

電影時代的吳爾芙—— 作為翻譯計畫的《達洛威夫人》與《時時刻刻》

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摘 要

從吳爾芙（Virginia Woolf）死後，「吳爾芙」這個名字就成了一個重要的文化象徵。在一九九〇年代，一些改編自吳爾芙作品的戲劇作品陸續問世。但讓吳爾芙真正確立其在流行文化中明星地位的，卻是班雅民（Walter Benjamin）所言機器複製時代的藝術作品——電影。隨著科技進步，我們可以藉由影像的堆疊，瞭解吳爾芙的性格、個人生活及書寫模式。在這些電影中，《達洛威夫人》（*Mrs. Dalloway*）直接改編自吳爾芙同名作品，《時時刻刻》（*The Hours*）則師法《達洛威夫人》技巧及主題，力圖成為吳爾芙作品的來世。本論文會從修辭學角度，就電影/小說主題、劇情布局、意識流的呈現等部分探討電影中的翻譯過程，並繼續藉由班雅民的理論討論電影的「原創性」。若我們將「吳爾芙」視為一項藝術作品，那麼翻譯（重新書寫作者）或許喪失了「光環」，卻會更貼近普羅大眾。重點是：電影版的《時時刻刻》或許並未創造出獨一無二的「吳爾芙」，但其創造出的「吳爾芙」和原作具有一樣的地位，並和原作不斷對話。

關鍵詞：吳爾芙、班雅民、《達洛威夫人》、《時時刻刻》、修辭學

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Virginia Woolf in the Age of Cinema: *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours* as Translation Projects

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Abstract

Virginia Woolf has become a significant cultural icon since her death. In the 1990s, a number of plays adapted from Woolf's works were produced. However, it is with the release of the following three films that the star status of Virginia Woolf in popular culture has been established. With the advance of technology, we can appreciate her character, personal life and writing style through the compilation of cinematic images. Among these films, *Mrs. Dalloway* is the direct adaptation of Woolf's novel while *The Hours* manages to follow the techniques, main themes and become the afterlife of Woolf's work. In the famous essay "The Task of the Translator," Walter Benjamin suggests the notion of "afterlife" of the original text/work of art. In another equally celebrated essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin states the influence of mechanical reproduction on the work of art. As a consequence, mechanical reproduction emancipates art from the task it was originally endowed with. In this regard, if we view the "Virginia Woolf" as the work of art, then the translation, the reproduction of the writer may lack the "aura," but it also become more down to earth and accessible. All in all, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Hours* may not create a unique Woolf, they are equally original as the real Virginia Woolf nonetheless.

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Keywords: Virginia Woolf, Walter Benjamin, rhetoric

As William Faulkner's famous proverb goes: "The past is not dead. In fact, it's not even past". The proverb is applicable in literature as well. All the great writers will perish and their mortal bodies will become ashes and dust one day or another. Be that as it may, their works may stand the test of time, being translated and kept in various forms. In other words, these works will have their own "afterlives." The term "afterlives" derives from Walter Benjamin's "afterlife" of literary works in his groundbreaking essay "The Task of the Translator" in 1923. In this paper, I will appropriate Benjamin's approach to "translation" to discuss another important literary figure in England in the early 20th century, Virginia Woolf.

In this paper, hence, I will explore how "adapted films" parallel Woolf's literary works. I would like to employ two of Benjamin's insightful essays to discuss the "translation process" of the films *The Hours* and *Mrs. Dalloway*. The translation of stream of consciousness, the arrangement of these movies and the themes will be explored in detail. I will place emphasis on how these films diverge from the feminist agenda put forth by Woolf and take another route. These films may not be perfect and live up to Woolfian ideals. That notwithstanding, these works are by no means less authentic than the original. Auteur Theory may help account for my argument.

Films as Products of Translation

Benjamin contends that the technology of mechanic reproduction has the power of "emancipation" whereas Theodor W. Adorno is extremely pessimistic about mass culture which can be easily reproduced. Adorno states that mass culture is destined to deteriorate and that it only appeals to the public

(120-121). From his perspective, cultural reproduction and the structure of capitalism are inextricably entangled. What is even worse, cultural production is the weaker force, so it is subject to other industries, which in the end deprives of the autonomy of culture. Adorno assumes that the development of technology will overshadow styles. This means that mass culture will force artists to lose their personal styles (122-124). Artistic works of personal styles will be suppressed and diminish on the market gradually.

