

A Mind of One's Own: Individual Internality vs. Interpersonal Intimacy in *Mrs. Dalloway**

Percy Verret

ABSTRACT

Throughout her early career, British modernist Virginia Woolf developed a literary style that gave modal priority to “internality,” or the inner workings of the inward mind. The most noteworthy instance of Woolf’s efforts in that literary style is the perennial classic, Mrs. Dalloway, whose delicate stream-of-consciousness narrative is universally regarded as exhibiting mastery over the style’s modernist prioritization of internality over conventional tropes in fiction. What is less widely recognized is that in Mrs. Dalloway Woolf crafted a piece that not only demonstrated a modal attentiveness to internality, but also effected a defense of individual internality—an exploration of the delineation between minds within intimate relationships and the impact of those delineations on the individual minds participating in the relationship. Accordingly, this essay examines Woolf’s theory of interpersonal intimacy by using tenets from her essay “Modern Fiction” (1919) and short work A Room of One’s Own (1929) to effect a comparative analysis of the relational practices of various characters in Mrs. Dalloway (1925), commenting particularly on those practices’ impact on the internal worlds of Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith.

***Winner of the Deans’ Distinguished Essay Award**

In her 1919 manifesto, “Modern Fiction,” Bloomsburian author Virginia Woolf urged her fellow modernists to abjure the clunky, externally-focused workings of the nineteenth-century novel and instead to employ their pens to “examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day... [to] record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall”; that is, to cast their allegiance with the emergent narrative form known as stream of consciousness.¹ Just four years later, Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) burst upon the literary scene, instantly garnering recognition as an examination of the ordinary mind on an ordinary day and assuming its status as a classic example of a formal mode that was reflective of the internal mind.

That Woolf’s employment of this interior-emphasizing mode was reflective of a prioritization of internality in her broader thought is robustly demonstrated by her explicit assumption of the theme four years later in her hallmark essay, *A Room of One’s Own*, in which she passionately explicated women’s need to have physical spaces of their own as a means of achieving psycho-spatial realms of their own.² While scholars have acknowledged Woolf’s prioritization of modal internality in “Modern Fiction” and her defense of psycho-spatial realms in *A Room of One’s Own*, few have recognized that *Mrs. Dalloway* represents an incarnation of *both* emphases—that in the novel in which she achieved her classic expression of modal internality, Woolf was, in essence, also advancing an argument for the primacy of and the importance of protecting internal modes of consciousness from intrusion. Indeed, while *Mrs. Dalloway* has long been recognized as a masterful modal instance of internality, I wish to argue that an examination of the several romantic relationships of Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith reveals that

1. Virginia Woolf, “Modern Fiction,” in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. 2, 8th ed.*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 2090. This work was originally published as “Modern Novels.”

2. In this essay, Woolf famously proclaimed that women needed “to have 500 a year and a room with a lock on the door” (105) in order to participate in the world of fiction writing. As she further explained on the succeeding page, the “five hundred a year stands for the power to contemplate, that... lock on the door means the power to think for oneself” (106). For Woolf’s fuller discussion of this theme, see *A Room of One’s Own* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1981), 105-106. That Woolf’s defense of spaces for women was equal parts literal and symbolic—physical and psycho-spatial—is reinforced by multiple interpretations of her work, including that by Sheheryar Sheikh, who concludes, “when Woolf focuses on the concept of the ‘room,’ it is used, and can be understood, in many different ways, the smallest of which is a physical room that enables privacy... Woolf thought about, and argued for, the room in the most abstract terms because she wanted it to appear simultaneously abstract and concrete.” Sheikh’s analysis of Woolf’s “room” is illuminating and may be found in “The Walls that Emancipate: Disambiguation of the ‘Room’ in *A Room of One’s Own*,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 42, no. 1 (Fall 2018): 20, 24.

Mrs. Dalloway is not only an *example* of modal internality but is also a *defense* of the preservation of individual internality within intimate interpersonal relationships.

The significance of internality as a modal element within *Mrs. Dalloway* is so elementary as to need no proof—as to be proven by the fabric of the text itself and by the fact that almost every word within its pages consists of the internal thoughts and reflections of its various characters' minds. Indeed, the basic appeal of stream of consciousness as a style lay, for the modernists, in its unprecedented capacity for accessing and depicting—that is, for prioritizing—the individual mind.³ However, for novelists in the Bloomsbury set (of whom Woolf was the foremost), the style also demonstrated an unprecedented aptitude for examining a further aspect of internality that they regarded with corresponding curiosity: the impact of interpersonal relationships upon that internality. Indeed, as Bloomsbury scholar Jesse Wolfe asserts, not only had “literary Bloomsbury made intimacy central to its work, interrogating its meaning and imagining models—both positive and negative—of intimate relations,” but a more specific linkage had arisen between the definition of self and the relations of selves in their thought: “For Bloomsbury and its satellites, an examination of inwardness means an examination of intimacy: they bring to life the ways in which inwardness is not manifested in vacuo.”⁴ We see this emphasis on the potential impact that interpersonal intimacy holds over a single inwardness almost immediately in *Mrs. Dalloway* as we, with Clarissa, plunge into the day of her party and we, with Clarissa, “find herself arguing in St. James’s Park, still making out that she had been right—and she had too—not to marry [Peter].”⁵ The presence of this debate in Clarissa’s consciousness throughout the novel—and, indeed, the persistent theme of the relationship between selves and other-selves within *Mrs. Dalloway*—not only reinforces the emphasis placed by both the Bloomsburians and Woolf herself on the exploration of relationships between consciousnesses as a fundamental means of establishing the perimeters of individual consciousnesses, but also directs us towards our own contemplation of the Bloomsburians’ “crisis of intimacy” as we analyze *Mrs. Dalloway*.⁶

3. Stephen Greenblatt, gen ed., “The Twentieth Century and After,” in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. 2, 8th ed.* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 1838-39; the prioritization of the individual mind was, itself, a fundamental focus of modernism: “High modernism through the 1920s, celebrat[ed] personal and textual inwardness, complexity, and difficulty... the modernist novel turned resolutely inward, its concern being now with consciousness—a flow of reflections, momentary impressions, disjunctive bits of recall and half-memory.”

