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GRADO EN ESTUDIOS INGLESES: LENGUA, LITERATURA Y CULTURA

NOW YOU SEE IT AND NOW YOU SEE IT AGAIN: THE PRESENCE OF PATRIARCHY IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *MRS DALLOWAY* AND *A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN*.

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Abstract

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and *A Room of One's Own* are both highly respected modernist, feminist works. As a modernist writer and a feminist, Woolf believed that gender is socially constructed from birth and gender inequality is reinforced within the family institution even before we become aware of the patriarchal society we have been born into. This study will show how images of patriarchy are paramount to both *Mrs Dalloway* and *A Room of One's Own*, and how Woolf manages to attack patriarchy by using patriarchal imagery as a subversive element against that dominant male presence.

Keywords

Keywords: *Mrs Dalloway*, *A Room of One's Own*, patriarchy, Virginia Woolf, imagery.

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Introduction

In her introduction to the Penguin Modern Classics 1992 edition of *Mrs Dalloway*, American feminist critic Elaine Showalter speaks of the fact that, as a student at Bryn Mawr College in 1961, her own first lecture notes on Virginia Woolf described the writer as “more limited intellectually than James Joyce.” Virginia Woolf’s contribution to literature was, at that time, underestimated and unrecognised. My own situation was similar – a generation younger than Showalter, and studying in the United Kingdom, Woolf was not even included as part of the syllabus. Therefore, before embarking on this degree course, I had only vague notions of Woolf’s life and literary career. The study of *Mrs Dalloway* and *A Room of One’s Own* marked the beginning of a fascination with Virginia Woolf, both as a woman and a modernist, feminist author.

It was decided that the title of this final assignment for this degree course would be “‘Now You See It and Now You See It Again’: The Presence of Patriarchy in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* and *A Room Of One’s Own*.”

As *A Room of One’s Own* was originally a series of lectures which Woolf gave at the female colleges of Newnham and Girton at Cambridge, in 1928, centring on the social, economic and political barriers which women writers have encountered through the ages, the image of patriarchy is obvious throughout the work; however, in *Mrs Dalloway*, which centres around a day in the life of society hostess and Conservative MP’s wife Clarissa Dalloway, the imagery is far more subtle. The aim of this final assignment is to show how images of patriarchy are paramount to both works, and how Woolf uses patriarchal images as a subversive element against male dominance – attacking patriarchy by representing patriarchy.

In *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), American feminist critic Elaine Showalter divided her history of women writers into three periods; 1840 – 1880, which she described as the “feminine” period, in which women writers imitated male writers; 1880 – 1920, which she referred to as the “feminist” period, because it was during this period that

women writers used their writing to protest politically; and finally, 1920 – 1977, which she considered was the “female” period because it was during this period that women writers embarked on a journey of self-discovery, and began to turn to their own experiences as women as a source of inspiration. *Mrs Dalloway* was published in 1925 and *A Room of One’s Own* in 1929, and although they were published during the period that Showalter refers to as the “female” period, we can see a fusion of Showalter’s “female” and “feminist” periods. This can be perceived in the manner in which Woolf turns to her own experiences as a woman for her inspiration, but also manages to turn those experiences into a political protest through the use of patriarchal images.

This work is related to the degree subjects of “*Literatura Inglesa III: Pensamiento y Creación Literaria en la 1ª Mitad del Siglo XX*” and “*Género y Literatura en los Países de Habla Inglesa*”.

Methodology

The methodology for this study involved the use of the *Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia*’s online metasearcher Linceo+, together with Google Scholar, to access databases such as Dialnet, Literature Online (LION), Jstor and Proquest Research Library. Search terms which were used included “*Mrs Dalloway*”, “Virginia Woolf and Patriarchy”, “Patriarchy and *Mrs Dalloway*”, “*A Room of One’s Own*” and “Patriarchy in *A Room of One’s Own*”. Initial results were somewhat disappointing; although many results were returned which featured the term ‘patriarchy’ in one or more paragraphs, no results were returned which offered an analysis of patriarchal images in either of the works. On the positive side, however, this meant that there was room for investigation on this theme.

One work which appeared to deal with the theme in question was *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* by Jane Marcus (1987) and based on the abstract, this work was ordered in print. Unfortunately, even though Professor Marcus is an eminence on Virginia Woolf, once the work was studied it was found not to be as helpful or relevant to the theme as was hoped.

The featured bibliography from Elaine Showalter’s introduction to the Penguin Modern Classics 1992 edition of *Mrs Dalloway* included the titles of some works which also appeared relevant but couldn’t be read online and therefore were also ordered in print.

These included *Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway (Modern Critical Interpretations)*, edited by Professor Harold Bloom (1988), Virginia Woolf's diaries, and a work entitled *Britain in the Nineteen-Twenties* by Noreen Branson (1976). Unit 5 of the text book for *Literatura Inglesa III*, entitled *The Need to Make it New: English Literature and Thought in the First Half of the 20th Century* (2011), included further relevant and useful information and notes, and furthermore, the featured bibliography at the end of the unit references several articles which have also been identified through the Jstor database and studied for their relevance.

Concerns that copious amounts of studies on the chosen theme would be identified proved unfounded, showing that there was room for investigation on the subject. Therefore, the method which has been used to carry out the study involves the close reading and analysis of both works – *Mrs Dalloway* and *A Room of One's Own* - in order to identify images of patriarchy therein. A chapter has been devoted to each composition and the critical analysis of each work will follow the basic linear order of the narrative and will be supplemented by information and discussion on the relevance of the images mentioned.

State of the Question

According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary the term "patriarchy" is defined as "a society controlled by men in which they use their power to their own advantage". In "Feminist Rhetoric: Discourses on the Male Monopoly of Thought" (1988), Mary E. Hawkesworth provides a somewhat radical description of the effects of this male controlled society and we are told that "[p]atriarchy produces the decapitated woman: Without mind to think, without eyes to see, without ears to hear, without voice to speak, she exists as mutilated body" (HAWKESWORTH, 1988: 446).

In this section we will refer to some of the studies related to *Mrs Dalloway* and *A Room of One's Own*, with particular reference to images of patriarchy found within these works. It was deemed that an understanding of the concept of patriarchy would be a pertinent point of departure for this dissertation, and Kate Millett's work entitled *Sexual Politics* (1990) offers an indepth analysis of this concept. Although Millett doesn't refer specifically to the work of Virginia Woolf, deeming Woolf's writing, along with the plays of George Bernard Shaw and Henrik Ibsen, "too familiar" (MILLETT, 1990: 129), she does offer a comprehensive analysis of how images of masculinity can be

found in society, culture and history and the way in which literature tends to reflect these sexist ideologies.

Millett describes “sex” as a “status category with political implications” (MILLETT, 1990: 24) and posits that the relationship between the sexes can be seen as a political one, in which one “collectivity – defined by birth” – exerts control over another “collectivity – also defined by birth” (MILLETT, 1990: 24). She relates this to the fact that society, as we know it today, is a patriarchy, in which the military, industry, technology, education, politics and finance are mostly controlled by men (MILLETT, 1990: 25). She also points to stereotypical personality traits attributed to men – aggressiveness, forcefulness, intelligence; and those attributed to women – docility, passiveness, ineffectiveness (MILLETT, 1990: 26). Traditionally, women’s role in society has been centred on nurturing and caring while men have been allowed and expected to be achievers and pioneers.

In the same way that Virginia Woolf believed that gender was socially constructed and that the family is the institution into which inequality is born, so Kate Millett refers to the family as being “patriarchy’s chief institution” (MILLETT, 1990: 33). Referring to the relation between family, society and the state, she points to the part which religion has played in upholding patriarchal beliefs, quoting both the Catholic and the Jewish religion’s views of the father being the head of the household, whose word is law (MILLETT, 1990: 33). Even today, in homes all over the world, irrespective of religious beliefs, frazzled mothers can be heard threatening their children with the phrase “Wait until your father gets home!” Millett refers to the 19th century historian Sir Henry Maine’s definition of family, in which he states that, “[t]he eldest male parent is absolutely supreme in his household. His dominion extends to life and death and is as unqualified over his children and their houses as over his slaves” (MILLETT, 1990: 34). From the perspective of the economic inequalities which women are subject to, Millett refers to the fact that traditionally women could “neither own nor earn in their own right” (MILLETT, 1990: 39). Their position in a patriarchal society was that of total economic dependence on a man. Even as recently as the 1960s men could be heard commenting that they had given their wives some “pin money.” One of the definitions which can be found in the Merriam-Webster online dictionary is “money given by a man to his wife for her own use.” The original meaning would have referred to money given by a husband to his wife for her to buy pins.

As regards women's education, Millett also states that, "traditionally, patriarchy permitted occasional minimal literacy to women, while higher education was closed to them" (MILLETT, 1990: 42). Virginia Woolf herself was educated at home, together with her sisters, whilst her brothers went away to school and later, university. She managed to educate herself further by reading books which she found in her father's extensive library – but young women of lower social status did not have access to family libraries. We can see this in Woolf's imaginary figure of Judith Shakespeare in *A Room of One's Own* – ambitious, with a lust for learning and a desire to be a writer, in the same way as her brother. However, Judith's life panned out in a very different way – ending in an unwanted pregnancy and suicide. We also see the vast difference between the male universities and female colleges such as the fictional female college of Fernham, in *A Room of One's Own*. In addition, in *Mrs Dalloway*, Clarissa's role in life is that of dutiful wife and society hostess – whilst Richard Dalloway, as a Conservative MP, is to a certain extent, involved in the running of the country.

In his work *Virginia Woolf – A Literary Life* (1991), John Mepham speaks of how, although Woolf was concerned that the storyline of *Mrs Dalloway*, which tells the tale of a day in the life of society hostess and Conservative M.P's wife Clarissa Dalloway, was too trivial, she nevertheless believed that by portraying the trivial in life we can also shine a light on important themes in life (MEPHAM, 1991: 93). Woolf herself, in her essay "Modern Fiction", speaks of the "myriad impressions" found in an "ordinary mind on an ordinary day" (WOOLF, 2012: 2150). The characterisations of both Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith show how through the depiction of everyday events, important themes such as the effects of what is today known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, can be highlighted. Woolf's original idea was that Clarissa would commit suicide or die at the end of the party, however her decision to introduce the character of Septimus led to her being able to call attention to the very real trauma experienced by veterans of the Great War – tortured by visions of the atrocities which they had witnessed and feelings of guilt for having survived whilst comrades had perished. Virginia Woolf finished writing *Mrs Dalloway* in October 1924 and the work was published in May of the following year. Although six years had passed since the Armistice, the terrible effects of this cruel war were still very much present. In the depiction of Septimus Warren Smith and his treatment at the hands of Dr. Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw we will see how patriarchy is present in class as well as gender issues.

Mrs Dalloway centres around one day in the life of the protagonists – the year is 1923 and the month is June – the 13th to be precise – with its connotations of bad luck – and the novel is set in the city of London – a teeming metropolis and the heart of the British Empire.

