social system, she made her female readers aware of their entrapment with her perfectly projected female characters. Mrs Dalloway, a 'simple' story according to her contemporaries' values, becomes one of the best examples in which Woolf synthesised her anger against the social system with the art. Woolf achieved her quest and showed to the reader ways to obtain meaning in life and to realise their identities not through a feminist propaganda but through her buried modernist stories embroidered with her subtle use of narrative techniques, innovative language and use of irony. Whilst her writing superficially maintained the status quo, it also destroyed the masculine discourse and created a revolutionary writing, becoming the vehicle to expose the subjection of women.

**Key Words:** Virginia Woolf, Mrs Dalloway, Social System, masculine discourse, female identity.

## VIRGINIA WOOLF'UN MRS DALLOWAY KİTABINDA SOSYAL SİSTEM KRİTİĞİ

## ÖZET

Virginia Woolf patriarkinin kadınların beyinlerini ve özgürlüklerini zapt ettiğinin farkındaydı fakat her şeyin başında olan erkek gücünü de yadsıyamazdı. Woolf kaleme aldığı romanlarla sosyal sisteme direk bir saldırıda bulunmamasına rağmen kendi öz benliğini yansıttığı kadın karakterleri sayesinde kadın okuyucularına içlerinde bulundukları sistemin onları nasıl hapsettiğini göstermeyi hedeflemiştir. Woolf'un çağdaşlarının değerlerine göre basit bir anlatım örgüsü bulunan Mrs Dalloway, Woolf'un sisteme karşı öfkesiyle sanatını sentezlediği en güzel örneklerden biridir. Woolf okuyucularına hayattan anlam çıkarmanın ve kendi benliklerini ortaya koymanın yollarını feminist bir propaganda ile değil farklı anlatım teknikleri, yenilikçi dil, ve ironi kullanımıyla zenginleştirdiği modernist hikayeleriyle göstermeye çalışmıştır. Yazılarında statükoya karşı çıkmıyormuş gibi görünse de erkek söylemini yıkan yenilikçi yazımı kadınların maruz kaldığı durumları anlatmanın aracı olmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Virginia Woolf, Mrs Dalloway, Sosyal Sistem, Erkek Söylemi, kadın benliği.

* This article is developed from the unpublished master thesis submitted to the University of Sussex in 2012.

How Virginia Woolf criticised the social system and passed it through her use of language will be the focus of this paper; central to the analysis is *Mrs Dalloway*. While trying to arouse women awareness, Woolf could not ignore male power which was at the helm of everything, and through her writing she found a vehicle to expose the subjection of women whilst superficially maintaining the status quo. As an acclaimed high modernist writer, Virginia Woolf invoked many narrative patterns and broke all the rules of the time, often through new and ground-breaking plots. [1] In her stories, not only did she diffuse a chronological framework, a fragmented unitary plan offering a new dimension of time by 'blazing the moment', but she also created the stream of consciousness technique, both enabling the reader to seize the person from all aspects and creating a fluid narration. The reason behind her quest to discover a narrative technique different from the typical one stems from her desire to break with the norms sanctioned and adopted by a patriarchal world in such a way that, in itself, it would break away from all preceding norms of narration. The aforementioned idea may be corroborated by referring to Woolf's own ideas, as expressed in *A Room of One's Own*:

'*A book is not made up of sentences laid from end to end, but sentences built, if an image helps, into arcades or domes. And this shape too has been made by men out of their own needs for their own use*'.[2] As clearly put forward by Woolf, patriarchal values were so embodied in fiction that they served masculine needs and became the standards of literature. So, she expresses her dilemma by quoting thus: '*I have the feeling of a woman but I have only the language of a man*.'[3] Hence, how a woman might feel at ease when creating her own writing within this system is debatable. By dint of this fact, female writers, in particular Woolf, felt the need to come up with a new form of writing. While creating a feminine narrative structure with the new aforementioned techniques, she does not '*dissect language as Joyce does*'[4] by dint of the fact that '*writing must be formal and the art must be respected*',[5] and '*kept a conventional form of narrative writing in the third-person past tense*'.[6]

