

# Power and Madness in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*

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**ABSTRACT:** During centuries, the history is regarded as the best evidence to prove that social networks had a direct effect on madness by acting forces. What are noticeable in the history of madness are the effects of society and various mechanisms of power on the framework of madness. The paper clarifies how Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) visualizes madness in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), for the sake of criticizing various forms of power in her contemporary British society. It considers Michel Foucault's (1926-1984) perspective about power and its strategies to introduce madness and tries to explicate the constructive role of society and power on the establishment of madness and to show how the concept of madness was determined by various mechanisms of power in society. In fact, through her novel Woolf shows the progressive network of power in English society and tries to make an allusion to the prevalent insanity in London after the Great War and to allude to the weaknesses in medical practices in her contemporary society. Septimus Warren Smith, as a shell-shocked soldier or war veteran who is mentally insane, is the horrible impact of a patriarchal society as well as medicine. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf portrays a status in which not only women are restricted but also men are under the dominant forces of the society. Throughout this novel, Clarissa Dalloway, Septimus Warren Smith, Peter Walsh, and others struggle to find a way for communication as well as adequate privacy..

**Keywords:** Power, Madness, Social Networks, Mechanisms of Power, Patriarchal Society.

## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between power and madness is the most important element that can be seen in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925, MD). Society includes a body of individuals who are in common geographical region and under the same political and cultural authority. Moreover, in such a society, individuals have to conform to the norms defined by the society. Someone, who frequently violates against these unwritten rules, is seen as abnormal. On the one hand, society through various mechanisms of power can control and even define everything; on the other hand, it tries to marginalize this group of abnormal people through various and invisible devices. In this respect, what is noticeable in the history of madness is the point that in all societies, in all periods, the status of madness has got a common characteristic and it is the salient fact that it has always been marginalized in every society, or almost, the madman is excluded from all things. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf tries to show the influence of power and society over madness and how they reject madness as an unpleasant feature. The role of society and power in the course of madness and the interaction between power and madness in *Mrs. Dalloway* will be discussed in this paper.

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) believes that power is not a phenomenon but a relation, power is not simply repressive but it is productive, power is not simply a property of the state. Foucault discusses that "[p]ower is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (1978). Foucault sees madness as a product of the society, as a child of social construction more than one of precise psychiatric truth. He believes that madness is not a natural being but it depends on the society in which it was created. He mentions that "[m]adness has become man's possibility of abolishing both man and the world—and even those images that

challenge the world and deform man. It is, far beyond dreams, beyond the nightmare of bestiality, the last recourse: the end and the beginning of everything" (Foucault, 1988).

The central point in this paper is the construction of madness in relation to power and society in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. It clarifies the way by which Woolf, through her novel and her characters such as Clarissa Dalloway, Septimus Warren Smith, Dr. William Bradshaw and Dr. Holmes, shows the complex structures of power in British society. However, it depicts the processes through which Woolf elucidates her experiences of power in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Actually, she makes a comparison between her experiences and the real essence of British patriarchal society. This paper shows how Woolf, by utilizing the idea of bipolar madness, criticizes her contemporary English society. She depicts madness beyond what can be considered merely as a mental illness. Although she tries to show the quality of having mental illness in madness, she endeavors to portray madness as something which can have an identity. In fact, Woolf's main focus is to demonstrate truth through tracing madness in a form of bipolar structure.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The aim of this paper is to illustrate Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* based on social psychological studies, which criticizes England's social system in this novel. Social psychology is the scientific study of issues and problems which are related to psychology and society and how people's thoughts, feelings and behaviors are influenced by their way of life in such societies. For example, Michel Foucault's view on psychological disorder shows how social forces and cultural and social setting have an effect on abnormality of people. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf attempts to perceive the real face of madness different from what is determined by norms and uses the literary language as a good device in order to accentuate the reality of madness. Woolf's principal objective from tracing this particular kind of madness is to use madness as an appropriate tool in the process of social criticism.

