

Hedda Sofie Lauve Hansen

The Effect of Industrialisation on Clifford Chatterley in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and Septimus Warren Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway*

Bachelor's project in English

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Faculty of Humanities
Department of Language and Literature

Abstract

The female narratives in D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* tend to be favoured for analysis over the male narratives of Clifford Chatterley and Septimus Warren Smith. Their narratives have been marginalised despite having a lot to say about the way in which the rise of industrialised society has affected the male self-image. Clifford's mind and body are transformed from victim of war to victim of industrialisation; the same goes for Septimus. Whereas Septimus rejects the stoic masculinity of post-war society, Clifford conforms to it in his pursuit of economic success. The reason why both of these characters react differently towards industrialisation, is because of their prerequisite mindsets: Septimus views the rise of industrialisation as a sickness to society; Clifford sees it as an opportunity to capitalise on the technological advancements of the time. Their different approaches to industrialisation are the direct result of their mindsets before war. However, both end up losing their sense of self and wind up as victims of industrialisation. In this light, both novels take a critical stand to the approach to industrialisation and the way in which it affects the male body and mind.

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INTRODUCTION

The First World War—or the Great War, as some might say—was unlike anything Britain had ever encountered before. Derived from post-war disillusionment, modernism sought to break away from traditional and romantic ways of writing and understanding the world and the individual. The focus of the modernist author was therefore to challenge the social, economic and political status quo through their writing. D. H Lawrence and Virginia Woolf are two of several modernist writers that seek to do this in their post-war novels. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* and Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* are two much reviewed novels that both reflect how the war impacted those who fought in battle as well as those who remained at the home. Topics such as trauma, sexuality, feminism and industrialism are some concepts that are more frequently discussed in the context of these novels. Elaine Showalter and Alex Zwerdling, for example, have explored how trauma is represented and dealt with in *Mrs. Dalloway*. David Kellogg has explored the topic of sexuality in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*.¹ Each of these concepts can contribute to the reader’s understanding of the post-war Britain these novelist challenge. However, the previously mentioned scholars all have in common that their work is largely concerned with the importance of the female characters of these novels, as opposed to the male characters.

The vast majority of scholarship written about *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* tend to favour Connie Chatterley’s narrative over Clifford Chatterley’s narrative, which has consequently made it difficult to find sufficient scholarship about his role as a physical embodiment of the effect of war and industrialisation on the male body. Although Septimus Warren Smith’s role as a victim of trauma and modernity is more frequently discussed, his narrative is largely reviewed in the context of Clarissa Dalloway rather than as a narrative on its own. This thesis will therefore aim to examine how the pressure of unresolved war trauma and the societally constructed masculinity communicated in these post-war novels transform Clifford and Septimus from victims of war to victims of the alienating rise of a new, industrialised society.

¹ Kellogg, David. “Reading Foucault Reading Lawrence: Body, Voice and Sexuality in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*.” *The D. H. Lawrence Review* 28, no.3 (1999). p. 31-54.

CHAPTER 1

Trauma and masculinity in the interwar years

The First World War is commonly acknowledged in Britain today as a senseless, industrialised war that claimed millions of lives with no prevail. However, this was not the image that dominated public discussion between 1914 and 1918.² Although the war effort was initially seen as both glorious and honourable, the reality of war was not revealed before it was too late to go back home. The war effort mobilised ideas of masculinity grounded in Victorian ideals to encourage millions of young men to enlist for war. To enlist as a soldier was a way of demonstrating the mental and physical strength that was part of this deeply ingrained idea of masculinity, and so many enlisted to prove to themselves and to their families that they were truly manly.³ Jessica Meyer argues in her article “Separating the Men from the Boys: Masculinity and Maturity in the Understandings of Shell Shock in Britain” (2009) that “the common contemporary narrative cast war as a training ground where boys were turned into men,”⁴ which fundamentally meant that the experience of war was expected to be a maturing process in which boys would have become mentally and physically strong men by the time they returned home from war. However, this gruesome trench war more often than not produced the opposite. The vast majority of soldiers returning from war were in some way traumatised by the horrific experience of war. The process of returning to society that wanted to forget the war was challenging, because there was no framework in place for those who could not forget what they had suffered.

Eszter Edit Balogh examines how the experience of war impacted the way male bodies were represented in the art of World War 1 in her article “From Heroic Soldiers to Geometric Forms and Suffering Wrecks: The Transformation of the Male Body in the Art of World War 1.” (2018). The soldier was a representation and embodiment of the perfect manliness, and the representation of the figure of the soldier was therefore vital to the construction of a general masculine ideal before, during and after the war. Balogh argues that the soldier represented

² McCartney, Helen B. “The First World War Soldier and His Contemporary Image in Britain.” (Wiley, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2014), p.1.

³ Balogh, Eszter Edit. “From Heroic Soldiers to Geometric Forms and Suffering Wrecks: The Transformation of the Male Body in the Art of World War I.” (Debrecen, Centre for Arts, Humanities and Sciences (CAHS), 2018), p.11-12.

