

**Portrayal of the 20th Century Woman as seen through Edith and Clarissa in Anita
Brookner's *Hotel du Lac* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway***

By

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requirements for the degree of
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my/our own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I/We have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Ethics Statement

Research ethics were taken into account and upheld throughout the entire study. In the methodology section, those are covered in greater detail.

Abstract

The late 19th and early 20th centuries in western society saw a fascinating change in the field of arts. Poets and authors shifted the attention to the newly emerging industrial world. This work will be an in-depth study of the effect of the choices made by the protagonists Clarissa Dalloway and Edith Hope in the novels *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Hotel du Lac* respectively. These two characters might seem to be similar with similar backgrounds, are close in age, and also belong to similar classes in society. However, the choices they had made in the past caught up with them. Both these women consider the circumstances of their condition in society and try to understand what could have happened if they had made different choices. The stream-of-consciousness narrative helps portray the isolation and despair. This study will take guidance from Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, in the discussion regarding women facing the pressures of social expectations and having to behave in a specific manner. The two novels portray the struggles the protagonists face to create a place for themselves in their domestic and social spheres and 'be a woman.' This study is divided into four chapters, which will explain how the two authors portray similar concepts in completely different manners.

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Table of Contents

Declaration.....	ii
Approval.....	iii
Ethics Statement.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Acknowledgement.....	vi
Table of Contents.....	vii
Chapter One Introduction.....	1
Chapter Two Clarissa Dalloway’s Choices.....	6
Chapter Three Edith Hope’s Despair.....	17
Chapter Four Conclusion.....	28
References.....	33

Chapter One

Introduction

“For I am not to be allowed my lapse as if I were an artless girl, she thought; and why should I be? I am a serious woman.” (Brookner 2) These are the thoughts with which Anita Brookner cautiously chooses to introduce the protagonist to the readers in her acclaimed novel *Hotel du Lac*. The protagonist Edith Hope is, at this point in the novel, still a mystery to the readers. The narrative immediately clarifies to the readers that this character is no ordinary protagonist, there are several layers of thought behind her arrival at the hotel. Yet, these cautious words of the protagonist earnestly raise the curiosity of the readers. The very beginning of the novel is a mystery to the readers. Why is the protagonist in such a lonely place? Why is she all alone? Why was this character completely abandoned by friends and family? The readers are yet to find out the answers to these questions. To the readers, it appears as though their revered protagonist has perhaps committed some form of a horrific crime. This is the reason the introduction of the protagonist in the novel *Hotel du Lac* is intriguing. The trend of following the antagonist or the broken hero might be somewhat common in recent times, but most literary works of the past generalised in portraying a prim and proper protagonist the readers could idealize. The late 19th and early 20th century literary, media, and entertainment fields saw radical changes and were gradually shifting away from the ‘grand narratives’ scheme of the modernist era writers. The effect of the industrial world and the drastic emergence of urbanisation created an unforgettable impact on the minds of the people of the time. Departing from the traditional forms of art, artists opted to follow a much more standard work pattern which was different from the obsolete and outdated structure. Departing even further than this, the postmodern writers opposed the grand narrative structures of the previous era, opting instead to characterise self-referential narration, which brings into focus the

identity of the characters portrayed in the work. For instance, in the novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, the city is a major part of the plot. It is almost as important as any of the characters within the story. The readers follow along as the charming Clarissa Dalloway roam in the streets of the city, taking in everything that is happening around her. Woolf details the protagonist's feelings about the city in which she lives and is freely walking around in a carefree manner. In the novel, Mrs. Dalloway's thoughts are expressed as, "For having lived in Westminster—how many years now? over twenty,—one feels even in the midst of the traffic, or waking 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." (Woolf 3) The city is a major part of her life and has of course played some role in the way she is. In literature, the changes in the narrative structure and the portrayal of different characters were enormous during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The narrative followed by the authors in creating the captivating world of the protagonists is detailed and tends to show the inner machinations of what is going through the mind of the characters. Unlike the prior eras, the focus is given more on the thoughts and intrigues of the characters, rather than the incidents happening around them. It is the reaction of the different characters within the story which the readers follow along as events unfold. The readers can connect with the characters and try to understand the reasons behind their different choices. In the two novels *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Hotel du Lac*, the readers learn about the choices the protagonists Clarissa Dalloway and Edith Hope made, and how these choices shaped their lives and brought them to the situation they are in because of those decisions. Both of these novels are narrated by the protagonists. The readers follow through as the protagonists make keen observations of their surroundings and the events which are taking place around them. The role of both of these protagonists, Clarissa Dalloway and Edith Hope, is to guide the readers through their journey,

following the twists and turns of everything that is happening and also realising the reasons behind why they are in the current situation of the novel. The protagonists of both of these novels ponder about why they are in the current position of their lives. These two prominent female characters take the readers on a memorable journey and readers follow along with their experiences and learn about the consequences of the choices they made, either willfully, or were being forced into. Both of these novels include fascinating secondary characters alongside the protagonist, who maintain their interesting incidents, and events that ensured a change in their lives as well. The experiences of all these characters are truly eye-opening for the readers and arouse curiosity as readers follow along the exceptional journeys of the individual characters. This study will be an in-depth look into the effect of the choices made at different points in life by the protagonists Clarissa Dalloway and Edith Hope in the novels *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Hotel du Lac* respectively. This study will be looking into how the lives of the protagonists Clarissa Dalloway and Edith Hope in the novels *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Hotel du Lac* changed because of their circumstances in society. Due to certain events in their past, they are living a life completely different from what they would have wanted to lead. Alongside the protagonists, several other characters within the novels face similar burdens due to events from their past and the choices they were required to make in life. Delving into details relating to these characters will also help to understand the reasons behind why they are in their current position in society.

Looking back, the role of women in society has always had an interesting outlook. For instance, one major incident revolves around one of the most prominent composers of the Classical Period, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Mozart was one of the most active musicians during his lifetime, and despite his short life, he created more than 800 works, of almost every genre of music. His impact in the field of composing can hardly be ignored, and his music is actively used in the

media even today. It turns out, that his elder sister, Maria Anna Mozart was even more talented than him, and a prodigy. Yet, despite her talent, she ended up married and remains to this day, relatively unknown. Throughout history, we might find several authors writing under male pseudonyms, to get noticed and to ensure the publication of their work. It seems somewhat disappointing, yet very few of these female writers had the alternate option. This seems a bit reminiscent of Virginia Woolf's intricate discussion about an imaginary scenario where Shakespeare had a sister in "A Room of One's Own". In the essay, which is based on two lectures by Virginia Woolf, the author discusses the lives of women in the past. Woolf states, "Here am I asking why women did not write poetry in the Elizabethan age, and I am not sure how they were educated; whether they were taught to write; whether they had sitting rooms to themselves; how many women had children before they were twenty-one; what, in short, they did from eight in the morning till eight at night." (Woolf 35) Woolf tries to imagine a scenario where a woman existed at that time with similar creative gifts, what would happen to someone like her? In this imagined scenario, Shakespeare's sister, 'Judith', probably would not be exposed to proper education and training. She would have been married off at quite a young age, and rather than expressing her creative gifts, she would probably have to focus on her family duties. The feminist theory helps readers understand what kind of impact these certain selected roles for women in society have in their lives.

