



Mrs. Dalloway* Revised: The Sense of Change and Disillusionment

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Abstract

Mrs. Dalloway (1925) by Virginia Woolf is an acknowledged modernist novel which includes the sense of change and disillusionment as modernist elements. Woolf provides readers with illustrations of characters highlighting illusional reality and disillusionment throughout the novel. Although Clarissa Dalloway is not depicted as a disillusioned character within previous studies, both Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith represent disillusioned individuals in a modernist society. Thus, the aim of this article is to analyze the sense of change and disillusionment in *Mrs. Dalloway* via examining Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith as disillusioned characters who share similarities. To this end, the issues of social approval, marriage, war and trust towards institutions as products of civilization are discussed within the scope of this article.

Keywords: Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, modernist literature, disillusionment.

***Mrs. Dalloway*'in İncelenmesi: Modernist Öğeler Olarak Değişim ve Gerçeğe Uyanış Olgusu**

Öz

Virginia Woolf'un *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) isimli eseri modernist öğeler olan değişim ve gerçeğe uyanış olgusunu içeren tanınmış modernist bir romandır. Woolf, eser boyunca ilüzyonel gerçekliği ve gerçeğe uyanışı vurgulayan karakter örneklerini okuyuculara sunmaktadır. Önceki çalışmalarda Clarissa Dalloway gerçeğe uyanmış bir karakter olarak tasvir edilmemesine rağmen, hem Clarissa Dalloway hem de Septimus Warren Smith modernist bir toplumdaki gerçeğe uyanmış bireyleri temsil etmektedirler. Bu nedenle, bu

* This article is an excerpt from ongoing MA study titled "Virginia Woolf and the Great War: Change and Disillusionment in a Modernist Perspective".

This article and thesis study have been supported by Celal Bayar University Scientific Research Project Coordination Unit. Project Number: 2015-007.

Gönderim Tarihi / Sending Date: 20/06/2017

Kabul Tarihi / Acceptance Date: 03/08/2017

makalenin amacı benzerlikler taşıyan, sanrılardan arınmış Clarissa Dalloway ve Septimus Warren Smith karakterlerini inceleyerek *Mrs. Dalloway* adlı eserdeki deęişim ve gerçeęe uyanış olgusunu analiz etmektir. Bu bağlamda toplumsal onay, evlilik, savaş ve medeniyetin ürünleri olan kurumlara duyulan güven meseleleri bu makalenin kapsamı dahilinde tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, modernist edebiyat, gerçeęe uyanış.

INTRODUCTION

Mrs. Dalloway is marked by the essence of change and disillusionment which is highly felt throughout the novel highlighting the modernist spirit it revolves around. The sense of disillusionment towards the project of modernity which is the harbinger of transformation and progress but ends up in destruction is dominantly prevalent in *Mrs. Dalloway*. An understanding of the sense of disillusionment, thus, might require an understanding of the phases of modernity. In *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* (1982), Marshall Berman describes modernity in three phases. According to Berman, the unknown urge leading to modern that is observed from the end of the 16th century till the end of the 18th century entails the first phase of modernity process. The term "modern" is not used deliberately by people during the first phase. As Berman states: "People are just beginning to experience modern life; they hardly know what has hit them. They grope, desperately but half blindly, for an adequate vocabulary; they have little or no sense of a modern public or community within which their trials and hopes can be shared" (Berman 1988: 16-17). The French Revolution is regarded as the second phase of the modernity project and it differs from the previous phase since there is an intentional attempt for transformation in the second phase. Revolutionary and rebellious tendency towards change is the main feature of this phase. The modern public structure emerges as a result of this transformation enabling people to compare the past and the present. Comparison can be maintained between the conservative and the modern. As Berman suggests, the 20th century is regarded the final phase of the modernity project. Due to the Great War, people are not in a deluded agreement with false promises of the modern world and the modernity project. It is understood that change leads to clash of powers and civilizations, innovations empowering malice and means of destruction. Therefore, confiding in falsified promises served through modernity, modern individual is disillusioned. As a result, society experiences an awakening from the illusionary condition and is faced with the sense of disillusionment. While "modern" recalls for the new and desirable in the first place, in fact, experience and history present that modernity does not reclaim its value as an optimistic project at all. On the contrary, the modernity project ends up in the revelation of terrible truth beneath the myth of progress and civilization.

The disillusionment experienced by Woolf as a survivor of the Great War causes a distrust in her towards the traditional means of expression just like most of the modernist writers. Unable to trust in the ability of the conventional narrative techniques to depict life in its real nature, she looks for new and experimental ways of expression that would make her readers question rather than simply accept what is provided to them through the narrative. Within a modernist perspective, letting readers struggle to reach their subjective reality via their own attempts is obtained when Virginia Woolf puts aside the illusory, in other words, traditionally imposed reality.

