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**Course Material**

**Department of English and Modern European Languages**

**Dr S M Mirza**

**B.A. (Hons.) English Semester-VI**

**Paper I: Twentieth Century British Fiction (Code: Eng- 601)**

**Unit-I** Joseph Conrad : *Lord Jim*

E.M. Forster : *A Passage to India*

**Unit-III** Virginia Woolf : *Mrs. Dalloway*

Muriel Spark : *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*

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Dear Students, Hello.

As I've already taught you Conrad, I'll provide you course material for the topics highlighted above.

You can find below the material on **Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway***.

**Prepare answers on the Themes and Technique of the novel.**

In case you have any doubts you can contact me on phone or send queries to my email.

All the best!

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**Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway***

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### **Bionote**

Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) is recognised as one of the most innovative writers of the 20th century. Perhaps best known as the author of *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927), she was also a prolific writer of essays, diaries, letters and biographies. Both in style and subject matter, Woolf's work captures the fast-changing world in which she was working, from transformations in gender roles to class relations.

Woolf's work explores the key motifs of modernism, including the subconscious, time, perception, the city and the impact of war. Her 'stream of consciousness' technique enabled her to portray the interior lives of her characters and to depict the montage-like imprint of memory.

She wrote polemical works about the position of women in society, such as *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938).

Besides her writing, Woolf had a considerable impact on the cultural life around her. The publishing house she ran with her husband Leonard Woolf, the Hogarth Press, was originally established in Richmond and then in London's Bloomsbury, an area after which the 'Bloomsbury Set' of artists, writers and intellectuals is named. Woolf's house was a hub for some of the most interesting cultural activity of the time, and Hogarth Press publications included books by writers such as T S Eliot, Sigmund Freud, Katherine Mansfield, E M Forster, and the Woolfs themselves.

Born Virginia Adeline Stephen in 1882, her parents were Leslie Stephen (1832–1904), the founder of the Oxford Dictionary of Biography. Her mother, father and brother died in quick succession, and she suffered from poor mental health for much of her life, committing suicide in 1941.

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## Publication

. *Mrs Dalloway* was published in 1925.

## Overview

**setting (time)** · A day in mid-June, 1923. There are many flashbacks to a summer at Bourton in the early 1890s, when Clarissa was eighteen.

**setting (place)** · London, England. The novel takes place largely in the affluent neighborhood of Westminster, where the Dalloways live.

Heralded as Virginia Woolf's greatest novel, this is a vivid portrait of a single day in a woman's life. When we meet her, Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway is preoccupied with the last-minute details of party preparation while in her mind she is something much more than a perfect society hostess. As she readies her house, she is flooded with remembrances of faraway times. And, met with the realities of the present, Clarissa reexamines the choices that brought her there, hesitantly looking ahead to the unfamiliar work of growing old.

"Mrs. Dalloway was the first novel to split the atom. If the novel before Mrs. Dalloway aspired to immensities of scope and scale, to heroic journeys across vast landscapes, with Mrs. Dalloway Virginia Woolf insisted that it could also locate the enormous within the everyday; that a life of errands and party-giving was every bit as viable a subject as any life lived anywhere; and that should any human act in any novel seem unimportant, it has merely been inadequately observed. The novel as an art form has not been the same since. "Mrs. Dalloway also contains some of the most beautiful, complex, incisive and idiosyncratic sentences ever written in English, and that alone would be reason enough to read it. It is one of the most moving, revolutionary artworks of the twentieth century."  
--Michael Cunningham, author of *The Hours*

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## **Background, Notes, Analysis**

### **Stream of consciousness**

- The term "stream of consciousness" was coined by philosopher and psychologist William James in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890). He wrote:

Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself as chopped up in bits ... it is nothing joined; it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. *In talking of it hereafter, let's call it the stream of thought, consciousness, or subjective life.*

-The continuous flow of sense-perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and memories in the human mind; or a literary method of representing such a blending of mental processes in fictional characters, usually in an unpunctuated or disjointed form of Interior Monologue.

-The term is often used as a synonym for interior monologue, but they can also be distinguished, in two ways. In the first (psychological) sense, the stream of consciousness is the subject-matter while interior monologue is the technique for presenting it.

