

The Character of Mrs Dalloway: The Narrative Construction of Psychological Complexity

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na analýzu postavy paní Dallowayové a její psychologickou komplexitu. Clarissa Dallowayová je hlavní představitelkou novely Paní Dallowayová od Virginii Woolfové, která byla vydána roku 1925 v Londýně. Práce taktéž zmiňuje život, díla a typ psaní autorky. Cílem analýzy je popsat pasáže které dokazují, jak složitá je hlavní hrdinka. Práce je z velké části zaměřena na její vztahy s ostatními postavami, což představuje nedílnou součást její komplexity. Dalšími popsánymi aspekty jsou její přemýšlení o smrti či samotný život.

Klíčová slova: *Paní Dallowayová*, Clarissa, Virginia Woolf, komplexita, vztahy, narativizace

ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis analyses the character of Mrs Dalloway and her psychological complexity. Clarissa Dalloway is the main figure of Virginia Woolf's novel Mrs Dalloway, which was published in London in 1925. The work also mentions the life, works, and type of writing of the author. The aim of the analysis is to describe the passages that prove how difficult the main character is. The thesis largely focuses on her relationships with other characters, which is an integral part of her complexity. Other aspects described are her thinking about death or life itself.

Keywords: *Mrs Dalloway*, Clarissa, Virginia Woolf, complexity, relationships, narration

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I hereby declare that the print version of my Bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	8
1 VIRGINIA WOOLF'S BIOGRAPHY	10
1.1 VIRGINIA'S WORKS	11
1.2 VIRGINIA WOOLF'S TYPE OF WRITING	13
1.3 WOOLF'S NARRATOLOGICAL CREATION OF CHARACTER	14
2 MRS DALLOWAY	16
2.1 MAIN CHARACTERS IN MRS DALLOWAY	16
3 ANALYSIS OF MRS DALLOWAY	18
3.1 INNER LIFE AND SOCIAL STATUS	18
3.2 LIVE OR DIE	20
3.3 RELATIONSHIPS	22
3.4 NARRATION	28
CONCLUSION	30
BIBLIOGRAPHY	31

INTRODUCTION

„What does the brain matter compared with the heart?“ is one of the sentences in the dialogue between Peter, the love of the Clarissa Dalloway, and Lady Rosseter in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. The citation is about the difference between feeling and thinking, which are two main aspects that form human character. The quote refers to the topic of this bachelor thesis, which focuses on the character of Clarissa Dalloway. The aim of this bachelor thesis is to analyse the character of Mrs. Dalloway and the narrative construction of her psychological complexity. The theme, as this is an analysis of a character, is a current topic not just in literature, but also in everyday life. Many characters in literature are not defined properly and people in the real world are not readable all the way through as well. It takes a great skill to form a simple-minded, average woman like Clarissa to appear complex and not plain from a psychological point of view. The mental processes and mental workings of Mrs. Dalloway are fascinating and Virginia Woolf's writings are timeless. The knowledge about the psychological complexity was not that widely explored as it is nowadays, so the fact that Virginia wrote and narrated her characters in such a well-rounded way is mesmerizing.

Every figure in this novel is not only described explicitly, but implicitly. That means that reader must find out the true character of each figure that Virginia Woolf put into the novel. As Virginia Woolf projects some of her own characteristics into her characters, Clarissa Dalloway is no exception. Virginia Woolf had depression from World War I and committed suicide due to the trauma from World War II. Clarissa has both attributes. Reading through the novel the reader gets to know the true thoughts and inner feelings of Clarissa's not just by reading the direct description done by Virginia Woolf, but also through the behaviour and reactions to other characters in the novel.

The story itself is set in London in the time after World War I. It is based on a single day in the life of Clarissa Dalloway, the protagonist. Clarissa is a woman coming from high society and seems to be simple-minded on the surface. Although she is married to a wealthy man, Richard Dalloway, she lacks knowledge in geography and politics, notwithstanding her husband is a member of Parliament for the Conservative government. Her main concerns lie in the preparation of her party and nothing else, which is supported by her outrage after finding out about the death of another character, Septimus Smith, the World War I veteran, who committed suicide due to his suffering from shell shock. She gets angry at this misfortune because it could ruin her social event. But the reader can find out, thanks to her retrospective thinking, different behaviour, relations with others, or her acting in various

situations throughout the day, that Clarissa is not the same person inside and out. Thanks to the modes of narration employed by Virginia Woolf, one is allowed to take a deep look into her mind and figure out that Clarissa is in fact shocked by Septimus' suicide, because it may bring death to her doorstep. She suffers from anxiety and depression, and Smith's death recalls her mental illnesses and memories of a time when she wanted to commit suicide herself.

The bachelor thesis is divided into four chapters and each of them analyses a different topic. The first chapter is about Virginia Woolf herself, her life situations, relationships, and her type of writing, especially focused on the story of *Mrs. Dalloway*, and other circumstances that formed her and her works. The second chapter focuses on the novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, the storyline, main characters, their correlations, and their behaviour. The last chapter analyses the character of Clarissa Dalloway, her feelings, and relationships and gives an overview of her personality. This chapter also describes the difference in Clarissa's behaviour in various situations and it analyses not just her emotions, but also her thinking and mental state. The evidence for the analysis is her interior monologues and her reactions to her life situations during the day. The very last part contains the conclusion, including the information found and compared, meaning the outcome of what is the actual psychological side of Clarissa Dalloway's character.

1 VIRGINIA WOOLF'S BIOGRAPHY

Virginia Woolf, originally named Adeline Virginia Stephen, was born on 25 January 1882 in London, where she also grew up. Virginia came from a successful family. Her father, Sir Leslie Stephen, was an author and critic coming from the line of Clapham Sect, Puritan philanthropists. Her mother, Julia Prinsep Stephen, was an Englishwoman known for her beauty. Virginia was not the only child; she was the third of four children. The eldest one, Vanessa, came to be an important avant-garde visual artist, Thoby, the second child, died young and Adrian, the youngest one, was a psychoanalyst. Virginia was the only one who faced sexual abuse done by her half-brothers, sons of her mother from the first marriage. But in terms of education, she was home-schooled. Sir Leslie Stephen had a significant impact on her writing because he was guiding her and introduced Virginia to the library. Nevertheless, it was her mother who had a considerable influence on her life regarding Virginia's perception of life and emotions.¹ The particular reason for this circumstance is the era in which Virginia grew up. The Victorian Era is known for the traditional family life, specifically focused on mothers being home and creating warm environments around the house and fathers working.² Stephen's residence was no exception. For this reason, Virginia looked up to her mother, her kindness and beauty, therefore it is no surprise that Virginia suffered her very first breakdown after her mother died. One unfortunate event led to another and 9 years later Virginia's father died as well, and this was the cause of another suicidal breakdown.