Mepham (1991: 98) speaks of the significance of the shadowy figure seen in the car with the “dove grey” upholstery (MD: 15). Passers-by are not sure of the identity of the passenger, but there was “no doubt that greatness was seated within” (MD: 17). In the image of this figure of greatness whose presence is perceived but not seen, we can see a connection to E.M.W. Tillyard’s *Elizabethan World Picture*, with the monarch – ordained by God – heading a socially structured “Great Chain of Being”. This concept will also be developed further in the main body of this essay.

In an article entitled “Irreconcilable Habits of Thought in *A Room of One’s Own* and *To The Lighthouse*” (1982), critic John Burt speaks of the fact that one of the theses which summarizes the argument of *A Room of One’s Own* is that “patriarchal society imposes economic and social restrictions upon women on account of its own need for psychological support” (BURT, 1982: 890). Burt argues that the improvement of social, economic and political conditions for women led to the emergence of an increasing number of women writers and that as a result of female independence, patriarchal society was keenly aware of the loss of said psychological support. In this observation, we can also see a connection to Woolf’s comments in *A Room of One’s Own* on the manner in which patriarchal society and men have used women as looking glasses through which they see themselves reflected as “twice [their] natural size” (AROO: 27). We will address Woolf’s vision of the magnified reflection of the male figure in more detail in the chapter devoted to *A Room of One’s Own*.

Furthermore, an article by Candice E. Bond entitled “Remapping Female Subjectivity in *Mrs Dalloway*: Scenic Memory and Woolf’s ‘Bye-street’ Aesthetic” (2017), also refers to the presence of patriarchy in the novel and states that “the novel is clearly critical of the patriarchal institution of marriage and its oppression of women” (BOND, 2017: 75). Bond focuses on characters other than Clarissa in her article, such as the presence of Sally Seton – now Lady Rosseter - at Clarissa’s party, and the fact that Sally is “at once patriarchal dissenter and conventionalist” (BOND, 2017: 75). Bond sees Sally as a dual personality – a feminist and a conventionalist. She also refers to Elizabeth – Clarissa and Richard’s daughter and speaks of how “Clarissa, like Elizabeth yearns for roles beyond those that have been ascribed to her by the patriarchy: wife, mother, socialite

and hostess” (BOND, 2017: 63). Bond argues that Woolf’s use of scenic memory in *Mrs Dalloway* exposes how patriarchy has influenced the formation of Clarissa’s identity (BOND, 2017). She examines the passage in which, after returning from her shopping trip to buy flowers in Bond Street, Clarissa reminisces over her relationship with Sally Seton as an adolescent. This use of scenic memory contrasts the eroticism of Clarissa’s emotional relationship with Sally, during a time when the world with all its opportunities seemed spread out before them, with the reality of the patriarchal world which prepared Clarissa, and, as we eventually see, Sally also, for their roles in society – as wives and mothers.

This section has offered a short introduction to relevant works which address our theme, however, in the main body of the work we will encompass references to other works pertaining to the theme of images of patriarchal presence in both *Mrs Dalloway* and *A Room of One’s Own*.

Mrs Dalloway

Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* was first published in 1925. In his introduction to *Virginia Woolf’s Mrs Dalloway (Modern Critical Interpretations)*, Professor Harold Bloom refers to the novel as “her first extraordinary achievement” (BLOOM, 1988: 2). Jane Marcus, in her work entitled *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy* (1987), states her belief that in *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf “attacked the notion of fraternity and its collaboration with patriarchy, capitalism, and imperialism” (MARCUS, 1987: 92).

The story revolves around a single day in the life of society hostess and Conservative M.P.’s wife Clarissa Dalloway, as told by an anonymous third person omniscient narrator who has access to the characters’ streams of consciousness.

We are aware of patriarchy from the moment we read Woolf’s title. Whilst we could be rejoicing in the fact that this novel is dedicated to and revolves around a female character, who is important enough to have the novel named after her, we are also immediately conscious of her role as a wife. On marriage she has taken her husband’s name, and ceased to exist as a person outside marriage. She is not even Mrs Clarissa Dalloway, but Mrs Richard Dalloway. If a letter were addressed to her it would be addressed to Mrs R. Dalloway – and she would only become Mrs C. Dalloway on being widowed. As archaic as this sounds, a quick perusal of the Internet shows the following

advice on envelope addressing protocol from 2017 – “address a married couple by using Mr and Mrs followed by the man’s name”: <http://shutterfly.com/ideas/how-to-address-a-letter> Maybe society has not advanced as much as we would like to think.

Furthermore, in her Introduction to the Penguin Modern Classics 1992 edition of *Mrs Dalloway*, Elaine Showalter also points to the manner in which the title of ‘Mrs’ reflects the way in which Clarissa is “socially defined by her marriage and masked by her marital signature” (SHOWALTER, in MD 1992: 12).

Regarding women’s position in society during the era, we must also bear in mind the fact that, as Olga E.K. Sulkin mentions in her 2014 article entitled “Virginia Woolf’s Divergent Hospitality or Clarissa Dalloway’s Struggle for Female Self Reliance”, “not long before World War I, women of Clarissa’s social status could not walk alone in the streets and they had to be accompanied by a man” (SULKIN, 2014: 403).

As Clarissa is on her way to buy flowers on the morning of her party, the sound of squeaking door hinges transports her back in time to Bourton, the country house where she was brought up and how, at the age of eighteen she had stood at the open French windows and felt as though “something awful was about to happen” (MD: 3). Clarissa’s adolescent thoughts can be interpreted as a premonition of her future – in which she would come of age, and be expected to fulfil her role in society.

We learn that Clarissa and her husband live in Westminster – and have done for over twenty years. There are numerous references to the city of London in the novel – and its grandiose monuments – the Embassy, the Houses of Parliament, the Admiralty - symbols of a patriarchal system in which these buildings were designed, constructed and inhabited by men. In his work *Virginia Woolf: A Commentary*, written in 1949, Bernard Blackstone refers to the “massive edifice of civilisation” in his description of these majestic constructions (BLACKSTONE, 1949: 78).

In a 2004 article entitled “The Empire from the Street: Virginia Woolf, Wembley and Imperial Monuments”, Scott Cohen points to the manner in which the appearance of famous monuments such as Nelson’s Column in Trafalgar Square or the statue of the Duke of Cambridge “introduce history, the state, and empire” (COHEN, 2004: 98). We also see reference to the Empire in Peter Walsh’s memories of India, or Lady Bruton’s comment as to the “tragedy [of] the state of India” (MD: 197). This remark could refer to the 1919 Government of India Act which, in order to decrease tensions in the region, had decreed that more Indians should participate in the governing of their country. This, however, led to a fear of a loss of control on the part of the English. In these imperial

images we again see connotations of patriarchal authority and belief in colonial and social supremacy.

As Clarissa is making her way to Bond Street, we hear the first of several references to the chiming of Big Ben – a monument which is thought to have been named after Sir Benjamin Hall who oversaw the installation of the Great Bell. The image of patriarchy can even be seen in the name of this famous monument. According to Marcus (1987):

The notion of clock time as male in its abstraction and antithetical to emotional life is sounded by Virginia Woolf most clearly in *Mrs Dalloway*, where Big Ben dominates and bullies the characters' lives (MARCUS, 1987: 60).

Later in the novel Big Ben is described as chiming the half-hour “with extraordinary vigour, as if a young man, strong, indifferent, inconsiderate, were swinging dumb-bells this way and that” (MD: 52). Woolf uses an interesting choice of adjectives to describe the “maleness” of the clock and in this description we see an allusion to male confidence in their own identity. Clarissa, on the other hand, as a female, lacks confidence in her own identity and strives to be caring and considerate to others, antonymous qualities to those displayed by the “male” clock.

As Clarissa continues walking we see references to social events such as Lords and Ascot with their “stirring of galloping ponies, tapping of cricket bats” (MD: 5). Both cricket and horse racing were sports which were played and largely watched by men.

We are told that the War is over – followed by a reference to “Lady Bexborough who opened a bazaar...with the telegram in her hand, John, her favourite, killed” (MD: 5). In this image we see the rules of the patriarchal society which sent men to war whilst women were opening bazaars – each with their own particular role.

The second character to appear in *Mrs Dalloway* is Hugh Whitbread. Whilst Clarissa is on her way to buy flowers for her party, Hugh Whitbread is “carrying a despatch box stamped with the Royal Arms” (MD: 5). In this image we see Clarissa’s superficial existence compared to Hugh’s importance in local government. Hugh tells Clarissa that he and his wife have come up to London to “see doctors” (MD: 6). He is described as “manly [and] extremely handsome” although somewhat over-dressed, whilst his poor wife Evelyn is described as “a good deal out of sorts” (MD: 6). Hugh’s confident image and demeanour contrast with those of his wife – constantly ill and having to be accompanied to yet another doctor by her solicitous but overbearing husband. In a 2017

article entitled, “Mrs Dalloway: The Spirit of Religion was Abroad – Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf and Wordly Realism” by Pam Morris, Morris points to the fact that in this passage:

It is salutary that immediately after she has exulted in the common life of the streets, Clarissa Dalloway encounters Hugh Whitbread with his government-stamped dispatch box and his mission to take his cowed wife ‘to see doctors’ (MORRIS, 2017: 64).

Later in the novel, when Peter Walsh is reminiscing about his youth and those he knew at Bourton, he remembers Evelyn as being “almost negligible” (MD: 81) – a derogatory and sexist description.

Whilst on her way to the florists, Clarissa muses about her adolescent relationship with Peter Walsh, life and marriage in general. We also learn that she does not consider herself to be particularly intellectual – “How she had got through life on the few twigs of knowledge Fräulein Daniels gave them she could not think” (MD: 9). Her feelings towards her own intellectual ability contrast with the previous description of Hugh Whitbread’s sense of his own importance and belief in himself.

Clarissa also criticises herself for the manner in which she tries to please and be liked by others. She acknowledges that she would rather “have been one of those people like Richard who did things for themselves” (MD: 10). We see an allusion to the male sex concentrating on pleasing themselves whilst the female sex feel bound to please others.

On her arrival in Bond Street, Clarissa glories in the atmosphere of the area - “its flags flying...no splash; no glitter, one roll of tweed in the shop where her father had bought his suits for fifty years” (MD: 11). Here again we see a patriarchal image – of imperialism, stability, authority and perpetuality. However as Clarissa pauses to look in the window of the glove shop, she remembers her Uncle William who “used to say a lady is known by her shoes and her gloves” (MD: 11). Imperialism and patriarchy are represented by the flags flying in Bond Street – whilst a woman is judged by the suitability of her attire.