At the time when films and television were just about to flourish, Adorno's concern can be justified. In fact, his preconception seems to foreshadow the development of Hollywood film industry (such as mass-produced and formulaic action movies or romantic comedies). He appears to underestimate the judgment ability of the public. As far as he is concerned, "outstanding artworks" do not exist in the world of mass culture, and the public are not capable of choosing what they really want, only following the footsteps of providers of cultural products. However, the truth is that the current of technology does not completely overwhelm artworks. Take films for example. Many films transcend the boundaries and find their own voice. It is entirely fair to say that consumers are not as blind as Adorno suggests. They may turn to the purity of artworks.

In the 1950s, French New Wave Director François Truffaut came up with the notion of "Auteur Theory." According to Truffaut, there are no such things as good films or bad films; there are only good directors and bad directors. Before Truffaut, it was generally believed that screenwriters were makers of films; they decided the destiny and development of a film. Truffaut, however, argues that the true author of a film is the director. He/she controls basically every little detail in a film, choosing scenes in a screenplay to shoot, giving

directions as to how the camera moves, casting actors and taking care of lighting, set decoration and editing. It is only through a director's genius and skills can a film be completed. A film also reflects its director's aesthetic points of view and vision. The central idea of Auteur Theory lies in the assumption that directors/authors shoot only one film in their entire career no matter how productive they are. Their talent can only be represented through their body of works, which echoes Benjamin's translation theory that put emphasis on the totality of artworks. Their films illustrate their viewpoints on ethics, religions, aesthetics, even their life and bear their very own signature. In the course of creation, they may repeatedly choose similar topics. As advocates of Auteur Theory suggests, the director plays the most significant part in the process of movie making and controls the outcome of the whole film. On the other hand, a film is also the combination of collective creativity and collaboration. All crews and actors are at directors' disposal. However, it is also true that these participants also need to exert their free will to endow a film with life. For actors' part, although they might appear on the screen for only several minutes or seconds, their performance is the outcome of numerous rehearsals and countless repetitive takes. Julianne Moore mentions in the DVD commentary for *The Hours* that while other actors may rehearse frequently, she personally does not rehearse at all. In this respect, individual actors may have different approaches to acting, thereby creating different dimensions of characters. What counts is not only what is shown in front of the camera but also what is done behind the camera.

Rhetoric and the Translation Process of the Film *The Hours*

Woolf has become a significant cultural icon since her death. In the 1990s, a number of plays adapted from Woolf's works were produced. Silver comments, "These new texts, these performances, become part of that 'complex totality' that characterizes the star image" (211). However, it is with the release of the following three films that the star status of Virginia Woolf in popular culture has been established: *Orlando* (directed by Sally Potter, 1992), *Mrs. Dalloway* (directed by Marleen Gorris, 1997), and *The Hours* (directed by Stephen Daldry, 2002). In the past, the only way to piece the writer Virginia Woolf together is through her letters, diaries, novels, essays and biographies. With the advance of technology, we can even appreciate her character, personal life and writing style through the compilation of cinematic images.

Among the three films mentioned above, *The Hours* is arguably the most high-profile one. As we have seen, the film itself is an adaptation of Michael Cunningham's highly applauded Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Hours* and homage to the writer Virginia Woolf. I would like to enlist Benjamin's perspective to discuss the "translation process" of *The Hours*. Besides, I would discuss the arrangement of *The Hours* and how it alludes to Woolf's works (*Mrs. Dalloway*) and theory (*A Room of One's Own*) to transform the original in the light of rhetoric. However, I would like to stress that the process of paying respect to a certain writer does not merely express writers' or directors' admiration. Whether intentionally or not, during the course of writing or making films, those authors instill new elements into the original, even to the extent of challenging the status of the original. Simply stated, the following discussion will illustrate how the plot and characters of *The Hours* interrelate with Woolf's works and theory based on Quintilian's and Cicero's viewpoints on the composition of a literary work, showing how contemporary filmmakers

make efforts to emulate Woolf. After exploring the process of translation in the film, I would go on to justify its originality by virtue of Benjamin's theory. In the famous essay "The Task of the Translator," Benjamin suggests the notion of "afterlife" of the original text/work of art. In another equally celebrated essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin states the influence of mechanical reproduction on the work of art. In this essay, Benjamin argues that the age of mechanical reproduction leads to the lack of "aura" of the work of art. He says that "the situations into which the product of mechanical reproduction can be brought may not touch the actual work of art, yet the quality of its presence is always depreciated" (221). As a consequence, mechanical reproduction emancipates art from the task it was originally endowed with. In this regard, if we view the "Virginia Woolf" as the work of art, then the translation, the reproduction of the writer may lack the "aura," but it also become more down to earth and accessible. The bottom line is: *The Hours* may not create a unique Woolf, it is equally original as the real Virginia Woolf nonetheless.

