

Clarissa Dalloway: The Crisis of Identity

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Abstract

Sex and gender have been two problematic subjects tackled by philosophers, thinkers, and writers throughout humans' existence on this globe. Sex refers to the biological constitution as female or male and gender indicates our cultural programming as masculine or feminine. Both terms define a person's identity. The belief that men are superior to women had been prevailing and was accepted at face value. Virginia Woolf attempted in her essays and novels to uncover the male monopoly of economic, political, and social powers. She depicts first how women were kept powerless by denying them all educational and occupational means of acquiring economic, political, and social power, and second how women struggled for equality and independent identity.

I

Virginia Woolf is one of the prominent modern writers whose works probe into the the feminist polemics by dealing with themes that examine women's identities, lives and histories. She lived in an era when women within their social confinement of chastity were hampered from developing their thoughts or showing their feelings. She developed her unique style as a writer, reformer, feminist, lesbian and woman struggling against depression.

The factors that had a great influence on Woolf's perception of life such as her family life, personal misfortunes and the sense of gender discrimination awakened her to the inferior position of women in the private and public sectors. Her

opposition to men's domination of women included her rejection of all the factors that turned their relationship into a semi master-slave relationship. Woolf included members of both sexes in her works, in which she rejects using male experience as the standard of evaluation. She observed how people were programmed to see norms and values of patriarchy as the legitimate ones, and aspired to reveal the deeply-rooted cultural attitude that ignored women's experiences, talents, and points of view. This had had of course a truly damaging effect on the identity and psyche of women. In reality, the sexual violence of men, which she had personally experienced in her childhood when she was sexually abused by her half-brothers George and Gerald Duckworth, intensified her opposition to all forms of exploitation. Such personal and public issues motivated her to share with the other feminists "the goal of a completely changed non-hierarchical society, and the belief that such a dream required not only practical changes but a radical redefinition of sexuality as well" (qtd. in Sellers, 2010:183).

Woolf lived in an age where there were unprecedented popular, literary and scientific preoccupations with sexual issues, especially male and female homosexuality. The term homosexuality was coined in 1900 to classify such passionate feelings in individuals of both sexes in terms of the same sex desire (Freedman, 2002:253). Many feminists opposed the status of a woman within the structure of heterosexual relationships because they believed that she was exploited by her husband's sexual desires without any regard to her, which they believed the system supported as a kind of sexual slavery. In reality, her literary career involved sexual issues, which were widely debated among her contemporaries, but she had shaped her attitudes towards homosexuality not only as an individual sexual preference, but also as Patricia Morgne

Cramer declares as “an impetus for personal transformation, literary inspiration” (qtd. in Sellers, 2010:185).

In her novels and essays, she explores the defects of the social norms of the ideal image of marriage, where women, like Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, turns up to a spray of passion to which her husband turns whenever his desire drives him. As a novelist, she always protests against the Victorian model of chastity and the ideal womanhood because she considers “men's adoration of idealised women as masks for their domestic abuse” (Ibid, 183). To project identity and avoid men's sexual abuse, Woolf has depicted in her works, a kind of intimacy and love between her female characters; a feeling that led the artist 'Lily Briscoe' in *To the Lighthouse*, to materialise her vision through the love she feels for Mrs. Ramsay. Her characterisation of intimacy between women in terms of “erotic sensibility, friendship alliances, and self and political transformation” is a way of opposing any forms of social limitations imposed on the life of women (Ibid, 194).

Woolf's feminist attitude can be seen in her support of women like Vita Sackville-West and through depiction of the sexual desire between her female characters. She deals with these sexual themes not only as an outlet of her own sexual desires, but also as a protest against all forms of exploitation of women. In *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), she attacks her society by showing how it suppresses women identity, role and will. Within the event of a single day, she explores the tracts of experience of her male and female characters, through the life story of two characters who never meet, the society hostess 'Clarissa Dalloway' and the ex-soldier 'Septimus Warren Smith'. Woolf exposes the status of Clarissa and all the other women who are related to her by showing that they are part of her past life, or that she knows about their life accidentally or in virtue of other kinds of relationship (Daiches, 1963:62).

II

Woolf presents the life story of a woman, Mrs Dalloway, who is making preparations for her party: “she would buy the flowers herself” (*MD*, 2007:5)*. Her illness prevented her from any real communication with the outer world. She gives a party because it offers her the opportunity of enjoying life through communicating again with the world and defying the sense of death that was dominating her thoughts during her illness. Having the opportunity of strolling through the busy streets of London makes her feel like a child who is released by her parents to do whatever she enjoys without any impediments. Her illness had exhausted her physically and spiritually; therefore, giving a party was a means of defying her illness and a returning to life:

For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges; Rumpelmayer's men were coming. And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning - fresh as if issued to children on a beach (*MD*, 2007: 5).

