

Wandering Souls in London: Urban Travel and Self-Identity in Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway

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Abstract. Mrs. Dalloway is Virginia Woolf's most representative modernist novel. Centered on a single day in Clarissa Dalloway's life as she prepares for a party, the novel presents women's self-identity and Identity exploration through depictions of urban landscapes of iconic London locations such as Fleet Street, as well as shifts in perspective among different characters including Clarissa, Septimus Warren Smith, and Peter Walsh. Meanwhile, the extensive interweaving of memories and reality in the work embodies the fluidity of the characters' identity consciousness. Taking Henri Lefebvre's "Spatial Theory" as its theoretical framework, this paper explores the interactive relationship between the flow of urban space and the flow of identity consciousness in Mrs. Dalloway, analyzes the pressures and contradictions faced by women in different space, and reveals the multiple possibilities of urban travel in identity exploration. The research aims to demonstrate that urban travel is not merely a physical movement across space, but more importantly, a profound reflection on an individual's social role and gender identity. It is hoped that this paper will enrich current academic research on travel literature in the literary field and provide valuable references for it.

Keywords: Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway, Spatial Theory, Urban Travel, Self-identity

1. Introduction

Mrs. Dalloway is a representative work by Virginia Woolf, a renowned British writer, literary critic, and leading figure of stream-of-consciousness literature in the Victorian era. It was ranked among Time magazine's "100 Best English-Language Novels from 1923 to 2005". The novel follows two main narrative threads: one centers on Clarissa Dalloway's single day as she prepares for an evening party, and the other focuses on the psychological state of Septimus Warren Smith, a World War I veteran suffering from mental illness. The visit of Clarissa's former lover Peter Walsh and her experience of wandering through London for a day trigger her memories of the past and reflections on the present. Septimus and his wife's life experiences reveal the profound negative impacts of war on ordinary people. Ultimately, Septimus commits suicide by jumping from a building to resist the doctors' forced treatment. When news of his death reaches Clarissa's party, the two narrative threads converge. Clarissa's recognition of Septimus' choice to die embodies a deep emotional resonance between the two person. Through the personal experiences of its characters, Mrs. Dalloway reflects

the social problems of post-WWI British society, including distorted values, widespread anxiety among the public, and the predicament of women's survival.

Scholars have conducted extensive research on Mrs. Dalloway. Given the uniqueness of its stream-of-consciousness writing style, Zhang Rui [1] explored the translation of its defamiliarized language from the perspective of New Criticism. Some scholars have focused on details within the work, interpreting it through images like church bells and nature. Additionally, studies have been conducted on other themes presented in the novel, including illness narratives, elitism, and queer culture. As a pioneer of 20th-century feminism, Virginia Woolf's feminist narratives in her works have also garnered significant attention: Guo Li [2] studied the translations of Mrs. Dalloway from the perspective of feminist translation theory, while Wang Nan and Luo Yanmei [3] analyzed the women's survival predicament reflected in the work from a social-psychological perspective. On the other hand, focusing on the narrative thread of "a day's journey through London" in Mrs. Dalloway, Wang Junping [4] carried out a series of spatial interpretations of the novel. Despite the relative richness of existing research on Mrs. Dalloway, most scholars have focused on in-depth analysis of a single theme, neglecting the dual relationship between "urban travel" and "self-identity" in the work. In fact, Clarissa's character in Mrs. Dalloway reflects on her entire life during her one-day journey through London and completes a transformation of self-identity—undoubtedly, the novel explicitly presents a connection between urban travel and self-identity.