The novel is studied based on Foucault's viewpoint which examines madness in historical settings. It focuses on the concept of madness as a product of society and discusses how power and society, in this case, English society, can be effective in the construction of madness. In *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (1988), Foucault examines the evolution of the concept of madness through three phases: "the Classical Age," "the Renaissance," and "the modern age" (Foucault, 1988). He states that during past centuries, madness has been modeled in various forms among knowledge or morality and ultimately as mental illness. He argues that in the Renaissance, the madness was portrayed both in art and literature.

Foucault contends that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, madness, was understood in the context of unreason, and was separated from society. For him the modern experience began at the end of the eighteenth century with the creation of places devoted solely to the control of the madness under the supervision of medical doctors for the purpose of confining undesirables under the protection of society. What Foucault shows in *Madness and Civilization* is the difficulty of finding a place for madness in society during centuries, and of representing how society deals with it. Considering Foucault's theories, this paper wants to examine various mechanisms of power in society, in this case, English society, and also the effects of society and power on the construction of madness, through an analysis of *Mrs. Dalloway* and its characters.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Virginia Woolf was a novelist, essayist, publisher, critic, and above all, she is considered as one of the eminent figures in the modernist and feminist literature of the twentieth century. She was born a Londoner, where she was extremely infatuated. Indeed, her homeland, London was the central point in every aspect of her life; it means both English literature and English landscape were linked to her childhood as well as her artistic life and also appeared in some of her books. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf tries to portray her experience of a patriarchal society as well as to provide a situation in the process of challenging it. It can be considered that the madness depicted by Woolf in this novel has a bipolar characteristic, a mixture of illusion and reality. Moreover, what is obvious is that madness cannot be examined merely as a mental illness but it can be something beyond or something which can be determined by social norms. It should be noted that madness mostly considered as a mental illness can have a logical background simultaneously and this bipolar feature can be a good device in order to challenge the structures of English society.

Septimus Smith's illness is an allusion to the prevalent insanity in London after the Great War, as a result of disappointment and disillusionment toward the British Empire. Although the presence of Septimus can be a device to challenge the power of the upper-class that undermines their belief about the point that war is over. Moreover, Woolf has challenged her contemporary medical practices by means of Septimus, too. It seems that Woolf is victimized through lack of sufficient understanding about her mental illness. Actually, the ways through which Septimus' doctors deal with his madness show both their lack of knowledge in the treatment of mental illness at that

time and the exercise of power. Society has been always trying to suppress or conceal abnormality by means of different mechanisms of power. In this social system, doctors could play the role of power to eliminate the harsh reality of insanity and madness. The British upper-class ignores the actuality of the aftermath of war to preserve power; in fact giving party by the upper-class can be a form of normalization to neutralize the existence of reality whereas madness uncovers the real social problem of mental illness through Septimus' suicide that becomes manifest at their party. Although either Septimus or Clarissa has been escaping from a kind of authority or power that destroyed their soul, it can be said that Clarissa's party is the best portrayal of society which has been challenged. Indeed, Clarissa, by means of giving party and inviting high members of English society who are the symbols of power, including persons like prime minister, provides an appropriate background for madness to reveal itself. Consequently, madness, born by this society, through bipolar feature, creates a situation in which world is forced to question itself, as if madness by uncovering the truth undermines the society.

Power and society in relation to madness

Madness is situated in the realm of mental illness as behaviors characterized by certain abnormal mental or behavioral patterns. Despite that madness can be regarded as a typical form of mental illness it has an essence and nature that can be seen beyond the state of being merely as an illness. What distinguishes madness from other types of mental illness is, as Foucault says, what associates man "with what is deepest in himself, and with what is most solitary" (1988). During past centuries, society through various mechanisms of power had a direct effect on madness. The historical perspective shows that after the eradication of leprosy at the end of the middle ages, another group of people was excluded from their cities among them madmen had a distinctive feature. Foucault believes:

What doubtless remained longer than leprosy, and would persist when the lazar houses had been empty for years, were the values and images attached to the figure of the leper as well as the meaning of his exclusion, the social importance of that insistent and fearful figure which was not driven off without first being inscribed within a sacred circle. (1988)

In fact, madness can be considered just as a reminder of the same meaning that leprosy tried to reflect and yet it can be regarded as the embodiment of the figure it left behind itself. Although the nature of madness has an immanent figure that includes an exceptional and new meaning, the constitution of madness has particular qualities that can be distinctive from other features of social disorders. However, in every society, different structures of the society, power and the prevailing wisdom can define how it is known.