Clarissa Dalloway's thoughts of her vivacious morning shifts back to a solemn morning she had experienced in the past when she was looking at the flowers and the trees with her ex-lover 'Peter Walsh'. Whenever she thought of Peter, she remembered that male-female contrast “I prefer men to cauliflowers” (*MD*, 2007: 5). She enjoys being in nature because it offers her the sense of beauty and freedom that one cannot feel within an institutionalized life. Peter prefers everything labelled by men, which indicates his deep belief in patriarchy. In fact, Clarissa's remembering of Peter denotes that she doubts her decision of whether she has made the right choice of marrying Richard Dalloway instead of the person she loved. Unlike Richard, who offers her a little space for experiencing the sense of freedom in life, Peter seems to be a man who mocked her for having interest in hosting other people. By creating the character of Clarissa Dalloway as a social hostess, Woolf suggests that women can prove their

personalities within the patriarchal system even if they are offered limited opportunities. In Clarissa's opinion, being kind to people, living for others and bringing people together are the "main ways of celebrating life and alleviating the prospect of death" (Ronchetti, 2004:54). Thus her marriage was in a sense right because it offered her the chance to design her own life and prove her true personality, which she failed to do with a man like Peter.

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- References will be made throughout this essay to: *Mrs. Dalloway*, Cairo: Dar Al-Fafouk, (2007).

One of the major reasons that made Clarissa choose Richard as a spouse was her “determination to protect her spiritual independence, which Richard freely grants” (Ronchetti, 2007: 54). Peter would have insisted on sharing everything with Clarissa, thus would leave him no choice. There fore, she does not repent for not marrying him because sharing everything is total submission to patriarchy and denial of her individuality. Clarissa believes that sharing all private thoughts and feelings are far more dangerous than sexual abuse. Thus Woolf always alludes to the necessity of women's privacy, where they can live their own life and practice their talents without being hampered by any social barriers:

So she would still find herself arguing in St. James's Park, still making out that she had been right- and she had too – not to marry him. For in marriage a little license, a little independence there must be between people living together day in day out in the same house; which Richard gave her, and she him (where was he this morning for instance? Some committee, she never asked what). But with Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into. And it was intolerable, and when it came to that scene in the little garden by the fountain, she had to break with him or they would have been destroyed, both of them ruined, she was convinced (*MD*, 2007:8).

Like a soldier who has to remain vigilant against the enemy, Mrs. Dalloway defies the mortality of life and protects her love for life in the face of war, death, sickness, age, etc. She throws a party not only for her own delight, but also as an attempt to lighten the burden of people's life after what “the world's experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears” (*MD*, 2007:10). In *MD*, Woolf unveils the status of women after the First World War. In fact, anti-war attitudes cannot be disassociated from her assault on masculine domination. The reference to Mrs. Foxcroft, who is eating “her heart out because that nice boy was killed and now the old Manor House must go to a cousin”, reflects the evil of tyranny that did not only dispossess a woman of her own son but also of her properties (*MD*, 2007: 6). As Woolf has referred in

Three Guineas to the role of artists in preventing the destructive impact of the war, in *MD* she alludes to the consciousness of a woman who resists the fascist's threat of spiritual death through the sense of life she attains from her parties. Lisa Low argues in this concern that:

Unseduced by domination - the fascism that threatened to destroy England after the First World War - loving nature and the flowers which symbolize it, as well as 'whatever one loves' for the fleeting moment one loves it; empathetic, kind, and spiritually fecund, Clarissa Dalloway is in the female outsider's position of powerful resistance to fascism (qtd. in Pawlowski, 2001:104).

Woolf's depiction of Clarissa reflects the image of a feminist who resists and defies the men-made laws that oppress women socially, legally and politically. Clarissa's act of buying the flowers herself indicates her determination to establish an identity and possess a will, which enables her to face the unjust system. Unlike other females in *MD*, Clarissa Dalloway has created a world of her own, where she lives with her husband and daughter without allowing any one to violate the boundaries of her privacy. Like a nun who devotes all her life to religion, Clarissa chooses "a marriage with clear limitations, but one that helps her to retain her individual integrity, her grace, her material well-being" (Wolfe, 2005:56). In fact, Clarissa is indebted to Richard because he preserves the chastity of her spirit; therefore, she wants to please him through the lively atmosphere of her parties:

She felt like a nun who has left the world and feels fold round her the familiar veils and the response to old devotions. The cook whistled in the kitchen. She heard the click of the typewriter. It was her life, and, bending her head over the hall table, she bowed beneath the influence, felt blessed and purified, saying to herself, as she took the pad with the telephone message on it, how moments like this are buds on the tree of life, flowers of darkness they are, she thought; not for moment did she believe in God; but all the more, she thought, taking up the pad, must one repay in daily life to servants, yes, to dogs and canaries, above all to Richard her husband who was the foundation of it (*MD*, 2007:26).

