

## **Psycho-Social Assortment: Psychoneurotics Claimed in Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway**

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### **Abstract**

In the literary period of modernism, Mrs Dalloway is a modernist fiction set in London, England with Woolf's usage of third person omniscient, and a free indirect discourse point of view. Woolf's texts are typical examples of twentieth-century narratives that portray the cultural and social relations and space. Considering Woolf's style of writing, there is a heavy usage of psychological details hidden in the body of the story, as the main goal of this research is viewing these details in relation to the selected characters to show the importance of the psychoanalytical analysis and therapy on the main character of the story as the case study, as well as the time and space elements toward the mentality of characters using Dr. Karen Horney's Psychoanalytical Social theory, in the case of affection and approval or in contrast case of aggression strategies, as well as her other essential key concepts.

**Keywords:** Modern fiction, Mrs. Dalloway, Psychological premises, Psycho-Social Theory, Karen Horney.

### **1. Introduction**

The revolution in psychology of Freud that began in the late nineteenth century has affected both the interpretation and the creation of literary works. Freud was the first to suggest that the unconscious governs a large part of our actions. Horney (1885–1952) disputed Freudian psychoanalysis by challenging his biological and psychosexual premise. She saw behaviour as a consequence of cultural distinctions and values. According to Horney, basic anxiety refers to the maladaptive patterns that develop when children are exposed to basic evil or any environment that does not meet their basic needs. Basic anxiety results in the formulation of interpersonal strategies of defense, or rigid ways of relating to others. Her theories have stressed the importance of interpersonal relations.

Karen Horney is one of the best known psychoanalytic theorist in 1940s- 1950s. Although

she praised Freud's genius, Horney rejected many of his premises and tried to shift the focus

of psychoanalysis from infantile origins to the current structure of the personality. This German psychoanalyst, although is known as a psychoanalytic rebel, she was a Freudian for many years. After studying medicine at the Universities of Freiburg, Gottingen, and Berlin; some intellectual influences from Harald Schultz Hencke and Wilhelm Reich,

Max Horkheimer, Erich Fromm as her colleagues and friends encourage her to consider the patients whose problems were different from those she had already treated; all contributed her in developing her new theories. In the early to mid-1930s, her essays reflected fresh modes of thought. In *Our Inner Conflicts* (1945) and *Neurosis and Human Growth* (1950), Horney was developing elaborate strategies of defense. In *Our Inner Conflicts*, she concentrated on the interpersonal strategies of moving toward, against, and away from other people and the neurotic solutions of compliance, aggression, and detachment to which they give rise. In *Neurosis and Human Growth*, she emphasized intra psychic defenses, showing how self-idealization generates a search for glory a system which consists of neurotic, pride, neurotic claims, tyrannical should, and self-hate. Horney praised some of Freud's works, but her origins and early experiences prepared her for wider perspectives. She became disenchanted with the Freudian instructions that the patient's present behaviour must inevitably be interpreted in terms of their past. Instead, she saw the value of concentrating on the present behaviour in the context of character trends. Horney stressed the need for patients to identify the specific cause of current anxieties rather than to focus exclusively on childhood memories or fantasies. Horney also observed that all behaviour was not sexual in origin. She criticized Freud as a feminine masochism, where he said that women feel an inferiority complex towards man's organ. As Gay in his *FREUD-A life for our time* expressed; Horney shows her opposition to Freud by saying that "the dogma of the inferiority of women had its origins in an unconscious male tendency" (519-521). So it can be

maintained that Horney was the first critic of Freud's ideas about women.

Adeline Virginia Stephen well known as Virginia Woolf was an innovative writer. Throughout her career she experimented with theme and form, producing thoughtful essays about the nature of prose fiction and the challenges it posed. Her critical works include: 'Modern Fiction' (1919); her famous plea in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) for women to have independence and privacy to write, and *Three Guineas* (1938) which was broadly on the theme of women's place in the world and their opportunities for education. There were also the major bouts of debilitating physical illness and nervous breakdowns among people of time. Her narrative approach has been described as cinematic, because Woolf uses techniques such as close-ups, flashbacks and montage. She was also influenced by the art of the Post-Impressionists, and perhaps by Cubist painters who tried to present objects from different perspectives. Mrs Dalloway takes place in June of 1923 and no need to mention that World War I, just ended in 1918, and though the United Kingdom was technically victorious in the war, hundreds of thousands of soldiers died fighting and the country suffered huge financial losses. Mrs. Dalloway critiques the conservatism and traditionalism of the upper classes at the time, while the novel is portraying the tragedy of the lost generation following World War I, like Septimus as a victim. All the action of Mrs. Dalloway takes place in London during one day and night in mid-June, 1923. Clarissa Dalloway is an upper-class throwing a party that night, and by the end of novel, the sudden arrival of death happened at her party. She admires the purity of Septimus soul and considers her own shallow existence. She

sees Septimus' suicide as an act of communication in modernist condition.