Clarissa Dalloway and Social Approval

Completed in 1925, *Mrs. Dalloway* is categorized as the second modernist novel of the writer, in which she depicts a day of Clarissa Dalloway in London. The novel reflects the thoughts of various characters throughout the novel as Clarissa Dalloway runs daily errands and completes the arrangements for her party which is going to take place in the evening of the same day. *Mrs. Dalloway* begins with the start of the day, is followed by the depiction of the whole day and ends after the course of the party. While the novel describes one day in London, Virginia Woolf manages to present different characters and their inner-thoughts which are unrelated with each other. As readers are exposed to inner-monologues of the

characters in the novel, one cannot necessarily link them together, however; Virginia Woolf accomplishes to reflect the overall sense of frustration, change and disillusionment that is prevalent at the center of the society in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Contemplating on *Mrs. Dalloway* as a modernist text, diversified debates and analyses have been implemented by various critics. In "Mrs. Dalloway and the Social System" (1977), Alex Zwerdling discusses the impact of the governing class over English society in the aftermath of the Great War. Zwerdling indicates that the novel reveals the superior position of the governing class (Zwerdling 1977: 120) and underlines how the more disaffected members of the society are perceived as unstable emotional exhibitionists. In *Authors in Context Virginia Woolf*, Michael H. Whitworth, on the other hand, suggests that *Mrs. Dalloway* is the embodiment of the modernist criticism of the oppressed individualism:

In Mrs. Dalloway, Woolf's individualism manifests itself as a largely sympathetic presentation of those individuals who have escaped 'corruption, lies, [and] chatter' (MD, p.156), and an unsympathetic, satirical presentation of those, like the Prime Minister, who embody the power of the state; those, like Hugh Whitbread, who oil its cogs; and those, like William Bradshaw, who enforce its norms. The picture is an essentially tragic one: the escape that Septimus and the female vagrants have achieved is not a sustainable one. (Whitworth 2009: 166)

As a modernist novel, *Mrs. Dalloway* has been analyzed through various other perspectives; however, the sense of change and disillusionment in *Mrs. Dalloway* is an area to be discussed critically.

Virginia Woolf embarks on *Mrs. Dalloway* by giving voice to Clarissa Dalloway, who is one of the main characters in the novel. From depiction of Virginia Woolf, it is understood that Clarissa Dalloway, an elderly woman in her fifties, constantly makes an evaluation of life and criticizes her profound choices about life. The portrayal of the different phases of Clarissa's life from her maidenhood to married status allows the readers to have an idea about her development as an individual and pose a critical standing towards her thoughts. At the beginning of the novel, Woolf reflects a portrayal of Clarissa through the perspective of Scrope Purvis, who is a neighbor of the Dalloways, with the following statement:

She stiffened a little on the kerb, waiting for Durnall's van to pass. A charming woman, Scrope Purvis thought her (knowing her as one does know people who live next door to one in Westminster); a touch of the bird about her, of the jay, blue-green, light, vivacious, thought she was over fifty, and grown very white since her illness. There she perched, never seeing him, waiting to cross, very uptight. (Woolf 2003: 3)

The external description of Clarissa Dalloway hints her stern and nervous nature. As the novel progresses, the readers learn this description is a result of the change and disillusionment that Clarissa experiences throughout her life. Woolf's use of "stiffen", "stern", "upright" while describing Clarissa has an underlying meaning from the beginning of the novel. Clarissa carries a mixture of contrasts within herself. On the one hand she has a touch of the bird, vivaciousness and loveliness, but on the other hand she is a stern and upright woman. The contrast related with her demonstrates the sense of change or frustration that might be born out of the disillusionment she experiences in her life.

Michael H. Whitworth elaborates on the multifaceted, multilayered personality of Clarissa arguing that "*The body, to use an image which Woolf favored, is a hard shell covering a vulnerable, soft interior*" (Whitworth 2009: 126), and he underlines that: "*The distinction she draws between her private and public selves develops her earlier reflections about being both 'Clarissa' and 'Mrs. Richard Dalloway'; the idea of composing the disparate elements of the self into a unity is*

an artistic question" (Whitworth 2009: 125). Masking her inner personality with illusional features that are supposed to be socially desirable causes frictions in her real self. Therefore, Clarissa merges disparate elements of the self in disillusionment. Her socially invented illusionary mask, the body, conceals her real self, soft interior until the protagonist reaches her self-enlightenment.

Maria DiBattista also examines the impact of developing double identities which she observes in both Clarissa and Bernard, also a character in *The Waves* written by Virginia Woolf in *Imagining Virginia Woolf an Experiment in Critical Biography* and claims that: "His conviction of the absolute difference between outer and inner self reiterates a common belief in Woolf's fiction first elaborated in *Mrs. Dalloway*, whose protagonist is struck and somewhat tormented by the difference between the private Clarissa and the public Mrs. Richard Dalloway" (DiBattista 2009: 33). Bernard shares resemblance with Clarissa since both characters carry multiple masks. With her character portrayal in different works, Woolf emphasizes the burden that is created as an outcome of developing split personalities for the sake of acquiring social approval.

Throughout the novel, Woolf hints that Clarissa rarely manages to observe and evaluate her life objectively. In "Women and Interruption in Between the Acts", Helen Southworth states that:

In Mrs. Dalloway, Clarissa stands unseen at a window on the stair case observing her elderly neighbor moving from room to room. From this (liminal) standpoint, Clarissa temporally foregoes her centrality to the major narrative and instead takes on a role peripheral to that of another. From this insecure site or intersection (neither upstairs nor downstairs, inside nor outside) she is able to contemplate her own world and that of the other, and to gain an understanding of the relationship between the two. This sighting, this re-sitting, forces Clarissa to a revelation of sorts: '[A]nd the supreme mystery [...] was simply this: here was one room, there another' (108). She understands that the problem of space remains. Reading inside out, from the outside in, she understands what she terms an 'ordinary [thing]', that is, that her life runs concurrently to that of others and, most importantly, that her life is defined in relation to these other lives (108). This spatial configuration opens Clarissa's eyes to question of difference, of otherness. Her epiphany is expressed in spatial terms: 'she came in from the little room' (158). (Southworth 2007: 50)

Clarissa shapes her choices and life according to "one room". Her understanding of her life might change when it is observed through another re-sitting. While her actions and decisions can be justified reasonable from a point of view, they might be proven the opposite from another point of view. Clarissa comes to a realization that there is more than one room; her life might be defined differently. Her realization of variety in perspectives, in other words, her disillusionment concerning possible alternatives highlights relativism. The chaos in her thoughts might be fixed when Clarissa denies the validity of human constructed values and embraces the change and disillusionment that comes within elimination of human constructivism, instead.

