



Virginia Woolf
Mrs Dalloway

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MRS DALLOWAY

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VIRGINIA WOOLF

Mrs Dalloway



Edited with an Introduction and Notes by
DAVID BRADSHAW

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BIOGRAPHICAL PREFACE

VIRGINIA WOOLF was born Adeline Virginia Stephen on 25 January 1882 at 22 Hyde Park Gate, Kensington. Her father, Leslie Stephen, himself a widower, had married in 1878 Julia Jackson, widow of Herbert Duckworth. Between them they already had four children; a fifth, Vanessa, was born in 1879, a sixth, Thoby, in 1880. There followed Virginia and, in 1883, Adrian.

Both of the parents had strong family associations with literature. Leslie Stephen was the son of Sir James Stephen, a noted historian, and brother of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, a distinguished lawyer and writer on law. His first wife was a daughter of Thackeray, his second had been an admired associate of the Pre-Raphaelites, and also, like her first husband, had aristocratic connections. Stephen himself is best remembered as the founding editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and as an alpinist, but he was also a remarkable journalist, biographer, and historian of ideas; his *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (1876) is still of great value. No doubt our strongest idea of him derives from the character of Mr Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*; for a less impressionistic portrait, which conveys a strong sense of his centrality in the intellectual life of the time, one can consult Noël Annan's *Leslie Stephen* (revised edition, 1984).

Virginia had the free run of her father's library, a better substitute for the public school and university education she was denied than most women of the time could aspire to; her brothers, of course, were sent to Clifton and Westminster. Her mother died in 1895, and in that year she had her first breakdown, possibly related in some way to the sexual molestation of which her half-brother George Duckworth is accused. By 1897 she was able to read again, and did so voraciously: 'Gracious, child, how you gobble', remarked her father, who, with a liberality and good sense at odds with the age in which they lived, allowed her to choose her reading freely. In other respects her relationship with

her father was difficult; his deafness and melancholy, his excessive emotionalism, not helped by successive bereavements, all increased her nervousness.

Stephen fell ill in 1902 and died in 1904. Virginia suffered another breakdown, during which she heard the birds singing in Greek, a language in which she had acquired some competence. On her recovery she moved, with her brothers and sister, to a house in Gordon Square, Bloomsbury; there, and subsequently at several other nearby addresses, what eventually became famous as the Bloomsbury Group took shape.

Virginia had long considered herself a writer. It was in 1905 that she began to write for publication in the *Times Literary Supplement*. In her circle (more loosely drawn than is sometimes supposed) were many whose names are now half-forgotten, but some were or became famous: J. M. Keynes and E. M. Forster and Roger Fry; also Clive Bell, who married Vanessa, Lytton Strachey, who once proposed marriage to her, and Leonard Woolf. Despite much ill health in these years, she travelled a good deal, and had an interesting social life in London. She did a little adult-education teaching, worked for female suffrage, and shared the excitement of Roger Fry's Post-Impressionist Exhibition in 1910. In 1912, after another bout of nervous illness, she married Leonard Woolf.

She was thirty, and had not yet published a book, though *The Voyage Out* was in preparation. It was accepted for publication by her half-brother Gerald Duckworth in 1913 (it appeared in 1915). She was often ill with depression and anorexia, and in 1913 attempted suicide. But after a bout of violent madness her health seemed to settle down, and in 1917 a printing press was installed at Hogarth House, Richmond, where she and her husband were living. The Hogarth Press, later an illustrious institution, but at first meant in part as therapy for Virginia, was now inaugurated. She began *Night and Day*, and finished it in 1918. It was published by Duckworth in 1919, the year in which the Woolfs bought Monk's House, Rodmell, for £700. There, in 1920, she began *Jacob's Room*, finished, and published by the Woolfs' own Hogarth Press, in 1922. In the following year she began *Mrs*

Dalloway (finished in 1924, published 1925), when she was already working on *To the Lighthouse* (finished and published, after intervals of illness, in 1927). *Orlando*, a fantastic 'biography' of a man-woman, and a tribute to Virginia's close friendship with Vita Sackville-West, was written quite rapidly over the winter of 1927-8, and published, with considerable success, in October. *The Waves* was written and rewritten in 1930 and 1931 (published in October of that year). She had already started on *Flush*, the story of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's pet dog—another success with the public—and in 1932 began work on what became *The Years*.