The establishment of the General Hospital at the beginning of the seventeenth century is the absolute incarnation of acting force. The result of such an action demonstrates the effect of society on madness. During the seventeenth century there were a large number of houses of confinement, and madness was linked to it throughout the century and this confinement came to be seen as a natural phenomenon for the madness. While during the Renaissance madness was part of the arts, being especially prominent in literature, in the seventeenth century the most prominent feature of madness was something to be hidden. Actually, confinement can be considered as a way of removing madmen from society.

But the most important point is the directors of these hospitals who had power over people both in and out of the hospital. The point that they have been selected from "the best of bourgeois families" shows the direct exercise of power in society. Foucault states that "[t]his responsibility was entrusted to directors appointed for life, who exercised their powers, not only in the buildings of the Hospital but throughout the city of Paris, over all those who came under their jurisdiction" (1988). It is apparent that the institutions of confinement in their purpose and functioning were not merely as "a medical establishment" but they were as the symbol of the prevailing power or, as Foucault says, "Semijudicial structure," or "order of repression" (ibid 40). In fact, the power that is omnipresent controls trivial elements in social body. The essence of this systematization is such a network which is propagated in community and it becomes evident in various forms. In fact, the directors of these institutions of confinement are authoritative hands of power that applied the order of ruling-class of society in the process of repression; however, houses of confinement were a failure. Foucault mentioned that these houses began to disappear at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

In this way, the idle poor were separated from criminals and the insane people, criminals were to be segregated into prisons and the insane into asylums. Obviously, madness was not liberated; it was just resided in a new land. On the other side, the new institutions and new practices of confinement emerged. This process is led to the emergence of new feature of power justified itself in terms of humanity and in scientific knowledge. In fact madness continued to be excluded, confined and negated, in a new way, freed from chains but still confined, allowed to talk but only of its own guilt. This action is led to assign madness to the realm of psychiatry and it was realized as mental illness. Throughout Madness and Civilization, Foucault insists that madness is not a natural, unchanging being, but rather depends on the society in which it exists. Various cultural, intellectual and economic structures determine how madness is known and experienced. He believes that from the Middle-Ages until the Renaissance, man's idea of

madness has been based on the knowledge of that time. In fact, madness is defined by the interest of power in every period.

### **Woolf and English Society**

In various ways, society has a strong influence on individuals who are the components of that society. In every society, power can be regarded as a crucial device to influence the behavior of people with or without resistance, or as a possession of control, authority or influence over others. However, in the views of some theorists, notably Foucault, power is the ability to create change in society or in the behavior of individuals; it can be positive or negative. Power, for Foucault, is what makes individual what he is. Power is then everywhere, in every relationship and all social relations are various and complex systems of power. Foucault believes that power can be “the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies” (1978). The values that a society imposes on individual through various “mechanisms of power” (Baradaran Jamili, 103) can be considered as the exercise of power in that society. The most important point is that the operations of power cannot be limited to visible and direct forces but the most effective approaches of power can be concluded from invisible and indirect actions.

The life of Virginia Woolf can be considered as a period between Victorian and modern age. But what is more important is that she can be regarded as the product of an upper-middle-class Victorian family: “Virginia was born into a family living according to traditional Victorian values” (Nahrwold, 3). Regarding this point that family is the most important unit of a society and plays an essential role in containing and transferring the values of that society, Woolf’s family can be considered as a perfect model of a Victorian society and its values. Tobias Nahrwold explains that “before World War I the English class system was rigid, a father of a family was usually the patriarch and a mother had to play the household Angel” (2). Her father, Sir Leslie Stephen, was a typical example of a Victorian father, like Mr. Ramsay, and her mother, a symbol of the Victorian woman, has been manifested in Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*. Victorian society was an accurate image of a patriarchal society, and according to Leila Baradaran Jamili, as a typical image of “male-dominated centrality and female-dominated marginality” (106). After the death of her father, she could feel free from his shadow, a feeling that helped her show how much she changed and rebelled against her father’s Victorian frame of mind. In studying her father’s constructive influence on her life, Goldman states that “the domestic dictator was also an intellectual who powerfully shaped her developing intellect” and Woolf herself considers this effect in a sense that “just as a dog takes a bite of grass, I take a bite of him medicinally” (7). Although this male-domination in her life was not just limited to her father, she experienced this sense through her half brother, husband and also her doctors in various degrees.

