

Cristian Georgescu

Virginia Woolf and The Universe of Her Novel "Mrs Dalloway"

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Introduction

During the nineteenth century, the novel form established itself as a major means of literary expression. A variety of different kinds of novels appeared, ranging from the grand panorama of life in a country town we find in George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, to novels pursuing social injustice such as Dickens' *Hard Times* or life-stories like his *David Copperfield* and Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*; thrillers such as Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, and continuations of the gothic tradition such as Emily Bronte's romantic masterpiece *Wuthering Heights*.

Although Virginia Woolf originally intended to continue the tradition of the great novelists, she soon started to develop new forms of the novel focusing more on the characters themselves than on the actual plot. *Mrs Dalloway* marks a milestone in her literary work because this novel includes new narrative techniques combining realistic and modern features that led either to admiration or criticism at that time, and even nowadays Virginia Woolf's work is still discussed in literary circles, and of great interest for the literature studies.

Mrs Dalloway, at first sight, is not an easy book, and it is difficult to understand as there is no real sequence of events; it rather seems to consist of various bits and pieces which seem not to be connected at first but having a closer look that kaleidoscope of aspects composes a picture of Post-World War London and its society centred around Clarissa Dalloway, the main character, reflecting her artificial life.

The aim of this thesis is to focus on the most important features of the novel that reveal the uniqueness of *Mrs Dalloway* as well as a modern novel as the importance for the development of early twentieth century literature.

Therefore, the first part of this thesis deals with the literary and historical context of War and Modernism in the era of Virginia Woolf illuminating the importance of her work, as well as the ambiguous reactions to her writing. In order to understand the genesis of *Mrs Dalloway*, the composition and the psychological evolution of the novel will also be discussed.

The second part of this thesis concentrates on different topics of the novel concerning style, narrative technique, as well as imagery and characters in order to put together the seemingly dislocated fragments into a clear and clean image of what makes Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* one outstanding example of modern literature.