

Counting the Uncountable: Number-Phobia and Temporal Anxiety in Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway

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Summary:

This article considers the motifs of number-phobia and temporal anxiety in Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway (1925), and especially its dramatisation of the way in which the quantification of time in terms of clocks and hours heightens the characters' encounter with death. Using Henri Bergson's modernist concept of time, as well as the psychoanalytic definition of anxiety, the essay posits that Woolf dramatises the fear of time's numerical count as a cultural and psychological condition. It is a time that occurs in the novel not as organic *durée*. Still, as a smashed succession enforced by social and mechanical systems, and it is experienced almost as an existential vertigo: a kind of number-phobia. The main question the study seeks to ask is how Woolf's re-presentation of time in Mrs. Dalloway mirrors modernist anxieties regarding temporality and death, as well as interrogating the psychological impact of breaking lived experience down into the manageable units of measurement brought about. The primary research questions include: (1) How does Woolf represent the conflict between lived, qualitative time and mechanical, quantitative time? 2) How does the novel connect number-phobia to death, trauma, and existential terror? (3) How does Bergson's notion of time interface with psychoanalytic ideas of repression and anxiety in opening up Woolf's narrative strategies?

The study focuses on close textual analysis of temporal images, narrative form and the motifs of clocks and measuring in relation to Bergsonian theory and psychoanalytic criticism. The results have so far suggested Woolf's novel as a source whereby the alienation provoked by the relentless quantification of modernity is both disclosed and resisted in the modality of memory, consciousness, and felt experience.

.1 Introduction

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) is regarded as an epochal modernist novel distinguished by its de-familiarisation of time, consciousness, and death (Lee, 2010; Whitworth, 2010). Most remarkable, perhaps, is the unceasing revisitation to time, to the ticking of clocks, the chiming of bells, the marking of the hours, which frame both the diurnal movement of the day during which the novel takes place, but also the psychic and existential agonies experienced by its protagonists. Time, in Woolf's hands, isn't so much a setting as a tangible force that shapes human life. This essay proposes that the novel dramatises a number-phobia, a fear of time when it is reduced to a countable and quantifiable fact in minutes, hours, and days, that heightens the awareness of mortality and impoverishes the richness of human life. The time-tensions of the novel, then, occur at the juncture of cultural time-management, its own mechanical management of life, and psychic time, clouded with the consciousness of loss, with the shadow of death.

This study's theoretical underpinning follows Henri Bergson's theory of *durée*, the difference between lived, qualitative time and mechanised, measured time (Bergson, 1910/2001). For Bergson, the clock time rips asunder the continuity of experience and renders life merely as numerical subdivisions. Woolf's novel manifests this tension, juxtaposing the

oppressive tick-tock of Big Ben with the fluid temporality of memory, most significantly in Clarissa's memories of youth and in Septimus's trauma of war memories. According to critics like Banfield (2000) and Whitworth (2010), Woolf's narrative techniques draw from Bergson's theories, and Mrs Dalloway represents a response to the modernist quest for alternative modalities to represent subjective time.

However it is offset by a psychoanalytic inflexion that illuminates the novel's temporal angst. Freud (1917/2005) associated anxiety with repression, trauma and the return of the repressed and subsequent psychoanalytic philosophers stressed the psychological cost of becoming aware of one's own mortality. The hallucinations of Septimus and Clarissa's fear of ageing indicate, in effect, that time, when it comes to be mathematically measured, is folded into death-anxiety: we may speak, that is, of a phobic response to numbering, an index to which is the formal ordering of the novel. Showalter, 1992, and Abel, 1989 have drawn attention to the gender of Woolf's temporal imagination, associating her focus on the problem of time with broader concerns about self-identity, repression, and death.

