

RESEARCH ARTICLE

IMPACT OF POST - TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER IN “Mrs DALLOWAY”

SamihaBanu. S¹, Sumyirra. A²

1. Department of English Literature, Thiruvalluvar University, India

2. Department of English Literature, Thiruvalluvar University, India

Abstract

This paper mounts about the sufferings and difficulties faced by the Britains during the World War I and also the repercussion of war through the novel Mrs Dalloway written by the prominent modernist author Virginia Woolf. She alluringly represented the concept Shell Shock or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder which was caused due to the Great War through the character Septimus Warren Smith. This paper deals with the how the character Septimus struggles with the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and whether the character defeat from this disease to lead a peaceful life or he ends his life with this disease. This paper also contains a few ideas to overcome from the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Keywords: Mrs Dalloway, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Septimus, World War I

I. Introduction

When the World War I sprang up in London in 1914, the society looked forward that it will elapse quickly but it endured for four years. The World War I is otherwise called as “The Great War”. From 1914 – 1918, the consequence of The Great War were, it claimed millions of soldiers lives, millions of civilians had demised due to hunger, disease and so on. Many soldiers who returned from the war were suffered from Shell shock, which is now remarkably known as “Post Traumatic Stress Disorder” and they found difficulties in expressing their own thoughts. The droopy image of desolation overshadowed all walks of life, including literature. Men were suffering from physical and psychological stress of War, where women forced to adopt a role of masculine as taking an industrial work on factories. The most prominent works regarding the war and its long-lasting consequences were begun in its aftermath.

II. Post – Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post - Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is mental health condition which is provoked by terrifying events, either by experiencing it or by witnessing it.

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Symptoms may include,

1. **Intrusive Memories** – It recalls the unwanted distressing memories of the traumatic events. Reliving the traumatic event as if it were happening again (flashbacks. Upsetting dreams or nightmares about the traumatic event
Severe emotional distress or physical reactions on something that reminds you of the traumatic event
2. **Avoidance** – Trying to avoid thinking or talking about the traumatic event. Avoiding places, activities or people that remind you of the traumatic event
3. **Negative Changes In The Mood** – Negative thoughts about yourself, other people or the world.

Hopelessness about the future

Difficulties in maintaining close relations.

Lack of interest in activities you once enjoyed.

Feeling emotionally numb.

III. Virginia Woolf And Mrs Dalloway

Adeline Virginia Woolf is regarded as one of the most distinguished modernist writer and highly influenced by the war. During the break-down of the war Woolf was just recovering from a nervous breakdown. She reviewed the works of war poets. Her opinion on war was “We do not like war in fiction” (quoted in Lee 343). According to her war was “a time when the constructive energies of our species sleep” (Gordon 163). The effects of the War disclosed on her works. She became one of the prominent post-war artists.

Above all, in this article I would like to present a brief description on traumatic effects which represents in one of Virginia Woolf’s works

“Mrs Dalloway”, the narration depicts over a single day in London on June 1923, and it was published on 1925 by Hogarth Press.

The setting of the novel is on June 1923, though the novel was set after five years of the Great War but still it presents the effects of the people those who lived through it. My article highlights the devastation which affects the people psychologically after the Great War. Woolf herself specified the intent of writing this novel is, “I want to give life and death, sanity and insanity; I want to criticize the social system, and to show it work, at its most intense” (Woolf, 57).

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IV. Impact Of The War In The Novel

The story created with two perspectives, the first perspective is the inner monologue of the character Mrs Clarissa Dalloway preparing for the party which she hosts that evening and the second perspective is Septimus Warren Smith, a World War I veteran suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

The Characters in the novel represent the ideologies of British society following World War I. Clarissa Dalloway, the protagonist of the play is immersed in organizing a party which she hosts that night. Richard Dalloway, Lady Bruton and even Peter Walsh were belongs with Clarissa Dalloway. According to them the war is over and they hide the pain and the effects of the war. And it's evidential in their present consequences.

But in contrast side of the spectrum, the character 'Septimus Warren Smith' is the epitome of abiding the real horrors and subsided the power of England after the war, emitting his pains and sufferings that he is unable to hide.

The novel, according to the perspective of war, Septimus, the major character plays a prominent role in the narration that it is, only through his character Woolf conveys the consequences of war and the 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder'.

V. SEPTIMUS AND EFFECTS OF TRAUMA

Septimus is the veteran and suffers from Shell Shock in the Great War. He is a quirky figure in literature who clearly presents the dreadful incidents which was happened in the War and also the trauma after the combat. Woolf depicts this character as a sufferer.

The state of being skepticism is appeared in the novel earlier as the motor car passes down at Piccadilly. All the people in the street along with Clarissa examining who could be inside, they consider that it has to be the Queen or Prime Minister. Septimus is the one in the street who looks the car with panic and anxious, "as if some horror had come almost to the surface and was about to burst into flames" (15). The other people who were in the street believe that they can speak with the higher authority of the British Empire whoever in the car. During the Pre – War period, the British Empire was representing the symbol of power and pride but in post – war it is hidden behind tinted glasses.

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He has an illusion of his friend Evan, in the Regent's park as his friend appears in front of him with a war scenes. "Evans was behind the railings!" (21). This behavior is the result of the trauma which he has experienced in the war. But the other humankind doesn't understand his strange behavior. Even his wife Rezia fails to recognize his vigorous expectations which Septimus gave up. "Was cowardly for a man to say he would kill himself," The Mr Holmes advised Septimus that his strange behavior will make his wife to feel odd. But Septimus feels irritate for the prescription and advices which Mr Holmes gave him. Septimus referred Dr. Holmes and his treatment as "The rack and thumbscrew are applied. Human nature is remorseless" (98).

As England can't regain its glory, Septimus also in the same stage where he can't regain his prewar self. Dr. Holmes clearly knew about Septimus mental health and it is necessary to Septimus to regain his vigorous self. But Septimus thought that doctors were not interested in helping him, they just want to control his life.

He is mentally unstable as he lost his friend Evan in the Great War. His wife and doctors tries to recover him but he is mentally prepared that he doesn't belong to this society anymore, including to his wife. Septimus reminds how he was in his boyhood who loved Shakespeare and poetry and once he was a proffer to serve in the military. "Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress" (86). With a great inspiration he came forward to the war but after the war he switches from simplest man to the man who effects in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

VI. Trauma Ends the Life

Septimus thought he could not overcome from his long – sufferings. He determines death is the mopping up to his isolation and oppression. His in-combat fatigue will not allow him to lead his life in this world. He asks Rezia, his wife to destroy all his papers, his drawings and his scribbles because all his things were the images of illusion of the World War which frustrates him. At last, Septimus commits suicide, not because he wants to die but because he feels that he has enacted "appalling crime and had been condemned to death by human nature" (p. 96).

"I'll give it to you!"(p.149). The last words from Septimus demonstrates that his suicide is the giving way to Dr. Holmes, as Dr. Holmes arrives to take Septimus off, Septimus gives himself. This represents that Septimus gave his physical body to the doctor.

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VII.IDEAS TO COPING WITH PTSD

1. Mindfulness meditation
2. Regain physical activity
3. Aromatherapy
4. Treatment

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