

**‘One must become externalised’ :
Virginia Woolf’s Creative Processes for Inner Presentation**

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0. Introduction

This paper attempts to examine a few works written by a representative modernist writer, Virginia Woolf, in the 1920’s, and analyze several techniques for completing her original inner presentation technique, by focusing upon a variety of thought presentation modes employed in them. In addition to the writer’s work, I will also discuss how these literary devices are creatively applied by Woolf to her works, by referring to her diaries and her essays written during the period corresponding to that of her literary works. In other words, I shall take collaborative approach, by connecting the studies of autobiographical information and stylistic textual analysis.

Although many critics consider *Jacob’s Room* (1922) to be Woolf’s first experimental novel featuring modernist characteristics, the main character’s thought and feeling are not fully developed in *Jacob’s Room*. Her next novel, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), displays the adequate skill in presenting the inner world belonging to her characters. I would like to claim that Woolf established the original mode of her writing inner thought, in the works written in the early 1920’s and that she completed her way of reflecting human consciousness realistically in *Mrs Dalloway*.

1. Background of Woolf’s works written in the early 1920’s

First of all, it will be instructive to refer to the chronological order of her works around the early 1920’s in which Woolf is supposed to have established her inner presentation method.

Figure 1

The title	The period spent for the work
‘An Unwritten Novel’	January 1920 ¹
<i>Jacob’s Room</i>	April 1920 – November 1921
‘Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street’	April 1922 – ? (published in July 1923)
<i>Mrs Dalloway</i>	October 1922 – October 1924

When Woolf completed *Jacob's Room* in November 1921, she had not established yet an 'ideal' form that she would claim to be for inner presentation. It was around 1922 when she was writing 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' that she became confident that she had finally discovered her own style of presenting the human mind. In her diary of July 26 in 1922, she writes:

There's no doubt in my mind that I have found out how to begin (at 40) to say something in my own voice; & that interests me so that I feel I can go ahead without praise. (*Diary II* 186)

Here Woolf shows her confidence in her own method of writing and seems to have found the solution to the problem she had faced in searching for the method of the inner presentation. The writer makes a note of her firsthand experience in her creative activity on another occasion in her diary, written in the following month, August 22 in 1922.

One must get out of life – yes, that's why I disliked so much the irruption of Sydney [a friend of hers in the Bloomsbury Group] – one must become externalised; very, very concentrated, at all one point, not having to draw upon the scattered parts of one's character, living in the brain. Sydney comes & I'm Virginia; when I write I'm merely a sensibility. Sometimes I like being Virginia, but only when I'm scattered & various & gregarious. Now, so long as we are here, I'd like to be only a sensibility. (*Diary II* 189: The underlining is mine.)

Woolf expresses clearly that she 'must become externalised' and realizes the importance of 'externalising' the internal. To describe the consciousness of someone else requires the author to cease to be herself ('her own self of Virginia') and become 'merely a sensibility'. Thus her method of the inner presentation led her to create a narrating persona who is sensitive enough to objectify the subjective matters.

Applying her argument to the concrete narrative mode, the first person is essentially suitable for describing his/her own thought and feeling. In order to represent plural characters' minds, however, the author should employ, not the first person character-narrator, but the third-person narrator who has "ability" to know and describe other persons' consciousness. At this period, Woolf must have found the solution to the issue which she addresses in 'An Unwritten Novel': how it is possible to

describe the other people's minds.

In the middle of August 1922, Woolf completed 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street'.² Based upon this story, she conceived a longer novel and started to write *Mrs Dalloway* in the autumn of 1922. This means that Woolf found a solution about how to embody her ideal internal presentation method at the period between the writing of 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' and the beginning of *Mrs Dalloway*. I would like to analyze the short story, 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' and *Mrs Dalloway*, by considering what she comments in her diaries while engaging in these works, so that it can be clarified to what extent her 'discovery' about inner presentation is textualised.

2. The use and effect of Direct Thought in 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' (1922)

Throughout the story of 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street', Direct Thought [DT] mode is employed, with reporting clauses such as 'thought Mrs Dalloway' or 'thought Clarissa' added.³ Remarkable is the fact that DT is used intensively, since it should be related to the externalization of the internal, on which Woolf noted in her diary. In this story, the heroine Clarissa Dalloway walks through Bond Street in London and buys a set of gloves. Within the external framework of these events, the character's internal thought and feeling develop. At the opening passage, where Clarissa is walking the street in London, her thought of miscellaneous matters, such as her past days and the Queen of England, triggered by the sights of London.