Lady Bruton is another female who invites few politicians like Hugh Whitbread and Richard Dalloway to a luncheon in

her house to help her write a letter to the *Times*. But Unlike Clarissa, who never has a direct engagement with her husband's political projects, Lady Bruton is “almost man-like in her figure, deeply involved in politics, not just on the level of interest, but taking on active roles as well” (Kocsis, 2008:42). In truth, Woolf refers to parties and luncheons as the few social structures where women have the opportunity to share men their role in the public sphere that they were denied in the earliest ages. Since her serious illness, Clarissa felt very sad at the idea of being neglected; thus, she was annoyed when she knew about Lady Bruton's invitation to her husband without her. Her sense of being neglected and her physical weakness always reminds her of the mortality of life. Throughout her novel, Woolf uses refrains from Shakespeare's play ' *Cymbeline*': “Fear no more the heat of the sun, nor the furious winter's rages” which is sung on Cymbeline's daughter 'Imogen' who was thought to be dead, but she actually took a sleeping draught and eventually woke up to be united with her family (qtd. in *MD*, 2007:10). The words from *Cymbeline* suggest that Clarissa accepts the mortality of life rationally, for to die is to attain spiritual freedom and fear no more the corruption of the earthly world. Moreover, her awareness of the ephemeral nature of life encourages her to create an immortal art, which keeps her alive physically in the immortal beautiful moments she creates by her parties. And since she has no other means to affirm her personality apart from her parties, she would not let the vulgar jealousy of Lady Bruton separate her from Richard, who offered her the chance of achieving her ambitions.

Like a nun who retreats to her isolated world in the convent, Clarissa aspires to secure her own privacy where she is not disturbed by any one, not even her husband. The clean tight sheets, the narrow bed in her room and the books that she reads are symbolic of her attempt to enjoy a private life, where

she is free from her husband's demands. Unlike Peter who loves to be shared everything, Richard provided his wife with space both physically, where she has a room and a bed of her own, the way she can ponder over her problems and enjoy her privacy. The sense of security that she feels in her house and her withdrawal from worldly connections reveal the feminine consciousness that Woolf was developing in her works (Kaplan, 1975:83). In fact, women were conscious of the oppression practiced against them by their spouses at home, but the fear of violating the social norms of chastity made them neglect their own desires:

Like a nun withdrawing, or a child exploring a tower, she went upstairs, paused at the window, came to the bathroom. There was the green linoleum and a tap dripping. There was an emptiness about the heart of life; an attic room. Women must put off their rich apparel. At midday they must disrobe. She pierced the pincushion and laid her feathered yellow hat on the bed. The sheets were clean, tight stretched in a broad white band from side to side. Narrower and narrower would her bed be. The candle was half burnt down and she had read deep in Baron Marbot's Memoirs. She had read late at night of the retreat from Moscow. For the house sat so long that Richard insisted, after her illness, that she must sleep undisturbed (*MD*, 2007:27, 28).

The nun-like image of Clarissa's retreat to her own bedroom is emblematic of the Christian figure of Mary, who remains spiritually isolated and physically inviolate. Clarissa attempts in her solitude to distance herself from any sexual and spiritual contact with her husband. Although she highly admires and respects her husband, as he has offered her material and immaterial support for realizing her dreams, she cannot respond to his "demands for sympathy and refuses to condone emotional symbiosis" (qtd. in Marcus, 1981: 135). In essence, she realizes that she has failed so many times to offer him the feminine warmth that he was looking for because she lacked that desire of spiritual and sexual sharing. Her frigidity with Richard might be "a survival strategy, a salutary egotism calculated to preserve her own carefully guarded psychological

space” (Ibid, 133). By not responding to Richard's demands, she fails to perform the social structured role of soothing her husband's egotism:

So the room was an attic; the bed narrow; and lying there reading, for she slept badly, she could not dispel a virginity preserved through childbirth which clung to her like a sheet. Lovely in girlhood, suddenly there came a moment - for example on the river beneath the woods at Clievedon - when, through some contraction of this cold spirit, she had failed him. And then at Constantinople, and again and again. She could see what she lacked. It was not beauty; it was not mind. It was something central which permeated; something warm which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman, or of women together (*MD*, 2007:28).

The patriarchal concept of femininity, which is linked to frailty, modesty, and timidity, disempowers women in the real world. It equals femininity with submission, encouraging women to tolerate family abuse, wait patiently to be rescued by a man, and view marriage as the only desirable reward for the right conduct. Like many feminists, Woolf protests against men's domination of heterosexual relationship where “elements of intimacy, care and respect were sacrificed so that men could be on top, could be patriarchs ruling the roost” (Hooks, 2000:79). In *MD*, she develops her feminist perspective that if a woman does not accept her patriarchal gender role without adhering to the social structured norms of marriage, she will develop in man a kind of respect for women's autonomy.

