

# A Multidisciplinary Approach for the Construction of Subjectivity in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*

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**Abstract**—Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), an epitome of modernist novel, is a multidimensional and multifaceted novel which explores Clarissa Dalloway's process of subjectivity. It is true that the novel chiefly embraces most of the salient characteristics of modernist fiction but to judge and analyze the novel only according to modernist aesthetics, ideology and philosophy, would inevitably be oblivious of other movements and philosophies like poststructuralism; therefore, eclecticism and multidisciplinary have been escaped from previous studies notice. Being the female protagonist of *Mrs Dalloway*, Clarissa's mind and life must be deciphered, demystified and unraveled through shedding light from different disciplines, and that is what the present study aims at presumptuously. Since similar studies are relatively short-sighted in not expounding interdisciplinary considerations, this study attempts to demystify those less trampled territories such as philosophical, political and ethical considerations of the construction of subjectivity.

**Key Words**— Interpellation; Excandance; Poststructuralism; Subjectivity; Carceral

## 1. Introduction

Multidisciplinary is the underlying principle organization of this study. The real intention behind this approach is the inadequacy of one-dimensional studies before poststructuralist era; therefore, the present study is highly indebted to basic tenets of poststructuralism and embraces much of its salient features or themes.

The primacy of theory and the decentering of the subject are two salient features commonly held among theorists and thinkers in poststructuralism. The decentering of the subject which almost has haunted every poststructural critic or philosopher is the major preoccupation of the present study; hence approaching the problematic of subject through multidisciplinary considerations would not come as a big shock. I have divided this study into three parts: I. Foucauldian construction of subjectivity, II. Althusserian construction of subjectivity and III. Ethical consideration of subjectivity. In conclusion, which I consider as the most important part of the study, the dialogue and interactions of these theories, critics and philosophers are discussed through multidisciplinary approach.

## 2. A Short Summary of the Novel

To refresh readers' mind and to pave the way to unravel Clarissa Dalloway's subjectivity, a short summary

which has been beautifully provided by Laurie Lanzen Harris (1990) is necessary:

What plot exists revolves around Clarissa Dalloway's day preparation for an important dinner party, which will include England's Prime Minister...She remembers her girlhood and a young lover whom she rejected, and she meets an old friend who will be attending the party and who flatters her and makes her feel young again; this causes more musing about her youthful suitor, Peter Walsh. Her thoughts are fragmented as she walks; they include what she is now and what she might have been, anxiety about her young daughter and her future, and thoughts about a limousine which, obviously carrying a member of royal family, has impact on her and everyone who views it... When Dr. Bradshaw appears late [t Clarissa's party] because of Septimus's death, she is torn between pity for a young dead man and rage that his action casts a pall on her happiness. In a solitary internal monologue, we can sense her responses to both the terror and beauty of life, with death as its natural ending (450-1

Some key critical terms must be already clarified to pave the way for the better understanding and appreciation of the present study:

**Interpellation:** According to the French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser, all ideology 'hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects', by the functioning of the category of the subject. In other

words, individuals come to live a given set of ideological assumptions and beliefs, and to identify these with their own selves, by means of a process whereby they are persuaded that that which is presented to them actually represents their own identity or self (Hawthorn 82). Consequently he sees an individual's subjectivity as generated through social forces.

**Excendance:** This concept is crucial to Levinas's philosophical texts. "Excendance is the spontaneous and immediate desire to escape the limits of the self, a desire generated as those limits are experienced in their narrowness, even their sheer absurdity" (Gibson 37). It is a process which precedes the encounter with alterity. It is thus a principle of unease within and inseparable from the self; therefore it is considered as an ethical impulse towards the other which otherwise confines one to the limits of self, and the idea of being.

