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From Warfare Zones to Word Zones: Studying the Contagious Power of Trauma in Fiction, with Emphasis on Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*

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Abstract

This study examines the connection between Virginia Woolf's personal traumatic experiences and the depiction of trauma in *Mrs. Dalloway*, focusing on the concept of trauma contagion. Trauma is typically defined as an experience that overwhelms psychological stability and is often accompanied by symptoms such as anxiety, flashbacks, and avoidance behaviors. Woolf portrays trauma as a deeply rooted affliction that extends beyond individuals to families and society. This analysis contributes to existing literature by exploring Septimus Smith's character, whose suffering reflects the psychological wounds of World War I. His portrayal highlights the connection between trauma and mental illness, emphasizing its lasting consequences. Drawing from her own

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experiences, Woolf profoundly conveys psychological suffering, reminding readers of the widespread impact of violence. The study argues that Woolf's intention was not merely to depict postwar psychological trauma realistically but also to critique its consequences through satire. By analyzing the novel's context, it becomes evident that Mrs. Dalloway serves as both a representation and a critique of trauma's pervasive effects on individuals and society.

Keywords: Contagious, Trauma, Society, Inner Thoughts, War impact.

"من ميادين الحرب إلى عوالم الأدب: كشف القوة المعدية للصدمة في الروايات، مع التركيز على رواية فرجينيا وولف "السيدة دالواي""

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الـمستخلـص

تتناول هذه الدراسة العلاقة بين التجارب الصادمة التي مرت بها فرجينيا وولف وتصوير الصدمة في روايتها السيدة دالاواي، مع التركيز على مفهوم انتقال الصدمة. تُعرَّف الصدمة بأنها تجربة تفوق قدرة الفرد على التكيف النفسي، وغالبًا ما تترافق مع أعراض مثل القلق، واسترجاع الذكريات المؤلمة، والسلوكيات التجنبية. تسلط الدراسة الضوء على كيفية تقديم وولف للصدمة كظاهرة متجذرة تتجاوز الأفراد لتشمل العائلة والمجتمع، مما يعكس فهماً عميقاً للطبيعة المعقدة لهذه الظاهرة. وتساهم الدراسة في الأدبيات النقدية من خلال تحليل شخصية سيبتيموس سميث، التي تجسد المعاناة النفسية الناجمة عن الحرب العالمية الأولى، حيث يُبرز تصويره العلاقة بين الصدمة والاضطرابات النفسية، ويكشف عن تداعياتها المستمرة. وبالاعتماد على تجاربها الشخصية، تعبر وولف عن المعاناة النفسية بعمق، مسلطةً الضوء على التأثيرات الواسعة للعنف على المستويين الفردي والمجتمعي. وتجادل الدراسة بأن هدف وولف لم يكن مجرد توثيق الصدمة النفسية الناجمة عن الحرب بطريقة واقعية، بل تقديم نقد ساخر لنتائجها وآثارها بعيدة المدى. ومن خلال تحليل السياق السردي للرواية،

يتضح أن *السيدة دالاواي* لا تقتصر على تصوير الصدمة، بل تقدم أيضاً رؤية نقدية تسلط الضوء على امتداد تأثيراتها داخل النسيج الاجتماعي والثقافي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: معدية، صدمة، مجتمع، الأفكار الداخلية، تأثير الحرب.

1. INTRODUCTION

Trauma is a term that refer to the psychological underpinnings of human experience. It's a complex issue that is often analyzed from multiple perspectives, but it can be overlooked or misrepresented in certain contexts by society. Much of the problem has to do with how it's perceived—in other words, how people perceive trauma vs. what trauma actually is. This discrepancy in perception often leads to misunderstandings and stigmatization surrounding trauma. Society tends to view trauma as a sign of weakness or something that can easily be overcome, disregarding its profound impact on individuals' mental well-being. However, understanding the true nature of trauma is crucial in order to deliver adequate care and promote healing for those traumatized cases. One must first begin to comprehend what War Trauma (or PTSD) actually is and why it occurs to properly comprehend and combat this very real epidemic of the condition. As if we could forget, PTSD has been a problem ever since the Great War, WWII, the Vietnam War, and the 2014 war with ISIS.

Yes, there is a debate over this topic. A word's definition might cause disagreements between people.

Let us take a moment to clear things up for ourselves... What is war trauma? How can it be contiguous through literature? A severe trauma that impacts one of the senses might cause post-traumatic stress disorder. It may be physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual, and it may result in the emergence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTS). This syndrome may appear at any point following the conclusion of experience. It takes time for PTSD to develop, and symptoms may not appear for years or decades after the initial incident (Oxford English Online Dictionary, 2021).

Regarding how Freud defined the term "Trauma," he provided the situation as following details:

> "When our protective walls are breached through horrific incidents, the results can be deep and long-lasting, frequently showing that the breach was psychological as well as physical. Individuals may engage in painful activities that appear to be repeated acts of self-destruct while their defenses are down, creating the sense that their future is dismal" (29).

The fundamental tenet is that different people react in a different way to the same circumstances. In other words, not the same reaction, not everyone who experiences a traumatic event will experience psychological trauma. In addition to being interdisciplinary, trauma has strong connections to the fields of psychology, sociology, history, war, politics, and, most importantly, literature. Trauma necessitates an integrative function because it is a recent event. It starts a movement that symbolizes a transformative event; the path of misery and suffering leads ultimately to realization and understanding.