All these aspects echo the anger that Woolf felt towards the century she was born in and her desire to change it. However, she was someone screaming silently and conveying her anger without being angry. In a way, she was obliged

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[1] Jane Goldman, **The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2006, p.25.
[2] Woolf, **A Room of One's Own**, Penguin Classics, London, 2002, p.74.
[3] Bathsheba quoted in Virginia Woolf, **Women and Writing**, The Women's Press Limited London, 1979, p.67.
[4] Kristeva quoted in Makiko Minow-Pinkney, **Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject**, Harvester, Brighton, 1987, p. 23.
[5] Virginia Woolf, **A Writer's Diary**, (ed. by Leonard Woolf), Harvest Book, New York, 1953, p. 67.
[6] Minow-Pinkney, **Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject**, p.61.

to do so, for the only way to '*give a voice to women and reject masculine discourse without being marginalized into madness and silence*'[7] has been through a revolutionary writing in which Woolf refused to commit herself to the plot rigidity, '*this appalling narrative business of the realist*'.[8]

She sought to make the reader go beyond the words, to decipher and internalize the coded meanings according to their interpretation. Woolf herself chose '*indirection, mocking, suggesting, calling into question, rather than asserting, advocating*'.[9] She did not want to express her ideas explicitly to her readers, but rather leave them space to think, and thus generate their own ideas by avoiding blatant expressions of emotion and preferring symbolism, irony and satirical comment as opposed to male writing '*regenerat(ing) itself in a repetitive circular narrative' and 'arguing proudly for its own self-perpetuation*.' [10]

Along with the narrative techniques revealing rather female insights and fluidity as opposed to the masculine rigidity dictating what to consider, the plot construction can be viewed as another rebellion against the masculine norms that permeated literature. As Woolf asserts, '*an important book is that which deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with [the] feelings of [a] woman in a drawing room*'[11]. The fact that the whole story of *Mrs Dalloway* revolves around organising a party is extremely significant and works on two levels: on the first, launching a successful party may be perceived as one of the main roles allotted to women by the patriarchy to keep them busy, and thus feel important; on the second, it is to rebel against male-dominated literature by creating a simple story according to the male values.

As Virginia Woolf stated in her diary, *Mrs Dalloway* is about multifold subjects; however, a feminist impulse is not the top subject in the palimpsest layering of plots, it is submerged in the '*intrinsically disjointed and textually dispersed and disguised*'[12]text and always present, along with anger and irony. This ordinary story about an ordinary woman takes place on a single ordinary day in June. Although the story seems very ordinary, the structure of the story is highly unconventional, causing the reader to become embroiled in the minds of these people.

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[7] Minow-Pinkney, **Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject**, pp. 84-85.
[8] Woolf, **A Writer's Diary**, p. 136.
[9] Alex Zwerdling, 'Mrs Dalloway and the Social System', **PMLA**. 92, 1977, pp.69-82, p. 70.
[10] Su Roe, **Writing and Gender: Virginia Woolf's Writing Practice**, Harvester, Wheatsheaf , 1990, p.20.
[11] Woolf, **A Room of One's Own**, p.74.
[12] Elisabeth Abel, **Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis**,University of Chicago press, Chicago, 1989, p.30.

In *Mrs Dalloway,* Woolf states that she '*wants to criticise the social system and show it at work, in its most intense*.'[13] She achieves this critical frame thanks to her vividly drawn two figures in whom the oppressive patriarchal force reverberates: Sir William Bradshaw and Peter Walsh. While both of these figures represent pure patriarchal oppression in the novel, the psychiatrist, Sir William Bradshaw with his name evoking railway timetable, symbolising his rigidity,[14] becomes the symbol of mechanisation, so the patriarchy. To him, it is right for men to be in control of everything without being questioned and its their right to be angry when their authority is questioned. The following extract from the text illustrates the point. When questioned by Septimus (a veteran, a subordinate of patriarchy) about whether he will be sent to one of Dr Holmes' homes, he angrily reacts ''*One of MY homes, Mr. Warren Smith,' he said, 'where we will teach you to rest*''[15] Owing to the place bestowed on him by patriarchy, his two- minute resolution may predestine his patient's fate by virtue of his not allowing himself any second thoughts, doubts or uncertainty.