4. Jesse Wolfe, *Bloomsbury, Modernism, and the Reinvention of Intimacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 2-3.

5. Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1981), 7.

6. Jesse Wolfe, “The Sane Woman in the Attic: Sexuality and Self-Authorship in ‘Mrs. Dalloway,’” *Modern Fiction Studies* 51, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 35.

In turning to an examination of the crises of intimacy within *Mrs. Dalloway*, we find three primary relationships to which we may apply our investigative lens. The first of these is the marriage of Clarissa's double, Septimus Smith, and his wife Lucrezia, who live erratically together in a small Bloomsbury flat. The second is the marriage of Clarissa Dalloway and her husband Richard, who live conventionally together in a Westminster mansion. The third is the marriage that might have been between Clarissa and her erstwhile suitor, the globe-roaming Peter Walsh.

Popular analyses of these relationships follow predictable lines based on the obvious features of the text. Lucrezia, the wife of Clarissa's double, is perceived as a doting if simplistic ministrant of care to Septimus whose constant attempts to engage him in conversation serve as a vital link between Septimus and reality. A representative example of this interpretation is provided by Juliane Fowler, who, in a brief analysis of Lucrezia Smith's performance in *Mrs. Dalloway*, lists a variety of closely related interpretations of Lucrezia's character, most of which revolve around the perception of her as "an access point... between Septimus the poet and a material world that is growing increasingly, untenably abstract around him."⁷ Richard, Clarissa's husband, is perceived as a conventional, colorless individual whose inability to express or engage in connective emotion—poignantly encapsulated by his bestowment of a bouquet of flowers as a substitute for the vocalization of affection—has caused Clarissa to languish or decay internally. Their marriage, particularly, is regarded by many critics as an act of emotional cowardice on Clarissa's part, with Julia Briggs declaring of it, "her marriage is close and loving, yet passionless."⁸ In contrast to the figure cut by Richard in these criticisms, Peter is popularly perceived as dashing, expressive, and stimulative—as a force that would have prevented Clarissa from stagnating by requiring her to engage with and to express her own emotion. Indeed, some critics propose Peter—and the marriage Clarissa could have had with Peter—as the factor that might have preemptively prevented the development of the introversion that they choose to regard as a flaw in her character. Jeremy Hawthorn rather mildly summarizes this perspective when he states, "In cutting herself off from Peter... [Clarissa] may have cut herself off from a necessary contact with others."⁹ Indeed, some critics propose Peter—and the marriage Clarissa could have had with Peter—as the factor that might have preemptively prevented the development of the introversion

7. Juliane Fowler, "(for she was with him)": Lucrezia Warren Smith as Witness and Scribe in *Mrs. Dalloway*," *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* 91 (Spring 2017): 29.

8. Julia Briggs, "What a Lark! What a Plunge!": *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925)," in *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 2005), 149.

9. Jeremy Hawthorn, *Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway: A Study in Alienation* (London: Sussex University Press, 1975), 13.

that they choose to regard as a flaw in her character. Jeremy Hawthorn rather mildly summarizes this perspective when he states, "In cutting herself off from Peter... [Clarissa] may have cut herself off from a necessary contact with others." Peter, in this view, forms a bridge to the outer world for Clarissa that Richard simply does not afford. Thus, in the choice between Clarissa's suitors, popular taste favors the rejected over the accepted.

In arriving at any such judgment of the relationships Woolf created in *Mrs. Dalloway*, however, we must regard as authoritative the attitudes of that creator—must recall that we are interacting with a modernist who was intent upon interrogating and deconstructing traditional attitudes towards intimacy. While such Victorians as the Brontës, with their Heathcliffs and Rochesters, had taught readers for decades to regard intensity of passion and intermingling of mind as the measurements of real love—and to regard as suspicious those loves that are less forthcoming, less explosive, less *demanding* in their expression—we must remember that the modernists were engaged in what Wolfe describes as "a debate about love and marriage spanning the Victorian and modern eras" that had resulted in the modernists adopting "a sharp feeling of alienation from Victorian mores."¹⁰ In embarking upon any such judgment of the relationships of *Mrs. Dalloway*, therefore, we must do so with the explicit acknowledgment that, in the depiction of those relationships, Woolf is engaged in the establishment of the defining line between self and non-self; in delineating the proper ways in which those lines may be negotiated properly without imbalanced demands made by the one on the other.¹¹

Indeed, the key to interpreting the relationships of *Mrs. Dalloway*'s markedly internal protagonists lies within Woolf's own thought—lies tucked away in the pages of the great defense of psycho-spatial freedom already mentioned, *A Room of One's Own*. Here, while musing upon the mechanisms by which men enact their domination over women—and specifically why men react with such passion, such *bitterness* towards women whose opinions do not accord with their own—Woolf proposes the following theory to explain the curious features of these interpersonal dynamics:

Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size... That is why Napoleon and Mussolini both insist so emphatically upon the inferiority of women, for if they were not inferior, they would cease to enlarge.

10. Wolfe, *Bloomsbury, Modernism, and the Reinvention of Intimacy*, 4. By "Heathcliffs" and "Rochesters," I, of course, refer to the emotive characters created by Emily Brontë and Charlotte Brontë, respectively.

11. Hawthorn, *Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway*, 12. Hawthorn posits that Woolf believed that "we exist simultaneously in terms of but distinct from other people— together with and apart from them"; Woolf is therefore acutely interested in discovering the terms of that division.

That serves to explain in part the necessity that women so often are to men. And it serves to explain how restless they are under her criticism... for if she begins to tell the truth, the figure in the looking-glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished.¹²

With a few deft strokes of her pen, Woolf has painted a complete picture: those with more egocentric personalities select and then seek to transform members of their immediate circle into mirrors of themselves as a means of maintaining their own sense of self. As Woolf describes it, this selection and transformation roots itself within and can only be perpetuated through an abrogation of the identity and internality of the object of the process; it reduces the personhood of the object by demanding that that object's core self serve as a reflection of the emotions, perspectives, and ego of the abrogator. In the context of *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf is speaking of widespread cultural trends that necessarily have a gendered aspect. However, when interpreted in light of Woolf's more general discourse regarding androgyny of mind within the essay—and particularly the fact that Woolf's argument in this essay is based at least partially upon the idea that there is, inherently, more *sameness* than *difference* between the minds and needs of men and women—we see that, on the individual scale, this type of identity consumption is not *inherently* a gendered practice.¹³ We see instead that it is not gender but egocentrism (most widespread in, but not limited to males) that funds these mirror-making campaigns and that this type of relationship evolves due to power imbalances—imbalances of emotive and sensitive personalities—within relationships. More importantly, we see that Woolf regards these campaigns as inadmissible regardless of the gender of the perpetrator; she regards as contrary to the individual's ability to achieve *a mind of their own* any method of interpersonal relationships that so explicitly breaches the internality of its object.

