

From Self-Sacrifice to Self-Awareness: A View of The New Woman in Virginia Woolf's *Night and Day*

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Ali GÜNEŞ*

Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size. (Woolf 1992: 45)

...here was exactly what she had been pinning for most in the whole wide world of late, a secret spot, sacred to herself, where she would be safe from intrusion. (Grand 1994: 347)

Özet

Bu makale, modern İngiliz yazarlarından Virginia Woolf'un *Night and Day* adlı romanında kadının toplumdaki yeri ve rolü ile ilgili olarak beliren iki zıt görüşü irdeler. Yazar, bu yapıtında ilk önce kadının toplumdaki geleneksel rolünü ve yerini ele alır. Ona göre, gelenekler kadını baskı altına alarak susturur ve ikinci plana iter; yani geleneksel kadının kimliğini erkeklerin belirlediği sosyal ve kültürel oluşumlar etkiler. Neticede, erkek-eğemenliğine dayanan bu kültürel yapı, kadına ne kendini ifade etme özgürlüğü ne de sanatsal yeteneğini geliştirme olanağı sağlar. Woolf, bu durumu romanda feminist bir açıdan eleştirerek "yeni kadın" tipi ortaya koyar. Onun "yeni kadın" tiplmesi, alternatif bir toplum yaratarak mevcut gerçekleri değiştirmeye çalışır. Bu "yeni kadın" imajı, geleneksel toplumun kendileri için belirlediği rolü ve evlilik görüşünü reddederek erkek ve kadınların bir arada olduğu daha özgür bir yaşam ve toplum arzular. Böylece, Woolf sadece alternatif bir toplum ve kültür istemekle kalmayıp Batı tarihinin ve kültürünün temellerini de sorgular.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Virginia Woolf, toplum, kültür, modernizm, kimlik, aile, evlilik, feminizm.

* Kafkas Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü Öğretim Üyesi.

Abstract

The article discusses two opposing views in Virginia Woolf's *Night and Day* as to the place and role of woman in society. In the novel, Woolf first examines the traditional position of woman in society. For her, the traditional values trap and silence women by pushing them into a secondary position; that is, the identity of the traditional woman is determined by the cultural and social construction created by men. Thus, this cultural construction created by men never allows women not only to express themselves freely but also to develop their creative ability. Woolf criticizes it in her novel from the feminist point of view by constructing her view of "New Woman". Her view of "New Woman" aims to change the existing reality by creating an alternative society. The image of "New Woman" rejects the role and marriage decided for them by society and proposes a new society where woman and man may live together equally and freely in peace. Hence Woolf not only desires an alternative society and culture, but she also clearly questions the very basis of the long-standing assumption of Western history and culture.

Key words: Virginia Woolf, society, culture, modernism, identity, family, marriage, feminism.

The traditional belief that women are inferior to men has served to construct a particular pattern of relations by suppressing and controlling women's lives. As Kate Millet argues, men consider "every avenue of power within the society" in their hands (1971: 25), and the masculine identification with "power" and authority throughout history has allowed men to take for granted that they exist at the centre of meaning by enforcing women to conform to the expressive role expected of them, a role that dictates conformity and obedience. It is due to this perception that heterosexuality starts work as a relationship of power and subordination. Hence, there are two separate worlds for the heterosexual relationship in society - the public world of men and the private world of women, in which there is not only a rigid division in terms of gender but also a division of social relationships between men and women. The public space has been constructed historically and culturally as men's place while private homes have been perceived as the places for women. As Doreen Massey asserts in *Space, Place and Gender* (1994), therefore, the place is "gendered in a myriad different ways, which vary between cultures and over time", and this gendering of place "both reflects and has effects back on the ways in which gender is constructed and understood in the societies in which we live" (1994: 186).

This paper examines two opposing views concerning women's place and role as expressed in Virginia Woolf's *Night and Day* (1919). The first part of the article will focus upon the traditional position of women through Woolf's representation of Mrs Hilbery in the novel, who is trying to write the life of her father, the great poet Richard Alardyce. Woolf represents her as trapped and silenced by the weight of male culture and by her reverence for the literary tradition of great men. Her sense of their past lives