*'...almost infallible accuracy in diagnosis but of sympathy; tact; understanding of the human soul… It was a case of complete breakdown … with every symptom in an advanced stage, he ascertained in two or three minutes'* (p.81). This passage appears to be sarcastic, for Sir William is claimed to understand human souls; however, he does not bother himself with trying to understand or cure Septimus but rather prefers to close him up in an asylum. In other words, if Septimus is 'shut up', his ideas about war will be incarcerated as well, hence patriarchal values will be left in peace, and his authority will not be called into question.

The fact that 'he ascertained in two or three minutes' reveals to the reader how perilous it was to be a subordinate by dint of one's inability to control one's fate while always being controlled. Though Septimus was claimed not to have a sense of proportion, Woolf clearly makes sure that that '*he (Septimus) could not feel. He could reason; he could read, Dante for example, quite easily…, he could add up his bill; his brain was perfect; it must be the fault of the world then – that he could not feel'* (p.75). Though Woolf never states openly, with all these hints she makes her readers question authority. She starts to make the reader question what madness is: is it absence of reason or feeling? For, if it is absence of reason, then Septimus cannot be mad, if it is absence of feeling, then who is really mad, or lacking 'a sense of proportion'?

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[13] Woolf, **A Writer's Diary**, p. 56.

[14] Jeremy Tambling, 'Repression in Mrs Dalloway's London', **Mrs Dalloway and To The Lighthouse**, (ed. By Su Reid), Macmillan Press, London, 1993, p.61.

[15] Virginia Woolf, **Mrs Dalloway**, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000, p. 83. Citations hereafter appear in parenthesis.

Along with this, another important part ironically showing readers the mind of the oppressor is when Septimus repeats the word 'war'; Bradshaw notes on his card that *'[h]e was attaching meanings to words of a symbolical kind. A serious symptom...'* (p.81). This sentence reveals that Mr Bradshaw is not a proper scientific person to treat his patient, but is rather too concerned with maintaining patriarchal values. As war is one of the most important tokens of patriarchy, he never considers the fact that war may have devastating effects on Septimus and so he may never really question the notion of 'war' (as a woman can never really question her place and rights in society). Despite the fact that the passage appears as a patriarchal discourse on the surface, Woolf manages to show to the reader how ridiculous Sir William is, and thus the patriarchy.[16] Bradshaw supports his acts by referring to them as '*there was no alternative. It is a question of law'* (p.82). This is another very biting sentence revealing the vicious circle, for as Zwerdling mentions, *'law is made by men'*.[17]

As a modern officer of coercion[18], Bradshaw, policing accepted norms, preaches proportion and worships conversion. Initially, his obsession with proportion reveals that everything in life should be balanced, ordered, and everyone should act accordingly. If a man rejects patriarchal norms and exhibits effeminate behaviour, as in the case of Septimus, or if a woman demonstrates unladylike behaviours, it should be ascertained that they obey society's rules, if not, then they should be ready to suffer the consequences. *'Worshipping proportion, Sir William made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views until they, too, shared his sense of proportion – his, if they were men, Lady Bradshaw's if they were women (she embroidered, knitted, spent four nights out of seven at home with her son)' (p. 84).* This is an outstanding passage demonstrating that there is no way out apart from being transformed into what the society requires as long as Sir William is at the helm. This passage plainly establishes that the 'Bradshaw civilisation' allow two types of human: Sir Williams and Lady Bradshaws. In addition to this, the fact that parenthesis frame the features of women reveals how women are subordinate and their roles are simply limited as the parenthesis themselves limit the words.

Following the notion of proportion, the idea of conversion echoes Bradshaw's credence that he can 'convert' people into subservient citizens, and his wife may be his first patient whom he converted successfully into an obedient woman. '*Once, long ago, she had caught salmon freely: now, quick to minister to the craving which lit her husband's eye so oilily for dominion, for power, she cramped, squeezed,*

[16] The fact that Woolf suffered too much from psychiatatric establishement, in her depiction of Bradshaw, the absudity and ridicule are more obviously reflecting the anger that she holds against them.