⁴ Meyer, Jessica. “Separating the Men from the Boys: Masculinity and Maturity in Understandings of Shell Shock in Britain.” 20 Century British History 20, no. 1. (2009). p.2.

not only a masculine ideal, but also different perceptions of war. There were two general ways of reacting to World War 1 in Britain: “to remain loyal to the pro-war attitude, rooted in the traditional interpretations of war, or to counter the traditional approach by an anti-war, disillusioned, and ironic response.”⁵ The figure of the soldier would thereby be represented according to these general reactions to war. The representation of the soldier in art can consequently be considered a major part of the changing perception of both masculinity and war from the beginning to the end of World War 1. As mentioned before, the expectation of what war would be like and the actual experience of it proved to be drastically different. What was initially considered an honourable cause suddenly became a devastating affair. As Helen B. McCartney writes in “The First World War soldier and his contemporary image in Britain” (2014), millions of young men found themselves stuck in “an alien landscape of muddy trenches and gaping shell holes for an unappreciative and uncomprehending public at home.”⁶ McCartney and Balogh both suggest that the shocking truth of World War 1 brought about a change not only in the way soldiers and men in general viewed themselves, but also in the way they were perceived by their family, friends and the general public. The meaning of the war as it was interpreted by both servicemen and civilians was therefore important to the perception of soldiers as an embodiment of masculinity and of the war effort. Consequently, the increasing number of traumatised or dead men raised the question of what soldiers were actually fighting for. The truth of industrialised war as a senseless affair meant that the image of the soldier at home changed from hero of war to victim of war.

Traditional Victorian masculine ideals idolised chivalry, mental and physical strength and a stoic demeanour that could withstand all kinds of suffrage. However, literary depictions of broken soldiers and shell-shocked veterans proposed that this stoic masculinity was a deeply unrealistic expectation for men to act accordingly to. The experience of war changed not only the public perception of war, but also the understanding of what an ideal man should be like; the figure of the soldier as he appears in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* and in *Mrs. Dalloway* propose that the consequences of Victorian traditional masculinity can be severe not only for the man himself, but also for the people he surrounds himself with. This image of masculinity is especially dangerous when the mind is clouded by unresolved trauma. The traumatic war experiences that live in Clifford Chatterley and in Septimus Warren Smith cannot be expressed or resolved in a healthy manner in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* and *Mrs. Dalloway* because there is no framework in place in either of these fictional upper-class

⁵ Balogh. “The Transformation of the Male Body in the Art of World War I.” p.11.

⁶ McCartney. “The First World War Soldier and His Contemporary Image in Britain.”. p.1.

societies to understand how trauma affects the mind. The stigmatisation of shell-shock as the male equivalent of female hysteria complicated these feelings of trauma, because it associated deep, overwhelming feelings with the female gender; the experience of trauma thereby becomes a gendered matter that belittles men for expressing any intense emotions. A man is therefore less of a man if he expresses his trauma,⁷ and so the male body is transformed from masculine soldier to feminine victim.

After years of being stuck in a bloody stalemate, traumatised soldiers eventually returned to their homes. Shaken to the core by the horrible things they had witnessed, several struggled to conform to the new, industrialised world surrounding them. The rise of a much more technologically advanced society was overwhelming and the transition from war to peace-time for those who had suffered the most was difficult. The lack of sufficient framework shell-shocked soldiers made it even more difficult for traumatised men to become part of society again. Ultimately, those who returned had to either conform to this new, yet rapidly changing world or resist it.

⁷ Meyer. "Masculinity and Maturity in Understandings of Shell Shock in Britain." p.2.

CHAPTER 2

Masculinity and trauma in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

2.1. Synopsis of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

Lady Chatterley's Lover begins by introducing its main protagonist, Constance Reid. Raised as a cultural bohemian, she has lived a life mostly free to say and do as she as she pleases. At the age of fifteen, she lays with a man for the first time. However, at this point in her life, the lovemaking is not as valuable as the intimate conversations she has had with this young man. A couple of years later, Connie marries Clifford Chatterley. After a month's honeymoon, he is shipped back into war only to return paralysed from the waist down. Returning to their home at Wragby Hall, Connie and Clifford try to make the best of their situation despite inadequate income. Clifford soon makes a satisfactory living off of his successful writings. His works attract several curious intellectuals to their residence. As Clifford becomes increasingly interested in finding success in writing and in coalmining, his relationship with Connie becomes more and more distant. Michaelis, one of several visitors to Wragby Hall, suddenly catches Connie's attention. Their affair is short and sweet, however, as it becomes apparent to Connie that Michaelis is just as disconnected from the pleasures of the body as every other man.