This brief account of her work during the first twenty years of her marriage is of course incomplete; she had also written and published many shorter works, as well as both series of *The Common Reader*, and *A Room of One's Own*. There have been accounts of the marriage very hostile to Leonard Woolf, but he can hardly be accused of cramping her talent or hindering the development of her career.

The Years proved an agonizingly difficult book to finish, and was completely rewritten at least twice. Her friend Roger Fry having died in 1934, she planned to write a biography, but illnesses in 1936 delayed the project; towards the end of that year she began instead the polemical *Three Guineas*, published in 1938. *The Years* had meanwhile appeared in 1937, by which time she was again at work on the Fry biography, and already sketching in her head the book that was to be *Between the Acts*. *Roger Fry* was published in the terrifying summer of 1940. By the autumn of that year many of the familiar Bloomsbury houses had been destroyed or badly damaged by bombs. Back at Monk's House, she worked on *Between the Acts*, and finished it in February 1941. Thereafter her mental condition deteriorated alarmingly, and on 28 March, unable to face another bout of insanity, she drowned herself in the River Ouse.

Her career as a writer of fiction covers the years 1912-41, thirty years distracted by intermittent serious illness as well as by the demands, which she regarded as very important, of family and friends, and by the need or desire to write literary criticism

and social comment. Her industry was extraordinary—nine highly-wrought novels, two or three of them among the great masterpieces of the form in this century, along with all the other writings, including the copious journals and letters that have been edited and published in recent years. Firmly set though her life was in the ‘Bloomsbury’ context—the agnostic ethic transformed from that of her forebears, the influence of G. E. Moore and the Cambridge Apostles, the individual brilliance of J. M. Keynes, Strachey, Forster, and the others—we have come more and more to value the distinctiveness of her talent, so that she seems more and more to stand free of any context that might be thought to limit her. None of that company—except, perhaps, T. S. Eliot, who was on the fringe of it—did more to establish the possibilities of literary innovation, or to demonstrate that such innovation must be brought about by minds familiar with the innovations of the past. This is true originality. It was Eliot who said of *Jacob’s Room* that in that book she had freed herself from any compromise between the traditional novel and her original gift; it was the freedom he himself sought in *The Waste Land*, published in the same year, a freedom that was dependent upon one’s knowing with intimacy that with which compromise must be avoided, so that the knowledge became part of the originality. In fact she had ‘gobbled’ her father’s books to a higher purpose than he could have understood.

Frank Kermode

INTRODUCTION

A Well of Tears

Jacob's Room (1922) ends with a poignant *tableau vivant*. The shoes of Jacob Flanders, a victim of the First World War, are held out by his mother in his overwhelmingly empty yet eerily occupied room. Virginia Woolf was as conscious as anyone in the 1920s of the paradoxical legacy of 'the bloody war'¹ of 1914–18—how what it had taken away was continually brought home to people—and her next novel, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), is the second of three she published during that decade (the third, *To the Lighthouse*, appeared in 1927) which explore, among other things, the social and psychological impact of the War.

The image of Betty Flanders holding out her dead son's shoes is called to mind soon after the beginning of *Mrs Dalloway* when Clarissa thinks of 'Lady Bexborough who opened a bazaar . . . with the telegram in her hand, John, her favourite, killed' (p. 4). This reference to a moment of mental and emotional arrest, following almost immediately after the first of Clarissa Dalloway's flashbacks to when she was 'a girl of eighteen' at Bourton (p. 3), develops into a key theme in the novel: in differing degrees, the plights of Lady Bexborough, Clarissa, Peter Walsh, and Septimus Warren Smith all lay bare how the trauma of a moment can check the progress of a life. Like the chiming of Big Ben, the past is both 'irrevocable' (pp. 4, 99) and ever present in *Mrs Dalloway*, and the retrospective cast of Clarissa's mind is epitomized in her choice of reading: she 'scarcely read a book now, except *memoirs* in bed' (p. 7; emphasis added).

