


**Twentieth Century Fiction**  
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**Lecture - 35**  
**Mrs. Dalloway - Part 6**

(Refer Slide Time: 00:12)

War, smashed a plaster cast of Ceres, ploughed a hole in the geranium beds, and utterly ruined the cook's nerves at Mr. Brewer's establishment at Muswell Hill.

Septimus was one of the first to volunteer. He went to France to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square. There in the trenches the change which Mr. Brewer desired when he advised football was produced instantly; he developed manliness; he was promoted; he drew the attention, indeed the affection of his officer, Evans by name. It was a case of two dogs playing on a hearth-rug; one worrying a paper screw, snarling, snapping, giving a pinch, now and then, at the old dog's ear; the other lying somnolent, blinking at the fire, raising a paw, turning and growling good-temperedly. They had to be together, share with each other, fight with each other, quarrel with each other. But when Evans (Rezia who had only seen him once called him "a quiet man," a sturdy red-haired man, undemonstrative in the company of women), when Evans was killed, just before the Armistice, in Italy, Septimus, far from showing any emotion or





So, hello and welcome to this NPTEL course entitled Twentieth Century Fiction, where we are studying the Virginia Woolf's novel, Mrs. Dalloway.

So, in this particular lecture we look at some of the characteristics of Septimus Smith, because remember we discussed how he was one of the first examples in fiction in English fiction of a PTSD sufferer. You know he is obviously suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. And he is a First World War veteran, he comes back from the war to London after the war and finds it almost impossible to emotionally, existentially, and biologically, and metabolically reintegrate himself with the post-war rhythms of London.

So, we see in this section that we will study in some details, and this should be on your screen, the entire experience of Septimus in the war, his history of joining the war, his experience of suffering in the war, and his history of love in the war. He fell in love with a man, although he never quite sure if there was some homoerotic, you know under currents in that relationship, it is never spelled out for us but indications are there quite

clearly. And of course, the guilt that he has as a survivor, the survivor's guilt the technical term for it and of course, how every all this informs his trauma and how it is essentially medically misunderstood, right. So, this experience of being medically misunderstood obviously, adds to his alienation, ok.

So, and this is the section on your screen, so which should you know give us some idea of Septimus's history with the war, his engagement with the war. So, Septimus was one of the first to volunteer. He went to France to save an England which consistent which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square.

So, you know the England of the genteel people, the England of high culture, that was supposed to be protected and that was the idealism with which he went to the war. It is obviously, a degree of sarcasm about it, because if you know the history of the wars, we find that most of the soldiers who fought in the war, they obviously came from working class backgrounds. Very few of them came from above middle-class backgrounds, and you know the entire casualty, the people who suffered the most they came from that kind of background as a result of which we find that the demographic disturbance after the war in England was very class based. We saw little bit of that in Eliot's the Wasteland; we have this conversation with two working class women talking about the lads, the husbands coming back from the war and want to have a good time, ok.

So, this was the England, he wanted to protect, he wanted to save the England. The England of Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole again a very genteel typical genteel woman, in a green dress walking in a square. There in the trenches, the change which Mr. Brewer desired when he advised football was produced instantly. He developed manliness. We find that and I mention in one of my own essays on this which I am happy to upload.

So, Virginia Woolf's, Mrs. Dalloway is a very good example of military masculinity and how that is medicalised after the war, how the entire constructed masculinity is essentially constructed and then how that gets decimated existentially and experientially due to the war. So, he developed manliness for playing football in the war we are told. He was promoted, he drew the attention indeed the affection of his officer Evans by name.


So, again, look at the very covert description over here. He drew the attention indeed the affection of the officer Evans by name. So, the affection could be erotic, the affection could be you know entirely platonic, the fashion could be military, you know collegial we do not quite know, but the world is obviously quite loaded.


It was a case of two dogs playing on a hearth-rug; one worrying a papers screw, snarling, snapping, giving a pinch, now and then, at the old dog's ear; the other lying somnolent, blinking at the fire, raising a paw, turning and growling good-temperedly. They had to be together, share with each other, fight with each other, quarrel with each other.

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growing good-temperedly. They had to be together, share with each other, fight with each other, quarrel with each other. But when Evans (Rezia who had only seen him once called him "a quiet man," a sturdy red-haired man, undemonstrative in the company of women), when Evans was killed, just before the Armistice, in Italy, Septimus, far from showing any emotion or recognising that here was the end of a friendship, congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably. The War had taught him. It was sublime. He had gone through the whole show, friendship, European War, death, had won promotion, was still under thirty and was bound to survive. He was right there. The last shells missed him. He watched them explode with indifference. When peace came he was in Milan, billeted in the house of an innkeeper with a courtyard, flowers in tubs, little tables in the open, daughters making hats, and to Lucrezia, the younger daughter, he became engaged one evening when the panic was on him — that he could not feel.

