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Through both mundane and extraordinary events, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and Christopher Isherwood's *A Single Man* (1964) present the tension that exists between private reflection and public existence. Although written nearly forty years apart, each novel explores a single day in the lives of the respective protagonists. Clarissa Dalloway from Woolf's *Mrs*.

Dalloway and George from Isherwood's *A Single Man* provide the focus for each novel. Although Woolf's and Isherwood's portrayals differ in gender, setting, and narrative styles, the foundations of both texts are achingly accurate portrayals of human connection and isolation. Ultimately, however, Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* emphasizes Clarissa's isolation, while George in Isherwood's *A Single Man* suggests a greater human connection.

Woolf's and Isherwood's texts immediately introduce their protagonists at early moments of their respective days with a focus on their internalized voices. Even though Clarissa is out among the public in order to prepare for a social event, the "private mental world" of Clarissa is the "novel's key event" (Littleton 36). Woolf's text opens with the indication of a simple errand: "Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself" (3). Clarissa Dalloway is a fifty-two-year-old woman living in bustling post-World War I London. Woolf combines the private and public life of the protagonist by seamlessly switching from Clarissa's private thoughts to her mundane activity in a single sentence: "Such fools we are, she thought, crossing Victoria Street" (4). A simple action like crossing the street is imbricated with Clarissa's deeper thoughts about life's unpredictability, through which she deems people "fools." Furthermore, as she performs errands around the city, she contemplates the "indescribable pause" that occurs before Big Ben strikes, which launches her into additional musings about human existence (Woolf 4). According to Clarissa, life is simply people "making it up, building it

round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh" (Woolf 4). Still, Clarissa experiences moments of stillness before the clock chimes and she is brought back into public existence. Then, she feels the energy from the city streets and the sense of renewal that comes with not only each day but also each moment.

Similarly, *A Single Man* opens by introducing George, the novel's fifty-eight-year-old protagonist, but in a more abstract manner. The opening simply states, "Waking up begins with saying am and now" (Isherwood 9). George is first referred to as "that which has awoken" and "has recognized I, and therefrom deduced I am, I am now" (Isherwood 9). It is not until George performs the ordinary tasks of getting ready that we "know its name" and that "it is called George" (Isherwood 11). He slowly wakes and realizes new moments of the day just as Clarissa Dalloway is aware of new moments forming when Big Ben chimes. Kay Ferres describes the "first scenes of the novel" as a way for Isherwood to "establish [George's] singleness and separateness" (110). Unlike Mrs. Dalloway's London setting, *A Single Man* places George, who is actually British, in suburban southern California in the early 1960s. While Clarissa notes the "bellow and the uproar" and the people "shuffling and swinging" in lively London (Woolf 4), George interprets his California setting much differently. In one of his many exposed private thoughts, George thinks "I am afraid of being rushed" as he prepares to face the day (Isherwood 11). George lives a lonely existence after the sudden loss of his partner, Jim, and he's aware of the

disappearing days of his own life. Although Clarissa's introduction notes how she thrives within the public environment of post-World War I London, George wakes up alone and now wishes to exist at a solitary pace. However, both characters combine commonplace public events with deeper private reflections.

Before I proceed with further analysis of the texts, it is worth noting that the correlation between Woolf and Isherwood extends beyond these two particular novels. Indeed, the authors were quite familiar with one another's work. For example, Hogarth Press, created by Leonard and Virginia Woolf, published Isherwood's second novel entitled *The Memorial* (1932) after reading his debut novel *All the Conspirators* (1938) (Lehmann 8-9). The couple published even more of Isherwood's work, including *Lions and Shadows* (1938) and *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939) (Lehmann 33). Furthermore, Woolf and Isherwood would meet over the course of their professional dealings. According to John Lehmann, Isherwood was "utterly fascinated by [Woolf]" (33) and very familiar with her writings. Notably, in his foreword to *All the Conspirators*, Isherwood acknowledges that his literary approach was to demonstrate "quaint echoes" of techniques by Virginia Woolf and James Joyce (9). Also, Isherwood mentions in a 1973 interview that he had Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Michelangelo Antonioni's 1961 film *La Notte* in mind while writing *A Single Man* (Kaplan 272). This biographical connection assists in establishing the parallels between Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Isherwood's *A Single Man*.