The novel is set on an imaginary (see note to p. 123 on pp. 182–3) and very hot Wednesday in June 1923. While Clarissa can 'thank Heaven' that the War is 'over', for Lady Bexborough, and 'for some one like Mrs Foxcroft at the Embassy last night eating

¹ *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie (5 vols.; London: Hogarth Press, 1977–84), ii. 51.

her heart out because that nice boy was killed' (p. 4), its hurt is undiminished. Though the social changes which the War accelerated are apparent to Peter Walsh on his return from India (pp. 61, 137), and he is a beneficiary of 'the great revolution of Mr Willett's summer time' (p. 137), introduced as a daylight saving measure at the heart of the conflict in 1916, the War's darker vestiges continue to obtrude amidst 'the bellow and the uproar' (p. 4) of London. The sky-writing aeroplane, for example, 'bore[s] *ominously* into the ears of the crowd' beneath (p. 17; emphasis added) because for Mrs Coates and her fellow Londoners its sudden drone still prompts the fear of aerial bombardment five years after the War has ended (though unsystematic and barely comparable with the London Blitz of 1940-1, being bombed from the air was as terrifying as it was unprecedented during the First World War). Even the 'indomitable' Helena Parry was 'disturbed by the war . . . which dropped a bomb at her very door' (p. 151). More generally, there are frequent references to and invocations of 'the dead' (pp. 15, 17, 56, 74, 93, 123, 125, 153) in the novel, and at one point a line of boy soldiers is seen marching up Whitehall past the War Office (now forming part of the Ministry of Defence), having laid a wreath against that most pain-filled and loss-laden of all empty spaces, the Cenotaph (from two Greek words meaning 'empty tomb'; p. 43), completed in 1920 as Britain's national memorial to her 'Glorious Dead'. Elsewhere, the 'embittered' (p. 10) Doris Kilman, victimized during the War because of her German origins, German friends, Germanic name and gutsy honesty (p. 105), observes people 'shuffl[ing] past the tomb of the Unknown Warrior' (p. 113) in Westminster Abbey. The corpse it holds could even be that of her brother, killed in the War, despite his name, fighting for Britain (p. 105). In these various ways, Woolf drives home her sense of the War's ongoing tragic aftermath, its refusal to leave hold of the living, the persistence of memory.

A profound sense of absence is felt not only by those characters who have lost brothers, sons, and comrades in battle. Peter Walsh, for example, has spent most of his life 'overcome with . . . grief' (p. 36) because of Clarissa's rejection of him in favour of

Richard Dalloway, and Clarissa herself has ‘borne about her for years like an arrow sticking in her heart the grief’ (p. 7) of having broken with Peter. Hugh Whitbread always makes Clarissa feel that she ‘might be a girl of eighteen’ (p. 5) and beneath her guise of the ‘perfect hostess’ (pp. 6, 53) that is exactly what she is, trapped (like Peter, p. 130) in the time warp of Bourton in the 1890s, when her life was brought to a symbolic halt after she opted for a prudent marriage rather than giving rein to her heart. Now a frail 52-year-old, Clarissa’s emotional suspension finds release in the ‘schoolgirlish’ (p. 5) spring of her language—‘What a lark! What a plunge!’ (p. 3)—and if Septimus’s own fatal plunge and his wife’s sedative-induced dream of ‘opening long windows, stepping out into some garden’ (p. 127) are clearly anticipated on the first page of the novel when Clarissa recalls how ‘she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air’ (p. 3), the triggering of such a vivid recollection of something so long ago by something so slight as the word ‘hinges’ (p. 3) reveals just how close the past lies to the surface of Clarissa’s mind. At different points in the novel, Clarissa (p. 37), Lucrezia Warren Smith (p. 56), Septimus (pp. 18, 119) and Peter all start crying, all, like Peter, ‘suddenly thrown by those uncontrollable forces’ (p. 39), ‘these astonishing accesses of emotion’ (p. 68), which the War and their pasts have bequeathed them, and in so doing they lend weight to Clarissa’s conviction that ‘This late age of world’s experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears’ (p. 8).

Shattered Nerves, Disabled Lives

As well as the pleasure of trying to fathom what Woolf gives us, her texts offer the extra satisfaction of musing on what she withholds. Septimus Warren Smith, for example, is a curiously grandiose name for a poorly educated clerk from the provinces. Is his ‘fantastic Christian name’ (p. 72) really the one with which he was baptized, its Latinate ring evincing his parents’ hopes for his social advancement? Or is it the forename which the pre-War

aspirant poet gave himself, topped off with a suitably distinctive two-part surname? Certainly, there is no mention in the novel of any of the six older siblings the name Septimus implies, and the philoprogenitive connotations of his Christian name, coupled with the unavoidable association of 'Warren' with the teeming fertility of rabbits, serve only to spotlight the barrenness of his marriage.