(1) She had passed through the Admiralty Arch and saw at the end of the empty road with its thin trees Victoria's white mound, Victoria's billowing motherliness, amplitude and homeliness, always ridiculous, yet how sublime, thought Mrs Dalloway, remembering Kensington Gardens and the old lady in horn spectacles and being told by Nanny to stop dead still and bow to the Queen. (2) The flag flew above the Palace. (3) The King and Queen were back then. (4) Dick had met her at lunch the other day—a thoroughly nice woman. (5) It matters so much to the poor, thought Clarissa, and to the soldiers. (6) A man in bronze stood heroically on a pedestal with a gun on her left hand side—the South African war. (7) It matters, thought Mrs Dalloway walking towards Buckingham Palace. (8) There it stood four-square, in the broad sunshine, uncompromising, plain. (9) But it was character, she thought; something inborn in the race; what Indians respected. (10) The Queen went to hospitals, opened bazaars—the Queen of England, thought Clarissa, looking at the Palace. (11) Already at this hour a motor car

passed out at the gates; soldiers saluted; the gates were shut. (12) And Clarissa, crossing the road, entered the Park, holding herself upright.

(Woolf 1989: 153: The underlining is mine.)

The passage extracted above consists of twelve sentences, and DT is used in five of them. For each the reporting clause is employed; 'thought Mrs Dalloway' (1), 'thought Clarissa' (5), 'thought Mrs Dalloway'(7), 'she thought'(9) and 'thought Clarissa'(10), all of which are inserted into the sentence to further weaken the narrator's intervention. The extensive use of DT can be considered as her initial style of presenting the character's thought from his/her inner perspective.

Sentence (1) is long and complex, consisting of three clauses and two participial constructions. In order to show my analysis of sentence (1) in detail, I divide it further into 4 parts ([a], [b], [c] and [d]).

- [a] She had passed through the Admiralty Arch
- [b] and saw at the end of the empty road with its thin trees Victoria's white mound, Victoria's billowing motherliness, amplitude and homeliness,
- [c] always ridiculous, yet how sublime, thought Mrs Dalloway,
- [d] remembering Kensington Gardens and the old lady in horn spectacles and being told by Nanny to stop dead still and bow to the Queen.

[a] describes the heroine's action from the narrator's point of view in Narrative Report of Action [NRA]. [b] is also in NRA describing her action, though the evaluative words, such as 'empty' and 'white', reflect the heroine's viewpoint. In [c] her original words are presented with the reporting clause, 'thought Mrs Dalloway', added, and the focalizer moves into the heroine's inside. Thus this clause is interpreted as DT. In [d], by means of the present participle, another ongoing thought (her recollection of the past) in her mind is presented. In sentence (1), it is found that the most appropriate method is employed for her creative purpose, in the sense that the boundary between the focalization of the narrator and that of the character is blurred. Furthermore, the actual state of human mind is *realistically* mirrored in a sense that plural thoughts are presented as co-occurring by the use of present participle.

With the help of cognitive stylistics which deals with the text beyond sentence unit, it is illustrated that Clarissa's thinking frame is constructed in sentence (1) and effective in the following sentences (2), (3) and (4). Thus they can be interpreted as

describing from the character's focalization, though they do not have the reporting clause such as 'she saw'. Sentence (2) and (3) are both narrated perception, which describes the heroine's sight of the street (2) and depicts her thought triggered by her perception of the flag above the Palace (3). Sentence (4) is narrated perception or Free Indirect Thought [FIT] in which the past perfect tense 'had met' indicates the character's recollection of the past event.

With the character's original words and reporting clause employed, sentence (5) is DT. On the other hand, the first part of (6) is narrated perception and the last phrase, 'the South African war' is the character's thought triggered by her own thought. Sentence (7) is DT, which repeats what comes up with her mind in (5).

As in (6), narrated perception and FIT are combined in (8); it represents what she perceives here while the last two words are evaluative adjectives which reflect her thought. What follows from here are DT ((9) and (10)), Free Direct Thought [FDT] (11) and Narrative Report of Action [NRA] (12).

