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**The Greatest Possible Happiness:
Autobiographical Features in the Novels of
Virginia Woolf**
Bachelor Thesis

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto diplomovou práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla úplný seznam citované a použité literatury.

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1 Introduction

Virginia Woolf managed to break through into the world of modernism with her, at that time radical, thoughts concerning equality of gender and women's individuality.

Propagating their rights and picturing their identity and self-expression, she has become an early pioneer of feminism, influencing thousands of works all around the world.

Although scholarly works often consider Woolf's novels in the aspect of modernist approach of stream-of-consciousness method or focus solemnly on gender studies, this thesis engages the bibliographical approach, examining Woolf's life and interfacing it with the women characters in the books.

The aim of the thesis is to analyse Woolf's three major novels, link them with her life and analyse concepts regarding her identity, self-realization and issues she wanted to communicate to the world through the characters in her novels.

The first part of the thesis is introductory in character, it opens with a brief description of Woolf's life and her place within the canon of British literature. Afterwards, it identifies key figures that played primary roles in shaping the author's life and works. Virginia Woolf's life lends itself to a biographical analysis because of her struggle with mental illness and sexuality in an era that repressed women.

Section three analyses out Woolf's main ideas of her feminist lecture *A Room of One's Own* and states its policy on women's need for individuality, money, and their right to fulfil themselves.

Section four carries out an analysis of Woolf's embodiments of herself, family and of social issues she was addressing in the three major novels. *To the Lighthouse*, being the most autobiographical novel, introduces the notions of marriage, maternity, the image of woman as men's mirror and the concept of individuality. In addition, *Mrs. Dalloway* adds images of identity, lack of communication, feminism and fighting one's own demons. Lastly, *Orlando*, being Woolf's work of a progressive nature, approaches the concept of gender roles, androgynous mind and social acceptance.

2 Virginia Woolf's autobiography

Woolf's adult life has mainly revolved around literary activism, as her diary demonstrates, she was constantly busy with either writing her own novels and finding inspirations for them in the bits and pieces of everyday life, or pursuing her career as a literary critic. All of her books reach deeper into the human consciousness, with her arguing "An odd thing, the human mind! so capricious, faithless, infinitely shying at shadows."¹ and introducing important issues she wanted to address. Many of the constraints and obstacles of Woolf's life appeared as the primary concepts in the stories of women in her books.

Her life, however, was shaded with anxiety and frequent depression, originating, in all probability, from her childhood, when she was oppressed and criticized by men who should have been her support. What is more, by their actions, they had denied her many pleasures life could offer otherwise.² If it were not for their tyrannical characters, it is possible Woolf would not succumb to her hardships and commit suicide. She was constantly battling the fear of not being taken seriously and communicating her thoughts to others. Woolf had nowhere to go, no one to talk to, so it is understandable she imprinted her thoughts and feelings into her books. The similarity of character's struggles with her own cannot be overlooked.

2.1 Autobiographical images in the novels

As Roger Poole fittingly suggests in his biography *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*, "to properly analyse the arts, you are ought to scrutinize the author and what may have influenced their stories and how does their own soul mirror in them"³. LuAnn McCracken too claims, that "the autobiographical criticism suggests connections between Woolf's experiences as a child and young woman and the characters and situations she creates."⁴ Although Woolf inclined to write fiction, she herself managed to depict many of the influential individuals of her life. Integrating them in the realistically sketched ordinariness of people's lives, prolonged with powerful insights

¹ Virginia Woolf, *A Writer's diary*. London: Harcourt, Inc., 1953, 26.

² Roger Poole, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

³ Poole, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*, 3.

⁴ LuAnn McCracken, "'The Synthesis of My Being': Autobiography and the Reproduction of Identity in Virginia Woolf," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 1990, 59.

into the human mind, Woolf masterfully pictures their complexity, individuality and weakness.

2.1.1 Influential figures in Virginia Woolf's life

As Poole addresses, over the course of her life, Woolf encountered a number of people who had influenced her works greatly. Noticeably, the influence of the highest importance was Woolf's father Sir Leslie Stephen with whom she had an ambiguous and torn relationship. Woolf was fascinated by his competence in an intellectual integrity and frankness, furthermore he gave her the opportunity to become successful writer and critic of the twentieth century.⁵ She despised, however, his "egoistic self-absorption, constant need of soothing the violent self-distrust and self-disappointment, and tyrannical urge to manipulate".⁶ This contradicting approach of men's qualities can be found in number of characters throughout the books for instance Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Tansley in *To the Lighthouse*, Peter Walsh of *Mrs. Dalloway*, demonstrating how masculine personality traits influenced the women around them.

The relationship with her mother Julia, in contrast, had been the source of "certainty, reassurance and sense of order"⁷, the lives of Stephen family revolved around her presence, similarly as around Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*. Woolf admired her devotion for others, however she could sense that the female qualities of energy, force and life are not infinite, and the never-ending giving resulted in her mother being exhausted, not even having a time for herself. In consequence, Woolf's fascination with the differences of masculine and feminine mind resulted in her proposing the idea of "androgynous mind".⁸ and describes the idea as "an escape from the split of rational masculine and sensitive feminine, it merges the opposites, annulling the conflicts."⁹ The concept was masterfully depicted in the progressive biography *Orlando*, where the male protagonist turns into a woman and majority of the characters show an ambiguous side in conception of their gender.

There is no doubt about Leonard Woolf playing an important part in Virginia's life. Meeting him at the Bloomsbury group, she immediately became his point of interest and he kept proposing to her. She refused him number of times, but when feeling too old and too afraid of not being taken seriously, she finally accepted.

⁵ Poole, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*, 19.

⁶ Poole, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*, 9.

⁷ Poole, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*, 103.

⁸ Poole, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*, 261.

⁹ Poole, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*, 261.

Interestingly, many of Woolf's female characters, while young, refer to marriage as "degradation" and loss of independence, but many of them are in the end confined to the pressure of society. After gaining Virginia's consent, Leonard immediately became her protector. From Woolf's diary their relationship seemed ideal interconnection of intellectual minds, him reading Woolf's works and praising them, owning the Hogarth's Press and sharing the passion of reading and publishing. Yet, as Poole suggests, Leonard writing about his wife's insanity in his *The Wise Virgins*, and leaving out a great deal of her personality, tossed him down off the pedestal. It is also greatly possible, that the already mentioned clash of feminine mind, functioning on the bases of feeling and seeing beauty in the world, and its masculine counterpart, not seeing the world in an illogical light, could have intercepted the stream of their mutual understanding and communication. Consequently, he could have been the reason of Woolf's sustained fear of doctors when he desperately tried to improve her mental state.

Woolf belonged to the group of respected writers of the twentieth century, after her family's relocation to Bloomsbury, she joined the elite of intellectuals, which gave her the opportunity and freedom to be herself, and to speak for herself, in terms of literary work.¹⁰ She could discuss her works with them, and find support or valued rational criticism from lips of the important figures like Lytton Strachey, Desmond McCarthy or Clive Bell. In spite of Bloomsbury group's sometimes radical ways and following the society's disclusion of women from literary committees saying: "No, no, no, ladies are quite impossible. They wouldn't hear of it."¹¹, they offered her a chance to build up herself a respectable reputation among writers as well as public.

It is a matter of speculation as to which exact role Vita Sackville-West played in the life of Virginia Woolf, literary sources arguing whether it was a friendship or rather companionship. However, in the sphere of literary work, Vita was a person of great influence and inspiration, with either Woolf valuing her opinions of the works she had produced or being the archetype for the epic love story in *Orlando*.¹²

¹⁰ Gerald Cheschire, Introduction to *Orlando*. London: William Collins, 2014.vii.

¹¹ Woolf. *A Writer's diary*, 171.

¹² Woolf, *A Writer's diary*, 85.

2.1.2 Virginia Woolf's psychological issues

Woolf must have overcome many obstacles in her life, which made it very hard for her to realize herself, communicate or be independent, so instead she masterfully imprinted her life and her own persona into the characters of her novels and had given the power to address and embody feminist and political issues of the twentieth century.

What accompanies the women figures of Virginia's novels is an apparent lack of sexual tension with male protagonists. The evasion of physical matters undoubtedly emerged from her childhood memories of being repeatedly molested by her half-brothers.¹³ The events influenced her view of her own persona and resulted in an extensive feeling of guilt, shame of her own body, and gave rise to pervasive anxiety of her social image, as she mentioned in her diary numerous times, as for instance mentioning her angst concerning her novel *the Voyage Out*: "Is the time coming when I can endure to read my own writing in print without blushing—shivering and wishing to take cover?"¹⁴ In consequence, there is a possibility of Woolf never being able to form a romantic relationship with men, or that she never was in fact interested in men in the first place and married only because of the contemporary social norms. In her diary she proposes the relationship difference by saying "If one could be friendly with women, what a pleasure—the relationship so secret and private compared with relations with men."¹⁵ and keeps giving hints of a same sex relationship in *Mrs. Dalloway's* Clarissa having a platonic crush on Sally and develops the subject in *Orlando*, where the gender perceptions are often blurred. She often portrays love as a destructive force of emotions, as Peter and Clarissa in *Mrs. Dalloway* or Orlando and Sasha in *Orlando*.