It is typical of Woolf's fiction in general that on first reading *Mrs Dalloway* many details pass by almost unnoticed before retrieving the reader's attention and demanding closer scrutiny. Some details turn out to be significant, some do not, and with others it is impossible to say. Who is the typist, for instance, whom Clarissa hears on returning to her house from Bond Street (p. 25)? It is most likely Miss Kilman, typing up work assignments for Elizabeth, or Elizabeth, typing up her response to such assignments, because Clarissa would seem to have no need of a typist and Richard Dalloway's would almost certainly have been based at the House of Commons. And just how Clarissa and Peter Walsh respectively get home from Bond Street so quickly; and get from Westminster to Regent's Park (pp. 41-7) and from Bloomsbury to Westminster (p. 139) so speedily, must remain either pointless questions, tantalizing conundrums, or evidence of Woolf's occasional loose plotting, depending on the reader's point of view.² One obvious rejoinder, of course, is that in a novel which portrays time as an all-pervasive agency of oppressive control, the ability of two of the principal characters to clock off for a while could not be more fitting.

A passing detail which should on no account be passed over, however, is the reference to Septimus's 'crosses' (p. 75). This single word makes it clear that he is not only an extremely fortunate survivor of the War, having enlisted soon after the beginning of the conflict in August 1914 and fought through it until the

² See e.g. John Sutherland, 'Clarissa's Invisible Taxi', in *Can Jane Eyre be Happy? More Puzzles in Classic Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1997), 215-24, and Diderik Roll-Hansen, 'Peter Walsh's Seven-League Boots: A Note on *Mrs Dalloway*', *English Studies*, 50/3 (1969), 301-4.

Armistice of 11 November 1918 (p. 73), but a military hero. We know that Septimus was a 'brave' soldier (p. 20), that he 'won promotion' during the War (pp. 73, 81), and that he 'served with the greatest distinction' (p. 81). But to be decorated with 'crosses' in the context of the 1914–18 War can *only* mean that Septimus's bravery was acknowledged through the conferment on him of *two or more* of the following decorations: the French Croix de Guerre, the Italian Croce di Guerra, the Belgian Military Cross, the Belgian Croix de Guerre, or, if the 'crosses' were British, as they are most likely to have been, the Military Cross and the Victoria Cross, his country's highest award for heroism in battle.³ In other words, Septimus must have been a remarkably courageous soldier, dedicated to making 'England prosper' (p. 84) with a martial zeal and patriotic fervour to which even Sir William Bradshaw would have to defer. When this is recognized, the treatment he receives at the hands of Bradshaw and Holmes seems all the more callous and unfitting. On discovering that he has leapt from his sitting-room window, Holmes denounces Septimus as a 'coward', but no description of him could be less appropriate. In flinging 'himself vigorously, violently down on to Mrs Filmer's area railings' (p. 127), Septimus ends his life with the same unflinching belligerence with which he must have conducted himself on the battlefield.

Which is not to minimize how sick he is in 1923. Indeed, with his stammer and his loss of memory (p. 83), his delusions and his generally disturbed behaviour, Septimus is a classic case of 'the deferred effects of shell-shock' (p. 155). Lucrezia recognizes that her husband 'had grown stranger and stranger. He said people were talking behind the bedroom walls . . . He saw things too—he had seen an old woman's head in the middle of a fern' (p. 56). He exhibits suicidal tendencies, voices assail him, he jabbers back at them, he sees a Skye terrier turning into a man, and he wants to tell the Cabinet that 'trees are alive . . . there is no crime' (p. 57). Most notably of all, he sees his dead comrade

³ Information from Stanley C. Johnson, *The Medal Collector: A Guide to Naval, Military, Air-Force and Civil Medals and Ribbons* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1921).

Evans coming towards him from amongst the Regent's Park shrubbery. 'The symptoms [of shell-shock] were wildly diverse,' Wendy Holden has written, 'from total paralysis and blindness to loss of speech, vivid nightmares, hallucinations and memory loss. Some patients declined eventually into schizophrenia, chronic depression and even suicide.'⁴ There were some 200,000 cases of this kind of nervous breakdown during and after the War, and at the end of 1922 there were still 16,771 soldiers hospitalized with shattered nerves and around 50,000 neurasthenic and other types of war pensioner at large in Britain.⁵ Interestingly, when the Government launched an official Inquiry into shell-shock in 1920 under the chairmanship of Lord Southborough, it gathered evidence from, among others, a Dr Holmes, formerly Consultant Neurologist to the British Expeditionary Force.⁶