Connie feels herself fall into despair as she struggles to understand why all men seem to be scared of experiencing true passion and emotion. Connie is both Clifford's wife and nurse, which leaves her with little time for herself. Mrs. Bolton, a nurse and caretaker, is hired to take care of Clifford so that Connie can be more independent. Clifford becomes incredibly dependant on Mrs. Bolton and thrives off of her admiration for him. Meanwhile, Connie begins a sexual affair with the gamekeeper, Oliver Mellors. Connie does not initially feel connected to Mellors despite several sexual encounters. However, after experiencing simultaneous orgasms, she begins to fall in love with him. As they continue their affair, their bodies continue to connect on a deeply sensual level. While Connie travels to Venice with her sister, Mellors's old wife returns. She proceeds to spread rumours about Mellors, which causes Clifford to fire him. When Connie returns, Mellors is nowhere to be seen. Eventually, Connie decides to admit to Clifford that she has become pregnant with Mellors's child. Enraged by this, Clifford refuses to divorce his wife. In the end, Connie and Mellors remain apart while they wait to be divorced from their spouses.

2.2. Masculinity and the subconscious trauma of Clifford Chatterley

Clifford's paralysis is widely acknowledged as Lawrence's representation of industrialisation as a sickness to society. He describes Clifford's disability as a symbol of "the paralysis, the deeper emotional or passional paralysis, of most men of his sort and class today."⁸ Clifford embodies the modern man that Lawrence despises; his meaningless pursuit for success in the coal industry had led him to become an emotionless, dull man with no regards for anything beyond himself. At the core of his destructive behaviour is his pursuit to make himself a man again. The war has taken away his control over his body, and with it his manhood. In order to gain some sort of control over himself again, he attempts to control his mind by repressing anything that will make him aware of his lameness and of his crumbling masculinity. Consequently, he becomes more than physically impaired; he becomes emotionally impaired as well, in the sense that he separates himself from his conscious, emotional self.

Clifford embodies an expression of modern, interwar masculinity in which "the iron and the coal had eaten deep into the bodies and souls of the men."⁹ This vivid image of iron and coal breaking down the male body reflects how overwhelming and alienating the rise of modern society was. World War 1 reduced the body of the soldier to an "inhuman" and "automaton-like" being, in which all individuality was eliminated, and a machine-like behaviour was adopted in order to survive. As Balogh writes,

World War 1 with its extremely mechanized warfare created the feeling it was no longer the guns, tanks, and airplanes that functioned as prostheses for the human body, extending its capacities to kill and maim, but the human body itself had become part of these machines, not ruling them but ruled by their strength.¹⁰

The human body became subject to industrialisation through mechanised warfare, which consequently made soldiers lose their sense of self. Clifford's transformation from paralysed war veteran into a soulless industrialist parallels this transformation of the soldier from man into machine. His paralysis has both figuratively and literally robbed him of his manhood, ultimately eliminating a part of him that is vital to his understanding of himself as a modern man. However, disregarding his impairment, Clifford came out of the war with no significant

⁸ Lawrence, D. H. 'A Propos of "Lady Chatterley's Lover"' in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. (Penguin Books, 2006), p.333.

⁹ Lawrence. *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, p.159.

¹⁰ Balogh. "The Transformation of the Male Body in the Art of World War 1," p.20.

signs of trauma. From the outside, he is strangely bright and cheerful despite his paralysis. The way his behaviour changes over time indicates that there is more to this: “It was obvious in the anxious brightness in his eyes, how proud he was, after the great shock, of being alive. But he had been so much hurt, something inside him had perished, some of his feelings were gone.”¹¹ Over the years it has spread throughout his body and to his head: “But now, as the years went by, slowly, slowly Connie felt the bruise of fear and horror coming up and spreading in him.”¹² This glimpse of fear is a small, yet important indication of what is going on inside of him. Julian Moynahan argues that although Clifford may be machine-like with his “hard, efficient shell of an exterior,”¹³ the “impulse of self-assertion” and “contradictory impulse of terrified dependency” that reside within his body tell another story.¹⁴

Having lost part of his masculine self, Clifford strives to assert himself as a modern man both inwardly and outwardly. This self-asserting impulse is grounded in an industrial ideal which only sees a man as useful if he has a function. A man is therefore no more than what he does, and so Clifford’s pursuit for success becomes critical in giving meaning to his life not just as an individual but as a modern man as well. His interest in coal mining can therefore be considered both an effort to give meaning to his life and an effort to reconstruct himself as a man. Coal mining allows him to shift his focus away from his subconscious trauma, consequently allowing him to let go of his “conscious being”: “And he seemed verily to be re-born. Now life came into him! He had been gradually dying, with Connie, in the isolated private life of the artist and the conscious being. Now let all that go. Let it sleep. He simply felt life rush into him out of the coal, out of the pit.”¹⁵ Clifford feels life surge into him as he breathes in the “stale air of the colliery,” and the coal mines has finally allowed him to escape himself: “He had fulfilled his life-long secret yearning: to get out of himself. Art had not done it for him. Art had only made it worse. But now, now he had done it.”¹⁶ The power he feels over all the hundreds of “colliers” give him control and makes him feel more like “a lord or a master,”¹⁷ and perhaps more like a man. By repressing his trauma, he has allowed himself to construct a new, modern man that has seemingly forgotten the war ever affected him at all.