The female protagonist's self-inflicted repressed condition and otherness is also exposed through the language of the writer relentlessly. Maria DiBattista examines Woolf's language and suggests that:

Woolf's respect for the drastic discipline that is the woman writer's most conspicuous inheritance from her creative female forbears underlies her conviction that a woman's language, shaped in confinement, allows her "to say a great many things which would be inaudible if one marched straight up and spoke out."

Yet we can also detect in her writing a growing restlessness with such prolonged imaginative of confinement, a restlessness that surfaces, for example, in the exuberant opening of Mrs Dalloway, the novel in which Woolf's modernity and her heroine make exhilarating contact with the out-of-doors. (DiBattista 2009: 89)

The hunger born due to the sense of otherness concealed by the role of “the perfect hostess” and oppressed condition of Clarissa displays itself via the bursting language of Virginia Woolf. The prevalent confinement of the female protagonist is revealed by the use of intensified language. DiBattista advances her explanation related with exposed hunger in Woolf’s language and states that:

A profusion of parentheses, exclamation points and semicolons at once reflect and subdue the manic gaiety of this verbal and existential plunge into the open air. Woolf's singular, strategic use of the semicolon will become a habitual, indeed symptomatic, feature of her prose. By its aid, she is able to regulate the excited rush of perceptions that threaten to outrun her powers of expression. Yet such syntactically and typographically elaborate sentences may also represent an anxiety formation, linguistic calmativ to subdue the agoraphobia instilled by all those years of confinement indoors. Perhaps this explains the heroine's ominous premonition that something awful was about to happen, and the inordinately heavy time symbolism of the novel that is always reminding us, not just Mrs. Dalloway, of the “leaden” tolling of the bells. (DiBattista 2009: 89-90)

Although Woolf seemingly describes London and the surroundings on a June day along with Clarissa Dalloway running daily errands for her party, Woolf’s intense use of punctuation in her writing underlines an extraordinary condition with description of an ordinary day. The conflict between the meaning and the punctuation, modernist features in Woolf’s writing point out the confinement of Mrs. Dalloway. The sense of disillusionment unveils itself through abundant use of linguistic elements. The exaggerated amount of language items within the passage indicates contradiction and break from the traditional, which is peculiar to the modernist texts.

Love and Marriage in an Illusional World

As the novel progresses, Virginia Woolf presents the reader a Clarissa who has been once torn between groom candidates. Before Clarissa is Mrs. Dalloway, she is in a relationship with Peter Walsh, who represents the opposite values of her current husband Richard Dalloway. While Clarissa is walking in Westminster in order to buy flowers for her party, she thinks “*he could be intolerable; he could be impossible; but adorable to walk with on a morning like this*” (Woolf 2003: 5). Clarissa Dalloway might think about Peter Walsh out of nowhere and she weighs her thoughts about Peter Walsh:

For they might be parted for hundreds of years, she and Peter; she never wrote a letter and his were dry sticks; but suddenly it would come over her, If he were with me now what would he say? – some days, some sights bringing him back to her calmly, without the old bitterness; which perhaps was the reward of having cared for people; they came back in the middle of St James's Park on a fine morning – indeed they did. But Peter – however beautiful the day might be, and the trees and the grass, and the little girl in pink – Peter never saw a thing of all that. He would put on spectacles, if she told him to; he would look. It was the state of the world that interested him; Wagner, Pope's poetry, people's characters eternally, and the defects of her own soul. How he scolded her! How they argued! She would marry a Prime Minister and stand at the top of a

staircase; the perfect hostess he called her (she had cried over it in her bedroom), she had the makings of the perfect hostess, he said.

So she would still find herself arguing in St James's park, still making out that she had been right – and she had too – not to marry him. (Woolf 2003: 6)

Peter Walsh's criticism of Clarissa on being the perfect hostess exasperates Clarissa. According to Peter Walsh's point of view, fulfilling the necessities of a hostess, acquiring a respectable place in the society via marrying someone of status indicate banality of an individual. His irony in telling Clarissa to marry a Prime Minister underlines insignificance of social status for himself because Peter Walsh is interested in state of the world rather than social status. Although Clarissa's perspective is different from Peter Walsh and she is in favor of acquiring remarkable position in her society, she is still infuriated by Peter's speech during their breakup. In "Imagining Virginia Woolf an Experiment in Critical Biography", Maria DiBattista refers to the criticism of Peter Walsh and the reaction of Clarissa and claims that: "*Neither sagacity nor innocence is suggested by Woolf's most searching and sardonic novelistic portrait of the 'perfect hostess,' as Peter Walsh sneeringly calls the worldly Clarissa Dalloway. Clarissa is at first dismayed by the epithet, but ultimately embraces it as a creditable even noble office*" (DiBattista 2009: 60). In spite of being parted for "hundred years", Peter Walsh still has an impact over Clarissa and the character finds herself questioning their breakup although she does not clearly question her decision after years. Her implicit questioning indicates the disillusionment that she experiences with her life and the change that appear with her choices. While leading her life according to expectations symbolizes her acceptance and surrender to the illusional reality; Clarissa's implicit questioning underlines the change and disillusionment of the character subsequently.