### 3. Michel Foucault: the Carceral Party

Foucault's works in the 1960's focused on discourse and language as the constructors of subjectivity; But in his later works he shifted from linguistic determination to the view that individuals are constituted by power relations; power as the ultimate principle of social reality. In this respect the common thread that appears to run through all his works is the fact that "power is associated firmly with the male and masculinity" (Nicholson, 157). One must also bear this point in mind that Foucault's works owe much to Nietzsche. For instance, his common sense view of the relation between power and knowledge can be traced back to Nietzsche. Whereas one might normally regard knowledge as providing us with power to do things, Foucault notes that knowledge is a power over others, the power to define others. Looking from Foucault's lens knowledge ceases to be a liberation and becomes a mode of surveillance, regulation, and discipline. This new mode of power, called panopticism, was first used in schools, barracks and hospitals and then began to be generalized. It would be striking if we noted the likeness between the panopticon (the all-seeing) and the Christian God's infinite knowledge. It is also similar to Freud's concept of the super-ego as the internal monitor of unconscious wishes (Sarup, 1988).

Foucault's arguments find clear embodiment in Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. Clarissa's party is more political than family party; and her main goal is in being a social success, and she has achieved this through her parties. Every element in her party has underlying political reading and significance. Otherwise the Prime Minister's presence would be odd. His presence underpins the fact that he is at the head of a political party. Other characters reinforce this view too: Richard Dalloway is a successful politician. Peter Walsh, a colonial(Indian) administrator; Septimus Warren Smith is a lower-middle-class young man of literary proclivities; Sir William Bradshaw is an ambitious, self-centered

psychiatrist who cares only for the power that his occupation gives him, power to manipulate the lives of others, power to intrude, to meddle, to interfere. Doris Kilman, embodiment of the will-to-power, the will to dominate and meddle in the lives of others. One of her passions in life is for evangelistic religion. And finally, Lady Bruton, is inclined to politics and has a rather masculine mind.

But what is Clarissa Dalloway's function in this political party? She is willing to sell her soul for a little conversation. Her party is the microcosm of a real society. She appears in this political party as a 'real hostess'. Peter Walsh "admired her courage; her social instinct; he admired her power of carrying things through." (Dalloway, 46). Clarissa finely demonstrates power relations in the party. Although power is always associated firmly with the male and masculinity, here it is Clarissa who tips the balance in her favour to be the most powerful figure in this political party.

But how is the carceral nature of modern society intimated in the microcosm of this political party?

Foucault relates disciplining of knowledge in the Renaissance period or in the classical and modern ages to the overall development of an increasingly disciplinary society. Discipline here means both of organizing knowledge and as an operation of power.

Foucault argues that, in the 'Post-Enlightenment' society which has developed since the end of the eighteenth century, public and physical forms of punishment such as hanging, flogging and torture have been replaced by more subtle forms of surveillance and self-surveillance. These forms place limitations on what can be said, written and known within society, and so help to create and constrain individual subjectivities (Moran 134).

Big Ben which is of high structural significance in the unity of novel also is a sound image and symbolizes the constraining effects of time. It seems that time is the greatest discipliner in the modern era. It reminds one of his/her limitations, that (s)he is bounded inevitably to time and as Clarissa notes "how it is certain we must die." (Dalloway, 127). Throughout the novel we witness that Clarissa is obsessed with constraining power of time. Big Ben counts out the hours, reminding all the characters of approaching evening and by extension their death. Clarissa knows well that the party must be performed within limited span of time; her party has beginning, middle and the end. Time-boundedness is what makes Clarissa's world, life and political party carceral. Time disciplines her life. Rather than being a subject of, Clarissa is subject to time. She is a hopeless prey to the crumpling power of time.

Another important symbol which runs throughout the novel is the motorcar. It conveys the complexity, variety

and multiplicity of modern life. It symbolizes established power and authority and death (with its enigmatic, unidentified passenger); and also, relevant to our study, symbol of unquestionable discipline. It is running through the streets of London and exerting its panoptical power over people's life. Later in the novel, there is another motorcar of symbolic significance, outside Sir William Bradshaw's office. Like the earlier one, it is also a symbol of power and coldness that separates Septimus and Lucrezia from Sir William and his smug, self-confident and cruel world.