Whilst selecting the flowers for her party at Miss Pym’s florists, the “violent explosion” (MD: 14) of a car backfiring startles Clarissa. The description of the “dove-grey” (MD: 15) upholstery of the car would appear to refer to a Rolls Royce Silver Ghost which was manufactured up until 1926. Although we are not told who the occupant of the car is, we do see a “male hand” draw the blind (MD: 15). Those observing the car “heard the

voice of authority” (MD: 15). Rumours begin to fly through passers-by that the unseen occupant of the car could be a member of the royal family. As mentioned previously, in this description of a shadowy figure of absolute authority who, although perceived, cannot be seen, we can observe a connection to E.M.W. Tillyard’s *Elizabethan World Picture*. Tillyard saw society and culture in structuralist terms and believed in a divinely sanctioned political order headed by the monarch, who was ordained by God. Although today we are captivated by photos and film of Royal walkabouts – in which members of the British Royal family shake hands with members of the public - the first Royal walkabout took place in the 1970s. Prior to this, the monarch was deemed “untouchable” and during the era in which Mrs Dalloway was set, there was an air of deific mystique attached to the monarch and the monarchy. As the car passes through Piccadilly and turns towards St James’s Street, we are treated to a description of the “pale light” of its “immortal presence” (MD: 20), intensifying this vision of godlike qualities.

Following the description of the car and its mysterious occupant, we are introduced to the character of Septimus Warren Smith. We quickly become aware that Septimus is also a victim of a patriarchal system and society. Buoyed up by feelings of patriotism, Septimus had volunteered to fight in World War I even before conscription was introduced in January 1916, no doubt encouraged by the poster campaign featuring the patriarchal face of Lord Kitchener, Secretary of State for War, with his finger pointing outwards and the caption declaring “Your Country Needs You”. Social historians point to the fact that the class system in Britain was clearly stratified at this time, and that the higher classes became the generals, captains and tacticians, whilst the lower classes were the ordinary foot soldiers. Having witnessed countless atrocities during the war, Septimus is now suffering from the ailment referred to during the era as “shell-shock” – today known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He is exhibiting symptoms of schizophrenia – seeing visions of Evans – his commanding officer – who was killed during the war; believing that the sparrows perched on the railings are chirping in Greek, and that the message written by the aeroplane in the sky is a private signal to him. In an article entitled “War, Alienation and the Concept of *Paressia* in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*” (2016), Douglas Rasmussen states that:

The delusional and hallucinatory episodes experienced by Septimus are symptoms of a psychological malady as well as, and perhaps even more powerful as, criticisms of the

guilt of patriarchal systems whose dominance and repression marginalise those who do not fall in line with the cultural logic of war (RASMUSSEN, 2016: 55).

In her diaries, Woolf herself spoke of her inspiration for the character of Rezia – Septimus’ wife. In her entry for Tuesday 11th September 1923, she writes that she “wanted to observe Lydia as a type for Rezia” (WOOLF, 1978: 265). Lydia refers to Lydia Lopokova, who married John Maynard Keynes – a pivotal member of Woolf’s Bloomsbury Group - in 1925. The introduction of Rezia in the novel coincides with the first reference to members of the medical profession who are treating her husband. She tries to distract Septimus by pointing out to him the smoke trail left by the aeroplane and we learn that she is following the instructions of Dr. Holmes who has told her that her husband “had nothing whatever seriously the matter with him but was a little out of sorts” (MD: 23). Failing to recognise the seriousness of Septimus’ condition, Holmes recommends he goes “to a music hall [or] play[s] cricket” (MD: 27). The extent of the medication which he prescribes is bromide tablets. It has been well documented that the characters of both Dr. Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw reflected Woolf’s feelings towards the medical profession in general and the manner in which they treated her when she suffered several mental breakdowns. Indeed, in *The Novels of Virginia Woolf* (1977), Hermione Lee mentions that one of Virginia’s doctors – Sir George Savage – was the model for Sir William Bradshaw. According to Lee (1977), both Virginia and Leonard Woolf distrusted Savage.

We can see patriarchal dominance in Dr. Holmes’ attitude to both Rezia and Septimus. Rasmussen (2016) asserts that “[m]edical discourse is intimately connected to patriarchal authority.” He also points to the fact that “while Holmes and Bradshaw differ in their respective treatment of Septimus,...they both signify a continuation of hegemonic control” (RASMUSSEN, 2016: 56).

Neither Rezia nor Septimus have the courage nor knowledge to question Dr. Holmes’ diagnosis and treatment of Septimus. At the end of the novel, when Rezia tries to prevent Dr. Holmes from seeing her husband, she is described as “a little hen, with her wings spread barring his passage” (MD: 163). Holmes, however, physically moves her aside and we are told that he was a “powerfully built man” (MD: 163). On a previous visit “he had to give...Mrs Smith, a friendly push before he could get past her into her husband’s bedroom” (MD: 100). In the descriptions of these episodes we can see an

allusion to male physical strength and possible suppressed violence beneath Dr. Holmes' exterior medical persona.

Doubting Dr. Holmes' bedside manner and treatment of Septimus, and increasingly concerned about her husband's mental health, Rezia decides to take her husband to visit a private psychiatrist in Harley Street - Sir William Bradshaw – for a second opinion. As they walk down Harley Street, we once again hear Big Ben chiming in the background, with its connotations of power, dominance and supremacy. We learn that Sir William Bradshaw would often travel long distances in his “low, powerful, grey...motor car [to] visit the rich...who could afford the very large fee which Sir William very properly charged for his advice” (MD: 103). Sir William Bradshaw is the epitome of the upper-class, patriarchal, authoritative, Harley Street medical specialist. We see patriarchal attitudes from a class perspective in Sir William's private impression of Septimus that “the fellow made a distasteful impression” (MD: 106). The use of the term “fellow” rather than “gentleman” shows Sir William's disdain for the lower classes. In his 1992 article entitled “I On the Run: Crisis of Identity in *Mrs Dalloway*”, Ban Wang speaks of the fact that Septimus' mental state threatens Sir William's patriarchal power of authority and states that:

Septimus's nervous breakdown poses a threat to what Sir William represents: the symbolic, the regime of rationality, the reign of norms and the normal, for Septimus lets his unconscious forces slip or break through the symbolic order and is unable to stay in the place of identity prescribed by social convention (BAN WANG, 1992: 185).

Septimus distrusts Sir William as he does Dr. Holmes and his stream of consciousness muses over the fact that “once you fall...human nature is on you” (MD: 107). He compares both the GP and the specialist to torturers with a reference to the “rack and thumbscrew [being] applied” (MD: 107). Rezia – in a more muted opinion of the specialist - concludes that “Sir William Bradshaw was not a nice man” (MD: 108).

Douglas Rasmussen (2016) states that:

Septimus's difficulties with Sir William Bradshaw, whose stratified mindset of domination and control leads to the impulse of war suggests that Septimus can be read as Woolf's metaphoric criticism of patriarchal Britain in the immediate years following the First World War (RASMUSSEN, 2016: 55).

Although Sir William recognises the seriousness of Septimus' symptoms, and correctly diagnoses a "complete physical and nervous breakdown" (MD: 104), the specialist's treatment involves complete rest at a home in the country. Because Septimus has talked of committing suicide, Sir William decrees that he must be secluded away at one of his rest homes. Sir William explains to Rezia that "there was no alternative [as] [i]t was a question of law" (MD: 106). Sir William worships "proportion" and orders:

rest in bed; rest in solitude; silence and rest; rest without friends, without books, without messages; six months' rest; until a man who went in weighing seven stone six comes out weighing twelve (MD: 108).

According to Rasmussen (2016), "proportion....coerces individuals into the accepted parameters of the social body" (RASMUSSEN, 2016: 15).

In this passage describing Sir William's diagnosis and suggested treatment, we can again see Woolf's own opinions on this medical treatment for a mental breakdown – having experienced the "rest cure" herself. This treatment was originally introduced in America in the late 1800s by the American neurologist Silas Weir Mitchell. The regime typically lasted six to eight weeks and involved enforced bed rest, constant feeding of a fatty diet and isolation from friends and family. Sometimes women were not allowed to read, write, sew or even talk. Virginia Woolf and Charlotte Perkins Gilman both underwent the rest cure and wrote about their experiences – Gilman's experience inspired her short story entitled "The Yellow Wallpaper". In later years, feminist scholars would argue that this "cure" reinforced the patriarchal notion that women should accept male authority unquestioningly on matters regarding their health.

<http://broughttolife.sciencemuseum.org.uk/broughttolife/techniques/restcure>

Lady Bradshaw, we are told, had also "gone under" fifteen years previously. There was "no scene, no snap; only the slow sinking, water-logged, of her will into his" (MD: 110). It appears that her husband's will has devoured her own, and if the poor woman ever had an identity, she has now lost it. Although outwardly she continues to host "ten or fifteen guests of the professional classes" with the same aplomb, a "nervous twitch, fumble, stumble [or] confusion" show her true mental state (MD:110). She is now reduced to being "quick to minister to the craving which lit her husband's eye so oilily for dominion, for power..." (MD: 110). Sir William Bradshaw's power of authority

extends beyond his patients to his wife and family and is all encompassing. We are told that “[h]e swooped; he devoured” and in this description we see Sir William likened to a bird of prey (MD: 112).

Interestingly, in *Mrs Dalloway*, it is Septimus - a male character - that is expected to submit to Sir William Bradshaw’s authority and mandate. In her introduction to the 1928 edition of *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf explained that Septimus and Clarissa were doubles – however it is Septimus who displays symptoms of madness and eventually commits suicide. In the passage which sees Dr. Holmes forcibly moving Rezia aside and climbing the stairs to visit Septimus, Septimus can be interpreted as “the madman in the attic” – the male version of characters such as Bertha Mason in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*.

We not only see patriarchal imagery with reference to main characters in *Mrs Dalloway*, but also in peripheral characters. When Mrs Dempster sees Maisie Johnson walking through Regent’s Park, and the manner in which Maisie is startled by the oddness of Septimus’ behaviour, she muses to herself that “you’ll get married.....and then you’ll know [because] every man has his ways” (MD: 29). Although Mrs Dempster has always longed to travel to faraway climes, it was her nephew who had done so, and not herself. Furthermore, the sight of the aeroplane soaring above leads her to conclude that “there’s a fine young feller aboard of it” (MD: 30).

On returning home, Clarissa allows herself to drink in the familiar sounds of her home, feeling “blessed and purified” (MD: 31) – still, however considering that she must repay this blessedness “above all to Richard her husband, who was the foundation of it” (MD: 32). Once again, we see Clarissa as an appendage to her husband – unimportant in her own right - her role in life that of the dutiful wife and society hostess, whilst Richard, as a Conservative MP, is involved in the perpetuation of the patriarchal society.