¹¹ Lawrence. *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, p.6.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.49.

¹³ Moynahan, Julian. “*Lady Chatterley’s Lover: The Deed of Life.*” (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1959), p.75.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.75.

¹⁵ Lawrence. *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, p.108.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.109.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.109.

Mrs. Bolton can be considered a parallel to industrialism by the way she “makes a man of him” by encouraging Clifford to become part of the coalmining industry. She “made him aware only of outside things,” successfully shifting his focus away from his lack of manhood. However, Mrs. Bolton’s affectionate demeanour toward Clifford is influenced by her glorification of aristocracy and by her position as his caretaker. Although she might make him feel like a man, he depends on her like a child would on a parent: “And he let her shave him or sponge all his body as if he were a child, really as if he were a child.”¹⁸ Meyer argues that disabled veterans, such as Clifford, were feminised by being portrayed as children by their physical dependence.¹⁹ In other words, Clifford’s dependency on Mrs. Bolton makes him less of a man. Moynahan argues that Clifford’s “impulse of terrified dependency” contradicts the powerful and manipulate industrialist he yearns to become, because it reverts him into a child-like state of dependency rather than the independent, powerful man he is trying to become.

Clifford depends on success, because without it he is nothing. He needs Connie, because without her he does not really exist. Without her, he is lost: “A man needed support and comfort. A man needed to have an anchor in the safe world. A man needed a wife.”²⁰ Connie has become his anchor in the real world, despite their differences: “Big and strong as he was, he was helpless. He could wheel himself about in a wheeled chair, and he had a sort of bath-chair with a motor attachment, in which he could puff slowly round the park. But alone he was like a lost thing. He needed Connie to be there, to assure him he existed at all.”²¹ Clifford feasts off of Connie’s energy to make him feel like he exists, but this drains her of life in the process. The same way industrialism has robbed Clifford of his emotions, he now robs his wife of emotion by dragging her into what Moynahan describes as his “orbit of non-existence.”²² Clifford does not really exist, because his emotional deficiency does not allow him to do so. He can control colliers and machines with his words, but Clifford’s own mind and body is ultimately as much of a victim to industrialisation as his workers and his wife are to him.

The trauma of industrialisation on man is expressed through Clifford’s body and how dependent it has become on his mechanised chair. He depends on it to drive him forward, the same way he depends on his interest in coal mining to drive his focus forward and away from his past. The same way he depends on his chair to have some sort of control over his life, he

¹⁸ Ibid., p.109.

¹⁹ Meyer. “Masculinity and Maturity in Understandings of Shell Shock in Britain,” p.4.

²⁰ Ibid., p.12.

²¹ Ibid., p.16.

²² Moynahan. “The Deed of Life,” p.73.

relies on industrialisation and the success it brings for his life to have any meaning. He depends on the feeling of power that coal mining gives him to feel masculine and ultimately alive at all. Consequently, he convinces himself that he does not need anything but coal to feel a purpose anymore. The benefit of coal is that it does not demand anything of him emotionally or physically; he can simply say the word and control all the colliers. He does not have to feel anything deep to gain something from it, unlike his relationship with Connie, which demands him to get in touch with the most sensitive and fragile parts of himself.

Lawrence writes in “A Propos of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*” that “all the emotions belong to the body, and are only recognised by the mind.”²³ Feelings remain within the body until the mind realises them, and so the mind depends on the feelings of the body to realise itself. When occurs then when Clifford represses his traumatic feelings is a separation of his mind from his body, and consequently a separation of his mind from his emotions. This emotional deficiency makes him unable to sympathise with his surroundings, which inevitably leads Connie to stray from him. It is not until Connie attempts to leave him that any real emotion is ripped out of him: “The face in the bed seemed to deepen its expression of wild, but motionless distraction. Mrs. Bolton looked at it and was worried. She knew what she was up against: male hysteria. She had not nursed soldier without learning something about that very unpleasant disease.”²⁴ Meyer persuasively argues that the inverse of proper male soldier was the child as well as the woman, and so “the failure of shell-shocked men were as much those of immaturity as effeminacy.”²⁵ Clifford’s childlike and dependent state can therefore be understood as a manifestation of his shell-shock. By losing control over Connie, he loses control over the illusion of life he has constructed. His past and his present life washes over him, leaving him in a state of despair.

The failure of Clifford is his separation of the mind and the body; by separating the two, emotions cannot be expressed naturally through the body. Consequently, intense emotions of trauma are not expressed in a healthy manner. He becomes an embodiment of the effect of industrialisation on man as he transforms into an emotionless, stoic man that cannot connect with himself or with his surroundings anymore. The overwhelming rise of industrialisation and his underlying, unresolved feelings of trauma is what tears him apart in the end. His meaningless pursuit for success has clouded his mind and separated him from his reality to the extent that he becomes another being. The trauma that surfaces when he loses

²³ Lawrence. “A Propos of “*Lady Chatterley’s Lover*,”” p.311

²⁴ Lawrence. *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, p.289.

