

Collage painting and narrative collage in *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf

Abstract

Virginia Woolf was a modern writer who commenced her career as a writer and then followed it as a painter. It doesn't mean that she only focused more on painting than writing but exactly she did the opposite. She strived to combine these two arts simultaneously which was a new method at that time and one took a risk by combining visual and verbal language. This novelty came from her family. She was born into a great family who didn't like to follow tradition. She had a sister named Venesa Bell who was a painter so she could help her sister in many ways. They sold their house and moved to London to follow their modern life and that was a starting point for gaining a reputation since after visiting many artists, she created a new method known as collage and cubism in her writings. She wrote *Mrs. Dalloway* based on collage and painting elements such as impressionism and post-impressionism. Collage is a French word that means to glue different materials. This novel is like a collage canvas rather than a book so readers should imagine every detail and combine all parts of the story to create the whole and that is exactly what the collage does in painting. This paper intends to analyze and trace these elements in this novel by Laurent Jenny's theory. Lastly, she used collage and cubism elements which were used in paintings as a new method in her novels and that made her novels unique.

Keywords: *collage, painting, modernity, Virginia Woolf*

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Introduction

Most of Virginia Woolf's novels have visual arts but they have not been discussed a lot. "Woolf's writing presents the reader with a new kind of perspective. This kind of writing that was created by her mirrors verbally what many experimental visual artists were doing in terms of painting at the time of the twentieth century. Woolf's step in this direction in the literature shows the influence of Roger Fry. Particularly the Post-impressionist Exhibition and other influential artists that Woolf came into contact with through Bloomsbury and mutual acquaintances. These artists inspired Woolf to use elements of both post-impressionism and cubism verbally to make her stories like paintings that move, clear and distinct but always shifting. She incorporates both the emotional elements of post-impressionism and the fragmented methods of cubism to create her representation of life." (Dias, Pieces of Virginia: Post-Impressionism and Cubism in the Works of Virginia Woolf: 23)

Collage is a new style in Impressionist painting and deals with many perspectives and fragmentations in both painting and writing. "According to Modern Art by Sam Hunter, John Jacobus, and Daniel Wheeler, Being composite, an image represented in this fashion conformed to the new, scientific knowledge that human perception derives not from a single, all-encompassing glance but from a succession of 'takes: from experience stored in the memory, and from the intellect's capacity to conceptualize form" (Modern Art 133)." (Dias, Pieces of Virginia: Post-Impressionism and Cubism in the Works of Virginia Woolf: 23)

Woolf used collage in her writings by using many colors, lights, fragmentations, and objects that are not the same and

also, there is no harmony between them. she wanted to create a link between art and real life because in our real life, there is no harmony and everything is fragmented and all parts of our lives are put next to each other like a puzzle so the beauty of life is not having any order.

H. Haward was a historian. He believed that reality is not whatever we see around us. The reality is in the eye of the viewer. We see many natural things in nature like the sun, moon, trees, mountains, sky, and clouds that are not the reality. The reality lies in the eye of the spectator. These natural things are not flexible and static. They are moving and changing with shadows, lights, and colors so Impressionists used these changes in their paintings by using colors and lights.

Virginia Woolf wanted to bring the sun on the paper. She wanted to write in a way that a reader sees it rather than read it. Allen McLaurin believed that she used Impressionism and post-Impressionism in her novels. She didn't choose between two or three methods of painting. In her novels, there is a kind of coexistence between many kinds of paintings like Impressionism, post-Impressionism, Collage, and Cubism.

Methods

This study uses the Ekphrasis theory. This theory comes from Greek. It describes literary work as art or we can say it is a verbal description of art and visual art. For example, a poem can represent a vivid scene or a novel represent a painting or vice versa. This theory says that all arts are connected and all writings have visual art within themselves. Then, the main characteristics of collage painting and narrative collage are

going to be traced by collage painting's related words and phrases like cutting, pasting, and using Laurent Jenny's theory. He introduced three ways of finding collage and intertextuality in novels. The first one is that the writer directly uses the artist's name and their works. The second one is Indirect; the writer uses paintings in novels with a description of that painting. The writer does not mention the painter's name and the last one is that the writer uses elements of painting in novels and researchers try to find them. Then collage characteristics in prose and painting are going to be extracted by using Pablo Picasso's theory. The main characteristic of collage is the lack of unity that exists in this novel.

