

Language and Ideology in West, Macaulay, and Woolf

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By

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ABSTRACT

At the outbreak of the First World War, the archaic principles of nationalism and masculinity ruled Britain. These principles placed on men expectations that had become unrealistic due to the changed nature of warfare. The new horrors of war and the loss of the masculine characteristic of self-control produced a high frequency of combat trauma. For such victims of the war, the healing of psychological conditions required the assignment of meaning to their trauma, accomplished through the communication of loss to the civilian population. The problem was the inability of most non-combatants, including medical doctors, to comprehend ideas outside of the language-supported ideology that governed perception of reality. Instead of empathy, traumatized veterans were met with demands of conformity to the standards of masculinity established long before the war. Veterans who dissented from the official line of God, King and Country were silenced by the very society they fought to protect. Women writers, however, were free from the strictures of masculinity and were thus able to act as proxies to their counterparts. Rebecca West, Rose Macaulay, and Virginia Woolf challenged the dominant assumptions of war trauma and masculinity, each identifying language and anachronous ideology as the primary means used to promote conventional thought and silence discordance in society.

For my family

TABLE OF APPRECIATION

	C. Felis Catus	Prof. Martin	Prof. Ophir	Prof. Vargo
Patience	✓	✓		✓
General Guidance	✓	✓		✓
Specific Assistance	✓	✓✓	✓	
Extraneous Whitespace Detection		✓		

According to Percy Shelley in *A Defence of Poetry*, when a civilization languishes in outdated modes of thought, progress halts and decline begins (§113-114). The course of a civilization in long continuance is spiral and cyclical: advance, stasis, and decline (§30). Each loop of the spiral represents one epoch of a society, and each literary "revolution" of the spiral aligns with a social revolution implemented by the Poet's renewal of language and expansion of thought. Shelley identifies the Poet – the artist of any field – as the essential force that alters society's old perceptions when they no longer answer the demands of truth. The Poet enables a society to emerge into the next epoch of understanding by renewing language to reflect the new character of reality. When the Poet restores the proper relation of language and reality, the tired and corrupted perceptions that hinder society fade. Virginia Woolf reiterates this sentiment in her 1938 treatise, *Three Guineas*, in which she identifies the need for a renewal of language in a society crossing "a transitional age when many qualities are changing their value" (176).

The beginning of the First World War marked the nadir of a British social era that began its epochal decline in the latter half of the nineteenth century. By 1914 the kingdom was governed by an unyielding social philosophy, communicated through language and image, and founded in the previous century's rigid constructions of gender and power. Society's expectations made WWI's new form of warfare particularly devastating but also limited the means by which traumatized veterans might understand their experiences. Hegemonic influences employed masculine and nationalist norms to ensure a willingness among men to heed the patriotic call to arms; women, however, existed at the margins of this influence. According to Virginia Woolf, women "cannot understand what instinct compels [men], what glory, what interest, what manly satisfaction fighting provides for him — 'without war there would be no outlet for the manly qualities which fighting develops' — as fighting thus is a sex characteristic which she cannot share" (*Three* 107). The "instinct" Woolf references is not a natural characteristic of man but a

perception shaped by the precepts of social convention, the same convention that demanded silence from traumatized soldiers of the Great War. Men like John McCrae and Wilfred Owen, who were able to eloquently depict and effectively criticize the war and society's treatment of traumatized veterans, had been killed in battle. Others, such as Siegfried Sassoon, had their anti-war views dismissed as heresy or, simply, as treasonous. Men whose views contradicted social propriety were silenced by the very conditions propriety founded. Some women authors, however, were able to work with relative freedom from the forces that silenced men.

The ability of some women to question the war, with its supporting gender constructs, and voice their conclusions was greater than most men. This was due, in part, to the role women and men were assigned by the system itself. Two operations of ideology acted to suppress critical analysis by men while overlooking censure from women. First, to produce strong custodians of the Empire, males were conditioned from boyhood to internalize the conception of masculinity that comprised self-control, psychological fortitude, and patriotism. Challenging the official reasons behind the war or society's conflicted view of shell shock conflicted with these deeply instilled masculine norms; to question the norms was to question one's own manhood. As females were not regarded as suitable for positions of power or leadership they were not subjected to the same conditioning as were males. Hence, women were able to criticize gender norms without fearing a fundamentally diminished sense of identity. Second, men freed from the psychological mechanisms of conformity were silenced and shunned by a society whose best interest lay in the continuance of the old order. The idea of masculinity as an expedient of both imperialism and of shell shock undermined a foundation of British culture. Since society associated authority with masculinity, men who disputed the definition of masculinity lacked authority in society. Women, however, were politically disfranchised — they lacked full suffrage until 1928 — and existed in a precarious relation to the will of men. Women who were

economically and socially bound to men, and who were unsatisfied with socio-political conditions had little reason to withhold their criticisms.

Resisting the archaic principles that obscured new realities and enforced silence among men, each female modernist writer herein examined has been able to contribute to the correction of deceptive language and false perception; each has helped pierce the silence imposed on their society by the old discourse. Some women writers were not subject to the same restrictions placed upon men and were thus able to freely present the flaws of British ideology, or "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser 162). Woolf rejects nationalist and militaristic doctrines, and advocates "freedom from [the] unreal loyalties" (*Three* 78) of nationality and sex (80) that maintain the *status quo*. Adherence to these standardized concepts holds society in "captivity" (80), unable to apprehend truth's new countenance. Rebecca West, Rose Macaulay, and Woolf, among others, worked to remedy this problem by identifying the symptoms of ideology through their widely available novels. These authors challenged British assumptions of war trauma and masculinity, each identifying language and anachronous ideology as the primary means of promoting State interests and silencing discordance in society. The central conflict in their texts – *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), *Non-Combatants and Others* (1916), and *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) – arises from the failure of those in power to understand the new reality of war and their desire to preserve the culture of previous eras.

The discourse founded on principles of empire, male strength, and self-control was largely accepted in British society throughout its imperial phase. Challenges to the social belief structure, which had been instilled through culture and institutional education, began to appear in substantial form with wide-ranging evidence of the traditional conventions' obsolescence. The new warfare of WWI provided this evidence. The soldiers who had been conditioned to view

masculinity as necessarily incorporating supreme self-control and emotional strength were the first to fight a large-scale conflict with high explosive artillery shells, smokeless machine guns, and chemical weapons. According to Ben Shephard, such modern weaponry resulted from the "pyrotechnic revolution that, since the last major European war in 1870, had transformed warfare" (2). The 1870 war Shephard refers to is the Franco-Prussian War, whose pitched battles were fought with slow-loading small arms and artillery, bayonets, and cavalry. This traditional style of warfare was brutal but lacked the psychological effects that would prove pandemic to the soldiers of the next major European conflict only forty-four years later. World War I resulted in widespread psychological trauma for reasons directly attributable to the nature of twentieth-century warfare, as well as its effects on the conceptions of masculinity into which most combatants had been indoctrinated.