²⁵ Meyer. “Masculinity and Maturity in Understandings of Shell Shock in Britain,” p.4.

control over Connie exposes everything he has tried to repress. His effort to reconstruct himself as a man inevitably ended in a broken marriage and the return of his unresolved feelings of trauma that he has struggled so hard to repress.

CHAPTER 3

Masculinity and trauma in *Mrs. Dalloway*

3.1. Synopsis of *Mrs. Dalloway*

Mrs. Dalloway is a modernist novel centred on upper-middle class woman Clarissa Dalloway who is preparing to host a party. The novel follows Clarissa and several other characters as they go about their day in post-war London. The war has left the upper-class seemingly untouched, and so conversations of the horrible affair that has passed never really occurs. Memories of World War 1 still shake shell-shocked veteran Septimus Warren Smith, however. A pistol-sounding car and the airplane in the sky triggers flashbacks of his departed friend, Evans. Returning from the flower shop, Clarissa enters her home to find that her old friend and former suitor, Peter Walsh, has come by for a visit. He asks Clarissa if she is happy in her marriage to Richard Dalloway. Clarissa recalls her friendship with Peter, and her brief romantic interaction with childhood friend Sally Seton. Peter leaves Clarissa's home and makes his way to the park. He observes that many things have changed in London.

Hoping to cure her husband of his horrors, Lucrezia Warren Smith takes Septimus to several doctors for help. Sir William Bradshaw, a highly respected physician, argue that Septimus has to be taken away to a rest home to recover from his hallucinations and suicidal thoughts. Meanwhile, Clarissa's husband Richard Dalloway returns home from lunch. He struggles to express his feelings for her and is unable to tell her that he loves her. Clarissa and Richard's daughter, Elizabeth, goes shopping with her tutor Mrs. Kilman in the meantime. After returning from their visit to Sir William, Rezia goes to work on her hats when Septimus suddenly becomes alarmed by another flashback. Rezia reassures him that despite his illness, she will not let the doctors take him away from her. Septimus's old doctor, Dr. Holmes, comes to their home to take him away. In an effort to save himself from his doctor, Septimus jumps out the window and kills himself. As Clarissa's party approaches, Peter receives a letter from her expressing how glad she was to see him today. He decides to attend her party after all. At the party, Clarissa hears from Lady Bradshaw about Septimus's death. Although they never met, Septimus's death makes her reflect on all that she has. The novel ends with Peter seeing Clarissa and realising that he still feels deeply towards her.

3.2. Masculinity and shell-shock of Septimus Warren Smith

Elaine Showalter writes in her introduction to this 1992 edition of *Mrs. Dalloway* that Septimus Warren Smith's shell-shock reflects "the conditions of his society, one in which the after-effects of the war have been evaded, where Proportion is worshipped, and feelings have been numbed and anaesthetized."²⁶ Septimus has lost his "sense of proportion," which is just a polite way of Sir William Bradshaw to say that he has gone mad.²⁷ Karen DeMeester understands Sir William as a representation of the social and political community that does not want the truth of the social status quo to be revealed, in fear that it might tear apart their world of proportion.²⁸ The only cure for Septimus unproportionate behaviour is rest: "Rest in bed; rest in solitude; silence and rest; rest without friends, without books, without messages: six month's rest; until a man who went in weighing seven stone six comes out weighing twelve."²⁹ The purpose of this cure is not to help Septimus, but to silence the truth of human nature that the experience of war has revealed to him. Out there in the trenches, "he saw humanity stripped of the trappings of civilization and witnessed its primitive nature and its potential for evil and destruction, which is merely constrained—not eradicated—by civilised order."³⁰ He can no longer be part of this civilised order he once was part of, because the shocking reality of war has made it abundantly clear to him that this order is simply a façade to hide the ugliest parts of human nature. The effort to silence Septimus can therefore be considered an effort to hide how the experience of war has made human beings into machine-like creatures that comply blindly with the order of things, without questioning the motives of the social order they are part of.

Alex Zwerdling argues in his article "*Mrs. Dalloway* and the Social System" that Woolf depicted English polite society as emotionally repressed to communicate "something inflexible, unresponsive, or evasive in their nature which makes them incapable of reacting appropriately to critical events of their time or their own lives."³¹ The governing class have become so devoid of feelings that they fail to recognise the cost of war on the world surrounding them. Zwerdling writes that this emotional deadness was part of a conspiracy to deny the pain and significance of the war in order to distance the individual from the past and

²⁶ Showalter, Elaine. 'Introduction', in *Mrs. Dalloway*. (Penguin Books, 1992). p. xlii.

²⁷ Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. (Penguin Books, 1992), p.106.