This allusion to the female as a lesser being is immediately reinforced when Clarissa reads a note on the pad by the telephone stating that “Lady Bruton wishes to know if Mr. Dalloway will lunch with her tomorrow” (MD: 32). Clarissa feels upset that “Lady Bruton, whose lunch parties were said to be extraordinarily amusing, had not asked her” (MD: 33). Clarissa’s stream of consciousness tells us that she, as a woman, has never been invited to Lady Bruton’s luncheon parties. When we are introduced to the lady in question later in the novel, we become aware that Lady Bruton has invited Richard Dalloway and Hugh Whitbread to her luncheon party because she wants them to help her with a letter she wishes to write to the *Times* on emigration. We learn that in the

same way as Clarissa, Lady Bruton is also hampered by her sex. The task of writing a letter to a newspaper made her “feel the futility of her own womanhood as she felt it on no other occasion” (MD: 119). We see the description of Hugh competently reducing “Lady Bruton’s tangles to sense, to grammar such as the editor of the *Times*....must respect” (MD: 120). Hugh reads out the final draft “which Lady Bruton felt certain was a masterpiece” (MD: 121). She doubts whether she could have put her thoughts into words in such an eloquent manner. Millicent Bruton – we are told – “was very proud of her family” who were “military men, administrators, admirals” – (MD: 121) - however Lady Bruton must invite men to a luncheon party in order to request help in writing a letter. She herself believed that “if Richard advised her, and Hugh wrote for her, she was somehow sure of being right” (MD: 120). In this image, awareness of patriarchal dominance and the female tendency to accept that dominance and their own lower social status is paramount. Ban Wang (1992) posits that it is by looking at paintings of these renowned members of her family – all male - that Lady Bruton is “able to gain a sense of her identity” (WANG, 1992: 181).

Following her discovery of the note about Lady Bruton’s lunch party, Clarissa retires to her room. We see her described as a “nun” in an “attic room” in a narrow bed with “clean, tight stretched” sheets (MD: 33). Sulkin (2014) sees Clarissa’s description of herself as a ‘virgin nun’ with a ‘narrow bed’ as a metaphor for the disappearance of her own identity which has ultimately blended with the house, which belongs to her husband (SULKIN, 2014). Once in her room, we see Clarissa reminiscing about her adolescent years at Bourton and her relationships with Sally Seton, Peter Walsh and ultimately, Richard, who would become her husband. We see the image of Clarissa and Sally – young, idealistic and full of plans for life, seeing marriage “as a catastrophe” (MD: 37).

Some time later in the day, whilst Clarissa is mending the green gown which she will wear to her party, Peter Walsh – recently returned from India – arrives to see her. We see his thoughts as he greets her - “ she’s grown older” - contrasting with hers towards him - “he looks awfully well, and just the same” (MD: 44). Whilst Clarissa is very much aware of the passing of time and the fact that she is no longer in the flower of her youth, Peter Walsh still considers himself to be young and virile - “he was not old; his life was not over; not by any means. He was only just past fifty” (MD: 47). Here we see reflected societal attitudes to men and women, and an allusion to the fact that, although women are only fertile for a certain number of years, male virility and fertility continues

almost ad infinitum. Peter is constantly playing with a large pocket-knife which he keeps in his pocket – opening and shutting the blade. This knife can be seen as a phallic symbol with its connotations of male sexuality and power. Peter’s pocket knife makes recurrent appearances throughout the novel. At one point, the third person omniscient narrator tells us of Peter’s thoughts about women - “[b]ut women, he thought, shutting his pocket-knife, don’t know what passion is” (MD: 88). Once again, we see connotations of the male sexual organ in this imagery, together with patriarchal dismissal of the “lesser” sexual desires of the female sex.

We learn that Peter is in love with a younger married woman – Daisy – who has two young children and Peter has come to England to see his lawyers about the divorce. Although she is the same age as Peter, in contrast, Clarissa’s stream of consciousness tells us that “it was all over for her. The sheet was stretched and the bed narrow...the door had shut” (MD: 51).

After leaving Clarissa, who reminds him of the party which she is holding that evening, Peter Walsh is aware of the chiming of Big Ben, closely followed by the clock of St. Margaret’s Church also sounding the half hour. St. Margaret’s is the Parish Church of the House of Commons. We see personification of the clock as a female hostess who informs her guests that she is not late – and that it is “precisely half-past eleven” (MD: 54). However, in spite of the fact that she is right, “her voice, being the voice of the hostess, is reluctant to inflict its individuality” (MD: 54). This image contrasts sharply with the previous male personification of Big Ben (p.12) – in which individuality is one of its main attributes.

As Peter crosses Trafalgar Square towards the Haymarket, he becomes aware of an “extraordinarily attractive” woman (MD: 57). On catching sight of her, his demeanour alters and “straightening himself and stealthily fingering his pocket-knife he started after her to follow this woman” (MD: 57). In this passage, the image of Peter Walsh can be compared to that of a sex predator – he is opening following a young woman, wondering whether she was “respectable” (MD: 58). We see a sexual image in his thought that she would be “witty, with a lizard’s flickering tongue” (MD: 58). His male ego is such that he doesn’t consider the crude facts behind this quasi-stalking – rather he sees himself as “an adventurer...a romantic buccaneer” (MD: 58).

After a short doze on a bench in Regent’s Park, Peter once again continues his walk to the hotel where he is staying. He notices the changes that have taken place in society since the end of the war, remembering young couples that he had encountered on the

ship over from India and how “the girl would stand still and powder her nose in front of every one” (MD: 79). We see a somewhat disapproving patriarchal reaction to this new behaviour displayed by young women, which contrasts with his own previous predatory behaviour towards the attractive woman walking along the street. He muses that the young lady on the ship – “Betty Whatsername...would make a very good wife at thirty” (MD: 79). In this image we see a patronising sexist remark in which the young lady in question, whose surname he doesn’t even remember, is referred to as if she were a commodity.

As he turns into Broad Walk, Peter’s stream of consciousness darts from the young lady on the ship to Sally Seton who had “married a rich man and lived in a large house near Manchester” (MD: 79). We learn that Sally was considered rather wild and daring at Bourton – a feminist and a supporter of women’s rights. During an argument on this very topic, Sally had “flared up, and told Hugh that he represented all that was most detestable in British middle-class life” (MD: 80). Following this incident, Sally had accused Hugh Whitbread of “kissing her in the smoking room to punish her for saying that women should have votes” (MD: 199). Candice E. Bond (2017) argues that “Hugh’s kiss with Sally.... is an example of a male patriarch using sexual force as a means of dominating female subjectivity. This kiss stems not from love or desire but from Hugh’s need to control and dominate” (BOND, 2017: 78-9). At Clarissa’s party, Sally turns up uninvited and we see the young, idealistic feminist is now Lady Rosseter – having married a “bald man with a large buttonhole who owned, it was said, cotton mills...” (MD: 199). Sally has also borne her husband five sons. In this image we see continuity of the patriarchal social structure. As mentioned previously, Bond (2017) refers to Sally as “at once patriarchal dissenter and conventionalist” (BOND, 2017: 75). She sees Sally as a dual personality – however, perhaps feminist literary critics would interpret Sally’s appearance at the party as one more instance of the manner in which society eventually “tames” those idealistic women that would rail against the confines of patriarchy.

Sulkin (2014) agrees with this view, stating that:

[Sally Seton] reads male philosophy, smokes, talks like a man and advocates votes for women. That is why the kiss with Hugh Whitbread is seen as a policing mechanism for the wild woman. When woman tries to cross gender boundaries there is a need for male patriarchy to conform her, “kissing [Sally] in the smoking-room to punish her for saying

that women should have votes” (MD: 199). Years later, Sally indeed becomes a conformist, marries and raises sons, who will continue the patriarchy (SULKIN, 2014: 404).

As Peter continues walking, through his thought processes we are now treated to an insight into Richard Dalloway. Peter considers him to be a “thorough good sort” although “without a spark of brilliancy” – in fact he was so nice that he was “wasted on politics” (MD: 82). Richard is part of the patriarchal society in which countries are governed by men, but in his description of Richard, Peter appears to emasculate him. In the State of the Question, we saw how Kate Millett, in her book *Sexual Politics*, pointed to the personality traits which are typically attributed to men, as being “aggressiveness, forcefulness and intelligence” (MILLETT, 1990: 26). Peter’s opinion of Richard points to a lack of these typically masculine qualities. The fact that Peter concludes that Richard is “wasted on politics” would appear to point to the fact that because Richard does not conform to the stereotypical male personality profile, he does not stand out as a politician. However, whilst attending Clarissa’s party, Lady Bruton muses over her belief that “it might have been better if Richard had married a woman with less charm, who would have helped him more in his work” (MD: 197). Lady Bruton’s stream of consciousness blames Clarissa for the fact that Richard “had lost his chance of the Cabinet” (MD: 197).

We know that Richard is respectful of his wife because we have been told previously that since Clarissa’s recent illness “Richard insisted...that she must sleep undisturbed” (MD: 34). Richard dislikes Hugh Whitbread’s personality and behaviour; following the luncheon party with Lady Bruton, when he and Hugh go into a jewellers, Richard finds Hugh’s pompousness intolerable and we learn that Richard “could not stand more than an hour of his society” (MD: 125).

Richard loves his wife very much but has difficulty telling her so. Whilst in the jewellers with Hugh, he looks at items of jewellery but doubts his own taste. He eventually resorts to arriving home with a large bunch of red and white roses, but still cannot tell Clarissa he loves her, and contents himself with holding her hand. It appears that although Richard Dalloway represents patriarchy in his role as a Conservative MP, he is the least stereotypical patriarchal male character in the novel.

Once Richard has given Clarissa the flowers, and told her of his lunch with Lady Bruton, he leaves the house once more, having given Clarissa instructions to rest for an

hour. We see an allusion to patriarchal expectations regarding women's submission and obedience to their husbands in Clarissa's remark that "she would do it, of course, as he wished it" (MD: 132). Whilst she is resting, Clarissa tries to ascertain the reason why she suddenly feels "for no reason that she could discover, desperately unhappy" (MD: 132). She comes to the conclusion that the reason for this feeling lies in the fact that both Peter Walsh and Richard "laughed at her very unjustly, for her parties" (MD: 132). Richard considered her "foolish....to like excitement when she knew it was bad for her heart" (MD: 133), and Peter simply couldn't see the sense in her parties. Neither her husband nor Peter consider that she could be contributing to her husband's professional career by hosting these events. She herself understands that this is her "offering" to society. Clarissa considers that her parties are the only thing she can offer because she "could not think, write, even play the piano" (MD: 134).

In the description of Elizabeth – Richard and Clarissa's daughter - and her tutor Miss Kilman taking a trip to the Army and Navy stores, we see a glimpse of a future in which women will challenge the patriarchal system. Initially, Elizabeth, who has left Miss Kilman behind in the Stores, is uncertain as to which bus to board. We are told that "she had no preferences.....she inclined to be passive" (MD: 148). However, suddenly Elizabeth appears to take control of her life and future when we are informed that she "stepped forward and most competently boarded the omnibus, in front of everybody" (MD: 148). Candice E. Bond sees this as "an act of defiance against convention and patriarchal expectations" (BOND, 2017: 80). Elizabeth's bus journey takes her past Whitehall – the seat of government, Somerset House – which throughout history has been associated with the Navy, the Inland Revenue and the Registry of Births, Marriages and Deaths, and Temple – the main legal district of London. All of these buildings symbolise the very heart of the patriarchal system – authority, power and sovereignty. Bond (2017) refers to Elizabeth's:

solitary omnibus ride through a range of traditionally masculine spaces: the monumental space of Whitehall, filled with its memorials to war, the professional spaces of the Strand, including Somerset House and the Temple, and the religious spaces of Fleet Street, most notably St. Paul's Cathedral (BOND, 2017: 63).