As a matter of fact, in the texts based on words, writers can deliver messages through arrangement and convince readers of their arguments. In films which basically rely on images to stimulate audience, details such as characters, settings and costumes show directors' creativity and intention. In this section, therefore, I will analyze the arrangement of the film *The Hours* and how it translates Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and theory and pay homage to Woolf. I will employ Quintilian's and Cicero's perspectives on arrangement to discuss how the plot and characters interact with Woolf's works, revealing how modern filmmakers' show their respect for Woolf.

Quintilian argues that rhetoric consist of five canons: invention,

arrangement, style, memory and delivery. Indeed, Quintilian's rhetoric lays much emphasis on the face-to-face interactions between speakers and listeners. However, in my opinion, his viewpoints can also be applied to the discussions of the texts of films since films are all about interactions between texts and audience. It goes without saying that film can deliver certain messages. With the advancement of modern technology, nowadays their influence on the world is even greater than that of a single speech. For example, the German female director Leni Riefenstahl directed the famous propaganda film *The Triumph of the Will* to chronicle the 1934 Nazi Party Congress in Nuremberg. Later in 1936, she made another influential film *Olympia* to document the 1936 Olympics held in Berlin. These two films used to be severely attacked for their alliance with Nazi and Adolf Hitler, but they are arguably the most successful propaganda films up to date, enjoying high status in terms of aesthetics. In this respect, films are deservedly excellent tools of delivering messages. As a consequence, it is adequate to analyze the language of films by means of the perspectives of Quintilian and Cicero. The arrangement is especially worth paying heed to due to the different essences of language used in speeches and images.

For Quintilian, the formation of a speech is like building a house. In addition to materials at the speaker's disposal, speakers have to dexterously build up a strong building. If speakers own good materials but lack perfect structure (arrangement), everything is in vain. Quintilian also states that a good arrangement is like a fine statue. For him, "order" is the origin of everything and key to a good speech. If we adopt the literal meaning of Quintilian's viewpoints on public speaking, Woolf's novel and *The Hours* fail to meet his criteria. On the surface, they both leave much room to be desired in terms of

“order.” However, just as the film version provides new ideas for the original novel, theories should also be advanced with time. Public speaking deals with face-to-face communication. Once it is accomplished, it can never be done again. We can reuse the text, but it is not possible to reproduce the tone of the speaker or the atmosphere of the occasion where the speech is given. Literature and films are another story. They can be read and watched over and over again. Readers and audience can dwell on the plots and savor the acting, the decoration and music score repeatedly. Although *The Hours* and *Mrs. Dalloway* do seem “out of order” at first sight, underneath the chaotic surface, they are full of order. As far as Woolf’s techniques are concerned, her language is full of experiments and personal style, emphasizing mental descriptions of her characters. In addition, her novels are abundant with a variety of symbols. Take *Mrs. Dalloway* for example. In this novel, interconnected metaphors and imagery (like flowers) appear repetitively and form a subtle yet tight network.

As for *The Hours*, the clear-cut three-part plot meets the requirements Cicero demands for the arrangement of a speech. In “De Inventione,” Cicero lists six parts of a speech: exordium, narrative, partition, confirmation, refutation and peroration (Benson & Prosser 197). The central character of *The Hours* is Mrs. Woolf. Therefore, in the exordium and peroration, the scene in which she commits suicide is vividly described. These two parts echo each other. By putting these two parts together, the audience enters Woolf’s mental state that the screenwriter speculates.

Cicero says that the exordium can either be an introduction or an insinuation. Judging by the treatment of the text, I will say *The Hours* has both. In the beginning of the film, Mrs. Woolf walks hastily toward the river, looking rather agitated. Her facial expressions and gestures reveal her nervousness and

tragic flaws. Even more, her suicide attempt implies the development of the plot, namely, the suicide attempts of other successful or unsuccessful suicide attempts of other characters in the film. In fact, such an opening lives up to the requirements of Cicero's exordium. The simplicity and seriousness of an opening can lead the audience into the world of montage in no time. Cicero mentions that conclusion ought to contain the "summing up," "indignato" and "conquestio." The summing up has to restate previously presented examples; "indignato" aims to excite "indignation or ill-will against the opponent;" the conquestio should arouse "pity and sympathy." The indignato and conquestio are two sides of a coin. They both manage to arouse the emotions of the audience. The voice-over of the ending which laments the fleeting time of one's life is unquestionably a conclusion of the theme of time in the film. Apart from that, the shocking image of Mrs. Woolf drowning herself can be said to create an effect that equals to the indignato and conquestio. All in all, in terms of the conclusion, *The Hours* does meet Cicero's standard.

