



Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*: Carnivalization of Gender Spaces

Victoria Bilge Yılmaz

Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, School of Foreign Languages, Turkey

APA Citation:

Yılmaz, V. B. (2021). Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*: Carnivalization of Gender Spaces. *Journal of Narrative and Language Studies*, 9(16), 96-105.

Abstract

Woolf's themes in her novels gesture in the direction of thought which undermines the idea of an affiliation of a woman with domestic responsibilities. Woolf seems insistent in welcoming new values in her themes – the adaptation of spaces according to women's desires; therefore, her female characters often attempt to be remote from homes, which are held to be the repository of laws, social rules and principles. This can be perceived specifically in her first novel, *The Voyage Out* (1915). *The Voyage Out* allows observing Woolf's concern with subverting patriarchal ideology, especially gender hierarchies, through the allocation of a special space for the female characters. The novel vividly and widely depicts the process of the possible change of the concept of home and the outside for women. The atmosphere of this space is characterized by the female characters' challenging of the absolute patriarchal dominance by promoting disregard for static existence and social norms, and by fostering the entrance of the outside into the inside of the houses. This study will analyse *The Voyage Out* in terms of its characters' tendencies to avoid patriarchal domestic ideology; and this tendency will be analysed in the light of Bakhtin's notion of carnival – a sense of the world devoid of social categories. The analysis of the female characters' escape from the confines of the domestic ideology in *The Voyage Out* can be divided into two main categories: merging of the inside and the outside and free contact between genders¹.

Keywords: Virginia Woolf, Bakhtin, carnival, carnivalization, patriarchy

Introduction

Virginia Woolf's feminist politics and aesthetics are mainly based upon her claim that women should be free from the constraints imposed on them by patriarchy. *The Voyage Out* (1915), Woolf's first novel, allows observing the author's concern with subverting patriarchal ideology marked by stability, certainty, and especially, gender hierarchies by reconfiguring the spaces according to women's values and brushing the authority aside. In this way, *The Voyage Out* allows an analysis in terms of its characters' entrance into a carnival atmosphere, which, according to Bakhtin, suspends everyday norms and enables the participants to contact freely.

¹ This study is a part of the author's Ph.D. dissertation. It was presented, but not published, at the 1st International Women's Congress in Ankara, Turkey, in 2016.

This study will explore Woolf's feminist aesthetics in *The Voyage Out* from a Bakhtinian perspective. It will seek to locate the novel's subversive essence with regard to gender within the framework of Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the carnival.

Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), a Russian intellectual, thinker, and philosopher, is the central figure in the theoretical discussion on carnival. He conceptualizes carnival mainly in his *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1929) and *Rabelais and His World* (1965). Carnival is the time of "uninhabited pleasure-seeking, challenges to official culture and a celebration of the material, physical body" (Bagshaw, 2013, p. 84). According to Bakhtin (1929/2011), carnival was a time of the displacement of "one-sided and gloomy official seriousness" (p. 160) and stability with mockery and laughter. Moreover, it is a dynamic entertainment at the core of which lie the ideas of absolute change and renewal through laughter. "Carnival is the festival of all-annihilating and all-renewing time" (Bakhtin, 1929/2011, p. 124). In short, the Bakhtinian concept of carnival is the belief in the absolute power of community, renewal of everything and challenge to the official life. *Carnivalized literature* or *carnivalization* is Bakhtin's term to refer to the presence of the carnival sense of the world in literary works (Bakhtin, 1929/2011, p. 107). Bakhtin sees carnival as a way of life and "carnivalized writing" as "writing which has taken the carnival spirit into itself and thus reproduces, within its own practice, the characteristic inversions, parodies and discrownings of carnival proper" (Dentith, 1995, p. 65). In other words, carnivalization is the translating of the carnival sense of the world into language.

The Domestic Ideology of the "Female Space" and Woolf's Reaction to It

In the nineteenth century, middle-class women "were forced into domestic roles as tight as their corsets" (French, 2008, p. 128). By locating women inside their homes, the prevailing ideology assigned them the role of instructors for their children and the soothing carers for their husbands who struggled outside in the "public" sphere. Thus, the domestic ideology rests on the assumption that there is a dichotomy between home and the outside. Armstrong (1987) calls these two spaces the "female domain" and the domain that "govern[s] the marketplace" (pp. 9-10). Women have been severed from the outside world, defined as a place of commerce, terror, uncertainty, hostility and imprisoned into their female domain of domesticity ironically seen as a place of peace. The domestic ideology of the middle-class people is in strong accord with patriarchy, and as Walker (1998) claims, "the gendered differentiation of the private and public domains" is the "essential structural imperative for the maintenance of patriarchy" (p. 495). In other words, women are trapped in this whole patriarchal "culture", in Baysal's words (2014), and are "observed according to [its] norms" (p. 20).

