

CHAPTER III  
THE USE OF THE STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS METHOD IN MRS.  
DALLOWAY'S ISOLATION

Mrs. Dalloway is regarded as "an elusive work as the essence of life itself," since the story is concerned with human personality with its mysteries and varieties especially Mrs. Dalloway's personality ( Surmelian 183 ). The story is about one day life in June of a middle aged woman, Mrs. Dalloway. As the central character of the novel, Mrs. Dalloway is revealed as a fifty-two years old who has just recovered from her illness. When the story begins, Mrs. Dalloway is going to leave her house to buy flowers for her evening party. The morning is very special to her since she can be out from the house after her being confined to bed for a long time and she can be seen by strangers, by an old friend, and by a neighbor.

The use of the stream of consciousness method of narration in Mrs. Dalloway is to reveal Mrs. Dalloway's character and other major characters inwardly, through what is going on in their minds. So by using the stream of consciousness point of view, the characters' "actions" take place and develop through what is going on in their minds.

Mrs. Dalloway is revealed as a most complex person. During her life, she would not say about anyone that "they

were this or were that" and " she would not say of Peter, she would not say of herself, I am this, I am that" ( Woolf 10-11 ). To Mrs. Dalloway, it is impossible for her to be one thing and not the other. That is why, she does not want to label other people and herself. She does not like to be regarded as a cold person or a warm one as she is convinced that she is able to change people's view forward her.

Mrs. Dalloway's personality is revealed through the narrated monologue used in the novel : "She sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on" ( Woolf 10 ). Although she has a problem, she can see her problem objectively and without emotion. Mrs. Dalloway 's emotions are very intense, yet she can control them as careful as she guards her life. Actually she has a feeling of love, anger or hatred towards other people, yet she is always able to control those feelings so carefully that she can cover her feelings well. Consequently, instead of expressing her emotions, she keeps them herself by living in isolation.

Unable to share her feelings, thoughts, or dreams to her husband, daughter, and friends, Mrs. Dalloway always keeps them to herself, no one else would understand them. Actually, she wants to get along with other people, but she has no capability to do so. She does not like to be ignored by her friends, yet she ignores them. She does not want to be committed in having relationship with other people. What she wants is to preserve her identity as Clarissa and not to give or to sacrifice herself to others. As a wife to

Richard, she is unable to show her love to him. Her love to him is no more than a love between friends. In her life, actually the one whom she really loves is Peter Walsh, her former fiancé. Yet, she is never able to express her love to him. Her deep love to him, then, only exists in her own imagination as revealed in an interior monologue: "Take me with you, Clarissa thought impulsively,...." ( Woolf 53 ). She wants to be with Peter but she cannot express her will to him. Realizing her incapability in getting along with other people, she chooses living in isolation.

Through the stream of thought of one or more characters, the causes and the effects of her isolation are revealed. The stream of consciousness in Mrs. Dalloway's isolation is mostly presented in narrated monologue or "erlebte Rede" and a few interior monologues.

Entering her old age, Mrs. Dalloway lives in isolation. She prefers to live alone from day to day after she has been ill for a long time. She feels that the world is changing and she becomes a stranger to it. Apparently, she becomes apart from other people. Her being alone is revealed in the morning scene when she goes shopping for flowers and when she returns to her house again. She is like an outsider who is alone among millions of people through the streets of London. Scrope Purvis, Mrs. Dalloway's neighbor sees Mrs. Dalloway when she goes out from her house. His stream of thought shows how Mrs. Dalloway looks like after her illness:

... a touch of the bird about her, of the jay, blue-green, light, vivacious, though she was over fifty, and grown very white since her illness. There she perched, never seeing him, waiting to cross, very upright.... Clarissa was positive, a particular hush, or solemnity.... ( Woolf 6 )

Purvis compares Mrs. Dalloway's age and appearance after her being ill to a bird. As her neighbor for over twenty years, he observes that Mrs. Dalloway still has spirit to live in her old age as a bird which is flying from place to place joyfully. He realizes that Mrs. Dalloway enjoys living in silence of her isolation, therefore she seldom goes out of her house. In this case, Mrs. Dalloway's isolation is revealed through other character's stream of thought instead of her stream of thought. The multiple characters point of view is used.