The narrative of *The Hours* also complies with Cicero's rules. Cicero asserts that narratives have something to do with either people or incidents. When it comes to incidents, speakers can resort to legends, history or fictional events. When it comes to people, apart from incidents, dialogues among characters and their mental state should also be explored without irrelevant contents. *The Hours* is a collage of historical facts, hearsays, and invented plots. It juxtaposes both reality and fiction. Moreover, the dialogues among the characters and their subtle mentality are visualized through images. For example, when Laura Brown considers taking her own life, the audience can see a flood (in her imagination) consuming her on the screen. Her fear of

drowning symbolizes her boring life. Another example is Mrs. Woolf's sympathy for the dead bird. It is actually a mental projection of her life as a bird that cannot fly. As for the parts of the partition and confirmation, we can get a glimpse of them by means of the arrangements of the characters in the film.

For a translation project, differences between the translated text and the original are inevitable. No translators can claim that they are one-hundred percent true to the original. With regard to the differences between *The Hours* and the original "Virginia Woolf," the casting of the three actresses *The Hours* is especially worth deeper exploration. First of all, the director does not choose one actress to play all the three female characters in the film. Instead, Nicole Kidman, Julianne Moore and Meryl Streep play Virginia Woolf and Clarissa Vaughan, respectively. The director purposely represents the looks of these three women based on the conventional "image" of Virginia Woolf. In addition, Cicero thinks that partition can underscore the main points in a speech. The partition can be approached in two ways: showcasing similarities and differences; presenting problems at issue in a simple and clear way. *The Hours* obviously adopts the former. The three women in the film all wear long hair and amber jewelry. Nevertheless, they are not "unique," a term Benjamin keeps referring to in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." They are all different from the one and only "Virginia Woolf" in one way or another. The texture of vulnerability is not so obvious in Kidman's Woolf; desperate as Laura Brown is, she chooses life over death; and the wishful Clarissa Vaughan does manage to pull herself together in the long run. For the sake of the box office, the narrative of the film is not so hard to follow. However, despite such differences, the originality of the translation

project is not necessarily compromised. It is precisely due to these differences that a new life is created. As Benjamin argues, oftentimes the translation is not identical with the original. Silver also remarks, “The adaptations of Woolf’s texts become more than ‘an activity of literary criticism’ that ‘can throw new light on the original’; they themselves become ‘originals’ whose construction and performance set the stage for assertions about Virginia Woolf” (213). In other words, *The Hours* stands as an original itself. It is the afterlife of the real Woolf, but it is definitely not an inferior.

Cicero thinks that confirmation stands for listing all the evidence to support the points of the speaker. In *The Hours*, the points “on display” are represented in the portrayal of the three female characters. Without a doubt, the director delicately and insightfully looks into the inner worlds of these three women. What is noteworthy is the fact that such a representation may challenge the uniqueness of the original, which constitutes peroration in Cicero’s refutation. For people who were too young to know the time of Virginia Woolf, the image which Kidman creates shapes people’s imagination about Woolf. The other two females constitute other adjectives which are often used to describe Woolf: “highbrow, mandarin, elite; sensitive and fragile” (Silver 97). However, none of them can claim to have the uniqueness of Virginia Woolf. In a sense, the process of “bringing Woolf to life” is correspondent with Benjamin’s theory. He says that the film, a product of the mechanical age, has caused the decay of the “aura” of works of art (222). In “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Benjamin defines the aura as “the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be” (222). In other words, for Benjamin, the distance (mental, not physical) brings about the aura, and the shortening of the distance may destroy the aura.

Benjamin identifies two values of the work of art: exhibition value and the cult value. The former refers to the function of being displayed, the latter the function of being worshipped. Based on Benjamin's observation, before the age of mechanical reproduction, the aura of the work of art was imbedded in the cult value. When people saw the work of art, they worshipped it from a distance. However, with the advent of the age of mechanical reproduction, the status of the work of art has been continually challenged. What remains is the exhibition value of the work of art. Its aura diminishes with the technological progress of various kinds of media, such as photography and cinema. Benjamin comments on this development to the point. He says,

For the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an ever greater degree the work of art designed for reproduction. From a photographic negative, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the "authentic" print makes no sense. But the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. (224)

That is to say, without the invention of cinema, the image of Virginia Woolf would not have been represented on the screen. Paradoxically, the representation of Woolf may also come along with the loss of her uniqueness. The question arises as to whether such a loss is detrimental. As far as Benjamin is concerned, the answer is definitely negative. He believes that mechanical production can break the standards of conventional art and become a freeing power. It frees the reproduced project from the domain of tradition.