Inner monologues of Clarissa demonstrate her satisfaction with the choices she makes about her marriage; however, the feeling of contentment is not justified because Clarissa makes constant comparison between Richard Dalloway and Peter Walsh:

For a marriage a little license, a little independence there must be between people living together day in day out in the same house; which Richard gave her, and she him. (Where was he this morning, for instance? Some committee, she never asked what.) But with Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into. And it was intolerable, and when it came to that scene in the little garden by the fountain, she had to break with him or they would have been destroyed, both of them ruined, she was convinced; though she had borne about with her for years like an arrow sticking in her heart with grief, the anguish; and then the horror of the moment when someone told her at a concert that he had married a woman met on boat going to India! Never should she forget all that! Cold, heartless, a prude, he called her. Never could she understand how he cared. But those Indian women did presumably – silly, pretty, flimsy nincompoops. And she wasted her pity. For he was quite happy, he assured her – perfectly happy, though he had never done a thing that they talked of; his whole life had been a failure. It made her angry still. (Woolf 2003: 6)

Clarissa states her expectations of how a marriage should be, her marriage with Richard symbolizes a rational marriage; however, her sincerity and contentment with her marriage is not clear. The way of expression Virginia Woolf adopts to use whilst reflecting Clarissa's thoughts, it is seen that Clarissa is not against having distance between Richard and herself under the title of "independence" but she cannot stand the idea of Peter's having a relationship with another woman still to that day, which signifies her distant boundaries with Richard is perhaps due to the fact that she does not care about him as she does for Peter. Clarissa might be yearning for the powerful bond she once had with Peter, who has

also been a failure with his choices. In another words, Clarissa sounds resentful rather than content with her marriage.

Clarissa Dalloway is a sensitive woman as well. Virginia Woolf's portrayal of Clarissa displays her joy, excitement and reaction towards the beauty of anything she comes across in her daily life but Clarissa is criticized by society as well. She maintains a wall between herself and other people including her loved ones, which causes people to evaluate her as an insensitive and cold woman. Rejecting Peter Walsh prevents Clarissa from living an actual passionate relationship throughout her life. She has an average marriage in which she preserves her distance with her husband. The dialogue scene between the servant and Clarissa mirrors her disconnection with her environment:

'Mr Dalloway, ma'am! –

Clarissa read on the telephone pad, 'Lady Bruton wishes to know if Mr Dalloway will lunch with her today.'

'Mr Dalloway, ma'am, told me to tell you he would be lunching out.'

'Dear!' said Clarissa, and Lucy shared as she meant her to her disappointment (but not the pang); felt the concord between them; took the hint; thought how the gentry love; gilded her own furniture with calm; and, taking Mrs Dalloway's parasol, handled it like a sacred weapon which a Goddess, having acquitted herself honorably in the field of battle, sheds, and placed it in the umbrella stand.

'Fear no more,' said Clarissa. Fear no more the heat o' the sun; for the shock of Lady Bruton asking Richard to lunch without her made the moment in which she had stood shiver, as a plant on the river-bed feels the shock of a passing oar and shivers; so she rocked: so she shivered. (Woolf 2003: 22)

The fact that Richard Dalloway lunches out with Lady Bruton irritates Clarissa but she controls her behaviors and does not judge or criticize Richard openly. Although she is sensitive, Clarissa intentionally chooses to mute her thoughts. Clarissa Dalloway upholds her personal space by acting out the illusional role of cold and sane woman in the society.

Clarissa Dalloway keeps questioning the meaning of everything such as her decisions, her marriage and social status along with her existence as she runs errands for her party in the morning:

Did it matter then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? But that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being the 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. (Woolf 2003: 7)

Clarissa judges and criticizes herself constantly. She happens to conceive her existence as nobody of importance. While she weighs her decisions and faces with her frustrations which she has not put into voice openly, she points out if all of her choices matter in the end. Regardless of being the perfect hostess or the woman that would receive approval by Peter Walsh, the fact that her life comes to an end with death exposes the insignificance of her existence. As the novel progresses, it is understood that the death itself is a dream signifies an escape for Clarissa because the death can free one's soul or self from leading illusional

lives and acting illusional identities. The fact that Clarissa relies on the consolation provided by death underlines Clarissa's disillusionment and the ensuing pessimistic and unsatisfactory attitude with her choices and unsatisfactory changes with herself or her life.

