

# Virginia Woolf



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## Introduction

This thesis investigates the way Virginia Woolf represents the Self and Other in her novels *The Voyage Out* and *Mrs Dalloway*. By analyzing the most important themes of the novels, I will show the different Self and Others that can be found throughout the novels.

### Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf was a writer who lived from 1882 until 1941. She was born on 25 January 1882 and she committed suicide on 28 March 1941 by drowning herself in a river. She was a complicated woman, with a love for women, a madness which would never leave her life and strong feminist ideas. She grew up in a family that owned two houses and had some servants. In her later life she received money from an inheritance, which was about the amount of 500 pounds a year she mentions in *A Room of One's Own* and she worked as a journalist to earn her own money. She had no formal education but had taught herself how to write articles and books. She wrote many novels, articles, biographies, diaries and essays in her life. Her first book was called *The Voyage Out* and describes a group of English people travelling to and into South America. It was published in 1915; right after Virginia married Leonard Woolf in 1912 and got ill in 1913. Exactly ten years later, in 1925, her book *Mrs Dalloway* was published. Readers had already met Mrs Dalloway in *The Voyage Out* as a strong, beautiful and melodramatic woman who loves, but at the same time, questions her husband. In *Mrs Dalloway* we see a woman with many more doubts than we would have taken her for after reading the first novel. Clarissa Dalloway is set against a background of the First World War, madness that came from the war, homosexuality, doubts about marriage, Peter Walsh who is just back from India, the upper-class society and the way elder women can influence young women.

### World War I

The First World War started in 1914 and times were turbulent. Before the war there was a feeling of endless progress. Economies were flourishing and everybody was satisfied with the way democracy worked and about the extended male suffrage. There had not been a great war for two generations, but at the same time the tensions were rising under the surface. What the cause of World War I is, remains not entirely certain. The most common explanation is the murder of the archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Habsburg throne. Before it had actually begun, everybody in Europe was convinced that the war would not take long. Just as the Germans were sure that they would defeat the French and Russians without any trouble, the French were certain that their troops would be home by Christmas.<sup>1</sup> The Germans arrived near Paris relatively easy. However, the French and British troops were waiting, forcing the German troops back. They started digging trenches there, trenches that

would assure the war to last a lot longer than everybody had expected beforehand. The trenches also made sure that on both sides, military men had to think of new ways of warfare, because they only proved effective for defensive tactics. Therefore, the soldiers had to use heavier artillery and both sides started using all sorts of gas from tear gas to mustard gas. In February 1915 the waters around the British Isles were also declared a war zone by the Germans and tried to sink all British ships. This also led to the sinking of a British passenger liner and the deaths of almost 1.200 British and American people.<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile in Europe women were fighting for their rights. Especially in the England women fought hard to get the right to vote. The suffragettes used fire, bombs and chains to get their way. Women were for the greater part banned from the public life and to the private sphere. Unlike men, most of them were not allowed to work or study. Many women disagreed with these rules and were fighting to get their space in the public sphere. But because of the war the suffragette movement felt less important, in any case to Virginia Woolf. When women were given the right to vote in January 1918 she wrote: 'I don't feel much more important – perhaps slightly less so'.<sup>3</sup> Naturally, there were more important issues to worry about. But exactly these other issues had helped women get their vote. World War I turned into a total war, a war in which all the resources and energies from the entire nation were used for warfare.<sup>4</sup> In Britain, this meant that about a hundred new factories opened to produce more arms for the battlefield. These factories needed workers and with the men fighting abroad, women were now put to work. Before the war 3.25 million women were employed; this number almost doubled to 5 million women.<sup>5</sup> For this reason, it is generally assumed that women got their vote because the House of Commons was appreciative of the work women had done. Still it could also be that women got their votes because it was just the time.

### **Self and Other**

In his book *Orientalism*<sup>6</sup> Edward Said states that when people talk about you and do not give you a voice, you become the Other. White people did this with the 'Orient'. They called the entire world outside of Europe and America the Orient and told stories about it. This way they had control over it.

From the sixteenth century until about 1750, European imperialism had focused on the Americas, but since the 1750s the imperialism centered on Africa and Asia. The nineteenth century until 1914 is now seen as a new era of colonialism referred to as the new imperialism. This meant first of all that the European countries wanted to expand their empires because of economic reasons. They wanted great markets to make more profit than their neighbours. All European countries wanted to be bigger and richer than their neighbours at that point in

time. The Cold War was going on with nations building more weapons than the other. Additionally, countries had joint alliances which caused several countries to protect each other from countries of other alliances.

At the same time new imperialism was caused by an obligation the white man felt towards their colonies. Europe was in such a great economic state because of the colonies that they felt they had to share their wealth and new inventions with the people in the colonies. The white men had, as they called it, a burden to help the wilder men. They had to share their culture and especially civilize the uncivilized people. In *The Voyage Out*, the English attend a Christian sermon. The English priest tells them that 'visitors to this beautiful land, although they were on a holiday, owed a duty to the natives.'<sup>7</sup> Rudyard Kipling called it the 'White Man's Burden' but this burden was really just to cover up that they had stolen all the wealth from the colonies in the first place.

Furthermore, under the influence of Charles Darwin's ideas many intellectuals at the time wrote about 'survival of the fittest'. Some contemporaries went beyond biology and applied the Social Darwinism to the human race. It gave many white people proof that they were a step ahead in the evolution and they were therefore better than black people. Anti-Semitism and racism were growing ideologies.

The white men intended to help the black men, but they did not actually see them as people. They saw black people as savages who did their dirty work for them. They used black men and women to do hard labour, to fight their fights and to take care of their children.

Meanwhile, the world was ready for a war. Everybody was convinced that the war would end quickly and that the war would take away all the tensions that existed between the European countries. But the war cost more than everybody would have predicted. It cost millions of lives and millions of pounds. The age of optimism was definitely over.

When the ancient Greek told their stories we now refer to as myths, they taught the listeners lessons, lessons about life. These stories were about why things are the way they are and how they became that way. But the stories were particularly about what you should not do. By knowing how not to behave, you know exactly how you should behave. Take Cyclops for example: they eat raw meat, never speak to each other, are in no way hospitable (they eat their guests) and they are extremely ugly. In other words, all unacceptable things in Ancient Greek society. But by showing the Other, you know your Self.

By analysing *The Voyage Out* and *Mrs Dalloway* I will show how Virginia Woolf represented the Self and Other. She was as complicated as a writer as she was as a woman, therefore her representation of any subject was never as straight-forward as it looks at first. These novels

show Virginia Woolf had a way of making you think about a subject instead of telling you what to think.

## The Voyage Out

In Virginia Woolf's first novel *The Voyage Out* the distinctions between Self and Other can be found throughout the novel. In this first chapter I will look at *The Voyage Out* and I will show the use of Self and Other through the most important themes. These themes are gender, marriage and colonies. I am going to look at the way Virginia Woolf has used the Self and Other and the way she represents marriage and colonialism.

*The Voyage Out* is Virginia Woolf's first novel. It took her seven years to finish and it was published after many revisions in 1915. In that time women were banned from the public life for the greater part and banned to the private sphere. However, they were not completely banned from public life, because there had been female writers for centuries. Mary Wollstonecraft, for example, already wrote in 1792 about how women are always struggling to enter the man's world. Men had constructed a society in which women were not human beings, but women, which meant they were not men. Because of this reason women were also not civilized according to men.<sup>8</sup> Women were made the Other by the dominant male culture, but were protesting more and more to get a voice of their own.

The goal of the first wave feminists, for example Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir at the turn of the twentieth century, was equality. Women like Simone de Beauvoir argued that the differences between men and women were not natural but socially constructed. With education and training women could be citizens just like men were.<sup>9</sup> Women like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, said that the biggest problem is that women have always economically depended upon men. They argued that women were given the house and men were given the world.<sup>10</sup>

The women who were fighting were middle- and upper-class women. The same women wanting more freedom in England wanted to 'civilize' the women in the 'less-developed' countries because of the white woman's burden. For example, in The Netherlands, women were discussing if the women in the West Indies were women just like them. Most Dutch women concluded however, that because they were more advanced, they had to make their feminism an export product to the oppressed women in the colonies.<sup>11</sup> This has always been the problem of the way 'white women' depict 'Third world women' like Sarah Radcliffe has argued. She wrote that white women have always described "Third World women [as] static loci of eternal suffering, a privileged recipient of First World concern."<sup>12</sup> Just as the white man never thinks of the colonized man as anything other than less advanced and less civilized as himself, white women did not consider the colonized women equal to her. This is similar to how the English man depicts the English woman as according to Virginia Woolf, as we will see later on in this thesis. Marriage plays an important role in this subject.