As an imperial power, Britain required men to be able to command and fight, and to share the belief in dominance that defined foreign policy. The Victorian conception of masculinity, the conservative stoicism that defined the era, was a natural mechanism of support for British imperialism. This conception was institutional, its dissemination tasked to the English public school system by the Clarendon commission of 1864. Schools became the means to mould the "natural" qualities that middle and upper-class boys were assumed to possess: "their capacity to govern others and control themselves, their aptitude for combining freedom with order [and] their vigour and manliness of character" (qtd in Shephard 19). For upper-working-class boys, organizations were founded to engender in them "patriotism, religion and a diluted version of the public school ethic" (Shephard 19). The strong sense of self-confidence that these schools and organizations instilled in boys promoted society's belief that British men possessed the strength needed to endure the hardships of war.

The men who were expected to bear the trauma of war with courage and strength broke down, however, with increasing frequency under the stress of the new nature of warfare. Despite the ever-present risk of death in the trenches, soldiers' concerns often centred on the failure of duty, which was bound to the ideological definition of masculinity. The social expectations of self-control and independence created an ideal that proved unattainable for many, as Howard Wiltshire, a WWI military doctor, surmised early in the war, "speculat[ing] whether such sights [of carnage] were so damaging because, by revealing the real effects of shellfire, they destroyed the illusions on which a soldier's self-control was based" (Shephard 31). The presence of such self-control in respectable men was assumed by the civilian population (Mosse 103-104) even after soldiers, through the experience of modern warfare, began to understand the illusory nature of the concept.

Rebecca West's 1918 novel, *The Return of the Soldier*, is an early examination of civilian responses to war trauma and duty, including society's presumption that men possess the masculine characteristic of self-control. Chris Baldry has returned to England from the front to recover from amnesia induced by the psychological, but non-physical, trauma of shelling (West 22). West's presentation of the treatments he receives from his wife, Kitty, and from the doctor who provides his cure, can be read as the observation and criticism of the relationship between language and social doctrine. The medical language of war abides by meaning assigned by social doctrine founded on patriotic duty. West's characters speak of Chris's cure in terms dictated by convention; Chris is ill, suffering from a psychological abnormality. The element of the novel that subverts standard thought exists in the characters' (save Kitty) questioning of the validity of the cure in the context of modern war. In Chris's situation, the concept of healing has lost its traditional meaning as beneficial. The consequences of the cure are far worse than the condition itself, as Chris, when healed, will be returned to the slaughter at the front. By

presenting the concept with new irony, West calls for the renewal of language to a form contextually suitable for changing realities. Chris's old love, Margaret, and his cousin, Jenny, stand in contrast with Kitty to display the new and traditional use of language to assign meaning to both shell shock and its cure.

Steve Pinkerton makes a sound theoretical argument in his attempt to validate Chris's instantaneous recovery from shell shock, but it is perhaps more beneficial to look beyond a literal reading of the cure. West did not intend to present the cure as medically sound (Pinkerton 2) but as symbolically significant. It is a representation of the hegemonic edict that demands soldiers' wounds, physical or psychological, be healed only well enough to enable the quickest possible return to battle. West identifies the premise of the novel in its title, *The Return of the Soldier*, which refers not to Chris's homecoming, but rather to his subsequent return to the front. Chris cannot be a soldier when he returns to his English home, as he has lost all memory of his military persona. When his amnesia is successfully treated, he can again assume his military role.

In a country fully engaged in war, doctors, both civilian and military, necessarily placed the interests of the nation, as defined by the government and upper classes, above those of the individual patient. Most doctors were bound by this directive, including Charles Myers, who, in 1915, first used the term "shell shock" to describe soldiers' conditions that included amnesia among the symptoms (Shephard 1, Dean 30-31). Doctors were compelled to focus on the goal of enabling wounded soldiers to return to their war duties. The imperatives of war made secondary the needed, thorough investigations of the causes of shell shock. In 1915 a civilian doctor suggested the then-unique nature of the war as a cause, as well as the possibility of non-physical trauma: "I suppose it was the shock and the strain but I wonder if it was ever thus in previous wars?" (qtd in Shephard 2). Doctors faced realities, however, that largely precluded the pursuit of this line of reasoning. Doctors, particularly those serving in a military capacity, "had to play a

role somewhat like that of a machine gun behind the front line, that of driving back those who fled" (S. Freud qtd in Gunther 5), as their primary purpose was to maintain the military's fighting strength (Jones 17).

West's Dr. Anderson, though aware of the complexity of shell shock, must abide the country's demand for battle-ready soldiers. After Chris regains his memory, Jenny, the narrator, describes his gait and its significance:

He walked not loose-limbed like a boy, as he had done that very afternoon, but with the soldier's hard tread upon the heel. . . . [H]e would go back to that flooded trench in Flanders, under that sky more full of flying death than clouds, to that No-Man's-Land where bullets fall like rain on the rotting faces of the dead. (West 184; ellipsis added)

If, as Dr. Anderson believes, Chris's unconscious has instigated the amnesia as a defence against the trauma of the past, his cure has reintroduced the psychological wound. Jenny is aware of what they have done in curing Chris, and why it is necessary: "against all his hopes, business had forced him to return" (183). The "business" is war, and it takes precedence over all else. Dr. Anderson has done his duty by returning the soldier to his proper place in the hegemonic order. While Margaret and Jenny are dispirited from their knowledge of the cure's consequences, Kitty appears delighted with her husband's re-found capacity to fulfil his role:

I heard her suck in her breath with satisfaction.

'He's cured!' she whispered slowly. 'He's cured!' (185)

The contrast of the exclamation points and "whispered slowly" suggests the irony of the situation. Chris is "cured" of a happy life with Margaret, whom he loves dearly, and made able to return to "that flooded trench" where "where bullets fall like rain."

Like the doctor, Kitty embraces the *status quo* of British society; however, her concern lies more with her appearance as a dutiful and patriotic citizen than with the values themselves. The continuation of military stoicism and its underlying ideology ensures her personal social power as an upper-class woman. Indeed, Melissa Edmundson sees Kitty as "West's home front equivalent to British militarism during the First World War and the unforgiving, masculinist mindset that led England into war" (493). In Kitty's mind, her own needs and Chris's ability to fulfil his State-assigned role hold greater importance than Chris's personal welfare. After reading a long letter written by Frank Baldry, a chaplain and Chris's cousin, which details Chris's troubling condition, Kitty's first and immediate reaction is one of personal offence, complaining of the letter's slight to her singing (West 42). By considering the letter's news only by how it affects her, she shows her unwillingness to believe Chris has suffered a real injury. She consistently places herself, rather than her husband, at the centre of the situation, suggesting he is either "mad" in his amnesia, or "queer" for having had a romantic relationship with working-class Margaret (32). Regardless, she resents what she considers his breach of her trust (32). Kitty's frustration with being cast out of the centre of attention leads her to conclude that Chris is merely feigning his amnesia (59). She believes he has fabricated the illness in order to escape the responsibilities of their marriage, and thus echoes the attitude of those officers and military doctors who saw shell shock as evidence of malingering (Shephard 50, Scott 296).

The discourse into which Kitty has been indoctrinated limits her ability to conceptualize injury without physical causation; she must reconcile the situation using insufficient linguistic means. Lera Boroditsky characterizes the English language as agentive in nature (205), its structure favouring the assignment of agents of causation, regardless of whether responsibility can be reasonably placed in a given event. The phrase "shell shock" connects shelling with physical injury and characterizes sufferers "as having 'been exposed to, and had suffered from,

the physical . . . effects of explosion of projectiles" (Mott qtd in Shephard 3; ellipsis added). This leads to the conclusion that injury must result in visible corporeal damage. Shell shock without a direct combat-related agent (e.g. physical injury or close proximity to an exploding shell) was incompatible with the linguistic agentive categories that reflected the possibility of purely psychological trauma. Kitty thus represents those civilians who were bound by this faulty understanding of shell shock. She finds no physical agent of Chris's trauma and amnesia and so must assign Chris himself as the agent: to Kitty, Chris is a malingerer.