The year of Sir Leslie Stephen's death was also the time when Virginia anonymously sent her review to the Guardian, and it was published. A year after this succession, she started working as a teacher of literature. As she was an independent and smart woman, there was foreseeability that she would not marry, but accepted the marriage proposal done by Leonard Woolf, publisher, and political journalist, and got married in 1912. Unfortunately, due to her depression, they were advised not to have children.

Virginia, together with her husband, launched the Hogarth Press, a publishing house, in 1917. Throughout her life, Virginia has been a part of groups such as the Bloomsbury Group, which was a pacifist and liberal club full of intellectual people, or the Memoir Club,

¹ Jane Goldman, *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1-11.

² Christina Schlüter, *Home and Family Life in Victorian England*, (Munich: Leuphana Universität Lüneburg, 2008), 12.

also called ‘Old Bloomsbury,’ which was, for the most part, made up of the original members of the Bloomsbury Group. The Memoir Club’s main purpose was to be as frank as possible.

The marriage of Woolf was based on mutual support and being partners, not on physical attraction. To quote Beth Kephart: “Leonard, to Virginia, was a stabilizing force—a refuge, a sanctuary—to which, after the wide-eyed wilderness of forging something new, wrestling the beast, finding the word, she could return”.³ Leonard stood by Virginia’s side all the time, throughout their whole life together, even in the darkest times when she suffered from breakdowns. Virginia herself called him an ‘inviolable centre’⁴. He was committed only to her; despite she was not. Notwithstanding the fact that Virginia had a safe place in Leonard, she was sexually attracted to Vita Sackville-West, an English writer. Vita chose to publish her work in Woolf’s Hogarth Press, through which they met.⁵ In 1925, they began having an affair and this relationship had been an inspiration for both of their writing.

When the bombs started to fall on London in 1940, Virginia was able to save her diaries but faced a hard depression and mental struggle. Eventually, she committed suicide on 28 March 1941 by drowning herself. Many discuss the actual reason for taking her life, but Leonard wrote to the press: “She took her life, not because she could not ‘carry on’, but because she thought she was going mad again and would not this time recover.”⁶

1.1 Virginia’s Works

Virginia Woolf’s repertoire is vast and impressive. In her early years, she had been writing *The Hyde Park Gate News*, a weekly paper, along with her siblings. Despite the fact that she did not write her own autobiography, Virginia’s whole life was associated with literature and writing, which is evidenced by her daily notes.⁷ The diaries formed a noticeable part of Virginia’s life. She began the very first one when she was 15 years old. At that point in time, she was writing about daily activities, and this initial work of hers was reviewed by her father. She began writing diaries and journals in her teenage years. And these are the ones that can give the most accurate insight into her life and mind. As they are a great tool for getting the most personal information and feelings about Virginia, many analysts and

³Beth Kephart, “What Passes For Love: On the Marriage of Leonard and Virginia Woolf,” *Literary Hub*, October 10, 2020, <https://lithub.com/what-passes-for-love-on-the-marriage-of-leonard-and-virginia-woolf/>.

⁴ Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol.5: 1936-1941, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1984), 9.

⁵ Suyin Haynes, “What to Know About Virginia Woolf’s Love Affair With Vita Sackville-West,” *Time*, August 23, 2019, <https://time.com/5655270/virginia-woolf-vita-sackville-west-relationship/>.

⁶ Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996), 766.

⁷ Goldman, *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf*, 5.

students can enjoy her fascinating thinking, writing, and life situations of hers through her notes.

Virginia's talent was used to write multiple genres such as novels, short stories, biography, essays, letters, diaries, or notebooks. *Melymbrosia*, later renamed *The Voyage Out*, was the first novel written by Virginia, and it was published in 1915. It is set in a place she had never been, and that is South America. Her main goal was to 'reform the novel' and 'capture multitudes of things at present fugitive'.⁸ Two years later, *Kew Gardens* was written, which was an experimental story, and it was later followed by the second novel *Night and Day*, characterized as the longest fiction of Woolf's, which is dedicated to Vanessa, her sister.⁹ Virginia continued writing and publishing experimental short stories such as *Monday or Tuesday* in 1921, then *Jacob's Room* in 1922, which were both published by Woolf's Hogarth Press. By that time, Virginia was known as a literary critic and an avant-garde writer. In 1925, one of her most popular and well-known novels *Mrs Dalloway* was published, with the main character Clarissa Dalloway. Soon after, *To the Lighthouse* came into the world, in 1927. It is divided into three parts and the whole novel is highly poetic.¹⁰ Her other work, *A Room of One's Own*, includes a description of fiction, which is like 'a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners'.¹¹ Virginia portrayed Vita Sackville-West in the 1928' novel *Orlando: A Biography*, which was so personal that Woolf decided to ask for Vita's permission. Three years later, *The Waves* was published, the most difficult text with modernist features. Leonard Woolf noted this was the best book that Virginia had written.¹² The novel, where Virginia came back to a conservative novelistic structure, *The Years*, was published in 1937. It is worth mentioning Woolf's last piece of work that had been finished, which is *Between the Acts*. It was published in 1941 by her husband, shortly after she died. Nevertheless, the very last one is an unfinished memoir called *A Sketch of the Past*.

⁸ Virginia Stephen, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 1: 1888-1912, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautman (London: Hogarth Press, 1975), 356.

⁹ Goldman, *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf*, 47.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹¹ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, (London: Hogarth Press, 1929).

¹² Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol.4: 1931-1935, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1977), 36.

1.2 Virginia Woolf's Type of Writing

The style of writing had been changing throughout Virginia's life.¹³ As she started fulfilling her writing talent, she first followed the trend, which was not well accepted by people. Her early novels such as *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day* were based on upper-middle-class characters without a doubt about their sexuality, sensibility, or existence. Not until the release of *Jacob's Room* does her writing change; there is the first appearance of her playing with interior monologues and being an ambitious writer.¹⁴ An example of an internal monologue from *Jacob's Room* is: "The sea holly would grow through the eye-sockets; it would turn to powder, or some golfer, hitting his ball one fine day, would disperse a little dust—No, but not in lodgings, thought Mrs. Flanders. It's a great experiment coming so far with young children. There's no man to help with the perambulator. And Jacob is such a handful; so obstinate already,"¹⁵ where the monologue is Mrs. Flanders' thinking.