For now that it was all over, truce signed, and the dead buried, he had, especially in the evening, these sudden thunder-claps of fear. He could not





But when Evans (Rezia who had only seen only seen him once called him "a quiet man," a sturdy red-haired man, undemonstrated in a company of women,) when Evans was killed, just before the Armistice, in Italy, Septimus far from showing any emotion or recognizing that there was an end of a friendship, congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably. That is this is very loaded and it takes a degree of unpacking over here.

So, Evans is one of those spectral figures in Mrs. Dalloway. He is not a figure any more in the sense, he is not a character, he has been killed, but he is someone who is always there, some kind of a Hamlet's father like presence, very ghostly, very spectral, but also informing the emotional landscape in this particular novel. Just like Hamlet's father

informs the emotional landscape in that play. So, Evans, Rezia had just seen him once and had described him as a quiet man, undemonstrative in the company of women.

So, you can look at the way, look at the markers of masculinity at play over here, someone in order to be a manly man, military manly man, he must not demonstrate your emotions, demonstrate too much in the company of woman. He must have the stiff upper lip, he must have the stiffness which is part of the manliness package, right.

So, obviously all these markers are very important so. And then we are also told when Evans was killed, Septimus far from crying, did not even show an emotion, indeed he congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably. So, this feeling very little and very reasonably is obviously part of the training they have received out of this masculinity building exercise which the war had operated.

So, the entire idea of masculinity, an entire idea of manliness is obviously, constructed through a certain emotional training processes and part of the process taught taught this man to feel little. So, feeling was seen to be feminine. So, a feeling man would be an effeminate man, in this kind of a vocabulary this kind of a moral mapping, and obviously, an effeminate man will not be very reasonable.

So, again look at the way in which the lack of feeling and reason are equated with each other, both combined together to create this marker of masculinity, right. So, something which is supposed to be very masculine in quality.

Now, obviously what this novel shows quite clearly, what this passage shows specifically is how this constructed masculinity is essentially engineered through certain training rituals, physical training, you know moral training, emotional training, in order to create this package of masculinity which does not feel much, which does not express emotions in front of women and which holds reason at a very high premium, ok.

So, the war had taught him. It was sublime. He had gone through the whole show, friendship, European war, death had won promotion, was still under thirty and was bound to survive. He was right there. The last shells missed him. He watched them explode with indifference. When peace came he was in Milan, billeted in the house of an innkeeper with a courtyard, flowers in tubs, little tables in the open, daughters making

hats, and to Lucrezia, the younger daughter, he became engaged one evening when the panic was on him, that he could not feel.

Now, this becomes obviously, there is a reason why I chose this passage, because this shows us not as a history of Septimus's military experience, it also shows us quite clearly the history of Septimus's emotional experience. So, and this obviously, accounts for his lack of emotions now, because for a long time, when he joined the army, when he was drafted in the army, when he volunteered in the war, he was taught through different drills, through different training programs that not feeling, or not emoting, or not feeling an emotion is something of a manly moral trait as part of the you know moral manliness or the manly morality whatever way you want to put it. And that is something that he should exercise and exhibit you know the feeling-less-ness.

And you find that when the war goes away, that becomes the condition, that becomes a neurotic condition, that becomes so internalized in him, that even if he wants to he cannot feel anymore. Those of you who have read Katherine Mansfield's, *The Fly*, the short story where Mansfield would know that this is something which is obviously been satirized and caricatured, and decried, and deconstructed by Virginia Woolf and also by Mansfield in that story, *The Fly*, where we have this character of a boss, someone who is again trained himself not to feel, through a patriarchal process. And Septimus too had been had gone through the institution of military masculinity which had taught him not to feel, which had shown him the moral values of not feeling, the moral values, the superior moral values of being undemonstrative of not exhibiting any grief, exhibiting any emotion.

And we see how when he was in Milan, when the Armistice was signed, when the war came to end formally, he was in Milan and he was with this inn keeper who had his daughters making hats and he got engaged to Lucrezia in a moment of panic. And this panic is important because you know the panic was he was beginning to realize that even if he wants to, even if he desires to he cannot feel anymore because the entire training of not feeling has so internalized in him, it is so ingrained inside him that he cannot feel anymore even if he wants to, right. So, he got engaged to Lucrezia in a moment of panic.