Woolf believes that women, especially women artists' privacy should be respected. They need a room of their own, where they can imagine and express whatever they feel, unhampered by fear or bitterness. Her heroine is an artist whose marriage provides her not only with the support to practice her art, but also with the space, where she can enjoy her privacy (Wolfe, 2005:44). In her attic room, Clarissa exposes a feeling that bears the seeds of her consciousness and daring ideas. She retains a sense of being sexually frigid with Richard, but she enjoys a special intimacy with women. Like a

powerful melody of a violin that fills one with some ecstasy for a moment, her passionate response to the sensuous beauty of other women alleviates all her pains:

It was a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush which one tried to check and then, as it spread, one yielded to its expansion, and rushed to the farthest verge and there quivered and felt the world come closer, swollen with some astonishing significance, some pressure of rapture, which split its thin skin and gushed and poured with an extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sore! (*MD*, 2007:28).

falling in love with women has the force of The question of Clarissa's past, which is described in a recalling revelation of Clarissa was really .her contact with her friend Sally Seton impressed by Sally Seton's extraordinary beauty, and her quality that most English women lack; the quality of saying everything without any fear. Unlike Clarissa, Sally and doing behaviour, which women were not showed the most daring the floor and her expected to do in her area such as sitting on .arms round her knees, or smoking and running naked at home In fact, in her daring conducts, Sally represents the rebellious who bravely opposed the traditional gender young woman :division that shaped women's life

Then she forgot her sponge, and ran along the passage naked. That grim old housemaid, Ellen Atkins, went about grumbling- "Suppose any of the gentlemen had seen?" Indeed she did shock people. She was untidy, Papa said (*MD*, 2007: 30).

Unlike Sally, Clarissa Dalloway has been reared in a familial atmosphere, where it was out of decency, when she dared to break away form the Victorian model of the ideal and demure woman. In describing the stiff little vases at Clarissa's house, Woolf might suggest that the life of women in her house was "made up of stiff, indistinguishable days arranged along the length of the years" (Carey, 1969:24). But, the appearance of Sally in her life has a great impact on her; it awakened Clarissa's conscience to the inferior position of women at Bourton. Moreover, Sally had made Clarissa ponder on and perhaps compare their relation to the system of power

and inequity they experienced, especially the kind of the training and education allowed for them:

They sat up till all the hours of the night talking. Sally it was who made her feel, for the first time, how sheltered the life at Bourton was. She knew nothing about sex - nothing about social problems. She had once seen an old man who had dropped dead in a field – she had seen cows just after their calves were born. But Aunt Helena never liked discussion of anything. 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 (*MD*, 2007:29).

They shared their intimacy, and daring thoughts. It was Sally who initiated Clarissa's daring notion of opposing any relationship based on total sharing. She was fascinated by her friendship with Sally because Sally did not want to possess and dominate Clarissa's soul as Peter did (Carey, 1969:25). Although the passion of Sally is buried within the memories of her past, it still offers her the most intense sense of integrity, and happiness that she has ever experienced.. In her attic room, she recalled a moment which is still inscribed in her memory, a moment when Sally Seton kissed her on the lips in the open at Bourton; which Clarissa considers as a treasure, especially it was offered as Suzette A. Henke declares “unclouded by the sexual masks and societal roles that often muddle adult heterosexual relations” (qtd.in Marcus, 1981:135). Sally's pure passion offered her the language to criticize and oppose any male-dominated world:

They all went out on to the terrace and walked up and down. Peter Walsh and Joseph Breikopf went on about Wagner. She and Sally fell a little behind. 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, and told just to keep it, not to look at it- a diamond, something infinitely precious (*MD*, 2007: 31).

Although Clarissa and Sally always spoke of marriage as catastrophe, Clarissa embraces her “role, accepting the realities of her social position as an MP's wife and turning them to her advantage in practicing her art as a hostess and society

matron” (Ronchetti, 2004:51). It is not snobbery that has motivated her to be in the position of a social hostess, but her ambition of creating an immortal event that leaves its mark on people in both the private and public spheres. Like the diamond that flashes a dark place with its radiance, Clarissa radiates with her goodness some dull lives, which is a refuge for the lonely to come to. Therefore, she would not allow jealousy, vanity, and suspicion to dispossess her of that radiant gift. From her social connections in London, to alienation within her memories and thoughts in the attic, Woolf has connected Clarissa's memories of her past with the present time by the unexpected visit of Peter Walsh during the time of her preparations. At the moment of Peter's sudden interruption of Clarissa's tranquility in her drawing room, she immediately hid the dress that she was mending like “a virgin protecting chastity, respecting privacy” (*MD*, 2007:35). In fact, she considers her home a safe refuge from the danger of the institutionalized evil protecting thus her spiritual isolation from any expected threat.