Simone de Beauvoir eloquently discusses these roles of women in society, and how people react when someone fails to follow them. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir tries to answer the question, 'what is a woman?' Feminist theory informs the readers how the idea of gender in society is constructed and it is expected that women will only fit into certain set images previously formed in the minds of the people. The selected novels, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Hotel du Lac* help portray this

very idea of constructed gender. The way a woman is specifically expected to behave and the repercussions of not doing so are beautifully juxtaposed with the behaviours of the protagonists, and this will be discussed carefully in this study. Beauvoir's discussion on equal rights for women brings forth the concept and the consequences of the emancipated woman. A result of the industrial revolution was the entrance of women into the industrial field, becoming free of the monetary reliance upon their male counterparts. Thus, rather than the role of some kind of parasite, women now had an active role within society. The system which was based on their dependence on their male counterparts was crumbling. What kind of issues then did women have to face because of this sudden change? How did others in society, the friends and family of these emancipated women behave around them? The difficulties and differences in balancing professional interests and personal life are established by contemplating the journey of the two protagonists in the selected novels. The discrepancy in the attitude of the peers and friends towards Edith and Mrs. Dalloway, because of their behaviour is very much visible through the narrations of the two protagonists. It would seem that if one didn't behave in an expected manner, they would be neglected by everyone around them, even those who are close to them. Thus they have to be cautious about every choice or decision they make, otherwise be prepared to face the consequences. This is what we see the characters are pondering as the events of the two novels unfold gradually. Edith Hope is an example of someone who is working and creating something, making her way in society on her terms. She is not, however, denouncing the men in her life or their importance in society. The emancipated woman does not belittle their male counterparts, nor are they declared to be inferior. It is the independent coexistence of men and women in society, mutually recognising the importance of the other in life.

Chapter Two

Clarissa Dalloway's Choices

The name Virginia Woolf has become almost synonymous with modernism in literature. Along with a few pioneer writers such as James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Ezra Pound, and Joseph Conrad, the late 19th and early 20th century saw an interesting shift in the style of literary works. It is a credit to these remarkable authors that they had successfully prepared noteworthy literary works, the impact of which can be felt even today. Writers essentially helped create and perfect the new style and genre of writing which was emerging during that time. The artists and writers experimented with new styles of drawing and written works. The injunction to 'Make it New' by Ezra Pound in 1934 was essentially the benchmark of this movement's approach. Some intriguing characteristics of modernist literature include – stream-of-consciousness narrative, isolation, individualism, and absurdity of society. Using symbolism in different aspects, modernist literature usually tends to portray the harms of capitalism and the advancement of the use of technology in day-to-day life. Since these stories are often about the confusion and seclusion of the characters who are trying to identify themselves, the readers find it easier to understand the difficulties of the protagonist and to identify with the internal struggles the characters are facing.

Author Virginia Woolf is considered to be one of the most important authors of the 20th century and she is a pioneer in the use of stream of consciousness. Some of her most notable works include *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando*, *A Room of One's Own*, and *The Waves*. These literary works include intriguing characters and readers follow along with the complex thoughts of the characters as they process the events happening around them. In "Socialization in *Mrs. Dalloway*", Margaret Blanchard talks about Virginia Woolf's role as a social critic during her time. She states, "Only recently has she been hailed as a prophetess who brought forth insights about

women's liberation before the movement created an audience that could recognize them.” (Blanchard 287) Woolf's impact on female literary works cannot be ignored. The novel *Mrs. Dalloway* was published in 1925 and a looming theme throughout the novel is the scenario of England after the First World War. The anxiety of the people due to the war and the situation of society after the war is very much a topic of discussion in this novel. An intriguing perspective of the novel is that the story details the events which take place only in a single day. Even though the story gives the account of only a single day in the life of the protagonist, there is no shortage of interesting events that occur during the day or the number of intriguing characters introduced as the story progresses. The story progresses, not through the occurrence of multiple events, but rather through the interactions and communication between multiple characters. In “*Mrs. Dalloway: Portrait of the Artist as a Middle-Aged Woman*”, Jacob Littleton brings attention to this situation stating, “Woolf criticizes conceptions of character bound by the exterior forms of life: the whole complex (job, family, assets) that fixes every person firmly in the world of business and power relationships.” (Littleton 36) The characters presented in the story, especially the females seem unique and strong-minded in retrospect. In “*Misreading Mrs. Dalloway*”, Vereen M. Bell states, “For example Daniel Mendelsohn's assertion in the *New York Review of Books* that in *Mrs. Dalloway* ‘it is the men surrounding the women who keep falling apart’ and that it is ‘the women who are strong, who choose life, who survive.’ ” (Vereen 93) As Clarissa walks around post-war London, she meets several characters along the way, each with their unique backstories and underlying complications, readers follow along with the protagonist to view how the world is surviving and celebrating the end of the war. The vitality of the city which Clarissa loves is expressed in the novel, “Arlington Street and Piccadilly seemed to chafe the very air in the Park and lift its leaves hotly, brilliantly, on waves of that divine vitality which Clarissa loved. To dance,

to ride, she had adored all that.” (Woolf 5) Clarissa’s love for her life in the city is evident in the narration of the novel. An interesting perspective maintained in the story is the jump in the narration forwards and backward in time, trying to construct an elaborate image of what life was like for the protagonist Clarissa Dalloway, before and after the war, and how her life gradually changed during this time. Jean M. Wyatt talks about the major theme presented in the novel. In “Mrs. Dalloway: Literary Allusion as Structural Metaphor”, she states, “By pervading present events with echoes of the entire span of western culture, preliterate as well as literary, allusion and mythopoeic image reinforce the novel’s underlying theme: continuity between past and present.” (Wyatt 440) The readers learn the effect the war had on different individuals, and how life had changed for everyone. The narration of the story helps to highlight important issues, especially in the case of Clarissa Dalloway, the importance of choices. As the readers go through the story and learn about the current environment of which Clarissa is a part, readers cannot help but wonder back to what could have been if Clarissa decided to make different choices in her life. Clarissa does not think of herself as someone exceptional. Her thought about herself is expressed as, “Not that she thought herself clever, or much out of the ordinary. How she had gotten through life on the few twigs of knowledge Fräulein Daniels gave them she could not think. She knew nothing; no language, no history; she scarcely read a book now, except memoirs in bed.” (Woolf 6) The thoughts of other characters about Clarissa presented in the novel are also interesting. In “Love and Conversion in *Mrs. Dalloway*”, Blanche H. Gelfant says, “The special way that each character has of seeing Mrs. Dalloway reflects an incompatibility in points of view. While one character can see her significance, another sees her triviality; while one sees her generosity, another sees her selfishness;” (Gelfant 229) Each character reacts differently due to the actions taken by the protagonist. Some of her choices create major turning points in her life, and even she is left

