

Mackenzie McAnear

8 December 2021

Evolution of *Mrs. Dalloway* Scholarship: 1944-2021

Since its publication in 1925, *Mrs. Dalloway* has been translated into over fifty languages, including Turkish, Polish, and Hindi. *Mrs. Dalloway* is a novel by Virginia Woolf, set in London, England, right after World War I. It takes place over one day and jumps between Clarissa Dalloway, Septimus Warren Smith, Peter Walsh, Lucrezia Smith, Richard Dalloway, Elizabeth Dalloway, and Miss Kilman. Along with jumping from character to character, the novel also jumps back nearly three decades to when Clarissa was not yet married to Richard, and Peter was still a possibility. *Mrs. Dalloway* engages not only with questions about tradition and social class but also in its presentation of the shell-shocked, damaged Septimus Smith; *Mrs. Dalloway* is also, in its own way, a kind of war novel. The issues that soldiers home from war experienced, such as flashbacks and post-traumatic stress disorders, were side effects of the war; these issues started to be taken more seriously thanks to Virginia Woolf's inclusion of Septimus Smith. When searching for *Mrs. Dalloway* in the MLA International Bibliography, one will find hundreds of books, academic journal articles, and book articles, more specifically, 978 sources ranging from 1944 to 2021, which talk about several aspects of *Mrs. Dalloway*. The most significant chunk of this is the academic journals, with 563 results; next is book articles, with 260 results. The rest is divided into dissertation abstracts with seventy-eight, books with seventy-two, editions with three, and websites and translations with one result each. It takes some time, but as the decade progresses, the subject matter of the *Mrs. Dalloway* scholarship does, slowly but surely, expand.

From 1944 to 1970, there were only twenty-three sources on *Mrs. Dalloway* in these twenty-six years. Twenty are academic journals, and three are book articles. The only subjects mentioned at this time are "*Mrs. Dalloway*," "novel," "circular structure," "narrative technique," "plot," and "time." "Virginia Woolf's All Souls' Day: The Omniscient Narrator in *Mrs. Dalloway*" is a book article published by Hillis J. Miller in 1970, which discusses the novel's omniscient narrator. The first work to be published was written by Nathalia Wright in April 1944 and titled "*Mrs. Dalloway: A Study in Composition*." Wright's piece is significant because she looks at the technique that Woolf used to create *Mrs. Dalloway* and discovers that it is neither a "narrative nor a character sketch" but is "a thematic study" (Wright 351). It took nearly twenty years before someone decided to dive deeply into the work. This does not make much sense since, before *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf had published eight other novels, which should mean she is a well-known author and exceptionally talented at what she does. One of these books is *Jacob's Room*, a subject that some scholars use in works after 1970. "Towards an Understanding of the Meaning of Virginia Woolf's 'Mrs. Dalloway'" is another academic journal published in 1965 by Anna S. Benjamin. In this academic journal, Benjamin zeros in on the meaning and purpose behind the novel. From the evidence produced, the primary focus of the scholarship from 1944 to 1970 is *Mrs. Dalloway* as a novel.

From 1971 to 1979, sixty-one sources were produced, which, when broken down, gives us forty-nine academic journals, five dissertation abstracts, four books, and three book articles. The array of subjects also widens to include "imagery," "social class," "Clarissa Dalloway," and "feminism," alongside the current subject's "novel" and "*Mrs. Dalloway*." The inclusion of feminism and a closer look at Clarissa Dalloway as a character is important to note because, at

this time, the women's movement was starting in Britain, following the steps of American women who had started the Women's Rights Movement in the 1960s. However, the numbers indicate that this decade also focuses on *Mrs. Dalloway* as a novel. However, the articles themselves tell a different story. Many of them focus on imagery and social class, but not together. For instance, Margaret Blanchard published an academic journal in 1972, titled "Socialization in *Mrs. Dalloway*," where she focuses on social class. There is an entirely different academic journal from 1973, by Jean M. Wyatt titled "*Mrs. Dalloway*: Literary Allusion as Structural Metaphor," in this journal, Wyatt discusses the novel's narrative structure, imagery, and use of allusion. The central focus continues to be *Mrs. Dalloway* as a novel in the 1970s.