Contemporary literature and several biographical sources do not give a definite answer regarding Virginia Woolf's sexuality. Due to the traumatizing events, it seems possible that Virginia was essentially deprived of any affection towards men, other than intellectual, so naturally, she inclined to the soothing and understanding quality of women relationship. Her marriage with Leonard was based primarily on mutual respect, as seen in her diary entries, where she adored his mind and valued his intellectual eminence.¹⁶ Taking into consideration the possibility of the details of their relationship being edited out by Leonard himself, it is very likely that the fear of male desire, sexual

¹³ Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being* edited by Jeanne Schulkind. London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978.

¹⁴ Woolf, *A Writer's diary*, 15.

¹⁵ Woolf, *A Writer's diary*, 55.

¹⁶ Bell, *Virginia Woolf*, 146.

anxiety and the divergence of male and female mind could culminate in the relationship being a struggle for their expression of emotion and finding one's true identity. Understandably, in her novels she as much as avoids the topic of sex, making the relationships directed more into the emotional or intellectual sphere.¹⁷

Regarding the psychological issues, Woolf's life was accompanied with periods of serious depression, anxiety and nervous breakdowns. Undoubtedly, many of these mental complications were linked to the deaths of family members, namely her father, mother and brother. Yet admittedly multitude of these problems were of an inexplicable nature to Woolf herself, as she addressed in her diary, "I must note the symptoms of the disease, so as to know it next time".¹⁸ Sevedeh Sara Ahou Ghalandari claims that the mental disorder had originated in genetic transmission from her family simultaneously with the tyrannical approach of her father.¹⁹ As a consequence, it appears to be true, that Leonard decided to do what was in his power for Woolf's mental state to improve. He managed to arrange a doctor examination for Woolf and took control over her illness and medication. Yet again she was deprived of her own opinion of the problem, put into isolation, not as much physical as mental, where she was stripped of "her own sense of identity" and which had destroyed her own sense of rightness,²⁰ to which Woolf points with numerous entries of her diary, "Here I am chained to my rock; forced to do nothing; doomed to let every worry, spite, irritation and obsession scratch and claw and come again."²¹

Woolf manifested this part of her life in the story of war veteran Septimus Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway* who embodies an alter-ego of Clarissa, being analysed and examined by doctors who in that time considered mental illness being the matter of curing a body. Seeing that there is no possibility of being heard, with an extensive fear of doctors, he commits suicide. Woolf as well felt the pressure from all sides, doctors, diagnosing her as insane, and expressed the disapproval of the situation as follows: "What I dislike is feeling that I'm always taking care, or being taken care of."²² Furthermore, she started being paranoid, as all of the doctor appointments and discussions took place behind her back, deciding about the aspects of her life - for instance the matter of having a child,

¹⁷ Poole, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*, 39.

¹⁸ Woolf, *A Writer's diary*, 29.

¹⁹ Sevedeh Sara Ahou Ghalandari and Leila Baradaran Jamili, "Mental Illness and Manic-Depressive Illness in Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway." *Journal of Novel Applied Sciences*, May 3, 2014. 484.

²⁰ Poole, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*, 138.

²¹ Woolf, *A Writer's diary*, 34.

²² Woolf, *A Writer's diary*, 45.

for which she was supposedly too ill. Woolf supposedly wanted children, and often envied her sister Vanessa, as she portrayed this issue in Septimus Smith's thoughts on bringing child into the cruel world.²³ Ghalandari argues, that living in the patriarchal society was undoubtably difficult for a woman, "her illness and being female both threatened her with a profound sense of powerlessness."²⁴

The published diary also explicitly mentions her struggle with being accepted as an agreeable woman writer and the failure to veritably rise above the criticism of her works, stating "What depresses me is the thought that I have ceased to interest people."²⁵ Which then mirrors in a numerous women characters of the novels, most importantly the painter Lily in *To the Lighthouse*. The ruthless criticism and transferring a feeling of guilt from her half-brother George Duckworth rooted in further deepening of her lack of self-confidence and strengthening of the sense of guilt, which she tried to eliminate by work:

I want to appear a success even to myself. Yet I don't get to the bottom of it. It's having no children, living away from friends, failing to write well, spending too much on food, growing old. I think too much of whys and wherefores; too much of myself. I don't like time to flap round me. Well then, work. Yes, but I so soon tire of work—can't read more than a little, an hour's writing is enough for me.²⁶

2.2 Connection with Room of One's Own

A Room of One's Own, introduced as a lecture given by Woolf to the women-only audience at the Newnham College, Cambridge²⁷, had entered the literary world as an at that time radical criticism of financial and educational aspects of gender inequality. Presenting some pioneering ideas on feminism and intellectual freedom, closely connected to the concepts of education, class and economics, portraying women as prisoners of culture.²⁸ As Anna Snaith states, Woolf argues that "the exclusion of women from social, political, and creative spheres has detrimental effects on society as

²³ Poole, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*.

²⁴ Ghalandari and Jamili. "Mental Illness and Manic-Depressive Illness in Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway.", 484.

²⁵ Woolf, *A Writer's diary*, 29.

²⁶ Woolf, *A Writer's diary*, 27.

²⁷ Anna Snaith, Introduction to *Room of One's Own*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, iii.

²⁸ Catharine R. Stimpson, "Woolf's Room, Our Project: The Building of Feminist Criticism." Essay. In *Virginia Woolf*. London: Longman, 1992, 167.

a whole.”²⁹ From the oldest times, women were seen, as Woolf witfully points out, as mirrors reflecting the power and status of men, or fulfilling the role as the mother of bearings. Many of them accepted such role however for many, it had become a burden.”³⁰

Woolf offers an overview of portrayal of women in literature, presenting the issue of them being depicted only from the point of view of male writers, whereas the shelves of early literary works of women are graciously empty. Snaith also points out that “Woolf explores the causes and effects of the long history of discrimination against women and the ways in which they have battled against exclusion.”³¹ Woolf demonstrates this matter on a vivid picture of a tailless cat, representing a woman, and raises a question if the tail really is of that much difference. Woolf’s imagery of the cat is purposely drawing a link with the difference of sexes and how they are viewed from the perspective of outer society. “If things had been a little different from what they were, one would not have seen, presumably, a cat without a tail. But what was lacking? What was different?”³² Woolf asks and hints her disagreement with the values of contemporary society concerning gender, seeing great potential in women, not only in a literary sphere.

2.2.1 The concept of freedom, equality and independence

In *A Room of One’s own*, Woolf proposes the idea that “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction”³³. She correlates the concept to a fish, which Woolf too touches in her autobiographical works, saying “I see myself as a fish in a stream; deflected; held in place; but cannot describe the stream.”³⁴. She is most likely referring to the pressure of society on women, especially ambitious women, who are aspiring to be writers, painters, composers or generally realize themselves in the intellectual sphere intended for men. This issue is being a constant coloring of Woolf’s life and works, because she herself was victim of those confinements.

The issue of equality and freedom is fittingly examined by the opening scene of the lecture, where a woman’s train of thought is interrupted by a man urging her to

²⁹ Snaith, Introduction to *A Room of One’s Own*, xi.

³⁰ Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One’s Own*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, 10.

³¹ Snaith, Introduction to *Room of One’s Own*, xi.

³² Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*. 9.

³³ Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, 3.

³⁴ Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*. 80.

leave the premises, because it is intended only for men. Next, the possibility of a woman admission into the library is rejected, never having the chance to “wake the echoes”³⁵ of the intellectual treasures hidden in its peaceful hospitality. Thus, as Snaith says, “The narrator’s perambulations around the university are marked by exclusion and prohibition.”³⁶, which is linked with the contemporary thought of women not being eligible enough to acquire education. Woolf analyses how the contemporary society limited and still limits women in pursuing their dreams and careers, and their struggles to make money on their own. From the beginning of times, women were inspirational figures for male writers in poetry, fiction and other genres, it consequently points out the issue of them being portrayed only as muses and images of male desire, not crafted as human beings with their personalities and character traits. What is more, as Woolf concludes, “imaginatively she is of the highest importance, practically, she is completely insignificant”³⁷, as much as they carry important roles in the works of fiction, in real life women could scarcely read or write and were considered inferior to men. Unlike men’s value, measured by his life achievement, women “remained for this moment unclassified”³⁸, because how can you measure their roles as supporters, mothers, sisters, she asks. Woolf then confirms the issue, when bringing up that “Even history scarcely mentions her”³⁹, saying there is basically nothing known about the lives of women from history.

Furthermore, by suggesting Shakespeare’s imaginary sister Judith who would most probably struggle against herself, against society, being deprived of opportunity and creativity, and eventually end up either being immensely unhappy or killing herself, she addresses the issue of women not being taken seriously and the inability to earn a respectable place in society. Woolf explains, that it is the reason why majority of women writers and artists took either the Anonymous identity or chose male pseudonym for their works to be published and earn them some money. Because universally, they were expected to be “supported by, and minister to, men.”⁴⁰ and reflect men’s ego and social importance. To conclude the section on equality, she declares:

³⁵ Snaith, Introduction to *A Room of One’s Own*, xv.

³⁶ Snaith, Introduction to *A Room of One’s Own*, xv.

³⁷ Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, 34.

³⁸ Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, 65.

³⁹ Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, 34.

⁴⁰ Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, 41.