Throughout recorded history, from prehistoric times to the present day, causes for trauma have covered a vast spectrum of impacts, including extraterrestrial bodies, mystical and supernatural encounters, atmospheric changes, mysterious forces, accusations of magic, moral weaknesses, bodily illnesses, and even the impact of widespread political and cultural beliefs (Fussell, 1975, 2). This exploration delves into the complex and ever-evolving understanding of trauma and its origins, shedding light on the diverse perspectives that have shaped our comprehension of this deeply human experience. According to Elaine Showalter (1997) in her book *Histories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Media,* hysteria was frequently connected to women before World War I. Before the eruption of the First World War in 1914, hysteria was largely thought to be a feminine illness during the 19th century. The masculine psychological discomfort brought on by the conflict was described using phrases like "war-neurosis" or "shell shock," which depicted these men as military heroes. This gendered perspective of hysteria led to this. Showalter (1997) provided the following succinct summary of this dichotomy: " Hysteria became a pejorative term for femininity in a dualism that demoted the more honorable masculine type to a lower tier. " (292). A third observation made by Showalter (1997) is that "Men's womanish, homosexual, or childish tendencies were described as the cause of shell shock" (323). Therefore, men's experiences of discomfort during the war were referred to as shell shock or war neurosis, while women's psychological breakdowns were referred to as hysteria.

The first accounts of troops experiencing nervousness and mental shock in the British medical press emerged in November 1914. Veterans' symptoms were not attributed to the physical impacts of exploding shells, but rather to exposure, such as the extreme strain and stress of the fighting line or the disheartening impact of the horrific sights and sounds of modern battlefronts (Loughran, 2017). In the next few months, " Although he was not required to coin the word, Captain Charles Samuel Myers was the first academic to publish a paper case in a medical journal in 1915 that was dedicated to illustrating shell shock" (Myers, 1915). From that point onwards, the phrase began to be often used in reference to the diagnosis of war. The term "shell shock" quickly gained popularity and became widely recognized as a psychological condition resulting from the traumas of

war. The study shed light on the psychological toll that warfare takes on soldiers, highlighting the importance of addressing mental health in combat situations.

The representation of trauma in literature and cultural studies has grown significantly in relevance in recent decades. Trauma terms have been a popular subject in creative work as well, making them a major subject in literature and everyday existence. Many critiques and studies on trauma in movies, literature, and society immediately followed important publications on this topic throughout the 1990s, such as Cathy Caruth's works collection "Trauma: Explorations in Memory" (1995) and her book "Unclaimed Experience" (1996). It grows increasingly and become essential to study trauma literature to show how trauma narratives address historical, social, real-world, cultural, and educational issues while offering insights into traumatic occurrences. By providing a more complete consideration of the relevance of really painful events, trauma fiction has a moral purpose. compared to other methods of trauma research from an individual, ethnic, and holistic standpoint. Professor Laurie Vickroy claims that "Because literary and artistic approaches to trauma give a socio-cultural framework that enables readers to comprehend how viewpoint and public policy connect with individual experiences, they serve as a crucial supplement to historical and psychological study." (158). Literary portrayals of tragedy have the power to both personally and empathetically connect with readers while also provoking critical thought. This multifaceted approach can help society comprehend and support those who are affected by traumatic occurrences in today's society (Schönfelder, 2013).

In accordance with Professor Caruth's theories, readers can better understand how traumatic events might be conceived within the framework of trauma by viewing Freud's controversial book *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) as a history of trauma. Traumatic incidents may be recalled as persistent, delayed ghostly sensations comparable to the sporadic episodes that occur during traumatic neurosis (Caruth, 5). Caruth argues that traumatic events are not simply actions of the past incidents; rather, they continue to haunt individuals in the present. This understanding highlights the importance of providing support and resources to help individuals navigate the long-lasting effects of trauma in today's society. Karen DeMeester noticed a change in contemporary modernist literature in 1998 and noted that it had transformed into what is now known as trauma literature. These modernist works usually display styles that resemble the psychological marks of trauma survivors, and their themes frequently convey confusion and hopelessness (DeMeester, 1998, 1-2). Similar to the challenges faced by people who have personally experienced trauma, these books pose important ethical issues and impose duties on both writers and readers. According to DeMeester's framework for defining trauma theory, which rose to prominence in the 1980s and 1990s, modernist authors do a good job of capturing the wounded mind.

It is noteworthy that, long before American doctors identified trauma as a mental disorder in the 1980s, particularly in the form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), modernist authors found it difficult to portray a psychological state called "The Haunting Trauma." For many years to come, psychiatrists will face challenges because of this condition.

