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Fragmented selves and the Freudian crisis of identity: The unconscious, memory, and social performance in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*

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Abstract
Woolf's, *Mrs. Dalloway* explores the identity of post-war London during the time after World War One. Through one day in the city, Woolf shows how unstable and fragmented identity can be. Memory, trauma, desires, societal expectations, gender roles and changing relationships are key themes which affect how we perceive ourselves.
In this paper the researcher examine five main characters; Clarissa Dalloway, Richard Dalloway, Septimus Warren Smith, Peter Walsh, and Sally Seton , looking at how their fragmented identities are reflected through their thoughts, using Freudian theory. This paper includes examining the characters' id, ego and superego, the unconscious, repression, conflict and death instinct. Each character in this book has a fragmented identity. Clarissa Dalloway constantly struggles between her personal emotions and the image she must portray to others. Septimus cannot connect to his previous self due to the damaging effects of war. Peter is stuck in his past with Clarissa. Richard struggles to express his emotions and hides his tenderness behind his strong persona as a well respected politician. Sally has changed from her rebellious past to becoming a calm and content wife and mother.
All the characters struggle with their fragmented identities; this can be seen in their thoughts, speech, body language, emotions and personas. When looked at as a whole, the variety of mental fragmentation can be seen.

Keywords: *Mrs. Dalloway*, Sigmund Freud, psychoanalysis, identity crisis, Id, ego, fragmented identity

Introduction

It would be complicated to talk about modern literature without mentioning Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. It is famous for showing how fiction can separate people's inner thoughts. Published in 1925, the novel starts with Clarissa Dalloway going out to purchase flowers for her party that evening. However, throughout the novel, Woolf brings in huge themes such as memory, desires, sadness, sexuality, consequences of war, class, marriage and how people in society interact with each other. Most notably the characters all have unstable identities.
Mrs. Dalloway seems to lend itself to psychoanalysis. All characters seem to struggle with having a dual identity. Clarissa grapples with being the perfect upper class hostess but cannot escape the remnants of her past self from Bourton. Peter Walsh, her lover struggles with his emotions as he is an adult but trapped in his past with Clarissa. Richard Dalloway has a strong public persona as a politician but may struggle to express his true emotions. Sally Saton has changed from being wild and rebellious in Clarissa's memory to being a mother and wife. Septimus, the war veteran struggles to connect with his past self.
Sigmund Freud's theory of the id, ego and superego reflects how people struggle with their inner desires and societal pressures. His theory allows us to consider why these people are struggling with their dual identities. As Freud comments in The Ego and the Id, "the ego is not sharply separated from the id; its lower portion merges into it." (Frued 24). We can clearly see this in Woolf's characters as they all struggle between having a neat and rehearsed persona and messy and hidden desires and memories.
Freud's insight into" the ego not being in control of itself" (Freud 285). truly captures the theme of this novel. No one is fully in control of their identity. There are always factors influencing them.
The paper argue that there are five different ways of experiencing a fragmented identity through *Mrs. Dalloway*. Clarissa struggles with her desires conflicting with her duties. Septimus struggles with intense trauma causing complete conflict with his sense of self. Peter Walsh is stuck in his past. Richard hides his emotions through repression creating his mask of respectability. Sally has changed her identity to fit in with society. Overall, this shows how varied the modern mind can be.

Clarissa Dalloway: The Division between Clarissa and *Mrs. Dalloway*

Sigmund Freud believes that individuals can never fully understand themselves, as much of their mental life remains hidden in the unconscious. Their desires, fears, memories and impulses often operate beneath conscious awareness and shape their thoughts and behaviour. He separates our personality into three parts. The ego has the goal of maintaining harmony between the primitive instincts, real world and sense of right and wrong. The id is governed by basic and immediate desires. This consists of desires such as hunger, lust and primitive instincts. The superego works as a conscience within yourself providing a moral code. The ego is seen as 'reason and common sense' (Freud 25). Whereas the id is seen as 'the passions' (Freud 25). This provides a useful way to consider the characters in Woolf's novel. Their characters appear to constantly struggle with their unconscious desires and memories.
Mrs Dalloway appears as a sophisticated and refined lady to everyone. However, there is a part of Clarissa that hidden, a side of her that nobody really knows or comprehend. She

holds on to her memories of Sally Saton while struggling with her fear of death. She is still longing for things which she cannot explain or say aloud. Throughout the novel Virginia Woolf never allows the two sides of her character to merge. She frequently switches between the lady preparing for her party and the lady caught up in her memories. Through the lens of Frued we can see that the outer layer is just a thin shell and there is a complex and confusing inner self. Therefore, Clarissa and Mrs Dalloway are constantly fighting within themselves in opposite directions creating a person who will never be complete.