The change in Woolf's writing was not purely based on her own perception, but on the influence of others as well. As previously mentioned, the relationship she had with Vita made a significant impact on *Orlando*. But from, not just, the sexual aspect, there was a mark left by Sigmund Freud as well. They met in 1939, but Virginia was already familiar with him through publishing his works in Hogarth Press. Freud in a series of essays describes how a girl goes through her sexuality; through her parents, lovers to access her true desires. His influence can be seen in *Mrs Dalloway*, where Clarissa runs from Sally to Peter. In this way, Virginia used Freud's concept but changed it to the relationship between young adults.¹⁶ Mark Goldman says that sexuality was not the only thing that bothered Woolf, but also traditional standards and the damage in modern literature.¹⁷

In *Mrs Dalloway*, Virginia perfects the stream of consciousness and is referred to as a stream of consciousness writer. Nonetheless, there is no general agreement among writers and critics in terms of defining the term stream. Many argue that there is a difference between it and interior monologue, some disagree.¹⁸ One of the definitions of stream of

¹³ Anna O. Frank, *The Philosophy of Virginia Woolf: A Philosophical Reading of the Mature Novels*, (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2002).

¹⁴ Nasrullah Mamrbol, "Analysis of Virginia Woolf's Novels," *Literary Theory and Criticism*, June 1, 2019. <https://literariness.org/2019/06/01/analysis-of-virginia-woolfs-novels/>.

¹⁵ Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell, *Jacob's Room*, (London: Hogarth Press, 1922).

¹⁶ Elizabeth Abel, *Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989).

¹⁷ Mark Goldman, *The Reader's Art: Virginia Woolf as Literary Critic*, (The Hague: Mouton, 1976).

¹⁸ James Naremore, *The World Without a Self*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973).

consciousness is described in *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* as follows: “Stream of consciousness is a phrase coined by William James in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890) to describe the narrative methods whereby certain novelists describe the unspoken thoughts and feelings of their characters without resorting to objective or conventional dialogue.”¹⁹ The definition of interior monologue also varies depending on the author. Merriam-Webster notes that an interior monologue is: “A usually extended representation in the monologue of a fictional character’s thought and feeling.”²⁰ Virginia uses interior monologue in most of her works, therefore *Mrs Dalloway* is no exception.²¹ James Naremore gives various definitions and opinions, but the overall result is that Virginia was a master of stream of consciousness and of interior monologue as well.

“Fear no more the heat O’ the sun nor the furious winter’s rages”

The sentence above is an example of an interior monologue of what Clarissa, the heroine of *Mrs Dalloway*, thinks. It is a statement that appears several times throughout the novel and has its origin in Shakespeare’s play *Cymbeline*. Another literary device used by Woolf is symbolism, which means: “Symbolism is the use of symbols to signify ideas and qualities by giving them symbolic meanings that are different from their literal sense” according to the 4th edition of *Cambridge Learner Advanced Dictionary*. An example is a pocketknife that Peter carries, which can be seen as a symbol of masculinity.

1.3 Woolf’s Narratological Creation of Character

Narratology is “the study of structure in narratives,” as stated in Merriam-Webster.²² While using techniques such as stream of consciousness or interior monologue, Virginia allows the reader to see what is happening inside the character’s minds, in which way one can explore the true, deep nature of a character. However, Virginia criticized the society of the time as superficial, which she wanted to portray in her characters.²³ At first, they seem to be shallow but tend to express their feelings and inner emotions through their thinking, which is only available to the readers and, if there is a narrator to him/her as well.

¹⁹ Margaret Drabble, *Oxford Companion to English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 944.

²⁰ Interior Monologue. 2022. In *Merriam-Webster.com*. Accessed March 30, 2022, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/interior%20monologue>.

²¹ William A. Evans, *Virginia Woolf: Strategist of Language*, (Lanham: University of Press of America, 1989), 71.

²² Narratology. 2022. In *Merriam-Webster.com*. Accessed April, 26, 2022, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/narratology>.

²³ Berenice A. Carroll, “To Crush Him in Our Own Country: The Political Thought of Virginia Woolf,” *Feminist Studies*, Vol.4, No. 1 (1978), 116, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3177627>.

The perfect illustration of Virginia's thoughts and techniques used to create a character is described in her classical essay *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*, which was published in 1924.²⁴ This essay was written as a response to an article of Arnold Bennett. Arnold was an English writer, who was one of the harshest critiques of Virginia's works. In his article, he argues that writers in the 20th century were not successful in writing good novels due to their inability to create characters (who are the core of every fiction). Virginia decided to answer Bennett's article by writing an essay, that includes a story of her journey from Richmond to Waterloo. In this story, Virginia names the characters as Mrs Brown, who represents a character-creating, and Mr Smith. After the tale, Woolf mentions that it is not just about the narration of a character, but also about the temperament of a reader as well. "You see one thing in character, and I another. You say it means this, and I that."²⁵ She proceeds by stating that a character can be seen in various ways. Freddie Moore summarizes the rules of character-creating mentioned in *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown* into ten points: practice character-reading, examine others, listen, write a character with two very different characterizations (big and small simultaneously), mention people who make a great appearance, remember a character is not just a description, give your characters shallow standards of their time, the protagonist should be in the middle of all, find similarity between you and your characters, and narrate your characters as beautifully as possible.²⁶ It may be seen as a passive-aggressive way of showing and explaining the work behind character-creating to the main recipient, Arnold Bennett.

Virginia lets readers find the true essence of characters and accepts the fact, that the public may not like her work and characterization. Nonetheless, she argues that if you create a convincing character, it may break down barriers and persuade readers. One of the rules that Freddie Moore mentions is shallowness. At first, some characters created by Virginia may seem shallow, but she argues that for example Mrs Brown, "changes on the surface" and it is the author who is allowed to travel in and out.²⁷ Woolf lets the characters be complex and lets readers find the complexion of the figures by themselves.

²⁴ Goldman, *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf*, 106.

²⁵ Virginia Woolf, *Mr. Bennet and Mrs. Brown*, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1924),10.

²⁶Freddie Moore, "Virginia Woolf's Advice on Creating Memorable Characters," *The Airship*, <http://airshipdaily.com/blog/03102014-virginia-woolf-writing-advice>.

²⁷ Goldman, *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf*, 109.