Regarding how trauma is portrayed in literature, the "Fact vs. Fiction" fallacy can be harmful. Readers of this type of writing may want an exact representation of their own traumatic experience and hope to discover a discussion of the feelings and results that followed. Because these novels investigate the transpersonal part of collective memory that impacts an entire civilization in addition to the individual, authors who write on the subject of communal traumas face a number of challenges. Novels about trauma typically take their cues from documents and eyewitness testimonies, thus there is a clear factual and historical component to them. The author Dori Laub (1992, 57) claims that the reader of this fictitious work "becomes a participant and co-owner of the tragic event." Literature that depicts great tragedy encourages "mutual acknowledgement of a common understanding" (Laub 1992, 64). According to Anne Whitehead, various cultural groups' need to represent or make visible specific historical experiences of trauma has resulted in the creation of numerous major works of contemporary fiction. In the trauma novel, a major trauma is restated through a reconstruction process, and throughout this process, the reader's response to the literary work assumes both a personal and transpersonal dimension (2004, 3-4).

Literature written during the foremost part of the turn of the period, such as works influenced by the Great War, becomes especially clear from this perspective. In order to develop a separate genre of war writing, many soldier-writers drew inspiration from their personal experiences, hardships, and observations during combat. However, by forgoing specific and vivid portrayals, modernist narratives cultivate a pessimistic environment as opposed to providing straightforward depictions of the violence and tragedies of war. They don't openly criticize the war, practice didacticism, or disseminate overt propaganda for it. Instead, they illustrate the effects of the conflict by highlighting the emotional pain that people went through. The backdrop that modernist authors create enables readers to empathize with people and experience the profound psychological pain they endure. By encouraging readers to consider the human cost of war, this approach seeks to evoke deep understanding and insight (DeMeester, 1998). By concentrating on people's emotional experiences, modernist authors hope to give readers a better grasp of how the war affected people. They portray the long-lasting effects on the participants' physical and mental health through their creative narrative and emotive descriptions. This strategy challenges readers to think critically about the need for war and explore other avenues for achieving peace while acting as a potent reminder of the terrible results of conflict. For example, Etherington (2007) explains that the reflective approach is a useful tool for

understanding and assessing our experiences as well as the world we live in. This method enables people to get a greater awareness of themselves and the world around them by encouraging them to examine their feelings, reactions, emotions, and behaviors in a nonjudgmental way (16). People may learn more about their own values, beliefs, and prejudices by practicing reflection, which can eventually result in personal development and better decision-making skills. We can monitor our reactions, manage our actions, and get a better understanding of how we engage with the outside world, other people, and other circumstances. This reflective process is essential to many fields, including literature, because it constantly alters our perception of the cosmos on several levels. Self-awareness is just one facet of an all-encompassing, dynamic process.

Notably for civilians affected by traumatic incidents during the Iraqi combat war in Mosul after the liberation of the city from ISIS, who suffered from violence and fear that were extremely high among them as they witnessed terrorism, destruction, violence, military operations, the loss of close relatives or friends, or damage to their homes. Most of these survivors of that liberation were affected by traumatic incidents and experienced stress reactions that did not go away on their own and may even have worsened over time. These individuals may develop responses to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). "According to a study approved by the Medicine Department of the University of Mosul, the investigation was a data collection questionnaire survey on student participants, all of whom resided in Mosul and stayed there during the ISIS aggression and the liberation operation. A survey form was developed comprising details related to the demographic properties of respondents (age, sex, and residence), including existing health measurements used to assess PTSD in participants. The results of the investigation showed that all the participants included in the survey had been subjected to trauma and violence during the ISIS invasion and rescue military operation, with 100% of participants affected." (Zubair, Omaima, 2019, 8). Such influential experiences may shape people in many forms, not all of them negative. It is imperative to remember that rehabilitation from any trauma is possible, and it can lead to a normal, peaceful life again. As people recover from trauma, they may emerge stronger than before, possibly more caring and with a more balanced, reasonable perspective on what is necessary for their lives after what they have experienced

In literature, reflective writing allows writers to take a step back and see their own experiences objectively and from a different perspective. This meditative technique allows us to look at our inner emotional stories and issues, reflect on life, and derive meaning from it. For poets and fiction writers, this introspective mindset becomes a crucial component of the creative process, enabling them to comprehend others and themselves on a deeper level. Because of the strong interpersonal skills and emotional development that come from this reflective practice, writers may effectively collect information and convey the feelings and phenomena of others via their writing (McKee,

1997, 141). This skill distinguishes poets and fiction writers from other narrative genres is their capacity to understand and depict the human condition. They are able to write stories that connect with readers on a deeper level and promote understanding by exploring their own feelings and challenges. Their writing is enhanced by this introspective approach, which also adds to the larger cultural discussion about what it means to be human.

Luce Kapler (2017) highlights how thoughtful writing may have a transformative effect, particularly when it comes to poetic inquiry. She contends that the act of writing poetry gives writers access to higher layers of meaning and gives readers a glimpse into their lives, frequently bringing to light surprising revelations (Owton, 2017, 5–6). To meaningfully convey their experiences to their audience, frequently resulting in surprising revelations (7). By using poetry as a medium for self-expression, authors are able to explore their feelings, thoughts, and reactions in depth and get a deeper comprehension of their experiences and identities. Poets can evoke feelings and connections in their readers that would not have been attainable through other means of communication by skillfully combining words and imagery to convey the essence of their experiences in a distinctive and potent way.