Woolf's works are often regarded as her reaction against the division of social domains into gender-based categories. "The conceptual dichotomy between public and private spaces, spheres, . . . was one which captured her attention, to be reworked and questioned, rather than accepted wholesale in any particular form" (Snaith, 2003, p. 1). In her essay "Professions for Women," Woolf (2009a) describes her notion of the middle-class woman, or the so-called the Angel in the House: "She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. . . preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others. Above all – I need not say it – she was pure" (p. 141). Woolf proposes that a woman should have a room of her own where she can write and tell her own story. According to Woolf (2009a), "[k]illing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer" (p. 142) in order to be able to represent herself. Furthermore, it is evident in her works that she wants to redefine the public realm or the outside, too. According to Erdem Ayyıldız, moreover, Woolf's other way to destroy the barriers between the inside and the outside is the concept of androgyny (2019, p. 60). It is the ability to overcome the gender hierarchy that boosts human

beings' talents of expression and writing, through which women, actually, can overcome all boundaries.

The Voyage Out

The Voyage Out is about 24-year-old Rachel Vinrace, and her physical and mental voyage. She travels in her father's boat from London to Santa Marina, a touristic place in South America, where she stays with her aunt and uncle, the Ambroses. On the boat, she meets several people: Mr Pepper, the Ambroses, and the Dalloways. In Santa Marina, she meets more people and falls in love with Terence Hewet but dies on the brink of their marriage because of a high fever. She spends her time in Santa Marina by climbing mountains, dancing and travelling to a native village. Throughout her voyage on the boat and her stay in Santa Marina, Rachel has a chance to see life from a different perspective.

The Voyage Out vividly and widely depicts the process of the possible change of the concept of home and the outside for women. Woolf reconfigures the so-called female space marked by middle-class ideology and opens the doors of the homes to let the women characters go outside both spiritually and physically. In this way, her characters transform into carnival participants who suspend their non-carnival responsibilities and lead their carnival lives among the others on the public square. The analysis of the female characters' escape from the confines of the domestic ideology in *The Voyage Out* can be divided into two main categories: merging of the inside and the outside and free contact between genders.

Merging Of the Inside and the Outside

The basic premise of the Bakhtinian carnival is people's acquisition of harmonious unity. Carnival "*belongs to the whole people*², it is *universal, everyone* must participate in its familiar contact" (Bakhtin, 1929/2011, p. 128). Carnival is a space in which people's activities and lives are not eclipsed by the idea of privacy. In the same vein, Woolf's characters try to shatter gender hierarchies and create an atmosphere where they destroy the sense of isolation. Some scenes in *The Voyage Out* entail a contradiction between the female characters and their roles as domestic and isolated individuals; these characters tend to unite with the world. Woolf's female characters merge the inside and the outside mainly for the following functions: escaping from stability and rules and erasing the boundaries between the private and the public. Hence, Woolf's *The Voyage Out* suggests adherence to carnivalization.

The first function of opening up of the doors of domesticity in *The Voyage Out* is an escape from stability and experiencing life in flux and in a perennial change. Indeed, instability, uncertainty, ambivalence, and flux are the main attributes of the carnival sense of the world. Bakhtin states that there is the presence of "joy at change" (1929/2011, p. 160). Thus, as the female characters of *The Voyage Out* try to merge the inside and the outside in order to escape stability at home, the scenes with their actions in this regard can be seen as carnivalistic because they try to suspend the ordinary flow of life and subvert the ideology that endorses their ordinary existence.

The novel starts with the characters' journey on Mr Vinrace's boat. It is a life experienced in a communal way, on the deck. This movement away from a solid land towards the unknown and fluctuating surface of the sea is the act of escaping stability. Indeed, the name of the boat – *Euphrosyne*³ – suggests change and transformation because St Euphrosyne used to cross-dress

² The emphases throughout this study are as in the original.