“Lock up your libraries if you like, but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind.”⁴¹

Women across the centuries have managed to break through the social norms and number of them accomplished to move the limits further. Now that women earned the right to write, to earn their own money, with the nineteenth century there came another issue - *A Room of One's Own*. Burns adds, that “woman must have a “room of her own” where she can lock herself in and concentrate, where she can purge herself of the “male” society that seeks to constrain her voice and control her writing.”⁴² Woolf suggests the matter of middle-class women never having a chance to be alone, not having their privacy, proposing that “women never have a half hour...that they can call their own”.⁴³ Woolf however, offering full overview of women’s struggles over the centuries, is quite optimistic about the improvements society made from couple of centuries ago, in terms of available education, the right to create art or managing to escape the shadow of men’s superiority.

3 Textual Analysis of the autobiographical parallels in female characters

3.1 Autobiographical parallels in Mrs. Dalloway

Mrs. Dalloway being published 14 May 1925 is one of Virginia’s early works, focusing on one ordinary day in the life of Mrs. Dalloway, preparing her party. Seemingly simple story however offers multiple hidden concepts about mental disorder, identity, independence, being unable to communicate or establish a bond with someone.

3.1.1 Clarissa Dalloway conquering her demons

Indisputably, one of the crucial topic of Woolf books concern the emotional, intellectual and the often-absent sexual side of relationships. She presents the issues of relationship between men and women in the marriage of Clarissa and Richard and in the romance of Clarissa and Peter Walsh. The presence of fulfilling and happy relationship is a crucial aspect to self-realization, where the confined gender roles and the role of a women in either marriage or family life, can non-disputably prevent the recognition of one’s

⁴¹ Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 57.

⁴² Christy L. Burns, “Re-Dressing Feminist Identities: Tensions between Essential and Constructed Selves in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*.” *Twentieth Century Literature*, 1994, 347.

⁴³ Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 50.

dreams and pursuits. Touching again the difference of men's mind being "rather interested in the state of the world"⁴⁴ and women's being able to "appreciate beauty" in the most common aspects of the world, Woolf draws the line between genders once again.

The essential moment of the story comes with Clarissa's childhood lover, who unexpectedly, was a woman. This fact again correlates with Woolf's claim that "Sometimes women do like women."⁴⁵, pursuing the portrayal of so-long-absent female friendships and relationships which are "unmediated by men".⁴⁶ Sally Seton represented the actual unity of minds, both being women, having endless conversations, and she became Clarissa's inspiration with her free and rebellious personality. Clarissa felt as they were equal, in league together, bringing an encouragement and illumination. She felt herself free to do anything, pointing out that the feeling was rather different feeling that that for a man.⁴⁷ Here Woolf draws a link to the egoistic tendencies of men in relationships and how they differ from the female companionships. Showing the aspect of sexual attraction in the form of a kiss between Sally and Clarissa, feeling as if "the world disappeared"⁴⁸, interrupted by Peter Walsh, she indicated the inauspicious influence of men on female relationships. Abel claims, that "the female love preceded the male love, where a man was taken as an intruder, shattering the female connection by masculine intervention."⁴⁹ This part of the novel could have sprang the dispute of Woolf's sexuality and the question of her companionship with Vita Sackville-West.

The portrayal of relationship with men, in consequence, is mainly of negative nature. Men, according to Woolf, personate a disruptive element in the women's relationships, like Peter Walsh breaking into Clarissa and Sally's companionship felt like "embittering her moment of happiness"⁵⁰. Moreover, by stating that in their presence one was compelled to represent oneself, "being a meeting point of goodness, helping people, but never showing one's other sides faults, jealousies, vanities and suspicions."⁵¹, Woolf addresses her own experience of being constantly criticized and

⁴⁴ Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*. London: Harper Press, 2013, 6.

⁴⁵ Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 62.

⁴⁶ Anna Snaith, Introduction to *A Room of One's Own*, xx.

⁴⁷ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*. 30.

⁴⁸ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*. 32.

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Abel, "Narrative Structure(s) and Female Development: the Case of Mrs Dalloway." Essay. In *Virginia Woolf*. London: Longman, 1992.84.

⁵⁰ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*. 32.

⁵¹ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*. 33.

judged by her half-brother George⁵² and by the oppressive nature of patriarchal society directed towards women. Woolf's overly-affectionate half-brother can be also paralleled to the romance with Peter Walsh, being an example of toxic relationship. He viewed women as excitement, looking down on them, for being too different from men, being overly emotional. He claims that "the future lies in hands of young men like himself"⁵³ following intellectual pursuits through reading books and exploring science. He simplifies womanhood and women "as creatures of sky and branches ought to give him compassion, comprehension, absolution."⁵⁴ It is then of no surprise, that Clarissa feels vulnerable in front of him, referring to love as "monster", even though the criticism most likely originates from his lack of self-confidence, pursuing the feeling of superiority.

Concerning marriage, when young, Clarissa and Sally "spoke of marriage always like a catastrophe"⁵⁵, in the end Clarissa confines to the social norms and marries Richard Dalloway, thinking their relationship is built on the basis of mutual respect and love, only later realizing they both are very much different, and what is more, unable to express themselves. The same struggle can be found between Woolf and her husband Leonard.⁵⁶ The marriage and the change of her name just emphasizes her anxiety of being invisible, unknown and insignificant, being deprived of her identity, with people knowing her now as Mrs. Dalloway, the wife of Richard Dalloway, not Clarissa. Sally Seton's independence and rebellion against society is locked in the cage of marriage and family duties as well.

It is widely acknowledged fact, that Woolf was suffering from depression, acute headaches and battled the anxiety of not being good enough. In the novel, it is only implied Clarissa having an unknown kind of illness, she feels there is a brutal monster in her, since she was diagnosed, giving her physical pain and "her soul could never be safe, making all the delightful things like love, friendships etc. dulled, reality."⁵⁷ The illness, thus, may have a negative impact on her experiencing of emotions concerning human relations and may also cause troubles with communicating them correctly. The fact again correlates with Woolf's own issues about expressing her emotions and feeling

⁵² Poole, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*, 108.

⁵³ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*. 46.

⁵⁴ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*. 53.

⁵⁵ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*. 30.

⁵⁶ Poole, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*, 71.

⁵⁷ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*. 10.

isolated, because of her anxiety and depression. The same problem can be assigned to Richard Dalloway, since he fails to express his feelings of love for his wife, only holding her hand in the end, saying nothing. That is probably why Clarissa fails in the role of mother too, not being able to bond with her daughter Elizabeth, establishing healthy, confidential and trusting relationship. Claiming that interaction with people puts the monster to sleep, Clarissa turns her self-realization to the people and things around her, being “absorbed by real life actions and what was here and now”.⁵⁸

Shannon Forbes, however, argues, that Clarissa’s turn to outside world and society resulted in performing the role of perfect hostess to the extent that it consumes her.”⁵⁹ The issue Woolf wanted to address here is the one of identity. Forbes then claims that Clarissa succumbed to the patriarchal environment of London and in fulfilling the role of hostess in the eyes of society, giving her sense of order and vitality, ultimately, makes her lose her own identity, which is then substituted by fake one. She later realizes its confining influence and wishes, “Oh if she could have had her life over again!”⁶⁰. She however recognizes the fake identity saying: “Every time she gave a party she had this feeling of being something not herself”.⁶¹ She would want to have her own independence, money and be on equal terms with men, being able to do what she desires. She is too afraid of the illness being awoken again, if she would drop out of the role of perfect hostess, which would possibly expose her emptiness and non-unified identity. Therefore, she dismisses all the attempts of reality to shake her life performance of the perfect hostess like the death of Septimus Smith or Peter Walsh noticing her fake identity and criticising her.⁶² Woolf seems to project the problem of women succumbing and sacrificing their identities to patriarchal society, the struggle present for centuries.

3.1.2 *Septimus Warren Smith: the doomed counterpart*

As the long proclaimed alter-ego of Clarissa Dalloway and embodiment of Woolf’s fears, Septimus Warren Smith’s view on life must be taken into account. Sandra Gilbert

⁵⁸ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*. 8.

⁵⁹ Shannon Forbes, “Equating Performance with Identity: The Failure of Clarissa Dalloway’s Victorian ‘Self’ in Virginia Woolf’s ‘Mrs. Dalloway.’” *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 2005, 39.

⁶⁰ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*. 96.

⁶¹ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*. 160.

⁶² Forbes, “Equating Performance with Identity: The Failure of Clarissa Dalloway’s Victorian ‘Self’ in Virginia Woolf’s ‘Mrs. Dalloway.’”, 44-47.

and Susan Gubar claim, “he is a character, created only to be destroyed and call for acknowledgement of self-definitions culture has imposed on him and others.”⁶³. Being young war veteran, Septimus is too, similarly to Clarissa, affected by his demons. He is the graphic example of how does it look if one is taken over by one’s demons, giving up the hope for living and self-realization. Fragments of war and his fellow soldiers spoil his mind, suffering from post-traumatic syndrome, making him overly paranoid. Battling with the sense of his own purposelessness and meaninglessness of the world, which was Woolf’s issue too⁶⁴, Septimus’ paranoid images assign him the role of saviour, feeling “everything coming together into centre”⁶⁵ and is about to burst into flames, he believes to be the one preventing it. He can no longer differentiate reality and fiction, seeing people and hearing voices, being convinced he had been selected by God to fulfil specific purpose, being the carrier of a great message to the world. He believes he is connected to the world, and to God, with every fiber of his body feeling “his flesh was melted off the world”⁶⁶ which presents the fission of Septimus’ soul resulting in out-bodily experience. Similarly, to Woolf writing in her suicide note “And I shan’t recover this time. I begin to hear voices, and I can’t concentrate.”⁶⁷, the voices and hallucinations were gradually getting worse for Septimus too. He thinks of himself as a sailor drowned in seas, he sees the beauty in the world, but spranging up vivid images of his dead friend Evans, “The Millions lamented”, it seems he is invited to the land of dead. People however were often belittling him being a retired soldier, claiming “everyone has lost someone in the war, people change, war changes them into shy, stammering, anxious to improve themselves.”⁶⁸, even his name being Smith, as one of the most common name, given to individuals to preserve anonymity, is quite ironical.

