

## Virginia Woolf's *The Death of the Moth*: A Portrait of the Moth as Fighter for Life and Conqueror of Death

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### Abstract

Death had been recurring as an omniscient theme in Virginia Woolf's fiction particularly in her essay *The Death of the Moth*. A fascination with death as the core theme of Woolf's essay triggered the writing of this paper. The purpose of this paper is to probe Woolf's essay highlighting an intertwining binary relation between life and death. Firstly, death is explored from a biographical standpoint relating to its meaning throughout Woolf's life. Secondly, *The Death of the Moth* is analyzed as being divided into two dimensions: the 'life dimension' and the 'death dimension', relating to the moth as the main character. Thirdly, death is investigated referring to Woolf's major fictional works. The main query to be investigated is how Woolf represents the intertwining nature of life and death binary throughout the Moth's journey, struggling for life and striving to outlive a 'Godzillc' predator called death. Woolf represents the core of the relationship that binds life to death as either foes or successors.

**Keywords:** Conqueror; Death; Fighter; Life; Moth; Virginia Woolf.

### 1. Introduction

A strong willingness to write about Virginia Woolf's essay *The Death of Moth* led to the writing of the current paper. The Moth's portrait draws its persistence and struggling for survival, facing unknown, uncanny, and powerful forces despite its entrapment that drew it to its disappearance. Woolf granted her main character a ubiquitous portrait, being stranded within a haunted cell; helpless and pitiful as it faced death alone.

There was an observer in the living room that conjured up into the moth's cell. The observer did just that. She watched the moth fighting for life with her timid attempts at helping it. According to the observer, the moth's death was inevitable. She could do nothing but watch it perish. The leitmotiv of Woolf's text is the following: Death culminates and prevails over hopeless and helpless beings.

The purpose of this paper is to probe Woolf's essay highlighting an intertwining binary relation between life and death. Firstly, death is explored from a biographical standpoint relating to its meaning throughout Woolf's life. Secondly, *The Death of the Moth* is analysed as being divided into two dimensions: the 'life dimension' and the 'death dimension', relating to the moth as the main character. Thirdly, death is investigated referring to Woolf's major fictional works. The main query to be investigated is how Woolf represents the intertwining of life and death binary throughout the Moth's journey, struggling for life and striving to outlive a 'Godzillc' predator called death. Woolf represents the nature of the relationship that binds life to death as either foes or successors.

### 2. Woolf's History with the Life and Death Binary

No wonder Virginia Woolf was fascinated and struck hard by death. She entertained the omnipresent presence of death as a recurrent theme in her writings. Investigating Woolf's vision of death proved necessary as a first step towards the probing of

her essay in relation to her biography. Then, the essay is examined as being divided into two dimensions; the first dimension encompassing 'the life sphere' picturing the moth as a hard fighter for life. The second dimension involving 'the death sphere' representing the main character as death's prey. Then the death vs. life binary is explored in relation to a selection of Woolf's novels highlighted by her fictional characters' visions.

Woolf's early confrontation with death is narrowly linked to her view of life as being volatile and insecure. She looked for means of winning a constant trust in life since her childhood. In an early memoir *Reminiscences*, she wrote: "*The effect of death upon those that live is always strange, and often terrible in the havoc it makes with innocent desires*" (Woolf, 1976-b, p.31). A series of deaths overwhelmed her early life---particularly the death of her mother---haunted her mind for years to come. Woolf points out: "*People never get over their early impressions of death I think. I always feel pursued*" (Woolf, 1977, p. 84). Woolf expressed her stringent inability to cope with death in one of her diaries as she comments on her nephew Julian Bell's death. He was killed in the Spanish Civil War in 1937. She notes, "*If Julian had not died---still an incredible sentence to write---our happiness might have been profound. ... but his death---that extraordinary extinction---drains it of substance*" (Woolf, 1980, p. 111). She encountered huge difficulties to write about his death even "*with all [her] verbosity*" and she describes her reaction as "*a complete break; almost a blank; like a blow on the head: a shriveling up*" (Ibid.104). Another death that Woolf could not survive is that of her friend Roger Fry that took place on "*a day as it happened of extraordinary beauty*" (Ibid, pp.140-298). She notes:

I had a notion that I could describe the tremendous feeling at R.'s funeral: but of course, I can't. I mean the universal feeling: how we all fought with our brains loves & so on; & *must be*

vanquished. Then the vanquisher, this outer force became so clear; the indifferent. & we so small fine delicate. A fear then came to me, of death. Of course, I shall lie there too before that gate, & slide in; & it frightened me. But why? I mean, I felt the vainness of this perpetual fight, with our brains & loving each other against the other thing: if Roger could die. (Woolf, 1977, p. 19 September 1934)

But then, next day, today which is Thursday, one week later, the other thing begins to work—the exalted sense of being above time & death which comes from being again in a writing mood. And this is not an illusion, so far as I can tell. Certainly, I have a strong sense that Roger would be all on one's side in this excitement, & that whatever the invisible force does, we thus get outside it (Ibid. 20 September 1934)

According to Woolf, although life means movement and variety, human beings lose all this beauty and exquisiteness when they die. They just are scared of images of non-being and are intelligent enough to surrender to the present moment oblivious of their acknowledgement of death. It seems that the hardest thing about death is that one comes to accept that a person one loved most and thought eternal is dead. When contemplating the present moment, one regurgitates the odd idea: 'it's as if she has never existed'. This is how the splendid irony comingling life and death seems to operate. Woolf was, Smith says, interested in "*the mystery of life--the tensions between life and death, consciousness and unconsciousness, order and chaos, intimacy and isolation*" (1964, p. 125). Woolf confirmed:

Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; but a luminous halo, a semi transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end... Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? (Woolf, 1948, p. 213)

Woolf's struggle with death culminated when she committed suicide. She failed to cope with mental illness that strengthened her death wish. She wondered whether human beings maintain their sanity when they are terrified of the inevitability of death. She expressed her surrender in a letter to her sister Vanessa. The letter is just like a suicide note: "... gone too far this time to come back again. I am certain now that I am going mad...I am always hearing voices, and I know I shant get over it now." She insisted that Leonard, her husband, had been entirely good, no one could have done more, but he would be better off without her. "I can hardly think clearly any more," she wrote. "I have fought against it, but I cant any longer", she insisted (Marder, 2000, pp. 335- 336).

Woolf plainly gave up fighting against 'it'. 'It' could stand for mental illness as it could stand for the death wish. This ambiguous questioning might also picture an arm wrestling between fear and desire. Which is stronger. Was it the wish to die or the fear of death? It seems that such confessions are expressed because of self-abandonment, being tired of the tirades of a prematurely lost battle and being ready for the release instance. She abandoned herself to death as she thought: "Death is supreme and without memorial, as in a season of autumn, When the wind stops..." (Gilbert, 1999, p. 179). One

cannot help reading this quote repeatedly. It pictures the inevitability, calmness, and intrepidity of death we experience when encountering loss of life, especially that of our loved ones. Woolf painted it as an escape from life's suffering to embrace eternal peace. The same vision is illustrated by the author throughout her fictional characters' outlooks to life, which will be tackled later in this essay.

Woolf announced, later on, even the death of her writing: "*The figure of the human being lying behind Between the Acts is more elusive than in any other of Woolf's works: in 1940 she recorded the death of her writing 'I'*"(Hussey, 1986, p. 143). She declares, "*It struck me that one curious feeling is, that the writing 'I' has vanished. No audience. No echo. That's part of one's death*" (Woolf, 1977, 9 June 1940).

Death prevails in Woolf's, writing enshrining its opposite counterpart, life. The following step is to explore the dialectic of life and death in Woolf's essay *The Death of the Moth*.

### 3. The Moth as Fighter for Life and Conqueror of Death:

The next step is to probe the story's first dimension that portrays life and its attributes in relation to the 'living moth' and how it battled to outlive death. The moth is also to be considered connected to the setting and the other character in the story that is the observer.

