

1. The relationship between Septimus, a shell-shocked World War I veteran, and his wife, Rezia, is one characterized by emotional strain and unfulfillment. A root cause of the tension in their relationship is Rezia's lack of consideration for Septimus' condition and her tendency to perceive the situation selfishly. For instance, as the couple sit in Regent's park, Woolf reveals Rezia's initial thoughts, "Her wedding ring slipped— she had grown so thin. It was she who suffered..." (Woolf 23). Assuming that she experienced weight loss due to this unsatisfactory and stressful marriage, Rezia's blinding focus on her own suffering (i.e. her wedding ring becoming too large for her fingers) speaks to her lack of sympathy towards her husband's much more severe mental condition. To elaborate, a truly loving wife that cared for Septimus would demonstrate behavior that is more understanding of the mental distraught that a veteran experiences, and would cease to have the same expectations that wives have from a normal marriage.

In addition to failing to be an accommodating wife, Rezia's complete misinterpretation of the situation continues to add to the conflict in the marriage. To clarify, she believes that Septimus has the capability to decide between which thoughts dominate at a given moment – ones driven by mental suffering due to flashbacks from WWI and others by a normal, recovered state of mind. She is incapable of recognizing that he lacks control over his episodes of grief, or when he hallucinates about his dead friends. This is revealed in the following quote, "Yet he could be happy when he chose." (Woolf 66). Rezia's misunderstanding of Septimus' mental state continues to fuel her expectations and, therefore, her disappointment and frustration as he continuously fails to meet them. Rezia is also unable to fully grasp the depth of the situation due to Septimus' doctor's misleading claims, "Yet Dr. Holmes said there was nothing the matter with him." (Woolf 67). A credible individual such as Dr. Holmes claiming that

Septimus is perfectly well further convinces Rezia that he is *purposefully* behaving strangely (which, in fact, he is not) – and increases the distance between the husband and wife.

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2. Woolf's narrative style is distinctly unique in its ever ebbing-and-flowing structure, one in which each character's thoughts are liquid-like and dynamic– both within and among individuals– much as they would be in reality. Hence, each character is effectively surrounded by a “semi-transparent envelope”, a cloud of ideas that allow for quick transition between the perspectives of multiple characters as well as between a character and his/her environment. In Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, we witness this style of narration throughout the novel; however, one instance in particular is exemplary of the way that a character experiences a sensory-rich moment. In the following passage, Septimus Warren Smith appears to be hyper-aware of the many sights and sounds around him simultaneously– as one would expect from a character whose consciousness is held in a semi-transparent envelope:

*“But they beckoned; leaves were alive, trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement. The sparrows fluttering, rising, and falling in jagged fountains were part of the pattern; the white and blue, barred with black branches. Sounds made harmonies with premeditation; the spaces between them were as significant as the sounds. A child cried. Rightly far away a horn sounded.”*

This passage (located on pages 22-23 in my specific edition of the novel) delves into the wandering thoughts of Septimus as he gazes at a plane writing in the sky. We recognize the fragile border between his thoughts about the plane, which one would assume to be the subject of focus in the instance, and the minute happenings in the surroundings that continue to permeate his thoughts. For instance, the flying sparrows and honking horns are not necessarily sounds that are out of the ordinary, nor are they essential to the plot; nonetheless, Woolf's narration style aligns these background occurrences with those in the forefront– hence mastering the effect of a semi-transparent envelope of thought.