2 MRS DALLOWAY

Mrs Dalloway is a novel published in 1925 by Virginia Woolf.²⁸ The book contains no chapters, but the reader can see the separation of the text by spacing. The story describes one day, from morning to night, in London after World War I and is focused mainly on two characters: Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith, and the narration moves between them. But the centre of the novel is Clarissa. Reading through the story one can figure out that living at that time was convenient for the middle and the upper class, where Mrs Dalloway belonged. She was able to do nearly anything she wanted in her spare time, for example throwing a party, which is one of the events that the book is based on. As a host, Clarissa has to make the preparations and cares about the party the most. Despite having a full head of her event, Clarissa is implicitly concerned about her relationship not just with her husband, but also with Peter. Since the narration shifts between characters, on the other hand, Septimus suffers from shell shock and spends time with his wife Lucrezia. He is diagnosed as being mentally ill and has to be transferred to a mental institution. Nevertheless, before the transportation, Septimus commits suicide. Regarding Clarissa, she is not satisfied with how her party turned out and is more concerned that the news about Septimus would ruin it even more. After all, Clarissa is deeply affected by the news of the death and thinks about this terrible incident privately in a small room. The novel ends with guests leaving and Peter waiting for Clarissa to come back, which she eventually does.²⁹

2.1 Main Characters in Mrs Dalloway

In *Mrs Dalloway*, two main characters are in the foreground: Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith. Clarissa is a middle-aged heroine of the novel and an upper-class wife to Richard Dalloway, the Member of Parliament.³⁰ She is pictured as a simple-minded woman, who cares only about her party, but the reader can find out that she is not as shallow as it first seems. A deeper analysis of Mrs Dalloway will be covered in the next chapter.

Septimus Warren Smith also occupies an important position in the book. Since the story shows us his inner processes and surroundings, one can deduce that Septimus is mentally ill due to the consequences of World War I. Rather than living to the fullest, he is

²⁸ Goldman, *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf*, 54-57.

²⁹ Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, (London: Hogarth Press, 1925).

³⁰ Jin Wang and Xiaoyu Xie, "Traumatic Narrative in Virginia Woolf's Novel *Mrs. Dalloway*," *English Language and Literature Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2017), 19, <https://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ells/article/view/65902>.

trapped in his mind and sees and hears things that are not present, he especially talks with Evans, his dead friend killed in the War. Septimus does not have high hopes for the world and instead of forcing himself to spend time in a mental institution, he jumps from the window to escape from his problems.

Another figure in the novel is Peter Walsh. Peter is an old indecisive friend of Clarissa's, who once asked her to marry him. Unfortunately, she refused, and Peter never recovered from that rejection. Notwithstanding the fact that he cannot figure out what he really wants, he travelled from India to London and met with Clarissa. He is still important to her and due to this fact, also, attends her party, where he seems slightly critical considering the question of why it is extremely important to Clarissa, but eventually waits for her after the guests leave.³¹

The last character that should be mentioned is Sally Seton. Like Peter, Sally is also an old acquaintance of Clarissa, and Peter as well. She is now married to a wealthy man and although she once was a radical lady going toward changing the world, she had taken a step back from English society and calmed down.³² She is not physically present until the party but appears across the novel through Clarissa's memories. The women have always been close and cared about themselves despite not seeing one another for a long time. Sally plays an important role in the life of Mrs Dalloway. Clarissa still recalls their one and only kiss as "the most exquisite moment of her life."

³¹ Annalee Edmondson, "Narrativizing Characters in Mrs. Dalloway," *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2012), 17-36, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/jmodelite.36.1.17>.

³² Matt Cosby, "Mrs Dalloway." *LitCharts LLC*, August 11, 2014. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/mrs-dalloway>.

3 ANALYSIS OF MRS DALLOWAY

This chapter will focus on the character Clarissa Dalloway and will analyse her psychological complexity from various points of view and aspects. As she is a complex and difficult heroine, she will be covered in four subchapters specializing in analyses of different parts of hers.

3.1 Inner Life and Social Status

The novel *Mrs Dalloway* uses an omniscient third-person narrator as an external voice without the actual interference with the story and Clarissa as an internal voice.³³ Through this division of narration, the reader can see the difference between what Clarissa thinks and what she actually does. The technique that is used by Virginia Woolf to show the contrast in behaviours is called an indirect interior monologue, a type of interior monologue which keeps a certain distance despite the fact it is narrated.³⁴ Since this literal instrument is occupied by ambiguity, it is challenging to keep up with the narrator and remain sober while figuring out what is the moment that is being described.³⁵ This applies to the main characters as well, and an example is a passage from the party when Sally sees Clarissa Dalloway:

All on top of each other, embarrassed, laughing, words tumbled out—passing through London; heard from Clara Haydon; what a chance of seeing you! So I thrust myself in—without an invitation...

Sally Seton points out her emotions after seeing Clarissa but mentions the happenings that are not present, such as hearing Clara Haydon while walking in London. After this excerpt, the reader is thrown back into the story thanks to the description of Clarissa and Sally's greetings to each other.

Clarissa's inner life is narrated through her thoughts and untold emotions. She is a very uncertain and indecisive woman. Her insecurity can be connected with her not knowing about geography, and politics, but also with the feelings of being judged and not being involved. She was judged by Peter in their youth and when Peter comes to London, to her party, she still feels criticized by him although he is not doing anything to prove her concerns. An example of Clarissa's impression of being seen in a bad light is Peter's saying and hers thinking as follows: "' And what's all this?' he said, tilting his pen-knife towards her green

³³ Anna Snaith, "Virginia Woolf's Narrative Strategies: Negotiating between Public and Private Voices," *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1996), 134, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3831471>.

³⁴ "Analysis of Virginia Woolf's Novels," *Fiction Notes*, June 20, 2016. <https://www.darcypattison.com/writing/characters/character-thoughts/>.

³⁵ Snaith, "Virginia Woolf's Narrative Strategies: Negotiating between Public and Private Voices," 135.

dress. He's very well dressed, thought Clarissa; yet he always criticises me.” Or a passage hours after their meeting:” But suppose Peter said to her, ‘Yes, yes, but your parties—what's the sense of your parties?’” This is an imaginative conversation between Clarissa and Peter when she is thinking about how she can be judged by him now, and the answer is the party. Nevertheless, she is unsure about if the social gathering will be successful and at the beginning of the event thinks it is a disaster and nobody is having fun, although people wish to throw a party as good as hers by naming it a “successful” one.³⁶ She is insecure that Peter would not be interested in the event for she cared very much. Another example of her uncertainty is meandering around after discovering that her husband Richard is going to have lunch with Lady Bruton without her, his wife. The narrator reports Clarissa’s reaction such as: “she had stood shiver, as a plant on the river-bed feels the shock of a passing oar and shivers: so she rocked: so she shivered.”³⁷ Her indecisiveness will be covered in the subchapter focusing on her relationships.