Results in *Mrs. Dalloway*

Woolf was so fascinated by colors, lights, and fragmentations. She wanted to use them in her novels. When she was so young, she lived in Talland's house. In her diary, she wrote her memory of that house in detail. Her descriptions of that house were full of colors and lights.' Her house had a balcony; there was a partition, but it joined the balcony of my father's and mother's bedrooms. My mother would come out onto her balcony in a white dressing gown. Passion flowers were growing on the wall; there were great starry blossoms, with purple streaks, and large green buds, part empty, part full (Woolf, 'A Sketch of the Past, 1985: 65-6).'' She wanted to know how she can change the pictures into words.

'I spent an hour wandering there [the National Gallery], and then I came back and tried to describe my impressions to Vanessa. But I see why I like pictures; it's as things that stir me to describe them; 56 but then only certain pictures do this [...]; only pictures that appeal to my plastic sense of words make me want to have them for still life in my novels (Woolf, D I: 168).''

'The look of things has great power over me. Even now, I have to watch the rooks beating up against the wind [...] and still I say to myself instinctively 'What's the phrase for that?'' (Woolf, D III: 191)

Virginia Woolf used both real and mental images through paintings in her novels and she always imagined herself as a painter so she believed that for understanding her novels, readers should know about paintings and then they can translate her words. Her sensitivity to the visual arts exists in her novels, short stories, essays, and diaries.

The characters in her novels are so interested in color, lights, and fragmentations. For example, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the main character, Clarissa, is walking and she is in London. She is looking at the garden and trees, and she is so fascinated by them. In this novel, there are many colors like, 'all yellow and the little red flowers, a man in a gray suit, yellow table, pink curtain. Here are some examples of colors.

'Standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen. Looking at the flowers, at the trees with the smoke winning of them and rooks rising, falling, standing and looking until Peter Walsh said, musing among the vegetables?'' (Woolf, M.D:3)

'but Peter – however beautiful the day might be, and the trees and the grass, and the girl in pink.''' (Woolf, M.D:6)

In most of her novels, there is a painter character. In this novel, there is a painter character but Clarissa is a painter herself and all characters think so. They think that Clarissa's 'gathering serves as creative acts of social artistry.' 'Mrs. Dalloway was fat the best of the great ladies who took an interest in art and about the music she was so strict.' Another part of the novel has mentioned painting and art.

'Where had Peter got to? They used to be such friends. For at the mention of India, or even Ceylon, her eyes slowly deepened, became blue, beheld, no human beings, she had no tender memories, no proud illusions about Viceroy's Generals, it was orchids she saw, and mountains passes, and herself carried on the backs of coolies in the sixties, or descending to uproot or child (starling blossoms never beheld before) which she painted in watercolor.' (Woolf, M.D:129)

She used Picasso's method in her novels. Picasso created a Collage that is exactly like a stream of consciousness. Virginia Woolf and her new literary career took place at the same time as cubism. Picasso said 'I paint forms as I think of them, not as I see them' which resulted in objects and sitters portrayed in a fragmented manner, from several different perspectives, in a series of overlapping planes – all of which the viewer is invited to recombine mentally to form a three-dimensional image, rendered on a two-dimensional surface (though there were also a few cubist sculptures) (Sarah Latham Phillips, Virginia Woolf as a 'Cubist Writer).

Virginia Woolf like Picasso used her imagination, not objective things. There is a mixture of time, mixing present and past, emotions, colors, and fragmentations. Woolf like James Joyce wants to write in a way that is not linear. Like a collage painter who doesn't draw in an organized way, she wants to write in short sentence which is not in order and readers should solve them and fix them like a puzzle.

Woolf's use of the visual arts, however, is more complex than the mere making of 'sketches' and 'painting with words'. It is only "partial" and "incomplete" writers ("Pictures" TM 140) who are satisfied with the pictorial embroidery in their texts. "The world", says Woolf, "is full of cripples at the moment, victims of the art of painting who paint apples, roses, china, pomegranates, tamarinds, and glass jars as well as words can paint them, which is, of course, not very well." ("Pictures" TM 140) Her writings reveal Impressionism, Post Impressionism, Collage, and Cubism.

In the first step, she used Impressionist painting elements like colors and lights. From the very beginning, the writer used many colors for her descriptions like pink, green, gray, and white. Another element of Impressionist painting is water. Painters pay so much attention to it.

