

## CHAPTER V

### THE USE OF THE STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS METHOD IN MRS. DALLOWAY'S RESPONSE TO LIFE AND DEATH

Although Mrs. Dalloway lives in isolation and she has a "quietness" of marriage, she is still optimistic to face life and death. She enjoys her life very much and she has no fear of death. For her, life and death are something natural.

Mrs. Dalloway's response to life and death is the most interesting incident in the novel since the subject matter of the novel is about human mind in giving response to life and death. The stream of consciousness point of view in this chapter is basically represented in narrated monologue.

As the heroine of the novel, Clarissa Dalloway is optimistic to face life and death. Living in isolation, she is always thinking of death, yet she tries not to fear it. She enjoys her days of living very much. Her joy of living is obviously seen when she is going out of her house for buying flowers and when she is staying at home. Mrs. Dalloway looks very happy to breathe the air of London in June morning after she has been ill for a long time. She enjoys the sights, smells and the sounds of the busy streets of London. Before leaving her house, she opens the

French windows and admires the beautiful day in the morning. From this narrated monologue, her happy feeling is revealed : " 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...." ( Woolf 5 ). This stream of thought reveals that Mrs. Dalloway longs for the beautiful London very much. As soon as she has recovered from her illness, she gets a beautiful impression of the air of London as charming as the waves. In presenting Mrs. Dalloway's flow of thought, "wave" is used as an image of the beautiful air of London morning so that her emotion towards the air of London is described in a more charming language. It is one advantage of using a narrated monologue in representing the stream of consciousness of the novel. Actually, the words that is stated in the narrated monologue come from the character's own consciousness, yet they are presented to the readers by the omniscient author's dictions. In this case, the author selects the important details of the character's stream of thought and present them to the readers in a more charming language. So the character's stream of thought will impress the readers. As what is said by Leon Surmelian in Techniques of Fiction Writing that "the author's language may charm us [ the readers ]", sometimes the readers are satisfied with the language of the character's stream of thought in the narrated monologue, without knowing that actually it is the author's language ( 191 ).

While Mrs. Dalloway is walking on the way to the

flower shop, she is fascinated by Bond Street. She is fascinated by the flags which are flying, and the shop in which her father bought suits fifty years ago. Her fascination is shown through the narrated monologue : "... its flags; its shop; no splash; no glitter; one roll of tweed in the shop where her father had bought suits; a few pearls; salmon on a iceblock " ( Woolf 13 ). So, this narrated monologue does not only consist of Mrs. Dalloway's fascination but also of her memory which comes to her mind again when she is fascinated by Bond Street.

Finally, Mrs. Dalloway reaches a flower shop of Mulberry. She enjoys the beauty of various flowers there. She turns her head from side to side among the flowers with a great joy. And she enjoys the sweet smell, the delicious scent, and the exquisite coolness of the flowers. She is attracted to the colors of the flowers such as white, violet, red, and deep orange. She spends much time to look at the flowers in order to choose some flowers for her party.

Therefore, by enjoying the beauty of London in the morning, Mrs. Dalloway feels happy to live during the rest of her life. She still has spirit to live as she regards that the world is still meaningful to her. Though Mrs. Dalloway has fearful feeling of being possessed or dominated by other people such as Peter and Miss Kilman and she lives in isolation, still she can enjoy her days of living very much.

Mrs. Dalloway is very optimistic during her life. She

is aware of her weakness and she would like to overcome it. The one gesture which tells her desire to overcome her weakness is her effort to hold a party. She thinks that party is a means "to kindle and illuminate" her life ( Woolf 7 ). She has an opinion that by giving parties, people will like her ( Lewis 44 ). It is clear that Mrs. Dalloway wants to be liked very much, although it is hard for her to like other people or to relate intimately with other people. Mrs. Dalloway, then, is a complex character. In one hand, she lives in isolation. On the other hand, she holds a party. She likes living alone, yet she does not want to be forgotten. She knows her weakness that she is incapable to associate with others, but this weakness does not make her feel inferior to others. She, however, tries hard to be accepted socially by holding a party.