Opposed to Clarissa, emotional, but not being able to express it, Septimus firstly congratulates himself for feeling so little in the tragedies of war, though later he realizes he had gone irrevocably numb. His mind is only over powered by fear, pain and feelings of meaninglessness, and he tries everything what is in his power to feel something again – he marries Lucrezia.⁶⁹ But even seeing her cry could not move a muscle in him, so

⁶³ Gilbert, Sandra M., and Gubar, Susan, *The Madwoman in the Attic*. London: Yale University Press, 1984, 79.

⁶⁴ Poole, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*, 190.

⁶⁵ Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*. London: Harper Press, 2013, 12.

⁶⁶ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 19.

⁶⁷ Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972, 464.

⁶⁸ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 78.

⁶⁹ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 80.

eventually he “gave in, now other people must help him”⁷⁰, accepting Rezia’s attempts to find a doctor for him. This fact could correspond with Leonard trying to cure Woolf’s acute depression. However, the presence of doctor, Holmes as well as Bradshaw, is evoking feelings of terror and fear in Septimus as well as in Woolf, for none of the doctors ever take into account the feelings and emotions of the patient. Holmes sees “nothing whatever seriously the matter with him”⁷¹ and takes the old-fashioned view of every illness to be cured through curing the body, whereas Bradshaw recognizes the weakness of Septimus’ traumatised soul, offering seclusion and isolation. Septimus is afraid of seclusion and being exposed to his demons alone. Not being able to express himself, struggling to communicate properly, he seeks the comfort and salvation in suicide, when he jumps from the bedroom window. Even Woolf herself notes in her diary “Here I am chained to my rock; forced to do nothing; doomed to let every worry, spite, irritation and obsession scratch and claw and come again.”⁷², explaining that the prescribed isolation and rest only strengthened the power of the disorder, leaving her only one possibility how to reach her friends – via letters, she was left to battle her demons alone.

The two plot-lines, and two embodiments, finally fuse with Clarissa learning about Septimus’ death, wondering about the reason and stating that “Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded; one was alone.”⁷³. Ghalandari notes, that “Woolf shows the bipolar structure when Clarissa receives news of a young man who committed suicide, it exhibits the combination of both pity and desire to communicate too. Clarissa’s emotional fever is bipolar. She shows the climax of her feeling both to life and to death. Reflecting the fear in the depths of her heart,⁷⁴ “was she okay when she was alone?”⁷⁵, imagining how would not having the comforting and saving presence of her husband and other people look like. Fortunately, “she had escaped, but Septimus didn’t.”⁷⁶, seemingly because she had adopted a fake identity which however almost consumed her. Septimus, in contrast,

⁷⁰ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 84.

⁷¹ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 84.

⁷² Woolf, *A Writer’s diary*, 34.

⁷³ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 172-3.

⁷⁴ Ghalandari and Jamili, “Mental Illness and Manic-Depressive Illness in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*.” 485.

⁷⁵ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 173.

⁷⁶ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 173.

did not find his true identity, entering the layer of out-bodily experience. Clarissa feels the connection to him, “Somehow it was her disaster – her disgrace”⁷⁷, suddenly seeing their similarities. Woolf’s engagement in the present, being a critic and meeting a lot of people, including the Bloomsbury group saved her from confining to her mental disorder, at least for some time. When isolated and ordered to rest however, and similarly as Septimus, being happy just before his suicide, finding comforting unity in relationship with Rezia, she praised her husband in the suicide note. She is in the end conquered by the disorder and feeling of uselessness⁷⁸ and commits suicide by walking into a river, her pockets filled with stones.⁷⁹ Then comes the tragic end for both. Hilský in his epilogue fittingly suggests “Septimus’ mental illness and tragic end could have been omen of Woolf’s suicide, as if the literary character accompanied by romantic irony predicted the fate of its creator”.⁸⁰

3.1.3 *Rezia, the suffering saviour*

Lucrezia Warren Smith, the immigrant, the Italian milliner from Milano, is a close witness of a gradual disappearance of her husband’s personality, being replaced by fragments of past, provoking terror, pain, confusion and instability of his mind. Although desperately trying to help her husband, by appointing him to doctors and specialists, she feels caged in the marriage, falling deeper into the abyss of hopelessness, with her husband’s state getting worse. “Why should she suffer?”⁸¹, she asks, when she had done nothing wrong, she had loved Septimus but he is no longer there, there is some dead man saying cruel and wicked things. She doubts he acknowledges the outside world, even if he is advised to take interest in it, much less her, and she had nobody in this world, nobody to talk to now, she feels as if she were alone - “It was her she suffered, but she had nobody to tell.”, “There was nobody, her words faded.”, “I am alone, alone” she cried.”⁸² She feels like a bird sheltering under a thin hollow of a leaf, she is being exposed, and she has the urge to reach to other people to unburden her soul. She in a sense wishes, that “Far rather would she that he was dead.”⁸³ for he is in pain, but realizing she could not be happy without him, she keeps

⁷⁷ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 173.

⁷⁸ Bell, *Virginia Woolf*, 464.

⁷⁹ Bell, *Virginia Woolf*, 464.

⁸⁰ Martin Hilský, Epilogue to *Paní Dallowayová*, Praha: Euromedia Group k. s. – Odeon, 2004.

⁸¹ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 60.

⁸² Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 20.

⁸³ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 19.

the hope of him being cured eventually. She cannot, however, really understand Septimus' approach to doctors, she sincerely believed their methods being effective, yet in the end respecting her husband's wishes to not see them.

Rezia, same as Septimus being embodiment of Woolf, resembles the stance and actions of Leonard Woolf. Her suffering with her husband being "out of place" parallels with Leonard thinking Virginia's thoughts contradicted reality and addressing her insanity in his works.⁸⁴ Rezia's desperate attempts to help Septimus, exactly correlates with the endeavour Leonard developed to bring Virginia back to sanity. It is only question of dispute, if he had realized what effect the doctors had on the patient.

3.1.4 Elizabeth, the symbol of a future era

Elizabeth Dalloway is a youngster full of dreams, radical opinions and aspirations. Forbes claims, that "she seems to reject patriarchal world" and "she acknowledges her strength and ambition as a pioneer in the Dalloway family who is venturing into unknown worlds."⁸⁵ She did not care much for the outside world, she was much rather left alone in the country, she inclined to be passive and mostly she was "delighted to be free"⁸⁶. She hates people comparing her to all the beauties of nature – fawns, lilies, trees, and as opposed to her mother, she did not care about anyone's opinion at all, hence the way she dressed, how she treated them and that is why she was often thought to be "immature and still like a child"⁸⁷, even by her own mother. This approach may have sprouted from the fact that she was from a rich family, always having enough of what she wanted, thus being ignorant to the poverty and position of other people in society. On the other hand, she is optimistic about her future, acknowledging the fact that almost every profession is open for women of this generation, and she pursuits the dream of being a doctor or a farmer, her interest and fascination lying in ill people and animals. Forbes then states the function of Elizabeth's character in "deconstructing both the importance of performance of the perfect hostess role and the performance of woman-as-mirror."⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Poole, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*, 161.

⁸⁵ Forbes, "Equating Performance with Identity: The Failure of Clarissa Dalloway's Victorian 'Self' in Virginia Woolf's 'Mrs. Dalloway.'", 45.

⁸⁶ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 127.

⁸⁷ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 129.

⁸⁸ Forbes, "Equating Performance with Identity: The Failure of Clarissa Dalloway's Victorian 'Self' in Virginia Woolf's 'Mrs. Dalloway.'", 45.

Elizabeth Dalloway could be interpreted as Woolf's vision of a future world, where woman oppose the patriarchal society and conquer the stereotypes, which were imposed on them for centuries. They would start a new era, where opportunities for women are more open than the contemporaries, and where women are able to pursue their dreams.

3.1.5 *Miss Kilman, the symbol of the old era*

Miss Kilman represents the women of older generations, the element of embitterment over doomed self-realization, being constraint by one's lack of money and position in society as a woman. Woolf addresses struggle of woman against contemporary social norms concerning education and opportunities. Ms. Kilman works as a servant and maid of Elizabeth Dalloway, creating the atmosphere of friction between her and employer Clarissa Dalloway. Clarissa envies Ms. Kilman the relationship with Elizabeth, because she was never able to establish a connection with her, due to the struggle with communication.