²⁸ DeMeester, Karen. "Trauma and Recovery in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*." (MFS Modern Fiction Studies, 1998), p. 661.

²⁹ Woolf. *Mrs. Dalloway*, p.108.

³⁰ DeMeester. "Trauma and Recovery in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*," p.657.

³¹ Zwerdling, Alex. "Mrs. Dalloway and the Social System." (Modern Language Association, 1977), p.71.

all the emotions connected to it to become an ideal, stoic being.³² All emotions must therefore be silenced in order to maintain the illusion that the war never really affected the world. Septimus's existence becomes problematic in the light of this because he embodies everything the governing class wants to forget. As a shell-shocked veteran, Septimus struggles to conform to a world that wants to forget the war he has suffered through. His body is stuck in what Andrew Mangham and Daniel Lea describe as a state of "interrupted embodiment," in which "the temporality of trauma is fixated as the body repeatedly re-members the experiences of horror and loss in a complex entanglement of trauma and time."³³ Septimus's trauma forces his body to recall the past through flashbacks and hallucinations, subsequently separating him from reality. The lack of sufficient framework to express his trauma makes it impossible for him to process and understand his own emotional experience of the war, and ultimately heal.

Septimus enlisted for war "to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare's plays and Miss Isabel Pole in a green dress walking in a square."³⁴ However, the war has changed him; his appreciation for literature has vanished, he is incapable of loving his wife and the world he once knew has become a wretched and cold thing. The war made him "manly," which is to say it taught him how to repress his feelings. Initially, Septimus feels proud of this newfound stoicism: "When Evans was killed, just before the Armistice, in Italy, Septimus, far from showing any emotion or recognising that here was the end of a friendship, congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably."³⁵ He soon comes to the realisation that this stoic emotional behaviour is deeply unnatural to him. Mangham and Lea observes how Septimus has quickly gone from war-hero to "a hysteric and 'unmanly' subject ironically and precisely because of his inability to feel or emotionally connect to the people and objects around him."³⁶ Consequently, the war experience which was supposed to make a man of him has actually made him less of a man.

Showalter pioneered the idea of shell-shock as a form of male hysteria in her book *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980* (1987).³⁷ Showalter argues that shell-shock was considered the male equivalent of female hysteria and so the result of the war experience would in cases of shell-shock be transformed from a physical

³² Ibid., p. 71.

³³ Mangham, Andrew & Lea, Daniel. *The Male Body in Medicine and Literature*. (Liverpool University Press, 2018), p.127.

³⁴ Woolf. *Mrs. Dalloway*, p.94.

³⁵ Ibid., p.95.

³⁶ Mangham & Lea. *The Male Body in Medicine and Literature*, p.132.

³⁷ Meyer. "Masculinity and Maturity in Understandings of Shell Shock in Britain," p.2.

experience to a condition of emotional trauma. Showalter argues that this was “an expression of a feminine element in men’s natures that conflicted with Victorian understandings of appropriate masculinity.”³⁸ Men were considered feminine for experiencing intense emotions that was traditionally associated with women; thus, Sir William’s effort to silence Septimus can be considered an effort to maintain the illusion of a predominantly stoic masculinity.

Built upon Victorian traditional ideals of masculinity, the ideal man of upper-class society in *Dalloway* is an emotionally dead, yet physically and mentally strong man. Richard Dalloway’s struggle to communicate his love for his wife, Clarissa, depicts how emotionally dead men have become in their quest to conform to patriarchal English society.³⁹ It is almost as if he has to convince himself that he loves her and feel happy in her company: “He had not said ‘I love you’; but he held her hand. Happiness is this, is this, he thought.”⁴⁰ Even if he does, in fact, love his wife, he has no way of communicating it in a manner that does not contradict his idea of the perfect man. Sir William’s commanding and dismissive behaviour towards his patients further enhances how unbearable upper-class masculinity has become. His desire for control is disguised by his offers to help, and so he preys on those weaker than him to feel powerful: “Naked, defenceless, the exhausted, the friendless received the impress of Sir William’s will. He swooped; he devoured. He shut people up. It was this combination of decision and humanity that endeared Sir William so greatly to the relation of his victims.”⁴¹

Septimus’s struggle to communicate can be understood broadly as Woolf’s criticism towards a cold and dull upper-class society that does not allow any deep, vivid emotions to be expressed in an effort to maintain an image of perfection. Julianne Fowler emphasises in her article “Lucrezia Smith as Witness and Scribe in *Mrs. Dalloway*” (2017) that Rezia is devoted to being “her husband’s advocate and helpmate; what she lacks is the appropriate language and therefore the framework of understanding in which to do so meaningfully.”⁴² The deficiency of language makes it impossible for Rezia to communicate what she wants and to do so with a purpose. Both Septimus and Rezia share this frustration of closing the gap between spoken and written experiences of trauma. Septimus’s condition is not necessarily the cause of his inability to express himself; instead the fault lies in the lack of a framework for men like him to express intense emotions without being stigmatised as insane or

³⁸ Ibid., p.2.