wondering what her life could have been like if she did not follow the current path, she had chosen for herself. This is evident when readers follow along as Clarissa second-guesses her choice of getting married to Richard Dalloway, instead of another man she loved – Peter Walsh. One of the reasons she chose to marry Richard is stated in the narrative, “For in marriage a little license, a little independence there must be between people living together day in day out in the same house; which Richard gave her, and she him.” (Woolf 6) This was vastly different from the way her relationship was with Peter. In some instances, he seemed to be the complete opposite of Richard. As Clarissa states, “But with Peter, everything had to be shared; everything was gone into. And it was intolerable, and when it came to that scene in the little garden by the fountain, she had to break with him or they would have been destroyed, both of them ruined, she was convinced.” (Woolf 6) It might have been a concern for the eventual change in their relationship which might have made Clarissa choose to be with Richard instead. Between the two of them, Richard seemed to be the more reliable choice, someone who could guarantee a stable life. However, this does not mean her feelings for Peter had disappeared. In the novel, through her interactions with Peter, it is quite clear that she still thinks of him from time to time. Though it is readily pointed out that Clarissa does not regret her choice, she does wonder what her life might have been like. In “Love and Conversion in *Mrs. Dalloway*”, Blanche H. Gelfant discusses the theme of love in the novel, stating, “In *Mrs. Dalloway*, time and personality are related to a more specific issue, the conflict between love and conversion.” (Gelfant 229) Clarissa’s behaviour when Peter comes to visit her at the house before the party is quite intriguing. When Peter arrives at her door, Clarissa cannot help herself. Her behaviour was like that of a youthful schoolgirl, who was just about to meet her crush. Clarissa’s reaction to the events is, “Now the door opened, and in came—for a single second she could not remember what he was called! so surprised she was to see him, so glad, so shy, so utterly taken

aback to have Peter Walsh come to her unexpectedly in the morning!” (Woolf 29) The narration presents the dilemma Clarissa faces, as she contemplates what life could have been like, had she chosen to be with Peter instead. Her dilemma is expressed as she thinks to herself “Take me with you, Clarissa thought impulsively, as if he were starting directly upon some great voyage; and then, next moment, it was as if the five acts of a play that had been very exciting and moving were now over and she had lived a lifetime in them and had run away, had lived with Peter, and it was now over.” (Woolf 34) She was thinking to herself what life might have been like had she chosen Peter instead of Richard. There probably would be several other setbacks she would have to face in her life as well, had she made different choices in life over the years.

In a distinctive modernist structure, the narration of the novel *Mrs. Dalloway* begins abruptly. The readers are not aware of the setting or the reason behind the different events taking place until it is discussed in a later portion. The novel begins, “Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself.” (Woolf 3) Why is she going to buy the flowers, is there any significance to it, and why is no one else helping her out, all these are explored much later in the novel. As Clarissa goes from place to place, several incidents take place and readers follow along her journey. These events are not even mentioned in chronological order, there is a lot of back and forth in the discussion of the things which happen on that particular day, as Mrs. Dalloway carries along down the streets of London. Annalee Edmondson discusses the opening line of this novel in “Narrativizing Characters in *Mrs. Dalloway*”. She says, “After encountering the famous opening line, the implied reader immediately plunged into the innermost recesses of Mrs. Dalloway’s mind. (Edmondson 17) The reader follows along the journey Clarissa goes through down the streets, from this point onwards, experiencing the same fascinations she is feeling as the events unfold.

Clarissa Dalloway is not the only remarkable woman whose life change due to the war is discussed in the novel. There is another major female character in the story who had a great impact on Clarissa Dalloway's life. During her childhood, this character played an important role and helped her be the way she is in the present times. In this story, the character Sally Seton is introduced as an interesting part of Clarissa's past. Despite being an early 20th-century literary work, Woolf includes some intriguing details in her novel. Most notably, the true nature of the relationship between Sally Seton and Clarissa Dalloway. The connection portrayed between Clarissa and Sally is of pure emotions and the way Clarissa talks about this dear friend of hers, it feels like she has perhaps lost someone extremely valuable to her because they had to uphold the structure of society. If readers delve into it a bit deeper, the relationship between Sally and Clarissa is truly tragic. It might seem perplexing to figure out the true nature of the relationship between the two, but it does seem to go a bit beyond the feeling of simply being friends. In the novel, Clarissa narrates, "But this question of love (she thought, putting her coat away), this falling in love with women. Take Sally Seton; her relation in the old days with Sally Seton. Had not that, after all, been love?" (Woolf 23) Clarissa is questioning her past and her feelings about her relationship with this dear friend. They had become apart over the years and had to choose different lives for themselves, a life that was always expected of them. However, the emotion they faced when they were together, was love. When meeting Sally, her first impression of this girl was quite interesting. Sally was unlike the people Clarissa is generally accustomed to. She did not behave in the way girls were typically expected to behave. Clarissa's first impression was, "She sat on the floor—that was her first impression of Sally—she sat on the floor with her arms round her knees, smoking a cigarette." (Woolf 23) At that time, both of them were quite young. For her, this independent beacon, who was being truly authentic and behaving in a manner not usually expected

from girls like them, was truly shocking. Yet she was curious from the very first moment she saw Sally. Clarissa remembers those first emotions, “But 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—a sort of abandonment, as if she could say anything, do anything; a quality much commoner in foreigners than in Englishwomen.” (Woolf 24) For someone who was always accustomed to being told to behave in a certain way, to do what she is being told to do, and to do specific things at specific times following the decorum of upper-class society, this visionary approach of the independent Sally Seton was simply surprising to Clarissa. Sally was a vision, someone who had the things Clarissa never got to have because of the way she was brought up and because of the way she was expected to behave in society. However, it was not simply these behaviours that drove Clarissa’s emotions. There are several theories behind the kiss a young Clarissa and Sally shared. Kate Haffey discusses the kiss in “Exquisite Moments and the Temporality of the Kiss in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours*”. She discusses, “This moment may have little result on the plot of the novel, as we know from the beginning the shape that Clarissa’s life has taken, but it is nonetheless insistent in its importance.” (Haffey 137) Her feelings for Sally were much more genuine for a different reason. As Clarissa looks back and thinks about it, she realised, “It was not like one's feeling for a man. It was completely disinterested, and besides, it had a quality which could only exist between women.” (Woolf 24) To Clarissa, she seemed like a kindred spirit. This then was the girl who was going to arrive at her party as well, who was now all grown up, with a family of her own, and leading a completely different life. This is how we realise how prim and proper the people of that era were and shift in eras and the impact of characters’ behaviour and actions as well. Nowadays, the concept of homosexuality, of being gay, lesbian, or even bi, is an extremely common discussion.