While Woolf nowhere employs the word “looking glass” in association with romantic relationships in *Mrs. Dalloway*, we nevertheless see her expanding suggestively on similar themes in Clarissa's internal monologue. Indeed, in one of the most direct commentaries on love in the entire novel, Clarissa shudders before love's propensity to

12. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1981), 35-36.

13. In regard to the question of androgyny, Woolf embarks upon a discussion of Coleridge's conception of androgyny in *A Room of One's Own*, 98, that leads her to the conclusion “that the androgynous mind is resonant and porous; that it transmits emotion without impediment; that it is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided.” Feminist scholar Nancy Taylor proposes that a similar androgyny is afoot in *Mrs. Dalloway*, which she describes as “an androgynous creation of character, dramatic situation, and language that deconstructs the borders between male and female.” For Taylor's analysis see “Erasure of Definition: Androgyny in *Mrs. Dalloway*,” *Women's Studies* 18 (1991): 377.

act as an invasive force, comparing it unfavorably to religion as she internally remarks, “Love and religion! Thought Clarissa, going back into the drawing-room, tingling all over. How detestable, how detestable they are!... Had she [Clarissa] ever tried to *convert any one herself*: Did she not wish everybody merely to be *themselves*... love and religion would *destroy* that, whatever it was, *the privacy of the soul*.”¹⁴ Although Woolf has substituted her previously-held looking glass for the language of religion in this passage, the fundamental concept is the same: those humans who are less appreciative of and respectful towards internality seek to transform other humans into versions or reflections of themselves, and when they do so it constitutes the destruction of the soul. Here, Clarissa—or, more accurately, Woolf—identifies the tendency to convert others unto one’s self as being built into the fabric not only of religion, but of interpersonal relationships; she identifies the tendency to convert as a more basic urge of humanity that emerges even within so-called love—or, as Hawthorn phrases it, “love has its negative side, where it resembles religion and conversion, where it involves a desire to subdue or consume the other person’s identity.”¹⁵ Implicit in this urge, therefore—implicit in not all, but many practices of love—is the desire to homogenize; to abrogate or breach the other by seeking to make that other a function of one’s self until they are no longer their own self, but rather an echoic image of the radiating partner.¹⁶ The creation of such an echoic image involves first the invasion of the object of affection by means of the egocentric expression of emotion and then the conversion or transformation of the individual into a likeness of self through the demand that that object become a reflective, regurgitative mirroring likeness for those expressions.

Now, newly armed with Woolf’s theories of love’s potential to act as a mirror- or convert-making force through its invasive intrusion into internality, when we return to the evaluation of Lucrezia’s, Peter’s, and Richard’s performances as partners, we discover curious patterns emerging in their behavior. In the case of Lucrezia Smith, a return to her performance as a bridge between Septimus’s mind and reality reveals that her methods involve less a bridging than an invading effect. Indeed, as we tally them, we see that Lucrezia’s basic strategy for “engaging” Septimus amounts to a series of intrusions upon his stream of consciousness, as is apparent within her variations of the cry “Look, look,

14. Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 126-7, emphasis mine.

15. Hawthorn, *Virginia Woolf’s Mrs Dalloway*, 48

16. *Ibid.*, 45. Hawthorn specifically notes that the “consuming” of identity involves homogenization when he opines while analyzing Peter and Clarissa’s relationship that, “To love someone is to recognize their distinctness, their separateness from us, but the act of loving can, paradoxically, bring the loved one closer, can start to reduce this separateness.”

Septimus!” when he is deep in thought,¹⁷ her repeated inquiry after the time,¹⁸ and her attempts to force him into a display of reciprocity by interrupting his thoughts with the query, “What are you saying?”¹⁹ Lucrezia herself—and with her, her supporters—seeks to justify this intrusion by casting it as an application of the fearsome Dr. Holmes’s orders that Septimus “take an interest in things outside of himself”;²⁰ however, this is not an altogether honest framing of her behavior, for her own memories prove that her intrusiveness is not a new, but rather a longstanding habit.²¹ Indeed, as her own memories reveal, a troubling number of Lucrezia’s past interactions with Septimus—interactions that date to *before* Dr. Holmes’s diagnosis—involve her interrupting Septimus in some way: snatching a paper from him because he was “reading a paper instead of talking” and “shutting the *Inferno*” when she finds him peacefully reading instead of speaking to her.²² Indeed, her intrusion into his contemplative mode of existence has been of long enough standing that Septimus responds to it in the novel not by pondering, “Why had she begun to interrupt him?” but rather by sighing resignedly, “Interrupted again! She was *always* interrupting.”²³

Given that this habit, contrary to the framing Lucrezia would have us believe, is rooted less in Dr. Holmes’s orders and more in Lucrezia’s own character—that her acting on Dr. Holmes’s advice is merely a furtherance of a pattern of action she had already pursued with Septimus—we find ourselves beginning to question the more general narrative of Lucrezia as being motivated primarily by a sense of care for Septimus in her behavior towards her husband. In returning to Lucrezia’s thoughts with this suspicion in mind, we find much to further complicate our understanding of her performance as an interpersonal partner:

She could not sit beside him when he stared so and did not see her... She put on her lace collar. She put on her new hat and he never noticed; and he was happy without her. Nothing could make her happy without him! Nothing! He was selfish. So men are. For he was not ill. Dr. Holmes said there was nothing the matter with him. She spread her hand before her. Look! Her wedding ring slipped—she had grown so thin. It was she who suffered—but she had nobody to tell.²⁴

17. Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 21, 23, 25, 26.

18. *Ibid.*, 69-70.

