

Early Twentieth-Century Fiction  
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October 9, 2023. Woolf (3).

## review: up in the sky!

- ▶ “multipersonal representation of consciousness”
- ▶ but shared percepts do not imply shared concepts
  - ▶ it all adds up to...toffee? baby formula?
- ▶ instead, points of view “frame” and often ironize each other
- ▶ Septimus may not be “normal,” but “normal” is a problem

## what we owe to the dead

[Hugh] read out “how, therefore, we are of opinion that the time are ripe...the superfluous youth of our ever-increasing population...what we owe to the dead...” which Richard thought all stuffing and bunkum, but no harm in it, of course (107)

## review by way of discussion

He sang. Evans answered from behind the tree. The dead were in Thessaly, Evans sang, among the orchids. There they waited till the War was over, and now the dead, now Evans himself— (68)

When Evans was killed, just before the Armistice, in Italy, Septimus, far from showing any emotion or recognising that here was the end of a friendship, congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably. The War had taught him.... For now that it was all over, truce signed, and the dead buried, he had, especially in the evening, these sudden thunderclaps of fear. He could not feel. (84–85)

It was at that moment (Rezia gone shopping) that the great revelation took place. A voice spoke from behind the screen. Evans was speaking. The dead were with him. (91)

### Discussion

- ▶ Is it over? What is Septimus's relation to the war? And what is the novel's relation to that relation?

“The War?” the patient asked. The European War—that little shindy of schoolboys with gunpowder? Had he served with distinction? He really forgot. In the War itself he had failed. (93–94)

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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)

## home front

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

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)



## proportion, conversion

Worshipping proportion, Sir William not only prospered himself but made England prosper, secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalised despair...

But Proportion has a sister, less smiling, more formidable, a Goddess even now engaged—in the heat and sands of India, the mud and swamp of Africa, the purlieus of London, wherever in short the climate or the devil tempts men to fall from the true belief which is her own—is even now engaged in dashing down shrines, smashing idols, and setting up in their place her own stern countenance. Conversion is her name and she feasts on the wills of the weakly, loving to impress, to impose, adoring her own features stamped on the face of the populace. (97–98)

- ▶ Who focalizes here? How does the change in narrative technique affect the way we respond to the scene?

## Woolf: manifesto

Is life like this? Must novels be like this?

Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being “like this.” 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. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old. (“Modern Fiction,” 189)

## freedom!

If a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose...there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the **Bond Street** tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? (189)

Mr Joyce is...concerned at all costs to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame...and in order to preserve it he disregards with complete courage whatever seems to him adventitious. (190)

Nothing—no ‘method’, no experiment—is forbidden. (194)

## pop quiz

The leaden circles dissolved in the air.

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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. (91–92)

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## love is (not) the answer

The others disappeared; there she was alone with Sally. And she felt that she had been given a present, wrapped up, and told just to keep it, not to look at it...when old Joseph and Peter faced them. (35)

Love destroyed too. Everything that was fine, everything that was true went. Think of Peter in love—he came to see her after all these years, and what did he talk about? Himself. Horrible passion! she thought. Degrading passion! she thought, thinking of Kilman and her Elizabeth walking to the Army and Navy Stores. (124)

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## from empathy to...telepathy

“How delightful to see you!” said Clarissa. She said it to every one. How delightful to see you! She was at her worst—effusive, insincere....

Oh dear, it was going to be a failure; a complete failure, Clarissa felt it in her bones as dear old Lord Lexham stood there apologising for his wife who had caught cold at the Buckingham Palace garden party. She could see Peter out of the tail of her eye, criticising her, there, in that corner. (163; qtd. by “fizzie”)

Clarissa...could have bitten her tongue for thus reminding Peter that he had wanted to marry her.

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next

- ▶ bring back Woolf
- ▶ Make a start on Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, 3–81