Everyone is able to choose the identity they belong to, instead of being forced into selected social constructs. It might still be ignored or frowned upon in religious and ignorant countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, and places in Africa. However, in America and Europe, these behaviours are now completely natural. Due to the 'MeToo Movement,' a lot of girls can speak up about their difficulties and talk about the problems they have to face daily. Because of the massive impact of the media and alertness from people, independent living for women is not a difficulty anymore. But at the time of writing this novel, back in 1925, these behaviours were not natural yet. It was the modern age, and people were slowly embracing the benefits of things they were not still accommodated with. However, homosexual relations between people of different classes, and different positions, were not allowed yet in their society. Especially for two remarkably well-known members of their society, Sally and Clarissa, there was no cause for there to be any relationship beyond the one of great friendship they had for each other. This is why the two of them did not get beyond the close friendship they had had, even though they might have had extremely strong feelings for each other. They even shared a kiss, but now, in present times, Sally Seton had given up on her wild days. Instead, she focused on her marriage and a life with her five children. It is not as if the readers can simply blame her either, the character might have been free-spirited and extremely open-minded during that time, however, she was also a product of the society she was existing in. Sally was a free girl who had led a life as freely as she wanted to in her younger days, but even she had to mature as time went by. After dealing with a life full of enjoyment and liberty, it was up to her to figure out that she has to settle down. Being a product of the society of that time period, she did not really have a choice on the matter. She might not have been forced into a completely restricted life; however, she had to realise and behave in a manner that was expected from her.

Another tragic character mentioned in the novel *Mrs. Dalloway* is the incredible and struggling wife of the war veteran Septimus, Lucrezia Warren Smith. In no portion of the novel is the effect of war strong enough, unlike in the discussions regarding the timid young wife Lucrezia. The novel might be about the celebration of life, and giving importance greatly to the party that has been arranged by Dalloway, however, Woolf weaves into the story the effects of the war quite cleverly. The war is in the backdrop and though everyone is highly excited about this party, they are also intensely reminiscing about the impact of the war on their lives. The war may have been over, but the impact of the war was quite visible, on both the people who were directly involved in the battle, as well as those who stayed behind. One character greatly affected by war is Lucrezia Smith. Her husband proved himself to be a true patriotic citizen and served in the war with great pride and honor. Whenever someone is thinking of war, people usually become shortsighted and only consider the effect and the immediate aftermath of the war. Very few realise to look beyond just the obvious immediate effects of war and try to think about the consequences of these decisions. This is the reality out here in the real world as well. Whenever war begins between two nations or more, initially people show their utmost support and try to help out in any way they can to ensure the people are getting the best opportunities to survive such a dreadful situation. However, as the years roll, people's curiosity also fades and funding for the war and taking care of those affected by war also becomes difficult. The other thing is, very few people can relate to the aftereffects of the war. Nowadays, proper counseling and arrangements are available for soldiers after their return from the war front. This was not maintained in the past. Once soldiers get past that war phase and return home, the trauma of the things they had to go through really strikes them and it is not an easy experience to get over just like that. Woolf creates an interesting account of the aftereffects of the war, by focusing on Lucrezia, the wife of a soldier, rather than

focusing on Septimus himself, who was a war veteran. This helps the readers to understand how the lives of people were changed by the war, from a different perspective. The concept of death looms over much of the novel as readers learn more about Septimus and Lucrezia. In “Virginia Woolf and the Case of Septimus Smith”, Jean Thomson talks about the presentation of war in the novel, “Throughout there is a preoccupation with the meaning of death to the living, and particularly soldiers taken from everyday life to undergo often unbearable experiences before being deposited back into ordinariness again.” (Thomson 55) Lucrezia projects the changes in her husband after the war stating, “For he was gone, she thought—gone, as he threatened, to kill himself—to throw himself under a cart!” (Woolf 18) To her, it seemed her husband was a completely different person now. She did not feel the connection she had with him anymore. This is experienced in real life as well. Due to the soldiers being established to horrors firsthand during the war, coming back to a normalised life becomes somewhat difficult for them. This is what is expressed in quite a bit of detail by Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway*. War was a very important theme presented in modernist literary works. Modern literature celebrates the life and every small detail around us, but it does not fail to remind the readers of the horrors and effects of war on the people involved in the war, either directly or indirectly. Lucrezia’s husband is a war veteran and his reactions to the different events in the novel are presented in quite an interesting manner. However, it is Lucrezia’s struggles with the situation she has been handed, with her husband going through such a major trauma, that the audience begins to get a real taste of the horrors of war. As her husband becomes detached from society and behaves in unusual manners, it falls up to Lucrezia to take care of him, and ensure that he is comfortable, and he remembers that there is always someone right next to him supporting him during such a difficult time. It is also tragic that at certain moments she feels that she is also being judged because of her husband. She is completely

alone and this made her life with her husband even more difficult. She kept on thinking about her predicament, “She was exposed; she was surrounded by the enormous trees, vast clouds of an indifferent world, exposed; tortured; and why should she suffer?” (Woolf 47) She seems quite hesitant about the way her husband is behaving and how others react to her husband. Her situation seems even more difficult for her since she had no close friends or family to share her pain with. Everyone she was close to is back home in Italy, and she is all alone. She thought of her husband’s behaviour, “Everyone has friends who were killed in the War. Everyone gives up something when they marry. She had given up her home. She had come to live here, in this awful city. But Septimus let himself think about horrible things, as she could too if she tried.” (Woolf 47) These realities help establish in the mind of the audience how the war not only affected the men who went to fight for their country but massively affected the women in their lives and their families as well. In this novel, through the character Lucrezia Smith, Woolf beautifully portrays the difficulties that women have to face as well due to the changes during wartime. Another reason for her loneliness is her inability to have babies. This might have helped her in such a scenario since she was truly in need of a companion. Similar to how Simone de Beauvoir tries to discuss a woman’s importance in society in terms of only her ability to procreate in *The Second Sex*, readers can view how lonely and tragic Lucrezia must feel since she cannot have a child with her husband. Her husband Septimus even notices her sadness, as it is stated, “At tea, Rezia told him that Mrs. Filmer’s daughter was expecting a baby. She could not grow old and have no children! She was very lonely; she was very unhappy! She cried for the first time since they were married.” (Woolf 64-65) By bringing forth all these issues into the light, Woolf portrays the conflicts of these very different women trying to deal with their surroundings the best way they can.