Despite the fact that Clarissa is a middle-aged woman married to a wealthy politician Richard, she lacks knowledge about geography and does not care about her husband’s work. The narrator admits her insufficient education in the passage: “Not that she thought herself clever, or much out of the ordinary. How she had got through life on the few twigs of knowledge Fräulein Daniels gave them she could not think. She knew nothing; no language, no history; she scarcely read a book now, except memoirs in bed; and yet to her, it was absolutely absorbing; all this; the cabs passing; and she would not say of Peter, she would not say of herself, I am this, I am that,”³⁸ which shows how poor was the female education at that time. When thinking about politics, it could be said that she thought the men are the ones who are interested in politics, due to the fact that the narrator mentions Clarissa’s musings that perhaps she should be like Lady Bexborough, who knows as much about politics as men do.

Fear no more the heat o’ the sun
Nor the furious winter’s rages.

On any occasion Clarissa’s anxiety appears, she mentions the passage above from Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*. In the play, it displays the celebration of death.³⁹ Virginia uses

³⁶ Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 126.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁹ Vagisha Mishra and Anoop Tiwari, “The Gerascophobic Treatment of Clarissa Dalloway in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*: A Semantic Analysis,” *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (2018), 327, <https://doi.org/10.22161/ijels.3.3.5>.

Shakespeare's words in order to show the contrast between life and death by implying the saying to Clarissa and Septimus. It is not the only reference to the English playwright and poet Clarissa uses, but this one appears more frequently. The quote, in Mrs Dalloway's case, refers to life, hope and a fountain of motivation. Septimus' use of the passage represents death.⁴⁰ The first time when the reader can see Mrs Dalloway in contact with the extract from *Cymbeline* is at the very beginning of the story, when she reads that passage in the window of the bookshop. Furthermore, she whispers the saying to herself after discovering her husband went to have lunch with Lady Bruton, which deeply hurts her. By recalling the "fear no more" it brings her the feeling to calm down and that everything will be okay; her husband will not leave her just as a consequence of spending time with another woman.⁴¹ Another moment when Clarissa refers to the "Fear no more" is at the end of the novel, a moment after escaping to the room to think quietly about Septimus Warren Smith's death. When she is looking out of the window, watching an old lady turning her lights out, she remembers the quotation which implies the reassurance that even in the dark there is hope; it brings out there is a beauty in life, and it is worth living.⁴² Leonardo Mendes argues that the very last moment mentioned was the time when Clarissa "had found a place for death in the economy of existence (and the party)," which means she accepts death as a part of life.⁴³

3.2 Live or Die

Mrs Dalloway is tightly linked to death. Septimus' suicide plays a big role in the novel, but from Clarissa's point of view, death follows her throughout her life. She saw her sister die, which is not much described in the story, but based on the moral aspect, it has left a scar on Clarissa's soul.

One point of the analysis is shallowness, which can be used in the concept of death. The definition found in the Cambridge dictionary is as follows: "Shallowness is the fact of not showing serious or careful thought."⁴⁴ At the beginning of the novel, a reader may think

⁴⁰ Asad Hassan, "Shakespeare's Shadow in Mrs Dalloway."

⁴¹ Jean M. Wyatt, "Mrs. Dalloway: Literary Allusion as Structural Metaphor," *PMLA* 88, no. 3 (1973): 446. <https://doi.org/10.2307/461524>.

⁴² Cat Pieroo, "Something is Sought," *Hypocrite Reader*, June, 2011, <https://hypocritereader.com/5/something-is-sought>.

⁴³ Leonardo Mendes, "Death and Contentment in Virginia Woolf's War Novels," *Revista E-Scrita: Revista do Curso de Letras da UNIABEU*, 2010, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/47807552_Death_and_contentment_in_Virginia_Woolf%27s_war_novels.

⁴⁴ Shallowness. 2022. In *Cambridge Dictionary*. Accessed April 10, 2022, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/shallowness>.

Clarissa is an empty character who lacks emotions. But after getting deeper into the story, she shows feelings through her thoughts that may not seem that profound. The perfect example is the suicide of Septimus Warren Smith. When Clarissa overhears that a man committed suicide, although she does not know him, she first thinks that it is a bad sign for the party, bringing death to her doorstep as it may ruin the event, which seems morally insensible. The reason for such thinking can be the idea that Clarissa has about the event, which is a celebration of life. She was furious after realizing people are talking about the dead man at her social gathering. Although the news might ruin the party, she feels the grief. Shortly after her emotions ignite, Clarissa comes into a small room, which can be represented as her inner life due to the closer access to her mind.⁴⁵ She realizes there the passing was a “defiance and way to communicate.” The meaning is hidden and can be seen as an act of bravery leaving the world this way. While staggering around the room, she remembers one time in her life when she said to herself “‘If it were now to die, 'twere now to be most happy,’” which will be analysed with a focus on her relationships as well. Speaking about feeling the sorrow, Clarissa recalls this saying when dealing with concerns regarding if Septimus died as a happy person “holding his treasure,” which means she cares about what kind of circumstances led to this unfortunate event.⁴⁶ A person deeply touched by hearing the loss of another human and this unfortunate event bringing up the previous thought of suicide does not lack emotions. This person is Clarissa.

Before leaving the room and joining the party once again, Clarissa sees an old lady across the street. This is a contrast between the noise coming from the party and the piece from the lady’s apartment. The woman is going to sleep, and Clarissa watches her and her movements around. By hearing about the death of Septimus and observing the old neighbour, she realizes that life is not quite unbearable if in times of noise one can find the calm. Charlotte Hallahan from the University of East Anglia connects the passing of Septimus and Clarissa’s perception as Clarissa’s “resurrection, her rebirth.” Due to the realization of suicide, she realizes that life is remarkable.⁴⁷ As a consequence of the influence that suicide left, Clarissa wants to reconnect with her friends whose friendship was thought to be lost,

⁴⁵ Rachel Hatfield, “She Must Assemble: The Inner Life in Mrs. Dalloway”, *The Evergreen State College*, 2016. <https://sites.evergreen.edu/eyeofthestory/rachel-hatfield-she-must-assemble-the-inner-life-in-mrs-dalloway/>.

⁴⁶ Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 130.

⁴⁷ Charlotte Hallahan, “Death Comes to the Party: Virginia Woolf’s Mrs Dalloway,” *The Modernist Review*, 2021. <https://modernistreviewcouk.wordpress.com/2021/06/01/death-comes-to-the-party-virginia-woolfs-mrs-dalloway/>.

because life is precious and too short. For that reason, she comes back to the party. This action can be connected to Septimus as well. Clarissa said that death is a way to *communicate* and the passing of Septimus itself forced her to *communicate* and reunite with her friends.