Woolf's depiction of Clarissa indicates Clarissa's urge to please others and her dedication to achieve her plans as "a good hostess":

How much she wanted it – that people should look pleased as she came in, Clarissa thought and turned and walked back towards Bond Street, annoyed, because it was silly to have other reasons for doing things. Much rather would she have been one of those people like Richard who did things for themselves, whereas, she thought, waiting to cross, half the time she did things not simply, not for themselves; but to make people think this or that; the perfect idiocy she knew (and now the policeman held up his hand) for no one was ever for a second taken in. Oh if she could have had her life over again! She thought, stepping on to the pavement, could have looked even differently. (Woolf 2003: 8)

Everything Clarissa does throughout her life serve to pleasing others; there is a constant feeling which causes her to do and live to make others content. Her obsession in putting the necessities of others first or receiving the approval of the society shapes her life. Clarissa notices other individuals like Richard Dalloway whose behavior is shaped according to what he exactly wants to do rather than acquiring social approval and she criticizes herself for wasting her life because of minding what others would think. Considering Clarissa's self-criticism about her behavior throughout her life, it can be suggested that her choices and the type of attitude she performs consume her life whilst pursuing illusionary priorities. Her once-essential thoughts and choices are transformed as a result of the disillusionment that come forward with the impact of change.

War and Disillusionment

Virginia Woolf presents the shades of change and disillusionment along the darkness of the Great War through portrayal of Septimus Warren Smith, the other essential character in *Mrs Dalloway*. Septimus is depicted as a young man who attends the Great War and fights for his country. His experience of war maintains a terrible kind of confrontation with trauma and he begins to suffer from almost everything due to his fear of "feeling nothing". He gets married with Lucrezia, a nice Italian girl whom Septimus meets at the end of the Great War in Italy and they start a life together in London but witnessing loss of his friend Evans as well as other deadly events he comes across during the Great War deranges his sanity and Septimus begins to complain about not feeling anything anymore.

Woolf introduces Septimus Smith Warren to the readers in the same setting with Clarissa Dalloway as both characters inhale the same atmosphere of London streets on the very same day:

Septimus Warren Smith, aged about thirty, pale-faced, beak-nosed, wearing brown shoes and a shabby overcoat, with hazel eyes which had that look of apprehension in them which make complete strangers apprehensive too. The world has raised its whip; where will it descend? Everything had come to a standstill. The throb of the motor engines sounded like a pulse irregularly drumming through an entire body. The sun became extraordinarily hot because the motor car had stopped outside Mulberry's shop window; old ladies on the top of omnibuses spread their black parasols; here a green, here a red parasol opened with a little pop. Mrs. Dalloway, coming to the window with her arms full of sweet peas, looked out with her little pink face pursed in enquiry. Everyone looked at the motor car. Septimus looked. Boys on bicycles sprang off.

Traffic accumulated. And there the motor car stood, with drawn blinds, and upon them a curious pattern like a tree, Septimus thought, and this gradual drawing together of everything to once centre before his eyes, as if some horror had come almost to the surface and was about to burst into flames, terrified him. The world wavered and quivered and threatened to burst into flames. It is who am I blocking the way, he thought. Was he not being looked at and pointed at; was he not weighed there, rooted to the pavement, for a purpose? But to what purpose? (Woolf 2003: 11-12)

Woolf inscribes traumatic atmosphere appeared in the aftermath of the Great War gradually. The impact of the Great War and modernity, the search of the meaning of one's self and analyzing the essence of the world gain a darker tone as Woolf maintains the introduction of Clarissa to Septimus progressively. The impact of change and disillusionment is demonstrated by Septimus Smith as well. Septimus fears he does not feel anymore but his questioning of himself and the world indicates the opposite ironically.

The fall of the modernity project is indicated as Woolf introduces Septimus Warren Smith. Stereotypical optimistic individual who relies on government, the utility of war and the advantages of modern innovations is refuted by Virginia Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway*. Following the war, it is not clear where the world's whip will descend. Therefore, the world is not considered as sturdy and stable anymore. "The throb of engines" hints the technological innovations, the malice and the more death that comes along with them whereas "the motor car" which carries possibly a royal member of the monarchy renders Septimus or the rest of the people around trivial and disposable. As the balance of one's mind –just like Septimus- is shattered with the fall of the modernity project and the darkness of the Great War, Septimus becomes derailed.

Woolf reflects the embedded pessimistic approach of modernist thinking against the institutional units which recalls mistrust via Septimus Warren Smith. The roots of his derailed condition is a result of the Great War. Considering that the Great War is an unattained and failed goal in terms of bringing justice and solution to humanity, Septimus is psychologically destroyed.

As the novel progresses, his wife Lucrezia attempts to help her husband; however, her understanding of Septimus is inadequate:

"Look, look, Septimus!" she cried. For Dr Holmes had told her to make her husband (who had nothing whatever seriously the matter with him but was a little out of sorts) take an interest in things outside himself.

... for she could stand it no longer. Dr Holmes might say there was nothing the matter. Far rather would she that he were dead! She could not sit beside him when he stared so and did not see her and make everything terrible; sky and tree, children playing, dragging carts, blowing whistles, falling down; all were terrible. And he would not kill himself; and she could tell no one. "Septimus has been working too hard" – that was all she could say, to her own mother. To love makes one solitary, she thought. She could tell nobody, not even Septimus now, and looking back, she saw him sitting in his shabby overcoat alone, on the seat, hunched up, staring. And it was cowardly for a man to say he would kill himself, but Septimus had fought; he was brave; he was not Septimus now. (Woolf 2003: 16-17)

Woolf underlines the insufficiency in comprehending the importance of psychological wellbeing of one's self. Lucrezia and Dr. Holmes represent traditional approach in this respect. Ignoring the inner state of mind, as Virginia Woolf indicates, the reality constructed by them is based on the physical level, the appearance. Lucrezia experiences difficulty in categorizing the condition of Septimus because she cannot digest bipartite judgement about

Septimus. Regarding Septimus as a brave soldier at once prevents Lucrezia from unseeing him otherwise, which causes her to reject him now even being “himself”, Septimus. Lucrezia’s sharp evaluation towards Septimus is illusional within a modernist perspective as she relies on Dr. Holmes and her narrow understanding of Septimus firmly.