. In the second (literary) sense, stream of consciousness is a special style of interior monologue: while an interior monologue always presents a character's thoughts 'directly', without the apparent intervention of a summarizing and selecting narrator, it does not necessarily mingle them with impressions and perceptions, nor does it necessarily violate the norms of grammar, syntax, and logic; but the stream-of-consciousness technique also does one or both of these things.

An important device of MODERNIST fiction and its later imitators, the technique was pioneered by Dorothy Richardson in *Pilgrimage* (1915-35) and further developed by Virginia Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway*

(1925) and William Faulkner in *The Sound and the Fury* (1928).

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**See Wikipedia entry also.**

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- *Mrs. Dalloway* is a complex, compelling novel. Mrs. Dalloway's thoughts shape and make coherent the lives of the characters in the novel, but there is no main character. The novel enters into the consciousness of the people it takes as it subjects, creating a powerful effect. With Mrs. Dalloway Woolf created a visceral and unyielding vision of madness and a haunting descent into its depths.
- *Mrs. Dalloway* is a wonderful study of a day in the life of its principal characters. Mrs. Dalloway follows a set of characters as they go about their lives on a normal day. The eponymous character, Clarissa Dalloway, does simple things: she buys some flowers, walks in a park, is visited by an old friend and throws a party. She speaks to a man who was once in love with her, and who still believes that she settled by marrying her politician husband. She talks to a female friend with whom she was once in love. Then, in the final pages of the book, she hears about a poor lost soul who threw himself from a doctor's window onto a line of railings.
- Septimus Smith. Shell-shocked after his experiences in World War I, he is a so-called madman, who hears voices. He was once in love with a fellow soldier named Evans--a ghost who haunts him throughout the novel. His infirmity is rooted in his fear and his repression of this forbidden love. Finally, tired of a world that he believes is false and unreal, he commits suicide.
- The two characters whose experiences form the core of the novel--Clarissa and Septimus--share a number of similarities. In fact, Woolf saw Clarissa and Septimus as more like two different aspects of the same person, and the linkage between the two is emphasized by a series of stylistic repetitions and mirrorings. Unbeknownst to Clarissa and Septimus, their paths cross a number of times throughout the day--just as some of the situations in their lives followed similar paths.
- Even as their lives mirror, parallel and cross--Clarissa and Septimus take different paths in the final moments of the novel. Both are existentially insecure in the worlds they inhabit--one chooses life, while the other chooses death.
- Woolf's stream of consciousness style allows readers into the minds and hearts of her characters. She also incorporates a level of psychological realism that Victorian novels were never able to achieve. The everyday is seen in a new light: internal processes are opened up in her prose, memories compete for attention, thoughts arise unprompted, and the deeply significant and the utterly trivial are treated with equal importance. Woolf's prose is also enormously poetic. She has the very special ability to make the ordinary ebb and flow of the mind sing.
- Mrs. Dalloway is linguistically inventive, but the novel also has an enormous amount to say about its characters. Woolf handles their situations with dignity and respect. As she studies Septimus and his deterioration into madness, we see a portrait that draws

considerably from Woolf's own experiences. Woolf's stream of consciousness-style leads us to experience madness. We hear the competing voices of sanity and insanity.

- Woolf's vision of madness does not dismiss Septimus as a person with a biological defect. She treats the consciousness of the madman as something apart, valuable in itself, and something from which the wonderful tapestry of her novel could be woven. Woolf's vision of madness does not dismiss Septimus as a person with a biological defect. She treats the consciousness of the madman as something apart, valuable in itself, and something from which the wonderful tapestry of her novel could be woven.
- Clarissa has fears over the changes in herself. She is feeling older. ". . . *June morning; soft with the glow of rose petals for some, she knew, and felt it, as she paused by the open staircase window which let in blinds flapping, dog barking, let in, she thought, feeling herself suddenly **shrivelled, aged, breastless, the grinding, blowing, flowering of the day, out of doors, out of the window, out of her body and brain which now failed....***"
- Clarissa is planning a party while her doppelganger Septimus Smith is considering his death. "*He is linked to Clarissa through his anxieties about sexuality and marriage; his anguish about mortality and immortality; and his acute sensitivities to his surroundings, which have gone over the line into madness.*"
- **Birds sing in Greek.**

He is haunted by the war, in particular his memories of his friend Evans who died in the closing months of the war.