In the opening scene of the story, the narrator, also performing the role of observer, describes to what kind of moths the main character belongs. She contends that these moths do not look like other moths: "*They are hybrid creatures neither gay like butterflies nor somber like their own species*". "[He] seemed to be content with life". Right from the start, the observer addresses the moth as 'he'. She seems to grant it the attributes of a person. The moth appears to be a special creature that is satisfied with what it had. Nature outside the room seems to be blossoming with life. "*It was a pleasant morning, mid-September, mild, benignant, yet with a keener breath than that of the summer months.*" Life outside the room inspired "vigor" and life's heartbeats invaded the whole place. "...a tremendously exciting experience" inspired the moth's life inside the room. "*The same energy which inspired the rooks, the ploughmen, the horses, and even, it seemed, the lean bare-backed downs, sent the moth fluttering from side to side of his square of the windowpane. One could not help watching him. One was, indeed, conscious of a queer feeling of pity for him*". She thinks that though the degree and chances of pleasure plummeted in the room for the moth, it remained a creature for which she has "*a queer feeling of pity for (him)*". She labels the moth's fate "*hard*" and its ability for enjoying its joyful life "*pathetic*". The space outside the room loomed large and energetic, nevertheless, the moth's possibilities and paths remained limited and meagre. It strived hard to show off as, "*He flew vigorously to one corner of his compartment*" to another, yet, "*That was all he could do*", "*What he could do he did*" (Woolf, 2019, p.1).

However, as limited as the 'insignificant creature' appeared to be, it is, nonetheless, a sample of life: "*the enormous energy of the world had been thrust into his frail and diminutive body. As often as he crossed the pane, I could fancy that a thread of vital light became visible. He was little or nothing but life.*" One can notice the nature of the observer's volatile vision vis-à-vis the moth. She describes it as a "*small*" and "*simple*" item, however,

"there was something marvellous as well as pathetic about him". The following passage highlights the observer's portrayal of the insect savouring its existence in the realm of the story's life dimension:

It was as if someone had taken a tiny bead of pure life and decking it as lightly as possible with down and feathers had set it dancing and zigzagging to show us the true nature of life. Thus, displayed one could not get over the strangeness of it. One is apt to forget all about life, seeing it humped and bossed and garnished and cumbered so that it has to move with the greatest circumspection and dignity. Again, the thought of all that life might have been had he been born in any other shape caused one to view his simple activities with a kind of pity. (Woolf, 2019, p.1)

The story's first dimension displays life as lively, joyful, inspiring movement and energy. The moth could savour scraps of the vivacious scene in the room, dancing and moving to prove its existence. However lively and content with life the moth appeared to be, its observer seemed to deny any legitimacy to its being alive. She views the moth as insignificant and labels its efforts to be alive as being pathetic. One could also sense a queer disconnection between the setting outside the room of a happy energetic nature and animated creatures with the alive-like desolate moth cell.

The beginning of the story's second part labelled the *death dimension* starts with the moth's energy and movement slowing down. The observer notes: "After a time, tired by his dancing apparently, he settled on the window ledge in the sun, and, the queer spectacle being at an end, I forgot about him." She is watching him with disconcertment. The insect tries to recover its dancing in vain. She calls its attempts "futile" and unfruitful. The moth's living chances became scarcer as the observer describes:

Being intent on other matters I watched these futile attempts for a time without thinking, unconsciously waiting for him to resume his flight, as one waits for a machine, that has stopped momentarily, to start again without considering the reason of its failure. After perhaps a seventh attempt he slipped from the wooden ledge and fell, fluttering his wings, on to his back on the windowsill. The helplessness of his attitude roused me. It flashed upon me that he was in difficulties; he could no longer raise himself; his legs struggled vainly. But, as I stretched out a pencil, meaning to help him to right himself, it came over me that the failure and awkwardness were the approach of death. I laid the pencil down again. (Woolf, 2019, p.1)

The tiny creature's movements and liveliness come to a standstill. The noise and life outside the room lessened too as midday strikes. The observer senses the moth struggles against an enemy that she searches in vain. The 'insignificant creature' seems to fight for its existence aimlessly. The observer remarks: Yet the power was there all the same, massed outside, indifferent, impersonal, not attending to anything in particular. It was useless to try to do anything. One could only watch the extraordinary efforts made by those tiny legs against an oncoming doom which could, had it chosen, have submerged an entire city, not merely a city, but masses of human beings; nothing, I knew had any chance against death. (Woolf, 2019, p.2)