Now, of course what it also means is that we have this entire suffering of Lucrezia accentuated because she got engaged to a man who just needed a woman to come out of

his shell to, come out of his feeling-less-ness. So, she was essentially an experiment, she was essentially a Guinea pig so to say, in his emotional experiment that he was beginning to try, because he was obviously, suffering from a lack of feeling and he wanted to come out of that suffering, he wanted to feel again, so he got very hurriedly, and panically in a panic stricken way he got engaged to Lucrezia and that was what the entire history of marriage and military experience is all about, ok.

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For now that it was all over, truce signed, and the dead buried, he had, especially in the evening, these sudden thunder-claps of fear. He could not feel. As he opened the door of the room where the Italian girls sat making hats, he could see them; could hear them; they were rubbing wires among coloured beads in saucers; they were turning buckram shapes this way and that; the table was all strewn with feathers, spangles, silks, ribbons; scissors were rapping on the table; but something failed him; he could not feel. Still, scissors rapping, girls laughing, hats being made protected him; he was assured of safety; he had a refuge. But he could not sit there all night. There were moments of waking in the early morning. The bed was falling; he was falling. Oh for the scissors and the lamplight and the buckram shapes! He asked Lucrezia to marry him, the younger of the two, the gay, the frivolous, with those little artist's fingers that she would hold up and say "It is all in them." Silk, feathers, what not were alive to them.

"It is the hat that matters most," she would say, when they walked out together. Every hat that passed, she would examine; and the cloak and the dress and the way the woman held herself. *Maledroccino maledroccino che*



And now we have a series of episodes, where we are told that Septimus now panics, Septimus now begins to get more and more you know depressed and he gets more and more you know disturbed by the entire experience of not being able to feel even if he wants to feel, ok. That is something which we find even in this short story of Mansfield, where the character of the boss is not mentioned obviously, he is everyman, the every patriarch who despite wanting to feel, cannot feel anymore. Because for a long time he had denied himself feeling, he had trained himself not to feel, trained himself not to grieve because certain reasons. So, if you read this story you will find what I am talking about, it should be available online Katherine Mansfield's, The Fly, ok.

And now we come to the point where Septimus finds himself completely alienated from not just the urban landscape, but also from the emotional landscape around all of them because for a long time in the military trenches, in the war trenches he had trained himself not to feel, and now that he is back in the civilian space he cannot feel anymore

because the ability to feel has gone completely, disappeared completely, where there is rigorous training that he has had, on himself.

For now that it was all over, truce signed, and the dead buried, he had especially in the evening, these sudden thunder-claps of fear. So, he is panicking, he has this sudden and you know grasp of fear, you know he sees by fear in so many occasions.

He could not feel. As he opened the door to the room of the room where the Italian girl sat making hats, he could see them; could hear them; they were rubbing wires among coloured beads in saucers; they were turning buckram shapes in way you know this way and that; the table was all strewn with feathers, spangles, silks, ribbons; scissors, were rapping on the table; but something failed him; he could not feel.

So, again this is a recursive thing, a recursive phenomenon, he could not feel, he could not feel, he could not feel, that is told to us on several occasions to accentuate the emotional hollowness that he is experiencing at the moment that he cannot feel anymore despite trying, ok.

Still, scissors rapping, girls laughing, hats being protected, hats being made protected him. He was assured of safety; he had a refuge. But, still he could not sit there all night. There were moments of waking in the early morning. The bed was falling; he was falling. Oh for the scissors and the lamplight and the buckram shapes. He asked Lucrezia to marry him, and a younger, the younger of the two, the gay, the frivolous, with those little artist's fingers that she would hold up and say "It is all in them." Silk, feathers, what were not alive to them.

So, obviously the tragedy of Lucrezia gets accentuated over here. I mean she gets, she ends up being married to a man who out of panic proposes her for marriage because he feels he is running out of feelings. So, marriage to Lucrezia is an experiment for Septimus as I mentioned, she becomes a sufferer, she becomes a victim of this male experiment post-war, ok. And that is something which we find quite recursively and she finds obviously, herself as an outsider and this should be on your screen.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:48)

But beauty was behind a pane of glass. Even taste (Rezia liked ices, chocolates, sweet things) had no relish to him. He put down his cup on the little marble table. He looked at people outside; happy they seemed, collecting in the middle of the street, shouting, laughing, squabbling over nothing. But he could not taste, he could not feel. In the tea-shop among the tables and the chattering waiters the appalling fear came over him — he could not feel. He could reason; he could read, Dante for example, quite easily (“Septimus, do put down your book,” said Rezia, gently shutting the *Inferno*), he could add up his bill; his brain was perfect; it must be the fault of the world then — that he could not feel.

“The English are so silent,” Rezia said. She liked it, she said. She respected these Englishmen, and wanted to see London, and the English horses, and the tailor-made suits, and could remember hearing how wonderful the shops were, from an Aunt who had married and lived in Soho.