## **2. Karen Horney and Psychoanalytic Social Theory**

Horney's theory of neurosis offered a different way of viewing while she observe this concept as continuous of a normal life same as the previous theorists. Specifically, she saw neurosis as an attempt to make life bearable, as a way of interpersonal control and coping. In her clinical experience, she discerned ten particular patterns of neurotic needs. They are based on things that the people need, but they have become distorted in several ways by the difficulties of some people's lives, for affection and approval, or any unrealistic, unreasonable, and indiscriminating reasons.

The method of reading the Woolf's Mrs Dalloway explicates the way an individual's self which is formed along with what they receive from society and environment throughout his life. Psychoanalytic criticism is an approach through which one can interpret literary texts, finding the reason which works under character's behaviour in a literary text. Freud's theories are either directly or indirectly concerned with the nature of the unconscious mind. He suggests that the powers motivating men and women are mainly and normally unconscious. Freud's most important contributions to the study of the psyche, the theory of repression, lies in the unconscious mind which acts as a censor. Censored materials often involve infantile sexual desires, Freud assumed. Repressed to an unconscious state, they emerge only in dream forms, in language, and in creative activity that may produce art including literature, and in neurotic behaviour. According to Freud, all of us have

repressed wishes and fears. One of the unconscious desires most commonly repressed is the childhood wish to displace the parent of our own sex and take his or her place in the affections of the parent of the opposite sex. This desire really involves wishes and fears. A boy may fear that his father will castrate him, and he may wish that his mother would return to him. Freud referred to the whole complex of feelings by the word oedipal, naming the complex after the Greek tragic hero, Oedipus, who unwittingly killed his father and married his mother. The psychoanalytic approach to literature not only rests on the theories of Freud; it may even be said to have begun with Freud. Between 1909 and 1949 many critics were among the most influential to become interested in the new approach. But not all of them became Freudians.

Horney's theory of neurosis and psychoanalysis are involving inner conflicts, and in this regard, neurosis is to distinguish how people cope and have control over interpersonal issues that happen day to day. Her theories are examined in more depth by actually seeing how she disagrees with Freud and what her ideas are for neuroses and psychoanalysis. Horney underwent psychoanalysis as a young woman and felt it helped her understand her own inner thoughts and behaviours. Though many aspects of Freudian theory accounted for Horney's issues as well; she felt psychoanalysis was limited by the male bias. Freud believed that feminine experience and psychopathology resulted from disappointed male sexuality. Women, according to Freud, would always be psychologically restricted. Horney debunk this view by exposing its lack of scientific evidence and set about constructing her own theory of personality that better encompassed the range of female experience. Horney was

convinced that children who grow up feeling unsafe, unloved, and undervalued develop anxiety and consequently adopt maladaptive strategies to cope with this anxiety. Horney's theory does not exclusively apply to female children. But it leads the women to develop a masculinity complex, originating from feelings of inferiority, as well as frustration at the disparity between sexes.

### **3. Consequences of Change through the Effect of Environment**

According to Horney's concept of normality and her view of the role play of the environment; it is unquestionably the environment which effects on people to become constructive and destructive. The features of being constructive and destructive are closely connected with Horney's understanding of free and healthy individual, bad or good human being and the extension of having responsibility. Because of dread of potential dangers, human being develop certain neurotic trends which permitting ones to cope with the world with some measure of safety. Horney's central idea is a mixture of philosophy, psychology and psychoanalysis. She used these three fields of study, as she attempted to understand each neurotic case through the whole experience of people's lives, interactions, and environments.

Thoughts of death lurk constantly beneath the surface of everyday life in Mrs. Dalloway, especially for Clarissa, Septimus, and Peter, and this awareness makes even mundane events and interactions meaningful, sometimes even threatening. Septimus as an example, is constantly remembering his past and the traumatic memory of losing his friend on a loop which concludes his childhood need that has been repressed. A childhood

need for love and affection which we later on see as a problematic subject since he is routinely thinking about the lack of it in the novel and what eventually leads to his suicide.