In most DTs employed here, the reporting phrases such as 'thought Clarissa' are inserted after the reported thought. By withdrawing the reporting phrases backward, the narrator's intervention further weakens and the description appears more character-centred. This DT mode is successively employed throughout this short story. I would argue that Woolf's comment, 'the *externalisation* of the internal', noted in August 1922, is embodied textually as the extensive and intensive use of DT in this story.

Another noticeable feature is the extensive use of present participle, which appears six times in this passage.

...remembering Kensington Gardens and the old lady...(1)

...being told by Nanny to stop dead still...(1)

...walking towards Buckingham Palace...(7)

...looking at the Palace (10)

...crossing the road (12)

...holding herself upright (12)

Except for 'remembering' and 'being told' in (1), the verbs describe the character's actions. By accompanying her thoughts with her ongoing actions, Woolf seems to emphasize that her thinking is not interrupted by the action, and vice versa. Therefore, continuity is realized here, between the internal and external description

effectively, through her creative method. Woolf preferably employs the present participle in her representative works, presumably to highlight the simultaneity of the character's external actions and thoughts and thus to produce the continuity between these different worlds.

3. The use and effect of Free Indirect Thought in *Mrs Dalloway*

Here I shall deal with the analysis of *Mrs Dalloway*, which was started in October 1992 and finished in October 1924. In this longer work, although DT continues to appear, the ratio of the reporting clauses drastically decreases. On the other hand, the use of Free Indirect Thought [FIT] becomes more extensive. The opening passage is extracted below.

(1) Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself.

(2)For Lucy had her work cut out for her. (3)The doors would be taken off their hinges; Rumpelmayer's men were coming. (4)And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning—fresh as if issued to children on a beach.

(5)What a lark! (6)What a plunge! (7)For so it had always seemed to her when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air. (8)How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) solemn, feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen; looking at the flowers, at the trees with the smoke winding off them and the rooks rising, falling; standing and looking until Peter Walsh said, "Musing among the vegetables?"—was that it?—"I prefer men to cauliflowers"—was that it? (9)He must have said it at breakfast one morning when she had gone out on to the terrace—Peter Walsh. (10)He would be back from India one of these days, June or July, she forgot which, for his letters were awfully dull; it was his sayings one remembered; his eyes, his pocket-knife, his smile, his grumpiness and, when millions of things had utterly vanished—how strange it was!—a few sayings like this about cabbages.

(*Mrs Dalloway* 1: The underlining is mine.)

The work opens with Indirect Speech [IS] in sentence (1). However, in (2) the reader is encouraged to plunge into Clarissa's consciousness. From the grammatical point,

(2), where the past tense is used, can be interpreted as the objective narration. However, considering the use of conjunction 'for',⁴ indicating a relation of cause and effect, (2) is closely related not to the reporting clause of (1) but to the character's words and thought in the reported clause: (2) explains why she thought she would buy the flower herself. Therefore, though seemingly abrupt, (2) can be interpreted as reflecting Clarissa's thought in FIT. Following (2), (3) can be regarded as FIT in which Clarissa's thought continues to be represented.

In sentence (4), Indirect Thought [IT] (or DT) is used with the reporting clause, 'thought Clarissa Dalloway', inserted as in the passage from 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' analyzed above. This sentence consolidates Clarissa's thinking frame, which encourages the reader to take her inner perspective. Clarissa as focalizer becomes much more dominant due to the use of exclamatory sentence in (5) and (6), questions in (8), and modal verbs in (9) and (10). On the other hand, the narrator does not completely disappear, as recognized in the use of past tense verbs. Thus, while (5) and (6) may be FDT, the sentences from (7) to (10) should be interpreted as FIT in which the consciousness of the heroine Clarissa is represented. The analysis of thought presentation mode in this passage illustrates that, as compared to 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street', the use of the DT with a reporting clause decreases (this appears only once in (4)) and instead the use of FIT extensively prevails, presumably to realize the fusion of the narrator's and character's consciousness.

I have illustrated Woolf's creative process of establishing the internal presentation of the character by focusing upon the shift from the predominant use of DT in 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' to the extensive use of FIT in *Mrs Dalloway*. I have also argued that Woolf's confidence that she could 'say something in my [her] own voice' (diary of July 26, 1922) is based upon her success in inventing her original style of writing by employing the mixture of DT and FIT and other linguistic features which help realistically present human state of mind. I would say that through the extensive and experimental use of FIT, Woolf had nearly completed her internal thought presentation method in 1922.