He hallucinates.

He is certainly suffering from acute shell shock.

- "*Septimus Warren Smith, aged about thirty, pale-faced, beak-nosed, wearing brown shoes and a shabby overcoat, with hazel eyes which had that look of apprehension in them which makes complete strangers apprehensive too. The world has raised its whip; where will it descend?*"
- Clarissa also has an old flame, Peter Walsh, who is back from India just in time to attend her party. She has not seen Sally or Peter for many years so her party is infused with a certain level of warped nostalgia. Though really one gets the impression that Clarissa might have preferred leaving them both suspended in time when they were who she remembered them to be.
- Peter is still in love with her. As she analyzes her thoughts of Peter, it is certainly on a more practical level than a romantic one. She considers, without any sentimentality, what her life would have been like if she had married him.
- In his pockets Peter carries a menagerie of totems. "*...his knife, his watch; his seals, his note-case, and Clarissa's letter which he would not read again but liked to think of, and*"

*Daisy's photograph?*" The knife he pulls out whenever he is nervous and opens and closes it.

- Clarissa shares some of her thoughts on death after she hears the chatter at her party about the suicide of Septimus Smith. "*Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded; one was alone. There was an embrace in death.*"
- Woolf admitted that she had difficulty writing about the madness of Septimus. She used some of her own depression inspired hallucinations to describe his distressing anxiety. She had planned for Clarissa to die at the end of the novel, but shifted that role to Septimus.
- The treatment, if you call it that, of Septimus is a condemnation of psychology in post WW1 British society. Woolf was treated by several incompetent doctors for her own struggles with depression. Sir William Bradshaw, the famous psychiatrist, who was treating Septimus often bragged about his ability to determine a person's problems, and to also be able to prescribe a treatment in five minutes or less. Obviously, his respect for his own profession is rather cavalier, and certainly his dismissive attitude to the true nature of mental illness is reprehensible.
- The ending :

"What is this terror? what is this ecstasy? Peter thought to himself. What is it that fills me with extraordinary excitement?"

It is Clarissa, he said.

For there she was."

- In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf's able to achieve complete well-roundedness for a half-dozen people.
- Mrs. Dalloway is one of those books one is supposed to adore for its disruption of convention and innovative use of time, sound, parallel narrative structure etc.
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- The book, published in 1925, is also a time capsule of daily life in London in the early post-war years. (WW I of course.) A time when horses had been replaced by cars. As we follow her around town in her preparations we see the hustle and bustle of the city, the grocers, the shop girls, the crazies in the park.

- Our lives are an elaborate and exquisite collage of moments. Each moment beautiful and powerful on their own when reflected upon, turned about and examined to breath in the full nostalgia for each glorious moment gone by, yet it is the compendium of moments that truly form our history of individuality. Yet, what is an expression of individuality if it is not taken in relation to all the lives around us, as a moment in history, a drop in a multitude of drops to form an ocean of existence? Virginia Woolf enacts the near impossibility in *'Mrs Dalloway'* of charting for examination and reflection the whole of a lifeline for multiple characters, all interweaving to proclaim a brilliant portrait of existence itself, all succinctly packaged in the elegant wrappings of a solitary day.
  
- Woolf's poetic plunge into the minds and hearts of her assorted characters not only dredges up an impressively multi-faceted perspective on their lives as a whole, but delivers a cutting social satire extending far beyond the boundaries of the selective London society that struts and frets their 24 hours upon the stage of Woolf's words.
  
- Much of *Mrs Dalloway* is deceptively simplistic, using the singular as a doorway into the collective, and offering a tiny gift of perfect that can be unpacked to expose an infinite depiction of the world.
  
- Personal identity plays a major theme within the novel with each character's entire life on display simply through their actions and reflection within the solitary June day. Clarissa is examined through a weaving of past and present as she tumbles through an existential crises in regards to her position as the wife of a dignitary and as a the perfect party host. *'Why, after all, did she do these things? Why seek pinnacles and stand drenched in fire? Might it consume her anyhow?'* Through her interactions with Peter, the reader is treated to her romantic lineage, rejecting Peter for the safer, more social circle security of Robert, which gives way to a questioning if she is merely a snob.
  