³⁹ Woolf. *Mrs. Dalloway*, p.126-130.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.130.

⁴¹ Ibid., p.112.

⁴² Fowler, Julianne. ““(for she was with him)”: Lucrezia Warren Smith as Witness and Scribe in *Mrs. Dalloway*.” (New Haven, Southern Connecticut State University, 2017), p.30.

hysterical. This lack of a sufficient outlet has further led to his indifference toward her desperate cries for happiness: “Far away he heard her sobbing; he heard it accurately, he noticed it distinctly; he compared it to a piston thumping. But he felt nothing.”⁴³

Septimus’s indifference does not mean he is not aware of his lack of emotion; more than anything, his indifference towards his wife’s cries makes him terribly aware of the fact that he does not feel anything anymore: “His wife was crying, and he felt nothing; only each time she sobbed in this profound, this silent, this hopeless way, he descended another step into the pit.”⁴⁴ Septimus surrenders into the pressure of his wife’s unhappiness and Rezia sends for Dr. Holmes. According to him, Septimus is simply having a rough day. Whereas Rezia sees a road to recovery, Septimus sees his inevitable death: “So there was no excuse; nothing whatever the matter, except the sin for which human nature had condemned him to death; that he did not feel.” If there is nothing wrong with him, then Septimus’s lack of feelings cannot be blamed on sickness, but on his human nature. The only solution is therefore to kill himself, because “the verdict of human nature on such a wretch was death.”⁴⁵

The pressure of conforming to societal standards of masculinity has made Septimus emotionally impaired, subsequently robbing him of what makes him human. There is no feeling left in Septimus, and so his body becomes no more than an empty shell of a man. When Rezia holds his arm, it is nothing but a piece of bone that he gives her.⁴⁶ The sensations of the body briefly come back to Septimus through Rezia’s touch and through their conversations, signifying that there could have been a way for him to recover from his trauma. He manages to help his wife make a hat for Mrs. Peters even though “he had no fingers, could not even do up a parcel,”⁴⁷ indicating that the connection between him and Rezia through conversation and action could allow him to one day feel real again.⁴⁸ If he had been allowed to communicate his trauma to someone in a sufficient and tolerant manner, Septimus might have been able to recover. However, Sir William’s suggested cure will only separate him further from his body. He wants to take control over Septimus’s shell-shock by robbing him of the rights to his own body and with this the right to his own mind. Septimus’s suicide can therefore be understood as not just an expression of the severity of his trauma, but

⁴³ Woolf. *Mrs. Dalloway*, p.99.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.99.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.100.

⁴⁶ Woolf. *Mrs. Dalloway*, p.17.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.157.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.158.

also his last conscious decision over his own body. By killing himself, he takes control over his body before anyone else can do so.

Septimus' life would have been over whether he committed suicide or surrendered himself to a life in confinement. Society would have won no matter what, because either option would have silenced him and consequently rid him of his unproportionate behaviour. Clarissa reflects upon the meaning of Septimus's death towards the end of the novel. She comes to the realisation that Septimus's suicide and death in itself is "an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, faded; one was alone."⁴⁹ In this, Clarissa becomes the only person other than Rezia to acknowledge Septimus's suicide as something meaningful. His death can be understood as both a protest against the stoic masculinity of modern upper-class society and a protest against silencing your emotions in order to conform to a world devoid of sympathy.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.202.

CHAPTER 4

The effect of stoic masculinity and industrialisation on Clifford Chatterley and Septimus Warren Smith

Both of these novels question the industrial climate they are written in. The rise of a highly industrialised society has transformed man into a mechanised being driven by a meaningless pursuit for success. The body has become an emotionless shell that has no real meaning beyond housing the mind and its interests. Both *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Mrs. Dalloway* oppose this senseless society, but in different ways. Clifford and Septimus represent two general ways of responding to industrialism; Clifford conforms to the patriarchal society surrounding him by repressing his emotions to the extent that he separates his mind from his body in order to feel as little as possible. He does not question the order of things in his life, instead he embraces the deadness of upper-class society in order to fit in with the crowd of other, able-bodied men. He enjoys the power coal mining gives him over other people, so much so that he becomes obsessed with it. Contrastively, Septimus cannot conform to the stoicism in *Mrs. Dalloway*. He is troubled by the numbness of his surroundings and his inability to feel anything anymore. The war has given birth to the poison that is industrialism, which has consequently stained human nature and robbed the world around him of sympathy. Their reactions are grounded in the state of mind they are in upon returning from the battlefield. Clifford returns paralysed, yet mostly whole on the inside. Septimus returns physically okay, but emotionally and mentally destroyed. Their characters before going into war also say something about their reactions to industrialisation and whether or not it is natural for them to conform or to reject it. Clifford was not a particularly sensitive man before he went to war. Upon his return, his emotional life has been maimed through his war experience. Septimus, on the other hand, loved poetry, Shakespeare and life in general.