Sir William Bradshaw's reputation is based on his 'almost infallible accuracy in diagnosis . . . sympathy; tact; understanding of the human soul' (p. 81), but these last three qualities are not in evidence during his interview with Septimus. For example, Bradshaw interprets his patient's stuttering over the first person pronoun as evidence of his dangerous egotism: "Try to think as little about yourself as possible," said Sir William kindly. Really, he was not fit to be about' (p. 83). But in a number of ways Septimus shows that he is. Although he is clearly mentally ill, Septimus is far from wholly deranged. He displays a taste for low-level linguistic playfulness when he makes his pun about 'Holmes's homes' (p. 82) and he is sufficiently well attuned to the real world to remark to his wife on leaving Bradshaw's premises that the 'upkeep of that motor car alone must cost him quite a lot' (p. 84). Above all, Septimus's cool analysis of how best to kill himself, as Holmes ascends the stairs to his room, could not be more rational (p. 126). There is, then, evidence to suggest that Septimus is what his appearance

⁴ Wendy Holden, *Shell Shock* (London and Basingstoke: Channel 4 Books, 1998), 7.

⁵ Anthony Babington, *Shell-Shock: A History of the Changing Attitudes to War Neurosis* (London: Leo Cooper, 1997), 121.

⁶ Ibid. 124-8.

implies, 'a border case, neither one thing nor the other' (p. 71), who, had he been treated more sympathetically and less harassingly, may have begun to recover his mind. While Septimus is understandably intimidated by Bradshaw during their interview, and his stammer prevents him speaking up for himself, the consultant's opinion that 'attaching meanings to words of a symbolical kind' is a 'serious symptom' of mental unbalance (p. 81) is by some margin the interview's most disturbing revelation.

The 'Bill' which Bradshaw and Richard Dalloway (a Conservative MP) want 'to get through the Commons' (p. 155) is intended to deal with, among other things, 'the deferred effects of shell-shock' (p. 155). From what we know of their politics and their intolerance, it seems likely that Bradshaw is lobbying to have the proposed powers of the legislation extended in order that the State and its doctors would have the authority to deal with the most severely shell-shocked by forcibly interning them in asylums in Surrey and elsewhere: a 'provision' (p. 155), in short, not only to seclude '[Britain's] lunatics' (p. 85), but her shell-shocked ex-servicemen as well. Though Bradshaw knows exactly what is wrong with Septimus, he shows little compassion for his patient and merely addresses him on the dangers of succumbing to unmanly 'moments of depression' (p. 83). He seems to have no real grasp of the field in which he is supposedly expert, and his desire to segregate Septimus may be viewed as the characteristic response of a man who has dedicated his life to erecting a 'wall of gold' (p. 80) between his wife and himself and the rest of the world.

Holmes, on the other hand, even gets the diagnosis wrong. Although the War, and even more dramatically the influenza pandemic of 1918–19⁷ (of which the weak-hearted and ghostly

⁷ The pandemic killed 228,917 Britons and well over twenty million people worldwide. One commentator has written of 'those 120 days when the fate of civilisation hung in the balance . . . All told, over a billion people—more than half the world's population—are thought to have been attacked' during the pandemic. Richard Collier, *The Plague of the Spanish Lady: The Influenza Pandemic of 1918–1919* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1974), 305.

Clarissa—she had ‘grown very white since her illness’ (pp. 3, 31)—is almost certainly a survivor) had shown decisively otherwise, Holmes still insists that ‘health is largely a matter in our own control’ (p. 78). He is adamant that Septimus is just ‘a little out of sorts’ (p. 18) and that there is really ‘nothing the matter’ with him (pp. 20, 57, 77, 78). He prescribes a regimen of cricket (p. 22), golf (p. 77), music hall attendance (pp. 22, 77) and porridge (p. 78), and when those fail he resorts to bromide (pp. 77, 81), a noun, pointedly, which means both a sedative and ‘a trite remark’ (*OED*). Whether Holmes is antipathetic to the shell-shocked or just cluelessly incompetent is hard to say, but by 1923 the approach of both him and Bradshaw would have been regarded as highly questionable by those who were really in the know about the condition. ‘It was perhaps the First World War that most effectively brought home the artificiality of the distinction between the normal mind on the one hand and its abnormal conditions on the other,’ the psychologist Cyril Burt remarked in 1935.⁸