Arnold Hauser wrote a book and talked about paintings. In his *social history of art*, he said: "The representation of light, air, atmosphere, the dissolution of the evenly colored surface into spots and dabs of the color [...] the play of reflected and illuminated shadows, the quivering, trembling dots and the hasty, loose and abrupt strokes of the brush, the whole improvised technique with its rapid and rough sketching, the fleeting, seemingly careless perception of the object and the brilliant casualness of execution merely express, in the final analysis, that feeling of a stirring, dynamic, constantly changing reality."

Virginia Woolf's use of collage and cubism in her writings are shifting the narrator, time, location, characters, and emotions. This shifting creates many fragmentations in her novels. In her novels, many locations are real like London streets or rooms and she used objects' colors too much which are real and we can see them in our life. This novel used many real scenes. One of them is Mrs. Dalloway who is walking on the street which is so normal and natural and she behaves like an ordinary person.

"Her only gift was knowing people by instinct, she thought walking on. If you put her in a room with someone, up went her back like a cat or she purred. Devonshire House, Bath House, the house with the China cockatoo." (Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway: 7)

She used real places in her novel. "Only the other, visiting a patient, sir Somebody Something, in Bedford Square." in one part she says that they should go to the Victorian and Albert Museum.

Another similarity between collage painting and this novel exists. Virginia Woolf used many words that are related to collage like cut, paste, collecting together, and scissors several times. In one part, she says: "collected the green folds together and attached them." This is a way collage painters collect different parts and make a whole. In all the below paragraphs, she used these words many times.

"Richard is very well, Richard is a committee. And she opened her scissors and said did she just finish what she was doing to her dress, for they had a party that night?" (Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway:30)

"But she is too cold, he thought, sewing, with her scissors. Daisy would look ordinary beside Clarissa." (Woolf, MD: 32)

In another paragraph, when the writer is talking about Peter, she describes his life like collage painting. His life is like a canvas that different events gathered it and made a whole.

His powers chafed and roused in him. He assembled from different quarters all sorts of things. Praise, his career at Oxford, his marriage, which she knew nothing whatever about, how he had loved and altogether done his job. (Woolf, M.D: 33)

On page 44, the writer tried to show the different pieces in collage paintings by verbal language. In verbal language and writing, several words are put together to make a whole sentence. The speaker cannot say one word and expect people to understand the point. All these words next to each other make meanings.

"The words attached themselves to some scene, to some room, he had been dreaming of. It became clearer, the room, the scene, the past he had been dreaming of." (Woolf, M.D:44)

"Could it be that he was in love with her, then, remembering the misery, the torture, the extraordinary passion of those days? It was a different thing altogether – a much pleasanter truth being, that now she was in love with him." (Woolf, M.D:59)

Virginia Woolf used many words directly that show her use of collage-like "he assembled from different quarters all sorts of things." Or "as a woman, she gathers her things together.", "he had a feeling that they were all gathered together." These are some sentences in the novel that shows her interest in fragmentations.

In one part, the writer is describing the clouds and how they had attached themselves. And the characters are discussing letters that had been made by clouds. The way she wrote about the clouds and their gathering is like a collage painting. And everyone can see different letters. It means that there are many meanings for a painting and not only one.

"It has gone. It was behind the clouds. There was no sound. The clouds to which the letters E, G, L had attached themselves moved freely as if destined to cross from West to East on a mission of the greatest importance which never be revealed." (Woolf, M.D:16)

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, we can see the lack of unity which is so clear in this work. There are lots of webs in this novel. These webs are connected by the interaction of characters in the story. There are many characters and all of them affected each other. Readers don't see isolated life for each character. All character's minds, emotions, and feelings are combined. The writer used many shifts in the characters' minds. This lack of unity is the main element of post-impressionist paintings. In post-impressionist painting, the painter uses her or his feelings

toward something and draws it on the canvas based on whatever exists in the memory, not reality so these feelings which are drawn on the canvas are not matched and fixed together. Her character's minds are like a room full of objects and natural events which are not in order and every part of the mind is related to one landscape. From the very beginning, the writer used short sentences which are not related together and the locations are changing.

“ Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself. For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges, and Rumpelmayer's men were coming. And then, thought Clarrisa Dalloway. what a morning, fresh as if issued to children on a beach.”(Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway: 3)

“ but how strange, on entering the park, the silence, the mist, the hum, the slow swimming happy ducks, the pouched birds waddling, and who should be coming along with his black against the Government buildings most appropriately, carrying a dispatch box stamped with the Royal arms, who but Hugh Whitbread, her old friend Hugh.”(Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway: 4)

Her novels are not like a book but like paper or canvas that has many images and our eyes should move from one point to the other part and at the end step back and see the whole picture. This paragraph has many images which are ordinary and different. Readers should imagine a street full of these scenes.

“In people's eyes, in the swing, tramp, trudge, in the bellow and uproar, the carriages, motor cars, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swing, brass bands, barrel oranges, in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some airplane overhead was what she loved, life, London, this moment of June.”(Woolf, M.D: 4)

Virginia Woolf used many fragmentations in this novel. This novel has fragmentary syntax. The sentences are short and various words which are connected. The writer focuses on certain moments and it makes a visual image for readers. These fragmentations in her novels are like short brushstrokes on the canvas and collages in which different pieces are gathered next to each other and they are the same. She used many parentheses in *Mrs. Dalloway*. The words and phrases which are in the parentheses are not related to the previous sentence or the whole paragraph. It is like a painter who uses paper for sticking on the canvas next to the lines which are drawn by a painter and that paper is not related to the lines. For example in one part, the writer is talking about Peter and his behaviors and suddenly the point of view shifts and readers can see the nature which is described in parentheses.

June had drawn out every leaf on the trees. The mothers of Pimlico gave suck to their young. Messages were passing from the Fleet to the Admiralty. Arlington Street

seemed to chafe the very air in the Park and lifts its leaves hotly, brilliantly on waves of that diving vitality that Clarissa loved. To dance, to ride, she had adored all. (Woolf, M.D: 5) This part of the novel has many fragmentations which are not connected and show many scenes. “She shuts the door. At once he became extremely depressed. It all seemed useless. Going on being in love, gaining on quarreling, going on making it up, and he wandered off alone. The place was quite a humble one, the Preys were never very well off. But there were always grooms and stables, boys about- Clarissa loved riding- and an old coachman- what was his name?- an old nurse, old Moody, old God, some such name they called her, whom one was taken to visit in a little room with lots of photographs, lots of bird-cages.” (Woolf, M.D: 45)

A narrative collage is a modern device in the 20th century. Many writers used this device in their works. Virginia Woolf used it too. This device is based on collage painting and it collects other writers' words, phrases, books, paintings, and music, from her novel. She used Shakespeare's work in *Mrs. Dalloway* many times.

“ Here he opened Shakespeare once more. That boy's business of intoxication of language-Antony and Cleopatra- had shriveled utterly. How Shakespeare loathed humanity- the putting on of the clothes, the getting of children, the mouth and the belly.” (Woolf, M.D: 66)

“ Love between man and woman was repulsive to Shakespeare. The business of copulation was fish to him before the end.”(Woolf, M.D:66)

“Was he not like Keats? She asked and reflected how she might give him a taste of *Antony and Cleopatra* and the rest, lent him books, wrote him scraps of letters, and lit in him such a fire as burns only once in a lifetime, without heat, flickering a red gold flame infinitely ethereal and insubstantial over Miss Pole. *Antony and Cleopatra*, and the Waterloo Road.” (Woolf, M.D: 63)

Had he come in, that is to say, any night about this time, found him finishing his masterpiece at three in the morning and running out to pace the streets, visiting churches, devouring Shakespeare, Darwin, The History of Civilization, and Bernard Shaw.

‘It is time,’ said Rezia. This sentence belongs to T.S Eliot's *The Waste Land*. In some parts, the writer used the writer's name directly.

“ Helena never liked discussions of anything when Sally gave her William Morris, it had to be wrapped in brown paper.”(Woolf, M.D:25)

“He could reason, he could read, Dante and he could add up his bill. “ (Woolf, M.D:65)

Main discussion

Mrs. Dalloway has a high modernism novel because it is not traditional, has no plot in her novel and nothing happens in her novels so the only focus in her novels is on the observations and feelings of characters. The readers in her novels can understand the feelings of characters that are personal and also understand the other's feelings. The structure of the painting and literature in this novel are the same. The characters have inner speaking. It means that they speak to themselves. The artist does the same thing too. The meaning of art comes from our inside or interpretation of a painting by people is exactly like the interpretation of one character through the other character's eyes. This novel is similar to the painting's structure and subject matter. The characters in this novel imagine in their minds and readers can see their imaginations like paintings. Painting portraits and characters mean putting the brush on the canvas and drawing the portrait or describing that picture with words and drawing it in the mind of the characters by drawing. Writers do the second one. They use words for drawing the characters and that is why readers can imagine the character's faces and clothes by describing them. Lily, the main character in this novel does the same thing.