Virginia Woolf highlights the controversial issues of modern thought via Septimus. His inner arguments display the matter of importance to the mankind:

He, Septimus, was alone, called forth in advance of the mass of men to hear the truth, to learn the meaning, which now at last, after the toils of civilization – Greeks, Romans, Shakespeare, Darwin, and now himself – was given whole to ... “To whom?” he asked aloud. “To the Prime Minister,” the voices which rustled above his head replied. The supreme secret must be told to the Cabinet; first, that trees are alive; next, there is no crime; next, love, universal love, he muttered, gasping, trembling, painfully drawing out these profound truths which needed, so deep were they, so difficult, an immense effort to speak out, but the world was entirely changed by them forever. (Woolf 2003: 51)

Septimus feels alone as a man due to the fact that he has nobody that could understand him. The world around him regards him as a mad man and his war trauma is underestimated. Woolf gives voice to Septimus in *Mrs. Dalloway*, revealing his victimization. Following the destruction in the aftermath of the Great War and other entailing issues considered important politically, it is the importance of nature and love that the Cabinet and Prime Minister should realize in Septimus’s reality. Political discussions concerning the war and suggestions for a solution turns out to be illusional and pointless. While the emerging change after the Great War reveals the disillusionment experienced with false focus, it also indicates where and how civilization should be looked into.

Virginia Woolf continues narrating the indescribable essence, beauty which might be taken as the lead solution through Septimus Warren Smith flow of thoughts:

So, thought Septimus, looking up, they are signaling to me. Not indeed in actual words; that is, he could not read language yet; but it was plain enough, this beauty, this exquisite beauty, and tears filled his eyes as he looked at the smoke words languishing and melting in the sky and bestowing upon him in their inexhaustible charity and laughing goodness one sharp after another of unimaginable beauty and signaling their intention to provide him, for nothing, for ever, for looking merely, with beauty, more beauty! Tears ran down his cheeks. (Woolf 2003: 16)

Septimus, the only character who is acknowledged “insane” is perhaps the only one who is truly disillusioned and actually aware of the changing reality. The meaning of life, the exquisite beauty does not originate in the murderous civilization that ended up in the Great War. Rather, it is something simple and pure.

Referring to Septimus Warren Smith, the narrator in *Mrs. Dalloway* questions “Was there, after all, anything to make a passer-by suspect here is a young man who carries in him the greatest message in the world, and is, moreover, the happiest man in the world, and the most miserable?” (Woolf 2003: 62). Woolf stirs various questions with the problematic presentation of the male protagonist, Septimus. Enriching the questions concerning Septimus Warren Smith, in *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde War Civilization Modernity*, Christine Froula asks:

Is Septimus Warren Smith mad or does he have a message? That he is mad would seem indisputable; even sympathetic discussions cast him as a war victim not a prophet. Yet Mrs. Dalloway’s postwar world of multifarious and contested realities pits Septimus’s reality against

that of his doctors to frame “madness” as a censored truth. If, as Michel Foucault argues, civilization disciplines madness to suppress its truths, art recaptures truths branded madness to confront the world with the necessity of change: “by the madness which interrupts it, a work of art opens a void, a moment of silence... where the world is forced to question itself... [T]he world finds itself arraigned by that work of art and responsible before it for what it is.” (Froula 2005: 110)

The world Septimus physically lives in is damaged and it renders him “alone”. The fact that Septimus is branded “mad” in a society whose members are mostly illusioned bears critical role in the text. Septimus, the sole mad character in *Mrs. Dalloway*, represents and triggers the change and disillusionment.

An understanding of “Septimus” might be acquired through DiBattista’s text which discusses Virginia Woolf and Woolf’s views on Montaigne. In *Imagining Virginia Woolf an Experiment in Critical Biography*, DiBattista suggests that:

To Montaigne alone belongs the art “of talking of oneself, following one’s own vagaries, giving the whole map, weight, colour, and circumference of the soul in its confusion, its variety, its imperfection.” Montaigne, reading the book of himself, counsels us that “Communication is health, communication is happiness,” a message the disordered mind of Septimus Smith makes the burden of his prophecy in Mrs. Dalloway even as he enacts the dark fate of modernity – the death of the soul. (DiBattista 2009: 112-113)

The world Septimus lives in is shattered under the false premises of the modernity project. Although he has a message to deliver and he is not the mad one, there is not another entity with whom he can communicate. His sole means of company that could understand Septimus is merely himself. Ending his life signifies conveying the message to the rest. As a soldier, former participant of the dark fate of modernity, Septimus keeps his sanity by isolating himself from the world that might further pollute his mind and soul.

Trust Towards Institutions as Products of Civilization

Lucrezia and Septimus follow the advice of Dr. Holmes, who is a practitioner and consult Dr. Sir William Bradshaw who owns private nursing homes in the countryside. Woolf’s creation of Dr. Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw represents the mistrust towards and the ensuing rejection of human nature through institutionalization. Dr. Holmes ignores the traumatic experiences of Septimus and blames him for representing British men poorly to his foreigner wife, Lucrezia due to his mental condition and constantly suggests to indulge Septimus in various hobbies such as golf to cure his mind.