³ Euphrosyne was the Greek Goddess of Joy and Mirth. This version also fits the analysis of the boat's life according to the carnival sense of the world because the characters on the boat welcome change with joy.

in order to escape marriage. She used to disguise her sex and, thus, her appearance was ambivalent and unstable:

From a distance the *Euphrosyne* looked very small. . . . The insect-like figures of Dalloways, Ambroses, and Vinraces were . . . derided, both from the extreme smallness of their persons and the doubt which only strong glasses could dispel as to whether they were really live creatures or only lumps on the rigging. (Woolf, 2009b, p. 94)

People's mistaking the boat for a cargo boat that carries cattle and their inability to perceive the passengers as human beings deepen the boat's sense of strangeness and uncertainty. Similarly, the boat and its passengers cannot be easily defined: "Glasses were turned upon her from the decks of great liners, and she was pronounced a tramp, a cargo-boat, or one of those wretched little passenger steamers where people rolled about among the cattle on deck" (Woolf, 2009b, p. 94). The boat cannot be categorized; it is regarded as an object that changes its functions from one point of view to the other. The passengers are seen either as inanimate objects or as animals. Moreover, even if they are perceived as animals, none can be defined as a particular animal. "Mr Pepper with all his learning had been mistaken for a cormorant, and then, as unjustly transformed into a cow" (Woolf, 2009b, p. 94).

Experiencing a sea voyage is like being on the threshold. Woolf feels that the sea is "a border of mystery" (as cited in Sage, 2009, p. xii). The boat has "a life of her own" (Woolf, 2009b, p. 29-30); therefore, the characters are somewhere in-between. According to Bakhtin (1929/2011), in carnivalized literature the characters and everything they experience are "pushed to its boundaries" (p. 167). They are situated in spaces where they have their turning points in life. For Rachel, the boat stands for her space in-between; it is a space between naiveté and maturity.

Many works in English literature, particularly poems of the Romantic period, reflect sea journeys as a colonialist expansion. While analysing Coleridge's poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", Kaya (2019), for instance, states that colonialist expansion paved the way for racial hierarchies (p. 93). In other words, the sea turns into a stable and strong platform that stretches from European countries deep into the African interior to move the European colonialist ideology to its colonies. Yet, in Woolf's novel, sea stands for something else; it is the borderline where this European ideological structure sinks. And the sea journey serves the purpose of leaving everything related to any kind of constraint behind and feeling the air of freedom on the surface of the fluctuating sea. Being on the boat helps the passengers see London's rigidity and Edwardian life's tendency to ostracise everything that extends beyond what society regards as normalcy and stability. The characters' observation of the vanishing country makes them believe that they escape imprisonment. "The people in ships, . . . , took an equally singular view of England. Not only did it appear to them to be an island, and a very small island, but it was a shrinking island in which people were imprisoned" (Woolf, 2009b, p. 29). They usurp a place on the boat defined by the principles of perpetual change which is felt by Helen, Rachel's aunt and companion during her journey: "the whole course of their lives was now put out of order" (Woolf, 2009b, p. 73).

Second, Santa Marina becomes the place where Rachel experiences change and "crisis time." She explores new feelings and senses. She changes her perspective on her life and exclaims it during the dance activity at the hotel. "I've changed my view of life completely!" (Woolf, 2009b, p. 182) Santa Marina is the place where she becomes familiar with Terence Hewet and falls in love for the first time. Rachel's experience of love is a carnivalistic ambivalence because it combines love and hatred, courage and fear. According to Bakhtin (1929/2011), it is a "carnivalization of passion" which "is evidenced first and foremost in its

ambivalence: love is combined with hatred, avarice with selflessness, ambition with self-abasement, and so forth” (p. 159). Rachel falls in love and there is no denial of it. She likes her new feeling but at the same time she hates it. “Very gently and quietly, almost as if it were the blood singing in her veins, or the water of the stream running over stones, Rachel became conscious of a new feeling within her. . . . ‘This is happiness, I suppose’” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 330). However, later on in the novel, she objects to her new feelings. “‘No,’ she repeated, ‘I never fell in love, if falling in love is what people say it is’” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 342). Rachel is caught in a dilemma which makes her contemplate her condition. She even offers Terence to separate. “Let’s break it off, then” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 353).