4. Tunneling process for telling the past

Although Woolf seems to have achieved her internal presentation method while

writing 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' and *Mrs Dalloway*, around this period she expresses another problem she encountered in her creative writing. The following is the extracted from her essay, 'How It strikes a Contemporary', in which she defines her contemporary period as 'an age of fragments' (*The Common Reader* 156).

So then our contemporaries afflict us because they have ceased to believe. The most sincere of them will only tell us what it is that happens to himself. They cannot make a world, because they are not free of other human beings. They cannot tell stories because they do not believe that stories are true. They cannot generalize. They depend on their senses and emotions, whose testimony is trustworthy, rather than on their intellects whose message is obscure. And they have perforce to deny themselves the use of some of the most powerful and some of the most exquisite of the weapons of their craft. With the whole wealth of the English language at the back of them, they timidly pass about from hand to hand and book to book only the meanest copper coins. Set down at a fresh angle of the eternal prospect they can only whip out their notebooks and record with agonized intensity the flying gleams, which light on what? and the transitory splendours, which may, perhaps, compose nothing whatever. But here the critics interpose, and with some show of justice.

('How It strikes a Contemporary' (1923), *The Common Reader* 239: The underlining is mine.)

In this essay, Woolf complains about the fragmentary nature of her contemporary literary works, targeting the writers such as Katherine Mansfield. This essay was first published in *Times Literary Supplement* in April 1923,⁵ just after she firmly held the belief in her own ability to present the internal voice of her characters. She expresses her dissatisfaction with her contemporary writers whom she regarded as those who failed to tell a story of life and were no more than able to write down the things of mere a sporadic moment. Woolf is questioning if there are any alternative methods to realistically present the inner world, other than cutting off a certain time and describe a momentary scene. What Woolf deplores is that although Woolf's established internal presentation method makes it possible to describe a profound and fluid flow of human consciousness, it only presents a *fragmentary* life.

In the summer of 1923, Woolf seems to have reached a clue to this problem she had encountered previously. At her diaries of the 30th of August and the 15th of

October 1923 respectively she professes that she felt able to present the whole picture of human life by describing the past.

I should say a good deal about The Hours, & my discovery; how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters; I think that gives exactly what I want: humanity, humour, depth. The idea is that the caves shall connect, & each comes to daylight at the present moment — Dinner! (Diary II 263)

I wrote the 100th page today. Of course, I've only been feeling my way into it—up till last August anyhow. It took me a year's groping to discover what I call my tunnelling process, by which I tell the past by installments, as I have need of it. This is my prime discovery so far; & the fact that I've been so long finding it, proves, I think, how false Percy Lubbock's doctrine is—that you can do this sort of thing consciously. (Diary II 272)

Woolf calls the method of writing the character's past 'dig[ging] out beautiful caves' or 'tunnelling process.' The 'tunnel' implies the possibility of coming and going between the past and the present. More concretely, Woolf aims to bring a character's past into the present moment through his/her memory. By representing the past experience as embedded in the character's present consciousness, instead of only enumerating unorganized pieces, Woolf's inner presentation method makes progress, achieving the organic unification of the past and the present.⁶

The method of simply describing the past within the character's consciousness is practiced in the short story 'The Mark on the Wall' (1917). In this story, the first person narrator relates fragmentary past events, mainly in the present tense as they are evoked in her consciousness. Furthermore, in 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street', the third person narrator describes the past experiences in the past tense. On the other hand, by the 'tunnelling process', in *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf aims to embody the way the past experiences affect the present life, pursuing her basic philosophy of life that the past plays a crucial role in a human life. What she achieved in *Mrs Dalloway* is the style which enables her to show a full picture of life by grasping, and describing too, even just a brief moment coming across the mind of her characters.

The temporal shift developed in the short story, 'The Mark on the Wall', occurs at random and is not organically united.⁷ Each event is just enumerated regardless of any difference of their significance. This type of temporal shift may evoke a sense of

fragmentation, which may be likely to cause a lack of cohesion. On the other hand, by applying the same type of the temporal analysis to *Mrs Dalloway*, it will turn out that some of the characters' pasts in their consciousness are differently dealt with in this novel.