Indeed, the parallels continue within the world of these novels. For example, mortality and the aging process are topics that pervade Woolf's and Isherwood's texts through the inner dialogues of the protagonists. For example, Clarissa claims that she feels "very young; at the same time unspeakably aged" (Woolf 8). Her status as a middle-aged woman places her in between youthful moments and her physical age as represented by the "body she [wears]" (Woolf 11). Clarissa continues to think about how her "body, with all its capacities," seems like "nothing at all," and she has the "oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen; [and] unknown" (Woolf 11). Clarissa's conflicting thoughts demonstrate her emotional complexity despite a seemingly superficial lifestyle as a wife and mother in aristocratic London. She cannot help but ponder death within the same moments; Clarissa asks herself if it mattered "that she must inevitably cease completely" or if it were a consolation "to believe that death ended absolutely" (Woolf 8). Furthermore, Clarissa reacts physically to darker thoughts of death as she feels a "spasm, as if death's "icy claws" were able "to fix in her" for a moment (Woolf 36). However, the thought passes, and her day must move forward, but her internal questions demonstrate her "vivid awareness and fear of the termination" of life (Littleton 38). Clarissa is keenly aware of her mortality even as she peruses the flower selections or engages in other simple tasks. However, much later in the novel, Clarissa attempts to answer her initial question about death. At her party, she hears about the suicide of World War I veteran Septimus Smith, which "strikes a chord that

reverberates with her mood" (Littleton 40). Clarissa, when thinking about Septimus, decides that "[d]eath [is] defiance" and an "attempt to communicate" (Woolf 184). Even though she does not know Septimus personally, she "clearly understands him, as her thoughts mirror his" (Littleton 40). Moreover, his suicide represents the "shocking immediacy of death" that Clarissa has already fearfully considered (Guth 37). Most importantly, the news of the suicide at Clarissa's party is the "brutality that underlies civilized appearances" and represents the mixture of Clarissa's darker thoughts and her public self (Guth 37).

In *A Single Man*, George is equally concerned with his own mortality. George's contemplation of death is far more intimate than Clarissa's reflections on Septimus, since George is mourning the loss of his partner Jim who has been killed in a car accident. George thinks of his physical being in terms of this loss as he refers to his body as "the body that has outlived Jim" (Isherwood 104). Like Clarissa's physical response to thinking about her mortality, George's body responds to his grief: each morning with a "sick newness" he remembers Jim is gone, which he describes as "waiting for a spasm to pass" (Isherwood 13). However, George's self-perception differs from Clarissa's feelings of invisibility. George reassures himself: "I am alive, he says to himself, I am alive!" (Isherwood 104). While Clarissa feels invisible in her own body, she still admits she manages through the "ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived" (Woolf 9). Like George, she reassures herself of her own survivor status despite the precariousness of mortality. Similarly,

George describes his body as "the tough triumphant old body of a survivor" (Isherwood 104). The respective protagonists are survivors in their own right: George survives his monotonous daily routine while grief-stricken over Jim, and Clarissa survives her loneliness by maintaining social appearances as she grows older and feels herself slipping away from her relationships. For them, each day is a battle between their external responsibilities—jobs, errands, social events—and their internal voices. Clarissa's and George's social responsibilities demand connections among their peers, even as the internal dialogue of both characters exposes their isolation and anxieties. Therefore, withstanding the discrepancy between connection and isolation day after day is a remarkable event that they recognize even down to their physical beings. Both characters have a heightened sensation of being alive, even when it physically aches.