[17] Zwerdling, Mrs Dalloway and the Social System', p. 247.

[18] Abel, **Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis**, p. 27.

*pared, pruned, drew back, peeped through... '* (p.85). A woman once loving fishing salmon freely, after being married, is transformed into a typical upper class woman who follows the patriarchal rules, deprived of personal opinions. In other words, she becomes a puppet necessitating her husband's control. Meanwhile, as a success of the system, Sir William Bradshaw is depicted as being totally satisfied by the creature that he has created. The fact that all the words employed to depict lady Bradshaw, cramped, squeezed, pared, pruned, drew back, peeped through, have negative connotations unveils Woolf's anger towards this kind of woman who cannot resist. Also, all his patriarchal norms are disguised under the names of '*family, affection, honour, courage, and a brilliant career. All of these had in Sir William a resolute champion'* (p.86). This ironical sentence corroborates the fact that, actually, the creator of patriarchy is woman's 'swift submission', as in the case of Lady Bradshaw.

The other figure that Woolf creates to depict the cruelty of the social system is Peter Walsh. Though on the surface Peter Walsh appears to be an iconoclast, it is obvious that he is proud to be a member of and acclaims patriarchy, as well. The fact that he respects the boys in uniform marching with their arms stiff, for they were praising '*duty, gratitude, fidelity, love of England'* (p.43), substantiates the aforesaid idea. In conjunction with this, another token of his being a real patriarch is that he admires the '*instruments of patriarchy –hence tyrants in different forms'*[19]: '*the doctors and men of business and capable women all going about their business'* (p.47).

As a proud patriarch, he thinks women should see the world as he does, for they are inferior to him. This assumption may be corroborated by the reason Clarissa (protagonist, Mrs Dalloway) refused to marry him, for she rejected male egocentrism. '*For in marriage a little licence, a little independence there must be between people living together day in day out in the same house*' (p.6), but '*with Peter everything had to be shared*' (p.7). In this era, Peter's ideal of sharing would not stand for a '*mutual sharing'*[20] but rather to make Clarissa change to fit his ideal, for he wanted to see Clarissa as his possession, as a right endowed by hierarchy. Later in the novel though he criticizes Clarissa, because '*she had to see things through his [Richard's] eyes'* (p.13); in Bourton, he had expected her to see life as he had. This criticism of Peter unveils that even man can be disturbed by a woman's submission, if this obedience is not for them.

Along with this, another token that Woolf uses to prove that Peter's being a patriarch is his pocketknife. It does not only symbolise a phallus but also the sharp acute abrupt criticism that is endowed on men by virtue of patriarchy. In

[19] Beverly A. Schlack, 'The Patriarchy in Virginia Woolf's Fiction', **Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant**, (ed. By Jane Marcus), University of Nebraska Press, London, 1983, p.58.
[20] Minow-Pinkney, **Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject**, p. 89.

the novel, Peter is portrayed as still being shocked that he has been refused by Clarissa. However, he blames Clarissa for being cold, arrogant and prudish in making this wrong choice and never turns his pocketknife on himself but always points it at Clarissa. This being over confidence may make the reader question that man can also be wrong and should sometimes turn the 'knife' on themselves. Though Clarissa is the recipient of this criticism and is under the attack of a pointed penknife, she also has her arsenal; her scissors and needle. Though she never points them at Peter, she possesses these tools, though unexpressed she also has the potential.

Along with the pocketknife, another reference to this patriarchal order, Big Ben, '*viewed by Woolf as the very embodiment of patriarchy, both assertive and restricting*',[21] is always present in the story to dictate the heavy linearly proportioned masculine time, as opposed to the inner time of Clarissa. This '*tyranny of clock time*'[22] linking as well to Bradshaw whose name conjures an authoritative railway timetable, ironically emblematises how an artifice of intellect exercises control over inner lives.