Chapter Three

Edith Hope's Despair

In the phenomenal novel *Hotel du Lac*, author Anita Brookner chooses for her protagonist the lonely, intelligent, and inquisitive Edith Hope. There is a contrast in the emotional traits of this complex character, to the reader she seems elegant and poised and someone of grand stature. Yet, at the same time, Edith Hope seems desperate about her situation, and unlike the suggestion from her friends and family, does not seem to want to behave maturely and act according to her age, and essentially 'grow up,' as her friends and family would prefer. Anita Brookner is a very underrated author and often overlooked while discussing great literary works. Margaret D. Stetz compares the author with Jane Austen. In "Anita Brookner's Visual World." she states, "What I wish to suggest, as Phyllis Lassner also does, is that the label of 'miniaturist', which has been affixed to Brookner, suits her as poorly and does her as little justice as in Austen's case." (Stetz 35) The narration of *Hotel du Lac* is also quite intriguing and manages to capture the attention of the readers from the very beginning. The readers have very little idea at the beginning of the novel why the protagonist is constantly trying to reject her shadowy past. The way the other characters perceive Edith Hope is presented interestingly in the novel. Brookner writes about Edith, "I am a serious woman who should know better and am judged by my friends to be past the age of indiscretion; several people have remarked upon my physical resemblance to Virginia Woolf; I am a householder, a ratepayer, a good plain cook, and a deliverer of typescripts well before the deadline;" (Brookner 2) The comparison with Virginia Woolf is interesting, it would seem since she was a prominent writer, the protagonist Edith Hope expects to be just as liberal as the real-life author. At the very beginning of the novel, Edith seems restless and anxious to return home as soon as possible. This trait of the protagonist's immaturity remains throughout most of the novel,

and it is only near the end of the novel that she finally chooses to behave maturely. As the story progresses, readers learn the reasons why Edith was sent to the hotel for a 'probationary' period. It would seem that all her friends and family members agreed to send her to this hotel to be alone and think about the events which took place before the start of the novel. Edith had run off during her wedding because she thought she was in love with David, a married man with whom she was having an affair. This kind of behaviour is not acceptable to her friends, who think she should be more mature according to her age. It is mentioned in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, how women in society are generally expected to behave in certain ways. These are drawn demarcations, ones the woman is expected to follow without question or hesitation. In the book, Beauvoir tries to define a woman, or rather society's perception of a woman, stating, "But first, what is a woman? 'Tota mulier in utero: she is a womb,' some say. Yet speaking of certain women, the experts proclaim, 'They are not women,' even though they have a uterus like the others." (Beauvoir 221)

From the perspective of the novel, the reason why all of Edith's friends and family are scandalised by her actions is that she is not behaving the way in which she is expected to, by society. During her wedding, she ran away from a perfectly eligible man, who would have been able to provide for everything she might have needed. Despite having a certain future in a marriage with this man, she chooses to run away because of her love for David, a married man. Her family could not understand the reason behind this kind of behaviour from her, and even her friends shunned her for this. Edith's predicament and her current exile to the hotel are because her friends and family expect her to figure out from her experiences of a life away from home that she needs to behave more maturely.

Another quality we see in the protagonist Edith Hope in *Hotel du Lac* is her lack of mature thinking and behaviour. Despite being in her late thirties, she is still behaving somewhat like a

teenager. She is still quite perplexed about the different life decisions she is having to make throughout the novel. One thing this novel manages to do quite well is, it does not show the female characters being forced into relationships or marriages. The novel *Hotel du Lac* was published in 1984, half a century after the previously discussed *Mrs. Dalloway*. Thus, it is safe to assume that times have definitely changed during this period. Society's attitude toward certain aspects might have changed over the course of time. Yet, it seems a very small step, and in this novel, readers get to see certain actions of women are still judged by the people of the society. If we consider our protagonist or even her friends, they are not reprimanding Edith for not being married at her age. It is her desire to lead a life on her own terms that causes so much tension between Edith and her friends. In true modernist narrative style, Brookner chooses to give quite a perplexing account as events gradually unfold. In Peter Barry's "Beginning Theory An Introduction to Literary & Cultural Theory" the writer talks about the common traits seen in modernist literature. Referring to the modernist trend of writing, he states, "In literature, finally, there was a rejection of traditional realism (chronological plots, continuous narratives relayed by omniscient narrators, 'closed endings', etc.) in favor of experimental forms of various kinds." (Barry 79) This is quite clearly observed in the novel *Hotel du Lac*, through Edith Hope's narration. The events in the novel do not happen chronologically. At the beginning of the novel, readers are suddenly following Edith Hope at the hotel, with no precursor to what she is doing here or how she got here. The predicament of the protagonist is kept vague, which immediately captures the attention of the readers, as they look forward to finding out what happened to force this famous romantic novel writer, into such a secluded place. Throughout the novel, readers also see that the protagonist is writing letters to David, the married man with whom she was having an affair, to whom she is detailing her experiences and loneliness of living in the hotel. It seems curious that rather than contacting her

friends or family, she chooses to write to the one man everyone is warning her not to keep in contact with. However, the major plot twist in the novel is when the readers learn that Edith had not sent any of the letters to David. It was just a form of letting the load off her mind when she was writing these letters about everything that was happening to her. Yet, it is quite clear, that through her experiences at the hotel, she truly has matured enough and has gained a new perspective in life. Edith is sent to this hotel, and her friends and family are expecting by being alone in the city, and her experiences there in the solitude will help her become mature and make better life decisions. Near the end of the novel, when she sends the final telegram, it truly shows that the character has changed due to her experiences in the hotel, and whether she wanted or not, her being in the hotel and her interactions with its different characters has helped her become much more mature within this short time. It should be noted that this change was not forced onto her, it was not even that she was going to suddenly start behaving the way her friends and family are expecting her to believe. It is simply that she now has a much better understanding of everything that happened to her. She now chooses to make decisions after thinking them through properly, instead of doing things impulsively. Her relationship with David and every subsequent decision she has taken in the novel has been impulsive. She did not think through any of her actions or decisions, how they might affect others, and how the people around her might feel about the way she is behaving. When she runs away and decides to break off the wedding, she is not thinking about the groom or about the people who are already there. This brings to question why did she agree to marry in the first place. According to Edith's narration, the hidden reasons behind her agreement to such a bond, despite her heart belonging to someone else, is discussed as follows, "I am no longer young, she thought; this is my last chance." (Brookner 65) Yet, on the expected day, when her friends and the families of both sides had arrived at the ceremony, for her to disgrace the