Furthermore, like Clarissa, George considers the quickness of death and how everything can change in a moment, which echoes Clarissa's "feeling that it [is] very, very dangerous to live even one day" (Woolf 8). George thinks about his partner's accident; Jim died quickly and "never felt it" (Isherwood 128). He realizes the random quality of death, too, as he thinks if he had "been the one the truck hit," Jim would still be here, and "things are as simple as that" (Isherwood 128). Even through his grief, George can understand that death can happen in a quick, unsentimental moment; it could just as easily have happened to him. As a result, he both mourns and appreciates the sudden way in which Jim passed. George's connection with

death is made immediate and personal through the loss of Jim, while Clarissa's relation to Septimus Smith is more remote and theoretical. She uses Septimus Smith's suicide to pontificate on the nature of death rather than intimately mourn the victim. Still, death is not wholly negative. For Clarissa, death is a way to "communicate," as well as an "embrace" in a world in which she often feels alone (Woolf 184). Still, her feelings about Septimus are simultaneously authentic and impersonal—she does not know him but ultimately seems to understand the dark human impulse to give up. Septimus Smith becomes a canvas on which she can produce her own image of death in that very moment. For George, the loss of Jim was "lucky" in the sense of its relatively painless immediacy (Isherwood 128). Moreover, Clarissa's thoughts are inevitably fleeting. She hears of the suicide at her party but is unable to dwell on the idea of death for too long since she must maintain appearances and perform her duties as hostess. George must grapple with the death of his loved one daily and attempt to move on without Jim in an unpredictable world. Overall, both Clarissa and George consider their own existence and the respective direct and indirect losses they experience in each novel. Death is presented as both tragically immediate, as when George loses Jim, and as a word-of-mouth event, as Clarissa is told of Septimus's suicide. Still, rather than give in to imprudent grief and exhibit their struggle with mortality to others, Clarissa and George attempt to be dispassionate about the idea of death so they may reestablish some semblance of order in their daily lives.

Additionally, George and Clarissa are performers in their respective lives; they each possess a public self that differs from their private thought processes. Woolf's description of Clarissa at her party focuses largely on the socialite version of Clarissa. For example, Clarissa is "sparkling" with the "stateliness of her grey hair," wearing a "silver-green mermaid's dress" (Woolf 174). Despite the fact that "age [has] brushed her," Clarissa is described as "having that gift still; to be; to exist" (Woolf 174). In the social setting, Clarissa is at "the most perfect ease and [has an] air of a creature floating in its element" (Woolf 174). However, Clarissa realizes the fleeting nature of the "intoxication of the moment," and even though her friends are admiring her, she internally notes that the "semblances" of social "triumphs" possess "hollowness" (Woolf 174). Externally, Clarissa is happy—she is surrounded by her friends and people of high social status, and she moves through the crowd with grace. However, Jacob Littleton argues that if "communal experience is the focal point of Clarissa's universe," then "awareness of individual isolation" is "key to her awareness of herself" (46). The awareness of her isolation, as Littleton puts it, is something that she can attempt to suppress during her party. Clarissa is also aware that she is judged for her desire to throw parties by the very people she invites to them. Despite "how superficial, how fragmentary" these conjectures are, they make her question her existence: "what [does] it mean to her, this thing called life?" (Woolf 122). Her gestures of affection, expressed through her performance as hostess, lack a sense of direction; her social gatherings

are “an offering” to “combine, to create; but to whom?” (Woolf 122). She understands that her parties may simply be “an offering for the sake of offering” but they are still “her gift” because “nothing else had she of the slightest importance” (Woolf 122). As an individual, Clarissa finds herself to be rather ordinary. Her main obligations are to be a mother and a politician’s wife. Both are roles with which she struggles, leading her to tap into affectations so as to conceal her complicated feelings that may not be socially permissible. For example, as she contemplates her relationship with Richard, she admits to lacking “something central” in their marriage: the feelings of attraction that are “a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush” like “an inner meaning almost expressed” (Woolf 31-32). However, she does apply these more passionate feelings to Sally Seton, a friend from her past, with whom she shared a kiss, which Clarissa remembers as “the most exquisite moment of her whole life” (Woolf 35). Clarissa distinguishes between her romantic notions for men and women; she recalls the “purity, the integrity of her feeling for Sally” which was “not like one’s feeling for a man,” as evidenced in her more equivocal feelings for her husband (Woolf 34). In the present day, however, Clarissa has difficulty recalling the intensity she felt with Sally as a young woman, especially after years of being married to Richard. Clarissa’s relationships are often so strained that her recollection of Sally provides insight into a more romantic version of Woolf’s protagonist who perhaps, for a brief, passionate moment, did not feel quite so isolated. Therefore, she must contend with the fact that

her purest feelings of love were for Sally, although their relationship would have had to remain private, which would undoubtedly breed more isolation.