19. *Ibid.*, 25.

20. *Ibid.*, 21.

21. Even setting aside the question of Lucrezia’s motive, theorists Ghasemi, Sasani, and Abbaszadeh assert that, “This taking-an-interest-in-outside-things treatment implies a process of conformity, a plan for conversion” in “Mrs. Dalloway: Consciousness ‘Social Homeostasis’ and Marxism,” *Forum for World Literature Studies* 9, no. 4 (December 2017): 680. Conversion again!

22. Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 16 and 88, respectively.

23. *Ibid.*, 25.

24. *Ibid.*, 23.

The egocentrism of this passage is immediate and overwhelming. Perhaps the most obvious instance of this egocentrism is the fact that, in a marvel of maneuvering, Lucrezia has reframed the situation to cast herself as the victim, herself as the primary sufferer of the two. She has achieved this reframing by both diminishing Septimus's suffering and simultaneously aggrandizing her own, a strategy that appears more explicitly elsewhere when she reasons regarding his wartime losses, "[Evans] had been killed in the War. But such things happen to every one. Every one has friends who were killed in the War. Every one gives up something when they marry."²⁵ In Lucrezia's view, the emotional toll of Septimus's wartime experience is comparable to her decision to choose to marry the man she loved; in Lucrezia's view, it is not Septimus, the war-ravaged veteran, who lives daily under the knowledge that his closest friend's body had been blown to lumps of flesh, that suffers, but rather it is *she*, who left her family in the best of health to marry a sensitive man, who suffers; *it was she who suffered*. Only the greatest egocentrism—the most blatant belief that one's own emotions are the center of existence—could effect such a comparison as Lucrezia performs here.

More essential, however, to our discussion of mirror-making within relationships is Lucrezia's conception of the nature of her suffering. This suffering she proposes as arising from Septimus's "selfishness," a selfishness she equates, puzzlingly, with his ability to experience happiness independently of her. Lucrezia ranges herself in passionate opposition to this "selfishness," marking herself as "unselfish" in her own perspective by proclaiming, "Nothing could make her happy without him! Nothing!" On its surface, this declaration appears to be one of love—a proclamation of value and affection. However, when evaluated for its implications, this statement reveals itself to be less a declaration regarding Septimus and more a declaration regarding Lucrezia; less a declaration of affection and more a declaration of emotional dependency. Indeed, in declaring that she cannot be made happy without Septimus, Lucrezia has, in essence, declared a deeper act of selfishness than any Septimus perpetuated—has established that she is incapable of arriving at individual, self-generated happiness, but rather *requires* the constant emotional participation of or funding by a second party to experience happiness. That such dependency places a profound burden on the object of that dependency is so elementary as to need no explanation; more sinister, however, is the fact that such dependency, rather than elevating its object, instead *reduces* that object by linking its value to its ability to bear that burden, its ability to sustain and *reflect* the emotional pitch of the dependent feeler.

Indeed, throughout this passage (and the novel) we see that Lucrezia's primary frustrations with her marriage—her sources of "suffering"—are linked to Septimus's

25. *Ibid.*, 66.

failure to sustain the burden of her emotions, to act as an echoic reflector of her emotional projections. His “selfishness,” in Lucrezia’s view, consists of two primary aspects. The first is his ability to achieve happiness without reference to her, his ability to source happiness from within his own sense of self, independent of the emotions she is projecting—an ability that constitutes, in essence, a rejection of her echoic link. The second aspect of Septimus’s “selfishness,” consists, in Lucrezia’s view, of the fact that he does not respond to her attempts to cast him as an audience to herself—does not take notice of the superficial externalities (her new hat! her lace collar!) that she employs to try to bait him into a response to her. However, as painful as these marks of detachment must be for Lucrezia, it is not Septimus but Lucrezia herself who enacts the more ultimate reduction, the more ultimate selfishness when she articulates her response to his unresponsiveness to her: “Far rather she that he were *dead!*”²⁶ Such is the effect of entangling the value of one’s partner with their performance as a responder to self: over time the response itself becomes elevated over the value of the individual doing the responding—over time, as the responder falls stripped of emotional reserves, their value evaporates with those reserves.

Indeed, it is telling of Lucrezia’s status as an egocentric mirror-maker that the pitch of her unhappiness is not the fact that there might be something wrong with Septimus, but that *she had nobody to tell* of her emotions—that because Septimus is refusing to participate in an echoic emotional link to the extent that he is able to be “happy without her,” she has nobody who might act as a reflective audience to her emotion. This desire for the audience, this *need* to have a participant in her own emotions, is cemented by a later passage: “Since she was so unhappy, for weeks and weeks now, Rezia... almost felt sometimes that she must stop people in the street, if they looked good, kind people, just to say to them ‘I am unhappy.’”²⁷ Key to our understanding of this fantasy is that Lucrezia does not imagine these good, kind people as aiding her in the reparation of her marriage or as potentially becoming close friends whose individuality she might celebrate; their only function in her imagination is their momentary presence as an audience to her emotional expression, which bears ascendancy over all else in her system of value.

Having established Lucrezia Smith’s basic perception of interpersonal relations as a sphere of mirror-making, we turn to Peter Walsh with a sense of weather-worn wariness as we assay to examine the virtue most often attributed to his character: his ability to rouse Clarissa to emotional expression. As the most concrete instance of the couple’s interaction occurs when Peter calls upon Clarissa on the morning of her party,

26. *Ibid.*, 23, emphasis mine.

27. *Ibid.*, 83. “Rezia” is a nickname for Lucrezia.

it is to this instance that we first direct our attention. Here we find that, upon arriving at Clarissa's home, Peter's first act is to put aside her maid (whom Clarissa has erected as a symbolic barrier between herself and the invasive world) with the declaration "Mrs. Dalloway will see me... oh yes, she will see *me*," after which he bursts upon Clarissa, who, alarmed by the intrusion, "ma[kes] to hide her dress, like a virgin protecting chastity, respecting privacy."²⁸ This series of actions clearly illustrates that, whatever else may be true of the terms of their interaction, Peter clearly perceives himself and his desires as taking precedence over any boundaries Clarissa may devise to protect her privacy. Indeed, the entire visit is marked for its usage of the language of *invasion*, which we already know to be the basic tactic for those attempting to engage in identity-conversion. This language is employed most noticeably by Clarissa herself, who conceptualizes his call upon her explicitly in terms of a breach when she describes how, feeling "like a Queen whose guards have fallen sleep and left her unprotected... [she] summoned to her help the things she did; the things she liked; her husband; Elizabeth; her self, in short, which Peter hardly knew now, all to come about her and beat off the enemy."²⁹ Clarissa recognizes that this visit—that Peter's treatment of her—constitutes an assault on her inscape, and she calls upon the elements out of which she has volitionally forged her identity to aid her in conducting a defense of that inscape.