By framing the oppressor's mind, Woolf manages to reveal to her readers that once the masculine tyranny feels questioned or their ideas are refused by a subordinate, they cannot bear it. Thus, they immediately vent their anger in myriad ways, such as scolding, denying, threatening and propagating their views. This adeptly unveils how males view anger and take it for granted pursuant to their desire to subjugate. Woolf does not only depict the social system within the oppresor's mind frame but also portray female figures such as Clarissa, Sally Salton and Elisabeth to exhibit how these women seize their anger and place themselves within the social system.

'*Mrs Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself*' (p.3). This very first sentence of the novel stands out as an extremely significant sentence, already echoing to the reader that Mrs Dalloway, against the commonly accepted norm -expecting flowers from a male partner- was capable of getting them on her own. However, as Linden Peach argues, this stepping out may be read as only seeking to participate in the spectacle of early twentieth century modernity. Thus, whether Clarissa Dalloway stands out as a rebellious or an ordinary submissive Victorian angel is a disputable issue.[23]

Though the answer to the aforementioned issue is not yet definite, one certain thing is that by dint of the stream of consciousness technique, the reader sees who Clarissa is, who she used to be and whom she might have been. This

[21] Tambling, 'Repression in Mrs Dalloway's London', p. 58.
[22] Jörg Hasler, 'Virginia Woolf and the Chimes of Big Ben', **English Studies**, 63, 1982, pp.145-158, p.150.
[23] Linden Peach, **Virginia Woolf**, St Martin's Press, New York, 2000, p. 98.

generates all sorts of possibilities in the reader's mind about her and makes the reader seize, even judge their own lives, by comparing to Clarissa who could not set up a life for herself free from marriage, motherhood and heterosexuality.

Though Clarissa experienced one of the exquisite moments of her life with Sally Seton,[24] she did not dare to go further. '*Then came the most exquisite moment of her whole life, passing a stone urn with flowers in it. Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips. The whole world might have turned upside down! The others disappeared; there she was alone with Sally. And she felt that she had been given a present, wrapped up*' (p.30). This extract may hint at a correlation between '*Sally's wrapped-up present and the buried subplot of female bonds'*.[25] Then, the moment was shattered by Peter asking them whether they were 'star-gazing'. Abel offers a psychoanalytic reading of the scene suggesting that this extract points out some aspect of the fractured mother/daughter bond. Peter's intervention by rupturing the exclusive female bond is to direct Clarissa towards heterosexuality.[26] As well as the psychological reading, if more emphasis is put on the phrase 'star-gazing', this phrase may also denote that Peter makes them return to their restricted world, by annotating what they are looking for is as difficult as reaching for the stars as long as they live between the walls of patriarchy. This sentence may stand as a prolepsis to Clarissa's future, adumbrating that she could never realize a life freed from heterosexuality.

Subsequent to losing the only woman that Clarissa felt something for, she refuses Peter in favour of 'a little independence', one of the few moments in the novel where the reader assumes that Clarissa stands out as a rebellious woman. However, years later, Clarissa reflects on her thoughts about Peter: '*If I had married him, this gaiety would have been mine all day! It was all over for her. The sheet was stretched and the bed narrow. She had gone up into the tower alone...'* (p.40). These two instances make the reader notice Clarissa's neglected lives, one in not being able to confront social norms, and the other one in favour of being independent; however, she ended up being the 'perfect hostess'. Nonetheless, it is clear that even having a stable life and a bit of independence do not suffice to be happy in the narrow bed.

The following passage echoes how society pushes the woman to the edge of being miserable and makes her lose control of her body, even her name. The confrontation with grim reality, the society in which the woman is incarcerated, transforms these beings into nothing. '*But often now this body she wore … this body,*

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[24] Most of the critics construed this relation as a lesbian subtext; see Goldman, **The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf** p.55 and Abel, **Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis**, p.31.

[25] Elisabeth Abel, 'Narrative Structure(s) and Female Development: The Case of *Mrs Dalloway'*, **Virginia Woolf**, (ed. by Rachel Bowlby), Longman, London, 1992, p.99.

[26] Abel, 'Narrative Structure(s) and Female Development: The Case of *Mrs Dalloway'*, p.84.