London’s medical men do brisk business in *Mrs Dalloway*. Before the War, it seems, ‘you could buy almost perfect gloves’ (p. 9) in Bond Street, but in the London of 1923 nothing quite fits as snugly as it did, either materially or mentally. For the umpteenth time, Hugh Whitbread has come up ‘to see doctors’ (p. 5). ‘Other people came to see pictures; go to the opera; take their daughters out; the Whitbreads came “to see doctors”’. Times without number Clarissa had visited Evelyn Whitbread in a nursing home . . . Evelyn was a good deal out of sorts’ (p. 5), while at other points in the novel, invalids are glimpsed ‘huddled up in Bath chairs’ in Regent’s Park (pp. 20, 23) and ‘a maimed file of lunatics’ is spotted by Septimus in the Tottenham Court Road (p. 76). Most conspicuous of all, the ‘stream of patients’ attending Bradshaw’s Harley Street consulting room is ‘incessant’ (p. 81).

Mrs Dalloway was written at a time when Woolf herself was

⁸ Quoted in Elaine Showalter, *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* (London: Picador, 1997), 73.

both ill and misdiagnosed. She had suffered breakdowns in the past and had attempted suicide in 1913. During 1921 she was again unstable, suffering hallucinations. 'In the bitterly cold spring of 1922, she had had the 'flu, and [her doctor] had told her that her pulse was "insane" and that "the rhythm of her heart was wrong"' and that she might die imminently, but these proved to be "entirely false verdicts" . . . [and *Mrs Dalloway*] was powerfully affected by this brush with mortality. "Suppose the idea of the book is the contrast between life and death", she noted in November [1922]',⁹ while an 'idea' which is just as prominent in the finished novel is the folly of seeking to enforce rigid constructions of madness and sanity in a society which had suffered such deep psychological wounds.

Unhinging Things

The reference to taking doors off their hinges in the second and third lines of the novel most evidently relates to the preparations for Clarissa's party, but it may also be a cue to readers to ask themselves which character or characters, if any, *are* 'unhinged' (as a verb meaning 'to unsettle, unbalance, disorder in mind, throw into confusion' (*OED*), unhinge had been in use since the early seventeenth century) in *Mrs Dalloway*. In a diary entry for 14 October 1922, Woolf commented that her work in progress would be 'a study of insanity & suicide: the world seen by the sane & the insane side by side—something like that'.¹⁰ But who is which in the novel?

Is Clarissa, for instance, simply eccentric or precariously unbalanced? Before Septimus is even mentioned, her acute strangeness is carefully established. 'She felt very young; at the same time unspeakably aged. She sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on. She had a perpetual sense . . . of being out, out, far out to sea and alone; she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even

⁹ Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1996), 454–5.

¹⁰ *Diary*, ii. 207.

one day' (p. 7). In that this day in particular is the day of her party, Clarissa is peculiarly uncertain of the time of year: is it 'the middle of June' (p. 4) as she states, or is June 'still untouched . . . almost whole' (p. 31) as she also says? Clarissa feels 'the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown' (p. 9), and when she notices a 'salmon on an iceblock' in a Bond Street fishmonger's window she comments out loud 'That is all . . . That is all' (p. 9). Not knowing 'what the Equator was' (p. 104) might be thought a tad unusual for someone of Clarissa's age and background, but in view of her husband's profession, the prolonged and widespread coverage which the Turkish slaughters of Armenians in 1894-6 and 1915 received in the British press, and the way in which the continuing persecution of Armenians in Turkey was closely monitored in British newspapers between 1915 and the early 1920s, Clarissa's 'muddl[ing] Armenians and Turks' (p. 103) in 1923 is only a little less bizarre than muddling Jews and Nazis would be in the latter half of the following decade.

