

“First it is warm then it gets cold:” Temperature as Metaphor in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Mrs. Dalloway*

Franki Maria Rudnesky

English

Arguably the first coherent paragraph of James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* begins, “When you wet the bed first it is warm then it gets cold” (3). The preceding paragraphs denote an early-childhoodlike consciousness in which Stephen Dedalus comes to know the world through snippets of songs and a glimpse of his father. But, this notion of “warm” and “cold” after his bed-wetting seems like an awakening, even an epiphany, when the young Stephen begins to sense, and make sense of, the world around him. The notion of temperature, of hot and cold in particular, accompanies pivotal and mundane moments throughout the text, as though Stephen himself is keeping tabs of the world around him and how it makes him feel on his journey to artistic epiphany. Another character who makes note of the sensory phenomena around her is Clarissa Dalloway, in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, who reaches her own epiphany through a day of preparing for a party and reckoning with people and memories from her past. In this essay, I will argue through close readings of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Mrs. Dalloway* that the attention to the sensation of temperature, particularly hot and cold, reflects the emotional connectedness to others and to the world around them experienced by Stephen Dedalus and Clarissa Dalloway on their artistic journeys to epiphany. Although in Joyce’s novel, Stephen is embarrassed by the warmth of connectedness and seeks a life of artistic isolation, in Woolf’s novel Clarissa has grown up cold and disconnected, but finds warmth of connection through memories and epiphany. Since we see Stephen at the start of his life, and

follow his journey growing up (whereas we meet Clarissa in the middle of her life and follow her for one day), I will use *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* to illuminate an in-depth analysis of these themes in *Mrs. Dalloway*. As for the metaphors, based on my understanding, warmer terms reflect characters feeling connected, and cooler terms reflect an isolation or lack of connection. This assumption is rooted in research; in their study “Cold and Lonely: Does Social Exclusion Literally Feel Cold?,” Chen-Bo Zhong and Geoffrey J. Leonardelli write, “Loneliness and coldness seem to go side by side in everyday language” (838). To pad this, through conducting experiments, Zhong and Leonardelli found that social exclusion literally *felt* cold to subjects in their study.

Joyce and Woolf were not alone in using temperature as metaphor in their writing; as Alex Moffett demonstrates in “Hot Sparks and Cold Devils: Katherine Mansfield and Modernist Thermodynamics,” metaphors of temperature connect to modernist techniques. While Moffett’s research focuses on fellow modernist writer Katherine Mansfield, he nonetheless establishes the importance of sensory metaphors in the modernist era. Moffett writes, “I do wish to argue that in many of [Mansfield’s] stories she invests in her metaphors of temperature a significance beyond the registration of an emotional state, and that in doing so, she parallels a larger cultural recalibration of such thermal tropes that is taking place at the time she is writing” (60). Moffett argues that temperature metaphors in the modernist period were reflective of more than simply the emotional state of the characters, and in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Mrs. Dalloway* these metaphors don’t just reflect the current emotional state of a character, but rather disclose where they are in their emotional journeys, and can denote important moments such as epiphanies and awakenings. In discussing a significance beyond emotional state, Moffett was likely referring to the ways the temperature metaphor could speak to the emotionally-disjointed,

post-war industrial reality in which Joyce and Woolf were writing. While this paper aims to stay within the text, it is important to note, in contextualizing these novels, the societal changes that could have influenced the use of sensory metaphor. For example, Jon Day, in “What Virginia Didn’t Know: Knowledge, Impressionism and the Eye,” writes that thanks to technological advancements in the 20th century, “an understanding of personhood, and of what constituted literary character, began to be sought in new places” (32). This being said, I am attempting to understand Stephen and Clarissa through feeling them, taking their metaphorical temperatures as they embark on their respective emotional journeys, drawing out sensory details that capture their essence, rather than just reading the words on the page.

Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* follows protagonist Stephen on his artistic coming-of-age from Irish schoolboy to isolated artist, casting off family, friends, and religion to pursue a life dedicated to appreciating beauty through writing. As noted, the first mention of temperature felt by Stephen is the warmth then coldness of his childhood bed-wetting. “[F]irst it is warm then it gets cold” to me foreshadows Stephen’s artistic isolation (Joyce, 3). At first, Stephen did embrace the warmth of familial and social connectedness, but later became cold when he decided that to be an artist he had to disconnect from the life he came to know. Examples of the connectedness Stephen feels before his artistic epiphanies can be seen through the warmer-leaning descriptions of times when he’s felt safe with family or friends. For example, while at Clongowes Wood College boarding school, Stephen feels homesickness at first, associating warmth with memories of home and coldness with the roughhousing of his classmates. One day as he studies, he feels cold and uncomfortable remembering an incident with a classmate: “He shivered as if he had cold slimy water next his skin. That was mean of Wells to shoulder him into the square ditch ... How cold and slimy the water had been” (Joyce,

7)! With this in mind, he wishes he were studying “on the hearthrug before the fire,” and thinks what his mother may be doing at that moment: “Mother was sitting at the fire with Dante waiting for Brigid to bring in the tea. She has her feet on the fender and her jewelly slippers were so hot and they had such a lovely warm smell” (Joyce, 7)! Stephen associated the violence and unwelcoming spirit of his classmates with being cold and uncomfortable. On the other hand, his family members are associated with fire, tea, warm-smelling slippers, all things that would bring him comfort in his new circumstances.

The sensations of temperature that seem to accompany Stephen in times of epiphany reflect his battles with emotions and connections. One such moment takes place early on in Stephen’s development, while he is still at Clongowes. Stephen’s classmates ask whether he kisses his mother goodnight, and he attempts to respond both in the affirmative and the negative, drawing jeers at both responses. “They all laughed again. Stephen tried to laugh with them. He felt his whole body hot and confused in a moment. What was the right answer to the question?” (Joyce, 11). In this moment, Stephen begins to question his relationship with others, in this case his mother, and also whether those who seemingly have more authority are actually fraudulent. It may seem strange that given my logic of heat symbolizing connectedness, Stephen feels hot in this moment when he is at odds with his peers. But, here Stephen is reaching a sort of childhood epiphany in which he ponders his connection to his peers, his mother, physical touch in the form of kissing, and the line of thought eventually leads him to wonder at his place in the universe. So, the heat he feels is due to his beginning to reach understanding, and the connectedness that comes through that. For Stephen, connectedness seems to be somewhat associated with embarrassment, as seen in the thought of his classmates knowing he kisses his mother, or later when he is punished, struck by a pandybat by a prefect in front of his class. “A hot burning

stinging tingling blow like the loud crack of a broken stick made his trembling hand crumple together like a leaf in the fire: and at the sound and the pain scalding tears were driven into his eyes” (Joyce, 51). Here, Stephen briefly connects, physically, with the prefect when he is struck, and it could be argued Stephen understands the prefect’s desire for violence through this act. This connection, along with the violence being perceived by his classmates and Father Arnall, causes Stephen to heat up with embarrassment. While Stephen does have some positive childhood associations with warmth and connection, he comes to associate these things with embarrassment through his harsh schooling. Perhaps this is one of the reasons he believes he must shirk off connection to become an artist.

Associations with childhood sensory experiences continue to accompany Stephen as he struggles through schooling and self-discovery. Sangam MacDuff’s and Sebastian D. G. Knowles note this in “‘A Day of Dappled Seaborne Clouds:’ A Portrait of the Artist’s Epiphany.” Stephen notices the outward sensory details of hot and cold, such as the sensations of wetting the bed, and this article claims that Stephen, especially in moments of epiphany, relies on repetition and variation of remembered physical markers. An example of this reliance occurs when Stephen lays in the infirmary after being shoved into the square ditch. He wakes up feeling “very hot” although the sunlight was “queer and cold” (Joyce, 18), and the word “queer” acts as a callback to an early memory in which Stephen thought the word “suck” to be queer because of an experience he had in the Wicklow Hotel bathroom when using the sinks: “There were two cocks that you turned and water came out: cold and hot. He felt cold and then a little hot: and he could see the names printed on the cocks. That was a very queer thing” (Joyce, 8). On this, Macduff and Knowles write, “hot and cold become repeated motifs in which the cold of the playing fields and the cold slime of the latrine, the cold dark sea, and cold smell of the chapel are