*with all its capacities, seemed nothing–nothing at all. She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs Dalloway; not even Clarissa anymore; this being Mrs Richard Dalloway!' (p.9).* This patriarchal system creates out of 'the body with all its capacity' simply 'nothing'. Interestingly, albeit the recognition, Clarissa does not appear insurgent, for the system gulps the woman in such a way that it appears like no better options are available than having this stable life, a protecting loving husband. This situation can be epitomised by a metaphor endorsing the idea: '*a lady is known by her shoes and her gloves*' (p.9). The sardonicism here lies in the fact that these product of 'civilisation' draw attention to the hands while making the hands useless.

As Woolf mentions, '*Women sat indoors millions of years. The walls of her house are permeated by their creative force*'.[27] Clarissa is one of them, bustling with energy and creativity. However, what can she do apart from organising parties, mending dresses, being a good hostess and a mother and seeking to '*make people think this or that*' (p.9)? Clarissa also alleges that she would like to be like Richard or those people 'who did things for themselves'. Further, she declares, '*Oh if she could have had her life over again! ... she could have looked even differently!*' (p.9), denoting that she would have acted differently, would have taken more courageous steps in life, such as pushing over the walls surrounding her. However, how could she dare to realize these kinds of ideas in her being? For '*[s]he knew nothing; no languages, no history; she scarcely read a book now...*' (p.7).

Along with this, Woolf adeptly satires another so-called reason for male dominance over women, which is female illness. This tendency to be easliy sick prevents the women from being active in the outside world. Lord Lexham informs Clarissa that his wife cannot attend the party because she '*caught cold at a Buckingham Palace garden party*' (p.142). Evelyn Whitbread is accompanied by her husband to go and see a doctor (p.5). Ellie Henderson is subject to chills (p.143) and Mrs Dalloway is getting whiter because of her illness. Opposing Jeremy Tambling's suggestion that these illnesses reflect the weakness of being a female and the need to be controlled by male authority[28], Woolf depicts that the female weakness is the outcome of always being controlled, as they cannot resist the system and yield their anger.

As Herbert Marder proposes: '*in order to represent Clarissa's instinctual life, Virginia Woolf created Septimus Smith, her double, who lives as much in the depths as*

[27] Woolf, **A Room of One's Own**, p.87.
[28] Tambling, p.61.

*Clarissa does on the surface*'.[29] Minow-Pinkney describes Septimus as '*defensive splitting.*'[30] Rachel Balu Duplessis defines this relationship as '*a nonsexual but secretly bonded couple*'.[31] Throughout the novel it is apparent that Clarissa and Septimus overlap each other. The reason for projecting Clarissa's features onto Septimus can be elucidated as Woolf's stuggle to write the pyschodynamics of being a subordiante regardless of gender issues. Woolf makes use of Septimus to confront patriarchy from his inside walls and present its default owing to a male subordinate.

Their ideas coincide as well, both of them think about the Shakespearean refrain '*no more fear the hot o' the sun/ Nor the furious Winters rages*' (p.8). These lines from Cymbeline, a funeral speech, attempt to find solace in death and act as a prolepsis to Septimus' death which relieves him of the social pressure. These lines are very significant, unveiling to the reader the fact that no one should fear the oppression of patriarchy[32]; in a way, in the end, everyone will die, so it is better to have lived a life of our choice than to live under the pressure of accepting being a subordinate.

Another overlapping point between Clarissa and Septimus is the parallel between being a soldier and a submissive wife: they are both forced to work for the benefit of others and they are able to control neither their lives nor the society, despite all the effort made and work performed. Hence, they both suffer physically (being sick, going white) and mentally. However, Septimus, in contrast to Clarissa, first refuses to take the final step into the patriarchal order by not becoming a father himself and later decides to end his life, for though he did not fear the heat of the sun anymore, the medical system created a feeble creature out of him who could not oppose the system, as abovementioned. Septimus, therefore, perishes under the pressure of patriarchy. Though Clarissa at the beginning revolts against patriarchal rules, she cannot endure and ends up being a 'perfect hostess'. This ironical reversal of characters makes the reader see in a more accurate version how this society crushes everyone who opposes it. Yet Clarissa expresses her anger a few times during the story and acknowledges her accountability in shaping the fate of Septimus and her being an accomplice, '*somehow it was her disaster – her disgrace*' (p.157), she confines herself to this recognition. Indeed, this recognition of the problem is the first