In Clarissa's eyes, the 'degradingly poor' (p. 104) Doris Kilman is nothing less than a dangerous incubus, 'one of those spectres with which one battles in the night; one of those spectres who stand astride us and suck up half our life-blood, dominators and tyrants' (p. 10). She sees her as 'Elizabeth's seducer; the woman who had crept in to steal and defile' (p. 148). Clarissa is aware that a hatred, a 'brutal monster' (p. 10) lurks inside her with 'icy claws' (p. 31). Unlike the War, the influenza did not leave its survivors mentally impaired, but 'this hatred':

especially since her illness, had power to make her feel scraped, hurt in her spine; gave her physical pain, and made all pleasure in beauty, in friendship, in being well, in being loved and making her home delightful, rock, quiver, and bend as if indeed there were a monster grubbing at the roots, as if the whole panoply of content were nothing but self love! this hatred! (pp. 10-11)

Septimus's affliction is expressed in similar terms and both he and Clarissa are at once homicidal and suicidal, with the perilousness of Clarissa's life underscored by her husband's gift of red and white roses. 'Richard's first duty was to his country' (p. 94),

so it is entirely proper that the roses he has chosen are in the same two colours as the cross of St George, the patron saint of England. But red and white flowers together are also 'omens of death'.¹¹ Dalloway, highly ambiguously, is 'eager, yes, very eager, to travel that spider's thread of attachment between himself and Clarissa' (p. 97), and in doing so he exposes what Woolf saw as the essentially deathly connection between women and patriarchy, the individual and the State. Once home, he has little to say to Clarissa: in a novel of many arresting symmetries, at three o'clock (p. 100) on a hot afternoon in June 1923 Dalloway cannot bring himself to tell his wife, 'in so many words' (pp. 91, 98, 99, 100), that he loves her, just as it was at 'three o'clock in the afternoon of a very hot day' (p. 54) thirty years previously that Clarissa rejected Peter Walsh, unable, in so many words, to say that she loved him.

In her introduction to the Modern Library Edition of *Mrs Dalloway* (1928), Woolf revealed that Septimus 'is intended to be [Clarissa's] double',¹² and as well as being survivors of the two greatest catastrophes to beset mankind in their era, another obvious link between them is that Septimus's mind is locked into what happened during the eighteenth year of the twentieth century no less inextricably than Clarissa's is detained by what happened in the eighteenth year of her life. By acquainting the reader with Clarissa's strangeness in advance of Septimus's, the latter's abnormality is to some extent normalized and the response of the medical establishment made to seem all the more arbitrary and unjust.

Peter Walsh is another 'cranky' (p. 132) character. When Clarissa first sees him she notices that he has 'the same queer look' (p. 34) he has always had, and no sooner has Peter kissed Clarissa's hands than he withdraws 'a large pocket-knife and half opened the blade' (p. 34). 'What an extraordinary habit that was, Clarissa thought; always playing with a knife' (p. 37). Two

¹¹ Iona Opie and Moira Tatem (eds.), *A Dictionary of Superstitions* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 164.

¹² Repr. in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (6 vols.; London: Hogarth Press, 1986-), iv. 548-50; quote from p. 549.

pages further on he 'run[s] his finger along the blade of his knife' (p. 39) while talking to Clarissa before, 'to his utter surprise', he bursts into tears. Having rushed from Clarissa's house in a distressed state, he catches sight of a young woman in Trafalgar Square and proceeds to stalk her, 'stealthily fingering his pocket-knife' (p. 45) as he sets off. That evening, on his arrival at Clarissa's party, he opens up 'the big blade of his pocket-knife' (p. 140) before entering her house. One can be certain that if Septimus had a proclivity to caress knives in the presence of women Holmes would have been 'on him' (p. 78) even more rapidly, and Woolf seems at pains to contrast the disturbing behaviour which is tolerated as eccentric within the 'governing-class' (p. 65) with the socially harmless behaviour which is deemed insane and quasi-criminal lower down the social scale.

Peter Walsh likes to see himself as an 'adventurer . . . a romantic buccaneer' (pp. 45-6), and some critics have argued that his penknife equates with his sexual menace. This may be so, but it seems unlikely as he is hardly an accomplished philanderer and he comes across as sexually innocuous. He seems more in awe of the woman he follows than a threat to her, just as he failed to win Clarissa in the 1890s. Moreover, from what the reader learns of Daisy, the young married woman with whom he is infatuated and on whose behalf he has come to London to arrange a divorce, it seems likely that by the time Peter returns to India his flighty lover may well have flown to someone like Major Simmons, the Indian Army officer with whom she is wont to compare Peter to his disadvantage (p. 133), or Major Orde, whom she has 'been meeting' (p. 68) in Peter's absence. Peter is 'attractive to women', but it is because they 'liked the sense that he was not altogether manly' (p. 132). Rather than a symbol of his sexual predatoriness, Peter's penknife more eloquently represents the knife-edge equilibrium of his mind, and, as such, it links him with Clarissa, who slices 'like a knife through everything' (p. 7) and who, according to Lady Bruton, has a habit of 'cutting people up' (p. 88), and Lucrezia, the milliner from Milan who cuts up materials as the fabric of her marriage falls apart.