Therefore, this paper takes Henri Lefebvre's "social space" theory as its core to analyze the issues of identity and social contradictions intertwined with urban travel in Mrs. Dalloway. Lefebvre argues that "(social) space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity [5]." This theory emphasizes that social space is not merely a physical entity but also a manifestation of social relations. Starting from the experiences of a one-day journey through London, this study will examine the social space in Mrs. Dalloway to analyze three aspects: the accompanying relationship between spatial flow and identity exploration, the women's predicament reflected in social space, and the multiple possibilities brought about by urban travel. In doing so, it reveals the important role of urban travel in the process of self-identity and illustrates that urban travel serves as a crucial medium for understanding both oneself and society. This paper is committed to analyzing the spatial narrative and character development in Mrs. Dalloway, thereby exploring how urban travel promotes identity exploration and self-identity formation.

2. Navigating the city: London's streetscapes and the flow of identity consciousness

Henri Lefebvre, the French urban sociologist, pointed out that "(social) space is a (social) product [5]." He argued that space is constantly being produced, reproduced, and transformed, and is closely associated with the process of social development. Urban space is not merely a physical container for urban roads, networks, streetscapes, and other elements; instead, every entity within urban space carries significance in terms of social production. As a representative stream-of-consciousness work, Mrs. Dalloway revolves around the characters' observations and experiences in London, expanding into their inner monologues and emotional resonance with one another. Therefore, when studying the London streetscapes or the private spaces within the characters' residences depicted in the novel, we should conduct in-depth analysis and pay attention to the identity status of characters like Clarissa in different social spaces, as well as the process of identity formation during their spatial journeys.

2.1. Descriptions of street-wandering scenes and psychological activities

The narrative of Mrs. Dalloway exhibits fluidity in multiple dimensions. First, as the characters travel through the city, their footsteps, line of sight, and sense of hearing make London's streetscapes flow. The novel presents both macro wandering routes—such as traversing Victoria Street and Bond Street—and detailed descriptions of micro urban locations, like the windows of glove shops and flower shops, thus providing a comprehensive and objective portrayal of London's physical space. Second, the entire work employs stream-of-consciousness writing, ensuring that the flow of physical space is always intertwined with the psychological spaces of different characters and their varied memories. Any street scene can become a trigger for the characters' memories and reflections: for instance, when Clarissa sees gloves in a shop window, her thoughts drift to memories of her daughter's preferences— "Gloves and shoes; she had a passion for gloves; but her own daughter, her Elizabeth, cared not a straw for either of them [6]."—and then immediately shift to her dissatisfaction with the same-sex relationship between Elizabeth and her governess, Miss Kilman. This constant flow of consciousness drives the narrative and gradually unfolds the characters' experiences, a hallmark of stream-of-consciousness literature. Additionally, the psychological descriptions of characters in different scenarios or stages reveal the fluidity of their self-identity consciousness; different memory nodes and psychological feelings continuously bring the characters new self-understanding and emotional resonance.

Lefebvre's tripartite spatial theory constructs an analytical framework encompassing three interrelated dimensions: Spatial practice, Representations of space and Representational spaces [5]. Among these, spatial practice refers to the tangible, perceptible physical space; representations of space (or "conceived space") refers to the space imagined and planned by those in power; and representational spaces refers to individuals' personal feelings toward space, an independent spiritual realm. Notably, these three dimensions do not exist in isolation but are interdependent, coexisting within every space. In Mrs. Dalloway, Clarissa's feelings toward the urban space she inhabits are characterized by loneliness and alienation.

For having lived in Westminster -- how many years now? Over twenty,-- one feels even in the midst of the traffic, or walking at night, Clarissa was positive, a particular hush, or solemnity; an indescribable pause; a suspense(but that might be her heart, affected, they said, by influenza) before Big Ben strikes [6].

On her way to the flower shop, the chimes of Big Ben draw Clarissa's attention to her psychological experience of the space in the present moment. As a large-scale space filled with numerous streetscapes and a dense population, London constantly provides abundant spatial practice for urban wanderers like Clarissa. Naturally, anyone living in this vast space of London also possesses a corresponding representational space. By depicting Clarissa's psychological activities, Mrs. Dalloway presents Clarissa's spiritual space as a traveler—a sense of estrangement, anxiety, and loneliness. This feeling can be traced back to the social context of the time, reflecting the widespread contradictions among the British people in the post-WWI era. It is evident that physical space, social space, and spiritual space always coexist, jointly forming a complete space. As long as space exists, individuals within it will have personal feelings toward that space; these feelings guide people in understanding social relations and judging their own self-worth, enabling them to position themselves within social space and complete the process of self-identity.