## Marriage

*The Voyage Out* is seen by scholars as an accusation against marriage. Julia Briggs argues in her book *Virginia Woolf. An Inner Life*<sup>13</sup> that radical critics of patriarchy see marriage as a form of prostitution, which turns a woman into a sexual and domestic slave. This slavery appears acceptable because it uses a woman's desire for romance and love. When these women become mothers they will become, even more, a subject instead of a Self. But Briggs also states that Virginia Woolf's novels like *The Voyage Out* show that not only married women are slaves but that unmarried women are subjects to domestic slavery, forced by their parents or elderly relatives.<sup>14</sup> This also goes for a character of *The Voyage Out*, Susan. She lives with her elder aunt Mrs Paley who treats her like a servant and a companion.

"You deserve a holiday," he said. You're always doing things for other people. 'But that's my life,' she said, un cover of refilling the teapot. "That's no one's life," he returned, "no young person's." (...) "He would like some tea," said Mrs Paley. "Susan, run and get some cups – there are two young men." (p86)

In *Virginia Woolf against Empire*<sup>15</sup> Kathy Philips states 'In *The Voyage Out* (1915), Woolf began to study the links between the institution of marriage and capitalism, colonies, and militarism (...).'<sup>16</sup>

Amiable and modest, respectable in many ways, lovable even in their contentment and desire to be kind, how mediocre they all were, and capable of what insipid cruelty to one another! There was Mrs Thornbury, sweet but trivial in her maternal egoism; Mrs Elliot, perpetually complaining of her lot; her husband a mere pea in a pod; and Susan – she had no self, and counted neither one way or the other; Venning was as honest and as brutal as a schoolboy; poor old Thornbury merely trod his round like a horse in a mill; and the less one examined into Evelyn's character the better, he suspected. Yet these were the people with money, and to them rather than to others was given the management of the world. Put among them someone more vital, who cared for life or for beauty, and what an agony, what a waste would they inflict on him if he tried to share with them and not to scourge! (p97)

In this quote the English who are on holiday in Santa Marina in South America are having a picnic. Terence Hewet is looking at his companions and is not very happy with what he sees. He even says that Susan has no Self. Virginia Woolf talks about Susan completely without Self throughout the book. All Susan does is wonder what Arthur thinks of her. She does not have an opinion about herself, but she lives by what other people think of her. This is what an Other is. It is defined by what others say about them, but has no voice of themselves. *The Voyage Out* is about finding ones Self and evaluation of a Self. Women can become a Self but it is problematic as this novel shows.

The main character Rachel, for example, has no Self at the beginning of the book, but goes through a kind of inner journey during which she finds out more about herself and her life.

Rachel's aunt Helen teaches her about life but marriage has an even bigger part in Rachel's journey. Once Rachel falls in love with Terence and later on when they decide to get married, she really starts to find her Self. We will discuss more about Rachel's journey later.

First we go back to Susan. By presenting Susan without a Self, Woolf also criticises the institution marriage. When Arthur Venning asks Susan to marry her, they directly decide where they will live and what the rest of their lives will look like. Susan has never been happier in her life. She immediately makes plans for her friends; they should also get married as soon as she gets back in England. Because there is nothing better than being married. Once again Susan is being formed by her environment, because they (for example her aunt Mrs Paley) make her feel like now she finally fits into their world. Only now she is worth talking to.

Marriage, marriage that was the right thing, the only thing, the solution required by everyone she knew, and a great part of her meditations was spent in tracing every instance of discomfort, loneliness, ill-health, unsatisfied ambition, restlessness, eccentricity, taking things up and dropping them again, public speaking, and philanthropic activity on the part of men and particularly on the part of women to the fact that they wanted to marry, were trying to marry, and had not succeeded I getting married. (...) Her theory, of course, had the merit of being fully supported by her own case. She had been vaguely uncomfortable at home for two or three years now, and a voyage like this with her selfish old aunt, who paid her fare but treated her as a servant and companion in one, was typical of the kind of thing people expected of her. Directly she became engaged, Mrs Paley behaved with instinctive respect, positively protested when Susan as usual knelt down to lace her shoes, and appeared really grateful for an hour of Susan's company where she had been used to exact two or three as her right. She therefore foresaw a life of far greater comfort than she had been used to, and the change had already produced a great increase of warmth in her feelings towards other people. (p130)

Additionally, several other characters in *The Voyage Out* portray marriage as being the only thing to matter in this world. Mrs Elliot and Mrs Thornbury talk about poor, unmarried Miss Allan. They like her, but at the same time they pity her for not being married. Still, they also envy her because she has great knowledge and she has the means to write a book and the do not. This is an example of the issue(s) Virginia Woolf is struggling with. She knows marriage is not anything like it was for her mother. It is like Mrs Dalloway thinks: "It makes one so dependent. I suppose I feel for him [Richard Dalloway] what my mother and women of her generation felt for Christ. It just shows that one can't do without *something*." <sup>17</sup> On the one hand she loathes marriage, just like Terence Hewet who proclaims:

"I worship you, but I loathe marriage, I hate its smugness, its safety, its compromise, and the thought of you interfering in my work, hindering me; what would you answer?" (182)

He is thinking this, when he worries about marriage for several pages. Rachel has the same doubts about marriage. When she is still on the boat the Euphrosyne on their way to South America, Rachel asks her aunt Helen Ambrose why people get married. Helen says that that is what she is going to find out. Later on, when talking to Terence, Rachel says that she likes being a woman, someone who people do not really care about. People have no expectations of you when you are a girl, Rachel says, therefore she is as free as the wind and the sea.

When Terence is wondering about marriage he also wonders:

Did she love him, or did she feel nothing at all for him or for any other man, being, as she had said that afternoon, free, like the wind or the sea? "Oh, you're free!" he exclaimed, in exultation at the thought of her, "and I'd keep you free. We'd be free together. We'd share everything together. No happiness would be like ours. No lives would compare with ours." (p182)

Rachel and Terence have doubts, but one person in the book is absolutely against marriage. That person is Evelyn M. She does not like her life, she does not even like to call it life. She wants to have adventures and she absolutely dislikes the fact that she did not live in the time where there were lands to be conquered. She says she would like to be a man and conquer some land. Mr Perrot asks her if she would not miss the stuff young ladies like. But she says:

"I'm not a young lady," Evelyn flashed; she bit her underlip. "Just because I like splendid things you laugh at me. Why are there no men like Garibaldi now?" she demanded. "Look here," said Mr Perrott, "you don't give me a chance. You think we ought to begin fresh. Good. But I don't see precisely – conquer a territory? They're all conquered already, aren't they?" "It's not any territory in particular," Evelyn explained. "It's the idea, don't you see? We lead such tame lives. And I feel sure you've got splendid things in you." (p98)

However, even when Evelyn would have lived in the time of the conquerors, she would probably not have become one. She is a woman and women were not allowed in the army in her time and before. But she does not mean being a conqueror literally, she says it herself. She just wants to get out of the boring life she leads. But even this is problematic. Because, how could she ever do this? She was condemned to the house, perhaps if she would meet a nice man that would give her freedoms, she could go out and work or write books, but still she would be trapped in the life of her class. When Virginia Woolf would have wanted to write a book that was completely against marriage, and against the life Virginia herself led, she should have taken Evelyn M. as her main character. She is clear that she does not want to be a woman and she does not want to live a boring life. However, Woolf wrote *The Voyage Out* about Rachel. Rachel, who at first is sure she does not want to get married, gets second doubts later on and in the end she is perfectly happy with being engaged to Terence Hewet. You could argue about Rachel being happy, because although Terence claims he will let Rachel be free, soon after they are engaged he starts to interfere in her life. He keeps giving

her orders, talking through her music and so on. Woolf quickly makes clear that Terence is ruining Rachel's life.

Crashing down a final cord with her left hand, she exclaimed at last, swinging round upon him: "No, Terence, it's no good; here I am, the best musician in South America, not to speak of Europe and Asia, and I can't play a note because of you in the room interrupting me every other second." "You don't seem to realize that that's what I've been aiming at for the last half-hour," he remarked. "I've no objection to nice simple tunes – indeed, I find them very helpful to my literary composition, but that kind of thing is merely like an unfortunate old dog going round on its hind legs in the rain." (p218)

In this quote Terence has no respect for Rachel as a Self. He says that he can use her music to do his writing. He says that he has no objection to nice simple tunes, because that is what Rachel is playing according to him. It never occurs to him that Rachel might want to practice playing her music because she wants to be a good musician; that she actually is a good musician and not just someone who plays 'nice simple tunes'.