We learn that Elizabeth "would like to have a profession" [even] "possibly go into Parliament" (MD: 150). Following this glimpse into a possible future, however,

Elizabeth's stream of consciousness pricks and bursts this utopian balloon and "down again it went to the sandy floor" as Elizabeth becomes aware that "she must go home [and]... dress for dinner" (MD: 150).

As Elizabeth is returning home on the bus, Septimus is lying on the sofa in his sitting-room whilst Rezia is making a hat for one of her clients. Through Septimus' thought processes we are acutely aware of his dire mental state. In the description of Septimus watching the "watery gold" of the reflection of the buses passing by "glow and fade with the astonishing sensibility of some live creature on the roses, on the wall-paper" (MD: 153), we see more than a coincidental connection to Woolf's diary entry for January 9th 1924 in which she mentions the fact that she had "had some very curious visions in this room too, lying in bed, mad, and seeing the sunlight quivering like gold water, on the wall" (WOOLF, 1978: 283). Rezia and Septimus begin a conversation about Mrs Peters – the client whose hat Rezia is sewing – and Rezia feels joyful because for the first time in weeks she feels that they are having a normal conversation. Septimus is even making her laugh and "nobody ever made her laugh as Septimus did" (MD: 157). However shortly, the shadow of Sir William Bradshaw enters his mind again and when Septimus asks why Sir William has decreed he must go away, Rezia replies that "it is because you talked of killing yourself" (MD: 161).

In a flash, Septimus realises that "he was in their power" (MD: 161). He compares Dr. Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw to "judges"... [who] "saw nothing clear, yet ruled, yet inflicted" (MD: 162). We see the patriarchal image of the medical profession laying down the law – imposing their rules on others - together with connotations of pain caused to their patients by the use of the word "inflicted".

As Dr. Holmes is ascending the staircase, we see Septimus sitting on the window sill and rationalising with himself that he would "wait till the very last moment [as] [h]e did not want to die. Life was good" (MD: 164). It appears that Septimus would rather die than be sent away to Sir William's rest home. His cry of "I'll give it to you" (MD: 164) as he flings himself down on the railings can be interpreted as a final act of resistance towards the patriarchal medical profession who decreed by law what should become of him. It is during the final moments leading up to his suicide that Septimus has his most lucid thoughts. Bearing in mind that in 1941 Virginia Woolf drowned herself in the River Ouse and it has been documented that this was because she feared that she was once again on the verge of a mental breakdown, this interpretation of Septimus' suicide

could reflect Woolf's own feelings regarding mental illness and death. Woolf's suicide note to her husband, Leonard, begins with the words:

Dearest, I feel certain that I am going mad again. I feel we can't go through another of those terrible times. And I shan't recover this time. I begin to hear voices, and I can't concentrate. So I am doing what seems the best thing to do (WOOLF, 1941).

Dr. Holmes is shocked by Septimus' suicide, and when he brings Rezia a drink to calm her nerves, he is "white as a sheet" [and] shaking all over" (MD: 164). However, we see the patriarchal authority of the medical profession come immediately to the fore in Dr. Holmes' judgement of the situation – "Who could have fortold it? A sudden impulse, no one was in the least to blame (he told Mrs. Filmer). And why the devil he did it, Dr. Holmes could not conceive" (MD: 164). Mrs. Filmer meekly accepts his medical authority, even when Septimus' body is carried away and Mrs. Filmer believes that Rezia should be told. Although the housekeeper considers that "married people ought to be together" she accepts that "they must do as the doctor said" (MD: 165). It appears that the drink which is offered to Rezia contains some kind of tranquiliser, as she begins to feel sleepy. As she falls asleep, with Dr. Holmes taking her pulse, we are told that "[s]he saw the large outline of his body dark against the window" (MD: 165). In this image of the patriarchal "body" looming over the female figure and eclipsing the light, we can see a connection to the dominant letter "I" in male writing mentioned in *A Room of One's Own*, which casts shade and allows nothing to grow in its shadow.

Later, whilst on his way to Clarissa's party, Peter Walsh is walking towards Westminster, observing women leaving the house to attend social functions, their menfolk waiting in the car for them. We see a reference to the less salubrious aspect of London, in the description of "a shindy of brawling women, drunken women..." (MD: 180), followed immediately by a reference to male order and authority - "a policeman", "churches" [and] "parliaments" (MD: 180). Women are low-class, drunk and out of control whilst men are upper-class, righteous and sanctimonious.

At Clarissa's house, Agnes, the housemaid, is telling Mrs. Walker, the cook, that "the Prime Minister was coming" (MD: 181). However, in the following passage we see how far removed Mrs. Walker's life is from the world of patriarchal authority and government. Up to her elbows in:

plates, saucepans, cullenders, frying-pans, chicken in aspic, ice-cream freezers, pared crusts of bread, lemons, soup tureens, and pudding basins...one Prime Minister more or less made not a scrap of difference to Mrs. Walker (MD:181).

As the Prime Minister is escorted round the room by Clarissa and Richard, we are told that “nobody looked at him” (MD: 189). Although those present avoided his gaze, it “was perfectly plain that they all knew...this majesty passing; this symbol of what they all stood for, English society” (MD: 189). The Prime Minister is the symbol of the male establishment and patriarchal society.

When Sir William and Lady Bradshaw arrive at Clarissa’s party, Clarissa becomes aware that Sir William and Richard are discussing “[s]ome case...[which] had its bearing upon what he was saying about the deferred effects of shell shock” (MD: 201). Lady Bradshaw also tells Clarissa confidentially about Septimus’ suicide. Clarissa feels a connection with Septimus – as if she had experienced the suicide herself. She wonders whether Septimus had the passion of “the poets and thinkers” (MD: 202). Clarissa asks herself whether Septimus “had gone to Sir William Bradshaw, a great doctor, yet to her obscurely evil...extremely polite to women, but capable of some indescribable outrage” concluding that “...they make life intolerable, men like that” (MD: 202). In the description of Clarissa’s stream of consciousness in this passage, we again see a connection to Woolf herself and her own feelings towards the “Sir William Bradshaws” of the world – those medical specialists who embody upper-class patriarchal authority and oppression.

Peter Walsh is sitting on the sofa with Sally Seton – now Lady Rosseter. We are told that Sally is looking at the “people of importance, [and] politicians” attending the party and thinking that “[s]he had done things too” (MD: 205). However, we learn that Sally’s achievement in life is that she has given birth to “five sons” (MD: 205). As mentioned previously, Sally’s sons will ensure the continuation of the patriarchal social order – whilst their mother, in spite of her adolescent vision of her own promising utopian future, has become a breeding mare.

Sally is looking at Peter and remembering that they had been “very, very intimate” (MD: 205) when they were young. She watches him doing “his old trick, opening a pocket-knife...always opening and shutting a knife when he got excited” (MD: 205). We once again see the sexual connotations attached to Peter’s pocket-knife – and perhaps in the connection between the male sexual organ and the knife, which is a

weapon, we can perceive an image of the powerful male figure forcing himself on the submissive female.

We again see how Sally has conformed to patriarchal expectations and is no more a wild, wilful feminist when we are told that although she has “ten thousand a year” (MD: 206) she can’t remember if this is before or after tax, because her husband “did all that for her” (MD: 206).

As can be seen in this analysis of *Mrs Dalloway*, images of patriarchy can be found throughout the novel. In her diaries, Woolf spoke of the fact that she wished to use the novel, which had an original working title of *The Hours*, to “criticise the social system, and show it at work, at its most intense” (WOOLF, 1978: 248). Through her descriptions of 1920s London society, we see that said social system was dominated by upper-class patriarchal authority. Woolf uses both male and female characters and themes of life, war and death coupled with the blurred distinctions between sanity and insanity to present her readers with a critique of the patriarchal society of the era. We can see a final reference to the patriarchal authority and certainty of the male ego in Peter Walsh’s remark that “[w]e know everything...at least he did” (MD: 211).

A Room of One’s Own

A Room of One’s Own was published in 1929 and is an extended essay which was based on a series of lectures which Woolf had given at Newnham and Girton female colleges, Cambridge, the previous year. Woolf’s essay is considered as one of the great feminist works of the century; the fact that her audience at the original lectures consisted of female university students meaning that she was preaching to the converted in these lectures which focused on the social, economic and political barriers that women writers have encountered through the ages. Indeed, in a 2016 online article for the British Library website entitled “An Introduction to *A Room of One’s Own*”, Rachel Bowlby describes the essay as “the founding text for feminist criticism.” In *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy*, Jane Marcus also states that we see a focus on “sisterhood” in the essay (MARCUS, 1987: 92). Furthermore, in *Virginia Woolf: A Commentary*, written in 1949, Bernard Blackstone points to the main theme of “the intellectual subjection of women” but concludes that Woolf’s portrait of the historical oppression of the female sex is so delicately and wittily portrayed that the reader does not become “nauseated by repetition” (BLACKSTONE, 1949: 141).

The unnamed female narrator refers to herself as “I” and asks the readers to call her “Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or by any name you please” (AROO: 6-7). This fluidity of female identity shows us that our narrator is representing women in general. We learn that she has been asked to deliver a lecture on the subject of “Women and Fiction.” As with *Mrs Dalloway*, we are initially delighted that this work is going to focus on the female sex and in this case, their artistic talent. However, we are then immediately aware of the hurdles which the patriarchal society has placed in the path of female writers when our narrator informs us that her advice to a woman wanting to write fiction is that she “must have money and a room of her own” (AROO: 6). In the description of the narrator sitting by the river bank in the fictional university town of Oxbridge pondering over her subject – which “raises all sorts of prejudices and passions”, we observe the traditional views of the patriarchal society as to the temerity of those members of the female sex who consider themselves capable of writing fiction (AROO: 7).

As a hint of an idea for her lecture takes shape in our narrator’s mind, we are told that she begins to walk on the grass. She is instantly intercepted by a Beadle whose “face expressed horror and indignation” who explains to her that the turf was only for “Fellows and Scholars” (AROO: 8). In this image we can see an allusion to the male and female “spheres” - societal areas – the turf is the male “sphere” and the gravel is the female “sphere” and women are excluded from the areas reserved for the patriarchal society.

The narrator finds herself at the door to the library of the male university – she concedes that she must have opened the door because she was immediately confronted by a “deprecating, silvery, kindly gentleman”, who acts as a “guardian angel” and denies her access to this exalted space, gently explaining that “ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction” (AROO: 9). The reader becomes increasingly aware that even during this “enlightened” era with female university colleges, the patriarchs were still determined to guard against female intrusion into their world. We see irony and anger in the narrator’s stream of consciousness on passing the chapel door that “I had no wish to enter had I the right, and this time the verger might have stopped me, demanding perhaps my baptismal certificate, or a letter of introduction from the Dean” (AROO: 10).