Their conversation in the wake of this breach is best described by Clarissa herself, who ruminates later in the day, "he came to see her after all these years and what did he talk about? Himself."³⁰ Indeed, throughout their encounter, Peter's fixation upon and elevation of his own emotions—his egocentric sense that "only one person in the world could be as he was, in love"³¹—remains on constant display, leading Clarissa to recall that it was this very trait that had formed a fundamental element of her frustration with him: "it was... his lack of the ghost of a notion what any one else was feeling that annoyed her, had always annoyed her."³² That Peter's egocentrism does indeed, as Clarissa asserts, distort his ability to assess accurately others' (and particularly Clarissa's) emotions is demonstrated by the result of his awkward attempt to evoke an emotional reaction from Clarissa through the parading of his new relationship before her.³³ After springing his

28. For both quotations see *Ibid.*, 40.

29. *Ibid.*, 44.

30. *Ibid.*, 127.

31. *Ibid.*, 48.

32. *Ibid.*, 46.

33. It is also proven by Peter's hasty judgment of Clarissa's daughter, Elizabeth (49), his evaluation of Lucrezia and Septimus Smith (70), and his interpretation of the ambulance he hears on the streets (151); in each case, his projections represent his own emotions only, not a decentered perspective.

news upon her, he reflects “second by second it seemed to him that the wife of the Major in the Indian Army (his Daisy) and her two small children became more and more lovely as Clarissa looked at them... (for in some ways no one understood him, *felt with him*, as Clarissa did).”³⁴ However, the reality is that Clarissa does not feel with him—Clarissa thinks that Peter has been duped by this wife of the Major in the Indian Army and that his love for her is somewhat ridiculous.³⁵

That Peter so badly misjudges Clarissa’s judgment in the same breath in which he opines that their feelings accord not only casts doubt upon his claim elsewhere that the two “went in and out of each other’s minds without any effort” (itself a questionable virtue), but also suggests that Peter’s engagement with Clarissa involves and has always involved a heavy measure of projection—that he regards her as and expects her to be reflective of his own projected emotions.³⁶ He wishes to evoke emotions from her, certainly, but the emotions he wishes to evoke *are not hers at all* but are rather reflections of his own. Indeed, the primary emotion that Peter, the great evoker of Clarissa’s emotions, succeeds in evoking from her is not an expression of her core self, but rather a reflection of the very emotion she so dislikes in him: a sensation of “indomitable egotism.”³⁷ To defend herself against his advances, Clarissa must tap into a version of the very trait that she regards as lesser and immature in Peter. Even so, it is still better than her alternative in interacting with him, which is to accept Peter’s dictum that “everything had to be shared; everything gone into,”³⁸ a process which, when undertaken with such an egocentric character as Peter, could only result in catastrophe—in endless argumentation—should the second party refuse to echo the projector’s emotions. This, of course, is precisely what occurred in the past between Peter and Clarissa and is precisely what would occur in the future should she cave to Peter’s attempts to pursue her as an echoic mirror for his emotions.³⁹

34. *Ibid.*, 46, emphasis mine.

35. *Ibid.* In regard to news of “his Daisy,” Clarissa has the following reaction: “She flattered him; she fooled him, thought Clarissa; shaping the woman, the wife of the Major in the Indian Army, with three sharp strokes of a knife. What a waste! What a folly! All his life long Peter had been fooled like that; first getting sent down from Oxford; next marrying the girl on the boat going out to India; now the wife of a Major in the Indian Army—thank Heaven she [Clarissa] had refused to marry him!” As this passage demonstrates, Peter’s evaluation of Clarissa’s feelings is fatally colored by his own.

36. *Ibid.*, 63.

37. *Ibid.*, 45.

38. *Ibid.*, 8.

39. Clarissa recalls multiple instances of her fights with Peter, as when she contrasts her and Peter’s argumentative habits—“she and Peter frittered their time away bickering” (120)—with her life of efficacy with Richard’s “divine simplicity” (120).

That Peter is predisposed to perceive women as performing the role of the reflective mirror—that he assumes that a relationship between a man and a woman necessarily involves the woman acting as a reflector of her partner—is most tellingly, if subtly, demonstrated by his inability to conceptualize the Dalloways' marriage as anything other than a reflective union.⁴⁰ Indeed, as Peter ruminates on Clarissa's marriage, we see him repeatedly assuming that Clarissa has fallen into a reflective role with Richard. This is most apparent when he contemplates Clarissa's party, which he refuses to accept might be an act of self-expression and regarding which he instead asserts, "these parties for example were all for him, or for her idea of him."⁴¹ And yet, this perspective—so confidently set forth by Peter—is a rank falsehood, as is proven by the monologues of both Clarissa and Richard. Indeed, far from hosting these parties out of a sense of duty towards Richard, Clarissa perceives her parties as an ultimate offering of her person, a vibrant expression of her self; as "an offering for the sake of offering... her gift."⁴² Far from pressuring Clarissa to host these parties, Richard thinks of them that "it was a very odd thing how much Clarissa minded about her parties."⁴³ Richard regards the parties as an aspect of his wife that he does not completely understand—and yet, as they make her happy, he is happy for her to host them despite the fact that he does not understand precisely why she does so. That she is happy hosting them is enough for him; already differences are beginning to emerge between Peter's and Richard's approaches to loving Clarissa.