Ms. Kilman is possibly very capable and possesses knowledge in history and other subjects, however stating "for Elizabeth were the books of medicine, law opened, ...but for herself, her career was absolutely ruined, and was it her fault?"⁸⁹, she only confirms the difficulty and struggle for woman in her generation to meet opportunities and realize themselves. She felt "like a wheel without a tyre, jolted by every pebble"⁹⁰, being overly poor, always had to earn her living, never pursuing her dreams, and that is where her critique of Clarissa, as the rich high-class wife, starts. She wished to unmask her, overcome her, humiliate her, bring her to her knees crying⁹¹, for Clarissa always had her bit of happiness, living simple, plain life, not really being interested in anything, shouting "Fool! Simpleton You who have known neither sorrow nor pleasure; who have trifled your life away!"⁹². The pleasure and happiness which was perpetually denied to Miss Killman. She claims her having an unlovable body "meant never meeting the opposite sex."⁹³, so this sphere of self-realization falls off too. It is however highly probable, that her negative stance towards world and her constant pity of herself, was the element causing her failure and obstacles. To suppress these feelings of hatred,

⁸⁹ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 122.

⁹⁰ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 122.

⁹¹ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 117.

⁹² Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 116.

⁹³ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 116.

bitterness and hopelessness, she turns to God, seeking salvation under his protection, hoping he would help her find the purpose and happiness in her life, her saying “her food was all that she lived for, but one must fight; vanquish; have faith in God.”⁹⁴ shows that she did not give in entirely. Woolf thus encourages women to battle their struggles and to look to the future with more optimism, the new era is coming.

3.2 Parallels in women in *To the Lighthouse*

To the Lighthouse is moving into quite different direction than *Mrs. Dalloway*. The novel is divided into three parts to show the transiency of life and that some people never change, despite the time current. The characters pay tribute to Woolf’s family members, most importantly her father and mother. Their centrality in her life is undoubtful, as she captures their personalities, flaws, opinions and thoughts in detail. Although the book was published on 5th May 1927, a year after *Mrs. Dalloway*, it still shows women trapped in society, their inferiority to men and their role as the mirrors of their egos.

3.2.1 *Mrs. Ramsay and the role of supporter*

Just as Julia Stephen was central figure to the whole of Stephen’s family, so is Mrs. Ramsay for hers. Woolf constructed the character as a tribute to her deceased mother, and wanted to portray how she was a slave of her tyrannical husband and had to succumb to fulfil the role of supporter, guardian of order and peaceful atmosphere in the family.⁹⁵ Defromont claims, that Mrs. Ramsay herself becomes the symbolic hopeful light of the lighthouse and by reflecting it, radiates it from within herself.⁹⁶

The life of the family revolves mainly around her, she, finding herself in the role of mother figure and supporter, surprisingly, does not seem to mind the roles being assigned to her. For majority of the story, she is the perceived through the eyes of other characters, what she means to them and what role she plays in their lives. Only a few glimpses of her inner self shines through the covers of the needs of the others. As a matter of fact, she fully accepts her bearing and role as a mother figure, supporter and assuager. She sees the future and potential in everybody, mainly her children, she is

⁹⁴ Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 121.

⁹⁵ Poole, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*, 7.

⁹⁶ Françoise Defromont, “Mirrors and Fragments.” Essay. In *Virginia Woolf*. London: Longman, 1992, 63.

their protector and their guardian. It is in her nature to think about all the people, their good and have everything under control. However, it also has its consequences. As Woolf states in *A Room of One's own*, women had no time for their own being, they had been fully employed by caring for their families, not having money nor room of their own.

Although Mrs. Ramsay's inner self is seen only couple of times throughout the story, it opens the view into her consciousness. Indeed, she saw herself as a protector and supporter, as it became her main goal in life, to be "the perfect being", ready and non-failure, never showing anyone her emotions or feelings and being strong for everyone else. She was, however, "so boasting of her capacity to surround and protect, there was scarcely a shell of herself left for her."⁹⁷ She was always busy with everyone coming to her for advice and sympathy, so consequently, she sometimes felt exhausted by soothing and caressing others, not only exhausted in body but psychological fatigue was also present, leaving her feeling as nothing "but a sponge sopped full of human emotions"⁹⁸. She too had her dreams, as to "she wanted to become, what with her untrained mind she greatly admired, an investigator, elucidating the social problem"⁹⁹, but she felt rather inferior to men, not aspiring to be better. She thought that her achievements are negligible with respect to her husband's, that she was not good enough to tie his shoe strings. Which eventually points to the, at that time, inadequate views of human relationships and established gender roles. Men have seen only her beauty, fact by which she was flattered, but troubled at the same time, though she wanted to be something more to them than just an image of simplistic beauty. She is therefore almost willingly trapped in the inferior position of women, stated by society, being the target of men's ego tyranny, not pursuing her higher aspirations but, realizing and expressing herself via the help she was giving to others, stating "For her own self-satisfaction was it that she wished so instinctively to help, to give ..."¹⁰⁰

Mrs. Ramsay was also a mother. She constantly cared for her eight children, offering them support. She was anxious about their futures, never wanting to let them go of the children's innocence which protected them from being exposed to human worries, "Why must they grow and lose it all?"¹⁰¹. Consequently, Mrs. Ramsay's

⁹⁷ Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*. London: Harper Press, 2013, 34.

⁹⁸ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 29.

⁹⁹ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 7.

¹⁰⁰ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 37.

¹⁰¹ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 54.

obsession with doors being closed and windows open, could symbolize closing door to stream of danger from the outside world. By opening windows, she lets free flow of emotions and sympathy enter the house, so she could accept it, to return it.

Mrs. Ramsay is, in relation, seen as worshipper of marriage, saying “What could be more serious than love of man for woman, what more commanding, more impressive, bearing in its bosom the seeds of death”, acknowledging that marriage is a cradle of love and respect as well as some destroying element within. Sheldon Brivic claims, that the aim of love is always contradictory, so the more one loves, the more one damages self and the other. It applies to romantic as well as family relations. Woolf explores the “harmful effect of love that hinges on the interdependence of self and other”¹⁰² Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay’s marriage, based on respect, shows the fact that even the best love can be hurtful to others, with his constant need of sympathy and her need to control everything, even if the relationship is outstanding.¹⁰³ Taking into consideration Mrs. Ramsay’s constant anxiety of life being “hostile, horrible, quick to pounce”¹⁰⁴, demonstrating this fact on the scene with bird lovers Joseph and Mary, who represent the future or rough present of the world and of her children, that they will in utmost case suffer and “have their wings broken”¹⁰⁵ by reality -then in her eyes marriage seems “Almost as if it were an escape for her too, to say that people must marry; people must have children.”¹⁰⁶, and could possibly offer an escape from the torture of the world into safety, even with the risk of love’s dangerous nature.

She is well aware of the egoistic and vulnerable element of men’s mind, understanding the differences between theirs and of women’s. Female minds are more prone to appreciate beauty in the world, whereas men are fully with themselves. Mrs. Ramsay recognizes men’s need of assurance of their achievements or value and helps them to overcome their moments of vulnerability, by supporting them and giving them sympathy, having “a whole of the other sex under her protection”¹⁰⁷. She finds something fascinating in men, how strong they are and especially their devotion to her as the object of comfort and support. She is of that opinion, that women should be the listeners for men’s ego, however her relations with them are too, ambiguous. Although

¹⁰² Sheldon Brivic, “Love as Destruction in Woolf’s ‘To the Lighthouse.’” *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 1994, 66.

¹⁰³ Brivic, “Love as Destruction in Woolf’s ‘To the Lighthouse.’”, 67.

¹⁰⁴ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 55.

¹⁰⁵ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 75.

¹⁰⁶ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 55.

¹⁰⁷ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 4.

she feels inferior to them, their intellect, achievement and self-control, she admires the “fabric of the masculine intelligence”¹⁰⁸. On the other hand, she despises them for being ruthless, showing no sympathy and being driven only by truths and facts, despite them needing the sympathy at their finest. Even the children, particularly young James, feel into what account is she the object of male tyranny and person upon the whole weight of their self-doubts fall on to, observing that “Mr. Ramsay’s emotions disturbed the perfect simplicity and good sense of James’ relationship with his mother.”¹⁰⁹ The vulnerability and insecurity of men result in constant boasting, for instance Mr. Tansley, that she finds unbearable, but with her nature of trying to please everyone, she offers him assurance and sympathy too, saying “I am guarding you, I am your support.”¹¹⁰

Sharon Wood Proudfit, however, argues, that there is some commanding and domineering element in Mrs. Ramsay, where she tries to control everything. The fittest example is her forcing marriage upon Paul and Minta, even though later in a novel their companionship fails terribly. Proudfit also mentions Mrs. Ramsay’s influence upon people truly creative yet susceptible to her - “While Mrs. Ramsay lives, while the desire to be sheltered in the cradle of her arms and warmth is sustained, Lily cannot finish her picture and Mr. Ramsay cannot reach “R””¹¹¹ Only with her death, the creators are able to free themselves of her emotional domination.¹¹²

Mrs. Ramsay’s own meditations and thoughts are always interrupted by someone, mainly by her husband, demanding sympathy and assurance. The moment her inner self is uncovered is therefore when she is completely alone, when her family is gone. Now she finally has a room of her own, where “she need’ nt think about anybody. She could be herself, by herself.”¹¹³ She finally has her time to think alone, in between all those chores and doings, she states “one shrunk, being invisible to others.”¹¹⁴ She could finally be free, free for all the adventures she never realized, free of all the conventions imposed on her. She is finally to employ the woman aspect of her mind, seeing beauty in everything, seeing herself in everything, in the strokes of light of the Lighthouse, looking into her own soul, seeing her heart, realizing her own essence and

¹⁰⁸ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 98.

¹⁰⁹ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 33.

¹¹⁰ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 13.