One of the consequences of such a patriarchal society was that at that time, women had no right to go to school. In this way, Woolf could never go to school or receive a college education. She was extremely resented of this gender discrimination; and later in a letter to Vita Sackville-West, she wrote: “No school; mooning about alone among my father’s books; never any chance to pick up all that goes on in schools—throwing balls; ragging; slang; vulgarities; scenes; jealousies!” (Nicolson, 9). Victorian stereotypes about femininity were not ceased in depriving from right to education but also someone like Dr. Savage believed that education can be “mentally harmful for the lower classes and for intelligent young women rebelling against their natural roles as wives and mothers” (Caramango, 14). Although Woolf was rigorously trained in Greek and had read widely and deeply in the English and American classics and in history as a woman, she disliked the systematized public-school that was the entitlement of the male members of her family and society.

There were darker shadows of this male-dominated rule in her life. She was sexually abused by her half brothers when she was a child both before her mother’s death and afterward. It is considered as a disaster that influenced the rest of her life. Through the lens of this abuse, Hermione Lee sees Woolf as a “victim” (3) of childhood sexual abuse. One of the weak points of British patriarchal society was the lack of proper understanding toward the concept of mental illness. At that time, the term “nerve weakness” (Caramango, 11) referred to various types of mental disorders. It is the same diagnosis that George Savage, a typical of Victorian psychologist and the Stephens’ doctor, recognized about Woolf’s illness. Moreover, the beliefs of a Victorian physician such as Savage can be more regarded as a series of Victorian stereotypes or bias in relation to mental illness. According to Caramango, this kind of treatment of mental illness can only be considered as a “patriarchal attitude toward the organization of a patient’s symptoms, at least when that patient happened to be a woman” (18). Savage’s explanation of some types of mental disorders was in the status of a “defect in moral character” because Savage recognized sanity in the state of “social conformity” (Caramango, 14, 16). It can be seen as a typical attitude of many Victorian doctors.

This viewpoint had an effect on Leonard in the first year of their marriage. Savage offered Leonard to put the routine of her everyday life under his control, since Savage believed that stress can be harmful to her health. In this regard, he ordered Leonard to “to keep visitors, activities, and household stress at a minimum when Virginia was ill

and to make sure she ate well and rested regularly” (Caramango, 20). It is originated in Victorian dogma which believed that patient had to relinquish control to the doctor, especially as a woman, and follow, directions without asking any question. The organization of Victorian society shows the hierarchy of male-domination and the belief that the male is superior to the female in every process. In this hierarchy, there is a common point without any distinctive feature between the role of father in family, or of doctor in a society, or of husband in a private life. In such a society that is under the rules of patriarchy, the theory of female insanity decreased the values of woman as usefulness, Woolf as a woman was faced with an additional challenge.

Woolf's personal life and her work were inseparable, and part of that life was inscribed in every novel and artistic work she wrote. The experiences had influenced every detail of her life and caused to damage part of her life. However, throughout her life, she had a struggle and remarkable endeavor against the stereotypes that restricted her position as a woman. She, as a critic of patriarchal society, tries to criticize nature of those societies that restrict women to the private sphere and preserve woman's position in the status of inferior toward man in society. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf highlights the norms governed by society and the restriction of women to the private sphere:

He would open the door of the drawing-room or nursery, I thought and find her among her children perhaps, or with a piece of embroidery on her knee—at any rate, the centre of some different order and system of life, and the contrast between this world and his own, which might be law courts or the House of Commons, would at once refresh and invigorate; and there would follow, even in the simplest talk, such a natural difference of opinion that dried ideas in him would be fertilized anew. (Woolf, 1977)

She attempts to show that women's position in society is very much a cultural creation and their roles are very much a concept defined by the desires and needs of society. Woolf encourages women to take control of their position in society and be aware of the cultural creation imposed on them. She condemns the British patriarchal culture through her writings and addresses the inequalities between men and women in patriarchal society.