Mrs. Dalloway likes the party situation, though it is actually an arranged one. In the party, people gather together, they talk to each other, and still they keep one another at a certain social distance. Party is the place for people to wear their best clothes and to show their best manners. From the following "erlebte Rede," Mrs. Dalloway's feeling of the party is revealed: " Every time she gave a party she had this feeling of being something not herself, and that every one was unreal in one way; much more real in another" ( Woolf 187-188 ). This monologue reveals that Mrs. Dalloway becomes a different person in the party. Since people always try to appear well, it is difficult to know how a person actually is in the party.

Therefore, the party is the main event of the novel. It is a highly conventional narrative device : the gathering of all the characters of the novel at the end of the story ( Freedman 224 ). The party, then, proves at last why there can be no real communication between characters and shows the social life of high class society. In a party, Mrs. Dalloway can relate with other people, yet there is still a distance, since, in a party a person cannot become too much involved.

Aside from having an optimistic view to face life, Mrs. Dalloway is also optimistic to face death. In her fifty-two years old, she does not have doubt to face death, she is ready to face it with dignity. Whenever she is alone, she is thinking about death. But she always convinces herself not to fear of death. Her concept is taken from the two lines of song over the apparently dead Imogen in Cymbeline : " Fear no more the heat o' the sun / Nor the furious winter's rages" ( Pinkney 63 ). Everytime she thinks of death, she always comforts herself by those two lines.

Death for Mrs. Dalloway is a time of a quiet, untroubled rest. She is attempting to deal with death rationally as she rationally deals with love by choosing Richard instead of Peter. Moreover, Mrs. Dalloway has a belief about what she is going to be after she leaves the world. Her belief is shown through her stream of thought presented by the author :

...did it matter that she must inevitably cease



completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? but that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things,....she being part, she was, positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was.... ( Woolf 11 ).

Mrs. Dalloway believes that bits of her self will continue after she is gone, becoming parts of trees, air, people, water. In other words, her body will be torn to pieces and it will unite with non human being. So, she considers death as something natural. That is why, she is ready to face this incident.

Mrs. Dalloway regards that death is a kind of challenge as shown through an "erlebte Rede" : " Death was a defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them;.... ( Woolf 202 ). She thinks that it is true that sooner or later death will occur to someone. Not always that someone is ready to face death, more often he is doubtful or afraid to face it. Therefore, death is a challenge whether a person is able to face it naturally or not. She also thinks that death is a place for having communication to each other. She convinces herself that later, in death she can fulfil her desire to be able to communicate with other people. She regards that death is meaningful to her as she can relate intimately with other people that she cannot do so during her life.

Mrs. Dalloway's living in isolation is a death-like condition, because she is alone, she sees no one and it seems that she is already forgotten. She enjoys it very

much as she regards life and death as something natural, not to be afraid of.

The only character in Mrs. Dalloway who is very similar to Mrs. Dalloway is Septimus Warren Smith. He is a foil to Mrs. Dalloway. By comparing Septimus' response to life and death to Mrs. Dalloway's, the understanding of Mrs. Dalloway's character will be better and more complete.

Mrs. Dalloway and Septimus never meet each other, yet they are linked because of their similar characteristics. Both are impossible to meet each other during the actions of the novel as they are apart from the other. They come from two different worlds, the world of Mrs. Dalloway's sanity and the world of Septimus' insanity. They are finally linked in the middle of Mrs. Dalloway's party through Dr Bradshaw who takes care of Septimus' madness and through Mrs. Dalloway's comments on Septimus' suicide. It is the Bradshaws who bring the news of Septimus' suicide in order to get an excuse from Mrs. Dalloway of their being late in her party.

From her interior monologue, her being shocked after hearing the news is shown : " Oh! thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here is death!" ( Woolf 201 ). Then, she wonders why the Bradshaws talk of it at her party and why Septimus commits suicide. Through a narrated monologue, her confused feeling is revealed :

What business had the Bradshaws to talk of death at her party? A young man [ Septimus ] had killed himself. And they talked of it at her party-the

Bradshaws talked of death. He had killed himself-but how ? ( Woolf 202 )

Though in her mind, Mrs. Dalloway wonders about Septimus's reasons to commit suicide, she gradually becomes calm by keeping in her mind the two lines from Shakespeare's play, Cymbeline as her favourite words: " Fear no more the heat of the sun / Nor the furious winter's rages." Soon, Mrs. Dalloway remembers about her experience that makes her approaches to death. Her memory is revealed through this narrated monologue : " She had once thrown a shilling into the Serpentine, never anything more. But he flung it away" ( Woolf 202 ). This monologue reveals that once Mrs. Dalloway is approaching death because of her illness for a long time, but she is alive.