In the sphere of literature, reflective writing functions as a link between individual experiences, sentiments, and the tales that help us make sense of the world. It helps authors to engage readers more deeply, generating empathy, insight, and the examination of different ideas. In this way, the reflective authors can take the readers into their worlds and help them to feel what the characters feel, thus creating a strong bond. By writing about real life situations that the authors have experienced, the writers help the readers to change their attitudes and think out of the box. This kind of writing especially helps in promoting respect and tolerance in the society and therefore should be embraced in the of world literature. Thus, the writing also performs the function of a means of self-expression and development, as the authors explore their own ideas and emotions. It offers an opportunity to think about oneself and may result in finding some answers that will interest the readers and make them feel understood. Hence, through this process of writing, authors do not only embrace and expand their understanding of the world, but also add to the knowledge of the world. A person who listens too carefully and seriously to a patient, who has been through a lot, makes the spouse become suspicious as if they have a disease that can be caught through touching. This suspicion arises from the belief that deep engagement with someone's traumatic experiences can somehow transfer their pain or trauma to others. Well, it's suspected because someone deeply enmeshed into traumatic experiences of another creates, among many people, a sensation of some kind of transport of pain or trauma energy into them. It should nonetheless be emphasized that listening and emotional acceptance of traumatized individuals form part of their course to healing. By an offer of a compassionate ear, one makes them feel both understood and

heard, hence one achieves connectivity and support. In her 1997 book *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman claims, "Trauma is contagious." If a therapist treats the victim of a tragedy or atrocity, then his or her mind gets worn out. To put it minimally, such as in the case of experiencing just the same feelings of dread, anger, and helplessness as does the victim. That experience is referred to as "secondary traumatization" or "vicarious traumatization" (9). For Pearlman and Saakvitne (1995), "vicarious traumatization" refers to the negative impact that trauma therapy has on the psychotherapist.

This phenomenon occurs because therapists often empathize deeply with their patients and absorb their emotions, leading to a significant impact on their own mental well-being. Consequently, therapists need to prioritize self-care and seek support to prevent burnout and mitigate the effects of secondary traumatization. After experiencing the horror, the traumatized victim often describes their experiences in a fragmented, inconsistent, and highly emotional manner that undermines their credibility and so supports the twin imperatives of concealment and honesty. After realizing the reality, the surfer may begin the process of healing. However, the tale of the traumatic event is rarely told vocally, but rather just as a symptom, and concealment rules the day. Because they are impacted by the "transferred." emotions from the traumatic survivors, the victim's first trauma evolved to indirectly generate a second trauma that impacts and affects the psychiatry or family involvement in the act of listening, as well as the victim's recurring symptoms. The devastating influence of the patient's experience is clearly experienced by the listener as they engage in the transference in which the traumatized survivor enacts the distressing events and feelings. This phenomenon can lead to a vicious cycle, as the listener's own mental health and well-being may be negatively impacted by repeatedly witnessing and absorbing the traumatic experiences of others. Over time, this can result in emotional exhaustion, compassion fatigue, and even the development of secondary trauma symptoms in the listener themselves. It is crucial for professionals in helping roles to prioritize self-care and seek support to prevent the detrimental effects of secondary trauma.

The impact of trauma can be felt in many different spatial directions. In contrast to those who live or work with traumatized people, observers who hear or witness the horrific incident can also become traumatized as a result of their proximity and experience "indirectly secondary traumatization" (Degloma, 2009, 109). The concept of a traumatized event not only has an impact on the traumatized victims but also on their close friends and the audience implicitly through terrible events or when they observe their distressing position. Analysts have studied how therapists listen to patients while they undergo trauma treatment. They have found that therapists themselves can experience a form of secondary traumatization known as "vicarious trauma" (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995). This occurs when therapists empathize deeply with their patients and

internalize their traumatic experiences, leading to emotional distress and potential burnout. Although survivors might evoke such a powerful emotion that the therapist is "vicariously" traumatized, the issue of vicarious trauma in people's responses to typical processes has hardly been examined by story scholars. "Of course, one of these hearing impairments is the possibility of the trauma's "contagion," Caruth said (10). People nonetheless have what are called intrusions—memories, incidents, flashbacks, and visions that force them to again suffer the horrible experiences—even when they are not at blame for the dreadful occurrences. According to E. Ann Kaplen (2005) in his book, *The Political of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, it is a shift in the therapist's inner viewpoint, which is a normal and fair consequence of personal engagement with the client's mourning experiences and memories (40). Because of this, secondary traumatization frequently impacts and reaches both listeners and onlookers during therapy, making their scenario contagious and traumatic. They exhibit an excessively violent fight-or-flight response and live in a condition of stress-induced hyperarousal, similar to those who have experienced trauma themselves. They can have trouble sleeping and feel absolutely helpless. These symptoms of trauma transmission may seriously interfere with their day-to-day functioning, impairing their capacity for focus and regular routines. Additionally, individuals experiencing trauma contagion may also develop feelings of guilt or shame for not being directly involved in the traumatic event, further exacerbating their distress.

