

THE WAR THAT WILL NOT END: MEMORY, MOURNING, AND THE AFTERMATH IN MRS DALLOWAY

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Annotation. This article examines the themes of memory, mourning, and trauma in Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway, focusing on the long-lasting psychological and social consequences of the First World War. Through the characters of Septimus Warren Smith and Clarissa Dalloway, the study explores how traumatic experiences continue to shape individual consciousness and collective identity long after the war has ended. Special attention is given to Woolf's stream-of-consciousness technique and its role in representing the fragmented nature of memory and grief. The article argues that Mrs Dalloway portrays war as an enduring psychological reality rather than a completed historical event.

Keywords: memory, mourning, trauma, First World War, Virginia Woolf, Mrs Dalloway, Septimus Warren Smith, collective memory, post-traumatic stress, stream of consciousness.

Annotatsiya. Mazkur maqolada Mrs Dalloway romanida urushdan keyingi davrning ruhiy va ijtimoiy oqibatlarini xotira, motam va travma tushunchalari asosida tahlil qilinadi. Asarda Birinchi jahon urushining inson ruhiyatiga ko'rsatgan uzoq muddatli ta'siri Septimus Warren Smith va Clarissa Dalloway obrazlari misolida yoritiladi. Tadqiqotda individual va kollektiv xotira, travmatik tajriba, motam jarayoni hamda urushning tugamaydigan ruhiy merosi masalalari o'rganiladi. Shuningdek, Virginia Woolfning ong oqimi usuli orqali urushdan keyingi inson ongining murakkab qatlamlarini tasvirlashdagi badiiy mahorati ochib beriladi.

Kalit so'zlar: xotira, motam, travma, Birinchi jahon urushi, Virginia Woolf, Mrs Dalloway, Septimus Warren Smith, kollektiv xotira, posttravmatik stress, ong oqimi.

Аннотация. В данной статье исследуются темы памяти, скорби и травмы в романе Mrs Dalloway Вирджинии Вулф. Особое внимание уделяется долгосрочным психологическим и социальным последствиям Первой мировой войны, отражённым в образах Септимуса Уоррена Смита и Клариссы Дэллоуэй. Анализируется влияние травматического опыта на индивидуальную и коллективную память, а также особенности художественного воплощения этих процессов посредством техники потока сознания. Делается вывод о том, что война в романе представлена не как завершённое историческое событие, а как продолжающаяся психологическая реальность.

Ключевые слова: память, скорбь, травма, Первая мировая война, Вирджиния Вулф, Mrs Dalloway, Септимус Уоррен Смит, коллективная память, посттравматический стресс, поток сознания.

Introduction

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) is one of the most profound literary explorations of the psychological and social consequences of war in modern English literature. Although the novel takes place on a single day in London several years after the end of the First World War, the conflict remains a powerful and persistent presence throughout the narrative. The war has officially ended, yet its emotional, psychological, and cultural effects continue to shape the lives of individuals and the broader society. Woolf presents a world in which the past constantly intrudes upon the present, demonstrating that war does not conclude when treaties are signed or armies return home. Instead, it survives in memory, grief, trauma, and silence. Through her innovative narrative techniques and her sensitive portrayal of human consciousness, Woolf reveals how individuals struggle to cope with loss and how society often fails to acknowledge the depth of psychological suffering left behind by war.

The title of this lecture, "The War That Will Not End," captures one of the central themes of the novel. For Woolf, the First World War is not merely a historical event; it is an enduring psychological reality. The characters inhabit a postwar world, but they remain haunted by memories of death, destruction, and absence. The novel demonstrates that mourning is not a temporary process with a clear conclusion. Rather, grief becomes woven into the fabric of everyday life. The war continues to influence relationships, identities, and perceptions of reality long after the guns have fallen silent.

One of the most significant ways Woolf explores the aftermath of war is through the character of Septimus Warren Smith. Septimus is a veteran who suffers from what would now be recognized as post-traumatic stress disorder. His experiences during the war have fundamentally altered his perception of the world. Before the war, he was an idealistic young man who admired literature and believed in the values promoted by his society. The battlefield shattered those beliefs. Witnessing violence and death destroyed his confidence in traditional ideas of heroism, patriotism, and progress.

Septimus's psychological condition illustrates the devastating impact of traumatic memory. Throughout the novel, he experiences hallucinations, emotional numbness, and overwhelming feelings of guilt. He cannot separate the present from the past because the war continually reappears in his consciousness. The death of his friend Evans is particularly significant. Although Evans died years earlier, Septimus repeatedly imagines his presence. The dead soldier becomes a symbol of unresolved grief and psychological trauma. Septimus's inability to accept or process this loss demonstrates how traumatic experiences resist closure.

Woolf's representation of Septimus challenges conventional understandings of war heroism. In many traditional narratives, soldiers return from war as triumphant figures who embody courage and sacrifice. Woolf rejects this romanticized vision. Septimus returns not as a celebrated hero but as a deeply wounded individual whose suffering is invisible to those around him. His psychological injuries are treated with misunderstanding and indifference. Through this portrayal, Woolf critiques a society that values military service while neglecting the emotional consequences of combat.

The doctors who treat Septimus, Sir William Bradshaw and Dr. Holmes, symbolize institutional failures in postwar Britain. Rather than attempting to understand the complexities of trauma, they seek to normalize and control him. Bradshaw's philosophy of "proportion" reflects a broader social desire to suppress uncomfortable truths and maintain appearances. Septimus's suffering threatens the image of stability and recovery that postwar society wishes to project. Consequently, his psychological reality is dismissed rather than addressed.