Santa Marina is the place where Rachel becomes aware of women’s condition and acquires a sense of protest against patriarchal dictates. Her conversations with Terence lead her to this enlightenment. “Hewet’s words made her think. She always submitted to her father” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 246). According to Terence, women harm themselves by exaggerating men’s abilities. The choice of his words, indeed, puts more stress on the harm women go through: “The respect that women, even well-educated, very able women, have for men, . . . I believe we must have the sort of power over you that we’re said to have over horses. They see us three times as big as we are or they’d never obey us” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 239). He also stresses the fact that daughters are usually disregarded for the sake of sons:

And then, of course, the daughters have to give way to the sons; the sons have to be educated; they have to bully and shove for their wives and families, and so it all comes over again. And meanwhile there are the women in the background . . . Do you really think that the vote will do you any good? (Woolf, 2009b, p. 240)

So, as Little (1983) claims, under the light of these circumstances that become clear to Rachel, Rachel’s death is actually her insistence on remaining outside of the patriarchal world and away from social norms (p. 28).

Escape from stability inevitably leads to the tendency to escape norms. The female characters in *The Voyage Out* tend to open their homes to the outside world and refashion the inside because they want to break free from the presence of perennial precepts that govern the domestic space. Bakhtin (1929/2011) states that “[c]arnivalization is much deeper and more substantial” when the work includes “life that has left its normal rut, almost a ‘world turned inside out’” (pp. 162-163). Thus, a carnivalized work focuses on the life in which the characters cease following appointed rules and start living following their own desires. In *The Voyage Out*, it is seen that the female characters’ actions do not correspond to the actions that were expected of middle-class women in Edwardian England.

The holiday mood of *The Voyage Out* places the female characters in a space and time in which they feel free and brave enough to suspend the norms regulating women’s lives. Woolf “ships the English to Santa Marina, and deprives them of ‘the supporting background of organized English life,’ so that they are seen in high relief” (Sage, 2009, p. xxiii). The English feel they are not supposed to remember the social norms when they are away from London, that they are completely free. Indeed, having a holiday has been regarded by Bakhtin as a kind of activity carrying the traces of the carnival. “The carnival spirit with its freedom, its utopian character oriented toward the future, was gradually transformed into a mere holiday mood” (Bakhtin, 1965/1984, p. 33).

The characters in *The Voyage Out* are a collective of eccentric individuals. They disrupt the smooth atmosphere of stability and normalcy and in this way the dominant ideology of patriarchy is subverted. According to Bakhtin (1929/2011), “carnivalized atmosphere” is also created when there are eccentric characters: “ambivalent and crisis-ridden characters, unfinalized, eccentric, full of unexpected possibilities” (p. 171). The Ambroses seem quite

different from the others. For example, when they walk on the streets of London, the others are seen as “small, agitated figures” because “in comparison with this couple most people looked small” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 3). The children on the Embankment tease the pair because of their appearance. Mr Ambrose seems eccentric, “awful” and “grotesque” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 4) to the children. Mr Vinrace’s opinion about Helen confirms her peculiar nature. “Willoughby was reflecting that his sister-in-law was even more eccentric than he remembered, pushed her chair back and swept upstairs” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 23). Mrs Dalloway also sees idiosyncrasy in Helen: “slightly eccentric in appearance” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 40). In fact, for Mrs Dalloway, everybody on the boat is outlandish and she writes thus in her letter: “one feels as though one had boarded a little separate world, and they’d never been on shore, or done ordinary things in their lives” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 49). Mr Pepper is portrayed as “a spinster who detects a mouse” or “like the image of Buddha” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 18). For Mrs Dalloway, Mr Pepper is “queer” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 50) and she even ridicules him: “It’s a pity, sometimes, one can’t treat people like dogs!” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 50) These eccentric characters reveal the varieties of life; the novel pinpoints the fact that it is impossible to insert a character into a common frame of behaviour. Everyone has her/his own inner world that can seem queer for the others. In this way, Woolf propagates uncertainty and chaos against dominant patriarchal notions of certainty and stability.