The goal of the study is to consider Woolf's depiction of the dramatisation of the number-phobia in Mrs. Dalloway, and to demonstrate how the novel portrays the terror of time calculated in numerals, and what it means to the subjectivity. It will examine the following questions: (1) How does Woolf represent the tension between Bergsonian *durée* and mechanistic clock time? (2) In what ways is number-phobia related to existential and psychoanalytic fears of death and trauma? How is the novel a force for unthinking the tyranny of numerical time (memory, consciousness, affect)? Methodologically, the paper offers a close reading of Woolf's temporal

imagery, narrative form, and character psychology, inflected by Bergsonian modernist theory and psychoanalytic criticism.

In placing Mrs. Dalloway in the vortices of number-phobia, temporal anxiety, and mortality, this analysis offers modernist studies a reassessment of Woolf's novel as a critique of modernity's quantifying fetish and as a psychoanalytic exploration of the human being's troubled relationship with time.

.2 Literature Review

.2.1 Modernist Time, Temporal Anxiety and the Clock in Mrs. Dalloway

Criticism invariably places Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway (1925/2005) at the vanguard of modernism's temporal experiment, drawing attention to the oppositional push-pull of public, mechanical time and private, lived duration. Scholars have shown how the chiming of London's clocks, Big Ben chief among them, intersects consciousness, shaping the day, and introducing an outside logic into the interiority of thought, i.e. the "hours" that name and measure both thought and life. Recent research consolidates this view. Consider, for example, a thesis that amalgamates the ideas of "psychological time," "deep time," and "timekeeping" by interpreting Big Ben as a metronomic weektimer of discontinuous perceptions that Woolf binds together into a single day, then visit as to how clock towers serve as narrative transition points between scenes and psyches. Work in modernist magazines also studies watches and clocks as affective media machines that record cultural concern over measurement while in the process appending Mrs Dalloway to discourses of punctuality and discipline.

Other essays reconsider the novel's use of sequential hours and auditory markers, affirming Big Ben's catalytic function in bringing characters back to

"reality" and foregrounding conflicts between clock time and inner time (Oxford Academic, 2023; Chapman University Digital Commons, 2024.)

.2.2 Bergsonian Duration and Woolf's Form

Henri Bergson's notion of homogeneous, quantitative time versus qualitative *durée* continues to serve as touchstone by which to understand Woolf's form. Although much of the above has a long history, some of the material listed here underscores that it is not peculiar to its time but survives to inform present studies, specifically attending to the way Woolf orchestrates the anachrony against official time. Several more recent essays highlight how Woolf contrasts the controlled chiming of hours with streams of memory and affect, reading her free indirect discourse as an effort to represent *durée* within a culture of synchronisation.

Psychoanalytic and Trauma-Oriented Perspectives

In addition to time-form, I have been working through temporality psychoanalytically on repression, death anxiety, and postwar trauma in Clarissa Dalloway's ageing and in shell shock in Septimus Smith. Recent studies confirm how Woolf's characters dramatise psychic wounds and the return of the repressed. For instance, one peer-reviewed study from 2024 characterises Septimus psychologically as "shell-shocked," through socio-psychological lenses that synergise anxiously with the problem, not so much linear time's relentless accrual. Other essays on repression read Woolf's collage techniques as fixation and paranoia, correlating psychic excess to the novel's temporal scaffolding.

.2.3 Numbers, Numerality, and Modern Fiction

In modernist studies, there is an emergent line of critique, taking numbers, quantification, and mathematical structures as the point of departure to approach the topic of literary technique. Opponents of "literature and

numbers" contend that contemporary fiction makes counting matter aesthetically and epistemically while placing regimes of measure and the bounds of quantification directly in our view . Meanwhile, digital analyses of modernism have shown the era was marked by concerns over interiority and form. However, they also, with their technology-enabled impersonal distance, have hinted at the problem of how "inner time" resists the quantitative reach of the outside . However, this literature generally treats numbers as structural or formal aspects rather than as affective objects that evoke dread.