cripples her own present writing and creativity. As Woolf examines comprehensively in *A Room of One's Own* (1929), the social and cultural confinement of women's existence made it almost impossible for them not only to express themselves but also to fulfil their creative abilities. Their lives were restricted materially by lack of money of their own and hence they were deprived of the freedom and personal space that wealth is able to provide. Equally damaging was the cultural and psychological confinement imposed upon them. This was not merely a matter of inequality of education, important though that was, it was the intangible but persistent pressure of a sense of natural inferiority, whispered always in their ears, and of the pervasive moral conventionalism that hemmed in all their activities, thoughts and horizons of possibility. Women were, therefore, forced to live in a world smaller world than the world of men, and this view limited profoundly their creative faculties. "The indifference of the world which Keats and Flaubert and other men of genius have found so hard to bear was in her case not indifference but hostility. The world did not say to her as it said to them, Write if you choose; it makes no difference to me. The world said with a guffaw, write? What is the good of your writing?" (1992: 68). Such attitudes led women writers to a further debilitating constriction: their reverential relationship to a literary canon not made by themselves and not suited to women's language usage or their way of understanding the world. In the second part of the paper, Woolf's view of "new woman" will be scrutinized through her representation of Katharine Hilbery in *Night and Day*, who strives to create a picture of an alternative society and to change the current reality, by means of creating a model of a society organized along different lines. Katharine refuses the gender roles imposed by the society as well as the traditional view of marriage by longing for an independent life, in which public and private spaces incorporate without division. Katharine, thus, accepts not William Rodney as husband due to the fact that he desires a traditional marriage, but Ralph Denham, who offers her a relationship based on friendship, respect, freedom and equality without any commitment. Through her representation of Katharine Hilbery as a new woman, Woolf not only desires an alternative society and culture, but she also clearly questions the very basis of the long-standing assumption of Western history and culture.

Like Mrs Dalloway in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), Mrs Hilbery in *Night and Day* is presented as a stereotype of traditional woman as well as a traditional woman writer. Not only does she associate with traditional values of Victorian society, but she also strives emphatically to keep them alive. Hence, Mrs Hilbery arranges parties and makes "her house a meeting place for her own relations [as well as for others], to whom she would lament the passing of the great days of the nineteenth century" (Woolf 1992: 27). What is more, she names her visitors as "Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley", who make "a kind of boundary to her

vision of life, and played a considerable part in determining her scale of good and bad" in her small affairs (28). Mrs Hilbery's strong adherence to the past and traditional values prevents her from opening up to embrace new ideas and experiences, and eventually her creativity is clearly crippled. Indeed, she is free from financial restrictions. She has a room and the time to write; she even has privileged access to books and sources. She has no need to sue for entrance to prestigious university libraries preserved for male scholars. She has, moreover, abdicated to her daughter the onerous social duties of "angel in the house" (Woolf 1966: 285). All of this only serves to highlight the destructive effects of cultural constriction upon her capacity to write and opportunity for movement. Mrs Hilbery has not broken free from the enclosure of moral convention. This brings upon her a paralysis of indecision as to what she should include and exclude in her account of her father's life. This shrinking from the whole truth fearlessly told is at odds with her equally conventional belief that the life of a great man demands the truth. Above all, it is this respectful obedience to past literary forms and language which continually thwarts Mrs Hilbery's best efforts: "The glorious past, in which men and women grew to unexampled size, intruded too much upon the present, and dwarfed it too consistently, to be altogether encouraging..." (29). Woolf represents Mrs Hilbery as finding herself "cramped and thwarted" by the "hardened and set" structure of patriarchal language which is the only language she is able to recognize as proper to literature (Woolf 1992: 99-100).

As Woolf writes in *A Room of One's Own*, "there was no common sentence ready for her use", because the "man's sentence" inherited by "Thackeray and Dickens and Balzac" from "Johnson, Gibbon and the rest" is as unsympathetic to her mind as "the older forms of literature" are to her imagination (1992: 99-100). Mrs Hilbery is writing the life of Alardyce, not only to keep him alive, but also to establish "indisputably that [he] was a very great man" (30). For her, and even more so for her daughter Katharine, completion of the biography is necessary to justify their status as inheritors of the tradition: "if they could not between them get this one book accomplished they had no right to their privileged position" (30). To prove their right to inherit, the book must be written very much in the traditional way so as to produce what Woolf, elsewhere, calls the "integrity" of the great poet's life (1992: 93). By "integrity" she means that impression of accumulation and solidity of the materiality of life which is the achievement of nineteenth-century realist writers like Tolstoy and which Woolf feared her own writing lacked. It is such writing which "gives one [the belief] that this is the truth" (1992: 93). Yet Mrs Hilbery and Katharine "were making no way at all...The book still remained unwritten" even though the enormous mass of manuscripts as source materials for the biography "lay furred in yellow bundles" (29). The life of Alardyce cannot be written, since it is conceived in the old form, and all the manuscripts are

written in the “old words”; for this reason, Mrs Hilbery and Katharine are unable to find a linguistic medium for their task. Woolf ironically represents Mrs Hilbery searching for inspiration among the “old words” of patriarchal language as if to polish her own language by mere contact with its lustre:

She liked to perambulate the room with a duster in her hand, with which she stopped to polish the backs of already lustrous books, musing and romancing as she did so. Suddenly the right phrase or the penetrating point of view would suggest itself, and she would drop her duster and write ecstatically for a few breathless moments; and then the mood would pass away, and the duster would be sought for, and the old books polished again. (29-30)

Under these changing moods, Mrs Hilbery produces disorganised collections of paragraphs about Alardyce’s life, but they do not add up to a complete and comprehensive whole; they do not cohere into a realist solidity. When they go through disorganised bundles of drafts written in the “old words” of Alardyce that Mrs Hilbery has been writing over ten years, “they found a state of things well calculated to dash their spirits...They found, to begin with, a great variety of very imposing paragraphs with which the biography was to open; many of these, it is true, were unfinished, and resembled triumphal arches standing upon one leg” (31). Woolf links these “very imposing paragraphs” to man’s language in both *Night and Day* and *A Room of One’s Own*, and elsewhere she describes the sentence made by men as “too heavy, too pompous for a woman’s use” (Woolf 1966: 145).

In her paper addressed to the National Society for Women’s Service on 2 January 1931, and later published as “Professions for Women”, Woolf reveals the difficulty that a woman writer faces in a patriarchal society when she comes to write about her own experience. Her freedom of expression is thwarted by the internalized symbol of Victorian womanhood, “the Angel in the House”, who guides her pen and demands her to “flatter”, “deceive” and “use all the arts and wiles of our sex”, but “never [to] let any body guess that you have a mind of your own” (1966: 285). If a woman wants to continue her writing as a profession, Woolf argues, the “Angel in the House” must be destroyed: “Had I not killed her she would have killed me” (1966: 286). One of the most powerful impediments imposed by the patriarchal values is the psychological constriction which men impose upon women’s knowledge of sexuality. The woman writer’s “imagination...sought the pools, the depths, the dark places where the largest fish slumber. [But] there was a smash. There was an explosion. There was a foam and confusion. The imagination had dashed itself against something hard” (1966: 287). In her speech, Woolf makes it clear that the “extreme conventionality of the other sex” not only impedes women’s free speech, expression and creativity, but it also prevents them from “telling the truth about [their] own experiences as a body” (1966: 288).

Woolf refers to this difficulty in her account of the life of her fictional poet Judith

Shakespeare in *A Room of One's Own*, too. Judith Shakespeare, equally talented as her brother William Shakespeare, becomes an archetype for the woman writer's experience in the male dominated literary environment in London. Like her brother, she wants to write and act in the theatre, because she is "as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world" as her brother is:

But she was not sent to school...She picked up a book now and then, one of her brother's perhaps, and read a few pages. But then her parents came in and told her to mend the stockings or mind the stew and not moon about with books and papers...Perhaps she scribbled some pages up in an apple loft on the sly, but was careful to hide them or set fire to them. Soon, however, before she was out of her teens, she was to be betrothed to the son of a neighbouring wool-stapler. She cried out that marriage was hateful to her, and for that she was severely beaten by her father. (Woolf 1992: 60-1)

Then she flees her private home in the country and is driven to London by the gift for pen and ink that she knows she possesses. Her end, however, is disgraceful, because she is a woman not a man:

at last...Nick Greene the actor-manager took the pity on her; she found herself with child by that gentleman and so - who shall measure the heat and violence of the poet's heart when caught and tangled in a woman's body? - killed herself one winter's night and lies buried at some cross-roads where the omnibuses now stop outside the Elephant and Castle. (1992: 62)

Judith Shakespeare kills herself, because she has not been allowed to develop the creative skill that lies within her as definitely as it lies within her brother. Moreover, she was forced to flee a household where her marriage had been arranged for her and while becoming entangled in a relationship with Nick Greene, Judith Shakespeare's artistic self-expression is thwarted by the prevailing intellectual, professional, cultural and moral values of patriarchy. Hence, all these obstacles cripple a woman writer's life and creativity when she attempts to pursue her own way alone in a male-dominated professional space. The resulting lack of a female tradition as well as the lack of freedom of speech and expression, Woolf argues in "Professions for Women", makes it impossible for women to know themselves: "I mean, What is a woman? I assure you, I do not know. I do not believe that you know. I do not believe that anybody can know until she has expressed herself in all the arts and profession open to human skill" (Woolf 1966: 286).