Like Dr. Holmes, the character of Sir William Bradshaw does not reveal appraisable values, either. Sir William Bradshaw, also an acquaintance of the Dalloways establishes the success of his treatment technique over the importance of proportion and conversion. Refraining from using the word “insane” or “mad”, Sir William Bradshaw claims man can be out of adequate proportion and can be treated with rest and isolation from one’s surroundings in his private asylum. Woolf highlights the British upper-class patriarchal oppression via Bradshaw and the ignorance of post-war British culture which praises war heroism instead of realizing the dark side of the Great War via Dr. Holmes.

Woolf illustrates both physically and socially traumatized individuals in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Wyatt Bonikowski also discusses the literature after the First War in *Shell Shock and the Modernist Imagination the Death Drive in Post-World War I British Fiction* and states that:

In literature after the First War, the encounter between the shell-shocked soldier and civilians, especially women, is an allegory of the revelation of a traumatic knowledge about the nature of the

home, self, and civilization. Septimus Warren Smith [...] is dealing not simply with a blow to his sense of self and home that makes accounting for his experience difficult, but with a radical breakdown in his experience of the world which utterly cuts him off from humanity. Septimus is not just "shell-shocked" but insane: separated from sociality, relationship, and language, he is out of touch with the living and receives messages from the dead, which he feels he must communicate to the rest of the world. These revelations speak of the end of death and a fullness of meaning, and therefore would change the structure of the world – that is, if Septimus could only communicate them. But Septimus's quest for full communication ends in suicide. His leap from the window of his home onto the area railings below- his body impaled on the boundary that separates home from what lies outside it – punctuates an implicit statement about the home's lack of place for him. (Bonikowski 2013: 133)

As narrated in *Mrs. Dalloway*, "Death is defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death" (Woolf 2003: 205). Having no one to communicate, Septimus realizes that he cannot disseminate the message. In an insane world where the only sane one is labelled as "insane", Septimus contemplates ending his life is the ultimate means of reflecting his message.

Virginia Woolf emphasizes the fall of the modernity project through the mental collapse of Septimus. In his so called insane condition, Septimus expresses his complaints about human nature "Once you fall, Septimus repeated to himself, human nature is on you. Holmes and Bradshaw are on you. They scour the desert. They fly screaming into the wilderness. The rack and the thumbscrew are applied. Human nature is remorseless" (Woolf 2003: 72). Woolf implies that the selfishness of human nature is the core of evil. Septimus, as an embodiment of the failure of the modernity project, experiences the fall and cannot be cured or regain his strength because the priority of mankind is power and influence, which is subsequently confirmed by the Great War.

Virginia Woolf indicates the partial enlightenment of Lucrezia as she comprehends that Dr. Holmes or Sir William Bradshaw are of no help; however, she cannot prevent the suicide of Septimus when Dr. Holmes visits them to check on Septimus:

"My dear lady, I have come as a friend," Holmes was saying.

"No. I will not allow you to see my husband," she said.

He could see her, like a little hen, with her wings spread barring his passage. But Holmes persevered.

"My dear lady, allow me..." Holmes said, putting her aside (Holmes was a powerfully-built man).

Holmes was coming upstairs. Holmes would burst open the door. Holmes would say, "In a funk, eh?" Holmes would get him. But no; not Holmes; not Bradshaw. Getting up rather unsteadily, hopping indeed from foot to foot, he considered Mrs. Filmer's nice clean bread-knife with 'Bread' carved on the handle. Ah, but one mustn't spoil that. The gas fire? But it was too late now. Holmes was coming. Razors he might have got, but Rezia, who always did that sort of thing, had packed them. There remained only window, the large Bloomsbury lodging-house window; the tiresome, the troublesome, and rather melodramatic business of opening the window and throwing himself out. It was their idea of tragedy, not his or Rezia's (for she was with him). Holmes and Bradshaw liked that sort of thing. (He sat on the sill.) But he would wait till the very last moment. He did not want to die. Life was good. The sun hot. Only human beings? Coming down the staircase opposite an old man stopped and stared at him. Holmes was at the door. 'I'll

give it you!' he cried, and flung himself vigorously, violently down on to Mrs. Filmer's area railing. (Woolf 2003: 108)

Lucrezia finds out about the unreliability of the doctors and is almost content with her marriage as she begins to form the connection that she yearns for a long time with Septimus; however, the representatives of the institutional units do not leave them on their own and Dr. Holmes visits Septimus. Although Lucrezia refrains from maintaining a confrontation between Septimus and Dr. Holmes, Holmes' patriarchal power as a man hampers the process. As Woolf underlines, the death he is planning to reach is not an end for him because the oppression and ignorant attitude towards human is a means of personal invasion towards Septimus; however, in a modernist perspective, Septimus has managed realizing his own self and he is well aware of the fact that death is a means of self-preservation. Woolf's statement related with the deliberate delay of Septimus in throwing himself out of the window before Dr. Holmes steps in emphasizes the confidence of Septimus in his self-acknowledgement. Septimus stands among the category of few people fulfilling himself and he confronts with Dr. Holmes by stating he will give it to them; what Septimus surrenders is not his whole self or identity but only his body, in other words, in their insane world where Septimus is misunderstood as an insane man, Septimus manages to preserve his soul and uses death as a solution that leads to the endless exquisite beauty, universal love.