As noted earlier, according to the clinical professor at Yale University Laub's (1998) book *Bearing Witness or The Vicissitudes of Listening*, suffering has an impact on others who hear the sufferer's tragic story or experience their traumatic situations and reenactments, in addition to the listener who engages in transference. In the words of Felman & Laub (1992), " The trauma witness becomes a subject and co-owner of the horrific event; by focusing solely on listening, he learns to partially experience trauma in himself " (57-58). The listener thus begins to feel the confusion, harm, anxiety, dread, and arguments that the trauma victim goes through as a consequence of the survivor's interaction with the trauma actions. Transference, acting out, and empathy are all integrally linked to secondary vicarious trauma, whether directly or indirectly. Indirect trauma demonstrates how trauma recurs through storytelling and listening. Even if the listener employs resistance mechanisms voluntarily or unintentionally, there is still a chance that they could fall into the gap created by vicarious listening or hearing the tragic stories that the narrative tells in front of them with great emotion and passion (to demonstrate how much they suffered for the listeners). This is also true for readers: what is it about stories that captivates them? is the question that modernist narrative writers most likely considered when they were honing their craft. Modernists understand that readers want to see characters' emotions through their body language, facial expressions, and reactions because they have been there themselves. In other words, show, don't tell. Rather than just telling us that a character is afraid, show us how afraid they are by

demonstrating how their body tenses and reacts, which will help readers understand the character's dread as well as that of others. This point of view emphasizes how crucial it is for readers to be aware of these emotions and use this awareness when reading traumatized stories that reflect what writers want you to feel. Particularly, readers or viewers with negative records will be more susceptible to feeling the effects of emotional stories.

According to DeMeester (1998), " for example, the post-war century's revolutionary novels depict the psychological disarray, instability, and disintegration of survivors following a horrific experience "(1). DeMeester's observation highlights the profound impact of traumatic experiences on an individual's mental situation. The depiction of fragmentation, chaos, and instability in post-war novels serves as a powerful testament to the long-lasting effects of such events on survivors' psyches. This would imply that modernist tales emphasize characters' feelings and thoughts rather than their deeds. The "inwardness" of experience via reflections is another thing that they, like other modernist writers, wish to maintain and include in their work. This has gained appeal in post-war literature. Along with modern viewpoints on how to engage with the outside world, this also encompasses novel "ways of thinking—paths to philosophical structures." According to a fundamental category, the topics and forms of modernist impressionism also grew in new ways related to visual language, spatiality, and time-life.

These new traditions of using visual language, spatiality, and time-life allowed modernist authors to break away from traditional narrative structures and experiment with fragmented storytelling techniques. By incorporating these elements into their writing, they aimed to capture the complexity and fluidity of human experience in a rapidly changing world. Additionally, modernist impressionism also embraced the exploration of subconscious thoughts and emotions, blurring the boundaries between reality and imagination. The 1914–18 world war produced a large number of traumatized soldiers, and the literature of the century was influenced by its enormous repercussions, which were felt not only in people's physical surroundings but also in their psychological circumstances. The aftermath of the war led to a shift in literary themes as authors began to delve into the psychological effects of trauma and the fragmentation of identity. This exploration of the human psyche further contributed to the complexity and depth of literature in the 20th century. It also had an impact on psychoanalysis, which was becoming more popular in the early 1920s, around the same time that it had on modernist writing (Terentowicz, 2018). Novelists of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries attempted to give the war cultural importance; it is no accident that many of these writers, like Virginia Woolf, were civilian survivors who wrote about their experiences and observations during the conflict and supported their arguments with examples. It is no accident that many of these authors, including Virginia Woolf, were civilian eyewitnesses who wrote about their experiences and observations during the conflict and provided

examples to back up their claims that the war had cultural significance. These writers examined themes of trauma, loss, and the disintegration of social norms in order to look into the psychological impacts of war. By combining their own experiences with fictional tales, they aimed to portray the true essence of the battle and its impact on humanity. In addition to providing readers with a form of catharsis, their works helped them cope with the profound changes brought about by World War I.

The technique of trauma in Woolf's fiction has sparked widespread interest and been the subject of numerous critical analyses over the years. The art, as she puts it, is connected to "a war shock that cannot be forgotten" (Tylee,1990 150). The opinions of her readers and many critics at the time may have been impacted by her writing style. Additionally, she contributed to the development of her standing as a wartime observer and reflective writer. In order to distinguish the psychology of the survivor's trauma, she used her books to highlight the modernist literary genre's influence. Her storytelling method preserves the internal instability brought on by trauma rather than reorganizing it as more traditional stories do. By embracing the modernist literary genre, she was able to capture the fragmented and disjointed nature of survivor trauma, mirroring the shattered psyche of those who experienced it. This unique approach not only set her apart from other writers of her time but also allowed her readers to truly immerse themselves in the raw emotions and psychological complexities of her characters. If Woolf isn't solely to blame for producing affected characters like Septimus, his culture is at least the trigger for it. Woolf illustrates the contagious traumatic symptoms between the effected case and society and touches upon the reasons for this contagious Septimus Smith, an innocent individual and highly dreamer person, enlists to fight in the war because it is the right thing to do. After all, he witnessed the death of a close friend in front of him with a grounded miner, and he feels as though he is defending his fatally constrained notions of what culture stands for. However, Septimus suffers from severe post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of the horrors of battle. Woolf illustrates how cultural norms and social pressures may worsen a person's mental health through her depiction of Septimus's suffering. Furthermore, Woolf highlights the interdependence of people and society by examining the infectious nature of trauma, implying that the consequences of one person's suffering may have an impact on a whole community.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 ECHOES OF TRAUMA IN WOOLF'S WORLD

Wars will leave permanent scars that will extend beyond the battlefield as it affects not only the warriors but also the communities that they come back to. Virginia Woolf might not be known for capturing the sheer brutality and impacts of war, but she encapsulates its psychological consequences beautifully in her novel, Mrs. Dalloway. Through the character of Septimus Smith, Woolf tries to depict warrior's trauma and how deeply it spreads, affecting families, relationships, and even society as a whole. The

mental anguish he suffers because of his wartime experiences is a sobering reminder of the hidden scars and deep-set fear soldiers are compelled to live with in their society.