¹¹¹ Sharon Wood Proudfit, “Lily Briscoe’s Painting: A Key to Personal Relationships in ‘To the Lighthouse.’” *Criticism*, 1971, 32.

¹¹² Sharon Wood Proudfit, “Lily Briscoe’s Painting: A Key to Personal Relationships in ‘To the Lighthouse.’” *Criticism*, 1971, 32-38.

¹¹³ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 57.

¹¹⁴ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 57.

essence of all the things. She may possibly impersonate the Lighthouse, watching over all the people and guiding their ways through life, showing them the direction, hence trying to keep them off the danger. The Lighthouse gives her the sense of being understood, of finally seeing her true self, “Beneath is all dark, unfathomably deep; but now and again we rise to surface and that is what you see us by.”¹¹⁵

3.2.2 *Lily and the importance of independence*

Lily Briscoe, another significant female of the story, could be taken as a complete opposite of Mrs. Ramsay in the respect of her self-realization. Lily may seem as Woolf’s portrayal of a passive rebel, breaking out from the social norms, not marrying anyone, withstanding the attempts of men to impose their ego on her and free herself in her creativity.

Lily, herself, and others are taking her as an outwardly creature, living in her own realm, seeing “the world through the eyes of love”¹¹⁶, which then corresponds with her self-realization as an artist – a painter. Even though the others were not taking her painting seriously, with Mrs. Ramsay saying that “With her little Chinese eyes and her puckered-up face she would never marry; one could not take her painting very seriously; but she was an independent little creature”¹¹⁷ which brings out again the emotional dominance of Mrs. Ramsay and her suffocating influence on creative people. Charles Tansley repeatedly notes that “women can’t write and can’t paint”¹¹⁸, which was mainly to enhance her inferiority in relation to men, painting had become Lily’s reality. She tries to defy Tansley’s stance, focusing on her painting more acutely. A link to Woolf’s own self-doubts about her works can be drawn here, as Lily was extremely afraid of her paintings being exposed to anybody, she fears that maybe too much feeling would be uncovered if someone looked, and “that was what Lily Briscoe could not have endured.”¹¹⁹ thus even when in the painting act itself, she keeps track of her surrounding, feeling naked and vulnerable when painting, being anxious about being exposed. She had quite a vivid observation talent, “seeing everything so clear”¹²⁰ however, and this was the source of her self-doubt, she struggles with transferring the

¹¹⁵ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 57.

¹¹⁶ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 42.

¹¹⁷ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 14.

¹¹⁸ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 44.

¹¹⁹ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 14.

¹²⁰ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 16.

model image to canvas. It was when she took the brush in her hand, when all the things she saw changed and it “often brought her to the verge of tears and made this passage from conception to work as dreadful as any down a dark passage for a child”¹²¹.

Similarly, as Woolf, Lily is overly critical to her own creations saying that “It was infinitely bad! She could have done it differently, of course, the colour could have been thinned and faded.”¹²². These “demons” of self-doubt, anxiety and inferiority take over her mind, “they pluck her visions from her and start to enhance all the other matters of inferiority – like that she is insignificant, a failure”¹²³. Nonetheless the weaker part tries to oppose the angst, and is “struggling against terrific odds to say: “But this is what I see”¹²⁴. She conquers her demons by letting William Banks look at her picture, embracing her fear of being judged, “where in the picture only she could tell her visions and view upon the world, mother and child can be reduced to a purple shadow.”¹²⁵ When he asks about the painting, she cannot explain to him, because she either sees her vision only with the paintbrush in her hand.

Another significant part of Lily’s personality and another of her self-realization, is her independence. Clearly stating that “She liked to be alone, she liked to be herself.”¹²⁶, she then develops the notion of freedom of one’s mind and one’s privacy of thought, and how one can say nothing and not let other people see, what they are like. It is indeed possible, that Woolf was imprinting her own meditations upon this topic into Lily’s consciousness, bringing up the issues of social norms on marriage, and how should women marry to be taken seriously, giving up their independence. Lily wonders about if there can be a unity between man and a woman and if they can achieve any kind of intimacy. Indeed, she fails to understand why should a woman marry in the first place, when one cannot say what one means, and possibly becoming a slave of their tyranny, or mirror of their ego, so she feels like nobody will ever truly know her and she will not know anybody - “Human relations were all like that, she thought, and the worst were between men and women. Inevitably these were extremely insincere.”¹²⁷ She takes ambivalent view on love itself, declaring it the moving force of the universe, however, at the same time it makes man do foolish things and making bullies out of them, “there

¹²¹ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 16.

¹²² Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 44.

¹²³ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 16.

¹²⁴ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 16.

¹²⁵ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 46.

¹²⁶ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 45.

¹²⁷ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 85.

is nothing more tedious, puerile, and inhumane than love, yet it is also beautiful and necessary.”¹²⁸ It again points to Brivic’s theory that love has some destructive element in it, Lily being aware of that.

In addition, Lily could never accept the role of assuager and supporter of men’s ego, as to feeling her inferiority towards them, shaming herself for not being educated enough. Their egos, too, kill all her creativity, taking away the aspect of female mind to see the colours and beauty in the world, interrupting the creative process of painting and bringing chaotic element into it, Lily confirms saying “He made it impossible for her to do anything.”¹²⁹, “He changed everything. She could not see the colour; she could not see the lines; even with his back turned to her.”¹³⁰ She closes this matter with stating that “She need not marry, she need not undergo that degradation.”¹³¹ Woolf may have intended to indicate the burdensome effect of men criticism upon women and their conviction that women are not capable of participating in the creative process of arts, moreover to earn their respectable place among male elite of the patriarchal society.

From then on, Lily rebels and keeps the conviction of being free and independent and even after Mrs. Ramsay’s death, she returns to the abandoned house. It is like her salvation, where she finally lets go of her demons and fears, the suffocating influence of Mrs. Ramsay emotional dominance and criticising eyes of men, defeating the anxiety of not being good enough, where Mr. Ramsay sails on the sea and is not here to criticize her, and Mr. Carmichael being in silent interplay with her feelings, she frees her mind of the accusation that women “can’t write, can’t paint”, which till that time became one of those habitual currents which after certain time experience forms in the mind, so that one repeats words without being aware any longer who originally spoke them.”¹³² She endures the tyranny of men requiring sympathy and acknowledgement, so now she is free, independent and without demons, understanding and being at peace with the fact that her creations “would be hung in the attics, she thought, it would be destroyed. But what did that matter? It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision.”¹³³

¹²⁸ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 95.

¹²⁹ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 137.

¹³⁰ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 138.

¹³¹ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 95.

¹³² Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 147.

¹³³ Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 194.

Woolf gives an optimistic closure to the struggle of a woman artist, with things coming full circle, where the female painter lets go of her burdens and frees herself to creation and beauty of the world. Far away from the criticism, she reconciles with the fact that she is writing for herself, her own satisfaction. Woolf addresses the struggle of women writers to win their recognition, and is possibly opening the imaginary doors and inviting the timorous women of arts to pursue their dreams. With this book, Woolf laid rest to the ghost of her parents and established herself as an independent woman, similarly to Lily.¹³⁴

3.3 Orlando: The Biography

Orlando: The Biography lines up with Woolf's most progressive novels. Published in 1928 it follows the life story of Orlando, a young man who happened to be, by unfortunate circumstances, changed into a woman. Challenging the genre of realistic novel, it frames gender based critique of the patriarchal society¹³⁵, moreover, it "explores the role and perception of gender throughout history, from Elizabethan period through to the early 20th century".¹³⁶ The novel presents modernist view on identity and sexuality and furthermore develops the previously mentioned concept of androgynous mind. Its treatment of these issues meant Orlando "was considered a work of modernist literature".¹³⁷ A major inspiration for writing this novel was Vita Sackville-West, Woolf's long-term friend and supposedly lesbian lover.¹³⁸

3.3.1 Concept of gender and sexuality

Orlando, a descent of noble ancestry, is introduced as a person "He-for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it."¹³⁹, being undoubtedly handsome and charismatic, favourite of everyone. He was a lover of solitude and nature, who writes poetry, fluent abstract celebration of nature, which are quite uncommon features found in a man. It seems he takes all the men privileges for

¹³⁴ Susan M. Squier, "Tradition and Revision in Woolf's *Orlando*: Defoe and 'The Jessamy Brides'." Essay. In *Virginia Woolf*. London: Longman, 1992, 122.

¹³⁵ Squier, "Tradition and Revision in Woolf's *Orlando*: Defoe and 'The Jessamy Brides'." 122.

¹³⁶ Gerald Cheschire, Introduction to *Orlando*. London: William Collins, 2014.vii.

¹³⁷ Cheschire, Introduction to *Orlando*, vii.

¹³⁸ Anna Snaith, Introduction. In *A Room of One's Own*, viii.

¹³⁹ Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*. London: William Collins, 2014, 1.

granted, dismissing the material holding, concentrating more on the spiritual and imagery of the world.

The main topic Woolf wanted to explore in *Orlando*, was the fluidity of gender and sexuality, considering the concept of androgynous mind being the crucial aspect of relationship unity. Adam Parkes adds, that “Woolf’s *Orlando* mocks all normative sex and gender codes, destabilizing the very grounds on which sexological as well as legal conventions were founded.”¹⁴⁰ She also emphasizes women’s view on world and how it differs from the male conception.