Power and madness in Mrs. Dalloway

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf tries to challenge Victorian English society in a more different way, which is perfect and not one dimensional. She demonstrates a full scale manifestation of the mechanisms of power in English society. In British society, power relationships can be defined as a possession of control, authority or influence over others. Woolf depicts the complex network of power relation pervaded in society and shows an omnipresent power that can control every detail of people's life and their personal experiences. Baradaran Jamili states that Woolf illustrates the nature of power that can govern over “all forms of relationships based on their profitability” (108). According to her, Woolf tries to show “the diverse layers of power lay behind, beneath and upon the surfaces of London” (Baradaran Jamili, 104). In fact, this image of power is the state that Foucault aptly calls the “polymorphous techniques of power” (1987). *Mrs. Dalloway* shows a general form of power that “manifests itself in various forms” (Baradaran Jamili, 112). Actually, in this system, the exercise of power can be “produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another” (Foucault, 1987). This society operates power in the way that it can be everywhere and everything can manifest the shadow of power. In this respect, in English social system, the tactics of power is performed in the process of changing everything regarding to its advantages. Actually, everything is sacrificed in the process of the stability of power.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf attempts to depict power relations and its effects in the patriarchal system of the British society by creating a status in which people seek refuge in their solitude as well as past. Reviewing past memoirs creates a therapeutic state in which they can have a sense of vitality and exuberance, this past gives them something that they lost under the control of power. On the other hand, past can strengthen their sense of lost identity in what she or he was. Power structures can seize the people's real identity and fabricate it in order to be appropriate with the values and norms of power.

Power is announced with the sound of Big Ben clock that propagated in the air. However, the sound disappears its “leaden circles dissolved in the air” (MD, 3). Big Ben, as a symbol of England, sounds out the hour relentlessly, ensuring the passage of time, and the awareness of inevitable death. Time is linked to and controlled by power and ruling-class. Clarissa Dalloway, Septimus Warren Smith, Peter Walsh, and other characters are in the grip of time, and they evaluate the way through which they have spent their lives. In this regard, time can assert its power of separation. Clarissa, in particular, by the passage of time emphasizes how much time has gone by since she was young. This expression recurs many times throughout the novel, indicating how time is ephemeral, despite the sound of Big Ben. Rezia, Septimus' wife, says to Septimus as they sit in the park waiting for the doctor's appointment on Harley Street:

‘It is time,’ said Rezia. The word ‘time’ split its husk; poured its riches over him; and from his lips fell like shells, like shavings from a plane, without his making them, hard, white, imperishable words, and flew to attach themselves to their places in an ode to Time; an immortal ode to Time. (MD, 50).

In Mrs. Dalloway even if people would not like to remember the passage of time, Big Ben will call to their mind that they are under the control of power as well as close to death. Dramatically, time is represented in the clock of Sir William Bradshaw's Harley Street as a destroyer and the blade that "shredding and slicing, dividing and subdividing" (MD, 73). The systems of power destroy unity and the attachment among human being. People are searching for having a necessary connection with their daily life but they more detract from a mobile life. It can be assumed that British patriarchal society and power have seized time from the people. The daily life has lost its beauty and attractiveness for English people and on the other hand it is going to absurdity.

The main effort of the characters of the novel, particularly Clarissa, is to achieve a sense of communication. Yet, it is a difficult situation to come to a balance between them. In this regard, Clarissa struggles to open the way for communication and gives parties in an attempt to invite people together. Moreover, Clarissa and Richard have a moment of communion before her party but each of them thinks of his failure towards the other. Clarissa thinks that "she had failed him, one at Constantinople," and Richard "could not bring himself to say that he loved her; not in so many words" (MD, 84). Even though he says, "it is a thousand pities never to say what one feels" (MD, 83), he is ultimately unable to do so. Peter Walsh has also trouble putting his emotions into words. He cannot clearly express what he thinks about Clarissa and is also confused about his feelings toward her.