[29] Herbert Marder, **Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf**, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1968, p.39.
[30] Minow-Pinkney, **Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject**, p.80.
[31] Rachel B. Duplessis, 'Feminist Narrative in Virginia Woolf', **Novel: a Forum on Fiction: Why the Novel Matters: A Postmodern Perplex Conference Issue**, 21.2/3, 1988, pp, 323-330, p.327.
[32] The sun is considered to represent man.

essential step to take to find a solution. Per se, one might even argue that this is all *Mrs Dalloway* is about. The novel acts as the recognition step.

Two other women that Woolf presents the reader with are Sally Seton and Elisabeth Dalloway. Sally Seton features in Clarissa's reminiscences as a woman standing against patriarchal norms. She could easily perform all the unaccepted behaviours such as (running) along the passage naked (p. 29), speaking of sexual matters in front of men and, smoking cigars (p.28-29). Not only her actions but also her conversation was very rebellious, asserting that she was a woman looking for equal rights. Furthermore, she also made Clarissa think beyond the walls of Bourton.

*'There they sat, hour after hour, talking in her bedroom at the top of the house, talking about life, how they were to reform the world. They meant to found a society to abolish private property, and actually had a letter written, though not sent out. The ideas were Sally's of course – but very soon she was just as excited – read Plato in bed before breakfast; read Morris; read Shelley by the hour' (pp. 28-29).* This passage portrays how a woman can think and what she can produce if she is given the chance. Nevertheless, at the end of the story, Sally, who 'spoke of marriage as a catastrophe' (p.29), reappears at the party as a mother of five sons and the wife of a rich industrialist. She surrendered to patriarchal forces and accepted the female identity favoured by patriarchy. Further, she is very content of her life, projecting the power of male tyranny, and the helplessness of women.

Real hope comes with Elisabeth, the daughter of Clarissa, who blossoms into a modern woman. As Susan Squier points out, while her mother's walk is restricted between Westminster and Bond street, an area that traditionally symbols '*male political and female social power*'[33], Elisabeth goes up to the Strand, beyond her district, a newly booming commercial and professional centre in the 1920s, denoting her interest in a career and the public sphere of life.[34] This signals to the reader that she may go beyond her mother and she may be a holder of new opportunities.[35] To get up to the Strand, 'Elisabeth stepped forward and most competently boarded the omnibus,--a pirate[36]-- standing out as the new symbol of freedom and modernity. Further in the narration, Elisabeth's movements parallel the movements of the bus: '*and to each movement of the*

[33] Susan Squier, **Virginia Woolf and London: The Sexual Politics of the City**, University of North Carolina Press, USA, 1985, p. 102.
[34] Squier, **Virginia Woolf and London: The Sexual Politics of the City**, p.102.
[35]Rachel Bowlbly, **Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf**, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1997, p.70.
[36] Independent omnibuses were nicknamed 'Pirates', See Eleanor McNees, 'Public Transport in Woolf's City Novels: The London Omnibus', **Woolf and the City: Selected Papers from the Nineteenth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf**, (ed. by Elizabeth F. Evans and Sarah E. Cornish), Clemson University, Clemson, 2010.

*omnibus the beautiful body in the fawn-coloured coat responded freely like a rider*'. This harmony with the bus portends her being able to adjust herself easily to the new conditions that being a 'new woman' may hold.