contrasted with the fire at home, or in the peasants' cottages, and the warmth of his bed" (107). The warmth of the fire or his bed are reminders of comfortable, connected times, whereas the chill of the latrine and the chapel remind Stephen of times he felt alone. Sheldon Brivic also discusses this scene in connection with the initial bed-wetting scene in "Gender Dissonance, Hysteria, and History in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*," writing, "The change in temperature, which recurs in the scene with his father in the bathroom with the cold and hot cocks, may be associated with sexual excitement. For the child, who has no idea what sexuality is, the alternation of cold and hot is a hysterical way of expressing a thrill" (465). This also relates to the scene in which Stephen grows hot and embarrassed in discussion of kissing his mother; while this is not a sexual thought either, it leads a young Stephen to ponder the meaning of kissing, which can be sexual. As a teenager, Stephen again recalls sensory details from Clongowes as he sits in the chapel at his new school, and feels changed by the sensory memories. "His soul, as these memories came back to him, became again a child's soul" (Joyce, 116). Stephen's sensory memories are part of him, building on each other along his journey to make up his psyche. Katy Marre writes of this phenomenon in "Paired Repetition as a Formulaic Element in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: "the pattern of paired repetition in *Portrait* shows how Stephen's recollections serve to establish a coherent sense of himself" (208). Thus, Stephen uses sensory details such as temperature to reorient himself, reflecting on memories that have shaped him, while allowing the emotions associated with these details to construct his ever-changing selfhood.

As Stephen comes of age, the cooling sensory details more heavily reflect his evolution into isolated artist. As a teenager, he has his first sexual encounter, which is an awakening or epiphany in itself, and the temperature details are notable. "Her room was warm and lightsome ...

Her round arms held him firmly to her and he, seeing her face lifted to him in serious calm and feeling the warm calm rise and fall of her breast, all but burst into hysterical weeping” (Joyce, 107). The warmth he feels from the woman cause him to feel so connected and comfortable that he returns to a childlike state. Even before this encounter, his desire for sex is coded using sensory terms. “He burned to appease the fierce longings of his heart before which everything else was idle and alien” (Joyce, 105). This feeling of burning with desire is surely different than the burning when he tried to hold back tears out of humiliation at being punished by the prefect, and yet if Stephen does use sensory details to reorient himself, then this burning desire and warmth from sex could even take him all the way back to the warmth and embarrassment of bed-wetting. It’s around this time that he begins to detach from religion and the morality he once ascribed to, envisioning himself as having gone cold: “A cold lucid indifference reigned in his soul” (Joyce, 110). In this already-detached state Stephen learns more about hell during a sermon by Father Arnall, who describes it as “a neverending storm of darkness, dark flames and dark smoke of burning brimstone, amid which the bodies are heaped one upon another without even a glimpse of air” (Joyce, 129). The heat of hell can be read as yet another possible negative association Stephen forms with human closeness and warmth.

Arguably Stephen’s most influential awakening occurs after he has pondered the priesthood and is considering university admissions. He passes a statue of the Virgin Mary, a figure which once held power over Stephen, but now he “turned his eyes coldly for an instant toward the faded blue shrine of the Blessed Virgin” (Joyce, 175-6). The fact that his connection to the Virgin Mary has run cold, along with the statue appearing faded to him, serves as his dismissal of connection to religion. On the other hand, shortly after, he sees a girl wading in the water and her beauty causes his artistic epiphany. Sensory temperature descriptors are present

here, of course: “a faint flame trembled on her cheek ... His cheeks were aflame” (Joyce, 186).

Unlike the coldness he felt in the presence of the Virgin Mary statue, the beautiful woman who changes Stephen’s soul with a glance makes him feel as hot as fire. Is this similar to the mythological Icarus flying too close to the sun, though? Shortly before this epiphany which changes the course of Stephen’s life, he ponders his namesake Daedalus, Icarus’ father, the mythological craftsman who created wings for he and his son to escape. “He would create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul, as the great artificer whose name he bore, a living thing, new and soaring and beautiful, impalpable, imperishable” (Joyce, 184).

Unfortunately, as the myths go, Daedalus’ son did not listen to his warnings and he perished when he flew too close to the sun, melting his wings. Daedalus avoided death by staying away from the warmth of the sun; similarly, Stephen believes as an artist he must avoid the warmth of connection in order to survive creatively and thrive. The cost of this, is that he must enter a cold isolation. The final association of temperature with Stephen in this novel is, “Stephen watched [Cranly’s] face for some moments in silence. A cold sadness was there. He had spoken of himself, of his own loneliness which he feared” (Joyce, 269). Stephen feels the cold sadness emanating off his friend Cranly, who he will be leaving behind to pursue his art. Even though it’s not Stephen’s own sadness, he can already feel the negative results his going away may have on himself and others.