2.2. A sense of time and self-memory in spatial transitions

David Harvey analyzed the interdependence of space and time from four perspectives, emphasizing that the social framework composed of time and space is rooted in the process of social reproduction [7]. Time and space are interdependent and coexistent, forming the vertical and horizontal dimensions of social space respectively.

In the short term, spatial transitions are often accompanied by the passage of time. As the characters observe London's streetscapes, their perspective shifts to different locations while they also experience time. The novel repeatedly materializes the flow of time through the chimes of Big Ben and the bells of St. Margaret's Church. Each mention of the bells is accompanied by a description of the characters' current psychological state. After a bitter conversation with Clarissa, Peter Walsh takes to the streets just as the bells ring; he perceives the chimes as "the sudden loudness of the final stroke tolled for death that surprised in the midst of life [6]" His life experiences shape his perception of time—his pain at Clarissa's changes makes his experience of time equally painful and sorrowful. This transference echoes the interdependence of the three dimensions in Lefebvre's tripartite spatial theory: both time and space simultaneously possess physical forms, inherent structures, and personal meanings.

In the long term, self-memory endures over time, and memories can construct a vertical timeline; at the same time, each memory node can be expanded to form a horizontal space. Time often drives the development and transformation of space, making social space not a static plane but a carrier that reflects social relations at specific times. Only when individuals perceive both time and space can they form a comprehensive understanding of society and themselves, thereby constructing their personal self-identity. In Clarissa's memories, Bourton (the country house where she spent her youth) represents a specific time and space of her adolescence. When this memory is evoked, Clarissa feels both regret and nostalgia for the time span from her girlhood to old age, as well as longing for the free space she once enjoyed. However, returning to the present moment in London, the experience of old age brought by the passage of time and the spatial constraints of being an "the other" in marriage give Clarissa new feelings. The vertical dimension of time and the horizontal dimension of space jointly form a complete life experience, driving Clarissa's self-identity and self-construction.

2.3. Urban travel as the starting point of identity exploration

The anthropologist Victor Turner proposed a three-stage model of ritual process—separation, liminality, and incorporation—in his research on rituals. If we view urban travel as a "ritual journey", the separation stage represents the traveler's departure from daily life and detachment from their usual identity; the liminal stage occurs when the traveler is in a new space, where they reexamine their identity positioning in the current space, explore their identity, and construct a new self-identity—a process in which the new identity evolves from the unknown to the vague, and finally to the clear; the incorporation stage marks the conclusion of the "ritual", where after the journey, the individual integrates the new feelings and identity formed during the trip with their existing identity exploration, resulting in a brand-new self-identity.

The "liminal stage" is the core of identity reconstruction. During urban travel, travelers temporarily cast off the constraints of their daily identities and gain the freedom to explore their identity. As a middle-aged noblewoman in high society, Clarissa has been confined to the attic since marrying Richard, moving between upper-class dinners and parties. On the surface, she is a wealthy lady with no material worries, but deep down, her spiritual world is desolate. She feels unwilling,

which gives rise to a series of anxieties—anxiety that only becomes apparent during her urban travels. What she sees in shop windows triggers memories of her past life experiences, prompts her to reflect on her current identity, and inspires diverse visions of her self-identity:

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; with a country house; very dignified, very sincere [6].