Woolf starting writing *The Voyage Out* in the summer of 1907 and it was submitted for publication in March 1913.<sup>18</sup> She knew she wanted to write a book, right after her father died in 1904. But Woolf was a perfectionist and she was disappointed with herself with every new draft. She had a great fear of failing. During these years, Virginia moved to the neighbourhood Bloomsbury with her family who had always been friends with great writers and many other interesting people. Now, she would be friends with many interesting men herself. For example, Clive Bell, Lytton Strachey and Leonard Woolf.<sup>19</sup> Virginia mentions the 'Bloomsbury Group' in *The Voyage Out*. Evelyn M. is a member of a 'Saturday Club', which is called that because they meet at Saturday. They talk about art every week but Evelyn thinks that they should give up art and talk about things that really matter like the 'White Slave Traffic, Women's Suffrage, the Insurance Bill, and so on.'<sup>20</sup> Virginia Woolf also wanted to give meaning to her life. She wanted to do this through work. She also wanted to work to earn money. She was very happy when she earned her own money.<sup>21</sup> Her intellectual background gave her many inspiring friends, but it also caused for many expectations. As the daughter of Leslie Stephen she could not be too rude, or speak her mind too boldly and she was terrified of what people thought of her writing.<sup>22</sup>

In 1906, after the trip to Greece, her brother Thoby had died and her sister Vanessa was engaged to Clive Bell. Virginia felt that she was losing her sister and this feeling became only greater when Vanessa turned out to be pregnant. 'Nessa comes tomorrow – what one calls Nessa; but it means husband and baby; and of sister there is less than there used to be.'<sup>23</sup> She did not only fear losing her sister, she thought that her sister was losing her Self.

Virginia was interested in talking intimately to men. She wanted to get married, but there was no man in her surroundings that would be a suitable husband. That is, until Lytton Strachey encouraged Leonard Woolf to propose to Virginia. Leonard was an employee of the Colonial Civil Service in Ceylon, a British colony at that time. Virginia had doubts about getting married and she also had mixed feelings towards other people. She felt the pressure of getting married from society but she was also a bisexual. Those feelings made her doubt about getting married even greater. Still Leonard was the only person she could imagine as a husband. She compared herself to her sister Vanessa who had ‘a husband, two children, a promising career as a painter, *and* a lover.’ As opposed to Virginia who was ‘29 & unmarried – to be a failure – childless, insane too, no writer.’<sup>24</sup> Here we see the thoughts of Susan from *The Voyage Out* coming to life. Susan is sure that marriage would solve all problems.

Leonard and Virginia were married at 10 August 1912. Just three years later *The Voyage Out* was published. Getting married, however, did not change her thoughts about marriage. Kathy Philips states in her book *Virginia Woolf against Empire*<sup>25</sup> that: ‘In keeping a woman from a range of fulfilling work other than caring for children, middle-class matrimony becomes a kind of death. In denying the happily-ever-after ending, *The Voyage Out* caustically implies that it might be better to kill the bride at once, rather than submit her to the slow suffocation of wifehood.’<sup>26</sup> Indeed, in the end of *The Voyage Out* Rachel falls ill after an expedition into the country (just like Virginia’s sisters and brother had fallen ill during and after the family’s trip to Greece) and dies. But this death solves everything. Terence and Rachel had had problems about being engaged. In Terence and Rachel we see that love and marriage can be hard. They wonder why love hurts so much and whether they should stay together. Once Rachel is ill, she keeps seeing a woman that cuts a man’s head off. This stands for the relation between men and women and the way Rachel subconsciously views marriage. But later during her sickness, she becomes alone and imagines flying. Which can be interpreted as the conviction that being alone is better than being with a man because alone you can be free. When Rachel’s doctor feels that Rachel’s end is near, Terence is sent to her bed.

The terrible torture and unreality of the last days were over, and he had come out now into perfect certainty and peace. His mind began to work naturally again and with great ease. The longer he sat there the more profoundly was he conscious of the peace invading every corner of his soul. Once he held his breath and listened acutely; she was still breathing; he went on thinking for some time; they seemed to be thinking together; he seemed to be Rachel as well as himself; and then he listened again; no, she had ceased to breathe. So much the better – this was death. It was nothing; it was to cease to breathe. It was happiness, perfect happiness. They had now what they always wanted to have, the union which had been impossible while they lived. Unconscious whether he thought the words or spoke them aloud, he said, “No two people have ever been so happy as we have been. No one has ever loved as we have loved.” (p265)

Now Rachel is dead, Terence is sure they can be happy. Happier than any two people have ever been. So even Terence appreciates that marriage could not have made Rachel happy. It is like Philips said, that dying before getting married, is better than dying a slow death as someone's wife.

## **Colonies**

In addition to marriage and gender, the colonies and people who live abroad are a major theme in *The Voyage Out*. Not only does Rachel have an inner journey, the novel is also about travelling. Travelling to the colonies, away from England and travelling inside the colonies. As we will see later, the foreign person in South America does not get a voice from Virginia Woolf. The English talk about them, but never with them and in this way they are made the Other. But the English are in South America, have travelled all the way from England to the other side of the North Atlantic Ocean. There the Self encounters the Other. Also, when a party of the English travel inside the forest and search for the village of the inlanders, they encounter the Other. Travel is important for the book, because it also represents the Self in search of the Other and being influenced by the Other. Travel is, so to speak, also an inner journey. Not only for Rachel but for instance for Terence who is in search of his view on marriage and during his journey, he finds out he is just as old-fashioned as most English men. In this case the Self grows during his travels, not in the way that we would now find a positive growth, but it is growth nonetheless.

Also important for the theme colonies, is the view that is represented about the Self. In her twenties, Virginia Woolf starts to wonder what it means to belong to a country and to be English. She wondered if emotion for a place was because of the way the place looked or because of patriotic reasons. She found out that you always think different about your country when you are abroad. When in Greece in 1906 she wrote:

'[W]e are not patriotic ... Out here ... The Times loses its stately proportions: it is the private sheet of a small colony of islanders, whose noise is effectually shut up in their prison.'<sup>27</sup> In *The Voyage Out* she writes the same thing:

Whether the flimsiness of foreign sheets and the coarseness of their type is any proof of frivolity and ignorance, there is no doubt that English people scarce consider news read there as news, any more than a programme bought from a man in the street inspires confidence in what it says. A very respectably elderly pair, having inspected the long tables of newspapers, did not think it worth their while to read more than the headlines. (p79-80)

It is by taking the English on a voyage out, Virginia Woolf can comment on the English society. On the institution marriage, as we have seen above, but also on the English society as a whole. The people in the novel talk and think about England a lot. Yet they also find out

that they are not as civilized as they think. When Rachel and Terence are on a cliff looking over the sea they realise that that same sea flows to England. 'It was this sea that flowed up to the mouth of the Thames; and the Thames washed the roots of the city of London.'<sup>28</sup>Therefore, the English are not so different from the people that live in South America. Maybe the South Americans are even better. Woolf makes us consider this in the next two quotes:

"Here the servants are human beings. They talk to one as if they were equals. As far as I can tell there are no aristocrats." (p67)

But when they had looked for a moment undiscovered, they were seen, and Mr Flushing, advancing into the centre of the clearing, was engaged in talk with a lean majestic man, whose bones and hollows at once made the shapes of the Englishman's body appear ugly and unnatural (...) But soon the life of the village took no notice of them; they had become absorbed in it. The women's hands became busy again with the straw; their eyes dropped. (...) Seeking each other, Terence and Rachel drew together under a tree. Peaceful, and even beautiful at first, the sight of the women, who had given up looking at them, made them now feel very cold and melancholy. "Well," Terence sighed at length, "it makes us seem insignificant, doesn't it?" Rachel agreed. So it would go on for ever and ever, she said, those women sitting under the trees, the trees and the river. (p213)