Actually, the patriarchal power has castrated their sense of life as well as communication. Meaningful connections in this disjointed postwar world are not easy. Ultimately, Clarissa sees Septimus' death as an act of communication. In spite of the fact that English people try to pass the traditional values but they are stunted in that convention. Alex Zwerdling (1932) states that "[t]he sense of living in the past, of being unable to take in or respond to the transformations of the present, makes the governing class in Mrs. Dalloway seem hopelessly out of step with its time" (123). It can be seen that Clarissa's strong memories are related to Bourton which was a conventional Victorian home. However, Clarissa's choice of places to walk signifies her choice of lives. In this regard, about Bourton she says "I never go there now" (MD, 30). Clarissa intended to transcend the limits of society and traditions; she was a radical, read John Tyndall (1820-1893) and Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895), and as young women she and Sally talked about "how they were to reform the world" (MD, 24). Clarissa as an English woman and even as one of the members of the ruling-class cannot release herself from English convention. Ultimately, Clarissa has chosen a conventional life with Richard.

Woolf represents the disappointment of the British Empire while people are limited in a sense of Britishness. She shows this disillusionment when Clarissa was going to buy a book for Evelyn Whitbread: "There were Jorrocks' Jaunts and Jollities; there were Soapy Sponge and Mrs. Asquith's Memoirs and Big Game Shooting in Nigeria, all spread open" (MD, 7). There were many books that all of them refer to British people's honors and its good days:

There were Jorrocks' Jaunts and Jollities; there were Soapy Sponge [...] Ever so many books there were; but none that seemed exactly right to take to Evelyn Whitbread in her nursing home. Nothing that would serve to amuse her and make that indescribably dried-up little woman look, as Clarissa came in, just for a moment cordial. (MD, 7)

Woolf's attitude toward English society is ambivalent, because reading this book intensified people's sense of disillusionment from the values of British imperialism. She shows that through passing the streets of London, there is "something very profound" (MD, 13) both positive and negative. She attempts to criticize the social system as well as to boost the upper-class and to bring them under the question. Woolf demonstrates that the tactics of power and the effect of Victorian conceptions create a status in which English people scorned other nations. She exhibits this sense of contempt in the words of Clarissa:

The horror of the moment when someone told her at a concert that he had married a woman met on the boat going to India! Never should she forget all that! Cold, heartless, a prude, he called her. Never could she understand how he cared. But those Indian women did presumably—silly, pretty, flimsy nincompoops. (MD, 6).

Actually, Woolf shows that English people are under the rules of patriarchal British imperialism as well as they act as the devices of power. Baradaran Jamili states that "they might be under the control of power and act as the imperial lenses" (111). In fact, the aim of power is to create a condition in which everybody or each person is a symbol of power. In this system, everyone is under the forces of power and he or she is a device in the process of applying power.

In this respect, madness through its particular quality can make a space to manifest her aim. She has regarded madness as a specific essence that can have multidimensional features. The sensibility of madness is linked to an identity seized from it; this form of madness was secluded by authority of power and it was perceived under the aegis of its time. Woolf attempts to perceive the real face of madness different from its determined features, and create its pure spectacle. She utilizes the language of literature as a good device in order to accentuate the reality of madness from what was rejected and enveloped under the name of worthless and hallucination.

Woolf portrays a bipolar feature of madness in the state of the mixture of illusion and reality. In fact, she constructs the foundation of her work for the sake of challenging society based on "the interacting illusions of

madness" (Foucault, 1988). She shows madness both merely as a mental illness and puts madness in a position with a logical background. The main effort of Woolf by tracing this particular kind of madness is to use it as an appropriate tool in the process of social criticism. She used authoritative language of madness in order to challenge the social system. She acutely utilizes the same feature that society has been designating to madness in contrast to society itself. She applies the social techniques of power in the process of keeping madness in isolation and also attributing a futile and valueless language to madness in order to criticize society. Actually, Woolf demonstrates truth which is hidden beyond madness like "a strange paradox, what is born from the strangest delirium was already hidden, like a secret, like an inaccessible truth" (ibid 23). She used an indirect language to indicate truth. Bipolar madness creates an equivocal language that can be considered both as real and unreal. Foucault says that "[m]adness begins where the relation of man to truth is disturbed and darkened" (ibid 104). Regarding this specific quality of madness, Woolf unveils the truth hidden under the cover of a city in this case, London, as "a network of developing social and cultural relationships" (Baradaran Jamili, 118) and the truth that is obscured beneath the shadow of power.