In *Night and Day*, Woolf suggests the same difficulty exists for women in telling the truth of their own experiences as women. To do so, she subversively uses Mrs Hilbery's inability to convey her awareness of women's lack of literary tradition in a patriarchal society. The tradition of literary expression, entirely the product of man, is suitable for his identity, his world view and his historical perspective as a means of expression, but

not for a woman's. Thus handling man's materials about a man's life by a woman undermines her achievement and creativity. Mrs Hilbery suffers from her attempt to conform to language and generic conventions which are alien to her way of thinking and experiencing. The language that she is using is composed of solemnities and formal conventions which are barriers to her, and it appears to her impossible to reconstruct the multiplicity of her father's past experiences as they really were. Although Mrs Hilbery's scattered writings are "so brilliant" and "so nobly phrased, so lightning-like in their illumination", "they produce a sort of vertigo, and set her asking herself in despair what on earth she was to do with them?" (30) Her scattered writings lack the "integrity" that the realist text demands, dashing her hope of finishing the book: "I don't believe this'll do" (93). When Katharine wants her mother to proceed in the traditional linear narrative pattern from point to point, she becomes more frustrated and hopeless:

"Oh, I know," Mrs Hilbery exclaimed. "And that's just what I can't do. Things keep coming into my head. It isn't that I don't know everything and feel everything (who did know him, if I didn't), but I can't put it down, you see. There's a kind of blind spot," she said, touching her forehead, "there. And when I can't sleep o' nights, I fancy I shall die without having done it". (93)

In Mrs Hilbery's inability to produce a cohesive writing, Woolf highlights the woman writer's difficulty in creating a successful work of art in a literary style that does not belong to her. Mrs Hilbery seems to have accepted her defeat as she wanders from one sentence to another; she knows and feels everything, but she is unable to express it in a way that she wants, because she is constrained by the tyranny of "straightforward and commonplace" sentences or plot (93). Under the constraint of the realist plot, therefore, she cannot express what she knows and feels, so the "blind spot..there", she perceives, remains undefined and unexpressed and the book still unfinished. Indeed, at the conclusion of the novel, it seems likely to be 'swept into a very insignificant heap of dust' (365). Through Mrs Hilbery's dilemma, Woolf as a woman writer indicates her own concern about the form of language and novel in the Victorian period. Both Mrs Hilbery and Katharine are very much under the influence of the language of the past: "no one can escape the power of the language...Even Katharine was slightly affected against her better judgement" (258). What Woolf implies in her representation of Mrs Hilbery's struggle with language is that she fails, because she is trying to go against a form of expression which arises from her own way of perceiving and understanding experience. It seems to her daughter Katharine that "the book became a wild dance of will-o'-the-wisps, without order or continuity, without coherence even" (32). However, this could equally suggest a new form of narrative structure, one which disregards the coherence and linearity which earlier realist novelists had aimed to achieve. When Mrs Hilbery abandons her attempt to use this weighty language of the literary tradition, she

produces a form of writing very similar to that described by Woolf in "Women and Fiction" as the "ordinary and usual type of sentence" suitable for women's use (Woolf 1966: 145):

Here were twenty pages upon her grandfather's taste in hats, an essay upon contemporary china, a long account of a summer day's expedition into the country, when they had missed their train, together with fragmentary visions of all sorts of famous men and women, which seemed to be partly imaginary and partly authentic.
(32)

Mrs Hilbery would be able to bring her father's life freshly into the present in all its immediacy by means of her fragmentary vision of hats, china, a summer's day expedition whereas a linear narrative and solemn language would embalm it forever in the past. Clearly, Mrs Hilbery's fragmentary form has close affinities with the way modernist narrative techniques are used to convey the complexity and incompleteness of modern experience. This is the direction in which Woolf would develop her own style subsequent to her completion of *Night and Day*; an increasing dispersal of narrative linearity and a language affirming the "scraps, orts and fragments" of modern experience (Woolf 1992: 173).