Kitty's selfish and ignorant conclusion about her husband is the product of her traditional belief system, which has become unsuited to modern society. Jenny refers to the changed nature of this society while playing a piece by the seventeenth-century composer Henry Purcell. She envisions Purcell's England as free from such traumas as Chris's, and asks why tragedy has become prevalent in modern life (57), implying modernity and modern warfare are the causes of the disorder afflicting Chris and many others like him. Her rhetorical question casts her as a helpless figure whose implicit understanding is suppressed by the overwhelming force of convention. She knows historically founded perceptions of gender are no longer valid and indicates their continuing use worsens the tragedies of the present. In contrast, Kitty holds firm to these dated perceptions, seen in her assumption that, as a man, Chris should have complete self-control. She claims "that if he would make an effort" (159) Chris would recover. Dr. Anderson quickly rebukes her ideological conformity with his implication that self-control as a masculine attribute is a contrived concept and that Kitty has been conditioned by language to believe otherwise: "Effort! . . . You've been stuffed up when you were young with talk about a thing called self-control. . . . There's no such thing" (159-160; ellipses added). However, Kitty's reliance on the traditional social structure for her own upper-class status creates in her a resistance against novel approaches of understanding; she is unswayed by the doctor's words.

Kitty is the female counterpart of the public-school-educated men who had been groomed from childhood, as recommended in the Clarendon report, for positions of leadership. This structure formed a basis, though contrived, for the justification of the social hierarchy that existed in the UK in the early twentieth century; the upper classes' innate superiority warranted their privileges. Those the system did not favour were less invested in its continuance. In this sense, Margaret's working-class background has saved her from full indoctrination into the hierarchical customs that Kitty preserves. Margaret's intellectual freedom from this social code accords her the capacity for empathy and the ability to see beyond the social and patriotic rhetoric that Kitty embraces. Her views are shaped by her existence in the liminal areas of gender and class in English society.

Margaret is gentle and empathetic, lacking the "harsh notes on her lyre" (26-27) that reflect Kitty's judgement of war trauma as "queer." She is essential to Chris's recovery, yet, ironically, serves the interests of war with her ability to heal. It is Margaret's selfless nature that leads to his return to war, as it is she who believes a reminder of his lost past will restore Chris's memory (165). Margaret is aware of the consequences of her act, appearing as though she had "swallowed bitter drink" (181) when she sets off to her task, a situational dilemma that Jenny earlier describes as a reluctant deference to a greater power or responsibility: "when one goes into the damp, odorous coolness of a church in a Catholic country and sees the kneeling worshipers, their bodies bent stiffly and reluctantly, and yet with abandonment as though to represent the inevitable bending of the will to a purpose outside the individual person" (138-139). Pinkerton calls the decision to cure the "moral choice" (6) of the novel; by providing the cure, Margaret returns Chris to his normative responsibilities to his wife and his country.

The questionable morality of Margaret's decision is closely in the novel associated with the definitions of madness and the language of established norms, the danger of which West portrays

as overpowering even for the liberal-minded. Jenny lucidly describes this relationship by questioning the validity of the authoritative conception of mental illness:

[In madness] he had attained to something saner than sanity. His very loss of memory was a triumph over the limitations of language. . . . I felt . . . pride in his refusal to remember his prosperous maturity and his determined dwelling in the time of his first love, for it showed him so much saner than the rest of us, who take life as it comes, loaded with the unessential and the irritating. (128-129; ellipses added)

Society, generally, accepts the prevailing line of reasoning. However, Chris, by some unconscious mechanism, has used amnesia as a defence against further participation in the senselessness of his life as formed over the previous fifteen years. The war is the greatest event of senselessness, and, as such, evokes this mechanism. His condition, called "madness" by dominant social and medical interpretations, is actually a rational escape from his socially created prison and "a triumph" over language that labels as queer those who fail to serve the needs of the hegemony. West, through Jenny, re-appropriates the term "sane" to signify one who rejects life as defined by economics, military conflicts, and governmental policies. The demands of these ministers of life who use "words like a hammer" (183) re-instill the discourse of the old, destroying the peaceful "madness" of the civilian and ensuring the return of the soldier.

In the 1916 novel *Non-Combatants and Others* Rose Macaulay demonstrates the British oligarchy's two-front battle with the Germans on the continent and the sceptics at home who reject the socially imposed language of nationalism and war. Early in the novel the narrator describes the setting of the domestic effort: "Before [August 1914] life was of a reality, a sanity, an enduringness, a beauty. It still was, only it was choked and confused by the unspeakable things that every one thought mattered so much, but which were really evil dreams, to be thrown

off impatiently" (Macaulay 14). The words that convey the truth are "unspeakable"; in a country at war, sanity and beauty exist only in those perceptions shaped by jingoistic disinformation. Indeed, Prime Minister Lloyd George himself, who described the war as "horrible... and beyond human nature to bear" (qtd in Fussell 174), believed the public would end their support should they learn the truth (Fussell 174).

Lloyd George felt the UK had moral obligation to defend Belgium and other targets of the Central Powers but the government relied on appeals to emotion as the means to garner public support for war. William Rubinstein notes the early and repeated use of the theme of war as a necessary sacrifice for the kingdom's moral restoration (76). In 1914, while a cabinet minister, Lloyd George delivered a speech that portrayed the war as an endeavour required to reclaim the forgotten British values of "Honour, Duty, [and] Patriotism." He depicted Britons as peering beyond the brink of a new era, as "clad in glittering white, the great pinnacle of Sacrifice pointing like a rugged finger to Heaven" (qtd in Rubinstein 76). The speech had the desired emotional effect on citizens and members of government (76), but Lloyd George and his government understood the need to control information lest the truth of war belie the justification of British honour and patriotism. The *Defence of the Realm Act* of 1914 passed, without debate (Select 96), to establish governmental authority over "the spread of reports likely to cause disaffection or alarm" (Times 67). This legislation legally enabled the government's practice of censorship; control of information was the means to shape public perception of the war, which had been further manipulated with propaganda.

Macaulay exposes the inherently disciplinary function of authoritatively imposed discourses of masculinity and patriotism by examining the British censorship and propaganda that were central to obscuring the truth of the First World War. In her characters she represents the elements of society that are affected by gender norms and pro-war rhetoric. Kate possesses

unquestioning faith in authority, while Mrs. Frampton sees through authority's deceptive visions of nationalist glory, yet cannot fight against them. Alix's views are akin to Mrs. Frampton's until learning of her brother's death in battle. This event triggers in her the power to move from mildly ridiculing war propaganda to fighting for the complete change of society's perception of nationalism and war.

