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Empty Time and the Split Subjectivity in Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway: A Deleuzian Analysis

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<p>Article type: Research Article</p> <p>Article history: Received: 10 June 2022 Received in revised form: 12 August 2022 Accepted: 23 August 2022 Published online: Summer 2024</p> <p>Keywords: Affirmation of life, death, Gilles Deleuze, split subjectivity, Virginia Woolf.</p>	<p>In Mrs. Dalloway (1925), Virginia Woolf probes and criticizes the effects of the First World War on English society. Not only has the War caused misery and sadness among the characters, but it has also inflicted physical and mental damages. Woolf represents the effects of war through her famous character, Septimus Smith, and his desperate death. His death has been a controversial topic of debate. Critics have read it both positively and negatively. Some see Septimus' death as part of Woolf's social critique, whereas others interpret it as futile with no critical consequence. However, his death does not seem to be meaningless, especially for other characters, such as the protagonist of the novel Clarissa Dalloway. She displays sympathy and affection for him following his death. This paper argues that Septimus' death is comparable to the Deleuzian third synthesis of time. According to the third synthesis of time, the subject is split by a tremendous event that creates a fracture in the "I". The fractured "I" and the split subject dissolve the self. On the positive side, the dissolved self creates something new—a new self, which has liberated itself from law and identity. In Mrs. Dalloway, Septimus has a split subject as a result of the First World War. By using Deleuzian third synthesis of time, this paper argues that the First World War is a symbolic event that has split the subjectivity of Septimus into two Septimuses, a sane one before the war and a schizophrenic and delusional one after the war. Thus, Septimus' self is dissolved and he has experienced a death that affirms life. Moreover, he has become an artist, a creative person after the dissolution of his self. Therefore, the split subjectivity creates a new self, who is able to create in a new life. His metamorphosis has another positive side as well. The news of his death brings Clarissa into an awareness of the futility of her endeavors in social and political life. She is liberated from the repressive conditions of her life for some minutes and experiences a becoming. Throughout the novel, she is represented as a character who is suppressed but does not resist it. After the news of Septimus' death, she begins contemplating her own suppression in life. Therefore, this paper probes Septimus' split subjectivity and the double effects of his death on him and other characters, finally linking it to Clarissa's liberation at the end of the novel.</p>

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