The moth shows resistance against death when it moves its legs in an attempt to be alive again. The observer contends that she has sympathy for it for the Moth represents life for her,

though she still considers it insignificant. Her visions of life seem discrepant; one time she portrays life as energy and movement and on the other hand she labels it as something "no one else valued or desired to keep" and death as "a power of such magnitude". Then she notes, "Again, somehow, one saw life as a pure bead". She attempts once again to help the moth win its battle for life:

I lifted the pencil again, useless though I knew it to be. But even as I did so, the unmistakable tokens of death showed themselves. The body relaxed, and instantly grew stiff. The struggle was over. The insignificant little creature now knew death. As I looked at the dead moth, this minute wayside triumph of so great a force over so mean an antagonist filled me with wonder. Just as life had been strange a few minutes before, so death was now as strange. The moth having righted himself now lay most decently and uncomplainingly composed. O yes, he seemed to say, death is stronger than I am. (Woolf, 2019, pp.2-3)

The moth, the special, happy-like, free-like, alive-like, confined creature dies at last, battling for its right to be alive. Its relation to the setting and the observer is incongruent. Everything exists in disconnection with it. There are elements within the story (people included) that stay alive far from the moth not knowing him or caring about him. There are other people that observe him from far, trying to help but not succeeding. At the outset of the story, the narrator confirms the moth belongs to a peculiar kind as though affirming that elements that die have special characteristics unlike those of their own species that remain alive. When they are to meet with death, they behave and look different. The rhythm of the story took an ascending/descending cadence as life appeared to lift one's spirit with energy, movement and life and then suddenly the husky power of stillness, weakness and helplessness interfered. The observer, the only living creature in the room, besides the moth, looked confined, absent, disconcerted, and doubtful about the power of life within the room. She surrenders to the power of death proving death is more alive than life. She watched life disappearing with timid attempts to intervene. She seemed to submit to the clutches of death as if to affirm a readymade theory she crooned right from the start: "death is stronger than I am". A peaceful atmosphere seemed to haunt the room as the moth meets death.

#### 4. The Journey between Life and Death in Selected Woolf's Novels

The next step is to probe some of Virginia Woolf's main characters experiencing death, exploring a selection of her key novels respectively: *The Voyage Out*, *Jacobs Room*, *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando* and *The Waves*. These characters are to be analysed in relation to the moth, highlighting the following aspects of the novelist's fiction: a trance-like attitude to life before death and the life vs. death binary.

In *the Voyage Out*, one senses Rachel's merger with nature as she was sitting in the heat of the day savouring her trancelike moods, attempting to merge with life in vain:

The sounds of the garden outside joined with the clock, and the small noises of midday, which one can ascribe to no definite cause, in a regular rhythm. It was all very real, very big, very impersonal, and after a moment or two she began to raise her first finger and to let it fall on the arm of her chair so as to bring back to herself some consciousness of her own existence.... listening and looking always at the same spot. It became stranger and stranger. She was overcome with awe that things could exist

at all. She forgot that she had any fingers to raise. . . . (Woolf, 1965, p. 145)

She experiences a kind of dissolution that is so whole that she was unable to lift up her finger any longer and sat completely still. Such a hypnotic state prefigures Rachel's death. The moth's trancelike moods that preceded its death were expressed by its excessive movements and dancing to feel and fuse with life for the last time. Naremore contends that:

The sleepy, hypnotic moods that she (Woolf) renders so lovingly in all of her writings exerted a powerful hold on her imagination; so much so that often her novels can be understood in terms of the uneasy compromises the characters make between the will to live in the world and the temptation to dissolve all individuality and sink into a deathlike trance. (1973, p.55)

Woolf's characters, according to Irene Simon, "try to find permanence or stability, something that endures in the midst of the flow" (1960, p. 126).

Septimus, a controversial character in Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, is depicted as a sufferer reflecting the horrors of World War One. Before his death, he sits alone with Rezia, another character in the novel, contemplating the calmness of life, depicted by the shimmering patterns of sunlight on the wall. The peaceful atmosphere is also possessed by the echoes of his imminent death. He believes that the only prospect for his living self and the embodiment and preserving of his autonomy is suicide (Woolf, 1925). Clarissa Dalloway, the main character in Woolf's novel, felt that it is through others' deaths that our "experience" of death comes (Ibid.11). Her attachment to Septimus, being affected by his suicide, transformed her to a mere mist. She felt alone (Ibid. 202). She could transcend her identity and all that social meaning related to it. She was simply "Clarissa" (Ibid. 213). One could sense that Septimus' death was a reminder to Mrs Dalloway to seize her chance with life and contemplate its beauty. She expresses her belief in surviving death through the "odd affinities" she has with people and places:

Somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself. (Ibid. 11-12)

Clarissa owes her vision of death to her experience of that of Septimus'. According to her, there existed an embrace in death. The latter transforms from the cause of separation into that of an attempt to communicate and a possibility of ultimate union (Ibid. 11). This is that very particular meaning which Woolf wanted to stress in her novels (Naremore, 1973). Naremore contends: "The only answer I can give is that it suggests both that Virginia Woolf sees death as a kind of victory and a kind of defeat-a loss of the self, but at the same time an ecstatic embrace" (Ibid. 188). One could recall the observer's interest in the moth as the insect fought for life and then fall prey to death. She could relate to that insignificant creature in its last moments, following its heroic attempts to claim and maintain life.

In *To The Lighthouse*, the main character Mrs Ramsay, wonders about the abstraction of an individual from her attachments to the common world of human relationships. When

alone, Mrs Ramsay's main concern is death. She seems "to triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity". This intensifies the fact that for Woolf, the power and omnipotence of death is central to her fiction (Hussey, 1986). In the following passage, death in general and Mrs Ramsay's in particular, is referred to when Woolf describes the darkness invasion of a room. "Nothing it seemed, could survive the flood, the profusion of darkness which, creeping in at keyholes and crevices, stole round window blinds, came into bedrooms, swallowed up here a jug and basin, there a bowl of red and yellow dahlias, there the sharp edges and firm bulk of a chest of drawers" (Woolf, 1994, p. 93). Woolfian characters are in continuous quest for meaning and unity with the rest of the world. However, they constantly epitomize a death wish (Naremore, 1973, p. 56). Mrs Ramsay's following meditations illustrate the triumph of death over life: "To be silent; to be alone... one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness... Losing personality, one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir; and there rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity" (Woolf, 1967, pp. 99-100). Minogue indicates that Woolf embeds the ideology of "nihility" in the novel through the characters' consciousness of death and abstraction, which is an issue that modernist writers usually pay attention to (Ziyang, 2023, p.108).

In *Orlando*, Orlando the main character traces back memories of her life as a long tunnel of time. She could not help being shocked by her existing in the present moment. The very clock strikes dispatched her memories. Tension overwhelms her abruptly for "whenever the gulf of time gaped and let a second through some unknown danger might come with it" (Woolf, 1928, pp. 287-88). From that moment when "the whole of her darkened and settled" (Ibid. 282), we should understand that she is "one and entire" (Ibid. 288) and that for the first time one experiences time as a passage toward death (Hussey, 1986). For Rhoda in *The Waves*, her sense of being dedicated to life equals the feeling of being committed to prison; due to the strains that she constantly experiences when thinking of the way she lives her body. She therefore, "does not want to die, but cannot be at home in her body, and so lives in a twilight between life and death" (Ibid. 17).

Bernard is one of seven characters in *The Waves* and he is Woolf's image of the artist in search of a whole vision of life. Henceforth, he is the one to speak first and last in the novel. In the concluding soliloquy, he utters the summing up statement (Young, 1986): "Now to sum...Now to explain to you the meaning of my life" (Woolf, 1931, p.94). Bernard is the androgynous inspired character who reaches a perception of the mystery of life throughout his own existence. He uncovers the symbols and language that transmit the human spirit ahead further from life's disillusionment so as he can confront death. Whilst his friend Rhoda surrenders to what she terms the wonderful temptation of death, Bernard becomes aware of the necessity of fighting the "enemy" (Ibid. 96). Bernard realizes that he travelled "full circle from the womb to the womb" (Young, 1986, p. 96).

Bernard should attain a different outlook of life by valuing the "moment", a word that he keeps repeating all over the novel. In *Moments of Being* Woolf contends that "moments of being" are rooted in "moments of non-being" (Woolf, 1976, p. 71).