The plurality of copies substitutes a unique existence. The object reproduced can be watched and listened at any time, which gives it certain presence and leads to “a tremendous shattering of tradition” (221). On the other hand, Benjamin may oversimplify the notion of the cult value; he may also be too naïve to foresee the development the film industry. Is distance always the determining factor in the cult value? In fact, an easily accessible medium as cinema is, it does not necessarily diminish the cult value of the work of art. On the contrary, it may strengthen the cult value of certain works. For instance, with the release of *The Hours*, *Mrs. Dalloway* (once again) became a bestseller instantly, and Woolf’s other major works were also in great demand. More pertinently, cinema (the final product of mechanical reproduction) and literature (the work of art) work hand in hand to boost the star status of the writer and attract more people to adore her. While the label “Virginia Woolf” may lose its aura and uniqueness, its cult value does not fade away.

The film version of *The Hours* is a translation of “Virginia Woolf” both in its content and form. As an original, her writing style clearly demonstrates her “translatability.” To begin with, *The Hours* is the working title when Woolf set about to write the novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. As other modernist writers, Virginia Woolf expresses her dissatisfaction with the world in her writings in the early twentieth century. She consciously constructs a wasteland with broken images. She ponders upon the meaning of life, judges the modern society, lays bare the emptiness of human minds, accuses the war of its cruelty and cherishes the memory of the good old days. As far as the techniques are concerned, Woolf’s language is imbued with experiments and extremely personal style. She lays special emphasis on psychological descriptions and her novels are filled with various symbols.

Furthermore, it is known that Woolf is of the opinion that a good writer should have an androgynous mind, the ideal which she materializes in *Orlando*. It can be inferred from her argument that a person is supposed to possess both masculinity and femininity. Interestingly, although the plot of *The Hours* echoes that of *Mrs. Dalloway*, the division of the three women is closer to the central character Orlando in *Orlando*. *Orlando* delineates the rebirths and transformation of sexes and life experiences over more than four centuries for Orlando. Originally a young man in the Elizabethan era, she becomes a modern woman who undergoes the process of giving birth. In different times, she may possess different features and faces. However, under various covers, she has an identical soul. *Orlando* has been an insightful exploration of masculinity and femininity in Europe over the past four hundred years. It is easy to see that the arrangement of the plot of *The Hours* parallels that of *Orlando*. In the film, the three women can be seen as a unity, or they can be viewed as three individuals who possess the same soul.

It could be said that Woolf demonstrates the fact that sexual differences are constructed and problematic and that men and women do not possess equal status through Orlando. The sex change also troubles the issue of heterosexuality. It is evident that in *The Hours*, the three female characters are more or less bisexual and that the flow of desire is not fixed. Besides, they are not only the focuses of the story, but also the pillars of the households. They do carry out Woolf's ideal while other characters are represented in a rather one-dimensional way. Laura Brown is a prominent example. As soon as her well-rounded neighbor Kitty walks into her house, the camera deliberately turns her gaze into a kind of "male gaze." The "looked" Laura soon becomes the "looking" one. The audience also identifies with Laura and pays close

attention to Kitty's body in no time. Just as Mulvey says, "she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire" (837); she is "as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look" (840). As a biological female, with the function of the camera, Laura is given a pair of man's eyes and in a sense becomes androgynous.

The "form" not only refers to the structure of the story but also the techniques involved. The writer Virginia Woolf is famous for her use of stream of consciousness, detailed descriptions, fragmented narratives and repetitive phrases. First of all, stream of consciousness is a term coined by philosopher and psychologist William James. Stream-of-consciousness fiction is "concerned with those levels that are more inchoate than rational verbalization—those levels on the margin of attention." (Humphrey 2-3). *Mrs. Dalloway* then serves as a perfect example. It is characterized by the use of interior monologues. The repetitive "she thoughts" remind readers of the mental function of the character's mind. The dramatic sequences of the principal characters are all linked with Mrs. Dalloway's through a shuttling pattern of verbal reminiscences. As Humphrey notes, the surface narrative of this novel only takes place within twenty-four hours. Yet all the incidents which take place in the mind of the main character Mrs. Dalloway cover many years (100). In the film version of *The Hours*, even though the technique of stream of consciousness is not as prevalent as in the novel, the director still tries to instill that element into the film. Laura Brown functions as the result of stream of consciousness for Virginia Woolf. According to the movie, Virginia Woolf originally decides to kill her heroine in her new book, and then changes her mind to kill somebody else instead. Laura Brown seems to fulfill Woolf's wish by staying alive, which partly leads to her own son's suicide. Every step

Laura Brown takes is exactly every thought Virginia Woolf has. In this sense, *The Hours* does imitate the technique of stream of consciousness of Virginia Woolf.