Septimus Warren Smith: Trauma, Fragmentation and Identity

Freud does not believe that individuals can completely understand themselves. He believes that we have an element of consciousness and unconsciousness, where many desires, fears, memories and impulses are not visible to us but influence us.This inner conflict can be seen through Freud's concept of division. Freud believed there is no clear boundary between the ego and the id. Septimus cannot create a firm barrier between his terrible memories and his present. We can see this through Septimus conversations with Rezia. He mentions dying often. Rezia thinks that " And he would not kill himself" (Woolf 33).However we can see how conflicted he is internally. He also has a close relationship with Evans. Even though he has passed away, Septimus still feels very connected to him. His past is very much a part of him.

This is where repression comes into play. Freud believed that the hidden memories will always be a part of us and will shape our mind and soul. Septimus cannot move his grief of losing Evans to the back of his mind. It constantly comes through and he cannot fully control it. This causes a bigger divide between Septimus and Rezia. Rezia is trying her hardest to keep Septimus grounded within reality but he is easily drifting further away into his own world. Although he is physically there, mentally he is miles away.

The doctors make things worse for the couple. Dr Holmes does not care about Septum's' pain and says there is "nothing whatever the matter" (Woolf 89). Sir William Bradshaw is only concerned with putting Septimus into medical categories. No one is listening to him. Instead of helping him with his pain and trauma they are trying to help him. Septiums's real issue is that he does not want to be defined by others. He does not want the medical world or society to tell him who he should be.

Freud's quote of "Where id was, there ego shall be." (Freud 80.) is very sad in this instance. Septimus cannot heal his wounds and put them into a narrative he can live with. His trauma is too loud and powerful. His identity crisis affects every aspect of his life. It is personal and has been created due to his history. It is linked to his masculinity and his social world. He cannot go back to who he was before World War 1 and nobody around him can accept who he has become! Woolf pushes this further by linking Septimus to Clarissa. They never meet but their struggles link to themes of death, isolation and searching for meaning in a world that does not care.

Overall Septimus is a heartbreaking example of a fragmented modern man. When he takes his life it is the final split. His soul has been torn apart by his memories, trauma, pressure to act and harsh reality.

Peter Walsh: Suppressed Attachment and Identity

Although Peter Walsh is not as overt and does not show struggle with his identity as much as Septimus, he does struggle with the same depth. Peter likes to think of himself as an independent and rational man, detached from societal nonsense. However, he can never stop thinking about Clarissa.

As soon as he saw her, Peter loses his composure. He becomes lost in thought and asks himself 'what was it? Where am I?' (Woolf 52). Although he is currently in London, he cannot help but think back to Bourton and Clarissa.

Freud stated the ego represents rationality and sanity (The Ego and the Id, 25). This should have applied to Peter. Although on the outside he wants to appear rational and independent, he cannot let go of his past emotionally. He is constantly struggling between being rational and emotional. Despite judging Clarissa for becoming a good hostess, Peter is simply trying to avoid his emotional issues. He puts the blame onto Clarissa rather than confronting his own attachments and limitations.

Peter looks up to Clarissa because of their relationship. He still measures his life by what she chose to do decades ago. He also feels pressure from Richards's achievements and worries that he is falling behind. When he is stressed he constantly opens and closes his pocket knife. This shows that he cannot come to terms with his argument between his mind and memories. This is also seen with Daisy. He tries to start anew and fall in love, however Clarissa is always there. She takes up too much of his imagination. As Freud pointed out, the ego is made up of everything we have attached to throughout our lives. This is something we can clearly see in Peter's character. He has not moved on from the younger version of himself who loved Clarissa. His identity is based around his memories and past feelings.

Overall Peter's story shows how an identity crisis can be subtle. Sometimes we cannot move on from our past. His present is constantly interrupted by his memories.

Richard Dalloway: Masculinity, Repression and the Internal Hidden Self.

Richard Dalloway appears to be the most realistic character within the group. He is a husband, politician and from the upper class. This makes him the typical English gentleman. However, Woolf gradually begins to uncover the truth about Richard. He is very repressed in terms of his emotions. While he is in public, he is seen as a strong masculine man. Everyone listens to him and he has power. However, this is not the case once he is in private. This is shown through his relationship with Clarissa.