3.3 Relationships

Clarissa's relationships and love life are complicated. The beginning of her complexity is found in her youth when she was in close touch with Peter Walsh and Sally Seton. Clarissa eventually came to a path of security and certainty, but what preceded was her inner fight about what way to actually take and if she should follow her heart or brain.

The main relationships of Clarissa are represented by three people: Peter Walsh, Sally Seton, and Richard Dalloway, and they also provide their points of view on Clarissa. Peter and Sally, as they are friends of hers from their youth, had left a big mark on her. Both of them are still important to her and stand for the passionate past untransformed into the future. With Peter, Clarissa had a close relationship on the level of knowing each other's thinking: "They had always this queer power of communicating without words."⁴⁸ Clarissa has always liked him, but not in the way Peter liked her. She was searching for "a little independence" within the relationship, which was provided by Richard but not Peter. With Peter, "everything had to be shared." He was in love and wanted to be with her for the rest of their life, but Clarissa refused and broke up with him. She was not happy about their split-up but the exact opposite: she was anxious and horrified. An example is her disapproval and outrage after discovering that Peter married an Indian woman on the boat. But she justifies their separation as a thing that had to be done, otherwise they "would have been destroyed, both of them ruined."⁴⁹ After years of not seeing each other, Peter comes to London and visits her in her house. He is pleased to hear her call him "My dear Peter." While talking, the present and the past overlap as Clarissa recalls her decision not to marry him and if it was the right one. Eventually, she thanks God for her choice to go for Richard. Although it would not have been so without Peter's pushing Clarissa to decide between him and Richard, which shows her indecisiveness. Nevertheless, their breakup left a scar on both of their souls.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 43.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁰ Mieke Schüller, "*Mrs Dalloway*" in *Love*, (Munich: GRIN Verlag, 2005).

Mentioning Richard, he is Clarissa's husband. Wealthy politician, father of Elizabeth, her only child. He could provide what Clarissa really wanted: independence, social status, and stability.⁵¹ In him, she has a partner everyone dreams about. He loves her, but it is not a perfect relationship. They are together for a long time and no longer share a bedroom, due to the illness Clarissa experienced; Richard figured it would be best to sleep separately in order to make Mrs Dalloway's health better. The thing missing the most between them is passion and the ability to express their love toward each other. "Here he was walking across London to say to Clarissa in so many words that he loved her. Which one never does say, he thought. Partly one's lazy; partly one's shy," is a thought of Richard after the lunch with Lady Bruton. He wants to tell his wife how he feels about her but is unable to do so.⁵² From Clarissa's position, a reader does not know how precisely she feels about her husband. One can infer from her thoughts that the marriage is uninteresting and thanks to Richard's inability to say what kind of feelings he has, she thinks that he does not love her.⁵³ However, reading through the novel and seeing how Richard decides to buy Clarissa flowers and to tell her what is on his mind, makes Clarissa's assumption untrue and contrived. Her husband may not show his affection enormously, but to say he does not try is false. He once bought her a bracelet, and she never wore it, which Richard remembers clearly: "She never wore it. It pained him to remember that she never wore it."⁵⁴ The invisible problem of their marriage can be seen not just by Clarissa's blindness to his efforts, but also by her insecurity. As mentioned earlier, Richard was asked to have lunch with Lady Bruton, which highly hurt Clarissa. Not the idea that he was invited, but that fact he went without her, his wife. While speaking to Peter, Clarissa suddenly remembers that her husband is not home and starts having feelings that he has left her and she will not be with anyone for eternity; not being loved neither by Richard nor by Peter: "and Richard, Richard! She cried, as a sleeper in the night starts and stretches a hand in the dark for help. Lunching with Lady Bruton, it came back to her. He has left me; I am alone for ever, she thought, folding her hands upon her knee." In one passage in the book, Clarissa tries to hearken back to what she likes, and she mentions: "her husband, Elizabeth, herself, in short," which is the closest direct

⁵¹ "Mrs Dalloway," *Great Works II*, March, 2015,

<https://blogs.baruch.cuny.edu/mhusseyspring2015greatworks/?m=201503&paged=2>.

⁵² Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 1986), 122.

⁵³ "Richard Dalloway's Relationship with Clarissa," *Delving into the 20th Century Novel*, September 17, 2015, <http://mehultwentiethtcenturynovel.blogspot.com/2015/09/richard-dalloways-relationship-with.html>.

⁵⁴ Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 82.

statement about her feelings towards her husband. In any case, their relationship is stable and secure, however without visible passion and lust.

The last person in Clarissa's relationship triangle is Sally Seton. Sally, the same as Peter, played a great role in her youth and emotions. As stated, she was the one with who Clarissa experienced "the most exquisite moment of her life." That describes the time when Sally kissed her on the lips. It happened when they were young, before the time Clarissa met Richard. Sally represents the possible happiness Clarissa could have. The kiss is immensely memorable to her, thereupon thinking back to that point, she says: "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, wrapped up, which, as they walked (up and down, up and down), she uncovered, or the radiance burnt through, the revelation, the religious feeling!"⁵⁵ Mrs Dalloway does not recall any other moment in such a manner in the novel. The diamond symbolizes homosexuality⁵⁶ and is later mentioned when Clarissa sees herself in the mirror as a diamond: "she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond."⁵⁷ That may explain why she was equally upset when Peter and old Joseph Breitkopf, one of the quests⁵⁸, interrupted the ecstasy. Clarissa compares the disturbance to the face hitting the wall and being awful. The narrator itself mentions a question regarding Sally "Had not that, after all, been love?" which implies Clarissa truly is in love with Sally. The impression of Clarissa after seeing Sally for the first time was that she cannot stop watching her due to her beauty and interesting image. The fact Sally once ran around naked as a consequence that she forgot the sponge, was extraordinary to Clarissa. Sally told her about sex and social problems, gave her a book, and altogether showed her a different view of living that she did not know earlier. She once mentions how utterly infatuated she is by her: "But nothing is so strange when one is in love,"⁵⁹ as she directly admits her longing. Their relationship is a problematic one as Clarissa confesses her affections, but Sally does not so. The only mention of interest in Clarissa may show Sally's reaction when they meet at Mrs Dalloway's party, where Sally comes without an invitation

⁵⁵ Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 25.

⁵⁶ Goldman, *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf*, 55.

⁵⁷ Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 27.

⁵⁸ "Mrs Dalloway: Characters By Chapters," *Book Companion*, https://www.bookcompanion.com/mrsd_character_list2.html.