It might be possible, Septimus thought, looking at England from the train window, as they left Newhaven; it might be possible that the world



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At the office they advanced him to a post of considerable responsibility. They were proud of him; he had won crosses. “You have done your duty; it is up to us —” began Mr. Brewer; and could not finish, so pleasurable was his emotion. They took admirable lodgings off the



It might be possible, Septimus thought, looking at England from the train window, as they left Newhaven; it might be possible that the world itself is without meaning. Again,



so we have those experiences of absurdity which is beginning to grip Septimus. And we have this completely contrasting perspectives on London.

Rezia comes to London with a lot of aspirations. She has heard about London, she has consumed stories about London for a long time, from an Aunt who had been married to someone over there. And you know she wanted to see these different markers of Englishness, the tailor-made suits, the Englishmen, the English horses, different markers, metonymic markers of Englishness.

She had obviously this very romantic idea of London, and now Septimus is obviously, is the obverse of romanticism. He finds himself in a situation where he cannot feel anymore, and he begins to feel that the world itself around him might be without any meaning. So, in other words he has began to feel the absurdity of existence over here.

So, in that sense Septimus may be linked, he might be compared to some one of those classical figures, in classical literature who come back from the hell, you know who has seen hell, come back from the hell and cannot integrate back into the living society anymore, ok.

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getting of children, the sordidity of the mouth and the belly! This was now revealed to Septimus; the message hidden in the beauty of words. The secret signal which one generation passes, under disguise, to the next is loathing, hatred, despair. Dante the same. Aeschylus (translated) the same. There Rezia sat at the table trimming hats. She trimmed hats for Mrs. Filmer's friends; she trimmed hats by the hour. She looked pale, mysterious, like a lily, drowned, under water, he thought.

"The English are so serious," she would say, putting her arms round Septimus, her cheek against his.

Love between man and woman was repulsive to Shakespeare. The business of copulation was filth to him before the end. But, Rezia said, she must have children. They had been married five years.

They went to the Tower together; to the Victoria and Albert Museum; stood in the crowd to see the King open Parliament. And there were the shops — hat shops, dress shops, shops with leather bags in the window, where she would stand staring. But she must have a boy.




So, and this whole idea of the English being serious, you know something like Rezia, Lucrezia keeps saying all the time and that at first it was to him to her an act of feeling of you know admiration, that she wanted to see the Englishmen is serious and that was part

of the attractive package for her. But together you know with time she begins to realize this lack of feeling is something which is actually being masquerading as seriousness.

And this obviously, becomes more difficult for her, it alienates her, it makes her completely insulated from everything around her. So, she becomes his cultural, linguistic and also the entire political outsider, being an Italian woman after the first world war stationed in London, ok.

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She must have a son like Septimus, she said. But nobody could be like Septimus; so gentle; so serious; so clever. Could she not read Shakespeare too? Was Shakespeare a difficult author? she asked.

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, eddying them now this way, now that.

He watched her snip, shape, as one watches a bird hop, flit in the grass, without daring to move a finger. For the truth is (let her ignore it) that human beings have neither kindness, nor faith, nor charity beyond what serves to increase the pleasure of the moment. They hunt in packs.



And now the whole idea of not bringing children to this world becomes important and in the connection to Greek tragedy becomes more and more you know organic over here.

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, eddying them now this way, now that.


So, this entire idea, this entire experience of exhaustion in Septimus is obviously being also of sexual exhaustion, moral exhaustion, existential exhaustion. Now, what that is made him at the moment is he is not in a position to even think of bringing the children to the world which obviously is another an act of unfairness on Rezia or Lucrezia.

That is because he decides to abstain from sex, he decides to abstain from reproduction and that obviously is part of the trauma package that he is suffering, that he is experiencing at the moment.

But obviously, that becomes very unfair to Lucrezia whose opinion is never asked. So, she becomes the agency-less character because a lot of time we talk about Mrs. Dalloway as being this entire experience of Septimus Smith as this alienated, misunderstood survivor of the war.

But also one must be equally paid attention to is the fact that he is married to someone whose outsideness is compounded by her political status she is an Italian in London after the First World War. So, she is technically from the enemy state and now she is married to this Englishman and of course she is completely cut off from everything because Septimus would not you know first of all he is not emotionally stable and secondly, he does not help her integrate into society because he himself is so disintegrated after the First World War, ok.