Besides being quirk, the characters demonstrate a profane attitude towards religion. In Bakhtin’s terms profanation is “playing with the symbols of higher authority” (1929/2011, p. 125). Helen reveals her profane attitude toward Christianity: “I would rather my children told lies” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 23). Rachel “listened critically to what was being said” at the Mass, and “the atmosphere of forced solemnity increased her anger” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 264). Hirst reads Sappho during the Mass and Mrs Flushing “gulped down the Ode to Aphrodite during the Litany” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 267). Moreover, Hirst scribbles an “indecent” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 313) poem about God at the back of an envelope during the Mass. The characters’ profane attitude towards religion is the novel’s attitude towards any kind of norms that impose stability and rigidity. The characters’ playing with the notions of God, the Mass, and Christianity suggests their desire to be free from any stabilizing norms, to experience something that is prohibited, to break the boundaries and feel the flux of life.

The third function in the novel of merging the inside and the outside is to depict the characters’ reluctance to remain in closed spaces. Women’s coming out of the shell of domesticity brings them into contact with the others, particularly with men. Such behaviour on the part of female characters suggests their tendency to constitute a whole with the others. According to the Bakhtinian perspective, a body “is not separated from the world by clearly defined boundaries; it is blended with the world, with animals, with objects” (Bakhtin, 1965/1984, p. 27).

The domestic space becomes visible from the outside in some of the scenes in the novel; it loses its private atmosphere as a female space. Thus, the home loses its closed and secluded environment. In this way, it is possible to discuss these elements of the novel in terms of carnivalization. According to Bakhtin (1929/2011), one of the ways through which it is possible to discuss carnivalization is “‘leap[ing] over’ all that is comfortably habitable, well-arranged and stable, all that is far from the threshold” (p. 169). In *The Voyage Out*, the inside of the homes and hotels in Santa Marina, is seen through uncurtained windows. “The dinner-table was set between two long windows which were left uncurtained by Helen’s orders” (Woolf, 2009b, pp. 100-101). “A row of long windows opened almost to the ground. They were all of them uncurtained, and all brilliantly lighted, so that they [Rachel and Helen] could see everything inside. Each window revealed a different section of the life of the hotel” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 109).

Bowlby (1997) states that *The Voyage Out* “is full of scenes of looking and overhearing, planned or unwitting” (p. 175). Rachel’s and Helen’s preoccupation with gazing at what people

do deserves attention. Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz (2013) claims that feminist critics have always been engaged with the problem of a woman's being objectified by the male gaze (p. 195). The theory of the male gaze presents a woman as an object of the male's gaze. By gazing at a woman, a man subjugates her. As Laura Mulvey (2009) claims, women "are being turned all the time into objects of display, to be looked at and gazed at and stared at by men" (p. 13). Women, in this way, "connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*" (Mulvey, 2009, p. 19). In this respect, Rabinowitz (2013) states that Mulvey sees the male gaze as "fundamental to male power" (p. 195). By looking at a woman, a man establishes dominance and control over her. Indeed, women's function of projecting men is discussed by Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* (1992), where she claims that "[w]omen have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (p. 45). Woolf's and Mulvey's thoughts converge on the idea that men need women to see themselves powerful. Mulvey (2009) also adds that man's projection in a woman's image expresses "a strange male underworld of fear" (p. 8). It is the fear of loss of power and control. Similarly, Woolf (1992) states that if men lose their vision on a woman's image, his figure will diminish and "his fitness for life is diminished" (p. 46).

Woolf's novel unsettles this dichotomy between Mulvey's "active/male and passive/female" gaze and transforms the act of gazing into the act of acquiring knowledge and seeing life. Woolf's female characters gaze at men and women and are gazed at as well. This act of gazing makes them acquire knowledge with reference to the outside world; they become one with the rest of the world. By escaping the possibility of being objectified and being gazed at in the frame of the patriarchal order, subverting the dichotomy between being gazed at and gazing at, and transforming the act of the gaze into the act of seeing the world, Rachel's and Helen's actions make the borders between men and women dissolve. "The angels in the house" in the persons of Rachel and Helen, leave their "haven." What is surprising is that as they watch everywhere, they themselves are being watched, so the division between the act of watching and being watched is dissolved. "A melancholy voice issued from above them. 'Two women,' it said" (Woolf, 2009b, p. 112). As Helen later on says: "We watched you playing cards, but we never knew that we were being watched" (Woolf, 2009b, p. 147). And Rachel adds: "It was like a thing in a play" (Woolf, 2009b, p. 147).