On the way to the flower shop, Mrs. Dalloway always remembers about her past, she remembers about Peter's( her fiance ) letter, about his appearance, and about her argument with him in St. James Park. Then, the readers come to learn her present experience again that she realizes her unattractive appearance in her old age. This narrative style, from present to past and to present again is significant in this novel. When she realizes her unattractive appearance, her unhappy feeling emerges especially when she is comparing herself to Lady Bexborough, a woman whom she considers ideal. The comparison is shown through a narrated monologue :

She would have been, in the first place, dark like Lady Bexborough, with a skin of crumpled leather and beautiful eyes. She would have been, like Lady Bexborough, slow and stately; rather large; interested

in politics like a man; with a country house; very dignified, very sincere. Instead of which she had a narrow pea-stick figure; a ridiculous little face, beaked like a bird's. That she held herself well was true; and had nice hands and feet,.... ( Woolf 13 ).

Using the stream of consciousness point of view, Mrs. Dalloway's thought of her unattractive appearance is revealed believably and efficiently since the explanation comes from her own mind which is presented in the omniscient author's sentences. In the narrated monologue, the sentences are stated efficiently as the omniscient author selects the important details the character wants to say. As Phyllis Bently points out that " summary is particularly useful and efficient in dispatching unimportant matters on which the author does not wish to dwell" ( Steinberg 161 ). If the novel uses the first person sentences, the "I" narrator will reveal every details explanation he wants to say in his monologue. In other words, by using the first person sentences, the explanation is more subjective and more unbelievable. So, using the narrated monologue is more efficient than using the first person sentences. Mrs. Dalloway's stream of thought, then, reveals that Mrs. Dalloway would be happy if she can exchange her pale, thin, frail, and smooth skin for Lady Bexborough's dark and crumpled one. She would like to move more slowly and stately, not lightly. In other words, Mrs. Dalloway is jealous of Lady Bexborough's appearance. This narrated monologue uses an image of bird to describe Mrs. Dalloway's appearance in her old age that is "ridiculous, beaked like a bird's." Therefore, in this



novel the image of bird is often used to describe Mrs. Dalloway more objectively.

Mrs. Dalloway's isolation is also revealed when she withdraws to her attic room after her return from shopping flowers. She is "like a nun withdrawing or a child exploring a tower" ( Woolf 35 ). Mrs. Dalloway is described as a nun in her isolation. Similar to a nun, Mrs. Dalloway also lives in solitude in the privacy of her empty room. The description of Mrs. Dalloway's being like a nun is ironic since she is an atheist, not like a nun who lives for the service of God. Mrs. Dalloway's thought is told through a narrated monologue : "not for a moment did she believe in God" ( Woolf 33 ). Mrs. Dalloway is revealed as an atheist. This irony is impressive since there is a discrepancy between what she looks like and what she is in reality. In her daily acts, she performs a religious devotion like activity in the way that she avoids the worldly affairs by keeping silent in her house and by living in isolation. She is like a nun who always live in silence and in isolation, as she does not want to be involved in business matters, politics, or other worldly affairs. In reality, she does not believe in God. That is why, by using the stream of consciousness point of view, not only what is going on in the character's mind known but also the irony of the novel .

The privacy of her room is "an attic; the bed narrow; and lying there reading, for she slept badly,...." ( Woolf 36 ). The "tower" and "the bed narrow" as thematic image of

the novel, then, are used to describe Mrs. Dalloway's isolation in her house. Those images determine the poetic design that immediately reflects its theme that is isolation or withdrawal from life ( Freedman 1971 : 218 ). The "tower" and "narrow bed" symbolize isolation or withdrawal from life in the way that the tower is so high and is isolated from other buildings as Mrs. Dalloway who lives in isolation. The bed is so narrow that it can be occupied by one person only as Mrs. Dalloway's bed which is only occupied by herself. It is because that she must sleep alone, undisturbed after her illness. Though Mrs. Dalloway lives in her isolation, she is enjoying this kind of situation and she regards it as an " exquisite moments" ( Woolf 33 ).

The reason of Mrs. Dalloway's isolation is also shown through her stream of thought in the form of memory. The memory, which is about Mrs. Dalloway's youth , comes to her mind when she is in her attic room :

She could see what she lacked. It was not beauty; it was not mind. It was something central which permeated, something warm which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman, or women together ( Woolf 36 ).