Clarissa and Septimus as Disillusioned Characters

The life within "sane" society of destruction, patriarchal oppression and the violation of the less fortunate in the name of obtaining civilization is an illusional sanity and goodwill. Woolf presents readers someone who preserves his sanity via quitting this illusional life through the characterization of Septimus Warren Smith; however, Clarissa Dalloway is not much different from Septimus Warren Smith. Referring to the resemblance between Clarissa and Septimus in *Shell Shock and the Modernist Imagination the Death Drive in Post-World War I British Fiction*, Wyatt Bonikowski states that:

Over the course of the novel, Woolf creates a number of structural parallels between Septimus and Clarissa, using motifs to link them in contingent ways. By bringing their stories together at the novel's conclusion, Woolf motivates the arbitrary relation between them, making their connection seem necessary. This narrative structure had long been in Woolf's mind. In 1902, 20 years before she wrote the first stories that were to become beginning of Mrs. Dalloway, Woolf wrote in a letter to Violet Dickinson of a play she was planning to write: "I am going to have a man and woman – show them growing up – never meeting – not knowing each other- but all the time you'll feel them come nearer and nearer. This will be the real exciting part" (qtd in Briggs 130). Even though Septimus and Clarissa "meet" at the end of the novel, the "exciting part"- the sense of two people coming ever nearer but never actually meeting- is preserved through Septimus's death. (Bonikowski 2013: 134)

Obviously, creating the characters of Clarissa and Septimus is a predetermined task for Virginia Woolf as she mentions in her diary years ago. Clarissa and Septimus share similarities in their seemingly different worlds. Both protagonists are criticized by the society; Septimus is criticized for being "insane" because he is considered to have lost his connection with his senses and found irrelevant by Dr. Holmes, Sir William Bradshaw and his wife; however, he is too sensitive and he maintains his privacy and prevents invasion of personal space by ending his "life". Both Clarissa and Septimus are aware of the illusional lives and fake identities that are staged in the society. Both protagonists come to the realization of the sense of disillusionment and enlightenment, however; Septimus could be

asserted as the brave one since he rejects obeying the illusional reality whereas Clarissa surrenders with her illusional mask to the society although she becomes aware of the disillusionment.

Contemplating on the subliminal understanding between Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith, Wyatt Bonikowski states that: *"It is this madness, I would like to suggest, that Woolf attempts to evoke in Mrs. Dalloway. Through Septimus's story, she makes a narrative out of the seductive allure of death and the dangerous leap of poetic intensity, both in Septimus's mad desire for communication and in Clarissa Dalloway's attempt to grasp the meaning of his suicide"* (Woolf 2003: 145). Throughout the novel, Septimus searches for a means of conveying his message about the world whereas Clarissa Dalloway confronts with herself objectively step by step. Both characters experience the sense of disillusionment gradually. The mutual connection between two protagonists might be claimed intensity or restlessness as excessive as madness itself. On the mutual link between Septimus and Clarissa, Wyatt Bonikowski claims that:

On a more intimate level, Clarissa's imagining of Septimus's death contains something of the "lust" in death that is "fatal to art, fatal to friendship" from which Peter Walsh retreats. [...] It is not that Clarissa appropriates Septimus's death to fuel her own love of life, which would be an unethical use of the other as a mere object. Nor does she keep her distance from Septimus by clinging to social conventions, as Peter, Richard, Sir William and Lady Bradshaw do. Rather, without fully knowing what she is doing, she approaches the "centre" she vaguely apprehends, that "thing" that matters, at the core of Septimus's story, which recedes as she approaches and which she never grasps, but whose proximity creates an intensity of feeling beyond proportion, a jouissance more than mere aesthetic pleasure. (Bonikowski 2013: 173)

To Clarissa, the excessive lust towards death or the intense enjoyment imagining the death of Septimus is not due to merely aesthetic pleasure. Among the other attendants of the party, Clarissa is different from others for she manages to purify herself from her illusionary thoughts. Learning the story of Septimus does not intimidate or distance Clarissa unlike others. Though "Mrs. Dalloway" carries her socially invented mask on her face, Clarissa yearns for what Septimus Warren Smith accomplishes; to figure out the full meaning of life and to unload the extra weight freely.

At the end of the novel, the party of Clarissa Dalloway pleases all the guests. With the success of the party, Virginia Woolf underlines Clarissa's achievement in actualizing illusionary role of perfect hostess, wife and friend. Ironically, though, Clarissa is resentful due to her successful party. Considering the fact that Clarissa criticizes herself and her life time choices during the day, Woolf pairs the female protagonist's resentment with her realization of the disillusionment.

CONCLUSION

Although *Mrs. Dalloway* is composed as a depiction of an ordinary day in the life of an ordinary housewife, as a modernist text it implicitly discusses the disillusionment experienced by modern individuals. Vagueness and incompleteness are the concepts that contribute to the discussion of disillusionment as experienced by the characters in the text in the sense that they echo fluidity and relativity rather than traditional rigidity and certainty. By eliminating the imposition of a universal reality Woolf also reveals a disillusionment concerning positivistic universalism of modernity. Woolf chooses a unique way of bringing the disillusionment into light through the depiction of a section from the life of ordinary characters –a housewife and a former soldier- who experience a friction between the illusion imposed by the values of modernity and the reality as experienced by themselves.

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