The appearance of Peter in Clarissa's life covers their real thoughts and feelings by pretending false happiness. By finishing what she was doing to her dress, Clarissa might intend to show Peter that she is really happy in her life with Richard. Although Clarissa has favoured privacy instead of passionate sexuality, she still has an intense emotion towards the man whom she refused to marry. Thinking of Peter mirrors her internal confusion of her choice: “why did I make up my mind- not to marry him? She wondered, that awful summer” (*MD*, 2007: 36). It seems that she loved Peter, but she preferred Richard's compassionate love because Peter's chivalric ideal “sanctioned a grasping, appropriative love, a 'togetherness' that would have crushed” her personality (qtd. in Marcus, 1981:133). Seeing Peter playing with his knife made her feel like a queen who was left unprotected against the

threat of the enemy. Therefore, she felt the need for the presence of Richard and her daughter to enable her to 'beat off' Peter. She saw in Peter's knife a symbol of the domineering oppressive system that belittles women's mental ability and makes them always feel frail and timid:

What an extraordinary habit that was, Clarissa thought; always playing with a knife. Always making one feels, too, frivolous, empty-minded; a mere silly chatterbox, as he used. But, I too, she thought, and, taking up her needle, summoned, like a Queen whose guards have fallen a sleep and left her unprotected so that any one can stroll in and have a look at her where she lies with the brambles curving over her, summoned to help things she did; the things she liked; her husband; Elizabeth; herself, in short, which Peter hardly knew now, all to come about her and beat off the enemy (*MD*, 2007:38).

Peter thus represents the patriarch who believes that he has the right whether given by God or by his sex to dictate women to do whatever he demands without any regard to their individualities. In seeing Clarissa's luxurious way of life, Peter feels inferior to his competitor 'Richard' who has not only won Clarissa, but has also accumulated an enormous fortune that affirms his success. By contrast, Peter has only led a disorderly life full of "journeys; rides; quarrels; adventures; bridge parties; love affairs; work" (*Ibid.*,38). Therefore, he informs Clarissa of his being in love with Daisy, the wife of a major in the Indian army in order not to show her any sign of his failure and to assert his "youth, vitality and potency" (*qtd. in Marcus*, 1981:133). Moreover, at the heart of his passionate attraction to Daisy, Peter wants to inflame Clarissa's jealousy through the thrill of his romantic love that she has sacrificed for the sake of her social gift. Like an intruder who disturbs the privacy of people, Peter has succeeded in interrupting her silence for a moment when she was to become numbed under the spell of his passion:

And Clarissa had leant forward, taken his hand, drawn him to her, kissed him,- actually had felt his face on hers before she could down the brandishing of silver flashing - plumes like pampas grass in a tropic gale in her breast which, subsiding, left her holding his

hand, patting his knee and feeling as she sat back extraordinarily at her ease with him and light-hearted, all in a clap it came over her, if I had married him, this gaiety would have been mine all day! (MD, 2007:40).

However, Peter's spell did not have a lasting impact on her as the coming of her daughter awakened her to her reality that her marriage to Richard had not only offered her support, but also a beautiful daughter: "Here is my Elizabeth" (Ibid, 41). Moreover, she succeeded in making Peter see her felicity with Richard when she made him feel that he was a guest and she was the hostess. Although he loved her, he was annoyed by "the devilish part of her - this coldness, this woodenness, something profound in her," (MD,2007:52) which he had felt all his life. He believed that they would have lived in misery if they had had married because she lacked that ability to satisfy men's demands for passion. In fact, Woolf presents in Peter the image of a tyrant who compels a woman to be a "bottomless source of sensate and emotional warmth, a perpetual fountain of sympathy" for soothing his ego (qtd. in Marcus, 1981:132).

By showing Peter's thoughts of some past events, Woolf wants to show why Clarissa was unyielding to his intense passion. In fact, Clarissa felt that Peter was unfit to marry because he was an egoist whose concern was only restricted to his own world, without having any sense of regard to the interests of women. By referring to a scene where Richard was nursing Clarissa's dog, Woolf suggests to show the sense of compassion and safety which Richard displayed. Although in a way she chose the man's dominated world, he gave her more freedom as a person and offered her the chance to practice her empathy and kindness with all people. She was not from a well-off family, but she had a great deal of the Dalloways' interest in parties, which had grown in her and helped her repay her husband by gathering people of high ranks and great talents:

Infinite numbers of dull people conglomerated round her of course. But odd unexpected people turned up; an artist sometimes; sometimes a writer; queer fish in that atmosphere. And behind it all was that net-work of visiting, leaving cards, being kind to people; running about with bunches of flowers, little presents; so and –so was going to France- must have an air-cushion; a real drain on her strength; all that interminable traffic that women of her sort keep up; but she did it genuinely, from a natural instinct (*MD*, 2007:65-66).

III

In her diary on August 17th, 1923, Woolf states that: “In this book I have almost too many ideas. I want to give life and death, sanity and insanity. I want to criticise the social system, and to show it at work, at its most intense” (Woolf, 1954:56). Suzette A.Henke declares that Woolf always thinks that “the authoritarian power that incites nations to war makes autocrats of husbands and fathers, and forces individuals into rigid patterns of social conformity” (qtd. in Marcus, 1981:125). Along with Clarissa's story of asserting her autonomous identity in a patriarchal society, Woolf has at the same time been involved in a young man's defying of the institutionalized power that attempts to grind the individuality of a person.