Despite her reverence for the great men of the past, Mrs Hilbery is strangely ironic, "half malicious and half tender" as she speaks of their lives and persons (34). Here again, there are affinities clearly with Woolf's own ambivalent attitude to the past; her need to mock and debase its authority while retaining her sense of continuity within its heritage. Woolf herself grew up in a household where the lives of great men such as her father Sir Leslie Stephen and their guests Meredith, James and Hardy, influenced her childhood view. In "A Sketch of The Past", she remembers the "great men" who used to come to tea in the Stephen house, yet the idea of greatness seems to her in 1940 as eccentric and apart, "something that we are led up to by our parents and is now entirely extinct" (Woolf 1976: 136). In *Night and Day*, Woolf represents the Victorian tradition of great men in the process of disintegration. As Katharine talks ironically of her grandfather to Ralph Denham during his visit to the Hilbery house, for example, he reacts contemptuously: "No, we haven't great men...I'm very glad that we haven't. I hate great men. The worship of greatness in the nineteenth century seems to me to explain the worthlessness of that generation" (12).

It is the daughter Katharine who Woolf represents as fulfilling the potential of her mother's reluctant ironic vision. It is Katharine Hilbery who espouses a radical rejection of past forms and determines to discover new modes of expression and experience. Like many other female characters in Woolf's other novels, Katharine Hilbery in *Night and Day* has a natural antipathy to moribund conventions of the past. She particularly

dislikes that “perpetual effort to understand one’s own feeling” and to “express it beautifully, fitly, or energetically” as part of that Victorian moral sententiousness deriving from the tradition of writers like George Eliot and Tennyson (32). Unlike her mother, she is “inclined to be silent; she shrank from expressing herself even in talk, let alone in writing”, preferring to use “the small, inexpressive, commonplace words” for communication’ (32, 256). Through her silence, Katharine rejects “a great many convenient phrases which launch the conversation into smooth waters” (7). It is through silence that Woolf attacks the expected sequence of the dominant narrative order and tries to build up a female critical stance towards the ideology inherent in the nature of narrative and language. Lucio P. Ruotolo suggests that silence is both narrative strategy in Woolf’s different novels and a theme, focusing on the cultural and political dimension of silence. For Ruotolo, silence is a sign, “heralding change, and the growing expectation that society is on the verge of radical transformation” (Ruotolo 1996: 16). Katharine, having excluded herself from the “rounded structure of words” (6), seeks her new language in the abstract, “impersonal” and non-representational world of mathematics. She expresses her joy in life and love through a mysterious vision of “algebraic symbols, pages all speckled with dots and dashes and twisted bars” (254). “The more profound reason was that in her mind mathematics were directly opposed to literature. She would not have cared to confess how infinitely she preferred the exactitude, the star-like impersonality, of figures to the confusion, agitation, and vagueness of the finest prose” (34). By studying mathematics, Katharine refuses what she feels is the limitation of the “finest prose”, the old books and words, conveying only a “thin and inferior composition” of her existence (32). Behind her quest for “the exactitude, the star-like impersonality of figures”, which is contrasted to “the confusion, agitation, and vagueness of the finest prose”, lies Katharine’s distrust of the subjectivity and the arbitrariness of language of the great men. Through the self-indulgent “process of self-examination”, she thinks that “everyone tells lies” or makes up “stories to suit their own version” (73, 101). Thus, Katharine ignores literature in general and the literary heritage of her family in particular: “Yes, I do hate books...[she tells Ralph] Why do you want to be for ever talking about your feelings? That’s what I can’t make out. And poetry’s all about feelings - novels are all about feelings” (120). It is not that Katharine lacks feelings, but Woolf’s purpose in representing her in this way is to embody her own ambivalence towards the traditional modes of language. Moreover, Katharine’s yearning for “impersonality” through mathematics suggests her rejection of women’s traditional domestic duties including her own role as “angel in the house” to elderly parents:

Circumstances had long forced her...to consider, painfully and minutely, all that part of life which is conspicuously without order; she had had to consider moods and

wishes, degrees of liking or disliking, and their effect upon the destiny of people dear to her; she had been forced to deny herself any contemplation of that other part of life where thought constructs a destiny which is independent of human beings. (281)