But what is it that people feel for their country? After the Napoleonic time many people had lost their religion. People were searching for new ideas and next to other ideologies, nationalism was thriving. Nationalists believe that people derive their identity from their nation and owe it their primary loyalty.<sup>29</sup> Nationalism is an idea of some intellectuals in a country that invent certain traditions to make the people in the nation feel like they are part of that nation. People feel like they have a connection with the other people in their nation. This notion is also explored in *The Voyage Out*. Clarissa Dalloway talks about this subject to her husband Richard. She says that being on the ship 'seems to make it too much more vivid – what it really means to be English. One thinks of all we've done, and our navies, and the people in India and Africa, and how we've gone on century after century, sending out boys from little country villages – and of men like you, Dick, and it makes one feel as if one couldn't bear *not* to be English!'<sup>30</sup> Virginia Woolf also tells us what people in ships like the *Euphrosyne* think about England: 'Not only did it appear to them to be an island, and a very small island, but it was a shrinking island in which people were imprisoned. One figured them first swarming about like aimless ants, and almost pressing each other over the edge; and then, as the ship withdrew, one figured them making a vain clamour, which, being unheard, either ceased, or rose into a brawl. Finally, when the ship was out of sight of land, it became plain that the people of England were completely mute.'<sup>31</sup>This suggests you can only see your own country like it is, when you are abroad. But to know everything about the topic, you need to be part of it. Virginia Woolf could criticize the English middle-class civilization

because she was part of it. Yet she could also talk about the way the English see the people in colonies because she knew these people. Leonard Woolf worked in a colony for years and has written many books on the subject. Also, in 1917 Virginia helped Leonard with the writing of his book *Empire and Commerce in Africa*. Virginia's family was also involved in the colonies. Her great-grandfather, James Stephen, was very much appalled when he saw the way black people were treated in Barbados and he became involved in the abolition movement. Virginia's nephew Quentin Bell, who was a historian and wrote many books on his and Virginia's family, wrote that the movement James Stephen was involved in was an enormous political power.<sup>32</sup> James Stephen became a Member of Parliament and wrote a pamphlet called *War in Disguise* that influenced the American war of 1812.<sup>33</sup> His son and Virginia's grandfather, James Stephen, was one of the most influential colonial administrators of the nineteenth century. He carried out emancipation in the colonies as Counsel to the Colonial Office and Board of Trade and Under-Secretary to the Colonies.<sup>34</sup> This was his life-work and his family inheritance.

Virginia and Leonard started the publisher the Hogarth Press in 1917. Anna Snaith describes the role of the Hogarth Press as: 'In particular, the Hogarth Press was a key disseminator of anti-colonial thought in the interwar period, suggesting an alternative take on its role as a facilitator of international modernism.'<sup>35</sup> Many colonial writers were published at the Hogarth Press. Snaith also states in her article that the Hogarth Press stands for the freedom of speech against the censorship imposed by the BBC by a colonial writer published by the Press.<sup>36</sup> She names the Indian author Mulk Raj Anand and the Marxist and anti-colonialist from Trinidad Cyril Lionel Robert James.<sup>37</sup> So as we can see here, Virginia did not only think and write about the colonies, she helped the people who came from the colonies to England, to have a voice of their own, by publishing them.

As stated above, Julia Briggs says that Virginia Woolf's novels like *The Voyage Out* show that married and unmarried women are slaves. Black feminist bell hooks has said in *Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory*<sup>38</sup> that:

There are white women who had never considered resisting male dominance until the feminist movement created an awareness that they could and should. My awareness of feminist struggle was stimulated by social circumstance. Growing up in a Southern, black, father-dominated, working-class household, I experienced (as did my mother, my sisters, and my brother) varying degrees of patriarchal tyranny and it made me angry – it made us all angry. Anger led me to question the politics of male dominance and enabled me to resist sexist socialization. (hooks 1984)

In *The Voyage Out* men talk almost constantly negatively about women, but no woman is protesting. Terence says to Rachel that "[t]hat's a thing that never ceases to amaze me." (...)

“I believe we must have the sort of power over you that we’re said to have over horses. They see us three times as bid as we are or they’d never obey us.”<sup>39</sup>

However, the South American woman does not even have a voice of her own. Sometimes the English meet the South American woman. Mrs Chailey, the servant of the Vinrace’s meets a Spanish servant and feels sorry for her. She ‘hardly look[ed] like a human being!’<sup>40</sup> Later Rachel sees some Spanish-speaking women killing and plucking chickens. On the expedition to the village nearby, they see the people that live in the village. They see women with babies; they see children and Rachel and Terence looked at them, while the women looked at Rachel and Terence. But none of the villagers ever spoke. The English do talk about the villagers. This makes them who is them the Other. In other words, Virginia Woolf has some sort of power over the colonial people by not giving them a voice. But she used this power wisely. About the women with the chickens, she said that their method of killing chickens is more humane than the English way.<sup>41</sup> Like said above, Rachel and Terence feel insignificant when seeing the villagers. Rachel says that ‘so it would go on for ever and ever (...) those women under the trees, the trees and the river.’<sup>42</sup>

Later Rachel says:

“What’s so detestable in this country,” she exclaimed, “is the blue – always blue sky and blue sea. It’s like a curtain – all the things one wants are on the other side of that. I want to know what’s going on behind it. I hate these divisions, don’t you, Terence?” (p226)

The division that Rachel is talking about can be interpreted as the division between East and West, between Europe and the USA and the colonies. Yet the division is also about life.

Rachel feels torn between wanting to get married, because she feels the pressure from the people around her. But she also wants to be herself and be free.

She continues by stating: ‘[o]ne person all in the dark about another person.’ And: ‘[w]hy should one be shut up all by oneself in a room?’<sup>43</sup> As stated before, Virginia wanted to do something meaningful with her life. Clarissa Dalloway has said the same thing in *The Voyage Out*. She said:

“It’s dreadful,” said Mrs Dalloway, who, while her husband spoke, had been thinking. “When I’m with artists I feel so intensely the delights of shutting oneself up in a little world of one’s own, with pictures and music and everything beautiful, and then I go out into the streets and the first child I meet with its poor, hungry, dirty little face makes me turn round and say, ‘No, I *can’t* shut myself up – I *won’t* live in a world of my own. I should like to stop all the painting and writing and music until this kind of thing exists no longer.’ Don’t you feel,” she wound up, addressing Helen, “that life’s a perpetual conflict?” (p28)

Mrs Dalloway calls life a 'perpetual conflict'. In Virginia Woolf's life something similar was happening. Her sister Vanessa wrote later in her life about the years between 1910 en 1914 that '[w]e in Bloomsbury had only the haziest ideas as to what was going on in the rest of Europe.'<sup>44</sup> But Virginia did try to make a difference in this period. She participated in the Votes for Women campaign but this participation was half-hearted.<sup>45</sup> She did participate in the 'Dreadnought Hoax', which was a scheme to fool the Royal Navy. Virginia and some male friends, dressed up with moustaches, robes and turbans and pretended to be the Emperor of Abyssinia and his suite. They completely fooled the navy and were shown round one of the biggest and newest warships of His Majesty's Fleet.<sup>46</sup> Hermione Lee calls this hoax: 'ridicule of empire, infiltration of the nation's defences, mockery of bureaucratic procedures, cross-dressing and sexual ambiguity.'<sup>47</sup> But a cartoon in *The Daily Mirror* did ask: 'What will happen next time some genuine Eastern princes visit a British man?'<sup>48</sup> But that is the problem with life of course; it's full of perpetual conflicts. For example, the communication between men and women. As we have seen above, marriage was the most important thing in the world for most English people. At the same time, however, according to Virginia Woolf, a husband and wife will never understand each other. Mrs Ambrose is crying at the beginning of the book, when she is still in England. Mr Ambrose tries to comfort her but she says: 'Dearest.' (...) 'You can't possibly understand.'<sup>49</sup> Also, when Helen Ambrose is talking to St. John Hirst, the impossibility of a man and woman ever understanding each other comes to the surface: "There's an abyss between us," said St. John. (...) "You're infinitely simpler than I am. Women always are, of course. That's the difficulty. One never know how a woman gets there. Supposing all the time you're thinking, 'Oh what a morbid young man!' " <sup>50</sup> This conflict, of men liking women, but not understanding them, also goes the other way around. Evelyn M. is wondering about men and has a strong statement about them:

"I've never met a man that was fit to compare with a woman!" she cried; "they've no dignity, they've no courage, they've nothing but their beastly passions and their brute strength! Would any woman have behaved like that – if a man said he didn't want her? We've too much self-respect; we're infinitely finer than they are." (p184)

So we see the conflict between men and women as regards marriage. As we have seen above, Virginia was no stranger to conflicts inside her own mind. Of not wanting to get married, but getting married anyway and about not knowing what to think of the middle-class society she was living in. This topic will be further discussed in the second chapter.