Between 1980 and 1989, seventy-eight pieces were published, including three books, fourteen dissertation abstracts, nineteen book articles, and forty-two academic journals. At this time, the number of subjects spikes and grows to include discussions of Woolf's novels "*To the Lighthouse*" and "*Between the Acts*," along with Irish novelist "James Joyce," character "Septimus Warren Smith," "narrative structure," "Ulysses," and more. Five of the dissertations discuss the female view of the novel and the relationships between the women in it. "Wilda Leslie Grant's 1988 dissertation "Women's Search for Identity in Modern Fiction (1881-1927): Self-Definition in Crisis" examines the treatment of women in both *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. Margaret Burns Ferrari's "What the Heroines Want: Self-Discovery in Emma, Persuasion, Jane Eyre, Villette, Mill on the Floss, Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse" was published in 1985 and considers the self-discovery, marriages, and feminist approach taken in each of these novels. While the number of results has gone up, there still needs to be a definitive subject that scholars are gravitating towards. The primary focus of the 1980s is comparing *Mrs.*

Dalloway to one of Woolf's other famous novels, *To the Lighthouse*, published in 1927, or *Between the Acts*, published in 1941.

From 1990 to 1999, 158 results ranged in source type: one edition and one translation, ten books, eighteen dissertation abstracts, forty-nine book articles, and eighty-one academic journals. Many sources discuss *To the Lighthouse* in their works about *Mrs. Dalloway*, most likely comparing the two novels. Having ten books published about the same thing in ten years is a big deal. *Heralds of the Postmodern: Madness and Fiction in Conrad, Woolf, and Lessing* came out in 1999 and was written by Yuan-jung Cheng. A prominent book in 1998 is *Virginia Woolf and the Great War* by Karen L. Levenback, in which she discusses the war and how Woolf integrates it into her novel. A name that kept coming up was Molly Hoff, who published twenty-six works relating to *Mrs. Dalloway* from 1988 to 2019; however, most of her academic journals—twelve to be exact—were published in the 90s. The first journal, titled "The Midday Topos in Mrs. Dalloway," appears in 1990, where Hoff talks about foreshadowing, characterization, the treatment of noon, the novel's relationship to topos, danger, and death. She had another journal, "Coming of Age in Mrs. Dalloway," published in 1997. This journal discusses the treatment of initiation and transition into adulthood. "The Pseudo-Homeric World of Mrs. Dalloway" is one of the two 1999 journals Hoff published, where she goes in-depth, talking about the treatment of the journey and comparing *Mrs. Dalloway* to James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Homer's *Odyssey*. While the scholarship in the 1990s tended to focus on James Joyce and Homer, the next decade would move towards other concerns, such as Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* and its connection to *Mrs. Dalloway*.

The results from 2000 to 2009, comprise 164 academic journals, eighty-one book articles, twenty-four books, and twenty-four dissertation abstracts. All of these add up to 293 results. The top subject for this decade is "*The Hours*," a novel by Michael Cunningham, who coincidentally is the second most discussed subject. This is because one of the main characters in his book reads Mrs. Dalloway inside his novel. The extent to which Woolf's works and novels are compared to each other is extensive. Most academic journals compare and contrast *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs. Dalloway* for their shared feminist perspective and how each book displays this. At the turn of the new millennium, scholars have focused on World War I and the modernist novel. Conversations of war trauma and mental health started popping up at this time, most likely because World War II had occurred, and people were starting to see more signs of trauma and the effect that the war had on the soldiers. The 2007 book article "Trauma, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Obstacles to Postwar Recovery in *Mrs. Dalloway*," written by Karen DeMeester, is a notable example of the topic of trauma and how it is discussed in *Mrs. Dalloway*. This is the first decade in which there are a fair number of books, and their subject matter is broad, ranging from modernism and women novelists to trauma and World War 1. From 2000 to 2009, the scholarship's focal point was Michael Cunningham's novel *The Hours* in relation to Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*.

The core of Mrs. Dalloway is discovered in forty-one sources that focus on the modernist novel. After letting a few decades go by, it makes sense for modern scholars to discuss novels published decades ago in a more modern setting. The number of sources from 2010 to 2021 totals up to 364, which branches into 207 academic journals, 105 book articles, thirty-three books, seventeen dissertation abstracts, and two editions. The core of the dissertation abstracts is

James Joyce and *Ulysses*. In contrast, the core of book articles focuses a surprising amount on Virginia Woolf, along with *Mrs. Dalloway*. These results are surprising because up till now, Virginia Woolf was at the bottom of the list of subjects that sources discussed. One book article focusing on Virginia Woolf is "Real Life Its readers in *Mrs. Dalloway*," published in 2011 by Rachel Bowlby. Bowlby discusses realism, reading, storytelling, and the minor characters of Woolf's novel. The central focus of the scholarship from 2010 to 2021 is how and what *Mrs. Dalloway* has contributed to modernist novels.

