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Vereen Bell's "Misreading *Mrs Dalloway*"

Vereen Bell's "Misreading Mrs. Dalloway" attempts to restore the proper view of Clarissa, which she states has been "transfigured" by ideological claims and reinventions of her in films. Bell clarifies that the novel was written to criticize English society in 1923. One example of this is found in the example of Sir William Bradshaw, who embodies the standard upper-class British male. He's British and incredibly proud of being British. He believes in Proportion and Conversion which presents him as a scientist and authority figure rather than a caretaker. Bell also notes that when Septimus committed suicide, Clarissa was greatly moved by his action. She viewed his suicide as an attempt of communication and a form of rebellion towards forced treatment. This alone makes her think of the Bradshaws as evil members in society. However, she is insincerely attentive to the people of status that she dislikes, as Bell notes, "Clarissa lacks a meaningful connection to the real world." She instead believes status and throwing parties are her only gifts. Clarissa is also very consumed by her world and cares not to expand her horizons. Her archenemy, Mrs. Kilman, embodies everything Clarissa opposes. Yet when Kilman attempts to sympathize with her daughter Elizebeth, she is abruptly ignored as Elizabeth walks off across the room. Bell notes the narcissistic nature of Clarissa when she has her last thought of Septimus. Clarissa feels connected to his purpose and reflects on his suicide as an insight into her own life. Still, after this short moment of empathy, she slips back into her

character as a hostess and assembles herself back into the little world she had formed for herself. The overall conclusion from the novel is that there is no victory of one person, or one gender, over the other in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

#### Extension of Vereen Bell's "Misreading *Mrs Dalloway*"

Bell's interpretation of Clarissa is intricate and establishes the true nature of Clarissa. Bell conveys Clarissa as the typical upper-class British woman; however, she does have other qualities as well. She lacks an emotional connection to the world, but through small hints, she possesses the capability to develop a connection. Nevertheless, after each attempt she instead falls back to exist in her comfortable world she has made.

Clarissa is almost blinded completely by her perspective. She almost seems to believe things that do not occur in her immediate surroundings do not occur at all. For example, she gives no second thought towards the Armenian genocide after hearing about it. She instead focuses much more on her roses, which was much more important to her than the genocide. She has a delusory perspective on what matters and seems to have been pulled into a life of superficial meaning. Yet what makes her character so complex is that through short hints, she appears to show the capability of feeling and breaking out of her delusions to pursue a deeper meaning to life. Each time, though, she quickly forgets these feelings and retreats back into her world. It's important to note that this may be a protective procedure, as she has mentioned on several occasions that she has anxiety and fear about simple things such as crossing the road. On the surface, she is very shallow, but in reality, her character is far more in-depth with a constant

battle between her past choices and the life she lives now. Perhaps she chooses contentment out of a fear that a closer look at her life will disappoint her.