Although she studies mathematics alone, however, it becomes clear to Katharine that her lack of property and restraints on her freedom of movement and demands on her time for other purposes prevent her from achieving a sense of independent identity, particularly a visionary identity at home. As Woolf emphasizes in *A Room of One's Own*, material conditions such as a separate room and money are crucially important to free women psychologically (Woolf 1992: 4, 52-3). Despite the fact that she finds the conventions at home "monstrously absurd", Katharine feels "closely attached to them", and her attachment does not allow her to follow her own inclinations to achieve "a separate being, with a future of her own" (92; see also 32-3). Secondly, although she studies mathematics alone in her attic room during the night and early in the morning, Katharine is also very much under the influence of her mother's conventional moral views (34-5, 81). The mother-daughter relationship plays a significant role in Woolf's novels such as the one between Rachel and Helen in *The Voyage Out*. (1915) and between Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse*. In fact, this relationship represents to some extent Woolf's own dilemma with her mother's "invisible" presence in her life as she writes in "A Sketch of the Past": "the presence of my mother obsessed me. I could hear her voice, see her [Julia Stephen, Woolf's mother], imagine her what she could do or say as I went about my day's doings. She was one of the invisible presences, who after all play so important a part in every life" (Woolf 1976: 81). When she examines the development of her own separate identity, therefore, Woolf is "tugged about", "pushed" and "pulled" by her imaginary mother, remembering her mother's last words on her death bed: "Hold yourself straight, little Goat" (1976: 84). Woolf achieves her full mental separation from the obsession with her mother when she writes *To the Lighthouse*, and she never disturbs her psychologically again since then: "I expressed some very long felt and deeply felt emotion. And in expressing it I explained it and laid it to rest...I described her...and my feeling for her became so much dimmer and weaker..." (1976: 81)

Similarly, Katharine feels herself limited psychologically by her mother's projection of her own life. Not only does Mrs Hilbery desire her to perform the role of a traditional woman in a small world, but she also tries to make this tradition continue through Katharine. After examining her life with confusion, for example, Katharine finds her existence a "thick texture", which is so confined by "the progress of other lives that the sound of its own advance was inaudible" (p. 86). Hence, she comes to realise that she must deny her mother's view of life other than its visionary quality:

She reviewed her daily task, the perpetual demands upon her for good sense, self-

control, and accuracy in a house containing a romantic mother. Ah, but her romance wasn't that romance. It was a desire, an echo, a sound; she could drape it in colour, see it in form, hear it in music, but not in words; no, never in words. (243)

Later in the novel, the narrator tells us the meaning of her vision:

She could not reduce her vision to words, since it was no single shape coloured upon the dark, but rather a general excitement, an atmosphere, which, when she tried to visualise it, took form as a wind scouring the flanks of the northern hills and flashing light upon cornfields and pools. (359)

Unlike that of her mother's, the imagery of Katharine's vision as "wind" and "light" is rhythmic, simultaneous, poetic and incommunicable in words, but what is important for her is to assert herself whatever it is. Katharine refuses her mother's romance as well as her way of life as models for her own life which includes caring, feeling and involvement, as a result of which she realises the need to escape from her mother's world of conventions and morality as well as from her own iconic image for others so as to assert herself.

Katharine intends to put an end to her conflict between the moral conventionality at home and her ideal dreams of freedom through marriage in the hope that it will eventually liberate her to lead a life of her own, studying mathematics in a room of her own without interruption and enjoying a wide range of experiences like going to lectures (113). She, thus, explains her cousin Henry why she wants to marry: "why I'm marrying him [William Rodney] is, partly, I admire - I'm being quite honest with you, and you mustn't tell any one - partly because I want to get married. I want to have a house of my own. It isn't possible at home...It isn't that I haven't the time at home - it's the atmosphere" (162). The freedom to express herself in all aspects as well as the desire for "a room of one's own" beyond gender confinement are the main goals that Katharine has been fighting for. Katharine does not want to be silenced like traditional women under the burden of patriarchal culture, which always demands from women devotedness and self-sacrifice in accordance with the expectations of the time. However, she desires not to be confined to the domestic circle in a slave-like position but to speak freely and openly in her marriage. As in Woolf's other novels, nevertheless, marriage is based on social conventions and appears limiting in *Night and Day*. The marriage that Katharine's mother and aunts have in mind wants women to be an "Angel in the House", a phantom voice which orders that they are only "half alive" without marriage (52), that a wife must love and "submit to her husband" and "give him everything, everything, everything" (177; 117); otherwise, it is advisable that "a woman who wants to have things her own way" should not get married (177). For Mrs Hilbery, "marriage is a school. And you don't get the prizes unless you go to school" (177). William Rodney's view on marriage is not different from that of Mrs Hilbery in the