The narrator begins to focus on the grandness of her surroundings and the physical and economic efforts which had been ploughed into these magnificent buildings and their

grounds. Initially these constructions would have been funded by the monarchy and later by male “merchants and manufacturers” who would have used part of their fortune to “endow more chairs, more lectureships, more fellowships in the university where they had learnt their craft” (AROO: 11-12). Through this allusion to the stability and longevity of the patriarchal society we can begin to understand the difficulties faced by women who also wished to learn a “craft” but for many years had been excluded from further education and the opportunities which a male dominated society offered men under its auspicious wings.

These reflections are cut short by the narrator’s awareness that it was time for lunch. She waxes lyrical about the abundance and succulence of the food which she is offered at the male university luncheon party which she is permitted to attend. We see detailed description of the “soles [with] a counterpane of the whitest cream”, “the partridges....with all their retinue of sauces and salads” and the dessert which is described as “a confection which rose all sugar from the waves” (AROO: 12-13). She also partakes of various different wines – her glass being filled many times. This repast contrasts sharply with the meal which she will be offered in the female university college that evening.

Following the luncheon party, the narrator goes to flick her cigarette ash out of the window, and becomes aware of a Manx cat “padding softly across the quadrangle” (AROO: 13). In the image of the cat without a tail which looked “as if it too questioned the universe”, we may perhaps perceive an allusion to the female sex, lacking a tail (phallus), and questioning the justness of the patriarchal world from which the “tail less” are excluded (AROO: 13). This reading of the figure of the Manx cat would seem to be confirmed when the narrator later muses “it is strange what a difference a tail makes” (AROO: 15).

As “Mary” leaves to return to the female college we are told that “gate after gate” were locked behind her “with gentle finality” and “the treasure-house” in which she was allowed to partake of a meal but nothing further, “was being made secure for another night” (AROO: 15). She is once more being forcibly excluded from the majesty and authority of the patriarchal society which has allowed her a glimpse into its illustrious world.

On her arrival back at Fernham we are treated to a description of the grounds of the female college in which flowers were “sprinkled and carelessly flung” never “orderly” but now looking particularly “wind-blown and waving” (AROO:18). This image

contrasts with the impeccable grounds of the male university with its window boxes full of colourful flowers and perfectly maintained quadrangle. Blackstone (1949) describes the “raw red brick edifices” of the women’s college as being “devoid of history, of beauty, of amenities: the makeshift of women’s education” (BLACKSTONE, 1949: 140).

The evening meal at Fernham consists of a “plain gravy soup” – sadly lacking in ingredients – followed by “beef with...greens and potatoes” and a dessert of “[p]runes and custard” (AROO: 19). The only available beverage during this meal is water. Adjectives such as “plain”, “homely” and “stringy” are used to describe this offering and these contrast strongly with the earlier description of her lunch in the male university in which even the traditionally unappetising sprouts are compared to rosebuds. We are becoming increasingly aware that the meagre financial resources of the female colleges mean that less attention can be paid to matters such as gardening and catering.

Following this frugal meal, the narrator retires to her friend Mary Seton’s room and they begin a discussion on the thoughts which she has had earlier in the day regarding the patriarchal society which has financed and encouraged male education, colleges and universities, and the power, authority and influence that these establishments were built on and then asks her friend “but this college...what lies beneath its gallant red brick and the wild unkempt grasses of the garden?” (AROO: 21). In Mary Seton’s reply we can observe the vast differences which applied to male and female higher education at the time. The male universities were founded on vast sums of money and authority and centuries of patriarchal power and influence, whilst the female colleges were dragged up from inexistence by committees of women who were reduced to sending circulars and holding meetings in order to beg for donations and then face the ignominy of being told that “Mr _____ won’t give a penny” and that “The *Saturday Review* has been very rude” (AROO: 22). We can see how unimportant higher education for women was considered, in the footnote which quotes from *Emily Davies and Girton College* by Lady Barbara Nightingale Stephen:

We are told that we ought to ask for £30,000 at least....It is not a large sum, considering that there is to be but one college of this sort for Great Britain, Ireland and the Colonies, and considering how easy it is to raise immense sums for boys’ schools. But considering

how few people really wish women to be educated, it is a good deal (STEPHEN, 1927: 13).

The narrator and her friend continue to ponder over how different the acquisition of a decent education would be for women if previous female generations had had access to education and money and been able to plough their earnings back into “fellowships and lectureships and prizes” as had countless male generations (AROO: 23).

The male sex had progressed in leaps and bounds over the centuries whereas the female sex had stood still and Virginia Woolf was very much aware of this fact herself. As stated in *The Need to Make It New: English Literature and Thought in the First Half of the 20th Century* by Ana I. Zamorano and Maria M. García Lorenzo (2011), as was the custom for young ladies during the era, Woolf was “never allowed to leave the house to study” (ZAMORANO; GARCÍA, 2011: 221). Although Virginia had access to her father’s library and read the books she found therein to supplement her lack of a proper education, she was very much aware of the unfairness of this situation – her brothers Thoby and Adrian having both attended university. Her feelings towards the patriarchal society which ploughed vast amounts of money and effort into male education but left female education sadly wanting can be clearly seen in the musings of Woolf’s narrator.

We learn that “it is only for the last forty-eight years that Mrs Seton has had a penny of her own” (AROO: 24). Prior to this, her earnings or endowments would have been her husband’s property – the male sex had spent centuries excluding women from their world and using their overall power and authority over the female sex to maintain them in this inferior position. And, the narrator thinks, “how unpleasant it is to be locked out...” (AROO: 25). We can see that, during her visit to Oxbridge, our narrator has been “locked out” from the superior world of patriarchy both physically and metaphorically.

Once back in London, the narrator decides that, in order to do justice to her lecture on “Women and Fiction”, she will undertake further investigations into “[w]hy...men drink wine and women water?” (AROO: 27).

Her quest takes her first to the British Museum; we see her standing beneath the “vast dome” which is “so splendidly encircled by a band of famous names” (AROO: 28). We perceive male personification of the museum in the description of the dome as a “huge bald forehead” (AROO: 28). In this male embodiment of the dome and the famous names which only included men, we can see a connection between study, knowledge

and masculinity and once again women are excluded from this illustrious arena. In her 2002 article entitled “Women in the British Museum Reading Room During the Late-nineteenth and Early-twentieth Centuries: from Quasi- to Counterpublic”, Ruth Hoberman also refers to this imagery:

Because the famous names included no women and because a "bald forehead" is by implication male, the description suggests two things: that as a woman she exists only as perceived by the male mind and that the very shape of the room itself, as well as the books it contains, conflates knowledge with masculinity (HOBERMAN, 2002: 489).

The narrator is astounded by how many books have been written by men about women. We learn that countless members of the male sex – including those with no qualifications - have considered themselves sufficiently knowledgeable regarding the female sex to write books about women. According to Simone de Beauvoir in her 1949 work entitled *The Second Sex*, “the most mediocre of males believes himself to be a demigod next to women” (DE BEAUVOIR, 1949: 33).

The narrator begins to read the titles of these tomes and concludes that “innumerable schoolmasters, innumerable clergyman” had pontificated and preached from “their platforms and pulpits” on the subject of women (AROO: 29). Male authority and ego leads the male writer to believe himself qualified to speak authoritatively about women. In contrast, the narrator tells us that “women do not write books about men...” (AROO: 29). The inaccessibility of education to women for centuries means that women have neither the ego nor the belief in their own capabilities to consider themselves worthy of opining on the “dominant” sex.

Once all the books which the narrator has selected arrive in her stall, she is then faced with the daunting task of making sense of her research. She refers to the “grunts of satisfaction” (ARRO: 30) emitted by the male student in the stall next to her who is accustomed to study and research and compares this with her own chaotic thoughts which fly “hither and thither, helter-skelter, pursued by a whole pack of hounds”, due to the fact that she has had “no training in a university” (AROO: 30). Her notes on Women and Poverty are scribbled and copious and, taken from the academic works which she has selected for her research, include topics such as women being offered as sacrifices, the smaller brain or weaker muscles of women and the mental, moral and physical inferiority of women. They also include the opinions of renowned writers such as

Shakespeare or Dr. Johnson on the female sex. In the titles of these topics, we see the thoughts and opinions of the patriarchal society regarding the absolute inferiority of women.

The narrator becomes aware that whilst she has been thinking she has been doodling and has drawn a picture of “the face and the figure of Professor von X engaged in writing his monumental work entitled *The Mental, Moral and Physical Inferiority of the Female Sex* (AROO: 32). We learn that he is “very angry and very ugly” (AROO: 33) in her sketch and the narrator then realises that she has been projecting her own annoyance onto the image of the angry professor. She concludes that the only nugget of truth which she has gleaned from the morning’s work is the fact that the professors – and for “professors” we can read “patriarchal society” - were extremely annoyed. Blackstone (1949) describes the books as being full of “prejudice and anger” (BLACKSTONE, 1949: 141).

After pondering over the reason for this anger, the narrator realises that it is time for lunch. Whilst having lunch, she begins reading the newspaper headlines, and concludes that even the “most transient visitor to this planet” could not fail to realise that “England is under the rule of a patriarchy” (ARRO: 35). In this passage we see Woolf’s most direct criticism of patriarchy. Once again using the term “professor” to represent “patriarchy”, the narrator states that the “professor” was:

....the power and the money and the influence. He was the Proprietor of the paper and its editor and its sub-editor...the Foreign Secretary and the Judge....the director of the company that pays two hundred per cent to its shareholders.....left millions to charities and colleges that were ruled by himself (AROO: 35).

Tellingly, women are mentioned twice in the headlines – once by a judge who has commented in court on “the Shamelessness of Women” and once in a headline about an actress who has been “lowered from a peak in California and hung suspended in mid-air” (AROO: 35). The narrator concludes that the patriarchal society controls everything bar the weather.

“Mary” begins to wonder whether the patriarchs are really angry or whether they are fearful that as women become bolder they may try to claim a piece of the patriarchal pie. Generally, it appears that during this era, women were not considered sensible or intelligent enough to be allowed certain priviledges, and the thought of the female sex

making use of certain prerogatives caused consternation amongst the patriarchal society. In her work entitled *Britain in the 1920s*, Noreen Branson speaks of the fact that when, just before Easter 1927, Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin announced that women were going to be given the same political voting rights as men, the right-wing *Daily Mail* newspaper expressed alarm at the fact that this proposal would mean that women voters would be in the majority, due to the fact that following World War I, there were more women of voting age than men living in Britain. The newspaper complained that “the time may come when, if women decide to use their power, they will be able to dominate the State.” It was considered that this would be a “hazardous experiment” (BRANSON, 1976: 203-4).