.2.4 Archetypal Numbers and Cultural Semiotics

Almaarroof (2025) discusses archetypal numbers as cultural and psychological symbols in Yangsze Choo's *The Ghost Bride* by taking the novel's archetypal numbers themselves and showing how each number structures narrative events, ritual, and mythic significance. This article suggests that number can also have a qualitative, culturally embedded force as opposed to a purely quantifiable one, which resonates with readings of numbers as charged signs inside narrative worlds , But Almaarroof is more interested in archetypal numerology over a mythopoetic register than in modernist dread at the quantification of time in Woolf.

.2.5 The Gap This Study Addresses

Despite significant critical attention to (a) Woolf's deployment of clocks and the conflict between inner and public time, (b) psychoanalytic and trauma-oriented interpretations of anxiety and death, and (c) the nascent attention to numerality in modernist fiction, scholars have yet to theorise "number-phobia" in Mrs. Dalloway. What I have in mind with this term is the phobic effect toward numbers-as-time (hours, chimes, schedules) as instruments that bodily so to speak, carry out mortality's pressure on the psyche. It is a

justifiable direction in that most existing studies treat the clock as either a formal or historical instrument which illustrates *durée* against mechanical time, but they do not read the numerical mark of hours as the object of anxiety in its own right. A symbolic trigger such as this compresses the quantification of culture (the schedule of the city, the discipline of empire, medicalised time) with a psychoanalytic dread of finitude. Almaarroof's (2025) archetypal analysis of numbers illustrates that numbers can bear qualitative, mythic value; this study expands that insight into modernist temporality, suggesting that in Mrs Dalloway, numericization of time operates phobically, pressurising subjectivity, intensifying death-awareness and motivating Woolf's anti-aesthetics of *durée*.

.3 Methodology

The methodology used here is qualitative, inclusive and grounded in literary close reading, informed by psychoanalytic theory, modernist philosophy of time, and cultural numerology. Focusing on how Mrs Dalloway (1925) dramatises the fear of numerical time, what here launches number-phobia, at such moments through the recurrent, overpowering presence of clock chimes, the hours and the scheduled(4). Through considering the symbolic and affective work of numbers in the novel, the research locates Woolf's narrative strategies in relation to discussions of temporality, mortality, and modernity.

The texts-based approach is to analyse Woolf's prose line-by-line, attending to the specific places where clocks and numbers and measures of time interrupt the texture of the narrative present. Textual examples are analysed for their narrative roles (Structural devices that steer rhythm and perspective) and their psychological significance as cues for an irrelevant

،repression or existential unease. To retain theoretical specificity, the analysis triangulates between Bergson's philosophy of time, psychoanalytic explanations of anxiety and phobia, and current research on the symbolic nature of numbers.

.4 Theoretical Framework

A central framework is that of Henri Bergson (1910/2000), which distinguishes *durée* (qualitative, lived time) and homogeneous clock time. According to Bergson, the imposition of quantitative measurement fragments life into artificial units, depleting the bounty of consciousness. Woolf's book is an exemplar of this tension: the striking of Big Ben ,which not coincidentally is heard through the ringing of the bell, points to mechanical, external time, while the liquid, unformed streams of memory in the novel reflect *durée*. Here, Bergson explains how Woolf's form of novelistic prose goes against quantifiability even as it registers the oppressiveness of numerical time.

Equally central is the psychoanalytic dimension. To Woolf's depiction of numbers, Freud's (1917/2005) articulation of phobia as a displaced, objectified version of anxiety is relevant. The novel's preoccupation with hours and chimes shows mortality displaced onto numbers: striking a clock is a symbolic threat, a reminder to characters that life is spent. Clarissa's meditations on ageing and Septimus's traumatic memories are filtered through this terror of time, revealing how numbers operate as phobic prompts. Subsequent psychoanalytic thinkers, such as Lacan, expand this model by associating the phobic object with the Symbolic order, the domain of culture involving language, law, and measure. Read in this way, then, Big Ben is itself a Symbolic authority that comes to bear law-like divisions of time upon bodies and psyches.