## **Rachel**

Hermione Lee has argued in her book *The Novels of Virginia Woolf*<sup>51</sup> that *The Voyage Out* could also be seen as a journey of Rachel into maternity. In the beginning of the book, Rachel

is a young, naive girl who has never been kissed by a man and who has never been in love. Throughout the book she keeps on wondering whether she is really in love with Terence, because she does not know what it feels like. Helen thinks that Rachel's father has not raised her well, because she should have been less ignorant. Helen prays for a young man to help her see how absurd her ideas of life are. But Rachel turns into a mature, wiser woman during the book. Helen sees this change happening after three months in South America. She already looks 'more definite and self-confident in her manner than before.'<sup>52</sup> As Rachel has been a product of her environment in the beginning of the books, she begins to think more critically later on. First she stays in her room, later she says (like we have seen above) she does not want to lock herself up. Also she becomes more critical against religion. "Whatever the reason might be, for the first time in her life, instead of slipping at once into some curious pleasant cloud of emotion, too familiar to be considered, Rachel listened critically to what was being said.'<sup>53</sup> Nobody knows what would have happened when Rachel would have lived. Would she have become a slave-like wife of Terence, or a great musician, or something completely different. We could most certainly argue that Virginia Woolf's writing represents the possibilities of her becoming a Self, but maybe she was not sure if this could ever happen.

"So now you can go ahead and be a person on your own account," she added. The vision of her own personality, of herself as a real everlasting thing, different from anything else, unmergeable, like the sea or the wind, flashed into Rachel's mind, and she became profoundly excited at the thought of living. "I can be m-m-myself," she stammered, "in spite of you, in spite of the Dalloways, and Mr Pepper, and Father, and my aunts, in spite of these?" She swept her hand across a whole page of statesman and soldiers. "In spite of them all," said Helen gravely. (p58)

## Mrs Dalloway

In this second chapter I will discuss *Mrs Dalloway*, which was published in 1925. The most important themes in this book are war, illness and colonies and I will look at these themes separately.

### World War I

Many artists in general and writers in particular, were influenced by World War I. The French poet Paul Valéry said that ‘we modern civilizations have learned to recognize that we are mortal like the other. We had heard ... of whole worlds vanished, of empires foundered. ... Elam, Niveneh, Bayblon were vague and splendid names; the total ruin of these worlds, for us, meant as little as did their existence. But France, England, Russia ... these names, too, are splendid ... And now we see that the abyss of history is deep enough to bury all the world. We feel that a civilization is as fragile as a life.’<sup>54</sup> In *Mrs Dalloway* Virginia Woolf calls it the ‘European War’<sup>55</sup>. The war was over. Clarissa Dalloway rejoices over this fact: ‘For it was the middle of June. The War was over, except for some one like Mrs. Foxcroft at the Embassy last night eating her heart out because that nice boy was killed and the old Manor House must go to a cousin; or Lady Bexborough who opened a bazaar, they said, with the telegram in her hand, John, her favourite, killed; but it was over; thank Heaven – over. It was June.’<sup>56</sup> The war was over. But it was not over in the minds of people. And it was not over for people whose families were torn apart, or who had lost their partners. And it was also not over in Virginia’s mind.

Leonard Woolf remembered the war as a time in which nothing happened but ‘the pitiless, useless slaughter in France’<sup>57</sup>. Although Virginia Woolf was never directly the victim of World War I, it did influence her life. First of all, two of her cousins died and Leonard’s brother was killed by a shell. Other friends and family members were wounded. When Virginia visited them at the military hospital she had ‘a feeling of the uselessness of it all, breaking these people & mending them again’<sup>58</sup>. Secondly, she had to hide in the basement often because of air-raids. Furthermore, she suffered from rationing, life getting more expensive and problems with holding on to maids.<sup>59</sup> Especially the air-raids had an impact on Virginia’s thoughts. In February 1915 she walked streets she would have Mrs Dalloway walk some years later. In *Mrs Dalloway* a ‘violent explosion (...) made Mrs Dalloway jump’<sup>60</sup>. At first Clarissa thought that the sound was a pistol shot. Virginia Woolf said at her walk in 1915: ‘It is really an instinct of me, & with most people, I suppose, to turn any sudden noise, or dark object in the sky into an explosion, or a German aeroplane.’<sup>61</sup>

Yet still Woolf never had the feeling that she herself would get hurt. She was safe in Great Britain and she was strongly opposed to the war. For this reason, she started to feel more and more distant from the people in the street. She could not glorify militarism like they did, but she also felt that in her circle of friends it was hard to find a balance between being a snob or just being resistant.<sup>62</sup> None of her friends fought in the war, they were all anti-war and many of them worked for opposition movements.<sup>63</sup> But the war did influence Virginia as a writer. She was very sensitive to the situation and had to express this in her writing.

In *Mrs Dalloway* World War I comes to life in the character Septimus Warren Smith who suffers from shell-shock. He has seen a dear friend being killed in the war and since then he has not been able to feel anything or to function normally. The impact of the war is everywhere in *Mrs Dalloway*. At first it is mainly relief and happiness because the war is over. But this is not a long-lasting happiness; the many who were killed are not easily forgotten. Septimus Warren Smith's wife Lucrezia is more down to earth about it and thinks to herself: '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.'<sup>64</sup> Peter Walsh, who has been in India since 1918 and has just returned to England, wonders about the 'miracle' that is the war. All those 'thousands of poor chaps, with all their lives before them, shovelled together, already half forgotten'<sup>65</sup>. Yet the biggest impact the war had on Septimus was that he is now ill. He has an illness and he will not recover.

### **Illness**

Virginia Woolf was ill many times in her life. She had five major breakdowns of which four happened between the ages of thirteen and thirty-three. During almost all breakdowns she attempted to kill herself.<sup>66</sup> One of her breakdowns was in 1913. An important cause of it was the pressure she put on herself to finish *The Voyage Out*. Her friends thought that finishing the novel would eventually cause a breakdown so the publisher and friend Duckworth, decided not to publish it until 1915. But Virginia was in such a dark place already, that she was to be ill until the autumn of that same year.<sup>67</sup> Leonard Woolf kept records of her illness. In *Virginia Woolf*<sup>68</sup> Hermione Lee quotes one of these descriptions: 'In the manic stage she was extremely excited; the mind raced; she talked volubly and, at the height of the attack, incoherently; she had delusions and heard voices ... she was violent with her nurses. In her third attack, which began in 1914 [in fact 1913] this stage lasted for several months and ended by her falling into a coma for two days. During the depressive stage all her thoughts and emotions were the exact opposite of what they had been in the manic stage. She was in depths of melancholia and despair; she scarcely spoke; refused to eat; refused to believe that

she was ill and insisted that her condition was due to her own guilt; at the height of this stage she tried to commit suicide.<sup>69</sup>

In *Mrs Dalloway* illness is one of the most important themes. Health and sickness are the Self and Other in this particular theme. The distance between the two, are mentioned on several occasions in the book. Clarissa Dalloway's daughter, Elisabeth has no problem whatsoever with illness:

She liked people who were ill. And every profession in open to the women of your generation, said Miss Kilman. So she might be a doctor. She might be a farmer. Animals are often ill. She might own a thousand acres and have people under her. (p317)

On the other hand, Clarissa tells a guest at her party that she is perfectly well because she knows that that guests 'detest[s] illness in the wives of politicians'<sup>70</sup>.

At one level is Clarissa Dalloway the Self and Septimus Warren Smith the most obvious Other, although I will argue later on that these two can be reversed.

Septimus is a sick man, who suffers from hallucinations and delusions and does not have any emotions since he had fought in the World War I. Virginia Woolf represents herself in *Mrs Dalloway* as both Clarissa and Septimus. Clarissa is her healthy, normal, upper-class side and Septimus is her ill, mad side. According to Virginia, Septimus has the right to be mad and ill. Perhaps she did not think the same of herself. According to Hermione Lee 'Septimus's scribbles about his dead friend and 'the meaning of the world' reflect her own fear of unintelligibility. In all her fictional versions of her illness she expresses the horror of not being able to make sense to others. The fear of incomprehensibility links madness and writing.'<sup>71</sup> Maybe that is why she is represented in both Septimus and Clarissa. Furthermore, Virginia had a history of schizophrenia in her family. Her grandfather James Stephen who was mentioned in chapter one, was a man of two sides. On the one hand he was extremely strict to his children and was not understood by his employees, but on the other hand he had a great sense of justice, mostly towards people in the colonies. Virginia's father, Leslie, thought of James as 'two persons in one' with a rigid will and a thick skin.<sup>72</sup>

In addition, Clarissa Dalloway is not completely free from sickness. She describes a feeling of a 'monster grubbing at the roots'<sup>73</sup> which causes her to only feel hatred and no love. It takes away all the pleasure in beauty, friendship, in being well, in being loved and making her home delightful. She feels this way especially since her illness, which also causes physical pain. Virginia Woolf had similar episodes herself and especially during her breakdown she had severe physical pain.