The home as the symbol of privacy and the female sphere is abandoned and the actions that are supposed to happen inside are moved to the outside. In *The Voyage Out*, Arthur and Susan, the inhabitants of the hotel, kiss and become engaged outside and are watched by the others. "They lay in each other's arms and had no notion that they were observed" (Woolf, 2009b, p. 155). Helen and Rachel are presented with a vision of the local people's lives that are usually led outside. "The young women," whom Rachel and Helen see on the streets, "sat on the doorsteps, or issued out on to balconies, while the young men ranged up and down beneath, shouting up a greeting from time to time and stopping here and there to enter into amorous talk" (Woolf, 2009b, p. 107). Thus, the life of the inside flows outside; even the love affairs lose their intimate nature and become public. Money affairs lose secrecy and are evident to everybody. "At the open windows merchants could be seen making up the day's account" (Woolf, 2009b, p. 107). People, creating a crowd, "interchanged their views of the world as they walked, or gathered round the wine-tables at the street corner" (Woolf, 2009b, p. 107). Apparently, life in Santa Marina takes its course in front of everybody. And this is in contrast to the life the English have in their country. The English in Santa Marina, in other words, experience a carnival sense of the world by suspending their life in England.

Free Contact Among People

During carnival, as people from different classes come together, Bakhtin sees the birth of *free and familiar contact among people*. "[H]ierarchical structure," "reverence" for the higher

social ranks and classes, “etiquette” (Bakhtin, 1929/2011, p. 123) connected with the appropriate behaviour of the social statuses are suspended during carnival. Similarly, hierarchical structure, reverence for the authority and etiquette related to the appropriate behaviour are abandoned in Woolf’s *The Voyage Out*. However, in the novel, the barriers that are temporarily effaced are between men and women.

The Voyage Out includes two places where the characters transcend the gender roles that are imposed on them by society: the boat and Santa Marina. According to Bakhtin (1929/2011), the meeting of characters in one place becomes carnivalistic when these characters come face to face with change and flux and meet them with joy (p. 160). Mr Vinrace’s boat, *Euphrosyne*, becomes a meeting point for the characters that normally would not have a chance to come together. Indeed, Bakhtin (1929/2011) stresses the fact that a deck of a ship usually takes on “carnival-square significance” (p. 128). Rachel feels close to Mrs Dalloway despite the fact that they see each other for the first time. “She was overcome by an intense desire to tell Mrs Dalloway things she had never told anyone – things she had not realized herself until this moment” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 62). Besides Mrs Dalloway, Rachel feels close to Mr Dalloway:

The sleeping politician was left in Rachel’s charge. She read a sentence, and took a look at him. In sleep he looked like a coat hanging at the end of a bed; there were all the wrinkles, and the sleeves and trousers kept their shape though no longer filled out by legs and arms. (Woolf, 2009b, p. 65)

Santa Marina is another place that provides a chance for the characters’ intimacy. When Rachel and the people from the hotel go on expedition to Mount Rosa, an atmosphere for free contact among them is created. When they have a picnic on the mountain, men start flirting with women; one of the inhabitants of the hotel, Mr Perrott, flirts with Evelyn, who also stays at the hotel and whom he loves. “Playing this game they lost their stiffness, and even became unusually daring, for Mr Perrott, who was very shy, said, ‘Permit me,’ and removed an ant from Evelyn’s neck” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 149). Rachel starts to feel closer to Terence. “She realized with a great sense of comfort how easily she could talk to Terence, those thorns or ragged corners which tear the surface of some relationships being smoothed away” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 239). Familiarity among the characters intensifies when they start talking about their private lives. Hirst proposes “that each member of this party now gives a short biographical sketch of himself or herself” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 159).

When the characters go to a native village, they spend time on the deck of a steamer together. They even sleep on the deck and have a “question of nakedness” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 310) because there is no place to change clothes in. “Mattresses were thrown down, rugs provided, and the three women lay near each other in the soft open air” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 310) while men occupied the other end of the boat. The power and strictness of life in England loses its strong grip on them. The party goes away from the civilised world “into a primeval forest” (Sage, 2009, p. xxii). In the native village, where a woman can uncover her breasts “to the lips of her baby,” or “cry some harsh unintelligible cry” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 332), the English become freer in their behaviour. Rachel and Terence, for example, do not hide their engagement. “They turned away and began to walk through the trees, leaning, without fear of discovery, upon each other’s arms” (Woolf, 2009b, pp. 332-333). They want to express their feelings of love and make Helen listen to them. They become “anxious to go on talking about themselves” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 336). It shows their desire to make their love affair public. Evelyn feels this urge and yearns to share her feelings with the others and Terence seems to her the most available person. She reveals her worries and dilemmas related to her feelings of love: “can one be in love with two people at once, or can’t one?” (Woolf, 2009b, p. 213) She also reveals her illegitimate

background, which seems eccentric for the people of the time. "I'm the daughter of a mother and no father" (Woolf, 2009b, p. 214).