In the carceral society the modern individual is produced by a power that individualizes precisely in order to better control. A panoptic (all-seeing) power keeps subjects under constant surveillance. Foucault argues that each institution moulds behavior according to a norm, subordinates individuals to institutional demands, examines and watches over all subjects, and punishes deviants. Such a society is "Carceral", prison-like from top to bottom, because it uses the same strategies and techniques of control that prisons employ. Striking a right balance between Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* and his *The History of Sexuality*, I need to focus on latter book's main point that our apparently natural sexuality is far more a positive product of power than power was ever repression of sexuality; and this discursive practices in turn form part of the intensifying surveillance and control of the individual. In this sense Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* serves in many ways as an exemplary literary dramatization of some of Foucault's major ideas. Throughout his career, Foucault was fascinated by figures who existed on the margins of society like: mad men, lepers, criminals, deviants, etc. His important elaboration of the connection between sexuality and power in modern society can throw light on such marginal group like deviants in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. But how sexuality is administered and controlled in this novel?

In her girlhood Clarissa develops lesbian relationship with Sally, a beautiful and daring young woman, against the mainstream heterosexuality of the society; therefore, she resists patriarchal power which attaches women to certain paradigms of feminine identity. Foucault claims that "power is never won once and for all; there are always possibilities of resistance" (Gutting, 294) Foucault rejects "the repressive hypothesis" of Freud and insists on the productivity of power. Power is traditionally seen as repressing behaviors which is unproductive, threatening or otherwise undesirable. For example, people have various sexual desires such as seeking same-sex partners that are considered unacceptable and accordingly social power is exerted to repress those deviant desires. But Foucault argues that modern power produces the very desires it strives to regulate. When social power begins to identify and label a category, it has a heightened presence over it and accordingly can control it satisfactorily. Foucault goes on to argue that modern power operates through continual classification and surveillance to increase its opportunities for intervention. Consequently, modern

power penetrates everywhere, giving a specific name to every possible variant of human action so as to master the world and leave nothing unexamined, unknown, uncatalogued. For example, the new category of homosexuality explains and covers much more than traditional sodomy and therefore is open for institutional and state intervention. In the premodern world sodomy and other crimes were seen as temporary aberration, actions which carried no particular relation to the self who committed them; but in modern society actions begin to be taken as evidence of a deep-seated identity. Therefore homosexuality or lesbianism determines identity. Consequently modern power connects what I do to what I am and produces subjects who have identities and in turn gives itself the opportunity to interpret, analyze and accordingly to intervene in those subjects identities. Throwing light on Clarissa's gender identity from Foucauldian perspective, we see Clarissa as a woman of social standing who is transformed from earlier lesbian to later compulsory heterosexual as a result of the mechanism of the power. Very simply she is afraid of being labeled or categorized as lesbian in her social life; so we see that she is in full control of panoptical power which penetrates everywhere and leaves no stone unturned.

Respectively, Septimus Warren Smith's homosexual feeling towards Evans has been transformed to heterosexual feeling towards Lucrezia, a charming and warm-hearted Italian girl. Septimus never recovers from his relationship with Evans and his fear of doctors can be seen as a fear of the prevailing sentiments of the time that homosexuality was as illness that needed to be cured. Attempting to get over Evans, Septimus marries Rezia although he does not love her, will not give her children, and cannot function a normal way a husband should. Rezia may not be conscious that it is Evans who is her obstacle to having children. "In particular, sexuality functions as a focal point for an entire array of practices through which modern society has attempted to constitute the individual as a subject of administrative control" (Booker 276).

For Foucault, as Booker argues, "sexuality is not so much a matter of natural instinctive impulses as of socially and discursively conditioned responses. He describe sexuality as 'an especially dense transfer point for relations of power'"(126).

Somewhere else Foucault argues that "the will to knowledge is actually more fundamental in modern carceral society than the desire for sex" (Booker 277) and the literary dramatization of this idea can be seen in Woolf's deerotised and antierotic characterization of Clarissa Dalloway. We are never given a slightest clue about passionate and erotic relations between Richard and Clarissa. This movement from nature to culture is the function of the technologies of the self which are specific practices by which subjects constitute themselves within and through systems of power. In fact there are a series of techniques that allow individuals to work on themselves by regulating their bodies, their thoughts and their conduct.

These techniques also help individuals to police their selves in society. Therefore Clarissa moves from nature to culture by killing her passionate self, rejecting Peter Walsh whom she loved passionately. Everywhere in the novel she struggles to represent herself as an educated and knowledgeable person who moves and revolts against the mainstream and conventional images attached to women of her kind. She was reading Plato, Morris' Shelley, Huxley and Tyndall in her girlhood or later.