The effect of trauma on Clifford and Septimus as individuals is visible in the way they choose to deal with their trauma; Clifford tries to take control of his life by taking control of everything surrounding him including his conscious self in an effort to separate himself from underlying feelings of trauma, but these feelings come back to him as soon as he loses some of his control over Connie. Septimus is more conscious of his trauma and tries to communicate it so that he might heal. However, in a society which does not have a sufficient framework in place for shell-shocked soldiers, the only option for Septimus to get some sort of help is to be admitted to an asylum. In an effort to save his dignity and truly communicate

his feelings, Septimus takes his own life. Whereas Septimus's suicide is a violent response to a society that does not care for trauma, Clifford's breakdown in a sense kills him by forcing him into a child-like state. Fundamentally, both of these men are victims of shell-shock. The onset time for the vocalisation of their trauma is also similar, in that the severity of their trauma is only truly communicated to those around them in moments of distress.

The form of masculinity that is culturally dominant in each of these books, is what R. W. Connell would call hegemonic masculinity. According to her, hegemonic signifies "a position of cultural authority and leadership, not total dominance; other forms of masculinity persist alongside."⁵⁰ Hegemonic masculinity can therefore be seen as an indication of the dominant, masculine ideal in a given setting. There may still be other perceptions of masculinity present, but they may not be as acceptable as the culturally dominant hegemonic masculinity. The dominant, masculine ideal in both of these novels are similar in that they both reject emotion as a masculine trait. The stoic masculinity that Clifford displays is very similar to that of Sir William, especially in their need for control and power over those surrounding them. Septimus's masculine self can be compared to Mellors's masculine self, in that both of them reject the cultural notion of masculinity in their respective worlds. Although Clifford and Septimus's masculine identities after the war seem different on the surface, they are derived from the same hypermasculine figure of the soldier. However, their reaction to this image is what separates them from one another. Clifford tries to embrace it in an attempt to get back his manhood both figuratively and literally, whereas Septimus disdains the way it has stolen his feelings and sense of self.

Literary depictions of war veterans returning from war as physically or mentally traumatised communicate an anti-war attitude common to modernist writing. Clifford and Septimus are in this sense depictions of the devastating effect of war on the individual, both mentally and physically. The purpose of their pain is therefore to suggest that the figure of the masculine soldier has no place in the peacetime Britain, because it does not allow those who have suffered in war to truly heal. The consequence of this emotionally repressed masculine image is the death of consciousness, and consequently the death of the body.

⁵⁰ Connell, R. W. "Studying Men and Masculinity." (Toronto, Resources for Feminist Research, 2002). p.6.

CONCLUSION

The experience of the First World War shaped a new industrialised world in which all unnecessary emotions have to be repressed in order to move towards a brighter future. However, human beings have become machine-like in their pursuit for industrial success; by repressing their emotions, man has become separated from the feelings of the body and consequently life in itself. All that remains is the shell of mankind. Traumatized soldiers returning from war had to forget what they had suffered through in order to conform to a new, stoic masculinity. Those who could not conform to societal standards of masculinity, were alienated for it. The consequence of this has been detrimental to the bodies and minds of Clifford Chatterley in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and Septimus Warren Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Clifford and Septimus both return from the trenches to find that their worlds have changed. Industrialism as it is expressed in these novels demands a masculine deadness that is impossible for Clifford and Septimus to conform to unless they repress their war trauma. The stress of conforming has transformed Clifford's and Septimus's war-induced feelings of trauma into traumatic feelings of modernity and industrialisation; the experience of conforming to post-war society has failed to repress their trauma, instead causing these emotions to become stronger and more unbearable than they already were.

The options for veterans suffering from aftershocks of war are slim; you can either conform to the new world that wants to forget all that has happened to you and become emotionally dead in the process, or you can attempt to heal by seeking help from someone that is more concerned with maintaining the illusion of a flawless society than they are with curing you. The fate of these men seems futile no matter what they do, because either option will eventually destroy them as individuals. The ending in both of these novels are similar in that they are not happy; both men suffer under the by the pressure of modernity in one way or another. While Septimus commits suicide to save himself from a life in confinement, Clifford metaphorically kills himself by attempting to become an emotionless machine. There seems then to be no way out of the grasp of industrialism unless you kill yourself, which is in every way a devastating conclusion. And yet, this might reflect just how alienating the rise of modern society was to the mind and body.

The purpose of this thesis was to explore how Clifford and Septimus transform from victims of war to victims of industrialism and modernity. The masculine ideal communicated in these post-war novels contributed to this transformation by denying these

men any sufficient outlet for their feelings of war-trauma, subsequently forcing them to repress all emotions in order to be considered manly. Examining each of their narratives independent of other, female narratives may allow us to get a better understanding of how war and modernity have affected the way men are perceived by society. The expectation that all men should be capable of conforming to a stoic masculine image regardless of their past experiences is deeply unrealistic, as made evident by the physical and mental break-down of Clifford and Septimus.

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