Furthermore, Clarissa's isolation can also be traced to her rejection of religion. During one of her internal dialogues, she thinks about how "not for a moment did she believe in God" (Woolf 29). Her frustration with religious faith is evident in her feelings about Miss Kilman, her daughter's teacher. Clarissa resents Miss Kilman for not only being deeply religious but also for including Elizabeth in her activities, like Communion and prayer. As a result, Clarissa refuses to attach herself to concepts that are often inclusive and bonding experiences: "Love and religion! How detestable, how detestable they are!" (Woolf 126). Clarissa believes neither religious people like Miss Kilman nor romantics like Peter Walsh, who is "always in love," are able to"[have] the ghost of an idea of solving" anything about life (Woolf 121, 127). What others deem frivolous, like fancy parties, Clarissa deems her only contribution to her family and social circle. In contrast, what others deem to be of paramount importance—like love and religion—Clarissa understands as distractions that are "the cruelest things in the world" (Woolf 126). Therein lies a major discrepancy that further creates Clarissa's isolation from those around her. Internally, then, she is aware that she is performing for her guests, her family, and even at times herself, so that she may receive moments of adoration, however fleeting they may be.

Like Clarissa, George deals with a public and a private self. George's public self is most explicitly presented

in his role as a professor versus his private identity as a middle-aged homosexual male. George's sexuality and the consequential social disapproval essentially force George to maintain privacy. Moreover, his status as a professor creates social boundaries with his students, and "with the skill of a veteran he rapidly puts on the psychological make-up for this role he must play" (Isherwood 41). Just as Clarissa is juxtaposed with the crowd at her party in *Mrs. Dalloway*, George faces his classroom full of students and must also act as host. For example, George takes his time before speaking as he enters the classroom full of the chattering students. He stands quietly at the front of the room until finally his prolonged silence "has conquered them," and George claims he has "triumphed" (Isherwood 61). However, George's "triumph lasts only a moment," and he must "break his own spell" and "cast off his mysteriousness" to begin class and become "that dime-a-dozen teacher" (Isherwood 61). Furthermore, George also views social success in terms of a triumph, as does Clarissa, but their respective public successes are similarly short-lived. With Clarissa's parties and George's classroom, each protagonist is acutely conscious of his or her performance. Any given day provides blocks of time in which they must be who the public wants them to be, and the narration in both novels provides almost moment-by-moment analysis of how they transform themselves in these social or professional situations.

The multifaceted identities of Clarissa and George are further constructed by the various names applied to the characters. Woolf's protagonist goes by several names, both formal and informal, such as Clarissa, Clarissa Dalloway,

and Mrs. Dalloway. Clarissa even thinks of herself in her assorted identities as she looks at her reflection in the mirror and "[sees] the delicate pink face of a woman who was that very night to give a party; of Clarissa Dalloway; of herself" (Woolf 37). The multiplicity of Clarissa's reflection is more than just her physical being—she even thinks of herself as "a woman," her legal identity, and "herself" all at once. Moreover, Clarissa's name varies with her social interactions throughout the day. For example, while walking around London, Clarissa runs into an old friend named Hugh Whitbread, who greets her by saying "Good-morning to you, Clarissa!" (Woolf 5). Soon thereafter, the narrative voice creates formality for the protagonist in these moments as she speaks to Hugh: "'I love walking in London,' said Mrs. Dalloway" (Woolf 6). The narrative voice reveals Hugh's thoughts as well, and he considers her "an old friend, Clarissa Dalloway" (Woolf 6). When Clarissa contemplates her own identity, she thinks of "no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress" (Woolf 11). At this point in her life, she is "Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa anymore; this [body] being Mrs. Richard Dalloway" (Woolf 11). Within a single day, Clarissa's identity is as fluid as the names she goes by, each seeming to have its own level of formality or informality as well as implications about her relationship with both herself and others.