The past events in Bourton of thirty years ago are particularly significant for the main characters of *Mrs Dalloway*, both Clarissa Dalloway and Peter Walsh. The primary point in the characters' memory is the days of Bourton in their youth and, the past repeatedly appears in their consciousness. This shows that those days and moments have survived in their memories beyond thirty years and are inextricably linked to their present at the depth of his mind. The choice of their inner associations is more selective, and memories extracted illuminate particular moments regardless of their chronological order. Some moments are stressed and reserved in memories, while others soon disappear, and thus memories make our psychological time flexible. It can be said that this type of the presentation of the past tends to be more personal, self-reflective and selective than the way of temporal treatment conducted in the short story.⁸

To consider Woolf's view of life, it will be instructive to examine the passage presenting Peter's consciousness. Peter met Clarissa after five years' absence and he re-examines what has happened in his own life after his parting from Clarissa in Bourton. Furthermore, his meeting with Clarissa in the morning is added to his previous memories. Thus, preserved in their memories beyond years, the days in Bourton still continue to affect their present state of mind. The way Peter's consciousness shifts signifies the reality that certain past events will affect the present moment of human. By 'tunneling process' or coming and going between the past and present through consciousness, Woolf attempts to present a human life as it is in an entire perspective.

I have that in me, he [Peter] thought standing by the pillar-box, which could now dissolve in tears. Why, Heaven knows. Beauty of some sort probably, and the weight of the day, which beginning with that visit to Clarissa had exhausted him with its heat, its intensity, and the drip, drip, of one impression after another down into that cellar where they stood, deep, dark, and no one would ever know. Partly for that reason, its secrecy, complete and inviolable, he had found life like an unknown garden, full of turns and corners, surprising, yes; really it took one's

breath away, these moments; there coming to him by the pillar-box opposite the British Museum one of them, a moment, in which things came together; this ambulance; and life and death. It was as if he were sucked up to some very high roof by that rush of emotion and the rest of him, like a white shell-sprinkled beach, left bare. It had been his undoing in Anglo-Indian society—this susceptibility. (*Mrs Dalloway* 166: The underlining is mine.)

Woolf's philosophy of life implied in the passage above can be defined as the accumulation of the moments experienced by an individual in his or her lifetime. Our experiences are stored in our mind or 'cellar', as impressions, memories or 'the drip, drip, of one impression'. The reason Woolf writes the past and the present in parallel is that by so doing, she attempts to find the key to her creative challenge on the fragmentary nature seen in the contemporary works, through her creative effort to step forward to present the whole life of the characters in her literary works.

I have discussed that the way of inner presentation has been gradually established as the accumulation of her progresses in her works. The method by which to describe fluid, momentary changing states of human mind is refined and the presentation of the whole life as the recollection of the past is accomplished in *Mrs Dalloway*.

5. Conclusion

By analyzing Virginia Woolf's works written in the early 1920's, I have stylistically clarified how the author discovered several solutions to the problems she faced in searching for a method of inner presentation, and showed how her creative approach reached a developed mode of internal presentation. I conclude that *Mrs Dalloway* occupies a significant status among Woolf's several modernist novels in terms of representing inner reality.

Notes

- 1 The exact date of writing 'An Unwritten Novel' is not known, but the first entry of the short work is seen in her diary of January 26, 1920.
- 2 In Woolf's letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell dated in August 10? [sic] 1922, she noted that she has written the story. (*Letters II* 543)
- 3 The study of speech and thought presentation mode in this field has been developed and updated by linguists and stylisticians. The categorization also varies with the researchers such as Toolan (1990), Simpson (1993), Leech and Short (2007) and Fludernik (2009). As for a basic and influential categorization, see Leech and Short.
- 4 As some critics, such as Lee (1977), point out, the use of 'for' is significant in a sense

that it reflects a sense of continuity of the same person's (Clarissa's) consciousness between (1) and (2). As shown in sentence (7), this 'for' is also employed in FIT as a marker of the continuity between the character's and the narrator's consciousness.

5 The essay is revised for *The Common Reader* (1925).

6 Miller (1982: 189) argues that 'the "beautiful caves" behind each of the characters are passages into the past as well as into the general mind for which the narrator speaks', interpreting this 'tunnelling process' as not only connecting the past and the present in an individual human life, but also signifying the connection between each individual mind and the 'general mind' or the accumulation of all human beings.

7 Holst (1998) graphically illustrates the temporal shift developed within the character's inner world in 'The Mark on the Wall'.

8 As for the detailed analysis of the temporal shift developed in *Mrs Dalloway*, see Nasu (1999).

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