From this "erlebte Rede," it is revealed that Mrs. Dalloway's cold spirit has made her prefer isolation. She admits that she has a weakness in having relationship with other people. She is cold in getting along with men and women as well. Aware of her cold spirit, she feels " I am alone forever" ( Woolf 53 ). This interior monologue shows that she knows that she is incapable to love which

bases upon all the relationship between husband and wife, mother and children, between lovers and among friends. She is aware of this weakness, yet she is incapable to change it. This condition does not satisfy her, therefore she is jealous to those who are able to love and to relate with others.

She is jealous of Miss Kilman, her daughter's tutor, for Miss Kilman loves Elizabeth and is very close to her. This is one thing Mrs. Dalloway is incapable of. She cannot love her daughter with warmth. Mrs. Dalloway hates Miss Kilman as the latter seems to rob Elizabeth from her. It should be with Mrs. Dalloway, the mother, that Elizabeth is close to, but the fact is that Miss Kilman has taken the mother's place which is Mrs. Dalloway's.

Both Mrs. Dalloway and Miss Kilman have the feeling of loneliness so each wants a companion. Yet, they are contrast in the way that Mrs. Dalloway is incapable to love Elizabeth, but Miss Kilman is capable to do it. Mrs. Dalloway's lonely feeling emerges when Elizabeth goes away with Miss Kilman and she is left alone. Mrs. Dalloway's loneliness is revealed through her stream of thought presented by the author:

With a sudden impulse, with a violent anguish, for this woman was taking her daughter from her, Clarissa leant over the banisters and cried out, "Remember the party! Remember our party to night!" ( Woolf 139 )

Mrs. Dalloway cannot endure her lonely feeling any longer so that she shouts to express her feeling of loneliness. Mrs. Dalloway's shout : " Remember the party! Remember our



party to night!" means that Mrs. Dalloway wants Elizabeth to give her attention that she deserves more than Miss Kilman.

During this lonely feeling, the thoughts of love and religion occupy Mrs. Dalloway's mind. These thoughts also make Mrs. Dalloway hate Miss Kilman. What is going on in the mind of Mrs. Dalloway is revealed through this "erlebte" "Rede:

The cruellest things in the world, she thought, seeing them [ Elizabeth and Miss Kilman ] clumsy, hot, domineering, hypocritical, eavesdropping, jealous, infinitely cruel and unscrupulous, dressed in a mackintosh coat, on the landing; love and religion. Had she [ Miss Kilman ] ever tried to convert any one herself? Did she not wish everybody merely to be themselves? ( Woolf 139 )

Mrs. Dalloway hates Miss Kilman since the latter has "love and religion" and Mrs. Dalloway does not. Mrs. Dalloway is afraid that with Miss Kilman's domination of "love and religion," she will take all of Mrs. Dalloway's possession. She thinks that Miss Kilman is capable of loving Elizabeth while she herself lacks this capability. She knows that Miss Kilman is just converted to Christian, yet she wonders why Miss Kilman as a Christian slips to her house to disturb and destroy her life. Mrs. Dalloway's thoughts that Miss Kilman is jealous of her property and she wants to possess it are true to what is going on in Miss Kilman's mind presented in a narrated monologue :

If she could have felled her it would have eased her. But it was not the body; it was the soul and its mockery that she wished to subdue; make feel her mastery. If only she could make her weep; could ruin her; humiliate her; brings her to her knees crying, You are right! ( Woolf 138 )

Miss Kilman appears herself to be a poor person, as if she has no desire to destroy a rich family's life. In fact, she is jealous of Mrs. Dalloway's property as she thinks that Mrs. Dalloway, who is not a Christian, actually does not deserve to be rich. So, she wants to possess Mrs. Dalloway's property. Actually, Miss Kilman is very proud of her religion, and does not deserve to claim Mrs. Dalloway's property. But, she convinces herself that she has the right to all that Mrs. Dalloway possesses. That is why, Mrs. Dalloway regards her as a villain to her soul as she wants to disturb and dominate her. So, by using the stream of consciousness method, Mrs. Dalloway's loneliness and hatred are not revealed outwardly or through actions but they are revealed inwardly or through what is going on in Mrs. Dalloway's mind. So, only the readers are able to know and understand Mrs. Dalloway, but not other characters surrounding Mrs. Dalloway.