In the same way, Isherwood's protagonist goes by several different names and consequently several different identities. Significantly, George is not given a last name, which emphasizes his singular status. Also, unlike Woolf's

protagonist first introduced formally as Mrs. Dalloway, George's introduction is abstracted as simply "the body" or even "it" (Isherwood 9). However, just like Clarissa's mirror image, George's reflection presents many different versions of his character, and these various identities are equally adaptable. George looks into the mirror and sees "many faces within its face—the face of a child, the boy, the young man—all present still" (Isherwood 10). Furthermore, the narrator presents an outsider's perspective of George through Mrs. Strunk, his neighbor who pities him: "Poor man, she thinks, living there all alone. He has a kind face" (Isherwood 32). In fact, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *A Single Man* each feature scenes in which the protagonist looks into a mirror and contemplates his or her own reflection. The respective mirror scenes echo several of Jacques Lacan's ideas from "the mirror stage" of human development. Although Lacan's mirror stage theory pertains to the development of young children, his description of the "identification" and the "transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image" relates to Clarissa's and George's multiple reflections (1124). Moreover, it is worth noting that both novels begin in the morning hours, which establishes a sense of starting anew for significant change and development in a single day. For example, upon waking, one of the first actions George performs is to look at himself in the mirror. The narrator states, "It stares and stares," as if we are looking in on a child pondering his own reflection (Isherwood 11). He begins his day contemplating what his own image means at that particular time, since

his own image—and own identity—is no longer in relation to living, breathing Jim. Furthermore, for all of Clarissa's musings about growing older, she wakes up in the morning and greets a typical day with childlike vulnerability and awe: "What a lark! What a plunge!" (Woolf 3). Although she ruminates how it is "dangerous to live even one day," at the very next moment, during a social interaction, she stands "beside Hugh [Whitbread]" feeling "schoolgirlish" and "skimpy" (Woolf 8, 6). Clarissa, too, feels like she is many things at once: she is a woman who realizes the risks present in everyday life, who thrives on the revelry and distractions of throwing parties, but moments later reverts back to feeling like a self-conscious, much younger version of herself. She becomes "oddly conscious" (Woolf 6) of her behavior and outer appearance around others. Isherwood's George and Woolf's Clarissa demonstrate childlike behaviors; they are clearly trying to figure out who they are in relation to the world around them.

Additionally, a significant part of the "the mirror stage" is when the child will perform a "series of gestures" in "play" to comprehend the "relation between the movements assumed in the image and the reflected environment" including the "child's own body and the persons and things around [him or her]" (Lacan 1123). Both Isherwood's and Woolf's protagonists perform actions that represent their own version of the "play" that Lacan addresses: George's daily routine and Clarissa's social agenda, all of which bring about perceptions and impressions of those around them. Though each protagonist participates in scenarios

that could potentially succeed in achieving understanding and connections, George and Clarissa largely experience an "ambiguous relation" to "the world of his [or her] own making" (Lacan 1124). There is no cohesive, assuring sense of self for either character; their reflections bring about more uncertainty. Lacan's "mirror stage" also employs the German phrases "Innenwelt" and "Umwelt," which translate to "inner world" and "outer world," respectively, to explore the attempt of "establish[ing] a relation between the organism and its reality" (1125). I would argue that Isherwood's *A Single Man* and Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* operate on similar principles with their protagonists. Clarissa and George are continually negotiating their inner world with their outer world, hence their inability to fully connect with their own image in the mirror scenes presented in each novel. Both protagonists see numerous versions of themselves in their reflection; George sees himself in different ages, and Clarissa sees herself in different roles through her changing names. The "discordance with [his or her] own reality" (Lacan 1124) thus is evident in George's and Clarissa's inability to maintain a steady identity. Therefore, the mirror scenes in each novel explicitly present the "fragmented body image" (Lacan 1126) of the protagonists.