Her parties are real manifestations of her desire for will-to-power. "Power was hers, position, income. She had lived in the forefront of her time. She had had good friends, known the ablest men of her day" (Dalloway 82).

Clarissa's inclination towards throwing incessant parties overlaps with that of Foucault's persistent lifelong preoccupation: the social constitution of the subject; that individuals are not unique, autonomous entities but the products of social discourses.

By exerting power through social discourses, Clarissa is made docile subject. She must always bear in her mind that she is subject as long as she is subject to panoptical power which keeps her under constant surveillance.

In an interview with Foucault which is entitled "Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault" he says that: "The main interest in life is to become someone else that you were not at the beginning.... The game is worthwhile insofar as we don't know what will be the end" (Gutting 286). These sentences clearly find literary embodiment and addresses in Clarissa Dalloway's personality; throughout the novel she struggles hopelessly to become like those ideal characters she always envied them: "She would have been, in the first place, dark like Lady Bexborough, with a skin of crumpled leather and beautiful eyes. She would have been, like Lady Bexborough, slow and stately; rather large; interested in politics like a man. (Dalloway 8)

Later in the novel she notes that "all that evening she could not take her eyes off Sally. It was an extraordinary beauty of the kind she most admired, dark, large-eyed, with that quality which, since she hadn't got it herself, she always envied" (24).

Throughout his career, Foucault developed an influential account of the interconnections among power, knowledge, discipline, sexuality and the subject. He argues that "[i]t is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power" (Sarup, 82).

In case of Clarissa, her will-to-power combines with her will-to-knowledge to engender social domination and status.

To sum up, Clarissa needs her parties to maintain the bond between herself and society. Foucault's new philosophical conception of man as a simultaneous subject and object of knowledge can be traced in social construction of Clarissa's subjectivity. She is oscillating between subject and object positions; therefore her identity is not fixed but always in flux; society and its power constraints, rules and regulations are part of determining factors which shape her subjectivity.

#### 4. Louis Althusser : Subject as Site – Prisons of Ideology

"It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness."

Karl Marx

As a point of departure, let me quote Althusser's definition of ideology as "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence." Althusser's ideology takes the place of Lacan's the Imaginary, which one is "born into", and which, like the Freudian unconscious, deeply influences how one acts; therefore it is not a false but a primordial structure of consciousness. According to Althusser, different ideologies or world outlooks such as religious ideology, ethical ideology, political ideology, etc. are largely imaginary, i.e. do not correspond to reality; therefore, what is represented in ideology is not the system of the real relations which governs the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live (Rice and Waugh 56).

Impressionism is what Virginia Woolf employs for her novel *Mrs Dalloway*. From the very beginning pages we are allowed to enter Clarissa Dalloway's mind. It is her consciousness through which the sights and sounds of London, are exquisitely filtered. From the very beginning we are introduced to her highly subjective way of looking at things, her preoccupation with society, her fears and fancies and most significantly her memories. Most of the plot takes place in the past, in Clarissa's memory; again it is Clarissa who takes us back to those emotional scenes of her earlier life; everything is filtered through her consciousness. We witness everything through her eyes, through her highly personal and emotional response towards life. Woolf's employment of impressionism is responsible for those distortions of reality we get from Clarissa's highly subjective, personal impressions of daily and past experiences. Rather than presenting a literal and real picture of life, we are exposed to Clarissa's private emotional versions of reality which in turn is figurative. Whatever she recollects in tranquility is rendered through her subjective view point. But we know something for sure that she is ambitious for success in the world's eye. Her marriage to

Richard, a successful politician, rather than Peter whom she loved can be accounted for that deep-seated ambition. She has grown a sturdy and masculine respect for the authority of society. The Prime Minister's attendance in her party is symptomatic of her masculine taste in social and political issues. She is unable to see, to value, to appreciate, to judge, and respectively to respond to life objectively as it is, without respect to the views of established authority. Her values do not reflect a concern for important issues of feminine life such as the sexual relationship of marriage, motherly experiences and the like. To sum up, 'her social instinct', her ideological outlook, takes her a few steps further away from reality. Put simply, her eyes are wide shut to the real conditions of her existence. Worded differently, her social awareness has replaced her real awareness and consciousness towards life and reality; therefore, she is unable to bridge the yawning gap between her ideological outlooks and her own real conditions of existence; consequently, she never completely wakes up to the real facts of her life. Her incessant parties, which have originally been designed to sharpen her social consciousness, cannot save her; because she has become prey to ideology; and ideology in its own turn has distorted reality in its own favor.