Septimus Warren Smith is a mentally deranged man whose “derangement [thae] consists in his inability to be aware of the reality of other people,” is caused by the atrocities of the war (Daiches, 1963: xiii). He is a victim of a patriarchal system that swallowed up the ambitions of many young men and encouraged them by their implanted sense of patriotism to join in a blood-shedding war for the sake of asserting that system. He left behind all his dreams of being a successful poet when he was the first one to volunteer to the war to “save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays and (his love) Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square” (*MD*, 2007:72). Although Clarissa and Septimus never met, they are brought about together through sharing the same opinion about the value of one's identity. Before the war,

Septimus was “too androgynous to conform to society's masculine stereotype” (qtd.in Marcus, 1981:139). He was shy, and stammered, so joining the war was a good opportunity for him to develop his manliness , which he developed in the trenches that drew him closer to his officer 'Evans' with whom he developed an intimate relation. Like Clarissa who had lost the object of passionate same-sex love because of the social conventions that prohibited women from expressing such daring feelings, Septimus had lost the object of passion in the war when Evans was killed by a shell (Wolfe, 2005:27). In fact, the patriarchal society whether in the form of war or in the form of conventions, deprived both Clarissa and Septimus from the homosexual relationship that satisfies their sexual desires:

There in the trenches the changes which Mr. Brower desired when he advised football was produced instantly; he developed manliness; he was promoted; he drew the attention, indeed the affection of his officer, Evans by name. It was a case of two dogs playing on a hearth- rug; one worrying a paper screw, snarling, snapping, giving a pinch, now and then, at the old dog's ear; the other lying somnolent, blinking at the fire, raising a paw, turning and growling good-temperedly. They had to be together, share with each other, fight with each other, quarrel with each other (*MD*, 2007:72).

The feeling of torture for the death of Evans in front of his eyes makes Septimus realize the tyranny of the authoritarian forces that turned up their lives into hell for the sake of preserving their power. Coming back home with the burden of having witnessed the brutality of war, Septimus embraces “the widespread, socially acceptable madness of modern society” (qtd.in Marcus, 1981:139) to detach himself from any real communication with that vicious world. Like Clarissa who protects the privacy of her thoughts and feelings in the attic room, Septimus preserves the supreme secret of the world in his madness because he feels too powerless to “transmit his message to his fellow men and women” (Ibid, 140). Moreover, by opposing the dehumanization of the patriarchal institutions,

Septimus refuses to accept the social conventions of men's dominated role within the family atmosphere, when he neglects the intimate passion of his wife 'Rezia' under the law of the heterosexual relationship.

Woolf pulls aside the veil of hypocrisy in the English society that hides the crimes of crushing the individuals for preserving its power beneath the lies of creating an ideal civilization. In referring to the mental specialists Dr. Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw, whom Rezia consulted with reference to her husband's mental derangement, Woolf exposes their medical authority. Sir William Bradshaw dehumanizes his patients by surrendering "one's feelings and blind adherence to convention" (Marder, 1968:48). He did not only force his patients to give up their own claims to his personal vision, but he also left no choice for his wife to develop a style of her own. Marrying a man like Sir William denotes that Lady Bradshaw was condemned to death by his system, not physically but spiritually, as she had no room to freely express her own feelings and desires, but to follow him like a shadow. Indeed, Bradshaw stands for the evil of the authoritarian force that "overturns the entire personality and turns human beings into a clock work puppet" (Ibid, 49).

In spite of his mental derangement, Septimus recognizes well that Bradshaw's medical advice of having rest in his Health Centre at Surrey makes him sacrifice his freedom and follow the patriarchal conventions blindly. He felt like a "trapped animal who has no choice but to sacrifice his body to save the privacy of his soul" (qtd. in Marcus, 1981:140). Therefore, he finds no means of rejecting the evils of the patriarchal institutions that would rape his consciousness except jumping out of the window:

It was their idea of tragedy, not his or Rezia's (for she was with him). Holmes and Bradshaw like that sort of thing.(He sat on the sill).But he would wait till the very last moment. He did not want to die. Life was good. The sun hot. Only human beings- what did

they want? Coming down the staircase opposite an old man stopped and stared at him. Holmes was at the door. 'I'll give it you' he said and flung himself vigorously, violently down on Mrs. Filmer's area railings (*MD*, 2007: 123)

Unlike Septimus, Clarissa had shaped a workable marriage and household that helped her protect herself and her personality through the parties that offered her the sense of being needed in a powerful social milieu. Although she bound herself to one of the patriarchal institutions of heterosexual relationship, there was beneath it a sense of freedom to create a world of her own where her dignity could be kept intact. Though Clarissa and Richard's bond was not based on a romantic love, it was stable because both of them were considerate to each other's feelings; love "binds them, loosely, but it is also a barrier-self-imposed and, for each of their sakes, protective" (Carey, 1969:53). In a moment, their relationship was about to break off both when Clarissa knew about Lady Bruton's invitation to Richard to her luncheon and when Richard heard of Peter's return to London, but their mutual understanding was stronger than allowing any evil to spoil their life. To assure Clarissa that he still cares for her, Richard decided to buy her a present, yet he did not buy her a personal one like jewels because he was afraid he would lose her if he violated her privacy. Therefore, coming back home bearing his flowers like a weapon, indicated that he was decisive to protect Clarissa's love not through being romantic but by offering her the support that she needed.