Unlike in Stephen’s case, Clarissa Dalloway’s coming-of-age from girlhood to middle age and the way her associations with temperature change are not shown to the reader; her younger self is revealed only in flashbacks. But, what links her to Stephen is the fact that she is an artist as well. In Jacob Littleton’s “*Mrs. Dalloway: Portrait of the Artist as a Middle-Aged Woman*,” not only does he nominally link the two novels, but he reads Clarissa as an artist in her

own right and explains that a central aspect to her character is sensory experience. He writes, “Perhaps the most fundamental fact of Clarissa’s psyche is the pleasure she takes in physical, sensual existence ... She neither condemns what seems like an altogether noisy and irritating urban scene (her London is not a Waste Land), nor approves it with the air of a connoisseur; her appreciation depends only on experience ... She does not appreciate the scene for *what* it is, but simply *because* it is” (37). Thus, in this view Woolf’s inclusion of sensory details throughout *Mrs. Dalloway* serves to show a reflection of Clarissa’s inner thoughts and feelings, since the sensory scenes permeate Clarissa’s very being. An example of this sensory permeation that occurs early in *Mrs. Dalloway* is, “Arlington Street and Piccadilly seemed to chafe the very air in the park and lift its leaves hotly, brilliantly, on waves of that divine vitality which Clarissa loved” (Woolf, 7). This passage could seem like a simple description of trees on a summer day, but as this description is tucked within Clarissa’s musings on her ex-lover, Peter, the term “hotly” stands out because it is reflective of the passion with which Clarissa still burns for him sometimes.

Throughout most of the text, colder descriptive terms are associated with Clarissa by others, mostly Peter, especially during the scene in which they reunite. After this reunion, Peter feels that Clarissa gives off “this coldness, this woodenness, something very profound in her ... an impenetrability” (Woolf, 59). Peter feels that after all these years, Clarissa is inaccessible to him and is not even necessarily who he wants her to be. In fact, the entire first meeting between Peter and Clarissa is filled with sensory-related descriptions as the pair sizes each other up after some time apart. Even before they meet, Clarissa is aware that Peter thinks her “Cold, heartless, a prude” (Woolf, 8), and when they used to argue, “the perfect hostess he called her (she had cried over it in her bedroom)” (Woolf, 7). Clarissa did become what Peter prophesied, and

perhaps the coldness he feels from her is her shutting him out due to embarrassment at having proved him right. When Clarissa and Peter first see each other, they have vastly different reactions at first to the other's appearance. Peter thinks, "She's grown older," while Clarissa thinks, "he looks awfully well, and just the same" (Woolf, 39). This awareness of age is a prevailing theme for Clarissa herself, during their conversation thinking, "He was in love! Not with her. With some younger woman, of course" (Woolf, 44). From there, it becomes a contest, chatting politely on the surface but having a deeper discussion beneath the surface, each of them believing they can still communicate without words as they once could. At one point Peter finds it almost too painful to relive their past relationship: "For why go back like this to the past? he thought. Why make him think of it again? Why make him suffer, when she had tortured him so infernally" (Woolf, 41)? The term "infernally" stood out to me here as a temperature-coded term because it's reminiscent of an inferno, of the flames and fire of hell. Clearly the connection between Clarissa and Peter burned them both, leaving them cold and detached all these years later. Even just when Peter is about to try reconnecting with Clarissa during their conversation, "Shall I tell her, he thought, or not?," he quickly decides, "But she is too cold" (42). Maybe this coldness Peter feels in Clarissa is because she does not want Peter to know the extent she is dissatisfied in her relationships, her age, and her place in the world, so she completely closes herself off to him. Maybe, even, her coldness toward Peter is a coping mechanism because she laments the end of their relationship although it wouldn't have worked: "If I had married him, this gaiety would have been mine all day!" (46). Similar to the way Stephen closed himself off from the religion and peers that had caused him embarrassment, Clarissa closed herself off from Peter to preserve whatever artistic sensibility and sensory pleasure she had left.