⁵⁹ Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 25.

as Lady Rosseter, now married with five children. Sally is looking around and suddenly sees Clarissa which she describes as: “And Clarissa! oh Clarissa! Sally caught her by the arm.” Nevertheless, Michelle Grinstead thinks: “Sally also loves Clarissa, and always will, but because of society neither believed that their love could have been more than a whisper,” which brings the forbidden lesbianism at the time after World War I. In England, the Sexual Offences Acts was implemented in 1967, which justified homosexual acts.⁶⁰ Before that time, homosexuality was disallowed, therefore Clarissa’s decision to marry a man and leave an enjoyment off was a moral and reasonable choice. At the same time, it symbolizes her weakness, which is not being strong enough to dare something. She could be the representative of fearlessness but decided otherwise. Delight and passion are the things that Clarissa does not experience as a middle-aged woman, and Ruth Evans Lane mentions that she finds pleasure within the past, not the present. This may be explained by her comfort with the marriage to Richard and recalling a memory of kissing Sally in the past.⁶¹ At the event, they greet each other by kissing on the cheeks while holding hands. Peter joins them and Clarissa is overwhelmed by their company, and therefore asks them to stay until the other guests leave to catch up with each other. After talking to them, Clarissa remembers all the silly things Sally used to do which brings back the emotion of feeling the warmth that radiated from her.

Sally, being in the middle of Clarissa’s relationships, has been, despite the fact of their passionate past, supporting Peter. As he once was in love with Clarissa, Sally stands by him and even wrote him letters about how she and Clarissa talked about him and applaud him although having an intimate moment with Clarissa. Even at the party, when Sally sits with Peter, Mrs Seton knows how much Peter loves Clarissa just by watching him playing with his knife: “All the time he was thinking only of Clarissa, and was fidgeting with his knife.” As a pillar to Peter, Sally thinks that Clarissa actually loved Peter more than she ever loved Richard.⁶² But simultaneously, she thinks of Clarissa as a “snob” and being “hard on people.” However, the description is carried with Sally from their youth but can be implied to current Clarissa as well. Especially at the party, when she runs away from her former

⁶⁰ “Regulating Sex and Sexuality: The 20th Century,” *UK Parliament*, 2022, Accessed on April 10, 2022, <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/relationships/overview/sexuality20thcentury/>.

⁶¹ Ruth Evans Lee, “The Inscrutable Mrs. Dalloway,” *The Knox College Online Journal of Literary Criticism*, 2002,

https://departments.knox.edu/engdept/commonroom/Volume_Five/number_two/rlane/index.htm.

⁶² Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 137.

friends to talk with other guests. Peter and Sally understand her behaviour but feel left out at the same time.

The quote in the introduction of this thesis: “What does the brain matter compared with the heart?” said Lady Rosseter, who later was revealed as Sally Seton, at the end of the novel. It describes the relationship between not just Richard and Clarissa Dalloway, but between Sally and Clarissa as well. Sally could have meant that although Richard was a decision made based on Mrs Dalloway’s senses, she, Sally, could have been a choice of pure feelings and passion.⁶³ The context preceding the quotation is as follows: “Richard has improved. You are right,” said Sally. “I shall go and talk to him. I shall say goodnight.” This moment is a connection between the heart, represented by Sally, and the mind, characterized as Richard.

‘If it were now to die, ’twere now to be most happy,’ she had said to herself once, coming down in white.”

Here is an interesting part of the book, where Clarissa remembers going downstairs in the white dress to meet Sally. The saying itself represents in many people marriage, as coming down the stairs in white means the woman’s path to the altar in white dress to marry her partner nowadays. However, the line comes from Shakespeare’s *Othello* and refers to the decisions of Clarissa made about a relationship, the same as Othello did as both of them fell deep into their feelings about their significant other. In Clarissa’s case, she remembers the time when she was about to meet Sally, being in love with her, and from Othello’s perspective when he adored Desdemona.⁶⁴ Clarissa remembers the time she was genuinely happy and if about to die, was able to do so as being the exact opposite of sad. This moment is fascinating information a reader gets to know after discovering different points of view of other characters. As Clarissa mentions coming down, she means to have dinner with Sally and is looking forward to it. However, Sally was not the only one present at the table. Richard Dalloway and Peter Walsh were there as well. It is one of the few moments in the novel when all the people representing a part in Clarissa’s relationships were all together in one place and one makes the acquaintance of their feelings through their inner monologues. Clarissa, the one coming down, had in mind Sally only. She was excited to meet her and be with her. From the points of view of people sitting around the table, Peter, for example, still,

⁶³ “What Does the Brain Matter?” Mrs. Dalloway, September 29, 2008, <http://mrsdallowayconcordance.blogspot.com/2008/09/what-does-brain-matter.html>.

⁶⁴ Asad Hassan, “Shakespeare’s Shadow in Mrs Dalloway,” *Princeton University*, 2021. <https://commons.princeton.edu/london/shakespeares-shadow-in-mrs-dalloway/>.

to the time at the party years later, remembers her walk downstairs in the white dress: “the sound of St. Margaret's glides into the recesses of the heart and buries itself in ring after ring of sound, like something alive which wants to confide itself, to disperse itself, to be, with a tremor of delight, at rest—like Clarissa herself, thought Peter Walsh, coming down the stairs on the stroke of the hour in white.” This memory is fixed in his mind and his heart, which may be seen as a contrast of Clarissa’s and Peter’s feelings at that time as Clarissa had eyes only for Sally and Peter just for Clarissa.

Clarissa’s inability to decide and regretting the choices made mainly stand for her relationships. As mentioned, she went for Richard due to the security, but what would happen without Peter’s pushing her to make a choice is, indeed, in the stars. Clarissa plays with the idea of marrying Peter instead of Richard in the past many times throughout the story, which she usually ends up deploring. For example, after greeting Peter at her house, she kisses his hands, which she immediately regrets for no good reason, only assuming due to something he had said in the past.⁶⁵ Apart from that, she feels great regrets about the distance that there is between her and her daughter Elizabeth but knows that at least Elizabeth has a close relationship with Richard.⁶⁶

The overall result of her romantic connection to others is based on the question: “Why Richard, and not Peter Walsh, or Sally?” This subchapter describes Clarissa’s decision to walk the path of life with Richard. Although she had the greatest feelings for Sally only from one summer at Bourton, and at the same time was admired and loved by Richard and, more extensively and openly, by Peter, in the end, went with Mr Dalloway. In Peter, she did not have security or independence and in Sally, there was no open love due to the forbidden homosexuality in England at that time. The decision to go with a wealthy and socially prominent man is reasonable and logical for a woman living in the 1920s’.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 111.