Like influenza, mental instability is no respecter of rank, and if the imposing car with 'dove-grey upholstery' (p. 12) which pauses in Bond Street on its way to Buckingham Palace is the same 'low, powerful, grey [car] with plain initials interlocked on the panel' (p. 80) which is parked in front of Bradshaw's consulting room, it is possible that even the Royal Family has summoned the assistance of the distinguished nerve specialist. It seems likely that the two cars *are* the same because the 'curious pattern like a tree' (p. 13) on the drawn blinds of the Bond Street vehicle is probably either the staff of Asclepius, the universal emblem of the medical profession, or a caduceus, which is also frequently used as a medical symbol.¹³ There is 'a photograph of Lady Bradshaw in Court dress' (p. 82) in Bradshaw's office, and husband and wife may be driving to Buckingham Palace to attend a Court function, but their visit could be of a more professional kind. That 'a face of the very greatest importance' (p. 12) is glimpsed 'only once by three people for a few seconds' (p. 14), and that the pedestrians think the car could be the Queen's or 'The Proime Minister's kyar' (p. 12), is surely Woolf's way of debunking Bradshaw's self-importance and the kudos which neurologists had come to enjoy in post-War society. 'But there could be no doubt', the narrator observes with mock awe and solemnity, 'that greatness was seated within; greatness was passing, hidden, down Bond Street, removed only by a hand's-breadth from ordinary people who might now, for the first time and last, be within speaking distance of the majesty of England . . . ' (p. 14).

If Bradshaw believes that 'health is proportion' (p. 84), and 'not having a sense of proportion' (p. 82) betokens insanity, what light do these guidelines throw on his own mind? For a doctor who likes to see things in black and white, he is surprisingly wedded to grey. If the two cars are the same car, then its 'dove-grey upholstery' (p. 12), 'dove grey' blinds (p. 12), and the 'grey

¹³ Asclepius was the Graeco-Roman god of medicine, and his staff is usually portrayed as being branched at the top and entwined by a serpent coiling upwards which is bound more tightly at the base of the staff than at the top. A caduceus, a similar but unrelated symbol, is a winged staff ending in two prongs (or two serpents' heads) twined into a knot. Both symbols could be described as looking roughly 'like a tree' to the casual observer.

furs and silver grey rugs' (p. 80) which are heaped inside it, should not be overlooked by the reader. Bradshaw himself is grey-haired (pp. 81, 155), his wife's apparel is 'grey and silver' (p. 154) and the décor of his consulting room is also grey (p. 86). Inoffensive though it may be, does not Bradshaw's apparently exclusive attraction to grey suggest a monomania akin to Septimus's obsession with Evans?

The girl who serves Miss Kilman in the Army and Navy Stores thinks she is 'mad' (p. 110), such extreme concentration does Miss Kilman devote to the petticoats on display, and it is the habit not only of Doris Kilman, but also Clarissa, Peter Walsh (p. 50), and Septimus 'to talk aloud' (p. 109). In view of the War and the influenza pandemic; in view of the imponderable queer-ness of the everyday, is it really possible, Woolf seems to be asking the reader, to determine with Bradshavian exactitude where clinical insanity begins and human idiosyncrasy ends?

The Dominions and the Mother Country

If 'Health is proportion' as Bradshaw maintains, where does this leave Millicent, Lady Bruton, *Mrs Dalloway's* most ardent monomaniac? She has 'lost her sense of proportion' (p. 92) in pursuit of her scheme to export surplus Britons to Canada—so much so, indeed, that 'Emigration had become, in short, largely Lady Bruton' (p. 92). Having nodded off to sleep following the departure of Richard Dalloway and Hugh Whitbread from her lunch-table, Lady Bruton dreams of 'commanding battalions marching to Canada' (p. 95).

Lady Bruton's is an important role in the novel, in that it is through this character that Woolf draws an analogy between the State's treatment of the mentally sick and Britain's treatment of her Empire and dominions. Backed up by the 'police and the good of society' (p. 86), Bradshaw's patriotic toil is unending:

Worshipping proportion, Sir William not only prospered himself but made England prosper, secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, pen-