The key moment comes when Richard returns to Clarissa with a bunch of roses. He wants to tell her that he loves her however he cannot express this. Instead he thinks to himself "Happiness is this" (Woolf 180). This is an important moment as Richard is feeling a true emotion however cannot express this. As he is a masculine and respectable husband he cannot show any vulnerability.Freud's concept of the superego can be applied here. The superego is an inner voice which tells you what you should do. Richard is very repressed due to this as he has truly taken on board the superego. Freud states that the ego and superego are constantly battling. The fact that Richard cannot express his love for Clarissa is because his ego is trapped by societal expectations.

Unlike Septimus, Richard does not completely lose touch with reality. In fact he is very good at adapting and thus his need to be a respectable person takes over. Most of the time Richard is very practical and polite. However when he goes quiet it shows how he cannot express his true feelings. Woolf is showing how repression can be hidden as a successful life.

Overall Richard is torn. He is confident and secure in public however there is a side to him which he cannot express. Although he is a well-respected politician, as a husband there is always something he cannot express.

Sally Seton: Defiant Desires and the Societal Controlled Female Identity

Sally Seton represents change. She is a very dynamic character and Clarissa often mentions her throughout the novel. She is lively, bold and refuses to play by society's traditional rules. She smokes cigars, talks about women's rights and refuses to be silenced as she is a woman. Clarissa sees Sally as someone who tried to create her own life.

Freud's idea that the ego is rational and logical while the id is instinctive can be applied to Sally. When Sally was young she would do whatever her instincts told her to. However as she grows up her identity changes completely. She is now a married woman, Lady Rosseter and a mother to five sons. Sally Saton says to Clarissa "I have five enormous boys" (Woolf 129.) This is important as now motherhood and marriage define her. This leads to the question, has Sally changed or has she just been forced to change by society? Woolf does not give an intelligent answer. She simply states that we change with experience. The rebellious girl has not died however she has just changed into a completely different person. Her identity has been moulded by the world around her.

Freud's theory explains that our past will never fully go away. Even if we stop thinking about our desires they will still be there.

Conclusion: From Social Identity to Freudian Subjectivity Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* explores the complexities of identity within the modern world. This is an unstable, fragmented concept that is influenced by relationships and cannot be contained into a singular category. Through characters such as Clarissa Dalloway, Septimus Warren Smith, Peter Walsh, Richard Dalloway, Sally Seton and Woolf demonstrates how individuals cannot be placed into one category in the modern world.

Clarissa is constantly pulled in different directions. Her identity is constantly fragmented. She is both Clarissa and *Mrs. Dalloway*, constantly being pulled between her younger self and her current self in a 'decent' marriage. She fluctuates between her internal thoughts and external persona. Septimus suffers from fractured mind due to the war and cannot be dealt with by society. Peter is still haunted by his past. Richard desperately tries to keep up the perfect English gentleman image through repressing emotions. Sally demonstrates how her wild nature disappears or is repressed after marriage and motherhood.

Freud's psychoanalysis only adds to this problem. He dismissed the idea that we have one true identity. He famously said "the ego is not sharply separated from the id" (Freud 24). This means that our conscious self will always be intertwined with our unconscious instincts. However, he also stated later in his work that "Where id was, there ego shall be"(80). This suggests that we may become aware of our hidden thoughts. Throughout the novel however, most characters struggle to create a cohesive identity. Septimus becomes trapped within the gap between his past and present self. Peter is stuck within his past memories. Richard pretends to feel nothing. Sally's rebellious nature has disappeared.

This study explores how the focus changes from social identity to psychological identity. Critics have explored how factors such as gender, class, sexuality and war affect the characters in *Mrs. Dalloway*. However it is important to note how these external influences are taken in and become part of the individual. The identity crisis in *Mrs. Dalloway* stems from the interaction between society and the psyche. Rules become part of our identity. Memories resurface. Relationships creep in. Repressed desires return.

This research reveals that the characters within Woolf's novel do not have a cohesive identity. They are battling between many conflicting identities. Their identity is fragmented as no one (or ego) can ever truly control their unconscious, forget their past or escape society.

Thus, the study contribute to the psychological understanding of human nature reflects that we are never fully in control or know ourselves completely. Our identity is formed through conflict, memories, desires, repression, relationships and what society expects. Woolf uses this knowledge to create characters that feel unstable as this is simply what it means to be human.

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