

‘Mrs Dalloway’ a rebellion against the material, the external and the logical

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Abstract: The considerable influence of Darwin, Marx and Freud was reflected in the twentieth century novel. The fundamental changes in the beliefs increased the intellectual confidence and assurance and this was reflected in the first decade after the First World War if 1914-1918. It resulted in the rebellion restraint. In literature a group exploited this new-found freedom to create new forms. The men of letters of this group became violently self-assertive in their endeavour to propagate new creeds to fill the vacuum occasioned by the destruction of the old, the traditional. The disillusionment with the civilisation itself was the most striking attitude of the nineteen-twenties. Linking the twenties and thirties and undisturbed by the turmoil apparently were the innovators in literary techniques - James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf.

There were two main tendencies which affected both Subject-matter and Method of Presentation in modern fiction. The first is the revolt against reason associated with D.H. Lawrence in the nineteen twenties and that of the psychological absorption into the inner consciousness which gave rise to STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS TECHNIQUE used in its purest form by Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson.

Keywords: Clarissa, Dalloway, Virginia

Virginia Woolf made the most exciting use of the Stream of Consciousness Technique. She was the most distinguished writer of her generation. Steeped in English and French classics from her earliest childhood, she brought to the novel an unusual elegance of style and a rare poetic sensibility. She was intimately acquainted with the writings of Bergson and learnt much from two contemporary experimenters in the art of modern fiction, Marcel Proust and James Joyce. Whereas Marcel Proust's 'Conception of Personality' as a continuous process of decantation from

one state to another influenced her own theory of Multiple Selves, James Joyce, on the other hand, had found an alternative to the well-knit Plot and Characterisation. His conception of the inner drama of the mind was fraught with tremendous possibilities. Her own poetic feeling for language responded to his prose style with its fluidity and suggestiveness. Virginia Woolf ignored outer personality and studied the reality that is the thoughts, feelings and impressions as they quickened into life.'

The concept of Time as continuous flow helped the growth and acceptance of new psychological novel. The new novel variously termed as "THE NOVEL OF THE SILENT", "THE INTERNAL MONOLOGUE," "THE PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL" or "THE STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS NOVEL" came into existence during the middle of the second decade of the twentieth century. In this genre the novelist turned from the external to the internal reality, to the hidden and the uncharted world of the mind, the life of perception and senses. Such works possess an Autobiographical Element, an unusual infusion of the Language of Poetry, a curious kinship of search, voyage, pilgrimage — through consciousness. In the psychological novel, the novelist is omniscient because he/she seems to know everything, everything going inside the mind of his/her characters—perceptions, feelings, sensations.

The expression, in words, of the inner experiences of a Character is termed as "Internal Monologue", i.e. the speech Of the character without the intervention or comments to explain. It is designed to introduce the no directly into the internal life of the character. It is also a speech which does not envisage a listener and is, therefore, different from the conventional monologue.

The modern psychological novelist tries to render the soul or psyche truthfully and realistically, and the method or technique to this is the technique of the stream of consciousness. Here the human psyche does not function logically and rationally in a predictable manner. Human psyche is a kind of dreaming, welter of sensations and reactions, So instantaneous and that we never become conscious of them. Our consciousness is a small part of the psyche and does not act logically or coherently. It does only at certain times and for certain periods under the pressure of some urgent practical need. It is, mostly, an association of ideas, so freakish, so illogical and incoherent that its progress cannot be charted. It constantly runs into irrelevancies. The psyche is supremely indifferent to past and future, near and far.

The Stream of Consciousness Novel has been defined as a withdrawal from external phenomena into the flickering half-shades of the author's private world. The psychological novel of the twentieth century represented a reaction against the traditional novel of the nineteenth century. Its tendency was towards deformalisation. In the Psychological Novel or the Novel of Subjectivity both plot and character decayed. There was a shift from the external world to the internal world of the mind, of impulses, sensations and impressions. There is no Plot-Construction in the conventional sense, no logical arrangement of incidents and events leading chronologically to a catastrophe or Denouement. The action is also not in one particular direction. It moves back and forth in time.

