

Abstract (ENG)

The primary focus of this thesis is on the elements of Sapphism (lesbianism) and gender as present in the Virginia Woolf novels *Mrs Dalloway* and *Orlando: A Biography*, as well as the novel *The Well of Loneliness* by Radclyffe Hall. It also includes information about the authors' backgrounds that bear some relevance to the queer aspects of their work. The interpretation of the aforementioned text is mostly done through a queer and transfeminist and intersectional feminist lens (the author being a transgender woman), although some time is spent arguing with the past interpretations by lesbian feminists and literary critics who, in the author's opinion, intentionally erased or accidentally overlooked relevant information that would make some of the texts not qualify as works of lesbian fiction.

This thesis challenges the idea that Clarissa Dalloway is somehow a closeted lesbian who was forced by society to give up on her romantic relationship with Sally Seton and was made to agree to a heterosexual marriage. While the text does suggest that she was not able to further pursue and deepen her relationships with Sally and some other women, in large part because of social norms regarding same-gender relationships, there is not enough textual evidence to support that Clarissa is a lesbian, especially since she at several points throughout the book talks about feelings of attraction she has towards some of the men around her. As such, labelling Clarissa a lesbian and *Mrs Dalloway* a work of lesbian fiction (which also requires a similarly inaccurate labelling of Virginia Woolf) results in bisexual erasure which is something that some members of the queer community uphold even today.

In regard to *Orlando: A Biography*, the focus is not so much on the critical response to the novel, but more on how gender-essentialist notions are brought up and challenged in the text. Woolf clearly distinguishes between "sex" and "gender" within the novel (despite using the term "sex" in reference to both) and applies that distinction in situations that put to question the contemporary ideas about both. Whether it is in questioning the idea of physical sex by making the sex of certain characters temporary hidden or indiscernible (or changing it entirely, as is the case for Orlando), or applying traits typically associated with masculinity to female-bodied characters and vice versa, or the presence of characters whose gender identities are comprised of a combination

feminine and masculine traits, effectively making them non-binary in the contemporary sense, Woolf is unparalleled among her contemporaries.

Lastly, and perhaps the most controversially, this thesis proposes and expands on the idea that rather than being a butch lesbian woman, as is generally accepted, Radclyffe Hall can more accurately be described as a person on the trans masculine spectrum. This is supported by a pool of a biographical evidence, such as Una Troubridge's biography of Hall, written shortly after Hall's death and a modern biography written by Diana Souhami. The idea of trans masculinity is then applied to *The Well of Loneliness*, where it shows how strongly some of the (potentially) trans masculine characters subscribe to traditional gender norms regarding femininity and masculinity, resulting in a distinct presence of femmephobia (the fear and ridicule of femininity) and toxic masculinity.