Modernist novels and World War I are just two of the handful of themes that reoccur in the scholarship. The first mention of modernist novels is in a 1995 book article by Margot Gayle Backus titled, "Exploring the Ethical Implications of Narrative in a Sophomore-Level Course on Same-Sex Love: *Mrs. Dalloway* and the Last September." This article examines modernist novels as they relate to the use of narrative structure. The latest use of modernist novels is from 2021 in the book *Style in Narrative: Aspects of an Affective-Cognitive Stylistics* by Patrick Colm Hogan. In this instance, the modernist novel is congruent with style and narrative structure. World War I was first introduced to the scholarship in 1977 with Alex Zwerdling's academic journal, "Mrs. Dalloway and the Social System." Zwerdling's article considers the treatment of social class and its relationship to self-control and World War I. The latest mention of World War I is in the 2021 academic journal, "Nature Trauma: Ecology and the Returning Soldier in First World War English and Scottish Fiction, 1918-1932," by Samantha Walton. Unlike the first discussion in 1977, this journal focuses on World War I. Its secondary focus is on trauma and healing. World War I had a significant leap in scholarship, not unlike modernist novels, which had a few more steps before it became a more prominent focus in the scholarship's history.

Along with modernist novels and World War I, a novel has been around almost every decade of *Mrs. Dalloway's* scholarship. *To the Lighthouse* was first introduced in 1979 in the journal article *The Romantic Genesis of the Modern Novel* by Charles Schug. In this novel, the author compares multiple books and authors. The latest is in Elsa Högberg's 2020 book, *Virginia Woolf and the Ethics of Intimacy*. Unlike the first book, this book focuses solely on Virginia Woolf's novels, which shows how far this theme has come, from discussing one female author among many men to a solo book on her magnificent novels.

The scholarship of *Mrs. Dalloway* expands slowly over the decades. Sources start close to home, looking at other works by Woolf before expanding into other topics that connect to other novels and occur in *Mrs. Dalloway*, such as the feminist approach. Any talk of feminism and women is still low in research, with the feminist approach being the highest with five results. While its presence in scholarly sources is small, the mere existence of these few sources discussing feminism suggests that there is more to be looked at in this area. We finally see an expansion in topics in the 1980s when James Joyce and Septimus Warren Smith were added to the mix, but even the subject that was still the most talked about then was *To the Lighthouse*. However, trauma has become more prominent in recent years, especially concerning World War I. Such heavy topics might have been put off till 2000 and beyond because of the social climate of the times. People would have rather discussed the novel, Virginia Woolf's other novels, and even a male author before discussing the characters within or any of the hard-hitting subjects about women. It is saddening to know that even now, in 2021, only two sources discuss femininity. The novel is centered around a woman, written by a woman, and contains more than one female character. Hence, writers have no excuse not to discuss vital subjects like the feminist

approach, gender, or sexuality. Nevertheless, as the years progress, there is still hope that more and more scholars will want to dive deeper into the female side of *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Works Cited

- Backus, Margot Gayle. "Exploring the Ethical Implications of Narrative in a Sophomore-Level Course on Same-Sex Love: Mrs. Dalloway and the Last September." *Re: Reading, Re: Writing, Re: Teaching Virginia Woolf. Selected Papers from the Fourth Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf*, edited by Eileen, ed. Barrett et al., Pace University Press, 1995, pp. 102–105. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=1997068694&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
- Benjamin, Anna S. "Towards an Understanding of the Meaning of Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway." *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1965, pp. 214–227. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=0000210617&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
- Blanchard, Margaret. "Socialization in Mrs. Dalloway." *College English*, vol. 34, no. 2, Nov. 1972, pp. 287–305. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=0000872541&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
- Bowlby, Rachel. "Real Life and Its Readers in Mrs. Dalloway." *Woolf as Reader/Woolf as Critic, or The Art of Reading in the Present*, edited by Catherine Bernard, Presses Universitaires de la Méditerranée, 2011, pp. 19–37. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=2012583462&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
- Cheng, Yuan-jung. *Heralds of the Postmodern: Madness and Fiction in Conrad, Woolf, and Lessing*. Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 1999. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=1999065094&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