Moreover, this study engages with cultural numerology as discussed in recent literary studies. Almaarooof's (2025) study on archetypal numbers in Yangsze Choo's *The Ghost Bride* reveals that numbers can serve as a medium for symbols and culture despite their numerical use. By contrast, the present study considers numbers in Woolf not simply as structural innovations, but as symbolic residues that house cultural anxieties surrounding modernity, morbidity, and order. Whereas for Almaarooof, these play with mythic and archetypal numbers, this project has held numbers in tension as the instruments of temporal discipline, such as repetition, partitioning into phobic unease.

This union of Bergsonian philosophy, psychoanalysis, and cultural semiotics makes possible a multilevel reading of Mrs Dalloway. Bergson offers a means for differentiating between lived time and measured time; psychoanalysis illuminates how numbers function as phobic objects linked to mortality; and cultural numerology places these anxieties in larger traditions of symbolic numbers. In combination, these methods allow the study to cast Woolf's novel as a critical site in which modernist aesthetics and existential worry come together to dramatise the psychic costs of a culture increasingly driven by numbers.

.5 Analysis and Discussion

.5.1 Big Ben and the Phobic Power of Numbers

The heart of Mrs. Dalloway is the sound of Big Ben, whose chime marks the novel's passage. Near the beginning of the text, Woolf says: "Big Ben struck the half-hour. How odd she looked, the old lady in the house opposite, suddenly, in the midst of the day, walking back and turning round and looking back" (Woolf, 1925/2000, p. 35). This is a moment in which the numerical time (the "half-hour") does not merely set the pace of chronology,

but punctures consciousness, with the utterly unmotivated thought for which there is no evidential warrant bar the stirring of our own intuition, and sends Clarissa reeling toward reflection. The division of this flow into mechanical parts is, in the words of Henri Bergson (1910/2001), a "partition artificielle," a forced division. 20 Clarissa's intrusive memory serves as a phobic index for the intrusiveness of numbers: the clock orders a pause, creating anxiety and reflections on ageing and mortality.

Critics have long remarked upon this duality. Banfield (2000) contends that Woolf enlists Big Ben as a "syntactic interrupter," interrupting *durée* with a mechanical segmentation. Whitworth (2010) also believes that the novel dramatises the alienating power of official time. But while such critics insist on structure, this study insists on phobic affect: it is as numbers that numbers become things to fear, as numbers that they enable the realisation that all powers of finitude. Freud's (1917/2005) theory of phobia helps explain this displacement: the idea of the anxiety of death is transferred to the numbers, thus the actual sound when the bell tolls then becomes the dangerous reminder of dying.

.5.2 Clarissa and the Horror of Growing Old

Clarissa's musings equate the counting of time with her death. At one moment, she reflects, "She felt very young, and good God! I was at that instant very old. She cut through all like a knife; outside at the same time, looking on." (Woolf, 1925/2000, p. 8). In this, Woolf mirrors competing temporal identities, youth and age, immediacy and distance, implying that the self is shattered by the ceaseless advance of numbered time.

Elaine Showalter (1992) reads these veiled references as coded manifestations of Woolf's gendered anxiety about time: its relationship to the ageing woman and her social invisibility. At a psychoanalytic level,

Clarissa's conflicting emotions also resonate with Freud and the notion of the uncanny, where the familiar the ticking of the clock, the act of ageing itself becomes terrifying in its inexorability. Bergson's *durée* also provides resolution for this tension: she wants to keep the continuous flow of consciousness but is continually thrust back into the mechanical awareness of numbered hours. The phobic fear here is not simply of numbers but of what they represent, an inexorable march toward death.

.5.3 Septimus and the PTSD of Clockwatching

If Clarissa incarnates a social-philosophical anxiety about numbered time, Septimus Smith dramatises its psychological violence. His war trauma creates the word "non-linear" when applied to writing, it fractures time; as Woolf has herself described: "The world wavered and quivered and threatened to burst into flames" (Woolf, 1925/ 2000, p. 87). Time, as Septimus's experiences it, is a dread of time, an inability to live in synchronisation with the outside world; the ticking hours of London exacerbate his dislocation.