“Upper-class noblewoman” is Clarissa’s usual identity label. Under this label, she is forced to hide her yearning for freedom and abandon her pursuit of spiritual resonance. In her youth, she gave up an alternative path of identity—marrying Peter to pursue spiritual connection instead of material comfort. As a result, over time, she could only conform to the lifestyle required by her chosen identity. However, during her urban travels, she can temporarily “separate” from her original identity and have the opportunity to observe the space around her and reflect from a new identity perspective. Urban travel provides travelers with an opportunity to explore their identity, allowing them to gradually understand themselves and form a complete self-identity.

3. Women’s identity in movement: spatial constraints and inner struggles

Through his analysis of “heterotopian” spaces, Michel Foucault argued that “space is an indispensable factor in the operation of all micro-powers. Space is the foundation of social practice and also the foundation of power practice [8].” He pointed out that space is a site of power struggle and a manifestation of dominant relationships. Women’s living spaces are often limited, and women frequently exist as “the other” in terms of gender. As depicted in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa’s living space is mostly confined to the attic. Even when she ventures out into London, her route is limited to traveling directly from home to her destination and then immediately returning—her living space remains restricted. The experiences she encounters during her journey and the memories of her life make her deeply dissatisfied with this limited space, yet she cannot break free from it for the time being, triggering inner struggle and pain.

3.1. The multiple identities of wife and socialite

The dramaturgical theory proposed by sociologist Erving Goffman views society as a grand stage, where everyone acts as a performer. Individuals must adjust their words, deeds, and image according to the “stage setting” and “audience expectations” to create an “impression” that meets the role’s requirements—in other words, individuals assume different identities in different situations. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa is an elegant noblewoman in upper-class social circles, frequently hosting or attending dinners and moving between upper-class social events. On the surface, her life is enjoyable and luxurious. However, subtle details reveal that this identity is essentially one of helplessness and constraint: for example, her husband Richard lets her sleep in a small attic room on the pretext of not disturbing her rest, while ignoring her need for reading and the cramped narrowness of the room; similarly, when Lady Bruton invites only her husband Richard to lunch without including her, Clarissa feels resentful, yet she cannot express or vent this resentment through independent thinking. On the contrary, when she sees Lady Bruton at a dinner party, she still has to exchange pleasantries with her—as the novel states, “Clarissa must speak to Lady Bruton [6].” Even when there is no real desire for communication between the two, such interaction is still an indispensable formality.

More often than not, Clarissa’s behavior is not driven by her own feelings but by her identity as Richard’s wife. For instance, the essential purpose of the dinners she hosts is to maintain power

relations between men; she herself remains excluded from men's social space. This is evident at the evening party: the arrival of the Prime Minister fills Clarissa with immense pride— "And now Clarissa escorted her Prime Minister down the room, prancing, sparkling, with the stateliness of her grey hair [6]." On the surface, she seems to be integrated into this social network; in reality, however, the space where the Prime Minister enters the room and converses with others excludes her.

In terms of identity, Clarissa is a socialite, a wife, and a mother—but these identities force her to abandon her spiritual pursuits and become a mere spiritual accessory, which runs counter to her inner aspirations. This gives rise to a contradiction between her real situation and her spiritual world; the pain caused by this contradiction finds temporary relief during her urban travels, and during her identity exploration, she attempts new possibilities to forge a new self-identity.

3.2. The daughter's independent urban movement as a contrast to the mother

In addition to Clarissa's urban journey to buy flowers, the novel also focuses on the urban travel route of another woman: Clarissa's daughter, Elizabeth. Although both women wander through London, as representatives of two generations, their urban travel experiences also reflect the differences between women of the new era and those of the old era.

An examination of Clarissa's travel route reveals that after leaving home, she heads straight to her destination and immediately returns after buying the flowers. Her urban wandering is brief, limited, and purpose-driven. Even though she passes through multiple locations such as St. James's Park, Bond Street, and Brook Street, her wandering remains confined to a small area and never breaks free from the social space that society deems "appropriate" for women. Thus, although Clarissa has the germination of feminist consciousness, her lifestyle still adheres to the needs of women as "the other" and remains restricted.

