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Annotated Bibliography: Mrs. Dalloway

Sources about Nature and Mrs. Dalloway


Bagley examines the connection between references to the natural in order to better understand the social and political structures within Mrs. Dalloway. Bagley points out several biological metaphors that contain a double meaning. There are many instances in the novel when natural elements are used not only to express the actual natural element but something about the character or society that it is being compared to. In addition, Bagley argues that biological functions are intended to differentiate the power roles between men and women. Such roles are split into men being fit for public work and women unfit for participation in the public. Furthermore, Bagley argues that the nature-based references to men represent the public and political activities of the novel and, in turn, emphasize the superiority of men over women. Lastly, Bagley claims Woolf shows the inequalities between men and women to draw attention to the unjust and gendered inequalities of power within the nation.


In this article, Shearer analyzes the use of natural elements, such as flowers, trees, bushes, and gardens throughout the novel. Shearer points out that there are vivid descriptions that
use plants when referring to characters in the novel. She claims that the use of plants in the novel goes further than creating flowery language (pun intended); in fact, the symbolism of plants in the novel gives meaning to passages, themes, and characters in the novel. For example, Shearer looks at the roses in relation to Clarissa and Richard. Richard gives Clarissa white and red roses, which, as Shearer claims, signifies unity. Roses in general, also according to Shearer, represent love and beauty. Shearer further examines the usage of other plants and flowers identifying other interesting details that create more meaning in the novel.

**Sources about Style and Structure in Mrs. Dalloway**


By examining syntax and grammar, psychological post-war shock, and the theme of missed experiences in the novel, Abramson argues the environment in Mrs. Dalloway absorbs the shock and turmoil of the characters. Sticking to the idea that shock is followed by absorption, Abramson identifies the atmosphere of the novel as the absorbing factor, which is created through Woolf’s use of free indirect discourse. The use of free indirect discourse causes the reader to be absorbed along with the characters because the scenes quickly change. With the use of free indirect discourse, Abramson invites us to reread Septimus’s death at the moment when the party learns about the tragedy. The party is in shock when they discover Septimus’s death; however, after the shock, the knowledge of his death is absorbed into the atmosphere of the party.

Cui offers an interesting analysis of Woolf’s use of free indirect discourse in Mrs. Dalloway. Cui fills the gap of linguistic research regarding the viewpoints of the characters throughout the novel. Rather than focusing only on the changing narrative viewpoints, Cui highlights Woolf’s use of parentheticals when the shifts between characters occur. Cui claims that the parentheticals are used to express multiple viewpoints within in a single sentence. Furthermore, Cui points out that the minds and thoughts of the characters seem to be brought together and the lines between them are blurred.


In this article, Edmondson questions other scholars reading of Mrs. Dalloway’s private self vs. public self. She argues that *Mrs. Dalloway* reveals intersubjectivity in the characters’ private worlds. Edmondson completes this by examining the transition of *Mrs. Dalloway* from a short story to a novel, paying specific attention to Clarissa’s awareness of and relation to other characters, and the other characters’ perception of her. The strategy that Woolf uses in Mrs. Dalloway, which allows the reader to follow the free indirect discourse, is called the “tunneling process,” which Edmondson spends much time discussing. Furthermore, Edmondson analyzes Clarissa’s narration of the other character’s thoughts and argues that Clarissa portrays an ethico-affective response model in *Mrs. Dalloway*. In addition, Edmondson argues that the reader is never offered a full look into Clarissa’s life and claims that this may suggest that even Woolf did not fully know her character, Clarissa.

Penda creates a scientific approach to analyzing *Mrs. Dalloway* by applying the quantitative analysis strategy known as network theory. In a nutshell, network theory, when applied to literary studies, is a graph made based on the characters of the novel and their interactions and conversations with each other. The characters are viewed as “vertices” on the graph and are connected to each other when conversation occurs. Penda claims that by creating a network graph a better understanding of the characters connections and relations can be revealed. This graph also shows which characters are not connected to other characters, which makes them marginalized. Penda asserts that the network graph provides a visual demonstration of the social stratification within the novel.

**Sources about History and Science in *Mrs. Dalloway***


In this article Brown acknowledges Woolf’s particular interest in science and argues that she uses her character’s spatiotemporal awareness to showcase the transition of Britain into the postwar era. Woolf does this by describing characters walking around London reminiscing about their lives prior to the war. Brown pays specific attention to Big Ben and its role in bringing the characters back into the present moment with a strike (more specifically when Clarissa is recalling her past and is brought back by the sound of Big Ben). The strike of Big Ben signifies not only a new hour but also a shift into a new era. In addition, Brown discusses the symbolism of St. Paul’s Cathedral, No Man’s Land (in relation to Regent’s Park), and St. Margaret’s clock.
With the use of these landmarks, Woolf creates a modernist environment that acknowledges social and political changes.


Hickman’s article takes a look at the role that India plays in *Mrs. Dalloway*. In the novel, Hickman claims that “India” highlights the ethical and political problems in the novel and, by doing so, acts as a double catachresis. Clarissa’s lack of acknowledgment of the named Indian woman in the novel symbolizes a separation between middle-class, white, feminists and third-world women. Hickman comes to the conclusion that Indian women in the novel represent the need for and questions of transnational feminist ethics. Since the unnamed Indian women represents a class structure disconnect, the figure of the Indian women offers a perspective of failure and possibility of equality. Hickman claims that the unnamed Indian woman is present throughout the novel and, in the closing sentence, the pronoun “she” does not name a character and creates a possibility that women in the novel—English and Indian women—may acknowledge each other and have a name.

**Sources about Psychology and *Mrs. Dalloway***


Hogan begins his article discussing neurological research about beauty and how the brain processes beauty. He points out that the brain recognizes and responds to different types of beauty in different ways; most research about beauty regards music or visual art instead of
literature. After discussion of beauty in relation to emotion and the sublime, Hogan shifts his attention to the treatment of beauty and sublimity in *Mrs. Dalloway* and refers to Woolf as an artist. He argues that Mrs. Dalloway displays prototypes (such as flowers) and patterns of beauty specifically linked to emotion. Hogan claims the novel revolves around the idea of beauty rather than sublimity and through the beauty that is described, emotion is created.


By examining the trench poets of WWI, Septimus’s character, and Woolf’s “Sketch of the Past,” Myers analyzes the connection between witnessing tragic or violent deaths and the need to communicate those sights through writing. Myers attends to Septimus’s character by comparing his need to write what he witnesses in the trenches of WWI with the poems “Veglia,” by Giuseppe Ungaretti, and “Dulce Et Decorum Est,” by Wilfred Owen. In addition, Myers compares Septimus’s character and the previous poems with Woolf’s “Sketch of the Past,” which was supposedly written with the intention to heal Woolf’s pain after the unexpected loss of her mother. Ultimately, Myers concludes that the stories that Septimus holds are his “treasures” and that every soldier (or person) who has gone through trauma has a special story to be told and should be encouraged to express it.