Althusser sees an individual's subjectivity as generated through social forces; that how dominant social systems enforce their control – subtly molding human subjects through ideology (Leitch, et al. 1476-1478). Althusser describes how ideological state apparatuses "interpellate or hail individuals as subjects." For him, ideology works through our tacit recognition of being hailed, as when we turn around to answer the call, "Hey, you there!"

Althusser argues (Rice and Waugh 58-62) that interpellation occurs through the medium of 'Ideological State Apparatuses' which function by ideology in contrast to the 'Repressive State Apparatuses' which function by violence. It must also be kept in mind that these two categories are complementary to each other and never function purely on their own; therefore, Althusser focuses on ideology as a shaping factor in the development of individual identity. Such an ideology, Althusser argues, is not voluntary but the result of structural factors in society; he thus discards the humanist notion of free will and ties himself to those avowed antihumanist poststructuralists.

Clarissa Dalloway's party is a delicate literary embodiment of Althusser's "ideological state apparatuses" (ISAs). Althusser's ISAs operate primarily in the private spheres, and they gain their power not by means of violence or force but through implicit consent they elicit. The so called efforts of ISAs to win its subject's consent is very much like Antonio Gramsci's "hegemony". In these ISAs one indirectly learns the practice of obedience to authority, and shuns complaining unwittingly. Clarissa's parties can also be interpreted as Althusser's famous concept of overdetermination in which a range of different social

forces could result in a single, overdetermined event; therefore, looking through Althusser's lens, Clarissa's parties are overdetermined – constituted as the effects of all other aspects. She pours her creativity and social warmth into parties, which, for her, have become a way of ordering the world, of shaping reality into pleasing and enduring patterns.

Since there is no subject in solitude or vacuum, Clarissa's parties serve as a movement from solitude to society; why? To create opportunities for Clarissa to be hailed or interpellated as subject.

From the very beginning of her day, of party, Clarissa is continually hailed as subject; for example when she was going to buy flowers for the party, she meets her old friend Hugh Whitbread in streets of London: "'Good morning to you Clarissa!' said Hugh, rather extravagantly, for they had known each other as children." (Dalloway, 5) The idea of throwing parties for Clarissa was very indispensable since they offered her the most invaluable opportunities to become subject and gain her respective identity. As a result, "[s]he made her drawing-room a sort of meeting place; she had a genius for it." (57); because, "she needed people, always people;" (58). Without people she would lose the possibility of becoming subject. She just needed "to have famous people about her; great names;" (89). It seems that she derives thousand times as much pleasure being with great names; for this reasons she invites the Prime Minister to her party; to be hailed, to be interpellated by the Prime Minister is the climactic moment of her party; when she was walking down the room with the Prime Minister "She had felt that intoxication of the moment;" (126).

At the other side of this continuum, Clarissa's double, Septimus Warren Smith is "quite alone, condemned, deserted, as those who are about to die are alone," (68-69) and he mutters that: "Communication is health; communication is happiness." (69). He is left with no opportunities to become subject; there is no possibility of interpellation for him in his extreme solitude; for this very reason he desires 'communication', as the only way to construct his subjectivity.

As we saw, Clarissa's identity is directly dependent on her parties, to be continually hailed as subjects; for this reason she needs urgently to keep those parties going on." She did think it mattered, her party, and it made her feel quite sick to know that it was all going wrong, all falling flat. Anything, any explosion, any horror was better than people wandering aimlessly..." (122)

These parties have a direct bearing on Clarissa's life and subjectivity; therefore it is quite natural to make her quite sick if it goes wrong. But why does Clarissa encounter 'hollowness' and sterility of her parties? Because she realizes the fact that she needs those people attending in her parties all the time, to hail her, to interpellate her as subject, to assure her of her subjectivity, but in reality it seemed both impossible and extremely boring. Consequently she

agrees with Sally's last remarks regarding "[d]espairing of human relationships". (140).