The narrator begins to wonder whether men are more concerned with their own superiority than the inferiority of women and concludes that the patriarchal society has used women as looking glasses in which they see themselves reflected as twice their natural size. This vision of patriarchy once again suggests that men are fearful of women and the fact that should women become beings in their own right, their reflection might outshine the male reflection and subsequently the inflated looking-glass image which assured men of the superiority of their sex would be shattered for evermore. As mentioned previously, in a 1982 article written by John Burt, entitled “Irreconcilable Habits of Thought in *A Room of One’s Own* and *To The Lighthouse*”, Burt speaks of one of the central arguments of the book as being “[p]atriarchal society imposes economic and social restrictions upon women on account of its own need for psychological support” (BURT, 1982: 890).

As the narrator goes to pay for her lunch, we are told that she herself “need not hate any man; he cannot hurt me. I need not flatter any man; he has nothing to give me” (AROO: 39). We learn that the reason for this is that she is financially independent, thanks to a legacy of £500 a year left to her by an aunt. According to Marcus (1978) and Mephram (1991), Virginia Woolf herself was left a similar legacy by a maiden aunt – Caroline Emilia Stephen. Prior to this endowment, the narrator tells her readers that she had made a living “by cadging odd jobs from newspapers...by addressing envelopes, reading to old ladies, making artificial flowers, teaching the alphabet to small children in a kindergarten” (AROO: 39). She speaks of the fact that “[s]uch were the chief occupations that were open to women before 1918” (AROO: 39). These occupations paid very little money, and we see how difficult it was for women to survive during the era, leading to the necessity to rely on a husband for a decent standard of living.

However, her aunt's gift has freed our narrator from these preoccupations and she may now live her life as she pleases. We see a hint of pity for the patriarchal society which although "they had money and power," these were acquired "at the cost of harbouring in their breasts an eagle, a vulture, for ever tearing the liver out and plucking at the lungs..." (AROO: 40). This can be seen as an allusion to the competitiveness and aggression of the patriarchal society – not just towards the fairer sex but also towards their own sex. We also see once more a likening of the male sex to birds of prey – and are reminded of the description of Sir William Bradshaw in *Mrs Dalloway*.

Having returned once more to her flat, the narrator muses over the reason why no women wrote during the Elizabethan era, whereas "every other man...was capable of song or sonnet" (AROO: 43). She refers to Professor George Macauley Trevelyan's *History of England*, in order to analyse the social position of women through history and cites the fact that during the latter part of the 15th century it was considered a man's right to inflict corporal punishment on his wife and children, and that amongst the upper classes a daughter who refused to wed the gentleman of her parents' choice could be beaten and locked in her room "without any shock being inflicted on public opinion" (AROO: 44).

During the reign of the Stuarts, from the early 17th to the early 18th centuries, we are told that it was still unusual for an upper or middle class woman to choose her own husband, and once married, said husband was lord and master of the household. In her work *Sexual Politics*, feminist writer Kate Millett compared the institution of marriage to feudalism, with the wife acquiring a "serf status" on marriage (MILLETT; 1990: 68) - promising to "honour and obey" her husband "as long as you both shall live."

The narrator refers to the fact that, although according to Professor Trevelyan, Shakespeare's female characters do not seem "lacking in personality and character", these women are fictional (AROO: 44). Fêted in literature and poetry, in reality women were mainly illiterate, cowed and oppressed victims of male dominance and domestic violence. "Mary" ponders over the lack of information available regarding the situation of women in the Elizabethan era and we are acutely aware of the unimportance of women in a male dominated society, which afforded opportunities and rewards to the male sex whilst the female sex was not considered worthy of even the most basic education.

We are now introduced to the fictional character of "Judith" Shakespeare; William's sister. It would seem that Woolf's choice of name for William's "sister" could be

inspired by the fact that Shakespeare's own daughter – twin to Hamnet – was named Judith. This can be seen as an allusion to the fact that although the character of Judith is fictional, her circumstances and life experience would have been only too familiar to real-life women of the era. We are treated to a description of William's education – attending a grammar school, and learning Latin, grammar and logic. Judith, however, did not attend school, and in spite of the fact that she was “extraordinarily gifted” (AROO: 48) was chastised by her parents for picking up her brother's books and put to work sewing and cooking. William, on leaving to seek his fortune in London, becomes a successful actor and playwright and performs at court. Judith – to escape an arranged marriage – also goes to seek her fortune in the capital city. She, however, only finds ill fortune and ridicule. Her requests to be allowed to act are met with raucous laughter by the manager of the theatre – who compares a woman acting with a poodle dancing. We see male contempt towards women's desire to compete in this male-dominated theatrical world, in spite of the fact that we are told that Judith had “a gift like her brother's...” (AROO: 49). Judith, although incredibly talented, lacks self-belief, having been constantly reminded of her inferior social status as a woman since childhood. She eventually becomes pregnant by the actor-manager Nick Greene, and realising the futility of the existence of female talent and ambition in the patriarchal Elizabethan world, she takes her own life. She now lies “buried at some cross-roads where the omnibuses now stop outside the Elephant and Castle” (AROO: 50). In this sad image we see the insignificance of this wretched young woman; buried – physically and metaphorically – beneath the bustling metropolis of the patriarchal world – a world which allowed those of her sex no education and subsequently, no future.

The narrator continues to deliberate over the difficulties faced by women writers through the ages – sometimes leading to the decision to adopt a male pseudonym – Currer Bell, George Eliot – as a means of being accepted in the literary world. She also refers to women's desire for anonymity and a reticence towards publicly proclaiming their identity – no doubt fuelled by a lack of self-belief ingrained over centuries. This contrasts with the male desire for renown and public honours – even notoriety is preferable to anonymity. We see irony and humour in the description of “Alf, Bert or Chas” – incapable of passing “a tombstone or a signpost without feeling an irresistible desire to cut their names on it...” (AROO: 52).

At this point in her musings, “Mary” once again introduces her two most important requisites for a female writer – a room in which she may write unhindered and

uninterrupted and sufficient income to be able to devote herself to her work. However, even when these conditions were occasionally met, we are told that women writers faced “not indifference but hostility” (AROO: 54). We see indignation towards the patriarchal society intent on excluding female writers from their exclusive world in the quote taken from a poem written from Lady Winchelsea – a 17th century noblewoman and poet - in which she riles against the position of women – “debarred from all improvements of the mind...” “...and if someone would soar above the rest”, they would be fearful “[s]o strong the opposing faction still appears” (MD: 59). Men are described as hostile and opposed to women encroaching on their hallowed territory. Lady Winchelsea herself, we are told, was satirised by writers such as Alexander Pope and John Gay and described as “a blue-stocking with an itch for scribbling” (AROO: 61). The use of the derogatory verb “scribbling” with its connotations of senseless, unstructured prose reflects male contempt for female artistic prowess and talent. Although upper-class women began to write, the mere notion of women writing was considered ridiculous by the patriarchs. We are told that “[l]etters did not count” because a woman could write letters whilst nursing a sick parent – “by the fire whilst the men talked without disturbing them” (AROO: 63). Here we see the image of the woman as caring and compassionate but excluded from male society – her thoughts or ideas not relevant or even considered.

It is well documented by psychologists that constant belittlement and denigration leads to the victim believing themselves unworthy, and this was the case with women writers, who suffered tremendous self-doubt. In this respect, it can be said that the patriarchal society achieved its subconscious goal; to rob women of the self-belief which they would need to rise up and shatter the over-inflated male “looking glass” image.

The narrator points to the fact that the history of male opposition to female emancipation is probably more interesting than the history of female emancipation itself (AROO: 57). She suggests that a study of this would produce an interesting and amusing book – followed by a warning that a young woman writer’s decision to undertake such a task would lead to a need for protection against the reaction of the patriarchal society to such a work - “thick gloves on her hands, and bars to protect her of solid gold” (AROO: 57). Here we see a vivid image of the male sex as fiercely protective of their superior place in society and extremely averse to criticism of their ways and manners.

Although we are told that Aphra Benn was the first woman who “earned them the right to speak their own minds” (AROO: 66), making a living from her writing and becoming a literary role model for future female writers, by the 19th century, writers such as Jane Austen were still forced to write in the “common sitting-room” (AROO: 67), covering their work from prying eyes with blotting paper. Whilst men wrote uninterrupted in studios, women were sitting amongst family members and plagued by constant interruptions and contretemps. Interestingly, in the introduction to one of her collections of short stories, 2013 Nobel prize winning writer Alice Munro, speaks of the fact that her original intention was not to write short stories but novels, however marriage and motherhood were not conducive to this desire. Munro states:

A child's illness, relatives coming to stay, a pile-up of unavoidable household jobs, can swallow a work-in-progress as surely as a power failure used to destroy a piece of work in the computer (MUNRO, 2015).

Even in today's egalitarian society, it would be inconceivable that a male writer should utter a similar statement. Once again, one reflects on whether society has really progressed as much as we would like to think.

Early nineteenth century female novelists were criticised both for their choice of genre – considered inferior – and their choice of subject matter – considered insignificant and trivial. Rather than writing from the privileged position of male writers, with confidence and assurance, women writers were forced to defend their choices and style before the autocracy of the male dominated literary canon. “Mary” introduces the concept of the “man's sentence” which “was unsuited for a woman's use” (AROO: 77). Writers such as Jane Austen and Emily Brontë, as our narrator tells us, “wrote as women write, not as men write” (AROO: 75), contriving to ignore the “grumbling... ..patronising...domineering” critical male voice, intent on discouraging them from their aim and ensuring that women writers be aware of the “limitations of their sex” (AROO: 75). In this description, we see an allusion to the need for female writers to possess the courage of their convictions in the face of criticism and oppression by the patriarchal society.

The narrator, in her perusal of the book shelves, now focuses on contemporary works of the era. Choosing one of these at random, she settles down to take notes on this debut novel by Mary Carmichael. Here again, our attention is drawn to the fluidity of the

female identity and the fact that “Mary Carmichael” represents the contemporary female writer. Our narrator realises that this young woman writer’s style is unique and new; joyfully breaking away from patriarchal literary conventions. We are told that “Chloe liked Olivia” and we learn that Mary Carmichael’s novel alludes to a lesbian relationship between co-workers (AROO: 81). Before describing this, the narrator ironically asks her readers to assure her that “behind that red curtain over there the figure of Sir Chartres Biron is not concealed” (AROO: 81). This is a reference to Radclyffe Hall’s novel *The Well of Loneliness*, detailing the intense relationship between a young girl and an older woman. The novel was heartily condemned by the British patriarchal system and declared “obscene libel” by Biron – then a London magistrate – who ordered that all copies of said novel should be destroyed. “Mary” is interested to see how Carmichael depicts this fragile relationship between Chloe and Olivia of “unrecorded gestures [and] half-said words [exchanged] when women are alone, unlit by the capricious and coloured light of the other sex” (AROO: 84). We see an allusion to the male sex as capable of sudden, unexpected behaviour changes – bathing in the reflected light of their male identity and self assurance.