The British government used domestic propaganda not only to meet military recruitment requirements, but also to shape the public's perception of the war as essential and just. Although this method was effective, it was not universally so. For example, Alix, the principal character for most of Macaulay's novel *Non-Combatants and Others*, benefits from her exposure to the minority, anti-war view held by her activist mother, Daphne. Her apprehension of the means and designs of pro-war rhetoric enables her to resist the emotional plea of the recruitment poster she views: "an innocent and reproachful infant inquires of a desperately embarrassed but apparently not irate parent, 'Daddy, what did you do to help when Britain fought for freedom in 1915?' Alix giggled again" (Macaulay 58). The poster works on an emotional level, picturing a man who has failed his country and his own son, thus failing the test of masculinity. Such propaganda uses a strictly defined, and often artificial, language set based on the claimed responsibilities of men to Britain and the British people to shape popular perception because truth is rarely an effective promotion for war. Recruitment posters offering life in disease-ridden trenches and the chance of hideous gas and shell wounds would convince few that Britain's promises to her allies are worth such sacrifices. Instead, in this example — a real recruitment poster produced by the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee (Frantzen 150) — the war is not presented as a political decision based on promises of mutual defence between nations, but as a fight for British freedom. It is a defence of all Britons, including the women and children who cannot fight. Those who object to the war object to the defence of the innocent. Such discourse silences

objectors by casting them as unmanly cowards, selfish and disloyal, who refuse to sacrifice for the greater good. Alix with her giggle appears immune to such messages, but she is in the minority.

Kate, an older acquaintance of Alix, represents the audience that is most susceptible to ideological conditioning; she has absolute faith in the morality and competence of her nation's leaders. As she reads "[s]tories impossible to doubt" (Macaulay 81) from a newspaper, it becomes clear that logic is no obstacle to her consumption of disinformation:

Kate read next the letter of a private soldier at the front. 'The Boches are all cowards. They can't stand against our boys. They fly like rabbits when we charge with the bayonet. . . . There's not a German private in the army that wants to fight. The officers have to keep flogging them on the whole time.'

'Poor things, I'm sure one can't but be sorry for them,' said Mrs. Frampton. . . .

'It's wonderful how long the war goes on, since all the Germans are like that,' said Kate, without conscious irony. (77; ellipses added)

Kate will not or cannot consciously question the official line. She fails to consider the letter as potentially fabricated even as she draws attention to the contradictions of the claims. Mrs. Frampton, another older member of Alix's social circle, also comments without thought, but instead of accepting the information as stated, she sees the fallacy of the claims. Her response is ironic, as it notes the rational reaction, sympathy, to a story of unwilling soldiers forced to fight by their superiors; the article portrays the German privates as victims of their own countrymen, a reading that is obscured by its patriotic tone. The letter contradicts the propagandistic image of the bloodthirsty, baby-killing Hun. The average German soldier is either a coward who fights only under constant threat from his officers, or he is a sadist and barbarian who enjoys the carnage; he cannot be both. Were Kate to extend her inquiry of the article's two conflicting

premises beyond wonderment, she would risk destroying the illusion of a necessary and just war. The sole fact that Allied casualty numbers were shockingly high by 1916 belies the idea of Germans fleeing at the sight of enemy bayonets. Kate believes the false view of reality promoted by the government and the greater part of society because, in part, the discourse that presents the war in simple binaries of good and evil has the psychological, though irrational, benefit of justifying the sacrifices of conflict. The language used in the defence of war is difficult to dismiss because it offers sense, and thus a degree of peace, where there is none. Loss is more easily accepted if it is seen as a meaningful sacrifice, necessary for the greater good. The officially promoted dogma invites its audience to reconcile the tragedies of war, which is one reason for the longevity of its authority. It can dominate expression even in those who know the truth.

Margaret Higonnet draws a connection between the characteristics of war trauma and those of modernist writing, including the "mutism or fragmented language" of the former, and the "ellipses or gaps in narrative" (92) of the latter. This connection is of particular importance to *Non-Combatants*, in which silence is often indicative of language denied by the doctrines of 1916 England. Macaulay uses ellipses as placeholders for language forbidden in a time of war. The ellipses in the novel often appear when characters are unsure of the validity of their stated ideas, or when a logical continuation of ideas would enter into conflict with prescribed thought. For example, John, recovering from a war wound in England, describes encountering an old friend, Lennard, in France: "he'd gone so lean. When last I'd seen him he was rolling down King's Parade arm-in-arm with Chesterton, and I couldn't get by. It was an awfully sad change. . . . By the way, you all look thinner" (Macaulay 9-10; ellipsis in orig.). He begins to ponder the "sad change" in his friend, as denoted by the ellipsis, then abruptly turns his attention to the others present. John is practicing a form of self-censorship, stopping himself from becoming

immersed in dark thoughts of war's effects, and, more importantly, broaching a topic that society deems demoralizing and adverse to the success of the war effort.

When self-censorship fails, those who remain under the power of ideology will defend convention. John is "a very fair-minded and level-headed young man" (22), who is neither allied with, nor critical of, the peace movement. When an officer in the ward calls the movement "sickening piffle" (22), John, after a moment of contemplation, suggests that "[t]hey mean well" (22-23). His refusal to debase the movement using popular precepts draws immediate commentary from the wounded officer: "They mean well to the Boche. . . . After all our trouble . . . all the legs we've lost . . . to cave in now. . . . Besides, what do they think they can do? A lot of people gassing. . . . I wonder who they are?" (24; ellipses in orig.). The lieutenant criticizes the pacifists for, in his view, aiding the Germans, but his words are disconnected, as though the official line of reasoning he recites is breaking down against the reality of his injuries. The expression of dissent, existing only in the breaches of language, becomes apparent once the lieutenant's logic is given due consideration: he makes no mention of the original reasons for going to war, implying only that more lives must be discarded if sense is to be derived from the lives heretofore broken or lost in war. However, the absence of the war's value is a fact that must be suppressed for sacrifice to have meaning within the context of the principles that govern British society.

In the language of the era that Macaulay's characters reflect, the suppression of reason takes a number of forms. Fussell notes soldiers' common use of passive linguistic constructions when describing "nasty or shameful acts" (177), which separates the individual from the act and helps depersonalize trauma. When Macaulay's legless lieutenant says, "the legs we've lost" (24), he attempts this form of depersonalization. By using the first person plural, "we've," he remains a faithful participant in the war effort; the kingdom suffers united. This usage also allows him to

avoid direct reference to his individual loss, the acknowledgement of which would draw him out of the collective context and weaken the idea of patriotic duty as a justification for the war's continuation. The dominant system of understanding makes available only pro-war rhetoric to create meaning, though shallow, from the losses of war. Freedom from this rhetoric would enable him to say, "the legs I've lost," which makes the loss reflect the trauma he has personally experienced. Nevertheless, his desire to be free of the patriotic fictions about the war does exist, signified by the hesitations marked by ellipses. He resists this freedom because with the conscious acknowledgement of the war's absurdity would come the realization that he has sacrificed his legs for nothing.