In contrast, Elizabeth's urban wandering is free and aimless. As a woman of the new era, she refuses to confine herself to the glitz and glamour of upper-class social gatherings, nor does she want to accept society's restrictions on women. During the era in which the characters live, social space is not fully open to women; for the most part, men— as the subjects of power—enjoy the freedom to experience the complete social space outside the home, while women are confined to the private space of the home or a small area around it. Elizabeth's urban wandering route breaks free from the traditional restrictions on women's access to space: she passes through Victoria Street, the Embankment, Fleet Street, and Westminster. During her journey, she feels a strong desire "to go a little further [6]"; this large-scale urban wandering symbolizes her awakening feminist consciousness and her refusal to be trapped in the home as an accessory.

The differing degrees of awakening between Clarissa and Elizabeth are influenced by the social spaces of their respective eras. Clarissa's awakening begins in her middle and old age—while she has the germination of feminist consciousness and longs to establish a new self-identity, she is trapped by her existing identity as an upper-class socialite, making it difficult for her to completely break free from the restrictions imposed on women in the old era and the deprivation of their social space. In contrast, when Elizabeth explores her identity, her governess Miss Kilman tells her, "And every profession is open to the women of your generation [6]"—a line that reflects the gradual opening up of social space to women. Women of the new era can put themselves on a higher status during their self-identity.

3.3. The restrictions of marital and domestic spaces on women's identities

Clarissa, as a woman, faced multiple dilemmas in identity recognition, mainly stemming from the constraints imposed by social spaces on women. Doreen Massey argued that: “One typical manifestation of how space and identity collaborate to control women lies in the cultural divide between public and private spaces. Confining women within the domestic sphere is not only a specific form of spatial control but also a social control over their identities [9].” In European society at that time, public spaces were often only accessible to men, while women were confined to private spaces such as marital and domestic spaces.

Within the marital space, Clarissa existed as “the other”—treated as the property of her husband Richard. Their relationship was unequal, and they had access to different social spaces. As a man, Richard could freely discuss politics and enjoy full access to social spaces and rights. In contrast, Clarissa was confined to the domestic space, where her individuality and spiritual aspirations were suppressed, reducing her to a mere “ornament” in social settings. This stands in stark contrast to her youth, when she and her friend Sally would “There they sat, hour after hour, talking in her bedroom at the top of the house, talking about life, how they were to reform the world. They meant to found a society to abolish private property, and actually had a letter written [6].” This memory reveals that Clarissa’s inherent yearning for a broader social space was suppressed, even extinguished.

Within the domestic space, Clarissa longed to find emotional sustenance in her daughter Elizabeth. She referred to her daughter as “my Elizabeth [6]” rather than simply “Elizabeth”—a form of address that reflected her deep-seated desire to build an intimate bond with Elizabeth. However, reality fell short of her expectations. On one hand, as a woman of the new era, Elizabeth freely stepped out of the confined spaces traditionally imposed on women. Compared to Clarissa, who was trapped like a bird in a cage, a subtle rift had emerged between them. On the other hand, subtle details in the work reveal that Elizabeth’s living habits and values were shifting toward the patriarchal tradition. This left Clarissa feeling isolated once again within the domestic space.

4. The end as a new beginning: transcending spatial boundaries in identity and visions of the future

Clarissa’s journey of identity exploration began with her urban travels, but it did not end when she returned home. These travels opened a breakthrough for her to expand her living space and revealed new possibilities for exploring her own sense of self. During her journey, she experienced the city’s streetscapes, observed people from all walks of life, and forged connections with the city’s landscapes and its inhabitants. The restrictions she had once faced as a woman confined to the domestic space gradually crumbled, prompting her to reflect on her identity. When she returned home with these thoughts, she further reflected on her past through interactions with figures like Peter Walsh, and contemplated the present and future through conversations with others at her party.