While there are indicators of reasons for coldness in Clarissa's current life, Peter notes at various points that Clarissa has always had a coldness to her ("she was one of the most thoroughgoing sceptics he had ever met" (75)), even when they'd been in love, so this coldness and disconnect may stem from a familial matter: the death of her sister. It's only briefly alluded to once, but it seems to have been an epiphany for Clarissa all the same: "To see your own sister killed by a falling tree (all Justin Parry's fault—all his carelessness) before your very eyes, a girl too on the verge of life, the most gifted of them, Clarissa always said, was enough to turn one bitter" (Woolf, 76). This moment in the novel has not been extensively studied, and yet seems to reveal so much about Clarissa's character. Lorie Watkins Fulton, in "'A Direction of One's Own': Alienation in 'Mrs. Dalloway' and 'Sula,'" writes that novelist Toni Morrison discussed the death of Clarissa's sister as being a pivotal moment for her: "In her master's thesis, Morrison speculates that the death of Clarissa's sister, Sylvia, spurs her emotional withdrawal and that the effects of her detachment first appear in her relationships with Sally and Peter" (Fulton, 73). Karen DeMeester, in "Trauma and Recovery in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* also notes this as an important moment because it changed Clarissa's entire outlook: "Clarissa resigns herself to the belief that the world is chaos with no inherent ordering principle or guiding force, so she devotes herself to creating a façade of order. Though she admirably brings beauty and harmony to the disorder and isolation of modern society ... her assembling activities merely repress what she knows to be true about the evil inherent in human nature" (664). This façade entails Clarissa closing up, freezing over, shutting out the world. Thus, despite Clarissa's interest in being an artist and bringing sensory beauty into the world, her turn to bitterness and atheism coincide with a turn to coldness and disinterest in connecting, much like when Stephen turned away from religion.

Along with the past trauma of losing a sister, there are also certainly reasons for Clarissa's coldness which have some roots in her current home life. During their ill-fated meeting, Peter noticed a disjointedness between Clarissa and her daughter, Elizabeth, feeling a chill between them. As Peter leaves Clarissa's, he thinks about the way she introduced her daughter to him: "The way she said 'Here is my Elizabeth!' – that annoyed him. Why not 'Here's Elizabeth' simply? It was insincere. And Elizabeth didn't like it either ... There was always something cold in Clarissa, he thought" (Woolf, 48). Although we know Peter to be judgmental, and an outsider to their mother-daughter relationship, we do know that Clarissa feels a bit isolated from her daughter, who spends a lot of time with Miss Kilman, who Clarissa despises. "Anyhow they were inseparable, and Elizabeth, her own daughter, went to Communion; and how she dressed, how she treated people who came to lunch she did not care a bit, it being her experience that the religious ecstasy made people callous (so did causes)" (Woolf, 11). So, Clarissa attributes some of the coldness between herself and her daughter to Miss Kilman, who she sees as planting ideas of religious callousness into Elizabeth's mind. Clarissa later describes Elizabeth's appearance as different than hers or Richard's, and notes that Elizabeth "had become very serious ... a hyacinth which has had no sun" (Woolf, 120). A flower growing up without sun insinuates a coldness, meaning that Elizabeth probably was raised in a cold environment, with little opportunity for connection.

The chilly environment in which Elizabeth has tried to bloom likely comes from the emotional distance between her parents, Clarissa and Richard. On his way home from lunch at Lady Bruton's, which Clarissa was not invited to, Richard buys her flowers and resolves to tell her he loves her, something which clearly doesn't happen often: "The time comes when it can't be said; one's too shy to say it" (Woolf, 112). This shyness insinuates a coldness or lack of

connection creeping between Clarissa and Richard, especially since he does not end up telling her he loves her when he arrives home: “He was holding out flowers—roses, red and white roses. (But he could not bring himself to say he loved her; not in so many words)” (Woolf, 115). One reason their disconnect could have come about is the fact that Richard advised Clarissa to sleep in the attic room (“There was an emptiness about the heart of life; an attic room” (Woolf, 30)) after recovering from an illness. An attic room suggests a drafty chill, so although Clarissa acts like she is fine with the arrangement, it’s like she’s been banished into a room that reflects the coldness and disconnect that people like Peter already see in her. Within her marriage, similar to how Richard fails to verbally express his love for Clarissa, she feels she’s failed him in some way as well. “Lovely in girlhood, suddenly there came a moment—for example on the river beneath the woods at Clieveden—when, through some contraction of this cold spirit, she had failed him. And then at Constantinople, and again and again” (Woolf, 31). This failure implies either a sexual failure or a fertility failure, something feminine she could not give Richard due to her closed-off coldness. Regardless of whether Clarissa enjoys her chilly solitude, is Richard subconsciously punishing her for whatever failures he perceives by keeping her in the cold attic?