Septimus's suicide represents one of the most tragic moments in the novel. However, Woolf does not portray this act simply as a personal defeat. Instead, it becomes a powerful indictment of a society incapable of responding compassionately to psychological suffering. Septimus chooses death rather than submit to a system that denies the validity of his experiences. His suicide reveals the extent to which trauma isolates individuals from the communities that should support them.

Memory plays a crucial role in shaping the novel's understanding of war and its aftermath. Woolf presents memory not as a stable record of past events but as a dynamic force that continually influences the present. Characters move through London while simultaneously revisiting earlier moments in their lives. Time becomes fluid, with memories interrupting and reshaping present experiences.

Clarissa Dalloway, the novel's central character, also lives within a world structured by memory. Although she did not directly participate in the war, she experiences its effects indirectly through social change, personal loss, and heightened awareness of mortality. Throughout the day, Clarissa reflects on her youth, her relationships, and the choices that shaped her life. These memories reveal a persistent tension between past possibilities and present realities.

For Clarissa, memory is closely connected to questions of identity. She repeatedly revisits moments from her past, particularly her relationship with Peter Walsh and her friendship with Sally Seton. These memories are not merely nostalgic recollections. They represent alternative versions of herself and alternative futures that never materialized. Through Clarissa's reflections, Woolf demonstrates how individuals construct their identities through ongoing engagement with memory.

The relationship between memory and mourning is another central concern of the novel. Mourning is traditionally understood as a process through which individuals

gradually come to terms with loss. Woolf complicates this understanding by portraying grief as an ongoing and often unresolved experience. Characters continue to carry the dead within their memories, making absence a constant presence in their lives.

Septimus's inability to forget Evans illustrates the persistence of mourning. Similarly, Clarissa experiences a more subtle form of grief connected to lost opportunities, vanished youth, and the passage of time. Although her losses differ from Septimus's, both characters reveal how memory preserves what has disappeared. In Woolf's vision, mourning does not erase loss but transforms it into a lasting component of personal identity.

The city of London itself functions as a repository of collective memory. Throughout the novel, public spaces, monuments, and buildings evoke historical continuity while simultaneously bearing the traces of recent destruction. The city appears vibrant and alive, yet beneath its surface lies a profound awareness of death and change. London becomes a symbolic landscape where personal and collective memories intersect.

Woolf's depiction of postwar London highlights the tension between remembrance and forgetting. On one hand, society seeks to move forward and restore normality. People attend parties, conduct business, and participate in everyday routines. On the other hand, memories of war remain embedded within social consciousness. This tension reflects a broader cultural struggle to reconcile the desire for recovery with the necessity of remembering traumatic events.

The novel's narrative structure reinforces its exploration of memory and trauma. Woolf employs the stream-of-consciousness technique, allowing readers direct access to characters' thoughts and perceptions. This method reflects the fragmented nature of human consciousness and the unpredictable ways in which memories emerge. Past and present coexist within the minds of characters, creating a narrative that mirrors the psychological realities of trauma and remembrance.

The fluid movement between different perspectives also emphasizes the interconnectedness of individual experiences. Although characters often remain physically separated, their thoughts and emotions resonate across social boundaries. This narrative strategy suggests that personal suffering is never entirely private. Individual experiences contribute to a larger network of collective memory and shared humanity.

Death occupies a central position in the novel's exploration of mourning and aftermath. The war dramatically increased society's awareness of mortality, and this awareness permeates the text. Characters frequently contemplate death, aging, and the fragility of existence. Clarissa, in particular, experiences an acute consciousness of life's transience. Her preparations for the evening party occur against a backdrop of existential reflection.

The party itself serves as an important symbolic event. On the surface, it represents social success and cultural continuity. Clarissa brings together individuals from different backgrounds, creating a temporary sense of community. However, the party also reveals the fragility of social connections. Beneath the elegance and celebration lies an awareness of loneliness, loss, and mortality.

When Clarissa learns of Septimus's suicide during the party, she experiences an unexpected sense of identification with him. Although they never meet, she recognizes something meaningful in his act. Clarissa understands that Septimus preserved a form of personal integrity by refusing to surrender his inner reality to external authority. This moment creates one of the novel's most significant connections between private suffering and social experience.

Clarissa's response to Septimus's death illustrates Woolf's broader vision of human empathy. The novel suggests that genuine understanding emerges not through shared circumstances but through recognition of common vulnerability. Clarissa perceives in Septimus's fate a reflection of her own fears about death, isolation, and authenticity. Through this connection, Woolf demonstrates how individual experiences contribute to collective awareness.

Another important aspect of the novel is its critique of social and political structures. Woolf presents postwar British society as deeply hierarchical and often emotionally repressive. Institutions that claim to protect individuals frequently fail to address their actual needs. The treatment of Septimus exposes the limitations of medical authority, while the social world surrounding Clarissa reveals the pressures of conformity and performance.

At the same time, Woolf does not present an entirely pessimistic vision. Moments of beauty, connection, and understanding continue to exist despite suffering. The novel repeatedly emphasizes the value of ordinary experiences: a walk through the city, a conversation, a shared memory, or a glimpse of nature. These moments suggest that meaning can persist even in a world marked by loss.

Conclusion.

In conclusion, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* offers a profound exploration of the enduring effects of war on both individuals and society. Through the interconnected experiences of Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith, Woolf demonstrates that the First World War continues to exist in memory long after its official end. The novel reveals how trauma disrupts personal identity, complicates the process of mourning, and shapes collective consciousness. Woolf's innovative narrative techniques, particularly the stream-of-consciousness method, enable readers to experience the fragmented and persistent nature of memory and grief. Furthermore, the novel critiques social institutions that fail to recognize psychological suffering while emphasizing the importance of empathy and human connection.

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