Similar to Mrs. Dalloway, Septimus also lives in isolation, and he also fears of being dominated by others. But, he is a contrast to Mrs. Dalloway in the way that he is a pessimist facing both life and death.

Because of the war, Septimus gets a mental shock, and he is regarded insane. During his life, he can feel and enjoy the exquisite beauty of London in the morning as Mrs. Dalloway does. Yet, Septimus' reaction is too intense, he is too sensitive compared with Mrs. Dalloway so that he weeps at what he sees, hears, and feels. He observes the beauty of London, yet" he perceives a beauty in existence that his age is totally disregarded" ( Lewis 44 ). In other words, he feels useless in his age, as he is regarded insane.



When there is a sound of aeroplane in the sky and it makes some letters in order to advertise the commercial products, Septimus is moved to tears by them as described in this narrated monologue:

... this beauty, this exquisite beauty, and tears filled his eyes as he looked at the smoke words languishing and melting in the sky and bestowing upon him, in their inexhaustible charity and laughing goodness, one shape after another of unimaginable beauty and signalling their intention to provide him, for nothing, for ever, for looking merely, with beauty, more beauty! Tears ran down his cheeks ( Woolf 25 ).

Because of his too sensitive feeling, he is quite different with other people who are also enjoying the letters made by the aeroplane in the sky. Other people's impression are not as much as Septimus'. They do not weep at what they see, hear, and feel as what Septimus does. That is why, he is considered insane.

Similar to Mrs. Dalloway, Septimus lives in isolation as he cannot cope to live in the society. He is rejected. He is forgotten, but he does nothing, unlike Clarissa who still strives to be accepted socially although she also enjoys living in isolation. Septimus totally disregards the fact that the society isolate him. He does nothing and feels nothing. He is a passive character in his isolation whereas Mrs. Dalloway does everything and feels everything. She is very active in her isolation. Septimus, then, is a "tragic victim - as a walking corpse" as he cannot care any longer what happen to himself or any one else. ( Bennet 1979 : 54 ). Although Septimus is still alive, his behavior is like a dead person who feels nothing, does nothing and

cares nothing. He becomes useless for himself and for others. So, he is alone among other people who cannot understand him.

Similar to Clarissa, Septimus fears to be possessed or dominated by other people. Septimus fears of the doctors' domination. He hates Dr Holmes and Dr William Bradshaw since he thinks that they use him as an object of experiment only. That is why, whenever the doctors come, Septimus rejects to see them. Moreover, when Dr William suggests him to rest in a place in the country, Septimus prefers to die than to live under their constant supervision.

Unlike Mrs. Dalloway who is realistic to face life and death, Septimus cannot face the reality, he lives in himself. When there is a sudden noise of a car backfiring echoes, Mrs. Dalloway thinks that it is a gun-shot but she does not fear of it. Septimus, however, thinks that there is another war, the war breaks again as he thinks that "the world has raised its whip" ( Woolf 17 ). He is as if still living during the war, though actually it is over. Septimus cannot get away or escape from his obsession of war.

Septimus' way to overcome his fearful feeling is contrasted to Mrs. Dalloway'. He is not able to keep his fears and he can no longer defend himself. As living only gives him fear and insecurity, he chooses to die in which he thinks he can get happiness and security. So, he concludes that only by death he can preserve his soul in

the privacy of himself. His conclusion is shown by his last words in an interior monologue : " I'll give it to you" ( Woolf 164 ).

So, by knowing Septimus' character, Mrs. Dalloway's character can be understood better and deeper. They are similar as both of them live in isolation. In the society, Mrs. Dalloway is regarded sane as she still has an effort to be accepted socially by holding a party, though she enjoys living in isolation. Septimus, however, is regarded insane as he does not function socially. He is ignored by society, yet he does not do something for being accepted socially.