Virginia Woolf also has a director's eye, which reflects her unique aesthetics. As a matter of fact, Virginia Woolf's writing often has a cinematic touch. Caughie explains,

Not only does the narrative agency describe scenes when no one is there and rely on the point of view of insignificant, even unnamed characters, and passers-by, as a camera might, but the narrative agency also calls attention to the sex, age, and social position of the observer, as if emphasizing the particularity of the "multitudes" in the streets. (xxvii)

The same emphasis is also apparent in *The Hours*. In the film, the director uses a lot of close medium shots to capture the movements of each character. He also pays heed to trivial details such as flowers, cigarettes or broken eggs. Little by little, these tiny things permeate into the core of the plot and collect the power of the story. As Wolfgang Iser says, these trivial scenes create the gaps between dialogues, and human imagination makes over what is left unsaid in the text (1676). Therefore, a good text if required to leave some blanks to allow readers to fill in the gap. In the final analysis, *The Hours* can be said to be a film subtly weaves the elements of Virginia's writing into the text. In addition, the fragmented narrative is also one of the features in Woolf's writing. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Mrs. Dalloway's thoughts are incessantly interrupted by Big Ben, and "the dramatic sequences are connected through a single metaphorical nucleus, and the key metaphors are projected and

sustained by a continuous web of subtly related minor metaphors and harmonizing imagery” (Brower 7). As we know, Woolf suffered from a series of mental breakdowns throughout her life, which can partly explain her tendency to use fragmented narratives and even grammatically incorrect sentences. In *The Hours*, the three major threads of the plot are not as fragmented as the narratives in *Mrs. Dalloway*. However, the quick cutting in the very beginning does create a certain sense of disorder. One shot quickly follows another. Los Angeles in the 1950s is soon replaced by New York in 2001. Thanks to the technology, the film reconstructs the fragmented narratives prevalent in Woolf’s writings without losing the pace of the film.

Besides, the overall atmosphere in the film can be said to be rather campy, which is slight from Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*. Kidman’s prosthetic nose is a manifestation of the campy image. In addition to imitating Woolf’s appearances, the nose functions as an absolute eye-catcher. Streep’s performance is another example. Her over-the-top performance style in this film and her melodramatic breakdown scene in the kitchen seem to mock the seriousness of viewers at times.

In fact, Susan Sontag’s camp is a private code, a form of aesthetics. It is all about “artifice” and “exaggeration.” It abandons seriousness altogether. In essence, camp is an art form that takes itself seriously. However, due to its excessive quality, other people cannot take it too seriously. Camp often appeals to the dramatization of human experience. It is safe to say that camp is often related to old-fashionedness and outdatedness. The process of aging and deterioration provides camp with a necessary distance from other objects. When closely examining the essence of camp, one can find that camp often marks the victory of “style” over “content,” “aesthetics” over “morality,” and

“irony” over “tragedy.” Like Sontag points out, “style is everything.” She also points out that camp does not necessarily equal to homosexuality, yet they share similar spirits. In a way, homosexuals, especially gay men, are the one who put the spirit of camp into practice. Sontag comments,

The whole point of Camp is to dethrone the serious. Camp is playful, anti-serious. More precisely, Camp involves a new, more complex relation to "the serious." One can be serious about the frivolous, frivolous about the serious.....Homosexuals have pinned their integration into society on promoting the aesthetic sense. Camp is a solvent of morality. It neutralizes moral indignation, sponsors playfulness. (290)

In addition to Susan Sontag, Keith Harvey also lays bare the characteristics of the “camp talk.” He points out that camp talk often refers to sexual activities and that it indicates the ephemeral nature of sexual desire. In camp talk, the discussion of sex is often contrasted with an attentiveness to conventional moral codes. The speaker may deliberately feign ignorance to adhere to certain moral values. Harvey says, “the incongruity inherent in the juxtaposition of a detailed interest in the mechanics of sex with a trumpeted adherence to traditional moral codes is one of the chief sources of irony in camp” (449).

According to Harvey, the emphatics of camp establishes the theatrical woman. The speaker’s language would consist of exclamations, hyperboles and out-of-power adjectives (such as “marvelous” or “adorable”) that “were typical of women’s language.” However, these emphatics do not imply

commonly shared feminine attributes. For a gay reader, these emphatics are associated with “Southern Belle” played by Vivien Leigh in *Gone with the Wind*. The user of camp hence often cites the theatrical lines used by “Southern Belle.” Harvey contends that least two effects are achieved by doing so,

First, they create ironic distance around all semiotic practice, constituting devices of “defamiliarization”,...and, in particular, signal a suspicion of all encodings of sincerity. Second, they reinforce gay solidarity between interlocutors. To understand the slang or catch on to the allusion is also to feel that one belongs to the community. (451)