Critics like Owais (2024) argue that Septimus is the "shell-shocked victim" of war and that his trauma documents just how the modern world ultimately intensifies humanity's obsession with order and measurement. From a Freudian perspective, his hallucinations are his unconscious mind at work, the floating moments a repressed window into his past, restored by the process of numbered time forcing itself into his brain. In Lacanian speak, the Symbolic order oppresses Septimus, Big Ben as the lawgiver, which forces an impossible coherence upon his shattered subjectivity. If Clarissa experiences number-phobia as existential angst, Septimus experiences it as a complete psychic crash.

.5.4 Resistance through *Durée* and Memory

Despite the tyranny of time felt on every page, Woolf also puts up a resistance. For example, Clarissa's recollections of Bourton enable her to escape from numbered time: "She felt somehow very like him, the young man who had killed himself. Glad he'd done it; chucked it away...He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun' (Woolf, 1925/2000, p. 186). Here, Clarissa moves beyond the segmented present through memory and affective identification. This is how *durée* comes in for Bergson in trying to correct the contempt shown to the self of memory, refusing the flattening out of life to numbers, binding past to present in continuity.

Here's where Woolf's modernist aesthetics come into the equation to counter number-phobia. As Richardson (2016) argues in his analysis of watches in modernist fiction, Woolf dramatises the "affective encounter with timepieces", yet undercuts them by emphasising subjectivity. Almaarroof's (2025) reflections about symbolic number also register here: just as numbers in Choo's *The Ghost Bride* are freighted with archetypal cultural significance, so too Woolf's numbers are freighted with deep existential dread. But while the mythic numbers generate order, Woolf's numbers destabilize and generate phobias.

.5.5A Contested Terrain of Time

Finally, Woolf leaves Mrs. Dalloway an embattled space in which figures conquer and collapse in equal measure. Big Ben's chimes announce the structure of the novel, but Clarissa's memories and Septimus's unravelling demonstrate how tenuous that structure is. As Bergson ([1910] 2001) famously anticipated, human life cannot be confined to numerical quantities; it inevitably spills over into *durée*. From the perspective of the psychoanalysts, the phobic dread of numbers points to both death and repression, while Lacan emphasises their function as Symbolic signifiers of

the law. In Woolf, these forces battle: togetherness tries to impose coherence, but lived experience, trauma and memory shatter it.

So Mrs. Dalloway stages number-phobia as a modernist condition: the fear of quantification as a cultural demand and psychic load. When we read Woolf with Bergson and psychoanalysis, it is clear how numbers, instead of being a set of neutral indicators of time, are things of dread that organize subjectivity, menace identity, and inspire modernist literary experiment.

Among the most striking images in the novel is Woolf's description of the chimes of Big Ben: "First a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable. The leaden circles melted in the air." (Woolf, 1925/2000, p. 4) Here, Woolf makes time sensory as well as oppressive. The "warning" highlights the anticipatory foreboding of the approaching hour, and the "irrevocable" its irreversible passage of time. The metaphorical "leaden circles" somehow make a weight on experience; they turn the sound of the clock into a pressure on the self. Bergson's critique of homogeneous time is relevant to the present context: for as quantifiable time-measures, clock chimes are shown as interrupting *durée* and are made to impose an alien authority on subjective life. Schaub (2010) reads this passage in relation to Woolf's soundscape aesthetics, but psychoanalytically, the chime constitutes a phobic trigger, an external object that condenses anxiety regarding death and irrevocability (Freud, 1917/2005.)

