

'At last I am alone', from the diary of Dora Carrington

Selected by Femi Oyebo

IN OTHER WORDS

At last I am alone. At last there is nothing between us. I have been reading my letters to you in the library this evening. You are so engraved on my brain that I think of nothing else. Everything I look at is part of you. And there seems no point in life now you are gone. I used to say: 'I must eat my meals properly as Lytton wouldn't like me to behave badly when he was away.' But now there is no coming back. No point in 'improvements'. Nobody to write letters to. Only the interminable long days which never seem to end and the nights which end all too soon and turn to dawns. All gaiety has gone out of my life and I feel old and melancholy. All I can do is to plant snow drops and daffodils in my graveyard! Now there is nothing left. All your papers have been taken away. Your clothes have gone. Your room is bare. In a few months no traces will be left. Just a few book plates in some books and never again, however long I look out of the window, will I see your tall thin figure walking across the path past the dwarf pine past the stumps, and then climb the ha-ha and come across the lawn. Our jokes have gone for ever. There is nobody now to make 'disçerattas' with, to laugh with over particular words. To

discuss the difficulties of love, to read Ibsen in the evening. And to play cards when we were too 'dim' for reading. These mourning [sic] sentinels that we arranged so carefully. The shiftings to get the new rose Corneille in the best position. They will go, and the beauty of our library 'will be over'. – I feel as if I was in a dream, almost unconscious, so much of me was in you.

* * *

And I thought as I threw the rubbish on the bonfire, 'So that's the end of his spectacles. Those spectacles that have been his companion all these years. Burnt in a heap of leaves.' And those vests the 'bodily companions' of his days now are worn by a carter in the fields. In a few years what will be left of him? A few books on some shelves, but the intimate things that I loved, all gone.

And soon even the people who knew his pale thin hands and the texture of his thick shiny hair, and grisly beard, they will be dead and all remembrance of him will vanish. I watched the gap close over others but for Lytton one couldn't have believed (because one did not believe it was ever possible) that the world would go on the same.

Dora de Houghton Carrington (1893–1932) trained as an artist at the Slade School of Art, London. She reportedly lived in a *ménage à trois* with her husband Ralph Partridge and the writer and critic Lytton Strachey. Carrington wrote this diary entry in the spring of 1932, a few months after the death of Strachey and shortly before she took her own life. Dairy extract from Garnett D (ed.) (1970) *Carrington: Letters and Extracts from Her Diaries*. Jonathan Cape.

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Correction

CORRECTION

Gupta S, Fiertag O, Warner J (2009) Rare and unusual dementias. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*; 15: 364–371.

On p. 371 of the above, MCQ3 should read:

- 3 Regarding CJD:
- a sporadic CJD is the least common form
 - b 1–2 Hz triphasic periodic sharp EEG changes are rare in sporadic CJD
 - c in variant CJD, EEG is often abnormal
 - d age at onset in familial CJD is usually older than in sporadic CJD
 - e in sporadic CJD there is negative tonsil biopsy for prion protein.

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