

## I now, I then

*Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf's 1925 stream of consciousness novel, is set over the course of one day and alternates between two stories: a society hostess preparing for an important party and a shell-shocked war veteran on his way to a psychiatric assessment. Though they never meet, both Clarissa, the protected insider and Septimus, the social outcast, are haunted by the past. As the day draws to a close, news of Septimus' death is borne into Clarissa's party and she must make a choice. Opening with an excerpt from Woolf's recorded essay, *On Craftsmanship, I now I then* is a journey into the writing of *Mrs Dalloway*, interweaving narrative fragments from the novel with aspects of Woolf's autobiography including the experience of drawing on her own mental illness as subject matter.

## Becomings

*On or about December 1910 human nature changed.*  
Virginia Woolf

Written in an epoch of recalibration in every sphere including the roles and rights of women, modes of representation in art and literature, and rapid advances in cosmology, Woolf's iconoclastic 1928 novel *Orlando* centres around a fantastical figure who journeys through three hundred years without growing old, and changes sex along the way. Relationships prove transient, even with himself, while relativity and plasticity define her experience of time and space. *Becomings* presents *Orlando's* dizzying wide-angle vision of a vast, ever-altering universe in which life is energy passing through a multiplicity of forms – a brief, gorgeous flaring of insect wings, gestating, emerging, extinguishing and moving on.

## Tuesday

Grand and elegiac, *The Waves* (1931) is Woolf's most experimental novel, conceived in response to her own childlessness and the contrasting fierce maternity of her sister Vanessa. In the novel, the voices of six people growing from childhood to old age are punctuated by symbols of natural decay and renewal, the most important of which is the ever-returning sea. Responding to Woolf's unique fascination with underwater imagery in all her writing, *Tuesday* merges themes of *The Waves* with a portrayal of the writer's suicide by drowning. As Woolf counts her steps towards the river Ouse and her final journey, so too the world of her novel moves towards abstraction and silence.