## 5. Emmanuel Levinas : Excendence, the Encounter with Alterity & Transcendence

'One comes not into the world but into question.

Emmanuel Levinas

In her fiction, Woolf set out to portray the limitations of the self, caught as it is in time, and suggested that these could be transcended, if only momentarily, by engagement with another self, a place, or a work of art. Woolf's fiction is the real story of the justification of the so called transcendence which amazingly coincides and overlaps with that of Levinas's excendence. "Excendence is the spontaneous and immediate desire to escape from the absurdly narrow limits of the self." (Luckhurst and Marks, 184). Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, recounts and examines the probability of such an escape from the limitations of the self and its movement towards alterity.

The concept of excendence is crucial to Levinas's thought. He articulated this movement or process before his central idea of the encounter with altering. In this study, I shall try to illustrate and elucidate the following formula in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*:

Excendence-----the encounter with alterity--  
-----transcendence

Evasion (escape) is the ethical impulse towards or openness to the Other which induces a release from the confines of the self. It turns us incessantly elsewhere, outside. It moves us towards the Other. The subject in this sense is never available to observation; because excendence is a process, a continual becoming; there is always unease, discontent, discomfort and as a result a flight towards the Other, towards the exterior. The so called subject in process moves from an unendurable solitude towards the Other. Subjecthood can only be understood as intrinsically a projection towards the future. The subject is already on its journey elsewhere. But a problem comes up:

the Other whom I encounter is always radically in excess of what my ego, cognitive powers, consciousness or intuitions would make of her or him. The other always and definitely overflows the frame in which I would seek to enclose the other.... Levinas often writes of the delusion of the possibility of possession of the other.... As I fail to 'capture' the Other, too, the encounter with the other becomes an occasion to which I must rise again. In this instance, however, I no longer seek to bring the Other to terms. Rather, I offer myself to the Other, with a

gesture that Levinas expresses in the phrase 'Here I Am'. The will to know the Other or to approach the Other in terms of knowledge becomes responsiveness to and responsibility for the Other. The ego is deposed, gives up its drive to sovereignty and enters into ethics, into social relationship, dialogue, disinterestedness. (Gibson, 25)

Contemporary moral philosophers also contend that "love provides a means for exceeding the boundaries of the self" (Womack, 79); for example Levinas's excendence is embodied in Clarissa's escape from herself through love and this in turn is reified in her parties. Undoubtedly love in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* functions as excendence. Clarissa's escape from herself and march towards the other, to seek refuge there can be seen in her movement towards Sally Seton. But what is she escaping from? Put simply, from the limitations of her 'compulsory heterosexuality'. Femininity and masculinity are cultural constraints; they tend to maintain the current pattern of heterosexual relations. Of course, very many heterosexuals are not respectively masculine and feminine, or not in certain respects, or not all of the time; therefore, Clarissa aims at destabilizing her gender identity. Sexuality is always and only a dynamic, a composition or negotiation with the outside. Lesbianism is excendence; because it destabilizes and blurs the current prevailing sexual ideology. Lesbianism is the instant in which the present of gender is doubled up and divided from itself, in which the contemporaneousness of gender is fissured. Worded differently, the present of sexuality and gender is incessantly traversed or crossed. In other words, gender is never contemporary with itself. For this very reason, Clarissa's gender identity is like an activity, a site, a performance or precisely a continual becoming. The novel traces only Clarissa's evasion rather than her arrival at a destination. *Mrs. Dalloway* is about the becoming of sexuality, sexuality as an event that continually threatens to escape any categorical identification. To sum up, we are not sure about Clarissa's gender identity, to classify her either heterosexual or lesbian or both. At the same time, Clarissa's gender becoming is an ethical moment; it is a flight towards the others, Sally.