⁶⁶ Somnath Sarkar, “Symbolism in Mrs Dalloway,” *All About English Literature*, September 12, 2021, <https://www.eng-literature.com/2021/09/mrs-dalloway-symbols.html#:~:text=Flowers%20and%20green%20fields%20symbolise,expresses%20his%20love%20for%20Clarissa.>

⁶⁷ “The Marriage of Clarissa and Richard in Mrs. Dalloway by Virginia Woolf.” Kibin, 2022. [http://www.kibin.com/essay-examples/the-marriage-of-clarissa-and-richard-in-mrs-dalloway-by-virginia-woolf-WXVhQBAL.](http://www.kibin.com/essay-examples/the-marriage-of-clarissa-and-richard-in-mrs-dalloway-by-virginia-woolf-WXVhQBAL)

3.4 Narration

Mrs Dalloway is described by other characters, by her thoughts, and feelings. As she is narrated not by direct characterization from, mainly, an omniscient storyteller, she is depicted implicitly. The definition and meaning of implication can be found in *Literary Terms* as: “Indirect or implicit characterization uses behaviour, speech, and appearance, as well as the opinions of other characters.” This type of narration is given to the reader to figure out what are the characters like.⁶⁸ Most of the time, figures are pictured when some of them tell a story or remember a memory, in which they play their part. On many occasions, one event is seen from various perspectives which allow a reader to pick up pieces together and take a full picture. Regarding the psychological complexity of Clarissa, she is perceived differently in other characters’ eyes, due to the fact that Virginia Woolf does not accept only one truth.⁶⁹ Woolf allows the reader to look into Clarissa’s mind to understand her point of view and simultaneously, reveals the opinions of others about Mrs Dalloway’s behaviour. It is sometimes challenging to distinguish between the characters’ and narrator’s voices. By using an implicit characterization of characters, Woolf is leaving it up to the reader to form his/her opinion. It plays a great part in Clarissa’s complexity, as she receives many various facets and appears in different lights. Annalee Edmondson argues that even Woolf herself may not know Clarissa perfectly due to the fact she does not show the whole picture, but rather opens the minds of others to describe a few points of the character.⁷⁰

The behaviour of other figures was partially analysed in the previous subchapter, but based on the examination, one can say Clarissa is different while revealing her deep emotions and while being seen by others. In Peter’s eyes, she is occasionally described as “cold”, even “heartless,” usually when remembering the moment she rejected him.⁷¹ Sally once mentions Mrs Dalloway as a “snob” due to the fact that Clarissa sees Seton’s marriage: as being at a lower level than her own. From Sally’s perspective, Clarissa is behaving this way because she thinks her relationship with her husband is more successful. Nevertheless, Sally cannot comprehend why Clarissa married Richard Dalloway, which can be reasoned as a change in

⁶⁸ “Characterization,” *Literary Terms*, <https://literaryterms.net/characterization/#:~:text=b.&text=Indirect%20or%20implicit%20characterization%20uses,make%20indirect%20characterization%20about%20themselves>.

⁶⁹ Greta Lun, *Perception, Perspective and Moments of Being in Virginia Woolf’s Mrs Dalloway*, (Munich: GRIN Verlag, 2002).

⁷⁰ Annalee Edmondson, “Narrativizing Characters in Mrs. Dalloway,” 21.

⁷¹ Reece Jordan, “The Significance of Narrative Voice in Mrs Dalloway,” *KingNews*, 2016, <https://www.kingnews.org/articles/the-significance-of-narrative-voice-in-mrs-dalloway>.

behaviour from the youth when both of them spoke about marriage as a “catastrophe.” A portrait of mainly positive aspects is described by an omniscient third-person narrator, who reveals at the beginning of the novel that Clarissa was positive and adores “to dance, to ride,” and by Clarissa herself, when she let us access her emotions and thoughts in situations already mentioned, such as the things she likes (her husband and Elizabeth), being happy when in love with Sally, or remembering feelings triggered by happenings around her; this refers to the situation at the opening of the book when Clarissa leaves the flower shop and is taken back down the memory lane thanks to the flowers: to the moment before Sally kissed her and picked up a flower for her, or when hearing the backfiring of a car: her feelings about World War I.⁷² However negative emotions, that provide more in-depth feelings, are activated after hearing the news about Septimus Warren Smith’ suicide. This is the moment when the reader finds out the true nature of Clarissa, as she is in fact sad and tries to find the way out of feeling this way. She eventually does, as she “rebirths” and returns to the party to find her former lovers.⁷³

⁷² James Plath, Gail Sinclair and Kirk Curnutt, *The 100 Greatest Literary Characters*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019), 64.

⁷³ Charlotte Hallahan, “Death Comes to the Party: Virginia Woolf’s Mrs Dalloway.”

CONCLUSION

This bachelor thesis analysed the character of Mrs Dalloway from various aspects regarding her psychological complexity: based on her inner life and social status, the idea of death, relationships with others and the narration done by Virginia. It is important to mention the extraordinary skills Virginia Woolf had possessed in order to describe the behaviour of figures in her works. Due to the fact that Virginia did not believe in the existence of only one truth is pictured in her ability to show inner processes of Clarissa Dalloway and her reflection in others, which is fascinating. She let readers find their own opinions concerning the morality of personalities included in her writings. The techniques she uses the most are stream of consciousness and interior monologue; both build the way to the characters' minds and feelings.

The analysis of Virginia Woolf's works is still relevant, as the psychological complexity in her books is an interesting subject to explore and think about. Although Virginia herself suffered from depression and committed suicide, she chose Septimus Warren Smith to cover the issue related to death and left Clarissa with the idea of choosing life instead.

Clarissa, being a middle-aged woman coming from high society, is in fact a deep and complex character, nonetheless the fact she is seen as a shallow character without the knowledge about geography and politics, who cares only about her party. This bachelor thesis focused on providing proofs to this statement. Clarissa's difficulty of hers is seen through her implicit characterization, indecisiveness, insecurity, and inability to dare something. She struggles with the inner fight concerning anxiety and relationships. Clarissa is not sure about her decision to marry Richard and keeps meandering about the idea of another reality where she would be with Peter or Sally instead. A person reading the novel sees the great love she has for Sally and still remembers the kiss they shared. Despite the fact that homosexuality was not allowed at the time after World War I and Clarissa's urge to be provided with security, eventually led her to marry Richard, a wealthy politician. However, Clarissa is missing a passion and love in her marriage. After all, "What does the brain matter compared with the heart?"

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