4.1. Travel as more than geographical movement: a breakthrough of identity boundaries

“There exists a politics of space because space itself is political. Space is often an integral part of political power, infused with politics, ideology, contradictions, and struggles [10].” The spaces available to women were often limited. In the past, society took it for granted that women belonged to the domestic sphere, while men dominated the vast social spaces beyond the home. Men could discuss politics and engage in social networking, which led to a widespread tilt of social resources

toward men. Women, by contrast, were marginalized in society, forced to depend on male figures and unable to explore their identities or develop a sense of self.

After marrying Richard, Clarissa became exactly this kind of traditional woman: dependent on her husband, often confined to the domestic space, and restricted by family relationships and narrow living boundaries. What set her apart, however, was the lingering yearning for freedom she had cherished since her girlhood. This desire to explore the outside world had long been suppressed by the constraints of domestic life, but it was rekindled when she took to the streets of London. Travel, through the constant shifting of spaces, brings travelers a steady stream of new experiences. Beyond merely perceiving landscapes, travelers gain insights into the social context, political realities, and other implications embedded in their journeys. Mrs. Dalloway depicts the streets of London through the traveler's perspective, presenting the daily lives of Londoners. In the past, such experiences of life and society were inaccessible to women like Clarissa. But when she walked the streets alone, she was able to cast off the shackles of her former identities. In those moments, she was no longer a wife or a mother, no longer a tool to serve others or maintain her husband's dignity—she was free to have her own feelings and thoughts. Clarissa witnessed how people guessed the identity of the occupant in a car after it had a flat tire, and how they fanatically pursued this unknown “upper-class identity.” As the hostess of upper-class parties, Clarissa's daily life was also filled with such adulation. Yet in essence, people were not admiring her; they were admiring the power and status symbolized by her husband Richard. In other words, she often lived as “Mrs. Dalloway” rather than “Clarissa”—just as people began to fanatically adore the car's occupant without knowing who they were, because their admiration was directed not at a specific individual, but at a symbol of power. After the car passed by, Clarissa “She stiffened a little; so she would stand at the top of her stairs [6].” This line implies that she vaguely realized she was a symbol used to maintain social decorum. This was the first step in her journey of self-discovery—only with this realization could doubt arise, and only then could she embark on the full process of identity exploration and self-recognition. Travel is not only an expansion of one's identity, but also an expansion of one's horizons and a catalyst for identity recognition.

4.2. Urban travel in London: awakening possibilities for the self and visions of the future

In *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, Jean-Paul Sartre put forward the concept of “existence precedes essence.” He argued that for a thing, it must first exist before it acquires its essence [11]. Humans first “exist” in this world, and then gradually shape their own “essence.” From this perspective, travel provides an excellent opportunity for such “shaping.” During travel, travelers break free from the constraints of their usual environments, allowing them to explore diverse possibilities for self-development and envision the future with greater freedom.

In Mrs. Dalloway, Clarissa's daughter Elizabeth embodies the awakening of a new generation of women. She rejects the life of an upper-class social symbol that her mother leads, and refuses to be constrained by Miss Kilman's religious beliefs. However, her identity as “Miss Richard” subjects her to unavoidable restrictions: she must always maintain an elegant demeanor and attend the dinners hosted by her mother. To escape these constraints, she chooses to leave the domestic space, step into the urban space, and embark on a solo urban wander. “And Elizabeth waited in Victoria Street for an omnibus. It was so nice to be out of doors. She thought perhaps she need not do home just yet. It was so nice to be out in the air [6].” At this moment, Elizabeth was in an open and free space—one that allowed her to shed the shackles of her identity as “Miss Richard” and freely explore her own identity. As she experienced the diverse street scenes of the city, her longing for the future and the infinite possibilities it held was awakened. On the bus, her thoughts darted about, as

she began to envision her future career. When the bus passed Somerset House, she thought to herself, “might be a farmer [6]” ; as it passed other places, she also imagined, “She would become a doctor, a farmer, possibly go into Parliament, if she found necessary, all because of the Strand [6].” Urban travel not only broadens travelers’ horizons and exposes them to more possibilities in society, but also provides them with a space to break away from their daily environments, free from the constraints of established settings, to explore their sense of identity.