attendance of everyone at the event was simply unfair. Most important, however, was the fact that she chose to run away because of her love for David. The readers know that David is already a married man, and he was having an affair with the protagonist. It appears that David has made it quite clear that despite how much he might love her, he was not going to break off his marriage. For Edith to not consider these feelings of David, and just to run off to somehow manage to be with him seems extremely immature. However, looking at Edith's decision near the end of the novel, and the telegram she ends up writing, it becomes quite clear that she has matured somewhat through her experiences at the hotel. At least she has learned to take into account the thoughts and feelings of others when she is making a decision. Another sign of her maturity in the novel is the way she handled her interactions with Mr. Neville. Readers of the novel are used to several lonely female characters throughout the novel. The arrival of Mr. Neville potentially changes the track of the story. Much older than her, Neville seems to be a stable and safe choice for a husband for Edith. When he suddenly proposes to her, even though Edith realised she is not in love with him, she decides to agree to the engagement because he seems like a secure choice. In her mind, this is exactly what her friends and family expect her to learn after coming here. The proposal Neville makes while asking for her hand in marriage is neither romantic nor endearing. It is simply made in the way of a business proposal. Edith even points this out to Neville. Yet, as readers see, Neville easily convinces her into being a 'safe' wife for him, while allowing him to do whatever he feels like, and be with whomever he feels like. She even agrees to such an arrangement thinking it would be a better way to make everyone who is counting on her happy. It is not until the very end of the novel when she notices him sneaking out of Jennifer Pusey's room that she realised that there truly was no affection when he proposed the kind of relationship he expected with her, nor will there ever be any similar sort of emotion. She finally realised that whatever she was doing, accepting

such a heartless proposal was all for the benefit of the others, and not at all for herself. To ensure her happiness, she realised that she would rather be alone than get into a loveless marriage which only ensures her social safety. This is where readers see the maturity of the protagonist. This is where the narration takes a modernist turn since the protagonist chooses a fate that is perhaps not proper and something which the reader would not generally expect from the protagonist of a story. After everything she goes through, Edith chooses to finally do what is right for her, rather than trying to make everyone else around her happy while remaining miserable herself.

The plot of the story explains the reason behind the lack of presence of a huge number of characters in the hotel. Since Edith was sent to the hotel during the off-season, a time when she can remain calm and collected and gather her thoughts to redeem her past behaviours because there aren't many people staying at the hotel. Nonetheless, readers are introduced to a few quite interesting characters staying at the hotel with the protagonist. And even though the story revolves mostly around Edith and her daily affairs, the stories and struggles of these characters and their survival are also quite fascinating to learn about for the readers. The readers are introduced to the eccentric mother and daughter duo, Iris and Jennifer Pusey. Initially, when Edith is introduced to these characters, she finds a sense of comfort in being with them. She enjoys the close and pure relationship she witnesses of the mother and daughter together. They seem so close, they came to the hotel on vacation together, they go shopping together, and they dine together. There seems to be not even a single shred of discord between the two of them. It was completely unlike her relationship with her mother. Brookner's portrayal of this close mother-daughter relationship is interesting. There are very few literary works that portray such a close bond between mother and daughter. María Dolores Martínez Reventós discusses this in "The Obscure Maternal Double: The Mother / Daughter Relationship Represented in and out of Matrophobia." She elaborates, "Stories

of unmothered or badly mothered daughters are abundant in female literature and autobiography. According to Carolyn Heilbrun, the most relevant question concerning women's literary representation of the mother-daughter relationship is why no woman believes she has been sufficiently loved by her mother." (Reventós 286) Brookner's portrayal of this interesting mother-daughter duo seems quite different from the usual representations of similar character relations. To Edith, it is like the relationship she couldn't have with her mother. Her relationship with her mother is discussed in the novel as, "Her strange mother, Rosa, that harsh disappointed woman, that former beauty who raged so unsuccessfully against her fate, deliberately, willfully letting herself go, slatternly and scornful, mocking her pale silent daughter who slipped so modestly in and out of her aromatic bedroom." (Brookner 24) It is quite clear that she never had a close bond with her mother. It was perhaps this loveless relationship with her mother that turned her the way she was. It also seemed because of this loveless relationship; Edith found difficulties expressing her love in other aspects of her life as well. However, as the novel progresses, readers learn that the relationship is not all it seems at first glance, and despite appearing to be outwardly amused, there are hidden layers of emotions. Especially Jennifer Pusey, a girl who is close in age to Edith, initially seems to be extremely happy being with her mother all the time. She has everything that Edith could not have with her mother. Outwardly, she might seem like the perfect daughter, however, she too seems to have her secrets. Near the end of the novel, it transpires that she had been having a secret affair with Mr. Neville. She keeps this affair a secret from everyone, including the mother with whom she appears to be so close. As events unfold, the first time Neville went to Jennifer's room, and was almost caught, Mrs. Pusey became alert and quite worried about the noise in the room, and rightfully so. However, when everyone gathered in the room after hearing all the commotion, Jennifer behaved nonchalantly with the guests at the hotel and behaved as though

nothing had happened. To Edith as well as everyone who gathered, the behaviour seemed quite unsettling. After the incident, a shocked Edith enters the room to see what happened, and her reaction is stated as, “With fear clutching her stomach, still innocent of breakfast, Edith went into Jennifer's room prepared to find a scene of infraction or outrage, with Jennifer ill or possibly deranged. What she saw was indeed Jennifer, but Jennifer propped up in bed, her face moody...” (Brookner 77) She did not seem anxious or terrified, and when asked if she needed anything, she calmly asked for coffee, without the slightest hint of worry across her face. The fright in the actions and voice of Mrs. Pusey during the incident is in stark contrast with her reaction. She is not even concerned about her mother. As Edith notes, “She seemed gloomy, and curiously unhelpful. Sulky, Edith thought. And why so inactive? If her mother is unwell, she should be with her.” (Brookner 77) This then was the dual behaviour Edith saw when she gradually got to learn about the Puseys while she stayed at the hotel. There were layers to the way they behaved, they might have seemed happy and content at the hotel, but in Jennifer’s case, there was certainly something lacking in her life. Simply following her mother’s every move and whim was not enough for her. In a way, she was trapped in behaving this way with everyone. She might appear to be a perfect person, but unlike Edith, it would seem she was never allowed to make bold choices or stand up for herself. Also, when she got to meet Edith, who is similar in age, and yet she noticed there was simply so much difference between them. In her eyes, she saw Edith was a liberated woman who could afford to be on her own and do what she felt like. Meanwhile, she was forced to accompany her mother all the time, having to share her interests, and her choices, and essentially not having a voice of her own. The affair with Mr. Neville was the only thing over which she had control; it was the only thing she was able to decide on her own. The secret relationship with this stranger she met only for a few days in the hotel was less about love and more about the control she could gain in