In 1904, three months after her father had passed away, Virginia became ill. According to Leonard Woolf, Virginia was always certain that the illness was her own fault, that she had done something wrong. Sometimes she would say that she was not ill, but she would still be violent towards the nurses and would refuse to eat anything. She did not like her nurses. In *Mrs Dalloway* Septimus Warren Smith, absolutely does not like or trust his doctors. Similar to Virginia, he questions their judgment and he is sure that they know nothing of his disease. He does not want to visit any doctor his wife makes him consult. When Septimus is alone in his room and he hears Dr. Holmes coming, he sees no other way out, than the window.

There remained only the window, the large Bloomsbury-lodging house window, the tiresome, the troublesome, and rather melodramatic business of opening the window and throwing himself out. It was their idea of tragedy, not his or Rezia's (for she was with him). Holmes and Bradshaw like that sort of thing. (He sat on the sill.) But he would wait till the very last moment. He did not want to die. Life was good. The sun hot. Only human being – what did *they* want? Coming down the staircase opposite an old man stopped and stared at him. Holmes was at the door. "I'll give it you!" he cried, and flung himself vigorously, violently down on to Mrs. Filmer's area railings. "The coward!" cried Dr. Holmes, bursting the door open. Rezia ran to the window, she saw; she understood. (...) A sudden impulse, no one was in the least to blame (he told Mrs. Filmer). And why the devil he did it, Dr. Holmes could not conceive. (p329-330)

Woolf had also at one point, tried to kill herself by jumping out of a window. Her attempt was futile but it shows that Septimus jumping out of a window, did not sprang from her imagination alone. Also like Septimus, Virginia would succeed at killing herself at the end, not by jumping out of a window but by drowning herself in a river.

Virginia gives Septimus every reason to be sceptical about his doctors, just like Virginia and Leonard Woolf were. Leonard took care of Virginia and her doctor's appointments since they got married in 1912. In the first years of their marriage, until after the British psychiatry would become somewhat more modern after World War I, Leonard was sure that Virginia's conservative and authoritarian doctors 'had not the slightest idea of the nature or the cause of Virginia's mental state'.<sup>74</sup> In *Mrs Dalloway* Doctor Holmes keeps saying that there is absolutely nothing the matter with Septimus and that his wife Lucrezia does not need to worry about a thing. Naturally, he turns about to be very wrong in the end.

Virginia Woolf's doctor prescribed that the patient had to be 'taken away from her home and deprived of all communication, personal and written, with her family'<sup>75</sup>. They forced her to stay in bed and to have 'absolute rest of the intellect'<sup>76</sup> and 'total inactivity'<sup>77</sup>.

Sir William Bradshaw had the same advice for Septimus:

It was merely a question of rest, said Sir William; of rest, rest, rest; a long rest in bed. There was a delightful home down in the country where her husband would be perfectly looked after. Away from her? she asked. Unfortunately, yes; the people we care for most are not good for us when we are ill. But he was not mad, was he? Sir William said he never spoke of "madness"; he called it not having a sense of proportion. (p281)

Most interesting about this quote is the sentence: "the people we care for most are not good for us when we are ill." Was this what Woolf also thought about herself when she was ill? Right before she drowned herself in 1941 she wrote in a farewell letter to Leonard that he had given her complete happiness. More importantly she wrote: 'But I know that I shall never get over this: & I am wasting your life. It is this madness. (...) You can work, & you will be much better without me.'<sup>78</sup> Which sounds exactly like the words Dr. Bradshaw used in *Mrs Dalloway*. What then, was Woolf's intention with writing about Septimus? Maybe it was to create understanding and awareness about her situation? One does tend to comprehend Virginia's madness much better after reading the delusions Septimus is having. At first it is very odd to read about a man who thinks that all the people in the street are looking at him, while every sane person understands that they are looking at the mysterious car with the even more mysterious cargo in it. But later on, as a reader you start to take sides for Septimus instead of his doctors, especially when he is in the office with Sir William Bradshaw.

"Impulses came upon him sometimes?" Sir William asked, with his pencil in on a pink card. That was his own affair, said Septimus. "Nobody lives for himself alone," said Sir William, glancing at the photograph of his wife in Court dress. (...) But if he confessed? If he communicated? Would they let him off then, his torturers? "I - I - " he stammered. But what was his crime? He could not remember it. "Yes?" Sir William encouraged him. (But is was growing late.) Love, trees, there is no crime - what was his message? He could not remember it. (p282-283)

What had Septimus done wrong? His wife Lucrezia thinks most of the time she has a terrible life because of Septimus. She should have stayed in Italy, where at least they have great flowers. But it is not because of Septimus she thinks this, it is because of his madness. Because when he is acting normally and chooses to be happy, he is the most wonderful man in the world to her. Therefore, maybe his doctor was right when he said that sick people are not good for the people they love. As said before, Virginia doubted herself greatly, because she thought that people could read her madness in her books. On 19 June 1923 she wrote in her diary: 'Am I writing *The Hours* [the title she wanted to give *Mrs Dalloway* at first] from deep emotion? Of course the mad part tries me so much, makes my mind squint so badly that I can hardly face spending the next weeks at it. (...) Have I the power of conveying the true reality? Or do I write essays about myself? (...) This is the justification; for free use of the faculties means happiness. I'm better company, more of a human being.'<sup>79</sup> Maybe she does not want to write about the real world, but about a reality that she sees. She sees that people

are somewhat schizophrenic in upper-class England, because of the way they have to behave to the outside world and the way they want to behave. Maybe all the mad people after World War I were actually the sane people. Because after so much sorrow, who would not feel down? Feeling nothing like Septimus did, or becoming mad every once in a while like Virginia, might just be the sane way to respond. This schizophrenia is not only found in illness and health but also in the way the English depicted the colonies.

## **Colonies**

The theme colony is somewhat more complicated than the theme illness. First of all because the book is set in London, the heart of the Self. The character Peter Walsh went away from the heart of the Self and into the heart of the Other; India. Therefore Peter Walsh is the key-character of this theme. He just came back from five years in India and while nobody is aware of his return, he pays Clarissa Dalloway an unexpected visit. Peter is important in a narrative way, because he went a way and returned, and because of the journey he took he has a clear and open view of the English society.

Clarissa Dalloway is explicitly put down as the English person who loves London and thinks badly about people in the colonies. She really lives at the heart of the Self. When she walks in the streets of London, she meditates on how she loves the city in this moment in June. But also, when she thinks of Peter and his time in India, she describes the Indian women as 'silly, pretty, flimsy nincompoops'.<sup>80</sup> She also has absolutely no idea if Richard Dalloway is helping Armenians or Albanians for his work. And she does not care one bit, because '[s]he cared much more for her roses than for the Armenians.'<sup>81</sup>

Virginia Woolf criticizes the upper-class British world she lives in through Peter Walsh. He is the outsider of the book, together with Miss Kilman. Miss Kilman is the tutor of Clarissa's daughter Elisabeth. She is a poor woman who criticizes the upper-class society continuously.

She [Mrs Dalloway] came from the most worthless of all classes – the rich, with a smattering of culture. They had expensive things everywhere; pictures, carpets, lots of servants. She considered that she had a perfect right to anything that the Dalloways did for her. (p305)

Miss Kilman was also an outsider during the war. She comes from a German family and has German friends, therefore she would not say that all Germans were bad. As a consequence, she was fired from her job as a teacher. Also, Clarissa really sees Miss Kilman as her Other.

(...) [S]he saw the Prime Minister go down the stairs, the gilt rim of the Sir Joshua picture of the little girl with a muff brought back Kilman with a rush; Kilman her enemy. That was satisfying; that was real. Ah, how she hated her – hot, hypocritical, corrupt; with all that power, Elizabeth's seducer; the woman who had crept in to steal and defile (Richard would say, What nonsense!). She hated her: she loved her.

