

Early Twentieth-Century Fiction

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(Office hours by appointment this week)

October 27, 2016. Woolf (2).



Virginia Woolf, c. 1927.

[Wikimedia Commons](#)

1882 b. London

1905–1907 teaches night school

1907– Bloomsbury group

1915 *The Voyage Out*

1917 "Woolves" found Hogarth Press

1919 *Night and Day*;

"Modern Novels" in *TLS*

1925 *Mrs. Dalloway* (Hogarth);

Common Reader

1927 *To the Lighthouse*

1928 *Orlando*

1929 *A Room of One's Own*

1931 *The Waves*

1938 *Three Guineas*

1941 d.

review

Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel.

Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall....Let us not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small. (Woolf, "Modern Fiction," 149–50)

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Exterior events have actually lost their hegemony, they serve to release and interpret inner events. (Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask [Princeton U.P., 1957], 538)

A transfer of confidence: the great exterior turning points and blows of fate are granted less importance. (Auerbach, 547)

stream of consciousness

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Who was it now who had done that? Peter Walsh asked himself, turning into the Broad Walk,—married a rich man and lived in a large house near Manchester? Somebody who had written him a long, gushing letter quite lately about “blue hydrangeas.” It was seeing blue hydrangeas that made her think of him and the old days—Sally Seton, of course! It was Sally Seton—the last person in the world one would have expected to marry a rich man and live in a large house near Manchester, the wild, the daring, the romantic Sally! (70–71)

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the transfer of confidence

The violent explosion which made Mrs. Dalloway jump and Miss Pym go to the window and apologise came from a motor car which had drawn to the side of the pavement precisely opposite Mulberry's shop window....

The sun became extraordinarily hot because the motor car had stopped outside Mulberry's shop window; old ladies on the tops of omnibuses spread their black parasols; here a green, here a red parasol opened with a little pop. Mrs. Dalloway, coming to the window with her arms full of sweet peas, looked out with her little pink face pursed in enquiry. Every one looked at the motor car. Septimus looked. Boys on bicycles sprang off. Traffic accumulated. (13–14; qtd. by “MC”)

multipersonal

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Discussion

How does the skywriting episode (19–28) frame individual perceptions? Compare several examples. What is the sum of individual perceptions here?

such a thing as too much sharing

It was precisely twelve o'clock; twelve by Big Ben; whose stroke was wafted over the northern part of London...—twelve o'clock struck as Clarissa Dalloway laid her green dress on her bed, and the Warren Smiths walked down Harley Street. Twelve was the hour of their appointment. Probably, Rezia thought, that was Sir William Bradshaw's house with the grey motor car in front of it. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. (94)

The War was over.

For it was the middle of June. The War was over, except for some one like Mrs. Foxcroft at the Embassy last night eating her heart out because that nice boy was killed and now the old Manor House must go to a cousin...but it was over; thank Heaven—over. It was June. The King and Queen were at the Palace. (4–5; qtd. by “PD”)

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Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914–1991* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 24–26.

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What passing-bells for those who die as cattle?

—only the monstrous anger of the guns.

Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle

Can patter out their hasty orisons.

No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;

Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—

The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;

And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

Wilfred Owen, “Anthem for Doomed Youth” (1917; *Poems* [London: Chatto & Windus, 1920; HathiTrust], 11)

but it was over

Why not? Really it was a miracle thinking of the War, and thousands of poor chaps, with all their lives before them, shovelled together, already half forgotten; it was a miracle. Here he [Mr. Dalloway] was walking across London to say to Clarissa in so many words that he loved her. (112)

Those five years—1918 to 1923—had been, he suspected, somehow very important. People looked different. Newspapers seemed different. Now for instance there was a man writing quite openly in one of the respectable weeklies about water-closets. (70)

Boys in uniform, carrying guns, marched with their eyes ahead of them, marched, their arms stiff....It is, thought Peter Walsh, beginning to keep step with them, a very fine training. (50)

a very fine training

Septimus was one of the first to volunteer. He went to France to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square. (84)

If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est*
Pro patria mori.

Wilfred Owen, “*Dulce et Decorum est*” (1917; *Poems*, 15)

something happened

Something happened which threw out many of Mr. Brewer's calculations, took away his ablest young fellows, and eventually, so prying and insidious were the fingers of the European war, smashed a plaster cast of Ceres, ploughed a hole in the geranium beds, and utterly ruined the cook's nerves at Mr. Brewer's establishment at Muswell Hill. (84)

that little shindy

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They were talking about his [Mr. Dalloway’s] Bill. Some case, Sir William was mentioning, lowering his voice. It had its bearing upon what he was saying about the deferred effects of shell shock. There must be some provision in the Bill. (179)

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She had failed him, once at Constantinople. (115)

over

(but that might be her heart, affected, they said, by influenza) (4)

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war casualties

10,000,000 dead

21,000,000 wounded

1918 influenza pandemic

30,000,000–50,000,000 dead

2,300,000 in Europe

26,000,000–36,000,000 in Asia

thank Heaven—over

It rasped her, though, to have stirring about in her this brutal monster!...never to be content quite, or quite secure, for at any moment the brute would be stirring, this hatred, which, 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! (12)

Discussion

Is it over?

next

- ▶ *Mrs. Dalloway* (finish if you haven't)
- ▶ commonplace and mind-read
- ▶ Zwerdling essay (bring it in)