- Through Clarissa we see a desire of life, of not becoming stagnant, of not *'being herself invisible; unseen; unknown...this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway.'* There must be a way to separate from the society, to form an identity beyond social conventions or gender, to find life in a world hurtling towards death.
  
- *'Once you fall, Septimus repeated to himself, human nature is on you.'*

As a foil to the character of Clarissa, Woolf presents the war-torn Septimus. While Clarissa finds meaning in her merrymaking because *'what she liked was simply life'*, and bringing people together to be always moving towards a warm center of life, Septimus is

shown as moving outwards, stolen away from the joys of life through his experiences of bloodshed in battle.

- *So there was no excuse, nothing whatever the matter, except the sin for which human nature had condemned him to death; that he did not feel.*

--While Clarissa grapples with her fear of death, *'that is must end; and no one in the whole world would know how she had loved it all,'* Septimus finds life, a never-ending spiral of guilt for not feeling beset by visions of his fallen comrade, to be a fearsome and loathsome beast. Doctors would have him locked away (a dramatic contrast to the lively parties hosted by Clarissa), and even his own wife forges an identity of guilt and self-conscious sorrow for upholding a clearly disturbed husband. This is a haunting portrait of post-traumatic stress disorder and depression, the latter much like Woolf herself suffered. Septimus and Clarissa are like opposite sides to the same coin, however, and many essential parallels exist between them. Both find solace in the works of Shakespeare, both obsess over a lonely figure in an opposing window (one of Septimus' last impressions in the land of the living), and both trying to express themselves in the world yet fearing the solitude that their failures will form for them.

- Even his inability to feel is similar to the love felt by Clarissa: *'But nothing is so strange when one is in love (and what was this except being in love?) as the complete indifference of other people.'*

- Death becomes an important discussion point of the novel, with each character trying to define themselves in the face of, or in spite of, their impending demise. Peter so fears death that he follows a stranger through town, inventing an elaborate fantasy of romance to blot out the deathly darkness. Yet, it is in contrast to death that we find life. Clarissa's desire for communication, community and life is only given weight in relation to the news of death that invades her party.

*Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; repute faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death.*

--What is most impressive about *Mrs Dalloway* is the nearly endless array of tones and voices that Woolf is able to so deftly sashay between. While each character is unique, it is the contrast between death and life that she weaves that is staggeringly wonderful.

--Right from the beginning, Woolf treats us to a feast of contrast.

*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...but it was over; thank*



*Heaven – over. It was June...and everywhere, thought it was still early, there was a beating, a stirring of galloping ponies, tapping of cricket bats...*

Cold death and warm life on a sunny June day all mingle together here, and throughout the novel. And we are constantly reminded of our lives marching towards death like a battalion of soldiers, each hour pounded away by the ringing of Big Ben. This motif is two-fold, both representing the lives passing from present to past, but also using the image of Big Ben as a symbol of British society.

--The war has ended and a new era is dawning, one where the obdurate and stuffy society of old has been shown to be withered and wilting, like Clarissa's elderly aunt with the glass eye. Not only are the lifelines of each character put under examination, but the history of the English empire as well, highlighting the ages of imperialism that have spread the sons of England across the map and over bloody battlefields.

- Clarissa is a prime example of the Euro-centrism found in society, frequently confusing the Albanians and Armenians, and assuming that her love of England and her contributions to society must in some way benefit them. *'But she loved her roses (didn't that help the Armenians?)'*

-In contrast is Peter, constantly toying with his knife—a symbol of masculinity imposed by an ideal enforced by bloodshed and military might—to evince not only his fears of inadequacy as a Man (fostered by Clarissa's rejection for him and his possibly shady marriage plans), but his wishy-washy feelings of imperialism after spending time in India.

--*Beauty, the world seemed to say. And as if to prove it (scientifically) wherever he looked at the houses, at the railings, at the antelopes stretching over the palings, beauty sprang instantly. To watch a leaf quivering in the rush of air was an exquisite joy. Up in the sky swallows swooping, swerving, flinging themselves in and out, round and round, yet always with perfect control as if elastics held them; and the flies rising and falling; and the sun spotting now this leaf, now that, in mockery, dazzling it with soft gold in pure good temper; and now again some chime (it might be a motor horn) tinkling divinely on the grass stalks—all of this, calm and reasonable as it was, made out of ordinary things as it was, was the truth now; beauty, that was the truth now. Beauty was everywhere.*

- What's most brilliant about it is the easy fluid way she makes of each passing moment a ruffled reservoir of the inner life of her characters. Every moment alters the composition, the ebb and flow of memory and identity. And everything, very subtly, is experienced in relation to the inevitability of death. It's a deeply elegiac novel and one of the finest celebrations of the beauty to be gleaned in the passing moment one can think of.