sense that he also believes that women's identity is not complete without marriage. For him, as for Mrs Hilbery, therefore, all women must marry to have a complete sense of identity, otherwise they are nothing at all, and thus William Rodney advises Katharine as well as all women to get married to have her own identity completed: "Certainly you should. Not for you only, but for all women. Why, you're nothing at all without it; you're only half alive; using only half your faculties; you must feel that for yourself" (52). This view is clearly the product of culture and society that impose strict gender roles upon women, in which women have no choice but have to obey what society determines and decides for them, because "the rules which should govern the behaviour of an unmarried woman are written in red ink, graved upon marble, if, by some freak of nature, it should fall out that unmarried woman has not the same writing scored upon her heart" (265). In "A Sketch of Past", Woolf describes Victorian society as "a very competent machine. It was...that girls must be changed into married women. It had no doubts, no mercy, no understanding of any other wishes; of any other gift. Nothing was taken seriously" (1976: 135). In Woolf's view, society is entirely the creation of men, which is based upon repression, and the liberty of individual is not inherent to it. Society is more oppressive to women, barely leaving no room for them to develop themselves. Ideologically patriarchy, thus, desires to keep the continuity of its dominance both culturally and historically through the institute of marriage, because family, as Louis Althusser suggests, is one of the ideological apparatuses which contributes to the process of *reproducing the relations of production*, the social relationships which are necessary conditions for the existence and perpetuation of the capitalist mode of production (Althusser 1971: 121-73). In this respect, therefore, her marriage to William Rodney, which Katharine's mother desires to take place, will be of no use to her personality since he is also strictly "alive to the conventions of society, he was strictly conventional where women were concerned, and especially if the woman happened to be in any way connected with him" (206-7).

Woolf represents William Rodney as a typical male character of the patriarchal society, which Woolf criticizes throughout her life. He has all the conventional masculine qualities. He is intellectual, "judicial" and "despotic", making others do what he wants (54). William Rodney, as Woolf represents him, is greedy for validation, security and self-esteem. He needs someone to satisfy his psychic desires of dominion and support his position in society. He, thus, appreciates "good opinion" of others, particularly that of Katharine about himself (241). This view of life limits and narrows William Rodney's vision of life, which not only prevents him from showing consideration for the feeling of others, but also indicates a perception of roles constructed throughout history: man is always strong and dominant and woman weak and submissive. In Woolf's view, this perception stems from the fact that "the history of England is the history of the male line,

not of the female”, so that men made the law, history and created culture according to their own perception and wishes (Woolf 1966: 141).

After examining all these remarks as to what her mother thinks of marriage and William Rodney’s attitudes towards life, therefore, Katharine comes to realize that “the traditional answer would be of no use to her individually” (265). She puts aside all the predetermined views attributed to woman and marriage and strives to find out “the only truth which she could discover was the truth of what she herself felt - a frail beam when compared with the broad illumination shed by the eyes of all the people who are in agreement to see together’ (265). Katharine’s interest in discovering her own intuitive truth has both modernist and Romantic implications. Through a modernist perspective, Woolf represents Katharine as a non-conforming character, who rebels against all the social conventions and values, and who does not accept any truth other than her own. Her truth suggests a modernist view of consciousness symbolized as “a frail beam” which cannot be defined, yet is vague, fragile and ambivalent. On the other hand, Katharine’s interest in finding out her own truth through feeling suggests what William Wordsworth calls “a sensitive being, a creative soul” (*The Prelude* (1850), XII, 207). And it is through this feeling that she searches for what she could recognize and discover as “a true feeling” of her own among the chaos of her life and tries to bring it nearer to her desire and vision (265). But there is a conflict between her attempt to seek her “true feeling” and her recognition that she has no choice available at the moment but to follow the guidance of the “dark masses” of the late Victorian society (265). By representing Katharine’s confusion, Woolf shows us that women do not have enough freedom to trace their own inclinations, since society still imposes its pressure on women. What Katharine needs, like Rachel in *The Voyage Out*, is to bring down all the traditional values before she goes ahead in the pursuit of her own voice.