Horney in *Our Inner Conflicts: A Constructive Theory of Neurosis* argued that people combat basic anxiety by adopting some personality traits. As Karen appointed significant emphasis on parenting. She used her experiences as a psychiatrist to identify and develop a model of different interpersonal trends that people use to maintain social security. These are defined as moving toward people, moving against people and moving away from people. Each group's behavior is characterized by compliance, aggression and withdrawal, respectively. Karen Horney believed that an individual exposed to an unsupportive, uncaring and hostile environment develops strategies to cope with the basic anxiety that such environments produce (48- 115). Horney found that in the neurotic person, one of these three trends is dominant, and the other two are present to a lesser degree. To become better and better in life and interests, some people are driven to be perfect and scared of being flawed. They can't be caught making a mistake and need to be in control at all times. As Horney investigated these neurotic needs, she began to recognize that they can be clustered into the broad coping strategies. Ultimately it can be noted that the changes make Septimus move against people while it makes Clarissa move toward people. This change happens quite slowly but have deeper roots in both sides. Similar to waves hitting the sides of a beach, Septimus's sanity seems to vanish slowly like grains of sand into the deep waters.

#### **4. Comparison between the motivations**

Virginia Woolf herself wrote two suicide notes. One to her husband, and another for her sister. Looking at the details from the forensic linguistic analysis, we see that Virginia Woolf's suicide notes are unique. The emotions expressed in the notes towards her family were positive, especially towards her husband, Leonard. Even though the writer did not explicitly state her intention to commit suicide to the people she loved, her sentences show she was serious about ending her life. Based on the analysis, the writer shows guilt and depression. She appears to blame herself for her suicidal act. In a note Virginia Woolf left for her sister, her request of assisting her husband after her death along with the hope that her husband could do better without her is observable. It seems the intention of Virginia Woolf's notes were not to explain why she was going to kill herself, but to comfort her beloved family after her death. Based on the forensic semantics analysis, Virginia Woolf's suicidal act was caused by her depression. But, it was not because of the onset of World War II and the effects of unsatisfactory time. The result of this analysis supports the statement of other psychologists that her depression was caused by bipolar disorder which was also accompanied by changes in her cognitive processes and abilities that made her unable to work, and thus, leading on to her suicide.

Similarly, Septimus in the novel is being hostile towards his environment and people but getting closer to the ending he starts showing emotions to Rezia in particular. This can be a result of him embracing death and wanting to comfort his wife. So it can be noticed that they both have to fulfill the neurotic need for affection and approval via someone, but in the end as their last words,

they are the ones trying to comfort those around them which is completely contrastive or a reverse effect.

#### **5. The Dilemma: Peter Walsh or Richard Dalloway**

Peter Walsh is Clarissa's closest friend who was once passionately in love with her. They are intellectually very similar. Clarissa rejected Peter's proposal of marriage, which has haunted him all his life. He lived in India for years and often has romantic problems with women, and is critical of everyone, indulges in long fantasies and musings, and constantly plays with his pocketknife.

In Contrast, Richard Dalloway, Clarissa's husband, a Conservative politician in Parliament. Richard is a relatively simple, uninteresting man, but he is kind, and philanthropic. Clarissa Dalloway spends much of the novel reminiscing about one eventful summer at Bourton about her childhood country home, and the time she was a teenager. It was here that the most significant characters in the novel such as Peter, Clarissa, Richard Dalloway, and Sally Seton spent time together. In many ways, the novel asks and answers the question, while Woolf introduces Bourton with nostalgia about opening the French windows and plunging at Bourton and its flowers as well as the fresh air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet solemn, feeling as she did in her teen by standing there at the open window to observe outside.

There is loaded language here that suggests beauty, innocence, and danger. Peter challenges Clarissa, asking her to think deeply, to question, and to rebel against snobbery and rigidity. However, the calm,

certain, stable, comfortable future promised by Richard Dalloway proves to be the better choice to her. This can be a result of her neurotic need for a powerful partner in her life to give her the faith she needs in life to carry on or just to be there to support her.

Years later, of course, Clarissa still thinks about this choice. She has deep, complicated feelings for Peter but suggests that he would have loved her too intensely for the marriage to be a success. She thinks she would still find herself arguing in St. James's Park, still making out that she had been right not to marry Peter. For in marriage a little license, a little independence there must be between people living together day in day out in the same house; which Richard gave her. But with Peter everything had to be shared. Clarissa is most comfortable lady full of enjoyment, and superficiality in life. And any relationship with Peter would have been a passionate disaster.