Clarissa could create by her physical coldness a gulf between herself and Richard, where both preserved their identity and prevented it from being dissolved into fragments (Kaplan, 1975:92). She wanted to keep her marriage and motherhood quiet and safe from the threat of any one who could creep in to defile it. Clarissa instinctively disapproved making any real contact with women like Lady Bruton and her daughter's tutor Miss Doris Kilman because she saw in Lady

Bruton's invitation to her husband and Miss Kilman's tutorship to her daughter an attempt to conquer her. She did not like to interfere in her daughter's life yet she could not help feeling apprehensive about Elizabeth's attachment to a woman who was predatory, insensitive, egoist, ascetic and dominative in her greed for power. She did not hate her, but she was worried that Miss Kilman might seduce her daughter and dispossess her of her daughter's beauty and youth.

Woolf reflects the negative impact of the patriarch that has sown seeds of hatred and fear within people. From the bottom of her heart, Miss Kilman feels a great grudge against the merciless world, "beginning with this indignity- the infliction of her unlovable body which people could not bear to see" (*MD*, 2007:107). She always feels that the world has never been just to her. She had been poor and unhappy all her life. Worse of all was her career at Miss Dolby's school, which was absolutely ruined after the war. Miss Kilman who was originally German, was dismissed from her teaching position because she refused to be a puppet to the patriarchal system in England and to play the role of a hypocrite to pretend that the Germans were all villains. In some sense, Miss Kilman directs her anger towards women who had the opportunity of finding their way into the world of power and luxury. She envied Clarissa who was endowed with everything, a good and rich husband, a beautiful daughter, and a high rank. She believed that Clarissa did not deserve to live such luxurious life because she did not earn her living. Moreover, she did not have thorough knowledge of history although she led a life full of vanity and deceit. Therefore, Miss Kilman believed that she had the right to take whatever Clarissa possessed, especially her private and precious possession 'her soul'. Unable to threaten Clarissa's social status and conjugal felicity, Miss Kilman preyed on the youth and the beauty of her daughter as the first step to conquer Clarissa (qtd. in Marcus, 1981:136):

But Miss Kilman did not hate Mrs. Dalloway. Turning her large goose berry- coloured eyes upon Clarissa, observing her small pink face, her delicate body, her air of freshness and fashion, Miss Kilman felt, Fool! Simpleton! You who have neither sorrow nor pleasure; who have trifled your life away! And there rose in her overmastering desire to overcome her; to unmask her. If she could have felled her it would have eased her. But it was not the body; it was the soul and its mockery that she wished to subdue; make feel her mastery. If only she could make her weep; could ruin her, humiliate her; bring her to her knees crying. You are right! (*MD*, 2007:104).

Woolf did her utmost to uncover how women's psyche was affected by the discrimination exercised on them. In a sense, she showed a certain amount of sympathy to Miss Kilman who was turned into a woman full of egocentrism and hostility instead of loveliness. Although she attained the opportunity of being employed at the Dalloways' house, Woolf shows that the patriarchal system succeeded to perpetuate its power and privileges through the sense of domination that people began to seek by various means. Describing Miss Kilman's excessive desire for eating might signify that the patriarch has infected her with the disease of devouring everything that offers her the sense of superiority. In fact, Woolf suggests that any gender, class and sexual or racial discrimination will implant the seeds of evil and tyranny in people which eventually would lead to the disintegration of civilization.

Although Miss Kilman attempted to make Elizabeth a puppet through her intelligence and social insight, her plan never saw the light as Elizabeth turns back to her mother and decides to attend her mother's evening party despite Miss Kilman's seduction. When Elizabeth left Miss Kilman and began thinking of an appropriate profession, she reflected that "she is the bearer of new opportunities for her sex", (Bowlby, 1997:70) a woman who will not yield to the authority of neither her mother nor her tutor. Unlike the narrow training of her mother that kept her ability only within the level of hosting, Elizabeth's opportunity of obtaining thorough

knowledge from Miss Kilman empowered her to think of all the professions open to the other sex: “she would become a doctor, a farmer, possibly go into the parliament if she found it necessary” (MD, 2007:113). By presenting a glimpse of Elizabeth's vision, Woolf suggests that this immature girl may blossom into a new model of woman as she attempts to oppose the restricted social role granted to them.