(Refer Slide Time: 16:47)




PIRAMES OF NIGHT THROSE IN NIGHT BONES IN HIS DISCOVERY IN THE JEWEL, THIS  
roared past him; brutality blared out on placards; men were trapped in  
mines; women burnt alive; and once a maimed file of lunatics being  
exercised or displayed for the diversion of the populace (who laughed  
aloud), ambled and nodded and grinned past him, in the Tottenham Court  
Road, each half apologetically, yet triumphantly, inflicting his hopeless  
woe. And would HE go mad?

At tea Rezia told him that Mrs. Filmer's daughter was expecting a  
baby. SHE could not grow old and have no children! She was very lonely,  
she was very unhappy! She cried for the first time since they were married.  
Far away he heard her sobbing; he heard it accurately, he noticed it  
distinctly; he compared it to a piston thumping. But he felt nothing.

His wife was crying, and he felt nothing; only each time she sobbed in  
this profound, this silent, this hopeless way, he descended another step  
into the pit.

At last, with a melodramatic gesture which he assumed mechanically  
and with complete consciousness of its insincerity, he dropped his head on



So, again the whole experience of a being denied motherhood is something that Lucrezia suffers over here. At tea Rezia told him that Mrs. Filmer's daughter was expecting a baby. SHE could not grow old and have no children. She was very lonely, she was very unhappy. She cried for the first time they were married, since they were married. Far away he heard her sobbing; he heard it accurately, he noticed it distinctly; he compared it to a piston thumping. But he felt nothing.

So, we find that this becomes almost a medical condition of Septimus the ability not to feel anymore, the ability not to be able to empathize anymore. So, he becomes

completely empathy-less individual an empathy-less subject, he cannot connect to anyone emotionally. And also notice the way in which the sound of his wife sobbing in pain, sobbing in alienation, sobbing in complete isolation, it reaches him you know through a wave pattern which makes it sound like a piston thumping.

So, again the very human vital activity of crying, the very emotional activity of crying is being compared with a machinic metaphor. Now, if you remember something similar happened in Eliot's *Wasteland*, when we have this the scene of very loveless sex between the clerk and the typist, and when the clerk leaves, the typist puts an you know an automatic hand on a gramophone and starts to absorb the music in a very machine-like way.


So, a gramophone becomes almost humanized over here, and a man the human being becomes mechanized over here in that kind of a strange reversal of relationships and something similar happens here as well.

Every sound that comes to Septimus is made it through a machine, right. So, you know, he compares, the crying, the sobbing of Rezia with the thumping of a piston. So, the piston obviously is a machine and that sound of the piston thumping is being compared to the sound of his wife crying. And the final line is obviously, very you know it is indicative of his condition, he felt nothing.

So, in other words there is nothingness in him. So, there is no, there is no feeling at all, it's absolute nothingness in his inside him, inside his system and that makes him existentially completely exhausted. So, part of his exhaustion is also an emotional exhaustion, an existential exhaustion, right and that becomes the part of the nothingness that he embodies with his suffering self.

His wife was crying, and he felt nothing; only each time he sobbed she sobbed in this profound, this silent, this hopeless way, he descended another step into the pit, right. So, obviously, he is in a depression and you know the descent in depression becomes more dramatic as accentuated when he sees his wife suffer, at the same time he realizes he is not able to feel anything. And his knowledge of nothingness is important over here. He is aware of his nothingness, he is aware of the fact that he cannot feel anymore, and that knowledge consumes him even more and he descends you know increasingly into a pit, the pit being a metaphor obviously, the spatial metaphor of depression over here, ok.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:42)




into the pit.

At last, with a melodramatic gesture which he assumed mechanically and with complete consciousness of its insincerity, he dropped his head on his hands. Now he had surrendered; now other people must help him. People must be sent for. He gave in.

Nothing could rouse him. Rezia put him to bed. She sent for a doctor – Mrs. Filmer's Dr. Holmes. Dr. Holmes examined him. There was nothing whatever the matter, said Dr. Holmes. Oh, what a relief! What a kind man, what a good man! thought Rezia. When he felt like that he went to the Music Hall, said Dr. Holmes. He took a day off with his wife and played golf. Why not try two tabloids of bromide dissolved in a glass of water at bedtime? These old Bloomsbury houses, said Dr. Holmes, tapping the wall, are often full of very fine panelling, which the landlords have the folly to paper over. Only the other day, visiting a patient, Sir Somebody Something in Bedford Square –

So there was no excuse; nothing whatever the matter, except the sin



So, now we cut into this interesting characterization over here which is complete contrast to the characterization embodied by Septimus and this is by Dr. Holmes, the surgeon who is treating him, who is examining him, who obviously represents this very masculinist medicine in post-war England.

So, Dr. Holmes examined him. There was nothing whatsoever the matter said, Dr. Holmes. So, he had decided it is nothing the matter with Septimus. There is no problem with Septimus. Oh, what a relief. What a kind man, what a good man, thought Rezia. When he felt like that he went to the Music Hall, said Dr. Holmes.