Ingram, who had served with Alix's brother, Paul, displays the same psychological functioning as the lieutenant, though with a sympathy that perhaps results from his lack of physical injury. He relates to Alix his confusion over the breakdowns experienced "for no earthly reason" (156) by his comrades in the trenches, since, he claims, "nothing special" (155) had occurred to cause such reactions. Alix, however, sees through his façade of masculine strength, "perceive[ing] that he knew more about them than appeared in his jolly, sunburnt face; he was talking on rapidly, as if he had to, with inward-looking eyes" (156). Like "the Ancient Mariner, he had to talk and tell" (157) of the trauma of war to find his own peace, though he maintains the appearance, in language, of masculinity. Some men, he declares, are unfit for battle, those who are "not strong enough in body or mind" (156). The masculine ideal echoes in his words as he describes one particular traumatized soldier as a "sensitive sort of chap, and delicate" (156). He mentions that this man had "got his commission straight from school" (156), a seemingly incidental addition to the story. It is highly relevant, however, considering that schools functioned to instil into boys the very image of manliness that this young officer has failed to mirror. Ingram cites innate characteristics as the origin of this failure, even though he

states clearly the real cause and effect of the breakdown: "I believe he saw his best friend cut to pieces by a bit of shell before his eyes. He kept being sick after that" (156). Sympathy for traumatized soldiers does not threaten the old guard. It merely confirms society's belief in the victims' weakness.

The discourse of war overwhelms even those who possess the understanding, suppressed or explicit, of its illogic. Mrs. Frampton, a woman able to see the distortions of war rhetoric, struggles to find the words to render bearable the death of Paul, Alix's brother:

'Dearie, there was a telegram. . . . You were out, so we opened it. . . . Now you must be ever so brave.'

'No,' said Alix, rigid and leaning on her stick and whitely staring from narrowed eyes. 'No . . .'

'Oh, darling child, it's sad news. . . . I don't know how to tell you. . . . Dear, you must be brave. . .'

'Oh, do get on,' muttered Alix, rude and sick. (109; ellipses in orig.)

Alix reacts appropriately, dismissing the Mrs. Frampton's sincere attempt to ease the pain. Mrs. Frampton's task is necessarily painful, however, and made more so by the emptiness of Paul's death. Her words are interspersed with long pauses, as though she wants to, but cannot, give real meaning to his death. The only words available to her are those of patriotism; she lacks the means to validate Alix's loss:

'The poor dear boy has died doing his duty and serving his country . . . a noble end, dearie . . . not a wasted life. . .'

'Not a wasted . . .' Alix said it after her mechanically, as if it was a foreign language.

'He died a noble death,' said Mrs. Frampton, 'serving his country in her need.'

(110; ellipses in orig.)

To Alix, it is "a foreign language," this idea of death as a sweet and fitting sacrifice for one's country. In the year following the publication of *Non-Combatants*, Wilfred Owen wrote his ironically titled poem, "Dulce et Decorum Est," a phrase drawn from the Roman poet Horace: "*dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.*" As Rome's language is now dead, the language of England's past is one of death. Yet, this "foreign language" refuses to die and remains an archaic discourse that lingers still, serving as a foundation of the senseless ruin of war. Mrs. Frampton wants to provide solace to Alix, but the only words available to her are those the society deems appropriate to the efficient waging of war. It is impossible to gain complete independence from the language that serves these goals, as Alix realizes: "She read [the telegram] three times, and it always said the same thing. She looked up for some way of escape from it, but found none" (110).

While the novel's characters cannot escape, they do articulate dissent, indirectly, with their use of irony. If, as Elaine Showalter claims, "shell shock was the body language of masculine complaint" (172), then irony, too, can be seen as a circumvention of imposed silence. To a receptive audience, John can indirectly, though accurately, describe life on the front line. He inverts the environment's elements with hyperbole and sarcasm, abiding by the socially enforced interdiction on war criticism while also revealing the truth. As he tells them, the trenches offer "high living," while the dead and wounded on the battlefields are "burdens" who inconvenience the stretcher-bearers, forcing them away from the luxuries of the dugouts to run the obstacle course of no-man's-land (Macaulay 8). Soon after, Dorothy, John's cousin and a Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse, asks John about a silly rumour:

Dorothy wanted to know if it was true what the men said, that their bully beef often climbed out of its tin and walked down the trench. John said it was not, and that it was one of the erroneous statements he had most frequently to censor in the men's letters. . . . John said mess in the dug-out usually consisted of six courses . . . three drinks, and coffee. He proceeded to describe the courses in detail. (19; ellipses added)

The seriousness of his words is conveyed in the narration, which notes none of the cheer appropriate for the humorous subject of the conversation. John's family, gathered around the dinner table, understands the significance of his irony; the absence of laughter indicates their recognition of the real conditions of war.

John's descriptions of trench life are a mockery of the images of war presented by the government. Fussell describes the trenches displayed to the public in Kensington Gardens as "clean, dry, and well furnished" (43), the exact opposite of those at the front. He also quotes from *The First Hundred Thousand*, published in 1916, the same year as *Non-Combatants*, in which Ian Hay calls the second-line trench a "suburban residence" suitable for "refreshment and repose" (Hay 98). This "normal domesticity" (Fussell 43) is the same language Macaulay's John uses to speak the truth at the family dinner. John continues with this method, claiming he sleeps more soundly in the trenches than in the Royal Free Hospital, where he has spent time recovering (Macaulay 19-20). The humour he consciously injects into his descriptions is lost, however, when his unconscious takes over.

John's ironic portrayal of the front lines connotes his conformity to the expectations of masculine equanimity, but this conformity is betrayed by his unconscious. His sleepwalking episode evidences his psyche's fracture, which he consciously tries to hide:

his face turned up to the moon, crying, sobbing, moaning, like a little child, like a man on the rack. He was saying things from time to time . . . muttering them . . . Alix heard. Things quite different from the things he had said at dinner. Only his eyes, as Alix had met them between the daffodils, had spoken at all like this; and even that had not been like this. His eyes were now wide and wet, and full of a horror beyond speech. (27-28; ellipses in orig.)

John's unconscious is impervious to the social pressures that suppress expressions of anguish, allowing the trauma of war to the observable surface. The "horror beyond speech," again denoted with ellipses, is the horror that cannot be expressed in the calculated rhetoric of authority.

Dorothy understands the need for masculine appearances, warning Alix to be silent about the episode: "I say, don't tell him, Alix; he wouldn't like it. Specially to know he was crying. Poor old Johnny. Just the thing he'd never do, awake, however far gone he was" (28). John would never allow himself to cry because it would destroy his public appearance of strength, an attitude that is not unique to John, as Basil, a friend of Alix serving in the army, confirms: "I've censored letters which end 'Hope this finds you the same as it leaves me, i.e. in the pink,' from chaps who have to be watched lest they put a bullet into themselves from sheer nerves" (122-123). Should soldiers fail to censor themselves, the military will assume that responsibility, but this seems to be a rare failing in *Non-Combatants and Others*, where adherence to the masculine image precludes displays of weakness. Ideology propagates the unrealistic ideal of masculinity to ensure a united populous stands behind the war effort.