her life through it. A similar form of loneliness is seen in another guest staying at the hotel during Edith's stay; the upper-class Englishwoman Monica. In "Small Expectations", Jan Zita Grover discusses Brookner's heroines stating, "These are women who recognize how power is distributed in their worlds and who settle for its imperfect terms." (Grover 38) Each of these characters seems to be determined and can hold their own, no matter how hopeless the situation might seem. A major aspect presented in modernist literature was the isolation and loneliness, portrayed through the characters in different literary works. The protagonist Edith Hope in *Hotel du Lac* is already a great presentation of the feeling of loneliness of a character. However, Anita Brookner manages to include bits about another interesting character, who also portrays the feeling of isolation and separation from society. Brookner's characters might seem extremely sad, but the author manages to portray the sadness of these characters in such a way that it leaves a mark in the readers' minds. In "Sad Women: A Look2 Essay on Anita Brookner.", Ruth Hoberman states, "And I've arrived on the far side of sixty-five with a deepening sense of anger at the way people stigmatize the sadness of women." (Hoberman 201) Hoberman discusses how just because Brookner's writing has an array of sad women, does not mean that the writing is formulaic. The stories of each of these individuals seem different. When Edith first meets the revered Monica at the hotel, she is unsure about her. The conversation between Edith and Monica takes place much later in the novel. Edith's first impression of Monica is presented in the novel as, "I noticed only one elderly woman as I came in, very small, with a face like a bulldog, and legs so bowed that she seemed to throw herself from side to side in her effort to get ahead, but doing so with such grim conviction that I instinctively got out of the way." (Brookner 3) She seemed so strange and appeared privileged, so Edith chose not to get acquainted with her. It is not until almost halfway through the novel that the two characters get properly introduced. Within this time, Edith had met the woman multiple times,

but because of her preconceptions, chose not to talk to her. Another interesting comment is made by Edith about Monica just before becoming formally acquainted with her, which seems somewhat of a foreshadowing as well. Just before the initial introductions and conversation between the two characters, Edith comments on the appearance of Monica, stating, “The tall thin beauty with the dog was never visible in the daytime and it was impossible to imagine her doing anything except eating ice cream and smoking, like a child on an exeat from school.” (Brookner 34) This comment about Monica’s eating habits is ironic since later we find out that she is suffering from an eating disorder. The character Monica is presented interestingly by author Anita Brookner. There are several hidden layers to this character, and she is not what she seems to be like from her external appearance. She might seem like an extravagant lady with an eccentric lifestyle and unusual habits, and might even seem extremely happy. However, even when noticing her at the beginning of the novel, Edith seems curious why someone like her is alone in the hotel during the off-season. As it turns out, the fate of this character is somewhat similar to that of Edith herself. Just as Edith was abandoned by her friends and sent to stay in this hotel to learn to be more mature, Monica had been left behind by those close to her as well. It has already been mentioned that Monica has an eating disorder. She ends up sharing most of her food with her dog, rather than eating herself. She was sent to the hotel so that she can get well and prepare to produce an heir for her husband. She appears to be infertile, and those close to her are expecting her to eat better and become healthy fast so that she can ensure the very reason she was married in the first place. Her husband even contemplates divorcing her, should she fail to present him with a child. This seems reminiscent of Simone de Beauvoir’s discussion on the role of women in *The Second Sex*. Beauvoir writes about a woman’s role in reproduction and the emphasis on the function of the woman’s womb, “It would appear, then, that every female human being is not necessarily a woman; to be so considered she

must share in that mysterious and threatened reality known as femininity.” (Beauvoir 221) This incapability of the character to produce a child is what causes her isolation and detachment from the people with whom she is close. She is judged and scrutinised by those around her because of her failure to fulfill the role society expects from her. However, she is not one to back off so easily either. As Edith describes her predicament, “Monica, she entered a rueful world of defiance, taunting, teasing, of spoiling for a fight. The whole sorry business of baiting the sexual trap was uncovered by Monica's refusal to behave herself in a way becoming to a wife: by sheer effrontery, she would damage her husband's pride, humble him into keeping her, or, if not, ruin his reputation.” (Brookner 44) Not everyone would agree with the portrayal of the bond between women in Brookner's work as being positive. In fact, in “The Impossibility of Female Friendship: A Study of Anita Brookner's Female Characters”, Helga Kurz makes a very different claim about the female characters in Brookner's work stating, “In her novels, Anita Brookner shows women as restricted to essentially two roles, that of the female who acts out predictably unoriginal patterns of behaviour and thus remains reduced to an unimportant object of contemplation, and that of the highly-sensitive spinster heroine whose complex nature forces her into the position of the mute observer.” (Kurz 13) While this might seem true in the instance of *Hotel du Lac* as well, the secondary characters in this novel seem to be layered and maintain complications of their own. The stories of the characters are not just about simple straightforward issues.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

The literary works of the late 19th century and early 20th century truly manage to capture the essence of industrialisation and isolation of the characters and by default the lives of people of that era. The prominent literary artists of that era effectively portray the solitude the different characters might have felt being present at that time, as well as bringing the focus onto the complexities of their thoughts and the reasons behind their actions. The remarkable novelists Virginia Woolf and Anita Brookner shed light on characters with similar intricacies through their writing. In this study, an in-depth exploration helps to truly understand the effect of the choices made at different points in life by the protagonists Clarissa Dalloway and Edith Hope in the novels *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Hotel du Lac* respectively. The themes of isolation and loneliness are essential parts of these two novels and are interestingly presented through the protagonists of these novels.