Painting elements are so clear in her novel. Virginia Woolf in the first step used a painter in most of her novels. This novel is not an exception too. The second one is Virginia Woolf's use of colors, canvas, brushes, and painting stuffs. She used many colors in this novel. From the very beginning, a reader can see and imagine a colorful world like blue, gray, red, orange, green, and pink. When she wanted to describe the character's appearance, she only focused to describe their eye color or hair color.

Another element of Impressionism painting is the usage of water that Virginia Woolf used many times in her novel. "Describing water, to Impressionists, meant something more than focusing on and attempting at rendering the various nuances of color and the composition of a landscape on canvas. It meant paying attention to the effects of light as well. Monet was fascinated by the 'impalpable and fleeting; the transparency and vibration of air and water' (Blunden, 1976: 133), and those elements fascinated Virginia Woolf too.

Mrs. Dalloway has many fragmentations and pieces and nothing is linear. There is no order in the plot or story. Readers can see many pieces that they should put in order to understand the story. These fragmentations are the main element of collage painting that was invented by Picasso. Virginia Woolf did the same thing by writing in different pieces. Picasso in his paintings used many colors, objects, and lines that aren't connected but are put next to each other and made a whole picture. Verbal Collage for Virginia Woolf is the same. She used many points of view, characters, landscapes, and time that shift many times and make the readers confused because they should put these fragments next to each other to make a whole.

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Conclusion

A human being from the very beginning of creation was searching for a source of tranquility. Some of them found it in religion, and some of them found it in different arts like music, painting, and literary works. All of them had the same goal and that was reaching soul comfort so there is one goal but many ways to achieve it. Some people chose painting and writing for their own goals and they started working on their work to make themselves calm. These two arts are very interconnected together and have a close relationship. Their relationship is like sunrise and sunset. Sunrise and sunset have the same source, the sun, but their way of showing themselves are different. Literature and painting have the same source, and soul and their goal is the same too but the tools they use are different. Literature uses words but painting uses colors and lines for expressing itself so the connection between these two arts is clear and nobody can deny it. Many writers and artists who worked together had the same idea too and they believed that their art can help everyone. "Throughout time, humankind has struggled to respond to a universal need to express their humanity and their places in the world. According to Emerson, it is the artist (the author, poet, painter, etc.) who is best able to express beauty and either verbally or visually represent the thoughts of others." (Lawrence. Painting and words: Language and literature in the visual arts, 71)

Many writers started to find the connection between different arts and create a new style by combining these arts. Virginia Woolf a modern writer did the same thing and created a new method in her career by mixing visual art and verbal language. Most of us know her as a modern writer. Although she was a writer, she concentrated on pictures and paintings too. She wanted to express her concern about creating a new style and not a traditional one in novels. Readers find the link between painting and literature in her novel and this connection always exists in many works.

Woolf had many artist friends who helped her to know painting techniques better. She used three styles and movements in her works. The first one is impressionist painting which focuses mostly on colors and lights. For the impressionist, the colors are so important. Virginia Woolf believed that colors have meanings and she can find her meaning in life through the colors. She liked to be a painter and use colors to express her life and worldview. If she were a painter, she should impressions her life in pale yellow, silver, and green." (Cakirtas, Woolf's search for the meaning of life through colors: 54)

Woolf is a collage writer in her narrative method. She combined viewpoints, characters, and landscapes. ‘‘We see Clarissa Dalloway from the four points of the compass. She is the spot where time and space interconnect as if many folded mirrors gave off various images of characters’’(Lacourarie, Painting, and Writing: A Symbiotic Relation in Virginia Woolf’s Works).

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I am really interested in literature and painting so that was a tough duty for me to choose only one field so finally I decided to consider both of them although I had been rejected due to my new subject but my dear Dr. Royanian supported and encouraged me to follow my interest. I am so thankful and happy to have a such great professor and also I want to thank my parents and my husband who always have been there in my milestones and finally helped me. At the end, I want to thank Sina Publication a lot.

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