The same rule applies to Septimus Warren Smith. He escapes from the limitations of heterosexuality and moves towards homosexuality. Here again we are not sure about his gender identity, whether he is heterosexual or homosexual or both.

Following Levinas's footsteps, one can claim that Clarissa's parties are the best examples of reification of excendence and ethical moment of encounter with the other. Clarissa Dalloway as a subject in process devises to escape from an unendurable solitude towards the other. In Levinas's term, the turn towards the gaze of the other, which is an ethical turn, constructs subjectivity; that is construction of subjectivity through a relation and ethical obligation to the other. The face of the other, according to

Levinas, engages us in a way that inspires and insists upon ethical responsibility and behaviour.

For Levinas, it is the presence of the Other, a necessary alterity, that brings us into the world; i.e. the very presence of Otherness makes our existence possible, and further, that language is born in responsibility. Duty towards the other is imposed prior to the recognition of our own being and, in fact, constructs not only our awareness of self, but the self itself. In Levinasian ethics, the subject is host (in case of Clarissa a perfect hostess), both host and quest, and also Other, not self-sufficient and self-contained, and at the same time hostage, held by and prey to the Other.

Clarissa's love is what causes the emergence of identity. It is the summoning of the other which is ethical moment. It seems equally appropriate to claim that love is, metaphorically, the face of the other; and this very otherness of the other constructs subjectivity. For this reason we must always consider our self as a becoming, always in relation to those around us.

Clarissa's parties are ideal rendezvous for both ethical obligations and for the sake of the encounter with the Other. Her studies, her readings, her parties, which serve as her inevitable escape from the limitations of her self, are just prologues for the crucial ethical moment of the encounter with the other. Therefore, "[s]he made her drawing-room a sort of meeting-place"; (Dalloway, 57) because "it was an offering; to combine, to create"; (89). In her party she encounters hundreds of other people including the Prime Minister, Peter Walsh, Sir William Bradshaw, etc. But the oddest one is Clarissa's symbolic encounter with her own double, Septimus Warren Smith. Although they never meet actually, we are given some substantial clues of their critical, symbolic and ethical encounter which ultimately transfers Clarissa from exultance to transcendence. Septimus is intelligent, idealistic, and sensitive, a man with a soul of a poet, who has not been able to withstand the ravages of life and war. His war experiences have destroyed him emotionally. Now he is emotionally isolated from people. While Clarissa has been able to accept and live with that central coldness in herself, Septimus, her dark double, cannot accept a life without feeling. His solution is to recoil from the world at the hypocrisy and corruption he sees around him. Septimus' final act is an act of tremendous courage, of defiance, of escape from the very limitations of his life and self.

Death as ultimate escape brings Septimus to that brilliant triumphant moment of timeless transcendence. And the symbolic encounter between Clarissa and Septimus is rendered dramatically and resolved ethically; because Clarissa, in a moment of insight and revelation, is somehow more reconciled and inclined to the idea of death than she has ever been before; the ultimate escape to death is shared by Clarissa. She feels a mysterious kinship with Septimus and is able to understand that Septimus' final act was his way of both defying death and world and at the same time

trying to communicate; a communication that has always mystically evaded him. In this sense, Clarissa's ethical movement from exultance towards transcendence is a highly triumphant moment: "Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the center which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded; one was alone. There was an embrace in death." (134)

Consequently, death is not the end; it is another prologue for a subject in process, for a subject in continual becoming to move, to march towards those transcendental Others in death; that is why Clarissa exaltedly describes death as "an attempt to communicate".

## 6. Conclusion

Multidisciplinarity is a way of life in poststructuralist era. As we struggle to reach beyond the confines of discrete disciplines, multidisciplinarity offers a new way of thinking, acting, understanding and interpreting the world. As Moran (2002) puts it in *Interdisciplinarity*, we do not combine disciplines to produce new forms of knowledge but rather we simply juxtapose two or more disciplines with no real integration among them (16). As the anthropologist Clifford Geertz has written: "we are living in an age of 'blurred genres' a 'jumbling of varieties of discourse' within which disciplinary distinctions are increasingly hard to call"(qtd. in Moran 18). The real intention behind choosing multidisciplinarity for this study was to open up the existing disciplines to new perspectives, to shed more light on the problematic of subjectivity from different disciplines simultaneously. Multidisciplinary ways of thinking have a tendency to be disorganized, error-prone and incomplete than established forms of knowledge. In spite of this, it has produced some of the most interesting developments in the humanities over the last few decades; therefore, multidisciplinarity aims at encouraging communication between disciplines. It could be seen as a way of living with the disciplines more critically and self-consciously, realizing that their most basic assumptions can always be challenged by new ways of thinking from elsewhere. Multidisciplinarity aims at denaturalization of knowledge: it means that people working within established modes of thought have to be permanently aware of the intellectual and institutional constraints within which they are working, and open themselves to different ways of structuring and representing their knowledge of the world.