Conclusion

This study has explored Woolf's refashioning of the so-called female domain as a space in which female characters are liberated from the oppressive patriarchal world. This study has also connected the process of the reshaping of this space to Bakhtinian carnival by building an analogy between the carnival's participants and Woolf's female characters in that both groups suspend traditions and conventions. The juxtaposition of Bakhtinian and Woolfian works has identified the possibility of stretching the notion of the carnival to the discourse on gender hierarchies. Although Woolf pictures her female characters in their redefined female domain and in the outside, she also pictures their inability to grasp the absolute sense of freedom, which seems to be symbolized by Rachel's death. Rachel reconfigures her space but loses her life. Rachel's death, if read as her escape from the patriarchal norms, depicts Woolf's awareness of the fact that a woman can never be free in a world that is constructed according to the masculine values. As Little (1983) claims, Rachel dies and "travels deep into the primitive wildness of the nonhuman jungle", "the symbols of chaos and of freedom" and "a revolutionary country" (p. 34). Thus, for Woolf, getting rid of the patriarchal norms seems hardly possible. Women can only be freed from these norms if they create a female space for themselves.

References

- Armstrong, N. (1987). *Desire and domestic fiction: A political history of the novel*. Oxford University Press.
- Bagshaw, H. B. P. (2013). *Religion in the thought of Mikhail Bakhtin: Reason and faith*. Ashgate.
- Bakhtin, M. (2011). *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics* (C. Emerson, Ed. and Trans.). University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1929)
- Bakhtin, M. (1984). *Rabelais and his world*. (H. Iswolsky, Trans.). Indiana University Press. (Original work published 1965)
- Baysal, K. (2014). Inferiorisation and exploitation of women in *Herland* and *The year of the flood*. *Journal of Social and Human Sciences*, Special Issue, 19-28.
- Bowlby, R. (1997). *Feminist destinations and further essays on Virginia Woolf*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Dentith, S. (1995). *Bakhtinian thought*. Routledge.
- Erdem Ayyıldız, N. (2019). A Nietzschean reading of androgyny in Virginia Woolf's *To the lighthouse*. *Journal of Narrative and Language Studies*, 7(12), 57-69.
<https://nalans.com/index.php/nalans/article/view/145/108>
- French, M. (2008). *From eve to dawn: A history of women in the world*. The Feminist Press.
- Kaya, H. (2019). Two literary reactions in the romantic period: romantic anti-slavery idea and romantic orientalism in selected English romantic poems. *Agathos*, 10.1(18), 91-105.
https://www.agathos-international-review.com/issue10_1/13.Hilal%20Kaya.pdf
- Little, J. (1983). *Comedy and the woman writer: Woolf, Spark, and feminism*. University of Nebraska Press.

- Mulvey, L. (2009). *Visual and other pleasures*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rabinowitz, N. S. (2013). Women as subject and object of the gaze in tragedy. *HELIOS*, 40.1(2), 195-221. <https://doi:10.1353/hel.2013.0003>
- Sage, L. (2009). Introduction. In V. Woolf (Auth.), *The Voyage Out* (pp. xii-xxxiii). Oxford University Press.
- Snaith, A. (2003). *Virginia Woolf. Public and private negotiations*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Walker, S.P. (1998). How to secure your husband's esteem. Accounting and private patriarchy in the British middle class household during the nineteenth century. *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 23.5(6), 485-514. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0361-3682\(97\)00025-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0361-3682(97)00025-1)
- Woolf, V. (1992). *A room of one's own and Three guineas*. Oxford University Press.
- Woolf, V. (2009a). *Selected essays*. Oxford University Press.
- Woolf, V. (2009b). *The voyage out*. Oxford University Press.