The novel shows progressive aspects concerning gender, as for Orlando accepting his sudden change to female “without showing any signs of discomposure”¹⁴¹. The boundaries of female and male are blurred, influenced mainly by contemporary fashion, which “did something to disguise it”¹⁴², bringing in the question about “the extent to which society -and not biology- delineates distinction between “men” and “women””¹⁴³. Burns, in contrast, points out that Woolf also portrays fashion in a negative way, where “gender cannot be affected until clothing – that external social trapping- pressures to conform with social expectations of gendered behaviour.”¹⁴⁴. It is only then, with the change of his gender, that Orlando fully “realizes with a start the penalties and the privileges of her position.”¹⁴⁵, seeing the female side of the world, at last, as she is forced to confine herself to “to pour tea and ask my lords how they like it.”¹⁴⁶. Orlando is now conscious how women are mistreated by men. Thus, she finally observes the perspective the male sex has on women and feels the pressure of contemporary social norms. At first, Orlando was not sure to which gender she belonged, so “she was censuring both sexes equally, as if she belonged to neither”¹⁴⁷. As the novel evolves, however, Orlando deflects to the feminine side, as “she is becoming a little more modest, as women are, of her brains and a little more vain, as

¹⁴⁰ Adam Parkes, “Lesbianism, History, and Censorship: The Well of Loneliness and the Suppressed Randiness of Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*.” *Twentieth Century Literature*, 1994.

¹⁴¹ Woolf, *Orlando*, 88.

¹⁴² Woolf, *Orlando*, 1.

¹⁴³ Christy L. Burns, “Re-Dressing Feminist Identities: Tensions between Essential and Constructed Selves in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*.” *Twentieth Century Literature*, 1994, 343.

¹⁴⁴ Burns. “Re-Dressing Feminist Identities: Tensions between Essential and Constructed Selves in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*.”, 351.

¹⁴⁵ Woolf, *Orlando*, 99.

¹⁴⁶ Woolf, *Orlando*, 102.

¹⁴⁷ Woolf, *Orlando*, 103.

women are, of her person.”¹⁴⁸, celebrating the opportunity to quit the love of power and material ambition and enjoy the contemplation, solitude and love of female world¹⁴⁹.

As Melita proposes, “the protagonist is allowed, to fully and completely experience what it means to live life as both a male and as a female”¹⁵⁰. In the end, Orlando offers the conclusion that “In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place”¹⁵¹, presenting the concept of androgynous mind, where in every male mind is an element of female and vice versa. Perfect unity of minds can be observed in the relationship of Orlando and Shelmerdine, where they both show sign of male as well as female mind, as they ask each other “You are a woman, Shel!”, “You are a man, Orlando!”¹⁵², by which the novel shows how the gender is non-binary but rather on the fluid spectrum. Their understanding is instant and they are so surprised of the other’s sympathy, for it was such a revelation that a woman could be as tolerant and free-spoken as a man, and a man as strange and subtle as a woman.¹⁵³ The final part of the book, where Orlando calls upon the variety of her-selves, personates the complexity and layering of an individual, including both genders, being conditioned by one’s experiences. Burns suggests Woolf wanted to address the fact, that the environment has an immense effect onto a human mind.¹⁵⁴ It also confirms, as Melita claims, that “Orlando embodies both male and female characteristics while going on to marry a man and even bear her own child.”¹⁵⁵, Burns agrees by stating, that “the male and female strands of character combine in various ways, leaving Orlando more androgynous than essentially one sex or the other.”¹⁵⁶ Orlando is not forced to choose a gender for the most part of the novel due to the lax approach of contemporary society, acknowledging her change of sex, but caring only about the matter of material belongings and heritage.

Another point Woolf considers is the topic of sexuality and relationships. The hints on same-gender love can be observed right at the beginning of the story, where

¹⁴⁸ Woolf, *Orlando*, 122.

¹⁴⁹ Woolf, *Orlando*, 104.

¹⁵⁰ Maureen M. Melita, “Gender Identity and Androgyny in Ludovico Ariosto’s ‘Orlando Furioso’ and Virginia Woolf’s ‘Orlando: A Biography.’” *Romance Notes*, 2013, 131.

¹⁵¹ Woolf, *Orlando*, 124.

¹⁵² Woolf, *Orlando*, 168.

¹⁵³ Woolf, *Orlando*, 173.

¹⁵⁴ Burns, “Re-Dressing Feminist Identities: Tensions between Essential and Constructed Selves in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*.”, 344.

¹⁵⁵ Melita, “Gender Identity and Androgyny in Ludovico Ariosto’s ‘Orlando Furioso’ and Virginia Woolf’s ‘Orlando: A Biography.’”, 131.

¹⁵⁶ Burns, “Re-Dressing Feminist Identities: Tensions between Essential and Constructed Selves in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*.”, 347.

Orlando falls in love with Russian princess, where “he wanted to tear his hair with vexation that the person was of his own sex, and thus all embraces were out of the question”¹⁵⁷, since the fashion at that times at most disguised the sex, blurring the boundaries between male and female. At that time, Orlando would be confined by social restrictions about same-sex relationship being forbidden, however his love interest turns out to be a woman, and although Orlando feels love for the first time, willing to sacrifice everything, the love affair in the end seems to be only about Sasha exploiting Orlando’s money, potential and status and leaving him behind. Love between man and a woman is again portrayed as toxic and destructive, similarly to Peter and Clarissa in *Mrs Dalloway*, as men and a woman are, according to Woolf, simply too different. The betrayal causes a severe damage of Orlando’s soul, losing a will to self-express himself and feeling like “that life was not worth living anymore”¹⁵⁸. Melita in her article points out, that Orlando has fundamentally switched places with his female counterpart, where being abandoned is usually an archetype for a woman.¹⁵⁹

Woolf again explores the view on women relationships, which she touched in her feminist essay *A Room of One’s Own*, presenting a character of Nell as a demonstration of the fact that female friendships are valid and often more enriching than male ones, with Orlando admitting that the time never flew faster, and even if the conversations did not have any wit or intellectual nature whatsoever, it had ease and seduction of beauty. It thus refuted the general allegation of men, that “that when they lack the stimulus of the other sex, women can find nothing to say to each other” and “that women are incapable of any feeling of affection for their own sex and hold each other in the greatest affection”.¹⁶⁰

3.3.2 *The hardship of being a writer*

Second aspect thoroughly examined by Woolf, was the conception of being a writer, across time and gender. She addressed the issue of being respectable writer as a man and as a woman in *Room of One’s Own*. Burns also claims, that “she is urging women to write, to give themselves a voice and in Orlando, she implicitly inquires how women,

¹⁵⁷ Woolf, *Orlando*, 18.

¹⁵⁸ Woolf, *Orlando*, 42.

¹⁵⁹ Melita, “Gender Identity and Androgyny in Ludovico Ariosto’s ‘Orlando Furioso’ and Virginia Woolf’s ‘Orlando: A Biography.’”, 126.

¹⁶⁰ Woolf, *Orlando*, 145.

excluded from male literary tradition both participate in and resist that tradition.”¹⁶¹, recalling the image of Judith Shakespeare and the hostility of world to her genius. Ironically, Orlando battles the inability to reach the literary world in both sexes, where as a man he opposed the thought that ” to write, much more to publish, was for a noble man inexpiable disgrace”¹⁶² and as a woman facing the idea of contemporary patriarchal society that “as long as a woman writes little notes nobody objects to a woman writing either”¹⁶³, not being able to enter the literary world in the same position as men.

As Burns confirms, Woolf is trying to interconnect the world of literary work and finding one’s identity. The pilot poem “The Oak Tree” which accompanies the whole plot, suggests an allusion to Locke’s philosophy of personal identity, claiming that there is no possibility that change of body might have an effect on one’s personal identity.¹⁶⁴ However it does not deny the effects of the environment on one self. Whether it is Orlando’s inability to write after being betrayed or the quivering ring finger which represents the heavy social norms of the *Spirit of the Age* claiming that “It batters down anyone who tries to make stand against it.”¹⁶⁵, there is an undoubtful link between writing and life experience. When Orlando meets his idol Nick Green, his creations are criticized and the poet spoils Orlando’s fascination in the creation of art and forces him to propose he is “Done with men”.¹⁶⁶ Over the course of centuries, however, he marks his poem with personal history and wisdom claiming that “for everybody can multiply from his own experience the different terms which his different selves have made with him”¹⁶⁷, and with society being more open to women writers, he meets great praise from Green himself, as well as the public. It reflects again to the final scene of the novel, where Orlando calls her multiple selves, showing how with the experiences the human soul forms new sides and new selves, which then combines into one’s identity.

¹⁶¹ Burns, “Re-Dressing Feminist Identities: Tensions between Essential and Constructed Selves in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*.”, 347.

¹⁶² Woolf, *Orlando*, 45.

¹⁶³ Woolf, *Orlando*, 181.

¹⁶⁴ Burns, “Re-Dressing Feminist Identities: Tensions between Essential and Constructed Selves in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*.”, 348.

¹⁶⁵ Woolf, *Orlando*, 164.

¹⁶⁶ Woolf, *Orlando*, 58.

¹⁶⁷ Woolf, *Orlando*, 209.

4 Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was to critically examine crucial aspects of Woolf's life, which influenced her in the process of writing, linking them to the feminist critique of patriarchal society of *Room of One's Own* and carrying out a thorough analysis of these elements within the female characters of the novels *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *Orlando*.