Mrs. Dalloway's lack of warmth and later, her isolation causes Elizabeth never gets affection or love from her mother. That is why, Elizabeth is closer to her father and Miss Kilman than to her own mother. Elizabeth never gets any gifts from her mother. Yet, her father often gives her gifts such as necklace, bracelet. Though Elizabeth comes to her mother's party, she is concerned with her dog more than her mother's party. In the party, from Sally Seton, Mrs. Dalloway's best friend, the readers know that there is intimacy between Richard and her daughter : ( watching Elizabeth go to her father ), " one

can see they are devoted to each other. She [Sally ] could feel it by the way Elizabeth went to her father" ( Woolf 213 ). During the party, Richard always pays attention to his daughter as he is proud of her. Through his stream of thought, his pride is revealed : " And suddenly he realised that it was his Elizabeth,...,she looked so lovely in her pink frock!" ( Woolf 213 ). Both Richard and Elizabeth often come to each other and stand together during the party. Richard often looks at his daughter as he is fascinated with her lovely appearance. Besides from her father, Elizabeth also gets affection from her tutor, Miss Kilman. From Elizabeth's flow of thought, the readers know that Miss Kilman loves her very much : " And did Elizabeth give one thought to poor Miss Kilman who loved her without jealousy, to whom she had been open, a moon in a glade?" ( Woolf 149 ). Elizabeth can be intimate to Miss Kilman in the way that she goes to the stores together and she eats together in a restaurant. Moreover, to her tutor, Elizabeth can be open to share her problems. Yet, from Elizabeth's own mother, she never gets the love of a mother to her daughter. As if there is a distance between them, when Mrs. Dalloway introduces her daughter to Peter. Instead of saying " Here is my daughter, she says: " Here is my Elizabeth" ( Woolf 53 ). It means that they do not get on well, there is no intimacy between mother and daughter.

Mrs. Dalloway's characters also influence the nature of her relationship with her husband. As a husband to Mrs. Dalloway, Richard has never got Mrs. Dalloway's love as a

wife. His relationship with her is like a relationship between friends and not more than that. But, Richard can accept Mrs. Dalloway's nature and adapt to the way of living chosen by Mrs. Dalloway.

It is undeniable that a person, who lives in isolation, feels very lonely. As what is defined by Gisela Konopka in Social Group Work : " The neglected isolate is the lonely situation. He is tolerated by the group, but he is surrounded by a glass wall ( 1963 : 56 ). The loneliness also occurs in Mrs. Dalloway's life as an effect of her isolation on herself. Mrs. Dalloway likes to live in isolation, yet she does not like the feeling of being isolated.

Mrs. Dalloway feels lonely when she feels rejected by Lady Bruton. The latter does not invite Mrs. Dalloway, but only invites Mrs. Dalloway's husband to a lunch party. Mrs. Dalloway is very disappointed after knowing this news from her servant. Beside jealous, she is annoyed, too as she thinks that she is ignored by others immediately after she has been seriously ill. Then, Mrs. Dalloway goes upstairs alone and her feeling is described as in this following "erlebte Rede" :

... as she paused by the open staircase window which let in blinds flapping, dogs barking, let in, she thought, feeling herself suddenly shrivelled, aged, breastless, the grinding, blowing, flowering of the day, out of doors, out of the window, out of her body and brain which now failed, since Lady Bruton, whose lunch parties were said to be extraordinarily amusing, had not asked her ( Woolf 35 ).

So, by using the stream of consciousness method of

narration, Mrs. Dalloway's mixture of feeling can be shown thoroughly and realistically. The readers do not only know that Mrs. Dalloway is disappointed and annoyed, but they know that she is hurt because of Lady Bruton's rejection. So, by knowing Mrs. Dalloway's feeling, the readers know that she is really hurt by the attention denied to her.

Mrs. Dalloway prefers living in isolation, yet she cannot get rid of the lonely feeling. She needs human company at the same time she also fears becoming too involved in a more intimate relationship. The one significant thing about her is that she is able to realize her "weakness" and she tries hard to overcome it, but she gets no success.