- The book offers many partial even very modern approaches, reflecting the role of woman in society, the importance of marriage, the mental illness as a sign of our time, the consequences of war, the power of medicine and much more ..."
- The most important thing about this novel is the social commentary. There is so much of it here--this entire novel is a satire, and Mrs Dalloway herself, the uppish, dull snob, is a figure of satire, the object of Woolf's subtle scorn; part of the fine irony being that Mrs Dalloway is not a stranger to meting out scorn herself.  
Two of the social commentaries that stand out , are the commentaries on Britishness and the class structures of its society,
- The novel was published in 1925. Although first-wave feminist groups had already gained wide support towards the end of the nineteenth century in countries like the US and France, beyond small protests and smaller, less formal groups and individuals speaking out for female suffrage, organized feminist groups hadn't gone mainstream in Britain by the time that Woolf was born, and she herself had to taste the bitter pill of educational discrimination, not to mention sexual prejudice in the psychiatric treatment meted out to her.

--Nowhere is the sarcasm of Woolf, a writer herself, more obvious than in the following passages:

*But she [Lady Bruton] had to write. ... After a morning's battle beginning, tearing up, beginning again, she used to feel the futility of her own womanhood as she felt it on no other occasion, and would turn gratefully to the thought of Hugh Whitbread who possessed—no one could doubt it—the art of writing letters to the Times. A being so differently constituted from herself, with such a command of language; able to put things as editors like them put; ... Lady Bruton often suspended judgement upon men in deference to the mysterious accord in which they, but no woman, stood to the laws of the universe; knew how to put things; knew what was said; so that if Richard advised her, and Hugh wrote for her, she was sure of being somehow right.*

In other words, a woman's place in the universe, is where the men place her.

--The novel ends with Clarissa's extraordinary nondescript mediocrity: even a man in love with her can find nothing more remarkable about her than simply her presence, the fact that she exists. All he can remark about her, is: "There she was."

--Woolf's art, is her exquisite imagery and her use of metaphor. Here is one right at the start : "*what a morning—fresh as if issued to children on a beach*

--Consider this clever play of light and darkness to announce exactly that-- a theme of intermittent light and darkness, joy and pain, life and death:

- *Signs were interchanged, when, as if to fulfil some scheme arranged already..., now they struck light to the earth, now darkness. Calmly and competently, Elizabeth Dalloway*

*mounted the Westminster omnibus. Going and coming, beckoning, signalling, so the light and shadow which now made the wall grey, now the bananas bright yellow, now made the Strand grey, now made the omnibuses bright yellow, seemed to Septimus Warren Smith lying on the sofa in the sitting-room; watching the watery gold glow and fade...*

Here psychologically speaking Elizabeth is in light, and Septimus is in darkness. Every single thing that every character hears or sees, or what happens in the physical reality in the novel, can be seen as a metaphorical background for what is conceptually happening.

--Mrs Dalloway is a highly stylized work of art, its form and imagery constructed with mathematical precision, and yet part of its charm is that it is also subtly enough rendered with tasteful brush strokes in pleasing but subdued colors, that one doesn't notice its artifice immediately., Woolf's works tend to be structured like music that has certain leitmotifs echoing through the work in a recurring pattern. This way, the reader is alerted to look out for the recurrence of the theme throughout the novel. Flowers is one of the themes in Mrs Dalloway, and mention of them echo intermittently throughout the novel.