In turning, finally, to survey Richard's performance as a partner to Clarissa, we again select for inspection the scene in that performance for which the performer is best known. In Richard's case, that scene begins as he wends his way homeward from Lady Bruton's luncheon. In this scene, Richard reflects on Clarissa's inscrutable qualities but

40. Less immediately relevant but far more demonstrative of Peter's desire for a human mirror on which to project his emotions—and of his perception of women as just such a mirror—is his selection of a young woman on the streets of London who, with a few flourishes of his imagination becomes "the very woman he had always had in mind; young, but stately; merry, but discreet; black, but enchanting" (52). Over the next few paragraphs, Peter tracks this woman through the city, imputing to her—the reflective mirror—all that he desires of an encounter with the feminine while simultaneously imagining that if he were to ask her to "Come and have an ice" she "would answer, perfectly simply 'Oh yes.'" (53) As Briggs opines in *Virginia Woolf*, 151, "[Peter's] imagination is most intensely aroused by the woman he follows across Trafalgar Square, a fantasy creature he can invent and control; unconscious of him, she makes no demands." This is what Peter, ultimately wants from a woman—this undemanding *oh yes*—and it is Clarissa's refusal to supply this undemanding *oh yes*, this echo of his fantasy, that so nettles him.

41. Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 77.

42. *Ibid.*, 122.

43. *Ibid.*, 119.

nevertheless celebrates the joy of being married to her, thinking, “It was a miracle that he should have married Clarissa.”⁴⁴ Borne aloft by his love for her, Richard wishes to give her a gift—“to open the drawing-room door and come in holding out something; a present for Clarissa.”⁴⁵ However, while he imagines the emotion of the scene, his emphasis in this gift-giving fantasy is on the act of the giving of the gift itself—on the bestowment of care and value, the expression of affection—not on any sort of rise of emotion he wishes to wrench from Clarissa. Moreover, in choosing his gift, Richard explicitly avoids projecting his own preferences onto Clarissa, and instead “doubt[s] his own taste” regarding what sort of jewelry Clarissa would like, electing instead to bring her an offering that is less conventionally valuable, but which our experience with Clarissa proves that she will find *individually* valuable: a bouquet of flowers.⁴⁶

Much has been made of the moment in which Richard gifts these flowers to Clarissa; much has been made of his supposed inability to express his love to Clarissa in words rather than actions. However, a close examination of this encounter suggests an alternative interpretation of Richard’s silence, one that derives itself from the fact that, as he hesitates before her, about to say the words, Clarissa thinks, “Why? There were the roses.”⁴⁷ Clarissa’s response suggests that she prefers the gift of the roses to the vocalization of love—suggests that she finds them more meaningful as an expression of affection than she would find the usage of a phrase that is capable of losing its meaning through over-usage.⁴⁸ What this suggests is that Richard pauses upon the verge of the words and finally chooses to refrain from speaking them not because he is unable to speak them but *precisely because he is cognizant of Clarissa’s preferences in this regard*. Herein lies the primary difference between Clarissa’s two suitors, for while Peter insists that everything be gone into, insists that everything be expressed and established in terms reflective of his own style of being, Richard, as we have already seen, acknowledges that there are aspects of Clarissa that he does not understand and yet he chooses to be

44. *Ibid.*, 115.

45. *Ibid.*, 114.

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*, 119.

48. While we might perhaps be tempted to regard Peter’s explosion into tears on Clarissa’s couch as a more frank display of emotion, Clarissa herself regarded that display as sufficiently superficial as to describe it as a “gaiety” (47)—in her eyes, it was a type of performance. For Clarissa, *strength* of expression does not necessarily equate to *depth* of expression. The deepest emotions may be expressed in the most commonplace, the most everyday gestures; as Woolf herself opines in “Modern Fiction,” 2090, “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.” Clarissa takes this principle to heart.

understanding in his non-understanding of them. Richard allows Clarissa the space to exist as herself without attempting to rouse or antagonize her; he does not seek to bend her out of shape or understand her to her own discomfort, but instead respects her autonomy and regards her as a separate, discrete individual.

This allowance of autonomy—this allowance of individuality—demonstrates that, far from desiring to breach Clarissa or coopt her to act as a reflective mirror of his emotions in the vein of Lucrezia or Peter, Richard is instead dedicated to allowing Clarissa freedom within their marriage, a coveted rarity within early twentieth-century discourse surrounding intimacy.⁴⁹ Indeed, rather than mount an assault on Clarissa's inscape, Richard has accepted Clarissa's decree that "There is a dignity in people; a solitude even between husband and wife a gulf; and that one must respect... for one would not part with it oneself, or take it, against his will, from one's husband, without losing one's independence, one's self respect—something, after all, priceless."⁵⁰ By accepting this dictum, Richard has deeded Clarissa the control of her own identity, a right to self-possession that is paramount to the happiness of inward-directed personalities such as Clarissa, who need "to see their intimate lives as narratives over which they [can] exert... control, as self-authoring subjects."⁵¹ Rather than demand that Clarissa's sensitive soul reflect his own, more hearty consciousness, Richard has allowed Clarissa to choose her own methods of emotional expression within their marriage, methods that Richard categorically refuses to breach.

This series of examinations has served to illustrate that Woolf explicitly perceived and depicted interpersonal relationships in terms of their impact upon or interference with the individual internalities of their participants. However, the true body of Woolf's *defense* of the protection of internality within interpersonal relationships—which I proposed as a fundamental theme of *Mrs. Dalloway* at the head of this essay—lies not within her cataloguing of the *practices* of both types of interpersonal relationship but rather in her depiction of the *effects* of those relationships on the psyche. These effects are

49. Wolfe, *Bloomsbury, Modernism, and the Reinvention of Intimacy*, 22, emphasis mine; Wolfe identifies the pursuit of independence in marriage as one of the hallmarks of Modernist conceptions of intimacy, noting that, in distinction to the priorities of previous decades, "Early-twentieth-century spouses *needed* to find freedom within marriage."

50. Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 120.

51. Wolfe, "The Sane Woman," 38. Clarissa's marriage to Richard has also facilitated her ability to host parties, through which she is enabled to interact socially with and define herself in relation to other people while yet remaining firmly in control of the terms of that interaction—while not running the risk of their invading or breaching her internality. This ability to self-protect is essential for Clarissa, for whom, according to Taylor in "Erasure of Definition," 375, "the ability to choose when to open and when to close to others is important."

best illustrated by the divergent fates of the doubling characters of Septimus Smith and Clarissa Dalloway, fates which are themselves the crux of Woolf's defense of internality as an elemental aspect of identity and, therefore, existence.