He took a day off with his wife and played golf. Why not try two tabloids of bromide dissolved in a glass of water at bedtime? Those old Bloomsbury houses, said Dr. Holmes, tapping the wall, are often full of very fine panelling, which the landlords have the folly to paper over. Only the other day, visiting a patient, Sir Somebody Something in Bedford Square.

So, we have Dr. Holmes obviously, a very pompous man, full of himself, full of this male ego. And he says you know this is nothing, Septimus has no problem at all, whatsoever, there is no physical condition. That he is actually suffering from. It is entirely made up, he is probably malingering, but let him have a day off. When I have a day like this I go on playing golf, I spend time with my wife. I take a day off. So, again you know this is part of the production narrative in which he is in.

So, when I begin to feel unproductive I take a day off, do something, which is part of this consumerist narrative and then come back and be productive again. Now, Septimus obviously, has become permanently unproductive. So, he becomes a problem in this production consumption narrative that you know London is obviously exhibiting as a metropolis, right.

So, you know and he has been advised by Dr. Holmes, to take a day off, play golf, play cricket, do different things etcetera, in other words to man up. And obviously, this becomes ironic because we are told that we just saw before that Septimus for a long time, when he went to the war he had tried to man up through different rituals, emotional rituals, physical rituals, military rituals, etcetera, ok.

So, there was no excuse, nothing whatever the matter, except the sin for which human nature had condemned him to death; that he could not feel. So, again the whole idea of feeling-less-ness keeps coming back, as a recursive marker of Septimus's condition.

He had not cared when Evans was killed; that was worst; but all the other crimes raised their heads and shook their fingers and jeered and sneered over the rail of the bed in the early hours of the morning at the prostrate body which lay realising its degradation. How he had married his wife without loving her; had lied to her; seduced her; outraged Miss Isabel Pole, and was so pocked and marked with vice that women shuddered when they saw him in the street. The verdict of human nature on such a wretch was death, right.

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So there was no excuse; nothing whatever the matter, except the sin for which human nature had condemned him to death; that he did not feel. He had not cared when Evans was killed; that was worst; but all the other crimes raised their heads and shook their fingers and jeered and sneered over the rail of the bed in the early hours of the morning at the prostrate body which lay realising its degradation; how he had married his wife without loving her; had lied to her; seduced her; outraged Miss Isabel Pole, and was so pocked and marked with vice that women shuddered when they saw him in the street. The verdict of human nature on such a wretch was death.

Dr. Holmes came again. Large, fresh coloured, handsome, flicking his boots, looking in the glass, he brushed it all aside — headaches, sleeplessness, fears, dreams — nerve symptoms and nothing more, he said. If Dr. Holmes found himself even half a pound below eleven stone six, he asked his wife for another plate of porridge at breakfast. (Rezia would learn to cook porridge.) But, he continued, health is largely a matter in our own control. Throw yourself into outside interests; take up some hobby.



So, this complete isolation and alienation of Septimus is being you know described over here and obviously, his guilt of having seduced his wife into a loveless marriage is something which we are told again. So, again the recursive marker is feeling-less-ness; so, the war.

So, and the real problem as you can see, by now is not really the trauma of the war, but before what had happened before the entire masculinist training of manning up, which had taught him the virtue of not feeling, the virtue of not demonstrating feeling.

Now, what was then a virtue has now become a condition, has now become a medical condition because that is so internalized in him that he cannot, he did not, he could not historically express grief when his friend died, he cannot exhibit any emotion when you know he was supposed to exhibit emotions and that emotionless-ness has now become now converted into a permanent state of feeling-less-ness which is now beginning to consume him as a person.

Dr. Holmes came again. Large, fresh coloured, handsome, flicking his boots, looking in the glass, he brushed it all aside – headaches, sleeplessness, fears, dreams - nerve symptoms and nothing more, he said. So, again this is very historically true. So, contemporary you know Septimus's contemporary medicine or medical politics, they completely failed to engage, where they failed to understand the entire idea of war trauma, they gave them they gave the war trauma different names, shell shock being one of them which obviously, was very inadequate because sometimes even their doctors conceded that a real shell, a real explosion of shell had nothing to do with the trauma.

So, it was a combination a very interesting combination, a very pathological combination of forced manliness and the trauma of the war put together because the forced manliness which obviously trained them to be military men had told them not to feel, had showed them, had trained them not to feel and this training into feeling-less-ness is now what has eaten them up exactly, right.