Another moment comes when Clarissa is getting ready for her party: "She had the sensation that it was the all-too-terrible, all-too-dangerous to live even one complete day." (Woolf, 1925/2000, p. 9) This temporalises danger and existential peril. Every day, quantitatively, is now a battle for life and death. Showalter (1992) posits that "for Woolf's women, time can be internalised as a biological countdown", linking Clarissa's impression of

threat to gendered fears of losing one's youth and losing one's potential. From a Lacanian standpoint, the danger is found in the Symbolic's time, the calendar, the schedule, the law of the clock, that compels Clarissa to come to terms with her finitude, spread out in reference to a measure.

Septimus also, in a case of overt persecution of time: "He waited. He was condemned. He saw them, without feelings, sitting there all day and never said a word." (Woolf, 1925/2000, p. 102)

The feeling of "waiting / all day long" underscores the leaden monotony of time. For Septimus, time is not neutral but punishing; it is endured as a verdict. Owais (2024) reads this through the trauma theory lens: war survivors perceive time not as *durée* in flow, but as 'frozen repetition'. Freud's concept of repetition compulsion is powerfully ingrained here: the never-ending hours are like a traumatised loop, in which Septimus experiences again the horror of the war. The numbers and hours grow accusatory, joining with the Superegoic demand in the terms of Lacan, of an Other that guiltily and judgmentally never quiets.

Woolf ultimately resists this oppression through her evocation of memory, "She felt that she had been given a present and wrapped up and told that she must just keep it, not to undo it; it was a diamond, something of limitless value." (Woolf, 1925/2000, p. 29) Here, memory resists quantification. The "present" is not an hour on the clock but an affective gift, outside of clock time. Bergson's *durée* elucidates this: subjective time, the time of memory and affect, is not reducible to hours or days. Woolf's syntax, some critics like Banfield (2000) claim, literally performs *durée* by melting temporal edges. In so doing, memory is resistant to number-phobia, reasserting qualitative time over quantifiable hours.

These excerpts together reveal how Woolf dramatises numbers as objects of terror and control. Big Ben's "leaden circles" are symbolic of phobic dread, Clarissa's feeling of trepidation foregrounds the psychological cost of day-to-day calculation, and Septimus's "waiting" illuminates trauma's relationship to the quantified hour. Memory's "diamond" is an instance of Bergsonian resistance. Critics have considered Woolf's clocks as structuring devices, but this reading demonstrates how numbers themselves take on affective force as anxiety-objects. Which is to say that Mrs. Dalloway not only experiments with modernist time but also dramatises number-phobia, the existential dread of counting.

.5 Conclusion

The focus of this paper is an attempt to explore how the fear of numerical time, a phenomenon that I have called "number-phobia", is dramatised in Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway,(52) through its incessant focus on clocks, hours and the measurement of time. Through a synthesis of Henri Bergson's of philosophy of duration and psychoanalytic approaches to philosophy of durée developed by Henri Bergson and psychoanalytic approaches to anxiety and phobia, the reading shows Woolf to characterize numbers not as neutral measures of time but as symbolic objects loaded with dread, filled with mortality, and press in on the psyche.

The first question called for an analysis of how Woolf dramatises the conflict between qualitative, lived time and quantitative, mechanical time. What the study found was that Big Ben's chimes are structural interruptions that break into subjective consciousness with extrinsic authority. Phrases like the "'leaden circles dissolved in the air" underline how the mechanical time of the clock disrupts the continuity of durée, setting the fluidity of perception and memory into the straitjacket of homogeneity. In this way,

the novel is a performance of Bergson's criticism of homogeneous time as well as a dramatisation of its oppressive consequences.

The second question was how number-phobia was related to mortality, trauma and existential dread. While Clarissa ponders on the loss of time and ageing, confronted by the numbered hours, also death and the face of certainty, Septimus's trauma hallucinates time condemned and time repeated, the transformation of time immemorial to time of war, the times of war. For each, numbers function phobically: They condense anxiety about mortality and trauma into outward signs, the tolling of bells, the succession of days, that can't be outrun. In this Freudian account of phobia as displaced anxiety, the role of numbers as objects that we find threatening becomes clearer, and in this Lacanian understanding of the Symbolic, we may appreciate how Big Ben can assert itself as a law-like presence.