Previous studies of subjectivity seemed very reductionistic and therefore gave rise and motivation to the present study. They had treated the problematic of subjectivity from a distinct one-dimensional perspective. But armed to the teeth with multidisciplinary approach I tried to analyze Clarissa Dalloway's subjectivity from different and seemingly discrete disciplines simultaneously. Now in conclusion I have the vantage point of standing

above and seeing the interdependency of language, discourse, power, ideology and ethics in construction of subjectivity. Therefore, judging or analyzing subjectivity from one of these views won't be holistic and accordingly won't mirror the facts about one's subjectivity.

Again it is worthy to note that in poststructuralist setting, there is no subjectivity outside the framework of language; therefore, the subject is constructed in discourse and language and it is by no means stable or unified as it is posed in humanist ideology. The notion of the subject in poststructuralism is completely against those beliefs that believe in subject's sovereignty, its entirety, its centrality and finally its autonomy. For a humanist, man is situated at the centre of everything, and he is ascribed with full subjectivity and individuality. But poststructuralism dismantled this man-centered world and dethroned man from his sovereignty. Therefore, the subject from this new prism is split, unstable and fragmentary. But the present research tried to explain the fact that although language is very crucial and significant in construction of subjectivity, it is not the whole story about it.

Through the exploitation of the wide ranges of theories from Marxism and philosophy to ethics, I have tried to explore subjectivity from an eagle's eye-view. The real purpose and intention behind this approach is to throw new light on *Clarissa Dalloway* as a social being, and to show her vain struggles to achieve a stable and unified position as a subject and how this struggle is frustrated and ultimately leads to defeat of subjectivity.

Numerous social theorists have also recognized the close relation between language and systems of power. A character like *Clarissa* is a passive victim of male power. Her struggle for autonomy and self-definition in interaction with men results in greater disempowerment and disappointment. Even in her feminine resistance against patriarchal power she is forced to rely on the linguistic tools of her oppressors.

Also in this study I focused on the role of ideology in the construction of identity – not merely how *Clarissa* conforms to an accepted or imposed ideology, but how she rebels against or subverts a powerful system of beliefs. I emphasized the fact that ideological systems themselves exist as cultural constructs, subject to processes of change and revision by individuals and groups.

And finally it is Levinas who draws our attention towards ethical construction of identity; that how the face of the other engages us in a way that inspires and insists upon ethical responsibility and behaviour. According to Levinas, identity becomes an indeterminate product of the interaction with others and a contingency of relation. Therefore in Levinasian thought subject is constructed through a relation and ethical obligation to the Other. He further relates language to ethics; that language is born in responsibility. He argues that duty towards the Other is

imposed prior to the recognition of our own being and, in fact, constructs not only our awareness of self, but the self itself. We are essentially constructed as a result of our feeling, or obligation for the Other; and in this respect language becomes the actual site of ethical obligation, whereby one brings the other into question. As a result, the flight towards the Other is very significant in construction of identity in Levinasian thought.

Consequently, I argued that identities, far from being given in advance for individuals to step into, emerge over time through discursive and other social practices. Nor is identity construction an exclusively individual act; instead, social selves are produced interaction, through processes of contestation and collaboration. On the other hand, poststructuralism imposed unstable and fragmentary identity; therefore subjects in poststructuralism are constructed socially but their identities are fluid, dynamic and fragmentary; Lennard J. Davis puts it beautifully: "wholeness is in fact a hallucination"(qtd. in Leitch, et al. 2399).

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