Mrs. Dalloway VS. Mrs. Dalloway

In her Dutch treat *Antonia's Line*, Marleen Gorris successfully keeps in balance the various generations of a small town. In her new work *Mrs. Dalloway*, she once again employs a woman as a center, with men moving spirally around her leading actress. Basically Gorris does not abandon the technique of stream of consciousness. Interestingly, in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, the story starts with Clarissa's mental dialogue. The tone is light and pleasant. As for this movie, the opening scene foreshadows the tragedy in the end, and viewers can recognize it in the very beginning. The shell shock, the corpses, and the battlefield are woven into a picture of horror. Septimus's streams of consciousness indicate the both fates of Clarissa and himself. But somehow the tone in Morris's movie is too heavy that almost suffocates viewers. Clarissa's memories tend to be stage-like, rather than lyrical glimpses of an all-important moment in her tremulous youth. Therefore, many parts of

her deployment of stream of consciousness remain earthbound, which can't make this movie a masterpiece. On the other hand, by shifting the focus of the opening scene, Septimus becomes the protagonist in the whole story. It seems that Mrs. Dalloway is his witness, feeling the pain and regret with him.

There is no denying that *Mrs. Dalloway* is a work of feminism. In this book, Clarissa's daughter, Elizabeth, symbolizes how far women have come and where women meant to go. Although Woolf only dedicates several pages to her, the image of Elizabeth has been sufficiently demonstrated by dint of "her self-reflections, Clarissa's considerations, Miss Kilman possessive yearnings, and Sally, Peter, Richard, and Willie Titcomb's observations" (Dibert-Himes 224). Woolf introduces Elizabeth's complexity through her interactions the very first time that she appears. She interrupts a confrontation between Peter Walsh and Clarissa about her life with Richard. As Clarissa claims that she is her daughter in response to Peter's emotional and forceful inquiry, Elizabeth steps forward simultaneously to greet Peter. At once, she is "symbolic of Clarissa's union with Richard...and she becomes androgynous as she is the feminine manifestation of the masculinely defined Big Ben who marks forward-marching day" (225).

On the contrary, the character "Elizabeth" is not portrayed to the full in Gorris's *Mrs. Dalloway*. In this movie, Elizabeth is rendered as a willful young lady in a wealthy family. She even identifies with her spiritual mentor Miss Kilman, who looks down on Clarissa's shallowness. However, after some struggle, she still comes back to her mother's side, which does not meet readers' expectations. In this movie, Elizabeth is reduced to a minor character of little importance.

Translating Stream of Consciousness into Images

Virginia Woolf belongs to the category of artists who master the technique of stream of consciousness. Dowling indicates that “stream of consciousness” is a term that stemmed from the pioneering psychological work of William James and Henri Bergson in the late 19th century. It is “indirect by the lack of quotation marks, the use of the third person, and the employment of the pluperfect tense” (45-46). As Dowling notes, such a technique is often used to blur the boundary between the direct and indirect speech. It is prevalent in Woolf’s writing partly because she would make the transitions in the shift of time as accurate as possible seeing that it would correspond more to our natural experience (46).

The author’s voice blending a character’s stream of consciousness and the frequent shift from one to the other are typical techniques Woolf uses in her narration. In the first sentence of *Mrs. Dalloway*, “Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself” (Dowling 1), Woolf temporarily reads Mrs. Dalloway’s mind and repeats what she just said. Therefore, we sense that there is certain association between the author and the character. Due to the fact that the author is somewhat involved in her character, we readers can hear the voice that helps us communicate with the character herself. However, we always can’t distinguish who really speaks: Virginia Woolf or Clarissa Dalloway.

Apart from that, in the course of the narration, Woolf takes an omniscient point of view. She seems to be able to get into her character’s mind without any obstacles. In one moment, she stands quiescently observing the character. In another, she sneaks into her mind, rendering what she thinks and what she

recalls in no time (Dowling 12). She can add personal commentaries and analyses to her character's thought. She is compared to a stage manager who appears on stage occasionally. Woolf always uses "the compromising pronoun 'one' ...instead of the pronoun 'he' or 'she'" (12) in the presentation of individual consciousness. She chooses to present someone who takes a moment to think, to meditate, and to feel sorry for others as if the understanding of the author about the development of the story were no better than that of readers. She writes "as if the events being reported were taking place at that very moment, and she never knows in advance the course of her story and how it is going to end" (12). From an omniscient point of view, her presentation of the flows of thoughts seems to directly come from the consciousness of a character. The author's voice blended with the character's stream of consciousness and the frequent shift from one to the other are typical techniques Woolf uses in her narration. By dint of stream of consciousness, the author not only "give[s] coherence to her story but at the same time... range[s] at will through time and space of her characters' disordered, chaotic and fluidic activities" (15-16).