In Mrs Dalloway Virginia Woolf presented the past of Mrs Clarissa Dalloway, the development of her character in the course of a single day. These characters made contact with Clarissa either in Space i.e. London, or in Time i.e. doing something at the same time as she was doing, or in Memory. Those characters, who were not related to her (known to her) were significant to the theme or to the interpretation of life depicted. Even the seemingly irrelevant was relevant to the subtly organised pattern of experience.

When Clarissa goes out to buy flowers herself for the party in the evening, the freshness of the morning sets her thinking about the time she was only eighteen. She remembers Peter Walsh whom she loved but did not marry. Peter Walsh was to return soon from India. She thinks about his oddities. Much of her and Peter Walsh's past lives come to the surface. Moving through London Streets and Parks, she comes across a crowd of people gathered to have a glimpse of a royal personage seated in a car with shutters drawn. Septimus Warren Smith is in the crowd with his wife Lucrezia. The novelist states the state of mind of Septimus. When she returns home Peter Walsh calls on her, When Peter Walsh leaves Clarissa, the novelist takes the reader into his mind as he takes the stock of his life. He thinks of his unsuccessful life, his relations with Clarissa and about his new love-affair with a married woman, Daisy. At the evening party, one of the guests informs Clarissa that Septimus Warren Smith (whom Clarissa has never met) committed suicide. Mrs Dalloway abruptly leaves the party and ponders over life. She reveals her longing for death and thus identifies herself with Septimus Warren Smith.

Virginia Woolf, the author of Mrs Dalloway, presents the consciousness of an individual as a blend of retrospect and anticipation. Thus time becomes one. The present moment reveals all

the past moments as affected and altered by one another and by the hopes and aspirations in the future. By presenting the consciousness as the amalgam of the past, present and future, the author follows the character back and forth in time without extending the chronological limit of the novel beyond a single day (as has been done in Mrs Dalloway).

Virginia Woolf achieves the condensation of an individual character's past into the present moment, transcending chronology, by using the method of Internal Monologue. Both Clarissa and Peter Walsh use Internal Monologue in Mrs Dalloway. Clarissa travels thirty years back in time recall her relationship with peter Walsh and she scrutinises her decision of not marrying him. Similarly Peter Walsh also hurtles back into his past and regrets that all his life has been a failure.

In this technique Virginia Woolf takes two categories of Time and Space and alternates them almost regularly to bring about a transition between two different situations. We remain within the consciousness of (one or the Other character and move back and forth in time as the character recalls his past or thinks of his future. After sometime (within the character' s mind) the novelist brings the character's reverie to the present moment, reminds the reader of someone else who is following his own train of thought at the same moment. Thus we either stand still or in time or move from one character to another; or we stand still in space and move up and down with him in time with his consciousness. While the character moves up and down in consciousness Virginia Woolf always keeps reminding the reader that the movement is taking place in the individual's mind by using such phrases as "so it seemed to her", "she thought walking,... "She could remember" etc. When Virginia Woolf moves from the character whose stream of consciousness she is presenting, to some other character, who was doing something at the same moment, that moment of time which links or unites diverse personalities becomes the uniting or unifying factor and it is repeatedly indicated in the novel by striking of the clock, or the appearance of some object like car or aeroplane- these moments are the signals for the author to switch on from one character to another. Thus the Moment of Time and Space (Place) are important to Virginia Woolf's technique of telling a story. As Virginia Woolf emphasises a character's journey in the consciousness by repeating certain phrases, she indicates the journey through space by indicating the localities. The transition from one character to another is indicated by the striking of the hour, by some significant object the gathering of the crowd by the

royal personage in the car, or the appearance of the aeroplane in the sky (advertising toffees). Out of the crowd, she selects one and follows his/her stream of consciousness. Septimus Warren Smith is one such person. By this technique Virginia Woolf exercises complete control over the story as it progresses. Her Story is intelligible and her work as form and organisation.

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