Following these thoughts, the narrator rebukes herself for using words such as “highly developed” and “infinitely intricate” in her description of Mary Carmichael’s capacity for writing fiction (AROO: 84-85). She wonders whether such high praise can be justified of a sex which has taken no part in the discovery of new lands or the invention of new technology. Few women have university degrees or have left their indelible mark on professions such as politics, the diplomatic corps or the armed forces. However, in spite of this, “Mary” believes that women have played an important role in the biographies of illustrious male writers and philosophers. She considers that, on returning home from their male dominated “public sphere”, these men would have felt renewed and revitalised by female members of their family – confined to the “private sphere” who “have sat indoors all these millions of years, so that by this time the very walls are permeated by their creative force” (AROO: 87). This creative power, we are told “differs greatly from the creative power of men” (AROO: 87). The narrator concludes that “it would be a thousand pities if women wrote like men, or lived like men, or looked like men”, because differences between the sexes are far more stimulating than similarities (AROO: 87). She even ponders over the fact that if we became aware of other sexes in other galaxies “we should then have the immense pleasure....of watching Professor X rush for his measuring-rods to prove himself

‘superior’”(AROO: 87). We see humour and irony in this image of the male professor with his own preconceived notions of what constitutes superiority – using standards which have been set by the patriarchal society to compare himself favourably with beings from other worlds.

We are told that Mary Carmichael will have to be bold in her writing and portray many different characters and aspects of life from her own perspective as a female author; “the courtesan, the harlot and the lady with the pug dog” – although they currently “still sit in the rough and ready-made clothes that the male writer has had perforce to clap upon their shoulders” (AROO: 88), Mary will challenge these canonical literary characterisations from a woman’s perspective and “have out her scissors and fit them close to every hollow and angle” (AROO: 88). The time has arrived, we are told, for Mary Carmichael to take advantage of the improved situation of prospective female authors:

Men were no longer ‘the opposing faction’; she need not waste her time railing against them. Fear and hatred were almost gone...although traces of them showed only in...a tendency to the caustic and satirical...in her treatment of the other sex (AROO: 91-92).

We see an allusion to the patriarchal society as opposed to and critical of female creativity and artistic talent. We are struck by the use of adjectives such as “fear” and “hatred” to describe women’s feelings towards the opposite sex. Although these feelings have subsided as the social, economic and political situation of women has improved, the remnants of these feelings can be seen, we are told, in women’s acerbic and sardonic treatment of men. Even today, in the routines of female stand-up comedians, the foibles of the male sex are often ridiculed and lampooned with sarcastic wit.

Mary Carmichael is forging a new path for women writers; although her writing is sometimes awkward, she proudly writes as a woman, “...but as a woman who has forgotten she is a woman...” (AROO: 92). Here we see the beginning of Woolf’s notion of the androgynous mind which she develops further in the last chapter of *A Room of One’s Own*. We are told that the “bishops and the deans, the doctors and the professors, the patriarchs and the pedagogues” (AROO: 93) were all shouting advice and admonitions at Carmichael - “You can’t do this and you shan’t do that!” (AROO: 93). We see patriarchal belief in their own unique and unrivalled knowledge and authority in

the use of the imperative tense – “shan’t”. In spite of these intrusions however, Mary Carmichael does not falter in her course, and on finishing reading this young woman’s first novel, the narrator concludes that with “a room of her own and five hundred a year,” Mary Carmichael “will be a poet” (AROO: 93). Tellingly, however, the narrator also considers that it will be necessary to “[g]ive her another hundred years” (AROO: 93). Maybe Woolf considered that it would be another century before the patriarchal society would consider women writers equal to their male counterparts?

The following morning, when the narrator arises, we see the description of the city of London as a machine – “winding itself up again...” (AROO: 94). The narrator comments on passers-by she sees from her window – boys running errands, a woman walking her dog. We are told that a “very distinguished gentleman” narrowly avoids colliding with a “bustling lady who had, by some means or other, acquired a splendid fur coat and a bunch of Parma violets” (AROO: 94). Here again, we see an allusion to the continuing gulf between the two sexes. According to the 2001 edition of the *Oxford Thesaurus*, synonyms for the adjective used to refer to the gentleman - “distinguished” - include: esteemed, important, influential, and illustrious. The lady, however, has “acquired...by some means or other” a fur coat and a bunch of flowers. The use of these words implies that these items have been gifted to the lady by a gentleman, not that the lady has been able to provide them for herself because she is financially independent.

The sight of a girl and a young man approaching a taxi from opposite sides of the street and entering the vehicle together, leads the narrator to develop further the concept of the androgynous mind, in which “two powers preside, one male, one female” (AROO: 97). In the androgynous mind, the male-dominated mind will have a female part and the female-dominated mind will have a male part. The two parts of the mind will “live in harmony together” (AROO: 97). In practice however, this is harder to achieve “now than ever before” (AROO: 97). The narrator wonders why this should be, given that “no age can ever have been as stridently sex-conscious as our own” (AROO: 97) – referring to the countless tomes written by men about women that she had encountered during her research. She mentions the Suffrage campaign as one of the main reasons for this male desire for “self-assertion” – and refers ironically to the fact that “when one is challenged, even by a few women in black bonnets, one retaliates, if one has never been challenged before, rather excessively” (AROO: 98). Prior to the Suffrage movement, patriarchal society had never been challenged, and although some societal factions

considered the Suffragettes to be akin to terrorists, there is no doubt that the methods used to repress them were archaic and cruel.

“Mary” then takes a novel written by a male writer – Mr. A - from the shelves and is immediately struck by the directness of the writing, which shows “such freedom of mind, such liberty of person, such confidence in himself” (AROO: 98). She initially glories in the familiarity of the style and assurance of this “well-nourished, well-educated, free mind, which had never been thwarted or opposed, but had had full liberty from birth to stretch itself in whatever way it liked” (AROO: 98). This description of the privileged position of the male writer contrasts starkly with the previous portrayal of early women writers – considered deluded, eccentric or ridiculous by the supercilious patriarchs.

After reading a couple of chapters, however, the narrator becomes aware of “a shadow” which seems to intrude on the writing – shaped in the form of the letter ‘I’ (AROO: 98). According to Zamorano and García (2011), in this passage Woolf criticises the narcissism of male writing, with its recurrent “I” which, although she describes it as “hard as a nut, and polished for centuries by good teaching and good feeding,” nevertheless allows nothing to grow in its shade (AROO: 98). This dominant male “I” which eclipses all else could also be an allusion to the vanity and self-importance of a patriarchal society and its historical repression of the female sex. “Mary” considers that women’s burgeoning independence and self-sufficiency has resulted in male writers feeling the need to assert themselves as a protest against sexual equality. Although the narrator admits to respect and admiration for male writing, eventually the dominance of the male ‘I’ bores her; she sees it as an impediment rather than a benefit, as identity should be fluid rather than unified and homogeneous – as dictated by patriarchal society. Male writing, the narrator concludes, focuses to such an extent on male virtues and values that “the power of suggestion” is missing and although the writing can be appreciated on a superficial level, it lacks substance (AROO: 100). “Mary” equates the concept of the androgynous mind with writers such as Shakespeare, Keats or Coleridge, and begins writing her essay on Women and Fiction with the initial statement that a successful writer must be “woman-manly or man-womanly” (AROO: 102). It is through this collaboration of minds that creativity and literary success will be assured.

Following this final conclusion, we are told that “Mary Beton ceases to speak” (AROO: 103) and Virginia Woolf herself materialises to sum up her closure. She exhorts young women writers to have the courage of their convictions, and write as they wish to write,

on the subjects of their choice. She declares it “the most abject treachery” to defer to “some Headmaster with a silver pot in his hand or to some professor with a measuring-rod up his sleeve” (AROO: 105). She speaks of the symbolism behind her original statement regarding Women and Fiction – “five hundred a year” – referring to financial independence and “the power to contemplate” and “a room of one’s own with a lock on the door” – symbolising “the power to think for oneself” (AROO: 105). The use of the word “power” is striking - patriarchal society had spent centuries denying women power – whether through facetiousness or fear – and Woolf believed that women must take up the baton of power and make their mark on the world. She agrees that the patriarchal society has repressed and ridiculed women for centuries, however she then confronts her audience with examples of the advances which young women now enjoyed in the contemporary society of the era. We are told that claims of “lack of opportunity, training, encouragement, [or] money” are no longer valid (AROO: 111). Judith Shakespeare is waiting to be reborn; although it will require time, courage and resolution, in the contemporary world she will be recognised and revered. Woolf concludes that in order to achieve this, “to work, even in poverty and obscurity, is worth while” (AROO: 112).

Conclusions

The aim of this final degree project was to explore how images of patriarchy can be seen throughout Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* and *A Room of One’s Own*. As has been illustrated in the main body of this work, Virginia Woolf possessed a unique talent for presenting her readers with a critique of contemporary society of the era. Although *A Room of One’s Own* is considered a groundbreaking feminist text, *Mrs Dalloway* is no less so. In both works, Woolf used her own particular brand of “reverse psychology” to draw attention to the social, economic and political inequality of women and their repression and subordination at the hands of a patriarchal society. By representing patriarchy as superior and desirable – albeit ironically - and portraying the insecurities of female characters such as Clarissa Dalloway, Lady Bruton or Judith Shakespeare, Woolf shines the spotlight on the unjustness of a patriarchal world which considers women lesser beings.

In *A Room of One’s Own*, Woolf referred to the necessity for women writers to be financially independent and enjoy their own uninterrupted space in order to write

fiction. She also realised that it would take time – she referred to “a hundred years” - for the patriarchal society to accept women writers as their equals (AROO: 93). Almost a century after these works were published, their subject matter is still relevant, and Woolf’s arguments continue to hold up in the contemporary world, not merely regarding women writers – but women of all professions and conditions. Although women’s rights movements have ensured that social, economic and political conditions for women have improved, patriarchal society continues to struggle with the concept of gender equality; women are often still judged by appearance rather than merit and the male ego continues to flourish.

Following the example of Woolf’s narrator in *A Room of One’s Own*, we only have to peruse the press to confirm that our contemporary world is still dominated by patriarchy. In the most powerful country in the world, with a chequered history of slavery, racism and segregation, a black man has become President whilst female contenders are still speaking of the need to shatter the glass ceiling. In an interview, Ruth Bader Ginsburg – US Supreme Court Justice - remembers that during the late 1950s, the Harvard law Dean asked herself and her fellow female students what qualified them to take a man’s place at the prestigious law school. According to a 2016 online Financial Times article, only 7 of the top 100 companies on the London Stock Exchange boast a female CEO. In 2017, the BBC published a list of the earnings of the corporation’s top presenters – leading to a public outcry over the gender pay gap between male and female presenters.

Although we must concede that women have undoubtedly advanced in their fight for equality in a patriarchal society – they are now often accepted and even welcomed into the male dominated “public sphere” – they are in many cases still expected to fulfil their duties in the “private sphere” – leading to an increase in responsibilities and workload. We may now be permitted to partake of a piece of the patriarchal pie, but we are still expected to prepare and cook the pie. It may be suggested that, if Virginia Woolf were alive today, she would consider that patriarchy is alive and well and living cosily in the 21st century; perhaps she would suggest we meet again in another hundred years to review the situation.

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