This realization of lack leads Clarissa to ponder an epiphany she had in her younger days while summering at Bourton. First, Clarissa notes what she believes she lacked in her failures to Richard: “She could see what she lacked. It was not beauty; it was not mind. It was something central which permeated; something warm which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman, or of women together” (Woolf, 31). Whether through being told she had a coldness, or perceiving it within herself, Clarissa is aware she is detached in her interpersonal relationships. But, her mention of “women together” begs the question of whether that “something warm” could emerge within her contact with another woman. She does say, “yet she

could not resist sometimes yielding to the charm of a woman, not a girl, of a woman confessing, as to her they often did, some scrape, some folly ... she did undoubtedly then feel what men felt. Only for a moment; but it was enough” (Woolf, 31). She goes on to ponder the revelations she sometimes feels when close to a woman, almost like epiphanies, and in these cases, “for that moment, she had seen an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed” (Woolf, 31). It seems like, in these moments, Clarissa almost reaches epiphany, almost gets in touch with her warm inner self, but as she is married to a man these moments always pass and she hardens herself again. Could intimacy with or the erotic connection to women be the key to unlocking the inner warmth in Clarissa?

Like Stephen, Clarissa experiences multiple epiphanies throughout the text, and one occurs in her musings on the love she shared with girlhood friend Sally Seton during their time at Bourton. “Then came the most exquisite moment of her whole life passing a stone urn with flowers in it. Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips” (Woolf, 35). Now, in her fifties, Clarissa still views that singular moment as the best of her life; clearly it was an epiphany or awakening for her. She goes on to say, “And she felt that she had been given a present, wrapped up, and told just to keep it, not to look at it—a diamond, something infinitely precious, wrapped up, which, as they walked ... she uncovered, or the radiance burnt through, the revelation, the religious feeling” (Woolf, 35)! The sensory language comes in when she labels the moment of the kiss as burning through her, she can feel it as her new religion, considering she shirked off religion after her sister’s death. She feels, though, like the kiss was something she had to wrap up to keep safe, and maybe in doing so she further closed herself off to the world. In her current world of detachment, it seems she buried the precious epiphany so deep that it’s lost its warmth. Kate Haffey, in her article “Exquisite Moments and the Temporality of the Kiss in

Mrs. Dalloway and *The Hours*,” discusses Clarissa’s and Sally’s relationship and the way it’s affected Clarissa’s life: “The interpenetration of past and present ... occurs when Clarissa calls forth her memories of Sally. Thus to focus on Clarissa’s feelings for Sally as located only in the past ... is to ignore the ways in which this moment returns again and again to affect Clarissa’s present” (141). When she sees Sally in the present day at her party, the magic of their connection seems long gone at first: “One might put down the hot water can quite composedly. The lustre had gone out of her. Yet it was extraordinary to see her again, older, happier, less lovely” (Woolf, 167). The fact that Clarissa is holding a hot water can and puts it down after seeing Sally to me symbolizes the fading of any warmth or connection the two felt. It’s almost like the moment when Stephen looks coldly at the Virgin Mary statue, thinking it faded. But, as Haffey notes, the past is still affecting the present in sensory ways: ‘I can’t believe it!’ she cried, kindling all over with pleasure at the thought of the past” (Woolf, 167). The memory of passion between the two women is enough for Clarissa to feel a little burning simply being in Sally’s presence again. Clarissa is also reminded about a reason she was first drawn to Sally: “It was her warmth; her vitality—she would paint, she would write” (Woolf, 177). Clarissa, who had experienced a cold skepticism since at least the death of her sister, perhaps felt an attraction to the warmth and artistic sensibility radiating from her friend, and she can still appreciate it although it has faded a bit in her eyes. In the same way sensory memories reorient Stephen and bring him back to his youth, feeling Sally’s warmth again seems to have the same effect on Clarissa.