As Humphrey suggests, Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is basically composed of interior dialogue with the superimposition of montage on it (53). He also points out the cinematic elements of this novel and identifies the cinematic elements in Woolf's novel, especially in her use of stream of consciousness (51-52). Granted that terms such as "close-ups" and "cutting" are widely used in films, the technique of stream of consciousness is rendered differently in the novel and on the screen. To start with, while the films make abstract thoughts concrete, they are relatively limited in terms of the presentation of the immediacy of characters' consciousness. For example, in the novel, Clarissa's

mind may wander to her youth, to a specific day in her life, and then return to the present. To join the journey of hers, we readers must read several pages of the novel in order to sufficiently fathom the depth of her thoughts. Due to the length and characteristic of the films, directors are likely to avoid packing too many shots in a scene so that the film appears confusing. In a typical drama piece like *Mrs. Dalloway*, the director is destined to bear this in mind. Therefore, the director has no choice but to “unify” Clarissa’s thoughts in one or two scenes. Pages of Clarissa’s interior dialogue have to be condensed in several minutes to keep the path of the whole film. In addition, to make up for the possible lack of depth in the character’s thoughts, the director may use voiceovers to supplement the image. For example, in the beginning of the film *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa is seen in her bedroom with the voiceover reciting Shakespeare’s poem “Fear No More the Heat O’ the Sun,” which actually appears in the novel up to three times. The lines of the poem summarize Clarissa’s fear of being excluded while the same lines works as the talisman to protect both Clarissa and Septimus from being drowned in their despair. With this kind of voiceover, words can be translated into images more effectively without seeming insipid.

Secondly, although the novel has the advantage of being more in-depth in its own right, the cutting in the film allows scenes to shift more flexibly. The introduction scene of the three leading characters in the film *The Hours* serves as an excellent example. Cutting the film here may create a sense of disorder. However, such a technique helps to introduce those characters more efficiently, which is virtually impossible for the novel, which is divided into three parts. When it comes to the employment of the stream of consciousness, the film connects the three minds of the three women more tightly than the novel. In

the beginning of a “special day” in their life, Cunningham describes their states of mind. He depicts Mrs. Dalloway’s stream of consciousness as follows,

There are still the flowers to buy. What a thrill, what a shock, to be alive on a morning in June, prosperous, almost scandalously privileged, with a simple errand to run. She, Clarissa Vaughan, an ordinary person (at this age, why bother trying to deny it?), has followers to buy and a party to give. (10)

For Mrs. Woolf he writes,

Virginia awakens. This might be another way to begin, certainly; with Clarissa going on errand on a day in June, instead of soldiers marching off to lay the wreath in Whitehall. But is it the right beginning? Is it a little too ordinary? (14)

In the “Mrs. Dalloway” part, Cunningham does imitate Woolf’s touch with the sentence beginning with “what” whereas in the “Mrs. Woolf” part, he links the day of “Mrs. Dalloway” with that of “Mrs. Woolf” by purposefully referring to “a day in June.” Then in the “Mrs. Brown” he writes about “a character named Mrs. Dalloway is on her way to buy flowers” which echoes both “Mrs. Dalloway” and “Mrs. Woolf.” These descriptions appear on page 9, 29, 38 respectively. In the film version, the streams of consciousness of these three women are literally intertwined together through parallel editing. This editing technique can create the same effect as cross-cutting which refers to “the linking-up of two sets of action that are running concurrently and which

are interdependent within the narrative” (78). Parallel editing stresses “the paralleling of two related actions that are occurring at different times” (78). Also, as Susan Hayward says, “montage takes over the spectator’s agency: the choice of images to be juxtaposed encodes a preferred reading. Meaning and therefore interpretation are imposed by the film-maker.” In conclusion, modern technology enhances the use of literary techniques in novels, which demonstrates the fact that the two media are complementary, not necessarily contradictory.

In the past, translation and other forms of adaptations were often compared to a woman and they were both thought of as a “lack.” With the emergence of new technology, such an assertion should be challenged. Silver says that the original and adaptation do not exist in a hierarchical relationship but a fluid and shifting relationship. For Benjamin, translation is a kind of salvation. It continues the life of the original and even compensate for its lack. As a translation project, *The Hours* and *Mrs. Dalloway* bring “Virginia Woolf” to life. The director follows Woolf’s footsteps and recreates multiple images of her in the cinematic world. The film may not be a unique representation, but it is no less original than the Woolf we know.

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