So, Dr. Holmes who obviously, is someone who colludes with that kind of military, masculinity, he is part of the medical masculinity and again this is quite tyrannical, quite patriarchal, quite bombastic, quite pompous and quite complacent in his own knowledge. He seems to know everything, he is all mansplaining over here which is happening. So,



he dismissed Septimus's condition at once and says that all these examples, all these symptoms, headaches, sleeplessness, fears, dreams, are just mere nerve symptoms.

Now, as I mentioned when I began reading Mrs. Dalloway, this was the time, this is historically very true this is exactly the complete failure of the British medicine to engage with the PTSD victims, at that point of time. So, this was the time interestingly when Freud and Freudian psychoanalysis became very important, and the whole idea of converting dreams into narratives, dreams into stories which were told to the doctor, which were listened to by the doctor became very important.

So, you know that opened up a different era, a different narrative of healing at that point of time. Obviously, people like Holmes and Bradshaw, the doctors who obviously pre-Freudian would be anti-Freudian, they failed to engage with the medical problem of PTSD at that time.

So, you know Holmes and Bradshaw are seen as two you know masculinist monsters of medical agents of that time, who failed to understand the real emotional depth of this crisis, ok. So, you know these are brushed aside, Septimus's conditions are brushed aside as mere nerve symptoms these are very minor nervous problems.

If Dr. Holmes found himself even half a pound below eleven stone six, he asked his wife for another plate of porridge at breakfast. Rezia would learn to cook porridge. But, so you know look at the way in which the physicality of Dr. Holmes is maintained. So, eleven pounds you know eleven pounds eleven stones six sorry eleven stone six which is roughly 73 kilograms of weight that was the weight that Dr. Holmes maintained.

So, again look at the quantifiability of health over here, every marker of health is quantifiable, you need to maintain a certain weight and if you fall below the weight even by a half pound he increased the diet. So, he would advise, he would ask, he would demand from his wife another plate of porridge for breakfast, just to keep up the threshold weight as it were and here in that Rezia realizes that she would learn to cook porridge.





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without loving her, had led to her, seduced her, outraged Miss Isobel Pole, and was so pocked and marked with vice that women shuddered when they saw him in the street. The verdict of human nature on such a wretch was death.

Dr. Holmes came again. Large, fresh coloured, handsome, flicking his boots, looking in the glass, he brushed it all aside — headaches, sleeplessness, fears, dreams — nerve symptoms and nothing more, he said. If Dr. Holmes found himself even half a pound below eleven stone six, he asked his wife for another plate of porridge at breakfast. (Rezia would learn to cook porridge.) But, he continued, health is largely a matter in our own control. Throw yourself into outside interests; take up some hobby. He opened Shakespeare — Antony and Cleopatra; pushed Shakespeare aside. Some hobby, said Dr. Holmes, for did he not owe his own excellent health (and he worked as hard as any man in London) to the fact that he could always switch off from his patients on to old furniture? And what a very pretty comb, if he might say so, Mrs. Warren Smith was wearing!

When the damned fool came again, Septimus refused to see him. Did




But, he continued, health is largely a matter in our own control. Throw yourself into outside interests; take up some hobby. He opened Shakespeare - Antony and Cleopatra; pushed Shakespeare aside. Some hobby, said Dr. Holmes, for did he not, did he not owe his own excellent health and worked as hard as any man in London, to the fact that he could always switch off from his patients on to an old furniture? And what a pretty very comb, if he might say so, Mrs. Warren Smith was wearing.

So, he finds that this is a complete package in terms of the flirtatious nature of Dr. and also this very pompous humbug quality that he exhibits over here. He seems to know everything, and he gives he keeps giving his own example as this model masculine embodiment. He says that you know, if you fall below the desired weight even by half a pound I increase my diet, just to I maintain that particular threshold, and I should read Shakespeare, he opened Shakespeare, he advises people to take up different hobbies, excellent hobbies and excellent health is a precondition for any experience of happiness.

So, the whole idea of being this happy male is aligned to the idea of being this productive male. So, productivity and happiness they align with each other over here. And it is very capitalist, a post-war capitalist framework that is embodied by Dr. Holmes over here.

And while he is talking about you know his old hobby of collecting old furniture, he remarks on the prettiness of Mrs. Warren Smith, or Lucrezia's comb which is obviously, part of the flirtatious narrative that he exhibits over here, ok.

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very pretty comb, if he might say so, Mrs. Warren Smith was wearing:

When the damned fool came again, Septimus refused to see him. Did he indeed? said Dr. Holmes, smiling agreeably. Really he had to give that charming little lady, Mrs. Smith, a friendly push before he could get past her into her husband's bedroom.