## **6. Peter Walsh's Pocketknife and the Other Weapons**

Peter Walsh plays constantly with his pocketknife which just suggest his inability to make decisions. He cannot decide what he feels and doesn't know whether he abhors English tradition and wants to fight it, or whether he accepts English civilization just as it is. The pocketknife reveals Peter's defensiveness. He is armed with the knife, in a sense, when he pays an unexpected visit to Clarissa, while she herself is armed with her sewing scissors. Their weapons make them equal competitors. Knives and weapons are also phallic symbols, hinting at sexuality and power. Peter cannot define his own identity, and his constant fidgeting with the knife suggests how uncomfortable he is with his

masculinity. Characters fall into two groups: those who are armed and those who are not. Her ambiguous relationship with her friend Edith also puts her at a disadvantage in society, leaving her even less able to defend herself.

In the novel, Peter have this neurotic requirement for his ambition and personal achievement, self-sufficiency, as well as a neurotic need for perfection and unassailability. All resulting him to move away from people to satisfy these needs. Later on he is uncertain of his choices since this neurotic characteristic may have been what resulted his and Clarissa's separation. After all, that is what puts Peter in a dilemma ironically, as well as Mrs. Dalloway in the same kind of dilemma when she was thinking whether to choose Peter or Richard.

## **7. Dr. Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw: Doctors to Cure or the Unintentional Poison-guards**

Based on the novel, Sir William Bradshaw is a famous London psychiatrist. He subscribes to the worldview of proportion, and limits his patients into converting into his own views. He recommends that Septimus must be separated from Rezia and should be sent to an institution. Dr. Holmes is a general practitioner who treats Septimus. Septimus comes to despise Holmes and thinks of him as the embodiment of repulsive human nature.

Septimus, near to the ending of the novel, is exposed to society as he enters Sir William Bradshaw's office for his appointment. Septimus visits doctors as the embodiment of human nature, which he saw many ugliest conditions during the war. Both Dr. Holmes and Sir William are older men who probably did not see any of the war firsthand, but they

believe themselves to be experts on Septimus's condition. Science has become a new religion of sorts and Sir William is referred to as a priest of science, indicating the power he has over his patients. Just as religious believers often try to convert nonbelievers, Sir William seeks to convert the mentally ill to his sense of proportion. He preys on people like a vampire, sucking their souls out until they are his obedient followers. His wife, Lady Bradshaw, was one of his victims. Lady Bradshaw's hobby of taking pictures of decaying churches represents the twentieth-century transition from faith in religion, God faith in science, or technology. When the ill consider that no god exists because of the war equipment and technique which suffocates patients like Septimus who saw the horrifying results of blind conformity during the war.

The question of what the war was fought to preserve is never far from Septimus's thoughts, and he suffers from the lingering uncertainty. Peter Walsh and Clarissa might see English tradition as noble and worth fighting for, but Septimus does not read any of these conventional meanings in the symbols of England. Septimus no longer knows what the war was for. This doubt suggests that the very foundation of English society, an oppressive class system benefiting only a small margin of society, is problematic. Sir William, however, is uninterested in discussing Septimus's loss of faith in England and believes individuality is a sign of mental illness. He wants patients to convert, conform, and forget about themselves and any doubts they may have about the war or the empire. Neither Holmes nor Bradshaw realize Septimus is on his deathbed. His suicide is a social inconvenience in the middle of my party in the case of being far from the other people.

As Woolf believed that "Death was a defiance...people feeling the impossibility of reaching the center [...] There was an embrace in death", even as it may disrupt the party.

## 8. Conclusion

The roots of psychological problems which Freud implied them to the biological disorders and childhood process, Karen indicated them all as the effect of environment, culture, society and the training process by the parents. Horney believed that nobody was born as an evil character. There are lots of details which psychoanalysis leads to the cause and effect relationships among the characters, as well as in Virginia Woolf's personal life which could be applicable through the lens of Karen Horney, her key concepts, and her social theory. It fits to connect the remaining dots about outside elements to the people's minds and explain their origins for a certain characteristic of neurotic behavior which is stemming from his or her social background, or is taking as strategy of man, either related to the childhood, the society, or cultural forces.

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