Traditionally, the fate of Septimus's character has been read as a tragedy of war—his suicide as arising from his inability to reintegrate himself into reality in the wake of the trauma he endured as a soldier on the Italian front of the Great War.⁵² However, in recent years, an alternative vein of criticism has developed that employs Woolf's early draft of *Mrs. Dalloway* to emphasize that Septimus's struggle with reality (and that struggle's attendant symptoms), which have traditionally been attributed to the war by critics, actually began *before* the war—or, as Kathryn Van Wert phrases it, “Septimus has *always* been the bearer of a message he can neither relay nor tell himself.”⁵³ This reading of Septimus proposes that the War did not *change* Septimus as much as it *exacerbated* his natural qualities—his ongoing struggle to express the inexpressible—and left him in possession of a sanity that would remain functional provided it was allowed to function in unintruded calm.

The maintenance of this calm, however, is complicated by Septimus's sensation of possessing an inscape that is not quite what it ought to be—is complicated by his sensation of being unable to *feel* as humanity has prescribed that he, as a member of their army, ought to feel.⁵⁴ It is as a means of rousing this feeling, which society tells him he *must* have to be of their number, that Septimus proposes to Lucrezia. It is upon the sensitive inscape he is seeking to soothe through marriage that Lucrezia's invasiveness crashes like a guillotine, for while he feels nothing, she feels *everything* and, moreover, is not satisfied to feel in isolation, but rather demands that her husband participate in those feelings the more fully to reinforce her own feeling of them. *Yet Septimus cannot feel them*—and she will not stop demanding his feeling of her feelings from him—a paradox

52. This interpretation is blithely assumed in much criticism, as when John Batchelor declares, “Septimus Smith is, of course, a victim of the war, his suicide a delayed effect of shell shock” in “*Mrs. Dalloway*,” in *Virginia Woolf: The Major Novels*, ed. John Batchelor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 83.

53. Kathryn Van Wert, “The Early Life of Septimus Smith,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 36, no. 1 (2012): 77. In her close reading of *The Hours* (Woolf's original draft of *Mrs. Dalloway*), Van Wert specifically describes Septimus's early flight to London as being motivated by “the sense of besiegement he felt in his parents' home,” (84) a besiegement with which his sensitive spirit could have no traffic, but which Van Wert identifies as being reproduced through his association with Lucrezia.

54. Septimus speaks of this lack of feeling alternatively as a crime and a sin: “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” (91). The irony, of course, is that Septimus feels a good many things within the course of the book, most noticeably the fear that he does not feel; he simply does not feel as (he believes) others feel.

that triggers his cyclical spiral *deeper into* rather than out of his internality: "His wife was crying, and he felt nothing; only each time she sobbed in this profound, this silent, this hopeless way, *he descended another step into the pit*. At last... he dropped his head on his hands. Now he had surrendered; now other people must help him. People must be sent for. He gave in."⁵⁵ Thus we see that it is not the impact of the war, but rather the impact of his life with a mirror-maker that sets the treatment of Septimus Smith in motion—that enables Lucrezia to send for doctors to follow her into the breach she has formed into Septimus's psyche.⁵⁶ The breach once effected, the doctors are upon Septimus relentlessly, for "once you fall, Septimus repeated to himself, human nature is on you. Holmes and Bradshaw are on you."⁵⁷ This treatment, in turn, and the fact that it allows Sir William to "dabble his fingers in Septimus' soul" as he campaigns to convert the whole world to his program of "proportion,"⁵⁸ sets the suicide of Septimus in motion—sets Septimus in search of a defense for his soul.⁵⁹

For perhaps the most essential aspect of Septimus's suicide is the fact that *Septimus is not suicidal*. As Woolf records Septimus's own thoughts, "The whole world was clamouring: Kill yourself, kill yourself for our sakes. But why should he kill himself for their sakes? Food was pleasant; the sun hot."⁶⁰ Septimus has no distaste for living—has no dislike for the feel of the wind on his face, the sound of the dog upon his ear; even the war could not remove these things from him. No, his source of suicide arises from a different quarter than a distaste for *life*, as is proven by the last of his musings as he

55. Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 90.

56. Given the intensity of my tone here, I should note that, in my reading of *Mrs. Dalloway*, I do not believe that Lucrezia is motivated by actual malignant intent; merely that her self-centeredness results in malignant effects. It is, however, curious that Lucrezia does not exhibit sympathy with her husband's feelings until she learns that he actually *is* sick, at which point—learning that his treatment would require that he be removed from her—we encounter the following passage: "Never, never had Rezia felt such agony in her life! She had asked for help and been deserted!" (98). Again, although it is her husband who suffers, her husband who is soon to become the victim of Sir William's invasions, Lucrezia's perception of the event is that it is *she* who has been deserted by Sir William.

57. Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 92.

58. *Ibid.*, 99-100.

59. Hawthorn, *Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway*, 12. Woolf specifically marks out Sir William's "Proportion" as the sister of "Conversion"; her account of Bradshaw's marriage in is also singularly revealing: "Conversion, fastidious Goddess, loves blood better than brick, and feasts most subtly on the human will. For example, Lady Bradshaw. Fifteen years ago she had gone under. It was nothing you could put your finger on; there had been no scene, no snap; only the slow sinking, water-logged, of her will into his" (100). Lady Bradshaw, then, has been converted into a mirror for Sir William's more powerful will.

60. Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 92.

perches upon the windowsill preparing to plunge: “He did not want to die. Life was good. The sun hot. Only human beings—what did *they* want?”⁶¹ On the one hand, Septimus is baffled by human nature; yet in a deeper sense, he knows *exactly* what they want—they want to be upon him in inwardness-breaching conversion. And this, Septimus will not allow; this, his consciousness, which has survived the war (he would not go mad), Septimus will not permit to be ravaged. And so he leaps—leaps to give his life in defense of the integrity of his internal world.