4.3. Identity recognition remains fluid after travel, demonstrating openness and diversity

Urban travel inspires new thoughts and visions in travelers, and these visions of identity recognition do not end with the conclusion of the journey. On the contrary, travelers can bring these new perspectives back to their daily spaces and re-examine their existing sense of identity. Clarissa, having witnessed people’s relentless speculation and blind admiration for the car occupant’s identity, became aware of her own role as a “social symbol,” similar to that luxury car. When she returned home after her trip, she learned that Lady Bruton had invited her husband Richard to a luncheon alone, without extending an invitation to her. This further deepened her reflection on her own identity and value.

For the shock of Lady Bruton asking Richard to lunch without her made the moment in which she had stood shiver, as a plant on the river-bed feels the shock of a passing oar and shivers: so she shocked: so she shivered [6].

The visit from her former lover Peter Walsh brought her thoughts back to her unruly and free-spirited days in Bourton. In the present, however, she existed as an upper-class social symbol and an appendage to her husband—her personal aspirations and spiritual needs ignored and suppressed. The experiences from her travels echoed in her daily space, prompting Clarissa to question her current life. She began to reflect on the oppression of the space she inhabited and the lack of spiritual connection in her life. She started to see herself as an independent individual, tried to explore ways to meet her own needs, and began to think from her own perspective.

She attempted to form connections with others: she stood by the window, observing the movements of an elderly woman across the way. The elderly woman lived alone, isolated from the hustle and bustle of the party. Although Clarissa was at the center of the party, she felt emotionally distant from the excitement around her—thus, a bond of loneliness formed between her and the elderly woman. When she learned of Septimus’s suicide at the party, she also felt an emotional resonance with him. “If it were now to die, 'twere now to be most happy [6].” The experiences and choices of the elderly woman and Septimus were externalizations of Clarissa’s inner world; her emotional resonance with them reflected her ongoing struggle with identity recognition and her current circumstances. Mrs. Dalloway only depicts a single day centered on the party, focusing on the initial awakening of Clarissa—a woman of the upper class who was dependent on her husband. It is evident that urban travel served as a catalyst, opening a breakthrough for Clarissa’s identity exploration. In the living spaces of her future, it is believed that she will continue to pursue an open and diverse exploration of her identity, gradually moving toward complete self-identity.

5. Conclusion

This paper focuses on the continuous fluidity of geographical space, psychological space, and time during urban travel, exploring the concomitant relationship between spatial transformation and psychological experiences. It analyzes the struggles faced by Clarissa in her various roles—such as an upper-class lady, a wife, and a mother—and examines the living conditions of women as reflected

through urban travel. By tracing the psychological states of characters during and after urban travel, this paper explores the impact of urban travel on an individual's identity construction. First, the analysis reveals that the simultaneous fluidity of physical space and psychological space during urban travel facilitates an individual's exploration of identity. Second, the study identifies that women assume different identities across distinct spaces, dissects the contradictions and dilemmas inherent in these diverse female identities, and explores the deeper awakening and future visions of the new generation of women compared to the previous generation. Finally, through in-depth analysis, it is argued that urban travel serves as a breakthrough point for identity construction: it provides travelers with new directions for identity exploration and inspires visions of new possibilities, while also enabling a sustained and open-ended exploration of identity even after the travel concludes. By applying spatial theory to analyze the connection between urban travel and self-identity construction in Mrs. Dalloway, this paper offers new evidence for academic research on the significance of urban travel and enriches studies on the literary representation of urban travel. Furthermore, by linking the process of spatial transformation with that of identity construction and investigating their interrelationship, this study provides a fresh perspective for the academic community.

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