As a consequence of their internal conflicts, Woolf's and Isherwood's protagonists experience isolation from those around them. For example, Clarissa describes herself as "[slicing] like a knife through everything" while having the "perpetual sense" of "being out, out far to sea and alone" (Woolf 8). Even though Clarissa describes the

way she goes through life in aggressive terms—like "a knife"—she still feels the isolation and stillness of being out at sea. The imagery of the "knife" and the "sea" is telling of Clarissa's inner tension and outer behavior; she is someone who is internally dark but outwardly serene. Additionally, other characters describe Clarissa's disconnection. Peter Walsh, a friend of Clarissa's, describes her as having a "coldness" and "woodenness" about her that creates an overall "impenetrability" (Woolf 60). Few people feel close to Clarissa, and her description of her own detachment confirms the descriptions provided by those around her. Notably, her own family does not feel particularly close to her. Clarissa admits that even her own daughter, Elizabeth, seems to most admire her teacher Miss Killman, whom Clarissa mocks as a "poor embittered unfortunate creature" (Woolf 12). Moreover, like Clarissa, George experiences separation. For instance, George describes his home, which he previously shared with Jim, "as good as being [their] own island" (Isherwood 20). Their sexuality largely separates them from their community, which is highlighted by their house that is only accessible by crossing a bridge. Now that he lives in the house alone, George thinks about how Jim would see him now if the dead could visit the living. George describes himself from the outside looking in as a "figure who sits solitary at a table in the narrow room," going about his day "humbly and dully, a prisoner for life" in the house (Isherwood 15). George has difficulty connecting, and the more he stays in the house, the more he is reminded that he is a "prisoner" to his grief.

Despite the isolation both characters experience, Clarissa and George have moments of social connection. For Clarissa, her connection to others is mostly evident in her private thoughts. She believes she is part of "the trees at home; part of the house" and "part of the people she had never met" (Woolf 9). However, the connection she feels is still flawed as she describes herself as only being "laid out like a mist between the people she knew best" who comprise the "branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist" (Woolf 9). Her connections are separated like branches on a tree, and "her life, herself" are spread "ever so far" (Woolf 9). Her connections are described as occurring mostly with objects, like trees and her home, rather than her family and friends. Moreover, for George, his most profound connection is one that he now mourns. No matter what, George realizes "what is left out of the picture is Jim" (Isherwood 115). He remembers moments of their unspoken bond when they were together. For example, George and Jim could be "absorbed in their books yet so completely aware of each other's presence" (Isherwood 115). Another connection for George contains greater risk—he establishes a bond with one of his students, Kenny. George "finds himself almost continuously aware of Kenny's presence in the room" but is quick to mention that it "doesn't mean that he regards Kenny as an ally" (Isherwood 60). Additionally, he is careful to balance moments of connection with caution. Even though George "suspects Kenny of understanding the innermost meaning of life—of being, in fact, some sort of genius," he quickly decides that perhaps Kenny is just "misleadingly charming

and silly" (Isherwood 60). Still, Kenny allows George to free himself from the constraints of his grief and public performance in a moment of connection as they swim in the ocean late at night. Despite the risky situation, George maintains caution and uses the opportunity for personal reflection. He uses the night swim to "[wash] away thought, speech, mood, desire, whole selves, [and] entire lifetimes" in order to become "cleaner [and] freer" (Isherwood 163). Although he is bonding with Kenny, he is also bonding with the ocean, allowing the swim to function as a cleansing experience. While Clarissa uses sea imagery to express feelings of loneliness, George uses the ocean to obtain a sense of purity. Although nothing entirely physical occurs between Kenny and George, the night swim is a crucial moment for George as it allows him to reconnect with himself and his own existence.

Furthermore, human connection is established even more toward the conclusion of *A Single Man*. The narrative voice leaves George, informing the reader of a new outside perspective: "here we have this body known as George's body, asleep on this bed" (Isherwood 183). The image of sleeping George is juxtaposed with the image of "rock pools" located "in a lava reef under the cliffs" nearby (Isherwood 183). The narrator establishes connections between the pools and the characters by stating that "each pool is separate and different, and you can, if you are fanciful, give them names such as George" (Isherwood 183). Just as Clarissa describes her web of connections as branches on a tree, George is connected to the people in his life

through the tide pools. The narrator believes that the "variety of creatures" can "coexist" because "they have to," and "the rocks of the pool hold their world together" (Isherwood 184). Despite the grief and loneliness George experiences, he is still a part of the world and is universally connected to other human beings. The literal ocean soon becomes what the narrator describes as "that other ocean" of "consciousness," containing George and everything "past, present, and future" (Isherwood 184). The tide pool imagery allows George, a seemingly lonely and ordinary man, to become an essential part of the universe by the end of the novel.