Bernard is aware of the balance one should maintain between claiming an utterly separate personality and sustaining the "solitude necessary for true Selfhood". He recognizes the necessity to have other people to inspire meaning to his words and existence for his self (Ibid). Bernard notices: "We use our friends to measure our own stature" (Woolf, 1931, p. 90). His life reflects a double portrait picturing the possession of many selves and that of one Self (Young, 1986). He wonders "Am I all of them? Am I one and distinct? I do not know" (Woolf, 1931, p. 288). "I do not believe in separation. We are not single. Also I wish to add to my collection of valuable observation upon the true nature of human life" (Ibid. 67). "All divisions are merged—they act like one man" (Ibid. 67). By the end of the novel, Bernard says, "Yes, this is the eternal renewal, the incessant rise and fall and fall and rise again. And in me too the wave rises" (Ibid. 297).

Besides, Bernard is in constant search for relationships and order. He claims for his own position within that very order using language in the best possible meaningful way (Bolton, 1997). "I must open the little trapdoor," he says, "and let out those linked phrases in which I run together whatever happens so that instead of incoherence there is perceived a wandering thread, lightly joining one thing to another" (Woolf, 1959, p. 49). Bernard is looking for his own story using phrases; the word he uses to mean language: "phrases that come down beautifully with all their feet on the ground" (Ibid. 238), phrases "to be used when [he] ha[s] found the one true story, the one story to which all these phrases refer" (Ibid, 187) (Bolton, 1997, p. 43)

As part of his expertise in using language, Bernard performs the role of depicting the 'nature of life' using metaphors. He describes it as having "its concord and its discord, and its tunes on top and its complicated bass beneath" and that life is "a solid substance shaped like a globe which we turn about in our fingers" (Woolf, 2008, p. 193). He is also assigned the role of portraying the nature of all the other characters in the novel. He perceives "Louis as stone-carved sculpturesque, Neville as scissor-cutting, Susan with her crystal eyes, the dancing Jinny and the nymph-like Rhoda whose fountain is always wet" (Beate Frigstad, 2008, p. 26) (Woolf, 2000, p. 87). Besides, he illustrates the interests of his friends: "With Neville, let's discuss Hamlet", With Louis, science. With Jinny, love" (Ibid. 197). Bernard proceeds as storyteller, but he acts as if he is not one: But in order to make you understand, to give you my life, I must tell you a story - and there are so many, and so many -stories of childhood, stories of school, love, marriage, death and so on; and none of them are true. Yet like children we tell each other stories, and to decorate them we make up these ridiculous, flamboyant, beautiful phrases. How tired I am of stories, how tired I am of phrases that come down beautifully with all their feet on the ground. (Woolf, 2000, p. 183)

Bernard's is the most forceful wave in the novel and it acts as an energy that moves him forward: "And in me too the wave rises. It swells; it arches its back. I am aware once more of a new desire, something rising beneath me like a proud horse whose rider first spurs and then pulls back" (Ibid. 228). By the end of the novel, the journey between life and death is pictured as a gigantic rising wave. The waves elevate themselves with force to attain a crescendo illustrated by an inner struggle: "Against you I will fling myself, unvanquishing and unyielding O Death! The waves broke on the shore" (Ibid. 228). A conflict

between life and death takes place within the ego. Henceforth, the novel ends with a depiction of a struggling spirit (Beate Frigstad, 2008, p. 78). The same power of a struggling spirit is experienced recalling the moth's heroic fight to outlive death.

### Conclusion

A fascination with death and its capacity to overthrow life unvanquished, inspired the writing of this essay. Virginia Woolf's essay *The Death of the Moth's* leitmotiv is the ubiquitous nature of death and its ability to shatter life. However, what was fascinating about this text is the power of an atomic creature to display courage, resilience, and persistence in the face of death, its predator. Its willingness to live, prevail and outlive death were not to escape notice. This constant battle against death proves perennial as every mortal is undertaking it consciously or unconsciously. Some resolve to surrender and die, some fight ferociously, some end up insane or committing suicide. This had been the main concern of Virginia Woolf, characterizing her personal life and the main themes she tackled in her fictional texts. Her characters diverge from victims of insanity, suicide and an obsession with death like Septimus, Rhoda and Orlando, to fighters for life and conquerors of death like the moth and Bernard. Each story is conjured up by its teller who has the choice to celebrate her victory or dig up her tomb depending on the nature of relationship that binds life to death; foes or successors.

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