- DeMeester, Karen. "Trauma, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Obstacles to Postwar Recovery in Mrs. Dalloway." *Virginia Woolf and Trauma: Embodied Texts*, edited by Suzette Henke et al., Pace University Press, 2007, pp. 77–93. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=2007581419&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
- Ferrari, Margaret Burns. "What the Heroines Want: Self-Discovery in Emma, Persuasion, Jane Eyre, Villette, Mill on the Floss, Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse." *Dissertation Abstracts International*, vol. 46, no. 3, ProQuest, Sept. 1985, p. 705A. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1016/0192-0561(85)90418-7.
- Grant, Wilda Leslie. "Women's Search for Identity in Modern Fiction (1881-1927): Self-Definition in Crisis." *Dissertation Abstracts International*, vol. 49, no. 3, ProQuest, Sept. 1988, p. 510A. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=1988035733&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
- Hogan, Patrick Colm. *Style in Narrative: Aspects of an Affective-Cognitive Stylistics*. Oxford University Press, 2021. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=202120611371&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
- Högberg, Elsa. *Virginia Woolf and the Ethics of Intimacy*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=202018486578&site=ehost-live&scope=site.
- Hoff, Molly. "The Midday Topos in Mrs. Dalloway." *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 36, no. 4, 1990, pp. 449–463. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.2307/441795.

---. "Coming of Age in Mrs. Dalloway." *Woolf Studies Annual*, vol. 3, 1997, pp. 95–121.

EBSCOhost, [search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=1997067026&site=ehost-live&scope=site)

[direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=1997067026&site=ehost-live&scope=site](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=1997067026&site=ehost-live&scope=site).

---. "The Pseudo-Homeric World of Mrs. Dalloway." *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 45, no. 2, 1999, pp. 186–209. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.2307/441830.

Levenback, Karen L. *Virginia Woolf and the Great War*. Syracuse University Press, 1998.

EBSCOhost, [search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=1999058671&site=ehost-live&scope=site)

[direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=1999058671&site=ehost-live&scope=site](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=1999058671&site=ehost-live&scope=site).

Miller J. Hillis. Virginia Woolf's All Souls' Day: The Omniscient Narrator in Mrs. Dalloway. In: Friedman MJ, editor. *The Shaken Realist: Essays in Modern Literature in Honor of Frederick J Hoffman* [Internet]. Baton Rouge: La. State U.P; 1970 [cited 2021 Dec 1]. p. 100–27. Available from: [https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=1970105918&site=ehost-live&scope=site)

[direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=1970105918&site=ehost-live&scope=site](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=1970105918&site=ehost-live&scope=site).

Schug, Charles. *The Romantic Genesis of the Modern Novel*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979. *EBSCOhost*, [search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=1990039891&site=ehost-live&scope=site)

[direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=1990039891&site=ehost-live&scope=site](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=1990039891&site=ehost-live&scope=site).

Walton, Samantha. "Nature Trauma: Ecology and the Returning Soldier in First World War English and Scottish Fiction, 1918–1932." *Journal of Medical Humanities*, vol. 42, no. 2, June 2021, pp. 213–223. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1007/s10912-019-09591-9.

Wright, Nathalia. "Mrs. Dalloway: A Study in Composition." *College English*, vol. 5, no. 7, Apr. 1944, pp. 351–358. *EBSCOhost*, [search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=0000400391&site=ehost-live&scope=site)

[direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=0000400391&site=ehost-live&scope=site](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=0000400391&site=ehost-live&scope=site).

Wyatt, Jean M. "Mrs. Dalloway: Literary Allusion as Structural Metaphor." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 88, no. 3, May 1973, pp. 440–451.

EBSCOhost, [search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=0000206205&site=ehost-live&scope=site)

[direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=0000206205&site=ehost-live&scope=site](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=0000206205&site=ehost-live&scope=site).

Zwerdling, Alex. "Mrs. Dalloway and the Social System." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 92, no. 1, Jan. 1977, pp. 69–82. *EBSCOhost*,

[search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=000020643](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=0000206430&site=ehost-live&scope=site)

[0&site=ehost-live&scope=site](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=mzh&AN=0000206430&site=ehost-live&scope=site).