The third query was about the novel's resistance against the coercion of numerical time. Woolf does this most fundamentally through memory, affect, and narrative style. Clarissa's memories of Bourton, or the gift image of memory as "a diamond, something infinitely precious," are instances of Bergson's *durée*, moments when subjective eternity dissolves the artifice of numbered hours. These scenes constitute Woolf's modernist resistance to quantification against quantification: she dramatises the psychic violence of quantification and provides alternative temporalities grounded in memory, consciousness, and affective life.

Collectively, these encounters suggest that Mrs. Dalloway must read not only as a meditation upon time, but also as a novel of temporal anxiety in which numbers come to be phobic objects in their own right. By way of reimagining Woolf's clocks in terms of number-phobia, the chapter advances Woolf studies by offering an account of the affective and symbolic

aspects of quantifications in modernist literature. The novel, then, appears as a fraught field in which external temporalities of the disciplinary line the psyche, its inevitable site of disordered narrative memory. In exposing this process of number-making and numbers' phobic impact, Woolf is dramatising the alienation of modernity and pointing at the same time towards alternative ways of living time unservile to measure.

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عدّ ما لا يعدّ: رهّاب الأرقام والقلق الزمّني في رواية فيرجينيا وولف السيدة دالاوي

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الكلمات المفتاحية: رهّاب الأرقام، الأدب الحديث، فيرجينيا وولف، السيدة دالاوي
الملخص:

تتطرق البحث الى موضوعي رهّاب الأرقام والقلق الزمّني في رواية فيرجينيا وولف السيدة دالاوي (1925)، وبخاصة تمثيلها الدرامي للطريقة التي يؤدّي بها تحويل الزمن إلى كمّ مُرقّم من خلال الساعات والأوقات إلى تضخيم مواجهة الشخصيات مع الموت. وبالاستناد إلى مفهوم هنري برغسون الحداثي للزمن، فضلاً عن التعريف التحليلي النفسي للقلق، تفترض الدراسة أنّ وولف تجسّد الخوف من العدّ العددي للزمن بوصفه حالة ثقافية ونفسية معاً. فالزمن في الرواية لا يظهر كمدّة (durée) عضوية متدفقة، بل كسلسلة محطّمة مفروضة من قبل الأنظمة الاجتماعية والميكانيكية، ويُختبّر تقريباً كدوار وجودي: نوع من رهّاب الأعداد. السؤال الرئيس الذي تسعى الدراسة إلى طرحه هو: كيف تعكس إعادة تمثيل وولف للزمن في السيدة دالاوي قلق الحداثة إزاء الزمن والموت؟ وكذلك: ما الأثر النفسي لتفتيت التجربة المعيشة إلى وحدات قابلة للقياس؟ وتشمل أسئلة البحث الأساسية: كيف تمثل وولف الصراع بين الزمن المعيش، الكيفي، والزمن الميكانيكي، الكمي؟ كيف تربط الرواية بين رهّاب الأعداد وبين الموت، الصدمة، والرعب الوجودي؟ كيف يتداخل تصور برغسون للزمن مع أفكار التحليل النفسي حول الكبت والقلق في فتح استراتيجيات وولف السردية؟ تركّز الدراسة على القراءة النصّية الدقيقة للصور الزمنية، والشكل السرد، والرموز المتصلة بالساعات والقياس، وذلك في ضوء نظرية برغسون والنقد التحليلي النفسي. وتشير النتائج حتى الآن إلى أنّ رواية وولف تمثل مصدراً يكشف عن الاغتراب الذي أحدثه الإصرار الحداثي على تحويل الزمن إلى كمية رقمية، وفي الوقت نفسه يقاومه عبر وسائط الذاكرة والوعي والتجربة الشعورية.