Now that she was on the bus, once she started to discover, she did not want to stop and was willing to pay 'another penny' to go up to the Strand, '*the border between her world of Westminster and the professional world of the City*'.[37] Further, as McNees notes 'in the omnibus journey, the bus itself has metamorphosed into a pirate ship steering Elisabeth on a forbidden route'.[38]This journey towards freedom inspires Elisabeth and makes her think about the professions she would like to follow in the future. '*every profession is open to the women of your generation, said Miss Kilman. So she might be a doctor. She might be a farmer ... In short, she would like to have a profession. She would like to become a doctor, a farmer; possibly go into Parliament if she found it necessary, all because of the Strand' (p.115).* The fact that the passage ends with 'all because of the Strand' is very significant in unveiling to the reader that once freedom is tasted, it cannot be abandoned easily.

She even '*identifies with the possibility of a paternal profession*'.[39] '*The feet of those people busy about their activities, ...minds eternally occupied not with trivial chatterings…but with thoughts of business, of law, of administration … made her quite determined, whatever her mother might say, to become either a farmer or a doctor. But she was, of course, rather lazy*' (p.116). The passage clearly shows that once a woman is in a real social life, her ordinary life will seem very dull and unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, she ends up finding herself 'lazy' for considering this kind of thing.

This reaction of being lazy may stems from the fact that men are the ones who can produce actively, women on the other hand are passive receivers of adoration. This reception also affects Elisabeth and she thinks of herself as 'lazy', better to go and be prepared for the party. The following sentence, mentioned by Richard Dalloway, clearly demonstrates the aforementioned idea. '*If he'd had a boy he'd have said, Work, work. But he had his Elisabeth; he adores his Elisabeth*' (p.96). Though Mrs Dalloway, opposed to Peter Walsh, is not someone to pressurize women, it cannot be denied that he is a part of this patriarchal structure. Therefore, though he adores his daughter, he cannot think to give her anything beyond 'adoration'. This idea is also corroborated by Linda Peach's reading, Elisabeth being a lovely girl reduces her to the ideal female in the male gaze and suggests that she will follow her mother's role.[40]

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[37] Eleanor McNees, 'Public Transport in Woolf's City Novels: The London Omnibus, p.35.
[38] Eleanor McNees, 'Public Transport in Woolf's City Novels: The London Omnibus', p.35.
[39] Bowlby, **Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf**, p.71.
[40] Peach, **Virginia Woolf**, p.100.

'*And it was much better to say nothing about it. It seemed so silly. It was the sort of thing that did sometimes happen, when one was alone … 'She must go home. She must dress for dinner. But what was the time?*' (p.116) Here, once more, the reader is confronted with an irony. She claims that all she said is nonsense and this stems from the fact of being alone and bored. However, it should not be forgotten that when we are alone our ideas are not interrupted and we make them flow and plunge into the depth of our soul to get what we really want without any disengagement from the external world. However, in the end, she comes to realise that whatever she thinks and discovers will be in vain, for she is in a patriarchal world and does not feel strong enough to break the walls by dint of her laziness coming from passive 'adoration'. Subsequently, Elisabeth's relation with her tutor Miss Kilman induces her mother's homoerotic relation with Sally Seton.[41] Though Clarissa experienced her exquisite moments of her life with Sally, Clarissa develops to be the obstructer germane to Elisabeth's relation and wants her daughter participate in the social life and transform into a party organiser. This altering in Clarissa's cogitation is very biting reflecting how masculine norms achieved to root deeply in her psyche.

**Conclusion**

In *Mrs Dalloway,* Woolf makes her reader question the authority of male institutions just by revealing the situation with all its nakedness, Woolf portrays how male figures express their anger at being questioned and how marriage and all the norms that patriarchy present as a gift to women are actually all perishable and may not make everyone happy in life. Although Woolf crafts her characters as initially having a feminist impulse within them and presents some hopes for new woman, these prospective new women fail to cross the threshold and end up either adopting roles favoured by the patriarchy, such as being the 'perfect hostess' or the mother of five sons, or finding herself not driven to participate in the struggle. Apart from ridiculing some characters such as Bradshaw, she does not adopt an explicit critique of the status quo. Woolf, however, wisely portrays that being incarcerated within expected norms leads either to death or being trapped in silence. With her deftly drawn characters and use of language she manages to reveal all the cruelness, embedded within the social system they were living in, with all its nakedness, so the reader could come to her own judgement without being shown.

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