Macaulay identifies several important methods authority uses to appropriate language for its own purposes. The operation of war propaganda as based on the ingrained values of duty and manliness is the most obvious. More insightful is Macaulay's use of ellipses and irony to denote

the gaps in language that conventional discourse cannot fill. Like John's descriptions of trench life, Mrs. Frampton's comments regarding the clearly embellished or fabricated article are ironic; without context, taken literally, they fully conform to larger society's war-time beliefs. In her relation to Alix of Paul's death, the ellipses reflect the difficulty of novel expression using only the dominant lexicon, which has become the only linguistic paradigm known by most. Mrs. Frampton's speech is largely ineffective in revealing her true beliefs, but it is clear that she consciously understands that the government and its agents do not present reality accurately. The hospitalized lieutenant is a more severe example of language disabling discordant expression. The pauses in his speech suggest that he, too, doubts the official line that justifies the war, but he is otherwise unable to express his disbelief. While he may unconsciously reject the reasons for war, he insists on their validity because he avoids the language needed to form concepts of rational opposition. Only Alix is able to break through the language barrier and work to effect change in society. Appropriately, the clarity of her perception is enabled by the trauma she experiences from her brother's death; she is a surrogate messenger assuming the responsibilities of communication that her brother can never fulfil. Macaulay, then, provides in her novel an explication of the manner through which ideology functions in language to limit dissent and presents in Alix an example of success in overcoming the suppressive powers of conventional thought. The need for this explication, however, reveals the overwhelming public support of an outlook that prevented the recovery of the society and of the soldiers that were traumatized by its demands.

The conflict between reality and ideology's demands creates the prevalence of psychological disorder both during and after the war. Many doctors subjected both shell-shocked soldiers and post-war veterans to simplistic therapies resulting from ignorance of the condition's gravity. Even progressive doctors like Charles Myers believed that shell shock could

be remedied quickly, allowing for the re-integration of sufferers into civilian society, thus alleviating the burden they would otherwise present (Shephard 27). Rather than attempt to bring the traumatic origins of shell shock to the patients' consciousness, doctors sought to pacify the symptoms with extended periods of peaceful relaxation and special diets (Shephard 10, Crichton-Miller 29). Doctors' lack of understanding was reflective of the general rift between civilians and WWI combatants in terms of their perceptions and linguistic expressions of reality.

As Virginia Woolf depicts in her novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, the unparalleled horror of WWI alienated many veterans from the prevailing, but outmoded, views of the society they fought to defend. Woolf's Septimus Smith had enlisted for the same reasons that would subsequently alienate him, "to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress" (84). He had been indoctrinated into a patriotic ethos in school where Isabel Pole's beauty and Shakespeare's genius had together signified the glory of England. The illusions of honour and masculinity had justified the war to Septimus but had also worsened the trauma of witnessing the death of Evans, his friend and commanding officer. His reaction to Evans' death had conformed to society's expectation that men display stoic strength at all times. The futility of this expectation eventually becomes apparent in the form of Septimus's guilt over his callousness and in his rejection of the values he once held. After the war, his association of Shakespeare and Isabel with love and patriotic duty degrades into the essence of ideological odium: "Love between man and woman was repulsive to Shakespeare" (87). Having renounced his old views, Septimus comes to understand his need to give meaning to the losses of war and to his personal trauma by communicating to others war's folly. Septimus's language, however, is foreign to his audience, which remains subject to the limitations of conventional discourse. He lives and dies "alone, condemned [and] deserted" (90) in a society that cannot or will not understand his affliction. The tragedy of Septimus depicts the repercussions of society's

inability to engage with ideas that contradict the traditional belief structure. The death of Septimus is the death of Britain's opportunity to emerge from the darkness of propriety that is untenable in a changed world. Septimus's failure of communication is a failure of language; society cannot understand because it is entangled in the established language of the past.

Septimus exists isolated from his community, which fails to understand the import of loss. His inability to communicate his thoughts is ostensibly due to the effects of his war trauma, which has rendered him delusional and often unintelligible. Septimus uses language that is perceived by others as incoherent. His words, however, matter less than what they represent in the communicative relationship between those who have experienced war trauma and those who have not. Had Septimus communicated his trauma in an entirely lucid manner, he would have faced the same absence of understanding from society, a relationship common in the expression of trauma, as Karen DeMeester observes: "Communication between a trauma survivor and an untraumatized listener is diminished by a gap in meaning. . . . Though the listener recognizes the words the traumatized person uses, she cannot comprehend the reality these words represent" (655). Therefore, Septimus's nonsensical language can be read as a manifestation of his disorder, and in a wider sense, as a representation of society's reception of any trauma victim's illness.

DeMeester notes the frequently made observation that trauma victims need to find meaning in their experience (649). Meaning for Septimus exists in the communication of the futility and illogic of the values that perpetuate war. Septimus strives to replace the "social, political, and economic *status quo*" (659) with a vision informed by the experience of war, and one which would conform to the Christian ideal of "universal love" (Woolf, *Dalloway* 66). Septimus sees himself as a messiah figure:

Septimus, the lord of men . . . called forth in advance of the mass of men to hear the truth, to learn the meaning . . . he muttered, gasping, trembling, painfully drawing out

these profound truths which needed, so deep were they, so difficult, an immense effort to speak out, but the world was entirely changed by them for ever. (66; ellipses added)

Again, however, his madness can be read metaphorically, as representing the perception of those unable to empathize. Society must understand Septimus's words if he is to recover—and, according to him, if it is to recover—but lacks the means to do so. Its reasoning is based on a discourse that is closed to change and that has lost relevance in modern society. Septimus is silenced by the establishment (DeMeester 653); the communicative link is broken by the limitations of the prevailing social and medical narratives, which label as abnormal ideas that threaten the *status quo*.

DeMeester considers Septimus's suicide "a desperate but futile last attempt to communicate" (653) in a society unable to perceive his sacrifice, or that of the war dead, without the gospel of the establishment. Septimus sees himself as Christ-like figure who fails to communicate in life and so must perish to impart the meaning of death, a knowledge necessary for society's rebirth. As Christ's cross symbolizes the path from mortal existence to eternal life, the railings around Mrs. Filmer's house demarcate the boundary between the plane of ignorance and plane of enlightenment. While Septimus ponders God and change in the world, the "sparrow[s] perched on the railing opposite . . . sang . . . in the meadow of life beyond a river where the dead walk, how there is no death" (Woolf, *Dalloway* 24; ellipses added). There is life in death, where Septimus's experience is known and understood by all. Empathy lies beyond the strictures of society governed by those ignorant of the trauma of modern war: "There was his hand; there the dead. White things were assembling behind the railings opposite. But he dared not look. Evans was behind the railings!" (24). The vision of Evans first appears beyond this barrier, but as Septimus's hope of communication wanes, Evans appears elsewhere. In Regent's

Park he again sees Evans, "[b]ut no mud was on him; no wounds; he was not changed" (68), and so Septimus responds as a messiah, ready to share the knowledge that would heal the wounds of war, as it has done for Evans: "I must tell the whole world, Septimus cried . . . raising his hand like some colossal figure who has lamented the fate of man for ages in the desert alone" (68; ellipsis added). Septimus is compelled to renew society by preaching in the language of their changed existence, through which Britain can escape the ideology of masculinity and nationalism that lives by the empty sacrifice of war.

Woolf's characterization of Septimus using water and drowning imagery gives meaning to death with a parallel between the legacy of Christian death and that of death in war. Septimus's understanding of death is illustrated as he imagines himself at sea: "his hand lay there on the back of the sofa, as he had seen his hand lie when he was bathing, floating, on the top of the waves" (136). He floats atop the water, a void between finite mortality and everlasting life. The surface of the sea is a purgatory symbolizing the shallow purport of death when Christ's message is silenced. Escape from the precarious, wind-swayed existence lies beneath the water's surface but only for those aware of the true significance death holds. Septimus is adrift amid a society that forbids divergence from its own, antiquated, view of sacrifice in war as a necessary defence of British norms.