In *Night and Day*, Woolf’s female character, Katharine as a new type of woman longs for “a position of absolute and fearless independence” in life as a response to the restrictions that society and culture place upon her (267). In fact, her struggle is that of all traditional women trapped by traditional values. Through her representation of Katharine, Woolf tries to find a female place and develop a new gender relationship in the modern society. Katharine does not accept her parent’s view of life but prefers a different one, which is more suitable to her individually. Hence, the torch that she lights becomes “a sign of triumph” for future women “not to be extinguished this side of grave” (431).

Indeed, Katharine yearns for “a position of absolute and fearless independence” in her own life, yet she has to emancipate herself from her engagement to William Rodney. She, thus, breaks it off in a farcical manner. Woolf ridicules the concept of traditional

marriage, its sacredness and culture when Katharine helps William Rodney to establish an intimate relationship with her cousin Cassandra. However, Katharine seeks her freedom not in singleness like Mary Datchet, who commits herself to the issue of women's rights but ironically in marriage, yet her view of marriage as well as that of gender relations are thoroughly different from traditional ones. Unlike traditional women, she yearns for loveless marriage, for sincerity, for a kind of relationship which will not confine her life, because she comes to realize that "married love...is the most sacred of all loves. The love of husband and wife is the most holy we know" (347). But this kind of love limits and confines women. It is Ralph Denham, an intense, complex young lawyer, who offers her not "the most sacred of all loves, the love of husband and wife" (347) but a modernist view of love without committing. He is not conventional, and Katharine finds "some symmetrical pattern" of her view in his view of life (266). Thus, the relationship, which he offers, fits her vision of marriage and life, because it is based on what she respects friendship, respect, freedom and equality without any commitment. "Neither is under any obligation to the other. They must be at liberty to break or to alter at any moment. They must be able to say whatever they wish to say" (287). Their relationship is different from that of most people; it is not the fulfilment of fantasies of romance for her at all, but an unavoidable escape without love and ambition, "as the thing one did actually in real life, for possibly the people who dream thus are those who do the most prosaic things" (87). Katharine accepts Ralph's offer. In accepting Ralph's offer of friendship, she pacifies the demands of society that she should be a "normal" woman, but she also rejects her mother's world of conventions and morals.

In *Night and Day*, Woolf represents Katharine Hilbery and Ralph Denham as modernist characters in the sense that they reject domesticity, traditional values and restraints as well as pre-determined meaning in life. From the beginning of *Night and Day* to the end, they seek their own meaning rather than the socially prescribed one as in the traditional view of life. For them, "it's life that matters, nothing but life - the process of discovering, the everlasting and perpetual process"(106, 111). Through her representation of Katharine Hilbery, Woolf kills "the Angle in the House" that every house had in the Victorian society. Katharine, unlike a traditional woman, is not submissive and obedient to what is determined for her but outspoken and rebellious with a strong passion for independence in her own life: simply she moves from self-sacrifice to self-consciousness in her identity. Moreover, the relationship which Ralph Denham offers Katharine in terms of marriage topples down the bases of the established culture. Through her representation of the relationship between Katharine and Ralph Denham, Woolf challenges the traditional family and women's role within it. She attacks the dominant social values normally expressed through the representation of family. In

Woolf's view, women should not be restrained by strict gender roles at home, but they should have the right to take their place as free in society as men. Thus, Woolf questions and redefines the roles of women and individuals, the institution of family and marriage along with male-female relationship in the modern society beyond gender confinement and cultural determinism of patriarchy.

WORKS CITED

- Althusser, Louis. (1971). "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," **Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays**. trans. Ben Brewster. London: New Left Books: 121-73.
- Massey, Doreen. (1994). **Space, Place and Gender**. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Millett, Kate. (1971). **Sexual Politics**. New York: Avon Books.
- Ruotolo, Lucio P. Ruotolo. (1986). **The Interrupted Moments: A View of Virginia Woolf's Novels**. Standford: Standford University Press.
- Woolf, Virginia. (1992). **A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas**. ed. Morag Shiach. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 3-149.
- . (1992). **Night and Day**. ed. Julia Briggs. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- . (1966). "Professions for Women," **Collected Essays**. ed. Leonard Woolf. London: The Hogarth Press: 284-89.
- . (1966). "Women and Fiction," **Collected Essays**. London: The Hogarth Press: 141-48.
- . (1992). **Between the Acts**. ed. Frank Kermode. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . (1976). **Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings**. ed. Jeanne Schulkind. Brighton: Sussex University Press.
- Wordsworth, William. (1989). **Wordsworth: Poetical Works**. eds. Thomas Hutchinson and Ernest De Selincourt. Oxford: Oxford University Press.