In Mrs. Dalloway, Septimus is playing the role of someone whose truth is disclosed through him. Septimus, through his madness, his death and life, unveils the truths that are hidden under the surface of society. Woolf utilizes madness to criticize the structures of English society with a sharp attack to the social system at "its most intense" (Goldman, 54). In Mrs. Dalloway social system in the form of "public-spirited, British Empire, tariff-reform, governing-class spirit" (MD, 55) were very much under attack, and illness is one of its most important themes. Woolf, through portraying Septimus' life, indicates the prevalent insanity after the war in her contemporary society. This widespread insanity in London proclaims the existence of disillusionment in English people. They became hopeless about the values they maintained throughout the time. On the other hand, the general postwar disillusionment can be considered as the government's failure to fulfill its promises.

Septimus is a Great War veteran suffering from shell shock. Prior to the beginning of the war he is described as a sensitive intellectual being matured from "vanity, ambition, idealism, passion, loneliness, courage, laziness, the usual seeds, which all muddled up, made him shy, and stammering, made him anxious to improve himself" (MD, 61). At the onset of the war, Septimus eagerly volunteers for duty because he sees it as his responsibility to protect England, the country of William Shakespeare and Miss Isabel Pole, a lecturer with whom Septimus has fallen in love. After watching the scenery of Evans' death in war, Septimus was apparently unaffected by his death and "congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably" (MD, 62). Septimus believed that his lack of emotion was a sign of strength and courage. But, this repression of feeling is very much the product of upper-class, the power and qualities of Victorian period.

Woolf uses Septimus Warren Smith, to devalue these values in addition to the treatments of early twentieth century medicine. Dr. Holmes, Septimus' first doctor, blatantly ignores Septimus' symptoms and tells his wife Lucrezia to make her husband "take an interest in things outside himself" (MD, 16). Dr. Bradshaw recommends the rest cure by giving him a diet, the same diet was recommended to Woolf when she became mentally unstable. After Lucrezia tells Bradshaw that Septimus said he wanted to kill himself, Bradshaw informs Septimus that he must go into a home where he will lie in a bed in a beautiful country house. This provoked Septimus, who says "'Must,' 'must,' why 'must'?" What power had Bradshaw over him? "What right has Bradshaw to say 'must' to me?" (MD, 105). Septimus does not understand how someone can exercise control over his thoughts and actions. This authority makes Septimus feel as if Bradshaw is trying to stifle him. In the last moments of Septimus' life, he chooses to save his soul from his doctors by jumping to his death from his bedroom window. Septimus kills himself rather than submits himself to the will of his doctors.

It is a coercive process of power represented by Dr. William Bradshaw and Dr. Holmes, the two doctors who try to cure Septimus' mental illness through the manipulative use of their medical powers. Ironically Dr. Bradshaw, throughout his course of treatment, never says that Septimus is suffering from madness; he instead calls it lack of "a sense of proportion" (MD, 65). Dr. Holmes goes even a step ahead to discard all mental illnesses as merely a kind of fear or "nerve symptoms and nothing more" (MD, 65). When Rezia asks him about the diagnosis of her husband, he very calmly replies:

Dr. Holmes examined him. There was nothing whatever the matter, said Dr. Holmes. Oh, what a relief! What a kind man, what a good man! thought Rezia. When he felt like that he went to the Music Hall, said Dr. Holmes. He took a day off with his wife and played golf. Why not try two tabloids of bromide dissolved in a glass of water at bedtime? (MD, 65)

Dr. Bradshaw however feels just the opposite and finds this abnormality in Septimus as serious as a social danger that has to be wiped out at every cost through the power of scientific knowledge. Like Woolf's own doctors, Sir William also insists that Smith is dangerously ill and immediately needs to be quarantined in a sanatorium where

there are no contacts until the patient is healed and recovered. Both the doctors are not aware of the real cause of Septimus' illness and are only interested in exercising their disciplinary power to control someone such as Smith.