Consider the following:

- **themes** · Communication vs. privacy; disillusionment with the British Empire; the fear of death; the threat of oppression
  - **motifs** · Time; Shakespeare; trees and flowers; waves and water
  - **symbols** · The prime minister; Peter Walsh's pocketknife and other weapons; the old woman in the window; the old woman singing an ancient song
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### ***Read and consider the following passages from the novel***

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*--She was not old yet. She had just broken into her fifty-second year. Months and months of it were still untouched. June, July, August! Each still remained almost whole, and, as if to catch the falling drop, Clarissa (crossing to the dressing-table) plunged into the very heart of the moment, transfixed it, there - the moment of this June morning on which the pressure of all the other mornings, seeing the glass, the dressing-table, and all the bottles afresh, collecting the whole of her at one point (as she looked into the glass), seeing the delicate pink face of the woman who was that very night to give a party; of Clarissa Dalloway; of herself.*

*--Those ruffians, the Gods, shan't have it all their own way - her notion being that the Gods, who never lost a chance of hurting, thwarting and spoiling human lives, were seriously put out if, all the same, you behaved like a lady.*

*'--Dear Sir Harry!' she said, going up to the fine old fellow who had produced more bad pictures than any other two Academicians in the whole of St John's Wood (they were always of cattle, standing in sunset pools absorbing moisture, or signifying, for he had a certain range of gesture, by the raising of one foreleg and the toss of the antlers, 'the Approach of the*

*Stranger' - all his activities, dining out, racing, were founded on cattle standing absorbing moisture in sunset pools).*

*Mrs D on fashion: Nancy, dressed at enormous expense by the greatest artists in Paris, stood there looking as if her body had merely put forth, of its own accord, a green frill.*

*And finally, Mrs D's effect on others: Brief, broken, often painful as their actual meetings had been...the effect of them on his life was immeasurable. There was a mystery about it. You were given a sharp, acute, uncomfortable grain - the actual meeting; horribly painful as often as not; yet in absence, in the most unlikely places, it would flower out, open, shed its scent, let you touch, taste, look about you, get the whole feel of it and understanding, after years of lying lost...She had influenced him more than any person he had ever known.*

--*"Moments like this are buds on the tree of life. Flowers of darkness they are."*

--*"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, as she watched the taxi cabs, of being out, far out to sea and alone; she always had the feeling that it was very, very dangerous to live even one day. Not that she thought herself clever, or much out of the ordinary."*

--*She frequently ponders death and what her own death would mean in the context of the life she has lived.*

*"Did it matter then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? but that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself."*

### **From A Writer's Diary,**

- 1924, VW wrote : *'Mrs Dalloway' (short story) has branched into a book; and I adumbrate here a study of insanity and suicide; the world seen by the sane and the insane side by side--something like that. Septimus Smith? is the a good name?... But now what do I feel about..this book, that is, 'The Hours', if that's its name? One must*

*write from deep feeling, said Dostoievsky. And do I? Or do I fabricate with words, loving them as I do? No, I think not. In this book I have almost too many ideas. I want to give life and death, sanity and insanity; I want to criticise the social system, and to show it at work, at its most intense. But here I may be posing...Am I writing 'The Hours' from deep emotion? of course the mad part tries me so much, makes my mind squirt so badly that I can hardly face spending the next weeks with it...I should say a good deal about 'The Hours' and my discovery: how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters: I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humour, depth. The idea is that the caves shall connect and each comes to daylight at the present moment...It is a disgrace that I write nothing, or if I write, write sloppily, using nothing but present participles. I find them very useful in my last lap of Mrs D. There I am now—at last at the party, which is to begin in the kitchen, and climb slowly upstairs. It is to be a most complicated, spirited, solid piece, knitting together everything and ending on three notes, at different stages of the staircase, each saying something to sum up Clarissa. Who shall say these things? Peter, Richard, and Sally Seton perhaps: but I don't want to tie myself down to that yet. Now I do think this might be the best of my endings and come off, perhaps...--the last words of the last page of Mrs D...I did them a week ago yesterday. 'For there she was,' and felt glad to be quit of it, for it has been a strain the last weeks, yet fresher in the head; with less I mean of the usual feeling that I've shaved through and just kept my feet on the tight rope. I feel indeed rather more fully relieved of my meaning than usual--whether this will stand when I re-read is doubtful...The reviewers will say that it is disjointed because of the mad scenes not connecting with the Dalloway scenes. And I suppose there is some superficial glittery writing. But is it 'unreal'. Is it mere accomplishment? I think not. And as I think I said before, it seems to leave me plunged deep in the richest strata of my mind. I can write and write and write now: the happiest feeling in the world.*

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