Although Clarissa belonged to an atmosphere of social power that would silence women, she took no actual role in the working of power towards women, but instead she found an outlet for presenting her talents of being hostess because it “was her gift. Nothing else had she of the slightest importance; could not think, write, even play the piano” (MD,2007: 101). Moreover, she was very zealous for offering such parties because she wanted to participate in removing the negative impact of the war by offering people the opportunity to communicate again and overcome the dullness of life. Woolf believes that women in a patriarchal society have always faced the problem of developing form of expression. Clarissa considered her parties as a social gift, where she could bring a constellation of people, erase the borders between them and fill their lives with joyous moments. She is like a play writer who defies the mortality of life by her artistic gift of gathering the guests on her stage and taking them away from the dullness of the habitual activity to the delightful moments on her stage. It filled her with great happiness to see eminent figures and friends flowed out into her party and break down the silence of her rooms with the roar of their voices and laughter. She really cared for the success of her parties and it made her feel sick and unhappy if she found that her guests did not enjoy the parties. In this regard, Suzette A. Henke remarks that:

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf pays tributes to the delicate and ephemeral art forms that grow out of the daily lives of women. Like Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, Clarissa Dalloway is a 'good liver'- a social artist who brings people together in new,

imaginative configurations. With painstaking care, she weaves an evanescent web of friendship that creates new possibilities for love, affiliation, and collective joy (qtd. in Marcus, 1981:128).

Clarissa marvelled at the splendour of her party, especially she was filled with joy at the attendance of a Prime Minister, her daughter who charmed everyone with her beauty and her old friends Sally Seton and Peter Walsh who took her back to her youth at Bourton. But she withdraws from the party when its splendour fell on the floor with the coming of the Bradshaws and their excuses of being late to her party on the account of his patient's suicide: "Oh! Thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death" (*MD*, 2007:151). Although Clarissa never met Septimus, she confronts "a curious sense of identification with him mixed with a sudden recognition of her complicity with the social system that drove the man to death" (Son, 2006:191). The only way she can internalize and thereby realize its magnitude within the context of her party is to go through the fall herself imaginatively, in a sense to share with him the resentment of all the authoritative power. She disliked to be forced to do something against her wish; therefore, she instinctively disliked Sir William Bradshaw because he seemed to be capable of some indescribable outrage influencing her soul (*MD*, 2007:152).

Clarissa did not pity Septimus, but she felt proud of him because he did not relinquish his autonomy to the authority of Sir William Bradshaw and his tyrannical system that turns the individual into a puppet. In fact, his death did not depress her, but it encouraged her to be more determined and "never to bow to the laws of limitation set up in a society, but instead to carry a sense of freedom and love into her world" (Zwerdling, 1986: 39). In her final repetition of the same refrains from Shakespeare, Clarissa allays her own fears while laying Septimus to rest (Gay, 2006:91). Like Imogen's awakening when the sleeping draught was worn off, Clarissa decided to return to her party as she realized that her social gift can be the

only means to define her identity and protect her culture from the sense of dullness. Like the Phoenix reborn out of the ashes of immolation, the death of Septimus renewed her confidence in herself and turned into a source of inspiration for her to feel the beauties of life (qtd. in Marcus, 1981:143):

Fear no more the heat of the sun. She must go back to them. But what an extraordinary night! She felt somehow very like him - the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it and thrown it away. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun. But she must go back (*MD*, 2007:153).

IV

To sum up, one can say in *MD* Woolf lashes out at the patriarchal society that denied women full and free access to education, and erased her true identity through promoting the belief that women are innately inferior to men. Clarissa was able through her strong personality to refute the traditional gender roles that regard women emotional, irrational, weak and submissive. Such inequalities still occur today like excluding women from equal access to leadership and decision-making positions. To save the society from the corruption of patriarchy and fascism, she provides such a solution, and action that are clearly defined through the character of Clarissa and the parties she throws. Since her sex appeared to be like prison walls, Woolf believes that a woman can develop a new strategy in her life that would allow her a chance to oppose the limitations imposed on her life and build her identity. This is seen by Clarissa's politics: "life is possible only when roses, parties, and joy triumph over war, authority, and death" (qtd. in Diamond and Edwards, 1977:162). Clarissa reallies achieved success in her party when she brought felicity to the heart of her guests, especially to the heart of her daughter who was really pleased to see her father being proud of her. In fact, Clarissa's social gift could erase the barrier that the patriarchal system creates between male and female. This is evidenced when she succeeded to renew the relationship between the

father and the daughter and fills them with respect and intimacy instead of hatred and fear.

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خلاصة البحث

تعتبر الغريزة والجنس من المواضيع الشائكة التي وجد الكتاب والفلاسفة صعوبة في تناولها على مر العصور فالغريزة تشير إلى التركيبية الجينية للتمييز بين الذكورة والأنوثة فيما تعكس كلمة الجندر (الجنس) البرمجة الثقافية كالذكر والأنثى، وكلا المصطلحين يحددان هوية الشخص وكيونته. فالاعتقاد بان الرجال ارفع مقاما من النساء كان سائدا على مر العصور ومقبولا بشكله الظاهري. وقد عكسته (فرجينيا وولف) في مؤلفاتها ورواياتها أن تكشف سيادة الرجل في المجالات الاقتصادية والسياسية والاجتماعية، وقد صورت في كتاباتها الحالة الضعيفة التي رافقت المرأة عن طريق حرمانها من كافة حقوقها التعليمية والمهنية من ناحية، ونضالها من اجل تحقيق المساواة واثبات هويتها المستقلة من ناحية أخرى.