"So you're in a funk," he said agreeably, sitting down by his patient's side. He had actually talked of killing himself to his wife, quite a girl, a foreigner, wasn't she? Didn't that give her a very odd idea of English husbands? Didn't one owe perhaps a duty to one's wife? Wouldn't it be better to do something instead of lying in bed? For he had had forty years' experience behind him; and Septimus could take Dr. Holmes's word for it — there was nothing whatever the matter with him. And next time Dr. Holmes came he hoped to find Smith out of bed and not making that charming little lady his wife anxious about him.

Human nature, in short, was on him — the repulsive brute, with the blood-red nostrils. Holmes was on him. Dr. Holmes came quite regularly every day. Once you stumble, Septimus wrote on the back of a postcard,



When the damned fool came again, Septimus refused to see him. Did he indeed? said Dr. Holmes, smiling agreeably. Really he had to give that charming little lady, Mrs Smith, a friendly push before he could get past into her husband's bedroom, right. So, the Septimus's refusal to engage with his doctors is obviously, very symbolic, that is just shutting down against this tyrannical masculine's medicine, but obviously, that tyrannical masculinist medicine makes its way in, by pushing aside Mrs. Smith.

So obviously, what this shows is the agency-less-ness, this very you know lopsided or imbalanced location of agency in this doctor patient relationship, where the doctor seems to have the entire agency, he seems have entire knowledge and the patient seems to be just a passive victim and passive subject controlled and coerced by the doctor.

"So, you are in a funk," he said agreeably, sitting down by his patient's side. So, funk being the you know a colloquial term for depression. He had actually talked of killing himself to his wife, quite a girl, a foreigner, was not she? So, one of the things that Mrs. Dalloway does very well is very quick shift in focal points.

So, in most of these situations we see the entire episode through Lucrezia's eyes, but suddenly we also get a little micro focus from the doctor's eyes where we had described that you know Septimus's wife is a pretty little girl and also a foreigner. So, this quick shift of focal points becomes very interesting in the narrative technique of Mrs. Dalloway.

Did not that give her a very odd idea of English husbands? So, again he is almost sympathetic towards her in the sense that Septimus's condition must have given her, he thinks you know a very bad impression about English husbands. Did not one owe perhaps a duty to one's wife? Would not it be better to do something instead of lying in the bed? For he had had forty year's experience behind him; and Septimus could take Dr. Holmes's word for it - there was nothing whatever the matter with him.

So, again look at the failed diagnosis of the situation. Dr. Holmes says repeatedly out of complete conviction that he has 40 years of experience behind him and he is completely convinced that Septimus has no problem whatsoever. So, again this very mansplaining situation becomes important, he is this pompous knowledgeable medical man, who knows everything about everything and he is giving Septimus his own description of his own condition.

And next time Dr. Holmes came he hoped to find Smith out of bed and not making that charming little lady his wife anxious about him. So, again if we look at the rhetoric the vocabulary over here, the metaphors over here, are very condescendingly male, right. So, the woman is always charming, the woman is always pretty, the woman is always fidgety and you know he feels almost a degree of pity for the woman and he feels pity for the woman because he thinks the Septimus is giving her a very bad impression of English husbands.

So, he tells Septimus, the next time I come back to see you better take care of your wife. And so the entire patronizing perspective, the gaze is extremely patronizing, offensive and reifying also because everything is reified, everything was commodified over here. So the wife is the wife of the patient is commodified, the patient is commodified, the patient's condition is commodified, everything is very reductively done.

So, you know the entire medical vocabulary over here is a reflection of the medical science or the medical treatment which is very reductionist in quality. If nothing was

wrong physically in the patient's body, nothing can be possibly wrong at all. So, any idea, any engagement with the emotional crisis was completely done away with and that was seen as effeminate, right that was not part of the manly behaviour, the ideal manly behaviour, that Septimus is supposed to exhibit as an ideal war veteran.

So, we find how this entire collusion, between medical science and masculinity takes place in Mrs. Dalloway, and again my article on this exactly touches upon this line. I am happy to upload it, in the portal for you to read. So, you find that this collusion is important because as part of the masculinity package which had also created the war because the war was essentially greed of men, for men for more territories, for the lust of power that was you know a part of this very masculinist political thing, right.

And now we find even in medicine is supposed to heal and you know cure people that becomes informed by the same masculinist rhetoric, the very same masculinist metaphors of control, coercion and treatment, where people are forced to think that they are well, people are forced to be confined to bed, people are forced to do things against the will. So, the question of agency becomes very important over here. And we see how medicine or medical treatment instead of healing, makes things worse for the PTSD sufferer, for the trauma suffer from the war, which is part of the existential complexity in this particular novel.

So, we stop at this point today. I mean, hopefully conclude this in the next couple lectures to come.

Thank you for your attention.