In addition to being a source of shame for Septimus, the incident spread to his close friends and the larger community, causing him to suffer from severe mental health issues after returning from the war. His experiences on the battlefield and the ensuing emotional turmoil highlight the devastating consequences of war on individuals and society as a whole The incident not only affected Septimus personally but also created a sense of fear and unease within the community. As people recognized that anybody may become a victim of the aftermath of the conflict, they became more watchful and careful. A sobering reminder of the harsh reality of war and its profound effects on people and society was provided by the tragedy. The incident served as a stark reminder of the brutal realities of war and its far-reaching impact on individuals and society. It's surprising to learn that Woolf, who isn't known for writing about the unpleasant reality of war or sex, can so beautifully explain the impacts of war experiences on social and individual personal mental health experiences, as well as their interpersonal relationships. Woolf depicts Septimus Smith as a post-war traumatized soldier who fought in the firepower of the defensive trenches in Italy during the 1914 war. Smith experienced and seen the difficult situation, and he also lost his best friend, Evans, to a landmine explosion. Since he is no longer the same naive Septimus, the loss of his close colleague severely and inevitably affects him. According to Woolf's (2005), " Septimus was no longer the same Septimus; he had struggled and was strong and courageous". His identity was drastically changed by witnessing the death of a close friend during the war, which left an enduring scar on his brain as a terrible event with extraordinary reactions. (127). The metamorphosis adjustments and the conflict between his old status and post-war state necessitate additional examination because the war has traumatized him after realizing the perilous aspect of life threats. His closest friend's painless, untimely death has left him in shell shock. The loss of his companion will haunt him till he gets back to London, manifesting as PTSD symptoms including intense depression to the surroundings, flashbacks, and certain visual and other sensory impairments.

Rather than having a psychiatric disease, Septimus was a traumatized victim who suffered from mental and psychological harm as a result of the war and the subsequent treatment he received from the same culture. The fact that Septimus was a traumatized victim and that he truly suffers from mental and psychological harm rather than a psychological disorder was unknown to critics and onlookers who had previously classified his circumstances as having schizophrenia and applied a general psychoanalytic explanation of his personality. Karen DeMasteer (1998) describes how Woolf becomes an ambassador to mimic and duplicate the wounded soldier as Septimus by using modern tools to illustrate the impact of the fight on individuals who are drawn into this fiction via empathy with war veterans:

> In order to convey the psychology of the trauma sufferer, Woolf uses the modernist structure of a story in her writing. Her style of narration preserves rather than reorganizes the psychological illness-related trauma [...] occasionally to highlight the perceptive, disorganized, and melancholy experiences a survivor has had following a traumatic occurrence. [...] that made Woolf a "instinctive pacifist," his opposition is a part of a larger movement between people and war images (1-2).

Septimus and other combat veterans who struggle to adapt to life after the war are brilliantly captured in Woolf's modernist writing style. Additionally, trauma gradually undermines a trauma survivor's faith in his previous conceptions of himself and the outside world, leading him to search for new, tenable beliefs that will give his life after the trauma meaning and order. In order to comprehend the fragmentation of consciousness that results from trauma, Woolf attempted to build her tales from the pre-speech levels of awareness of the characters in her novels (Humphrey,1954, 19–21). In order to understand how the trauma of the other characters in this fiction is caused and how the tale itself is a vital trauma, we can see from this situation that the novel requires a thorough examination of Mrs. Dalloway's trauma and her infectious symptoms.

Since Woolf's husband Leonard described her as "the least political animal that has lived since Aristotle invented the definition" (Leonard Woolf, 1967, 27), many readers have disregarded Woolf's political viewpoints, despite the fact that she places a great deal of emphasis on ethical reasoning, political criticism, and war in her writing. Wolf addresses more in-depth questions of human destiny and the purpose of life in Mrs. Dalloway, reflecting people's need for harmony and tranquility in the midst of tragedy and anxiety. Woolf depicted not just the experiences and effects of society on individuals, but also their thoughts and needs. In Mrs. Dalloway, Woolf comments on the need for serenity and peace in the face of tragedy and fear, which paints not only the demand on individuals by society but also their innermost thoughts and feelings. Trauma within *Mrs. Dalloway* can be seen to become a gendered issue between the female protagonist, Clarissa, and other minor female characters such as Septimus's wife, Lucrezia, and Elizabeth's teacher, Kilman.