The endings of Woolf's and Isherwood's novels are ambiguous and reflect timelessness and possibility. Moreover, both novels end by finally shifting from the inner thoughts of Clarissa and George to outside perspectives. By the end of Clarissa's day, she is finally hosting her party. Peter Walsh, who previously describes his detachment in the novel, considers Clarissa from a distance in a brief, final moment of the novel. He asks himself what fills him with both "terror" and "ecstacy," and he soon realizes that "it is Clarissa . . . for there she was" (Woolf 194). The novel ends not with Clarissa's internal thoughts, but Peter's—a secondary character. At the end of this particular day, the narration fades away from Clarissa, symbolizing that life goes on no matter how she feels about it; her party is still happening, and she will still feel strangely detached and attempt to fill the void in her life through social events and largely superficial relationships. In the final scene, she goes about her party not realizing how people feel about her,

and it is possible that she will continue to live without deep connections. The novel ends with Peter Walsh's thoughts about Clarissa rather than the frequent musing she has about herself, illustrating that Clarissa is largely defined by the perspectives of the company she keeps and has little control over the world around her. Her isolation is further exposed in the beginning and ending events: *Mrs. Dalloway* begins with the immediacy of Clarissa on the street and ends with the immediacy of her walking into a room. Clarissa is continually depicted as an isolated individual standing out against the backdrop of many. Additionally, *A Single Man* creates a similar cyclical sense. The novel begins with George in the slow process of waking up and ends with George going to sleep. The narrator then asks readers "to suppose this, merely" that "there is no time at all" left for George as he lies on the bed (Isherwood 186). George's ending is ambiguous but maintains a sense of timelessness and possibility through hypothetical language such as "suppose" and "perhaps" (Isherwood 186). Significantly, the novel's conclusion comes directly after George's evening of reconnection. Like Clarissa's abrupt final moments presented through the eyes of Peter, an outsider, George's final moments are given by an outside voice that labors over the internal workings of his body as he goes to sleep. Therefore, the conclusion of each novel takes the control of narrative perspective from the protagonists and the final moments are given to a voice other than their own. *Mrs. Dalloway* and *A Single Man* are novels that are clearly invested in the deep inner workings of the mind to illustrate the anxieties

of daily life and human experience. However, Clarissa's and George's voices lose center stage, indicating that life goes on as they dissolve into the larger human experience in varying levels of connection and alienation.

Ultimately, no matter what exactly happens to George as he goes to sleep, he has obtained a sense of inner peace after this one seemingly ordinary day in his life. George drifts into sleep with a somewhat redeemed sense of human connection after he spends a large portion of the day mourning the loss of Jim. Although he will more than likely continue to grieve over Jim, the remarkable instances during this particular day—like George's late night swim—seem to suggest the beginning of a positive change within George. After a day of internal struggle, both his body and his mind are able to rest. However, at the end of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa steps into the room of the party she has spent the entire day planning—a day filled with inner thoughts which reveal the discrepancy between how she truly feels about people and how she behaves around them. At the end of the novel, she may be in a room full of people, but Clarissa is still alone. The last images of Clarissa that the novel provides are seen through the perceptions and judgments of her party guests. Woolf avoids depicting Clarissa after the party, after all the guests have gone home and she is alone again. Her obligations are over, and her role as hostess is now irrelevant. Clarissa is just as alone in a room of people as George is alone in his bedroom as he falls asleep. Although she has exceptionally similar musings

about her own existence, multiple identities, and imperfect connections, Clarissa in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is not given the same gradual ending and message of greater human connection that George achieves by the end of Isherwood's *A Single Man*. The novels, although published forty years apart with ostensibly different protagonists, both depict the complex inner turmoil as well as flickering moments of triumph within a single day of the human experience.

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