Woolf creates an opposition between Christian and pagan beliefs, analogous to the conflict between Septimus and society. Without Christ, death is infinite. With Christ, death's legacy brings eternal recompense for human suffering. Only through the acceptance of Christ's message can death have importance that originates outside of humanity's corrupting influence. Society's redemption rests on its submersion with Septimus to a realm of new understanding, a symbolic baptism into Christianity, and the necessary end of mortal existence that begins life anew in eternity. Septimus sees himself poised upon the water, but knows he need "fear no more" (136).

Before imagining himself upon the sea, Septimus thrice refers to himself as having drowned, but he does not, at first, understand the consequence of the image. He is fearful at the first drowning reference, despite the promise of life after death: "I went under the sea. I have been dead, and yet am now alive, but let me rest still; he begged (he was talking to himself again—it was awful, awful!). . . . He had only to open his eyes; but a weight was on them; a fear" (67; ellipsis added). Septimus rests between ghastly death and agonizing life in a society that does not understand him. To prolong his mortal suffering, society pulls him back into life with "the voices of birds and the sound of wheels [that] chime and chatter in a queer harmony" (67). He does not yet view death as incorporating a significance beyond human corruption.

Immediately following his second reference to drowning, Septimus understands the function of death in communication and progress. Septimus sees death as the liberator of those silenced by society: "even Holmes himself could not touch this last relic straying on the edge of the world, this outcast . . . who lay, like a drowned sailor, on the shore of the world" (90; ellipsis added). It is his vision of Evans, however, that brings to Septimus the knowledge that death's meaning is found in its message: "It was at that moment . . . that the great revelation took place. A voice spoke from behind the screen. Evans was speaking. The dead were with him. . . . 'Evans, Evans,' he had said . . . 'Communication is health; communication is happiness'" (91; ellipses added). Because Septimus sees himself as Christ-like, he realizes that his own death is the only manner of communication available to him. Drowning acquires new significance; to be submerged in water is to accept the role of Christ the messenger, whose return to Earth will provide to all the true value of mortality's consequence, life everlasting.

Septimus's messianic role must be read metaphorically, however, as Woolf does not offer a Christian message. Instead, Septimus's life beyond death represents the legacy of fallen soldiers: the message of war's futility and the need to cast aside the language that obscures perception of

reality. Woolf uses Septimus's Christian allusions as a parallel to society's need to reject its traditional understanding of its war dead as necessary expenditures for the maintenance of convention. This traditional understanding is set in terms of patriotism and the preservation of a culture that owes its existence to society's worship of the false goddesses, Proportion and Conversion. As death holds no relevance in a system governed by pagan-like beliefs, Britain's war deaths are robbed of value in a system governed by Proportion and Conversion, Woolf's terms for the operation of ideology within British society: "Proportion. . . establishes and promotes uniformity and moderation according to a set of normative measurements invented and implemented by [respected] members of society. Conversion enforces the norms established by Proportion through ideological [apparatuses]" (Polley 7). Contrary to the liberality of Septimus's views, Woolf describes Proportion and Conversion as powers that establish and enforce ideology:

Proportion, divine proportion, Sir William's goddess, was acquired by Sir William walking hospitals . . . begetting one son. . . . [Conversion is] a Goddess even now engaged . . . wherever in short the climate or the devil tempts men to fall from the true belief which is her own—is even now engaged in dashing down shrines, smashing idols, and setting up in their place her own stern countenance. (*Dalloway*, 97; ellipses added)

The description is ironic, representing society's orthodox and corrupt philosophy. Proportion's belief is the default truth because dissent is silenced by Conversion. Truth lies with the ideas Conversion claims are idols and then destroys. Bradshaw is characterized in biblical or mythological terms, worshiping the "divine" twin goddesses and "begetting one son," as though he were their mortal progeny, possessed of the ancestral claim to an earthly power passed down through the generations (97). He is their evangelist, a "priest of science," a "ghostly helper" of

his false goddesses (26), whose favour grants him, as a doctor, the authority to pronounce as mad those who do not abide by the social mandates of "uniformity and moderation" (Polley 7). He, and others like him, do Conversion's bidding, silencing the apostates of Proportion's doctrine. He has "secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalised despair, made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views until they, too, shared his sense of proportion" (Woolf, *Dalloway* 97). Bradshaw defends the apocryphal prosperity of England (97) against potential iconoclasts like Septimus, who refuses to contribute future soldiers to a corrupt country. Septimus rejects the idea of procreation, as it is a means to perpetuate the system he seeks to end: "One cannot bring children into a world like this. One cannot perpetuate suffering, or increase the breed of these lustful animals, who have no lasting emotions, but only whims and vanities" (87). He rejects the role society demands of him.

The scene featuring the chauffeured car and the skywriting airplane serves to emphasize the contrast between the culture of materialism and Septimus's belief in love preponderate. As Septimus is a Christ-like figure, it is appropriate that he opposes the practice of pursuing covetous vanities, a practice whose adherents the Bible calls idolaters (*KJV* Eph. 5.5; Col. 3.5). Idolatry entails the "[i]mmoderate attachment to or veneration for any person or thing," particularly things human-made ("Idolatry," def. 2, 1). The observers of the car drew "the same dark breath of veneration" (Woolf, *Dalloway* 16) without knowledge of the passenger's identity. The characteristics that make someone "venerable" are transferred from the person to an associated object, here the car, which is presumably luxurious if the spectators have "no doubt that greatness was seated within" (16). The car connotes that property worthy of veneration. It alone connotes power and prestige, as the denotative subject is unknown. Woolf depicts most residents of London as conditioned to accept the function of material display as connotative of personal worth. It is suitable that the car's path runs along Bond Street, whose "glove shops and

hat shops and tailors' shops" (17) make it a promenade of ostentatious commercialism where women fret over the length and colour of their gloves (17). The women who wear "furs on a day like this" (16) use clothing as signifiers of social status, signifiers that were significantly shaped by royal influence, as evidenced by Edward VII and other members of the royal family (Bailey 105; Richardson 99-100). Their patterns of thought conform to society's focus on superficial consumption.

To the "well-dressed men with their tail-coats and their white slips and their hair raked back" (18) especially, the car further connotes "the majesty of England" (16), evoking the nationalist sentiments of "the dead; of the flag; of Empire" (17). Here, "the dead" refers to those who died fighting for the maintenance of the Empire. This sacrifice is proper in the view of the men who "perceived instinctively that greatness was passing . . . and seemed ready to attend their Sovereign, if need be, to the cannon's mouth" (18). The car is symbolic of an ideal, materialistic England, which inspires men to fight in its defence "as their ancestors had done before them" (18), and as Septimus had done for his vision of England idealized by "Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress" (84). However, whereas the fashion-conscious Londoners connect consumer goods with venerable qualities, Septimus is no longer able to find meaning in his fellow citizens' commercial superficialities. That the skywriting is an advertisement is the natural interpretation to all viewers but Septimus (20, 21), who has broken with the culture of consumption and who views England as consumed by the false value of empty spectacle. From Septimus's perspective, society's allegiance to materialistic idolatry, at the expense of Christian values, has made England a pagan state in which he is a stranger.