Woolf's literary work has undoubtedly reflected her life as she imprints her personal psychological hardships and issues of contemporary society into a number of distinctive characters living ordinary lives. Woolf issues the female struggle of finding and keeping one's identity under the heavy imposition of patriarchal conventions in *Mrs. Dalloway's* Clarissa and Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*. She pays tribute to her mother in the character of Mrs. Ramsay, fulfilling the role of family supporter, confined to serve as a mirror to men's ego. Woolf then embodies her depression, bipolar disorder, paranoia and fear of doctors, including suicide as an attempt to communicate with the world, in the mirror characters of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa and Septimus. Clarissa is only saved from suicide by adopting a fake identity which almost consumes her. Lily in *To the Lighthouse* voices her anxiety about being a respectful writer and preserving her independence in patriarchal society. In the *Mrs. Dalloway's* couple Richards and Clarissa she argues for the impossibility of communication in male-female relationships, in *To the Lighthouse's* Mr. and Mrs Ramsay the destructive element of love and the differences in their view of the world. Women can appreciate the beauty of the world, in contrast with men, who are locked in their intellectual sphere. The women companionships, on the other hand, in *Orlando* and *Mrs. Dalloway* are foregrounded, highlighting its unity, ease and understanding. Touching the concept of the androgynous mind - the fusion of female and male elements, capable of communication and unifying relationship - in her earlier novels and in feminist work *Room of One's Own*, she completes its development in the progressive novel *Orlando* portraying the ideal integrity of the relationship of Orlando and Shelmerdine. In *Orlando*, Woolf also examines the issue of one's search for identity and its complex nature. She develops the two-fold perspective on gender - gender as a preoccupation and gender as non-binary feature, occurring rather on the fluid spectrum. In connection with the fluidity of gender, Woolf explores the taboo topic of homosexual relationships.

Woolf's critique of contemporary social norms prohibiting education and other opportunities is prominently voiced in her feminist lecture *A Room of One's own*, she simultaneously criticises the patriarchal society in her novels. Whether it is Mrs. Ramsay confining herself to be the victim of tyrannical and egoistical husband, Miss Kilman's doomed life due to lack of opportunities or the itching ring finger of Orlando, where the Spirit of the Age forces her to get married. Woolf nevertheless offers an optimistic view of the future of Lily conquering her anxiety and becoming an independent woman, Elizabeth being free to choose her career and Orlando finding her identity and fulfilling relationship unifying two androgynous minds.

Woolf's life intensely influenced the way her books were written, as an attempt to finally be heard, to communicate her darkest fears and issues, as well as reach the public, reveal the problems of patriarchal society and encourage a change, which could give freedom and equality to women. She, a modernist writer, encouraged the feminist movement of the twentieth century and her modernist ideas have influenced many other authors.

5 Resumé

Cílem této práce bylo kriticky prozkoumat stěžejní aspekty života Virginie Woolfové, které ovlivnily průběh její literární tvorby, propojit je s feministickou kritikou patriarchální společnosti *Vlastní Pokoj* a provést důkladnou analýzu těchto elementů v ženských postavách jejich děl. Pro tuto analýzu jsem si zvolila dvě stěžejní a známá díla *Paní Dallowayová* a *K Majáku* a doplnila je progresivním románem *Orlando*.

Literární tvorba Virginie Woolfové nepochybně reflektuje její život, kdy autorka vkládá své osobní psychologické strádání a problémy tehdejší společnosti do mnoha osobitých postav žijících všední životy. Woolfová nabízí náhled na ženský boj o nalezení a udržení si vlastní identity pod vahou konvencí patriarchální společnosti v postavách Clarissy z *Paní Dallowayové* a Paní Ramsayové v románu *K Majáku*. V postavě Paní Ramsayové dává sbohem své matce, která našla smysl života v roli rodinného obránce a odsoudila se tak po zbytek života k funkci zrcadlení mužského ega. Woolfová dále zosobňuje svou depresi, bipolární poruchu, paranoii a strach z doktorů, včetně sebevraždy, která je pokusem o komunikaci s vnějším světem, v zrcadlových postavách *Paní Dallowayové* Clarissy a Septima. Clarissa se zachrání před sebevraždou jen díky osvojení nepravé identity, která ji už téměř pohltila, na rozdíl od Septima, který podlehne depresi a zemře výskokem z okna. Lily v románu *K Majáku* dává hlas její úzkosti z jejího postavení vážené autorky a udržení vlastní nezávislosti v patriarchální společnosti. Pár románu *Paní Dallowayová* Richard a Clarissa nastiňuje problém komunikace mezi muži a ženami ve vztazích, pár Pan a Paní Ramsayovi z *K Majáku* zase destruktivní povahu lásky a diametrální odlišnosti myslí mužů a žen. Ženy podle ní dokáží ocenit krásu světa, muži jsou naopak uzavřeni do sebe a existují jen ve svých intelektuálních sférách. V *Orlandovi* a *Paní Dallowayové* dominují ženské vztahy a přátelství a Woolfová vyzdvihuje jejich jednotu, lehkost a porozumění. V jejích dřívějších románech a také ve feministické kritice *Vlastní Pokoj* rozvíjí koncept androgynní mysli – splynutí mužských a ženských prvků v jedné mysli, které když se potkají, dávají vznik vzájemnému porozumění, komunikaci a sjednocují vztah. Tato myšlenka dostane kompletní podobu v pokrokovém románu *Orlando*, kde Woolfová zobrazuje ideální integritu vztahu Orlanda a Shelmerdina. Dále se také zabývá tématem hledání vlastní identity a zkoumáním její komplexnosti. V románu dochází k duálnímu podání genderu, k náhledu z perspektivy genderových předsudků, ale také k prezentaci

genderu jako nebinární veličiny, vyskytující se spíše na fluidním spektru. V souvislosti s fluiditou genderu naráží také na taboo téma homosexuálních vztahů.

Současně s její kritikou tehdejších sociálních norem bránící ženám ve vzdělávání a získávání dalších příležitostí, kterou prominentně vyjádřila ve své feministické přednášce *Vlastní Pokoj*, můžeme v jejích románech také najít prvky kritiky patriarchální společnosti. V hledáčku její kritiky se ocitá Paní Ramsayová podléhající vlivu svého tyranského a egoistického manžela, také zatracený osud slečny Kilmanové zapříčiněný nedostatkem příležitostí nebo chvějící se prsteníček Orlando, když ji Duch Věku nutí se provdat. Přesto Woolfová nabízí i optimistické výhledy na budoucnost – Lily se vypořádá se svou úzkostí a stane se nezávislou ženou, Elizabeth si již může zvolit profesi svých snů a Orlando, která nakonec nachází svou pravou identitu a naplňující vztah dvou androgynních myslí.

Život Virginie Woolfové intenzivně ovlivnil způsob, jakým byly její romány napsány. Byly pokusem o to, být konečně vyslyšen, sdělením jejích nejtemnějších obav a problémů. Její snahou bylo také oslovit širokou veřejnost, ukázat na problémy patriarchální společnosti a podpořit její změnu, která by mohla ženám přinést svobodu a rovnoprávnost. Jako autorka modernistického směru Virginia Woolfová podporovala hnutí feminismu dvacátého století a její modernistické ideologie ovlivnily mnoho dalších autorů v nadcházející éře literatury.

6 Anotation

Name: Anežka Kropáčová

Department: Department of English and American Studies

Title: The Greatest Possible Happiness: Autobiographical Features in the Novels of Virginia Woolf

Supervisor: Mgr. David Livingstone, Ph.D.

Number of pages: 43

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Characteristics: The theme of this bachelor thesis is an analysis of autobiographical features in Virginia Woolf's three novels Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse and Orlando. The theme is analysed by means of a biographical approach with respect to historical and biographical context. The biographical facts uncovered several fields of interest, in which Woolf either projects her own psychological issues or addresses the issues of contemporary patriarchal society which are later reflected in the detailed analysis of the female characters in the novels.

7 Anotace

Příjmení a jméno: Anežka Kropáčová

Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Název práce: Největší možné štěstí: Autobiografické prvky v románech Virginie Woolfové

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Charakteristika: Tématem této bakalářské práce je analýza autobiografických prvků ve třech románech Virginie Woolfové *Paní Dallowayová*, *K majáku* a *Orlando*. Téma je analyzováno prostřednictvím biografického přístupu a nabízí náhled na tyto romány vzhledem k historickému a biografickému kontextu. Biografická fakta odhalují několik oblastí zájmu, ve kterých Woolfová buď promítá své psychologické problémy nebo adresuje problémy tehdejší patriarchální společnosti, a které jsou následně reflektovány v detailní analýze ženských postav jejích třech románů.

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TÉMA ČESKY:

Koncept seberealizace a sociálního statusu žen v dílech Virginie Woolfové

TÉMA ANGLICKY:

The Concept of self-realization and social status of women in the works of Virginia Woolf

VEDOUcí PRÁCE:

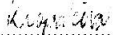
Mgr. David Livingstone, Ph.D. - KAA

ZÁSADY PRO VYPRACOVÁNÍ:

The thesis explores the concept of self-realization and social status of women in the works Virginia Woolf, firstly by examining the context of the period and its influence on Virginia Woolf's life and work. Secondly, it completes the image by performing detailed analysis of the women characters in the novels *To The Lighthouse*, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Orlando* with a close connection to the *Room of One's Own* policy.

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