2.2 FROM WOUNDED NARRATOR TO UNAWARE LISTENER: THE CONTAMINATED PERCEPTION OF TRAUMA.

Although Septimus is the main character who represents war neurosis in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa Dalloway can be seen as the unconsidered victim of the same trauma, though in less violently obvious ways. Whereas Septimus is demonstrably haunted by his experiences of war, afflicted with post-traumatic stress and hallucinations that incapacitate him, Clarissa's trauma comes through in more subtle yet deep-seated ways. She is plagued by the chronic feeling of fear, loss, and helplessness that grips her daily

life. All this emotional turmoil is linked not only to the impact of war on society but also to her personal life struggles: alienation, passage of time, and the choices she has made in her life. Her cold, distant, and isolated portrayal is indicative of a trauma that has been deep-seated and internalized, aligning with Vera Brittain's "unfriened" archetypes of war trauma. Brittain, like Woolf, a feminist, as Sarah Cole (2003) studies, illustrates women's trauma as something that is often overlooked, as it gets smothered under male soldier's suffering. Society, paying so much attention to men's physical and psychological suffering, fails to recognize distress caused to women. This broadens our conception of Clarissa as a multifaceted and gendered trauma victim whose anguish although less palpable than Smith's is equally important.

Clarissa's thoughts on her life and her decisions reveal her internalized trauma. Woolf writes:

> "She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa anymore; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway." (Woolf, 2005, 10)

In a similar vein, power relations in conversation reveal inner conflicts of self and power. The anthropomorphic one speaks first and therefore has more power and is able to interrupt the speaker, who is passive, as does Septimus when he refuses to conform to the dictates of an controlling society (Abdurrahman, Hasan, & Hazem, 2023, 53).

On other hand, the trauma that Septimus experienced, however, is more obvious and externalized. According to Woolf:

> Septimus had fought; he was brave; he was not Septimus now. He had fought in the war; he had seen his friend Evans die; he had come back to a world that no longer made sense to him."(Woolf, 2005, 127)

This quotation highlights the significant changes that war has brought about in Septimus. The tragedy of battle has shattered his identity, and he is no longer the man he once was. Woolf uses Septimus to show how inadequate society's and medicine's reactions to trauma are. Dr. Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw, Septimus's medical professionals, are unable to comprehend his situation and write off his pain as a "lack of proportion." His terrible death is eventually caused by their incapacity to understand his trauma.

The figure of Septimus's wife Lucrezia, who is profoundly impacted by his suffering, serves to highlight the infectious nature of pain. Woolf climes:

> "Lucrezia, who had been so happy, so proud, so full of hope, now found herself alone, abandoned, and terrified. She could not understand what had happened to her husband, and she felt as though she were living in a nightmare from which she could not wake" (Woolf, 2005 134).

This passage demonstrates how Septimus' trauma affects everyone in his immediate vicinity, especially his wife, who must see him suffer. Because those who are not actively participating in fighting are nonetheless profoundly impacted by the aftermath of war, Lucrezia's experience of secondary traumatization is representative of the wider social effects of war. Also, Clarissa's response to Septimus's passing also examines the listener's role in the transmission of trauma. Woolf writes:

> "She felt somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun. But she must go back. She must assemble." (Woolf, 2005, 186).

Clarissa is indirectly impacted by Septimus's anguish, highlighting the infectious nature of trauma at this moment of connection between the two. According to Woolf, trauma is a communal experience among people who witness it rather than only an individual one. According to Judith Herman, this concept is further developed in her book Trauma and Recovery:

> "Trauma spreads easily. A therapist's mind becomes exhausted when they treat a victim of a catastrophe or atrocity. To put it simply, for example, having exactly the same emotions as the victim—such as fear, rage, and powerlessness. "Vicarious traumatization" or "secondary traumatization" are terms used to describe that experience." (Herman,1997, 9)

In Mrs. Dalloway, Septimus's trauma has an indirect impact on characters like Clarissa and Lucrezia, demonstrating the idea of secondary traumatization. According to Woolf, trauma is a communal experience among those who witness it rather than only an individual one.

By demolishing a close-knit masculine group that includes some women, Brittain depicts the war as an event that separates a generation from society rather than putting men and women against one another. The disintegration of human ties is the biggest harm caused by the war to Britain. The profound sorrow of losing loved ones, like her brother, whose passing made life seem unreal, is how she conveys this: " I never thought I could truly

continue to live without the wonderful company that had supported me since I was a little child (Brittain,1993, 444).

Also, Mrs. Dalloway echoes this notion, since Clarissa's spiritual despair and emotional numbness represent the cumulative effects of war on those who remained behind. Although she did not take part in the war personally, Woolf presents Clarissa as a woman who has been profoundly impacted by it. Her pain is linked to the breakdown of conventional values and the loss of interpersonal ties, which Woolf depicts in her fractured narrative style. In the writings of Owen and Sassoon, where the breakdown of close relationships is a major factor in the alienation brought on by the war, this loss is a reflection of the broken friendships (Cole, 2003, 176-10)".

The coldness and hardness that Clarissa displays are not only emotional states, as Peter Walsh explains in the book; rather, they are signs of a more profound, existential crisis, or what he calls "the death of the soul." As a result of the severe effects of her life decisions and the larger trauma she experiences in society, Clarissa's mental world appears to be devoid of warmth and connection, suggesting a spiritual desolation. Her disengagement represents a severe loss of life, in which the soul, which was once able to achieve closeness and intense emotional involvement, becomes numb and unreachable.