It was enemies one wanted, not friends – not Mrs. Durrant and Clara, Sir William and Lady Bradshaw, Miss Truelock and Eleanor Gibson (whom she saw coming upstairs). They must find her if they wanted her. She was for the party! (p352-353)

The character of Peter Walsh is more complex than Miss Kilman. Peter has been in love with Clarissa since their youth, Clarissa still has feelings for Peter, and she wonders whether she should have married Peter instead of Richard. But she convinces herself that Richard was the best choice. Peter wants to share everything with her and Richard goes his way and let her go her way. She is also not able to forgive Peter for going to India and marrying a woman he met on the boat on his way there. Peter had said that she would never understand how much he cared for her. Maybe that is the problem that lies between the two. Yet as much as Peter loves her, he also criticizes almost everything she does. This starts at the unannounced visit, when Peter wonders why she is mending a dress. Clarissa thinks: ‘He’s very well dressed (...), yet he always criticizes *me*.’<sup>82</sup>It continues at Clarissa’s party in the evening.

She could see Peter out of the tail of her eye, criticising her, there, in that corner. Why, after all, did she do these things? Why seek pinnacles and stand drenched in fire? Might it consume her anyhow! Burn her to cinders! Better anything, better brandish one’s torch and hurl it to earth than taper and dwindle away like some Ellie Henderson! It was extraordinary how Peter put her into these states by coming and standing in a corner. He made her see herself; exaggerate. It was idiotic. But why did he come, then, merely to criticize? (p346)

Peter’s presence makes her question herself and everything she does. But this is not the way Clarissa Dalloway normally is. She says to herself: ‘They thought, or Peter at any rate thought, that she enjoyed imposing herself; liked to have famous people about her; great names; was simply snob in short. Well, Peter might think so. Richard merely thought it foolish of her to like excitement when she knew it was bad for her heart. It was childish, he thought. And both were quite wrong. What she liked was simply life. “That’s what I do it for,” she said, speaking aloud, to life.’<sup>83</sup>

But just as Peter Walsh criticizes Clarissa Dalloway, he also criticizes the English in general. While standing in a corner at Clarissa’s party he thinks: ‘Lord, lord, the snobbery of the English!’ (...) How they loved dressing up in gold lace and doing homage!’<sup>84</sup> But Peter still remains an Englishman himself and he is happy that he is away from India and away from ‘plains, mountains; epidemics of cholera’<sup>85</sup>. When he walked through London for the first time in five years, he notices how everything looks different.

The amusing thing about coming back to England, after five years, was the way it made, anyhow the first days, things stand out as if one had never seen them before; lovers squabbling under a tree; the domestic family life of the

parks. Never had he seen London look so enchanting – the softness of the distances; the greenness; the civilisation, after India, he thought, strolling across the grass. (...) After India of course one fell in love with every woman he met. There was a freshness about them; even the poorest dressed better than five years ago surely; and to his eye the fashions had never been so becoming; the long black cloaks; the slimness; the elegance; and then the delicious and apparently universal habit of paint. Every woman, even the most respectable, had roses blooming under glass; lips cut out with a knife; curls of Indian ink; there was a design, art, everywhere; a change of some sort had undoubtedly taken place. (p257-258)

Just as Peter Walsh loves and criticizes England at the same time, so does Virginia Woolf. She wrote about the beauty of London, while writing down the thoughts of Clarissa and Peter. However, when Septimus has committed suicide, she cannot help but to see some contradiction in the civilization of England. Peter Walsh thinks: 'It is one of the triumphs of civilisation, as the light high bell of the ambulance sounded. (...) That was civilisation. (...) Perhaps it was morbid; or was it not touching rather, the respect which they showed this ambulance with its victim inside – busy men hurrying home yet instantly bethinking them as it passed of some wife; or presumably how easily it might have been them there, stretched on a shelf with a doctor and a nurse (...)'<sup>86</sup>. These doctors and nurses are exactly what Woolf loathes in England. They have never brought her anything but misery. Would that than be the English civilization? Septimus' wife Lucrezia thinks the English are silent and serious and London is and 'awful city'<sup>87</sup>. She wishes she had stayed in Milan where the streets were filled with laughing people and people are 'not half alive like people here, huddled up in Bath chairs, looking at a few ugly flowers stuck in pots!'<sup>88</sup> Dr. Holmes agrees with Lucrezia this far, that her husband is not representative for all English husbands. He asks Septimus: 'He had actually talked of killing himself to his wife, quite a girl, a foreigner, wasn't she? Didn't that give her a very odd idea of English husbands? Didn't one owe perhaps a duty to one's wife?'<sup>89</sup> But most likely is the reader already getting on odd idea of English husbands. Septimus is mad and Richard has kissed Rachel in *The Voyage Out* and is never around in *Mrs Dalloway*.

### **Clarissa Dalloway**

In this last paragraph I will discuss the Otherness of Clarissa Dalloway because on some levels Clarissa Dalloway is not the Self, but she becomes the other. This is illustrated in her marriage with Richard.

She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway. (p202)

She felt not like herself, not herself in spite of everyone else, but she felt like her husband's wife and nothing more. By fulfilling this role of being a wife and not a husband, she also does not do things for herself. She wants people to think certain things of her. She dresses nicely and always wears pretty gloves. But still her body feels like nothing. Having this feeling also means, that Clarissa thinks she is not one to judge other people. Mrs Dalloway would also never say 'I am this, I am that.'<sup>90</sup> Even when Clarissa throws her party, she does not feel like herself. She feels like anybody could have done it and that everybody around her is fake. Nevertheless, Clarissa was someone that had influenced Peter Walsh 'more than any person he had ever known.'<sup>91</sup> When they were younger, they would take long walks. And Peter would only notice her and nothing of the surroundings, until Clarissa would point something out and would make him look at it. At that moment in time, his world was only what Clarissa wanted him to see. So when Clarissa says to herself: "[t]hat's what I do it for," she said, speaking aloud, to life."<sup>92</sup> she was becoming her Self again and distancing herself from Septimus, who wanted to die. He committed suicide and she lived on.

The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him; with the clock striking the hour, one, two, three, she did not pity him, with all this going on. (...) She felt somehow very like him – the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away. (...) He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun. (p363)

However, Septimus and Clarissa never meet. They both play an important role in the book and, as said before, Septimus was Clarissa's Other. Yet still they never speak a word to each other. Septimus' death also plays an essential role in Clarissa's party. His suicide brings the subject of death to the otherwise carefree party. It is a coming together of things that can actually never be together. This also goes for England and the colonies. They can never really come together. Peter Walsh was in the colonies, came back and has not changed his ideas about the colonies at all. Another example of elements that can never be together are Clarissa Dalloway and Sally Seton.

Sally Seton is the woman in *Mrs Dalloway* that Clarissa was in love with when she was younger.

The strange thing, on looking back, was the purity, the integrity, of her feelings for Sally. It was not like one's feeling for a man. It was completely disinterested, and besides, it had a quality which could only exist between women, between women just grown up. It was protective, on her side; sprang from a sense of being in league together, a presentiment of something that was bound to part them (they spoke of marriage always as a catastrophe), which led to this chivalry, this protective feeling which was more on her side than Sally's. For in those days she was completely reckless; did the most idiotic things out of bravado; bicycled round the parapet on the terrace; smoked cigars. Absurd she was – very absurd. (p223-224)

Clarissa Dalloway calls her relationship with Sally very absurd. She thought it not normal to have a relationship with a woman, and Clarissa quickly went on marrying Richard and never seeing Sally again, until her party.

Virginia Woolf had her own Sally Seton. She was called Vita Sackville-West and they had an affair from 1925 until about 1928. Virginia always liked to have women around; even when she was a young girl she had several female mentors. Her first love was Violet Dickinson who was seventeen years older than Virginia and helped her through tough times after her mother died and again after her father passed away.

Being in a close relationship with Vita, made Virginia aware of how little people really know each other. In a letter to Vita she wrote: 'I wish you could live in my brain for a week. (...) Do we the know nobody? – only our own versions of them, which, as likely as not, are emanations from ourselves.'<sup>93</sup> Clarissa Dalloway had expressed the same feelings to Peter Walsh when they were younger.