Virginia Woolf's portrayal of the issues of the characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* presents the internal struggles these individuals are facing. Anna S. Benjamin talks about the portrayal of the characters in "Towards an Understanding of the Meaning of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*." She says, "Specifically, *Mrs. Dalloway* an organic view and unfolds a woman's attempt to find the meaning of her life within this organic universe." (Benjamin 214) On paper, the protagonist Clarissa Dalloway is the ideal woman presented in that society. She had married a respectable man, had a wonderful family, and behaved in the exact manner society expects her to present herself. However, the novel is not simply about the outward manner in which the protagonist is presented. As readers follow along the stream-of-consciousness narrative of the protagonist, it becomes evident that even the protagonist is unsure about the situation she is in at the current state of her life. Despite being married to an ideal man and having the ideal life, she cannot help but

wonder what her life might have been like had she made dissimilar choices. These doubts are of course just momentary thoughts, it is not presented in a manner as if she is going to suddenly take steps and change the way she is at that moment. Her complex relationship with Sally Seton is interwoven in the novel by Virginia Woolf in an extremely curious manner. Even Clarissa is confused about her behaviours in the past, about the complexities of how her current relationship with Sally stands in the present time. These choices appear to be quite different from that of Edith Hope in *Hotel du Lac*. However, this does not mean that either one of them is worse than the other or that the decisions made by one of them are entirely wrong. The narrative structure of Clarissa's reactions as she walks down the busy street is an interesting way of portraying the events in the novel. In "Walking the Web in the Lost London of *Mrs. Dalloway*" Andelys Wood says, "In fact, readers who attempt to follow both time and place cues will find discrepancies, even impossibilities: nearly all the walks that structure the novel must take considerably longer than the time so precisely allotted to them." (Wood 19) Despite these seeming inconsistencies, it is how the story is presented that the readers find appealing. The novel shows the high points and low points in the lives of several characters on that particular day. Deborah Guth makes a note of these ups and downs presented in the novel in "'What a Lark! What a Plunge!': Fiction as Self-Evasion in *Mrs. Dalloway*." She says, "Among the various images and motifs through which the critical reader can reach a finer understanding of *Mrs. Dalloway*, the frame of ascent and descent has a prominent place, both because it expresses the rising and falling moods of Clarissa's day and because it provides a means of access to the connection between Clarissa and her symbolic double, Septimus." (Guth 18) Guth projects the characters Septimus and Clarissa on opposite sides and compares the difference in their lifestyle. The interesting aspect of the novel is, of course, the backdrop of war and the changes in the city due to the war. The struggles of Lucrezia Warren

Smith in the story are presented in a very real and very horrific manner. The reader cannot but sympathise with such a tragic character. How this character has to manage to hold her head high, despite everything she is going through shows just how strong this character truly is.

In contrast to this, Anita Brookner's Booker Prize-winning *Hotel du Lac* has a very isolated setting, with very few noteworthy characters presented in the story and very little happening in the story. The backdrop of the novel ensures the reader will feel loneliness and while reading the novel it seems like perhaps something is missing from the story. This makes it easier for the readers to connect with the protagonist and empathise with the character. Edith Hope's life seems so uneventful and empty as the story gradually moves forward, with very little interaction with the people around her at the hotel. The time frame when the story takes place, the hotel is in its off-season, and it makes sense that there will be so few guests at the hotel. However, readers can still sense the loneliness in the protagonist as she does not have anyone with whom she is close or someone she can share her feelings. The events which take place before her arrival at the hotel puts her at odds with everyone she had been close to. This is an especially sad situation since, at a time of such turmoil, she needed someone with whom she could have shared her feelings and personal struggles, she needed someone who might have given her sound advice, rather than expecting her to behave in a particular way while losing herself and her integrity in the process. It was no wonder then, that she had to look into the lives of these strangers who were also staying at the hotel, to find answers to her problems. Her loneliness and isolation are major themes in the novel and begin her gradual change in attitude as events unfold. Near the end, it seems that she matures a little during her stay at the hotel. This is evident through her decision not to marry Neville, since she knew she would be trapped if she married such a man. Her thought near the end of the novel on this matter is, "And if I were to marry him, she said to herself, knowing this,

knowing too that he could so easily and so quickly look elsewhere, I should turn to stone, to paste: I should become part of his collection.” (Brookner 105) She is also determined not to go back to her uncertain life with David. She finally recognised that she should be making decisions that will be good for her, not for the men in her life. The necessity of the other characters staying in the hotel with her can hardly be undermined. These characters show that each individual is suffering their struggles, no matter how well they hide their troubles. Through the relationship of the Puseys - both Iris and Jennifer, readers witness how something which seems so perfect might be so flawed. The two characters seemed so close, they even managed to make the protagonist feel envious of the close relationship presented between them, and how perfect they simply seemed. Yet, in the end, it appeared that perhaps Jennifer was in an even worse situation than Edith herself. As discussed in feminist theories, Edith might not be the ideal woman behaving in a certain expected manner from women in society. However, at least she has her freedom. On the other hand, Jennifer, with her ideal life with her mother, cannot truly be just by herself. She cannot present herself as an individual, since most of her decisions are made for her by her mother, she might have a close bond, and an idealistic relationship from the perspective of society, however, she does not have any freedom. Similarly, readers can see how Monica is mistreated and handled terribly, simply because she fails to behave in an ideal way.

Both of these novels by Virginia Woolf and Anita Brookner help to present the realities of women in modernist society. The stream-of-consciousness narration helps the readers to understand the complexities the characters are going through and how they are trying their best to remain strong. The struggles these women are going through, and the way they are still able to stand tall seems to make the readers easily sympathise with these characters. The readers understand that despite being very much the products of their time period, these women are able

to change some aspects of their lives. Readers also recognise the difference in the way of treatment between the emancipated Edith and the opposite spectrum, Clarissa, who is reliant on her husband and his revenue for everything. The theme of emancipation brings forth the reactions of the other characters in *Hotel du Lac*. Edith at the end of the novel has the freedom of choice when she makes the decision not to accept Mr. Neville. Jennifer Pusey and Monica on the other hand, do not have that luxury. They have no monetary freedom, and as a result, have no other choice but to behave in the way their provider expects them to behave. In *Mrs. Dalloway* readers recognise changes in Clarissa and Sally's behaviour from the past, since through their marriage they were now reliant on their husbands for different social roles. The two novels also tackle the theme of loss. Edith's narration depicts the loss of the thing she wants most, her love for David. Clarissa's debate regarding the two men in her life makes it clear that she is thinking of the opportunities she lost, by not choosing Peter Walsh. Alongside the protagonists, the two novels depict the loss of other characters as well. In *Hotel du Lac*, Anita Brookner portrays the feelings of loss and hopelessness of Jennifer Pusey and Monica. The narration regarding Lucrezia Smith gives a clear portrayal of the loss of hope and a life with no change in prospect anytime soon. The choices the characters made in the different stages of their lives shaped them and made them who they are. However, they do not seem to regret their life choices or their current state. They simply have a better understanding and acceptance of the way they are leading their life.

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