Therefore, critics have argued that women opted to ignore the conflict because they were unable to handle its catastrophic repercussions. Some have argued that women were either oblivious to the conflict or incapable of understanding its full impact. The works discussed here, however, show quite clearly that women felt the war's privations and devastation just as keenly as men, although differently. They had to live through the depths of loss, fear, and enforced relinquishing of true self. In *Mrs. Dalloway* (2005), Woolf denotes this struggle where she identifies her female characters with bearing "some venerable name; love, duty, self-sacrifice" (192). Woolf streams her own feelings through these characters, allowing their lives to become a manifestation of the emotional and psychological consequence of war. Their failure to re-create themselves is no mark of indifference but a proof of the extent of their suffering that Woolf powerfully transcribes into their fractured experiences and pent-up emotions.

From her civilian perspective, Virginia Woolf was compelled to confront not only the unimaginable horrors of the "that war will end all wars" and the incomprehensible atrocities humans inflicted upon one another but also the tactical advancements that made such devastation possible. For those anxiously awaiting news or dreading the spread of battle to their shores, the rapid technological progress designed solely for destruction was both bewildering and terrifying. Villagers and city residents alike had to make sense of the war through fragmented accounts and the physical disruptions that crept into their everyday lives. Through her observations, Woolf attempted to establish a connection between her characters, whether they were soldiers, civilians, or laborers; she depicted

trauma as an all-pervasive, unavoidable force—spreading like a disease that affected everyone and transcended boundaries of occupation or identity; she extended this shared suffering beyond her characters, making readers the last witnesses to this shared experience, thus making her narratives a moving representation of trauma's lasting effects across generations.

When long-held beliefs were being questioned in a country still healing from the Great War, many individuals found it difficult to comprehend what was true and permanent. They didn't know how to live in a world that made them feel less and less important. Modernist writers like Virginia Woolf were able to produce works that were both tragic and beautiful, wounded yet whole, by utilizing new creative processes. These painters portrayed the situation of mankind at a period when it looked as though time, space, and human existence had no real plan or purpose, and when the horrors of war had seemingly destroyed civilization. Woolf not only had to navigate the volatility of a collapsing society, but she also had to deal with her own inner torment. She was powerless to protect herself from the chaos outside by utilizing her ideas, and the chaos of the civilization that had shaped her age was frequently inevitable. In response, Woolf attempted to create her own framework for understanding the world and achieving achievement. The fact that such invention can emerge from turmoil shows how resilient we are and how we can keep going when things seem hopeless. Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is a masterful example of how trauma is ubiquitous and multifaceted, stretching beyond the visible scars of war to include the more subtle but no less terrible psychological scars that people like Clarissa Dalloway suffered. While Septimus Warren Smith represents the explicit and haunting effects of war trauma, Clarissa represents a quiet, internalized struggle with alienation, fear, and existential despair. Woolf's depiction resists traditional narratives in their emphasis that trauma does not remain on the battlefield but permeates civilian life, destabilizing identity and relationship.

The analysis underlines a general tendency of society to misapprehend the experience of women's trauma, as in Vera Brittain's works: both authors present women as the unacknowledged victims of war. Clarissa's emotional desolation and spiritual numbness reflect the collective impact of war on those who stay behind, enduring a reality fragmented by loss, fear, and the collapse of traditional values. Those critics who reduce women's trauma to a lack of feeling entirely misunderstand the depth of their suffering to which Woolf powerfully gives voice through her female characters (Brittain, 1993, 124).

Ultimately, Woolf bridges the gap between the wounded narrators and unaware listeners with her modernism, implicating society-and the readers-as witnesses to the burden of trauma shared. The narratives of trauma transcend the personal and depict trauma as contamination that erases boundaries between soldier and civilian, past and present, self and other. In so doing, Woolf offers a poignant consideration of the human

price of war, continuously reminding one of the reality of trauma's all-encompassing presence in any realm of life.

3. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the study of *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf eloquently illustrates how trauma, which stems from conflict, transcends personal experiences to become a social phenomenon. Clarissa Dalloway's more subdued existential issues and Septimus Warren Smith's overt psychiatric breakdown serve as examples of how trauma is complex and infectious. Her use of stream-of-consciousness narration, fractured timelines, and the merging of internal and exterior realities are examples of modernist storytelling methods that highlight the widespread and enduring effects of traumatic experiences on both people and societies.

The work urges readers to see trauma as a shared burden with far-reaching effects by challenging the distinctions between individual and group suffering, soldier and civilian, and past and present. With his symptoms signifying society's incapacity to effectively handle the mental health crises resulting from such events, Septimus personifies the obvious wounds of war. Clarissa, on the other hand, stands for the more subdued but no less significant psychological effects of bereavement, social expectations, and existential isolation. Collectively, these stories show how trauma permeates all facets of life, influencing relationships, identity, and social standards.

Mrs. Dalloway ultimately in the end, turns into a timeless meditation on the long-lasting consequences of trauma and the fortitude needed to face them. It highlights the ability of literature to promote empathy and understanding by asking readers to reflect on the complex interactions between personal and societal experiences. Woolf's observations are as pertinent today as they were in her day because her writings not only expose the damaging effects of trauma but also promote a more accepting and compassionate way of thinking. They also make links to current debates about mental health awareness and the value of developing societal empathy for people who are dealing with psychological issues.

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