It was to explain the feeling they had of dissatisfaction; not knowing people; not being known. For how could they know each other? You met every day; then not for six months, or years. It was unsatisfactory, they agreed, how little one knew people. But she said, sitting on the bus going up Shaftesbury Avenue, she felt herself everywhere; not "here, here, here"; and she tapped the back of the seat; but everywhere. She waved her hand, going up Shaftesbury Avenue. She was all that. So that to know her, or any one, one must seek out the people who completed them; even the places. (p332)

But just as Virginia's feelings for Vita changed after writing *Orlando: A Biography* for and about Vita in 1927 and 1928, the feelings from Clarissa about Sally changed too. When Clarissa was young, she would get excited when Sally was just under the same roof as she was. But when she sees Sally at her party she thinks: 'she hadn't looked like *that*, Sally Seton, when Clarissa grasped the hot water can, to think of her under this roof, under this roof! Not like that!'<sup>94</sup> Sally Seton had also turned into a housewife, with a husband and five boys. The end of the novel contains a conversation about Peter Walsh and Sally Seton, about Clarissa Dalloway. Two people who, at one point, loved Clarissa but could not be with her. That makes Clarissa the most important element of the novel which is not tangible. She is what holds the characters of the book together and she just is. 'For there she was.'<sup>95</sup>

## Conclusion

Virginia Woolf was a woman who loved showing contradictions and things that could not come together, but which sometimes nonetheless did come together. She would tell you all the sides to a story and let you make up your own mind about the story. In *The Voyage Out* and *Mrs Dalloway* she never says, with so many words, that she finds something wrong or right. She never tells the reader that she hates the way men treat women in marriage.

However she will let the reader know what Terence does to Rachel right after they are engaged. She would also never say that she did not like the way English people treated the colonies and colonised people, but she writes how English people think and lets you know there are other ways of thinking.

In *The Voyage Out* gender, marriage and the colonies are the most important themes. By looking at gender differences and marriage we have seen that Virginia struggled with her bisexuality, men in general and marriage in particular. She was not sure what to think of marriage. From the novel you can read that, although she was married herself, she was not completely satisfied with the way the institution of marriage worked. Women were to be locked up in houses and their talents were no longer nurtured. Instead, women now had to nurture their children and be done with her lives. Naturally, this is not what she herself did. She never had children and she kept on writing until the day she died.

What the theme marriage also shows is that it is important to Virginia for a woman to have a Self. A woman that wants nothing more than to get married, like Susan, does not get a Self from Virginia. Women who doubt marriage or are completely against it, have a Self and also have a strong voice in both *The Voyage Out* and in *Mrs Dalloway*. For example Evelyn M. or Clarissa Dalloway herself.

In *Mrs Dalloway* Lucrezia not only has doubts about marriage but also about England. She is perfect for Virginia to show what she felt about both topics. Because although England is spoken about as a great and beautiful country, there are some points in which this love for England is not unconditional. When the English travel to South America and find there that England is actually a tiny island of ants, or that the South Americans are actually better than they are, Woolf shows how England can also be deconstructed. She does not give her opinion, since the pro-England voices are just as loud, but it does show more opinions that the reader can think about.

On the topic of illness, Virginia shows the Self and Other in a very remarkable manner. On the one hand, most characters are healthy. But in *The Voyage Out* Mr Pepper is rheumatic, John St. Hirst thinks he is and Rachel dies at the end of an illness. In *Mrs Dalloway* at first illness seems nowhere to be seen, but Clarissa Dalloway has had her share of illnesses and there is

Septimus Warren Smith. He does not have one sane scene in the entire novel. He shows that the way doctors thought about illness in his time, was completely false. Just as Virginia's doctors had no idea what to do with her madness, Septimus' doctors also just either assure him that nothing is the matter with him and he just had to act normal or they will prescribe him remedies that, as seen from 2011 in hindsight, make absolutely no sense. Here the representation of the Self and Other is in no way fixed. Who the Self is and who the Other is, change during the novels. Especially in *Mrs Dalloway*, which was written after World War I, illness is subconsciously shown as a valid way of responding to the war. The war was over but, at the same time, was present everywhere around. In mad people, in people who had lost families, in man who had come back from the war and needed mending what was broken before. Yet before the war they were perfectly fine. It shows how pointless a war is.

Additionally, we come to the topic of the colonies, that shows the Self and Other and the way the 'Orient' is shown in the novels. As stated before, England is sometimes shown as the greatest country in the world and sometimes as a country that is completely pointless (the ants on a small island). But in what way does Virginia represent the Self and Other, or the English and the Resident of a Colony? On the one hand, Virginia shows how little the colonies really mean to the English. It has no real effect on their lives. In both novels, the habitant of the 'Orient' does not have a voice of their own. In *The Voyage Out* English people from the Heart of the Self go to the Heart of the Other. On their journey into the Heart they feel that they are not as important as they had thought before. Life goes its way and has always gone its way, regardless of the English.

When Peter Walsh comes back from the Heart of the Other, he feels that the Heart of the Self has changed.

Those five years – 1918 to 1923 – had been, he suspected, somehow very important. People looked different. Newspapers seemed different. Now for instance there was a man writing quite openly in one of the respectable weeklies about water-closets. That you couldn't have done ten years ago – written quite openly about water-closets in a respectable weekly. And then this taking out a stick of rouge, or a powder-puff and making up in public.'  
(258)

Peter wonders about the way the English society has become more open. Whether this is the case, or Peter had a different idea of England in his head, we do not know. Yet being in the 'Orient' has not changed his view on it. He has stayed his colonial Self and did not get any different attitude towards the Other in the 'Orient'. But to make things more complicated Virginia makes him think about the way the English are snobs and she makes him want to talk to Richard Dalloway because he knows what is going on in the colony right at this moment. Richard Dalloway has a job that makes him involved in the colonies. He is helping

the Armenians or Albanians. What it is exactly that he does, is not clear, but he and Peter Walsh bring the colony into Clarissa's life. She does not care one bit about the colonies. She cares about her flowers. Perhaps this attitude shows what Virginia felt about the other indifferent English, indifferent towards the colonies. Because as she helps publish books from authors from colonies, most of her characters do nothing to help the people from the 'Orient'.

In conclusion, Virginia Woolf was an extremely remarkable and complicated writer. She makes you think about all sorts of topics without imposing her opinion on you. She wrote a great deal about her own life, which gives readers a feeling of knowing her. The way she represents the Self and Other in *The Voyage Out* and *Mrs Dalloway* is subtle, and at the same time very bold. Her writing makes it very clear, how some English thought about foreigners, sick people, marriage and women. The Others in the book, tend to change into Selves, and Selves change into Others. This is another way of showing that life is complicated. In life there are perpetual conflicts, just like in Virginia's novels. Nothing is clear and nothing is certain. The only certainty you have, is that one day you will die. While nobody knows when and how they will die exactly, Virginia took this uncertainty and turned this into the only certainty she had, by putting stones in her pockets and drowning herself in the river eventually. She could not bear another war like World War I. The war was something that she would always carry with her. The sick, mad person is turned into a Self, because with all that was going on in the world in Virginia's time, who would not go mad? Maybe mad people are the Self and the 'sane' are the Other.

Just like the Other in *The Voyage Out*, the foreigner, without saying a word, turned into the Self during the journey of the English.

The women took no notice of the strangers, except that their hands paused for a moment and their long narrow eyes slid round and fixed upon them with the motionless inexpressive gaze of those removed from each other far beyond the plunge of speech. Their hands moved again, but the stare continued. It followed them as they walked, as they peered into the huts where they could distinguish guns leaning in the corner, and bowls upon the floor, and stacks of rushes; in the dusk the solemn eyes of babies regarded them, and old women stared out too. As they sauntered about, the stare followed them, passing over their legs, their bodies, their heads, curiously not without hostility, like the crawl of a winter fly. As she drew apart her shawl and uncovered her breast to the lips of her baby, the eyes of a woman never left their faces, although they moved uneasily under her stare, and finally turned away, rather than stand there looking at her any longer. When sweetmeats were offered them, they put out great red hands to take them, and felt themselves treading cumbrously like tight-coated soldiers among these soft instinctive people. But soon the life of the village took no notice of them; they had become absorbed in it. (...) Voices rose when a child was beaten, and fell again; voices rose in song, which slid up a little way and down a little way, and settled again upon the same low and melancholy note. Seeking each other, Terence and Rachel drew together under a tree.

Peaceful, and even beautiful at first, the sight of the women, who had given up looking at them, made them now feel very cold and melancholy. "Well," Terence sighed at length, "it makes us seem insignificant, doesn't it?" Rachel agreed. So it would go on for ever and ever, she said, those women sitting under the trees, the trees and the river.' (p213)

The Self and Other can be compared to people and animals in a zoo. The only question there is: who is looking at whom? In this quote, that question is exactly the same. The staring foreigners make themselves the Self because of this staring.

Virginia Woolf makes her reader stare into the world she created. But do not have any illusions; this world is staring right back at you.

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- <sup>95</sup> Woolf, V et al. (2003) The Mrs. Dalloway Reader, Orlando, Hartcourt, Inc., p371