Woolf believes that the social construct of normal and abnormal is intimately related to one's capacity to be able to protect and preserve the privacy of one's soul. Septimus could clearly feel this assault on his individuality in the form of Dr. Holmes and Bradshaw. He confesses this onslaught in the following words: "Human nature, in short, was on him the repulsive brute, with the blood-red nostrils. Holmes was on him [...] Once you stumble, Septimus wrote on the back of a postcard, human nature is on you. Holmes is on you" (MD, 66). For all those individuals who dare defy disciplinary gaze of dominant class, and especially to the weak and the sick, like Septimus, Dr. Holmes seemed to stand for the most terrible and evil side of human nature, "something horrible" (MD, 100).

Alex Zwerdling mentions that "the novel is in large measure an examination of a single class and its control over English society the 'governing class' as Peter Walsh calls it" (120). This class can be considered as a force in English society. The advocates of the English class system are pictured extraordinary, like Hugh Whitbread who "had no heart, no brain, nothing but the manners and breeding of an English gentleman," and "[n]o country but England could have produced him" (MD, 5, 53). The political activities of the novel, "Richard's committees, Lady Bruton's emigration project, Hugh Whitbread's letters to the Times" (Zwerdling, 124), are all the exhibition of the authority of ruling-class. They also worship proportion which means atrophy of the heart and emotion. There is a fact in this social system that the entire system is based on the maintenance of the power and wealth of ruling-class. The emigration project of Lady Bruton shows the importance of ruling-class; because it is designed for "young people of both sexes born of respectable parents" (MD, 78). These kinds of managerial skills are used to keep the society stable in a status of proportion and to retain power. In fact, there is a need to domination behind this sense of concern.

Through this novel and through portraying Septimus Smith, Woolf is not only able to explore the nature of insanity but also succeeds in liberating the construct of insanity from its marginal positions. She challenges the position of madness in her contemporary society, and utilizes the knowledge and the attitude of the society in relation to this sort of madness in the approach of making a situation in which society challenges its essence. The brutal exercise of power permeates every level of existence and relationships. Septimus and Clarissa are both fiercely against any kind of authority or domination and are obsessed in their own ways with an essential need for personal autonomy. Both escape from annihilation and "the death of the soul" (MD, 42). Through his suicide, Septimus communicates with Clarissa, who understands his gesture of defiance against an authoritarian society that would force his soul

## CONCLUSION

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf tries to show a full scale exhibition of the mechanisms of power in English society. She depicts the complex network of power relations pervaded in society and shows an absolute power that can control every detail of people's life and also their personal experiences. In this respect, it can be considered that in English social system, the tactics of power are performed in the process of changing everything regarding its advantages. Actually, it can be stated that everything is sacrificed in the process of the stability of power.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf attempts to depict power relations and its effects on the patriarchal system of the British society. She shows how power creates a status in which people try to achieve a sense of communication, while their attempt is futile and they are secluded more than before. English citizens, including Clarissa, Peter, and Septimus, feel the failure of the empire as strongly as they feel their own personal failures. Woolf represents the disappointment of the British Empire while people are limited in a sense of Britishness. On the other hand, Woolf's attitude toward English society is as ambivalent as to show how much English people are under the rule of patriarchal British imperialism and they act as the mechanisms of power.

In every society, different structures of the society, power and the prevailing wisdom can be effective in defining madness. This special attention to madness refers to the remarkable potentiality of madness than other types of mental illnesses. In fact, it can be known beyond what is defined by social norms. The significant point is the performance of this bipolar feature in Woolf's mind which relies on the use of madness as a device to access the truth hidden beneath the numerous veils; and madness creates a noteworthy status to retrieve it. As a matter of fact, madness can be the embodiment of what cannot be clear. For Woolf, madness is a way to achieve truth. Through constructing bipolar madness, Woolf has granted a situation to her readers in which they can explore their own path. Applying madness with a bipolar feature, she tries to achieve a new idea of life as purely as possible. In this way, Woolf's main effort is in the process of exploring a new type of experiencing.



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