At this party, Clarissa comes into her own as an artist. When Peter sees her during the party he is struck by the way that “her severity, her prudery, her woodenness were all warmed through now” (Woolf, 170). It is during the party that Clarissa experiences her final, and perhaps

most important, epiphany of the novel, after learning of the suicide of war-veteran Septimus Warren Smith. At first, she is annoyed that someone would bring talk of death into her party, but the more she thinks about it, she feels a kinship with Septimus. “Always her body went through it first, when she was told, suddenly, of an accident; her dress flamed, her body burnt” (Woolf, 179). Hearing of the horrific accident makes her feel the warmth of some kind of connection with the deceased and the connection she feels death can bring in general: “Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death” (Woolf, 180). Clarissa, who feels a lack of authentic communication and connection in her life, feels an affinity with Septimus and how he threw his life away. A reason that Clarissa and Septimus could be connected is that, for all their differences, they both were deeply perceptive to the sensory details in the bustling city of London. Much like Littleton writes of Clarissa’s central aspect being sensory experience, Leanna Lostoski, in “‘Imaginations of the Strangest Kind’: The Vital Materialism of Virginia Woolf,” writes about Septimus and his “feeling of connection with the nonhuman world that he senses is the reality of the relationship between the human and nonhuman worlds that Woolf elucidates in her works” (62). Clarissa feels glad that he has killed himself, but it also opens her eyes to the happiness that could exist in her own life. “She felt somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away ... He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun” (Woolf, 182). At this moment Clarissa also recalls a line from Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*: “and the words came to her, Fear no more the heat of the sun. She must go back to them” (Woolf, 182). This Shakespearean-inspired line rings true to Clarissa because her love of the art of entertaining plus the realizations that accompanied Septimus’ suicide causes her to feel ready to

stop fearing warmth and connection, and return to her family and friends wholeheartedly. The unfortunate part is that, “Clarissa alone reaps the benefits of this revelation; Woolf never allows Septimus to meet her, much less derive similar benefit from their connection” (Fulton, 69). Regardless, Clarissa is changed, warmed through, and it’s as though Peter can feel this shift as well, because at the very end of the novel he thinks, “What is it that fills me with extraordinary excitement? It is Clarissa, he said. For there she was” (Woolf, 190). It’s like Peter had an epiphany of his own in which his cold perception of Clarissa melts through and he feels the warmth within her.

To conclude, as noted in the introduction, Clarissa moves from feeling or being associated with cold to warm and Stephen the opposite. To summarize what I mean by this can be demonstrated by the following examples. Stephen’s story began with the warmth from bed-wetting as a child, and toward the end of the novel, he is confronted with “A cold sadness” (Joyce, 269) in the face of his friend Cranly. While it is not Stephen’s sadness, it seems that Stephen can feel the coldness that his isolation will bring to his friends, in the same way he felt the warmth of his bed as a child turn cold as the urine cooled. Conversely, toward the beginning of *Mrs. Dalloway*, after Clarissa has seen Peter again after a long time, he leaves their meeting thinking of “this coldness, this woodenness, something very profound in her ... an impenetrability” (Woolf, 59), but by the end of the novel, Peter sees Clarissa from across her party and thinks, “There was a breath of tenderness; her severity, her prudery, her woodenness were all warmed through now” (Woolf, 170). In other words, Clarissa gave off a coldness that was warmed through by the end. This change in Clarissa was felt by Peter, who in this case acts as a stand-in for the reader. Since as readers, we cannot physically touch the characters or feel their presence, we must rely on descriptions such as in this case, in which our view of Clarissa is

filtered through her former lover. Are we to rely on Peter, who switches haphazardly between loving and disliking Clarissa throughout the novel? Could he be projecting his feelings of passion and desire onto Clarissa here? While these are interesting questions to ponder, through my study of the sensory details in both novels, I believe that while Stephen chose to live as a metaphorical Daedalus, isolated so as to keep his distance from danger, Clarissa's epiphany brought on by the death of Septimus caused her to choose the life of Icarus, stepping into a warm and connected emotional world, regardless of the cost. Unlike Stephen, Clarissa decides to "Fear no more the heat of the sun..." (Woolf, 182).

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