Septimus is unable to meet the expectation of post-war reintegration, trapped, like Clarissa, under Proportion's law. Peter hears in her expressed opinions "a great deal of [her husband, Richard] Dalloway . . . a great deal of the public-spirited, British Empire, tariff-reform,

governing-class spirit" (75; ellipsis added). In Peter's view, Clarissa possesses an intellect superior to her husband's, yet she must publically echo his reactionary opinions, themselves echoes of the conservative newspaper *The Morning Post* (75), a publication biased in favour of "King and Country" (Wilson 4). Peter's description of Clarissa lost individuality as "one of the tragedies of married life" (Woolf, *Dalloway* 75) carries the connotation of the further tragedy brought by the necessities that compromise women's independence. As girls, Sally and Clarissa "spoke of marriage always as a catastrophe" (33), favouring instead the liberation of social change.

Sally, in her youth, blamed Hugh Whitbread for his implicit support for English orthodoxy: "She told him that she considered him responsible for the state of 'those poor girls in Piccadilly . . . He's read nothing, thought nothing, felt nothing. . . . He was a perfect specimen of the public school type'" (71). Hugh, like Richard, is responsible for England's social stasis because he accepts without question that the tenets of the past are proper. He represents the class of men who allow the continued exploitation of women through their prostitution in Piccadilly. This may be a reference to the politically powerful men who, wishing the practice to continue, interfered with the enforcement of prostitution laws (Bartley 165). Prostitution is a physical domination of men over women, a relationship suited to the power relations of the era. Unlike prostitution, traditional marriage was seen as a morally acceptable relationship despite the expectation of the intellectual domination of husband over wife, as Peter describes Clarissa's marriage to Richard. Although Sally had criticized Hugh for his tacit approval of the systemic domination of women, she eventually succumbs to the necessities of life in England, marrying to become Lady Rosseter.

Marriage, for Clarissa and Sally, is an apparatus of Conversion's enforcement of social custom, a prison that suppresses ideas contrary to the conservative forces that maintain the

privileges of upper-class men. Clarissa's social and financial dependence on Richard prevents her from expressing her own views, leaving her, as Peter describes, cursing the "gods" of the establishment:

As we are a doomed race, chained to a sinking ship . . . let us . . . mitigate the sufferings of our fellow-prisoners. . . . Those ruffians, the Gods, shan't have it all their own way, — her notion being that the Gods, who never lost a chance of hurting, thwarting and spoiling human lives were seriously put out if, all the same, you behaved like a lady. (76; ellipses added)

However, like the description of Proportion and Conversion, this passage, too, is submerged in irony. The good she does is unspecified, save "decorat[ing] the dungeon with flowers and air-cushions" (76). Clarissa censors her own feelings about marriage, assuming "no one was to blame" (76) for the England's unchanging state, reproaching instead the figurative gods of providence. Her ladylike conduct, though itself prescribed by convention, provides some relief as a justification for her lifestyle. Her refusal to identify the true causes of women's subservience implies a wilful ignorance of her own complicit support of the *status quo* and the dependence it creates. Clarissa cannot challenge authority without facing the pain of acknowledged captivity or risk losing the life she has built. She must instead adopt a language of omission that shifts responsibility away from conservatism.

Unlike Clarissa, Dr. Holmes acts on ignorance that is not wilful. He has no conception of the effects of war trauma, finding "nothing whatever the matter" (88) with Septimus, and recommending bromide before bed (88), or taking up a hobby, should he feel "out of sorts" (21). Holmes naturally reverts to the categories defined by his traditional understanding of medicine. Trapped in preconfigured patterns of thought when considering diagnoses, he must fill with conventional concepts the void of meaning created by new traumatic disorders, a practice

familiar to actual doctors of the era (Mosse 102). Dr. Bradshaw, however, identifies Septimus as having had a "complete physical and nervous breakdown, with every symptom in an advanced stage" (93). His diagnosis reflects modern psychiatric research, but the negligence of his prescription is equal to Holmes', if not worse: "The rest cure Bradshaw intends for Septimus conveniently secludes England's veterans and hides them away from others that they may taint with their revelations" (DeMeester 662). With this threat of silent isolation waiting for him, Septimus is left with suicide as the only means of communication. If Septimus believes his life is the sacrifice necessary to communicate humanity's terms of redemption, it is appropriate that his death arrives upon the "rusty spikes" (179) of the public fence and emblematic division (146) between darkness and light.

Septimus uses society's language in his final attempt to communicate but fails to achieve his desired effect. He hopes "their idea of tragedy" (146) will be the medium to successfully convey his message. Responses to his suicide, however, conform to the conventions Septimus has finally escaped. To Peter, the tragedy is an apparatus for the evincing of "the triumphs of civilisation" (147); the ease with which the ambulance moves through traffic is a showcase of "the efficiency, the organisation, the communal spirit of London" (147) that mark the city's communion with its goddesses. From the "sands of India" to the "purlieu of London" (97), Conversion ensures British tradition and convention can race forward unhindered. Indeed, Society shuns those who object to Proportion's advance. Holmes cannot find the intended meaning in Septimus's suicide, branding him a "coward" (146) for choosing death over indoctrination.

The apparent senselessness of Septimus's death brings to Clarissa's consciousness an awareness of the previously suppressed nature of her life. She knows little of Septimus, yet constructs a scenario that mirrors his reasoning:

there were the poets and thinkers. Suppose [Septimus] had had that passion, and had gone to Sir William Bradshaw, a great doctor yet . . . capable of some indescribable outrage—forcing your soul, that was it—if this young man had gone to him, and Sir William had impressed him, like that, with his power, might he not then have said. . . they make life intolerable, men like that? (180; ellipsis added)

In her hypothesis, Septimus shares with Shelley's Poet the ability to convey his perception of society's folly, though Clarissa alone receives his message. She acknowledges her own complicity in maintaining a society that destroys men like Septimus; she has not done "good for the sake of goodness" (76). Instead, "[s]he had schemed; she had pilfered. She was never wholly admirable. She had wanted success" (181). Unlike Shelley's Poet, however, Septimus does not effect a change in society, or even in Clarissa. She has sworn fealty to the politicians, merchants and manufacturers that her privileged society comprises (182). She is too closely integrated with social decorum to escape from it. Clarissa understands Septimus, but "she would have to go back; the rooms were still crowded; people kept on coming" (180). In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Proportion continues her advance unhindered.

In their attempts to derive meaning from the senselessness of war, Septimus, Jenny and Margaret, and Alix act as proxies for the men who cannot speak for themselves. These characters mirror their creators, Woolf, West, and Macaulay, who observed the conditions soldiers and veterans endured for the sake of preserving the British social order. Patriarchy and patriotism are not merely linguistic cognates; together they composed the salient elements of the justification for a war fought for no rational purpose. From the periphery of society, Woolf, West, and Macaulay were able to surveil unhindered the men broken and abandoned by the system of male power and nationalism. Their work did not create an immediate shift in public perception—indeed, Macaulay's criticisms alienated her readership and publisher (Levenback

84)—but it did create an early breach in the barrier around understanding and compassion. They rose to face Britain's “crisis in its destiny” (Shelley, *Reform* 29), offering the analyses of language and attitude needed for society to perceive convention as misfeasance rather than righteousness. Like Shelley's “unacknowledged” Poet-legislators, their influence was not fully appreciated by their contemporaries (*Defence* §342). Instead, their novels were preludes to a new era, inspiring the next revolution of language and perception.

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