All of this Clarissa feels instinctually when she hears of Septimus’s suicide later that night at her party. Having encountered Sir William Bradshaw only moments before, she instinctually identifies that he is “capable of some indescribable outrage—forcing your soul, that was it,” instinctually identifies the impact this breaching must have had on Septimus’s psyche “they make life intolerable, men like that,” and instinctually identifies that his suicide was linked to the protection of his internality as she wonders, “had he plunged holding his treasure?”⁶² Moreover, while she cannot be aware of the role Lucrezia played in introducing the great proportionist into Septimus’s soul, Clarissa is instinctually led by Septimus’s suicide to reflect on the role of the spouse in protecting or defending the integrity of their partner’s soul: “Even now, quite often if Richard had not been there reading the *Times*, so that she could crouch like a bird and gradually revive, send roaring up that immeasurable delight, rubbing stick to stick, one thing with another, *she must have perished.*”⁶³ If she had not had Richard—if she had not had the unbreached life Richard allows her to lead, Clarissa reflects—yes, *if she had not had Richard, she must have perished.* Given the circumstances that lead her to conclude this—and given our recent observation of the effect on Septimus of Lucrezia’s mirror-making treatment of his sensitive soul—we must realize that equally accurate would have been the declaration that *if she had had Peter, she must have perished.*

Indeed, the truly cautionary nature of Woolf’s tale—the answer to the doubt Clarissa has felt lurking about her soul all day concerning her decision to reject Peter and accept Richard as well as the most dramatic element of the novel’s defense of internality—lies in the fact that Septimus, *Clarissa’s double*, has committed suicide as a result of relational practices that *Lucrezia and Peter share*. Within the narrative, Peter, like Lucrezia, has launched multiple assaults on his object’s will, which he identifies as “the devilish part of her—this coldness, this woodenness, something very profound in her... *an impenetrability.*”⁶⁴ In a more sinister twist, however, we see that while Lucrezia seemed

61. *Ibid.*, 149.

62. *Ibid.*, 184-85.

63. *Ibid.*, 185, emphasis mine.

64. *Ibid.*, 60, emphasis mine.

unaware that she was doing battle with Septimus's core, Peter recognizes that Clarissa is mounting a resistance to his attempts at invasion as he describes that "He felt that he was grinding against something physically hard; she unyielding. She was like iron, like flint, rigid up the backbone."⁶⁵ Peter *knows* that he is locked in a battle with Clarissa's core self and *yet continues grinding*.⁶⁶

Indeed, rather than respect her resistance, Peter derives a profound frustration from Clarissa's struggle to maintain a discrete sense of self before his grinding, a frustration that escapes him in pockets of bitterness, as when he shifts the responsibility for his present aimless state to her for refusing to marry him and live in an eternal mirroring state with him, thinking "what she might have spared him, *what she had reduced him to*."⁶⁷ Much as Lucrezia reframed her marriage to propose herself as the victim of her husband's selfishness, Peter here proposes that by refusing to mirror him—by refusing to enlarge him to himself and choosing instead to protect her internality—Clarissa has *reduced* and therefore *wronged* him. All of these similarities lead necessarily to the conclusion that, had she lived in close association with Peter as Septimus had with Lucrezia, Clarissa must necessarily have, like Septimus, given way before the grinding and succumbed to the trampling of her individual internality that is encompassed in Peter's idea of being one. Because Peter would have insisted on being in Clarissa's mind even while filtering that mind through his projections of his own emotions onto it, he would inevitably have driven her further into her own internality, have left her prostrated, have pushed her to her own windowsill, from which she, too, would have leapt. Woolf's message is clear: relationships in which one member seeks to breach the individual internality of the other in the name of interpersonal intimacy commits an outrage against that internality whose psychic and emotional impact can only be accurately communicated in terms of literal death.

65. *Ibid.*, 64.

66. That Peter's version of mirror-making is slightly less simplistic—slightly more malicious—than Lucrezia's version is further proven by the fact that, while Lucrezia never intentionally seeks to inflict pain upon Septimus, Peter records that he told Clarissa that she would be "the perfect hostess" *precisely* because "he would have done anything to hurt her after seeing her with Dalloway" (62). Peter's willingness intentionally to inflict pain on Clarissa would have made the process of resisting his intrusions a dangerous business indeed.

67. Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 80, emphasis mine. In *A Room of One's Own*, 35-36, Woolf describes the emotions of the resisted mirror-maker as being "not merely the cry of wounded vanity" but also "a protest against some infringement of [their] power to believe in [them]sel[ves]"; as registering "far more pain and rousing far more anger" than typical criticisms or rejections. This description sounds remarkably like Peter Walsh's disproportionate frustration with Clarissa.

No reading of *Mrs. Dalloway* could argue that Richard and Clarissa's relationship is an *idyllic* one. Indeed, the very fact that Clarissa continues to fantasize of the past—and specifically to mull over her rejection of Peter—suggests that she is not as happy, perhaps, as she could be in her married life. However, this fact should not be regarded as a detraction from or shortcoming of Woolf's portrayal of interpersonal intimacy, but rather as a fundamental element of that portrayal—an essential aspect of Woolf's argument that the *achievement of the idyll* in an intimate interpersonal connection is less essential than the *preservation of internality* in the midst of that connection; that the pursuit of idealistic oneness in interpersonal, and particularly romantic relationships has, historically, resulted in the destruction of the *real* individuals who participate in those relationships. Indeed, in distinction to the literature of previous decades—which had glamorized the individuality-consuming practices of grand passions—Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway* resolutely resists the widespread cultural conviction that one must be locked in a “passion” to enjoy a rewarding relationship and instead proposes a distinctly Modernist attitude towards passion, an attitude that rejects the desirability of any association that grounds itself within the abrogation of that which she *as* a modernist valued above all else—the unhampered freedom of the self-defining mind. While previous centuries had been happy to subordinate the needs of the mind to those of the heart within relationships, Woolf defiantly elevates internality by suggesting that internality, rather than passion, is the *basic* element that must be preserved within interpersonal relationships in order to avoid the catastrophic destruction of the individual. While modern critics may be tempted to interpret Clarissa Dalloway's story as one of passionless stagnation, Woolf herself passionately defends individual autonomy by proclaiming that the element that is most essential to ensuring happiness and integrity of soul within interpersonal relationships is not oneness of mind—which so often results in the destruction of the sensitive mind—but rather distinction of mind: that is, the preservation of *a mind of one's own*.

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