

THE INTERIOR MONOLOGUE is a particular technique in which the narrator almost disappears and the point of view overlaps with the internal thoughts of the characters. Grammar rules are respected and punctuation is used to reproduce the sequence of thoughts, memories, feelings, considerations of the characters. The main features of the interior monologue are as follows: it is a verbal expression of a psychic phenomenon; it is immediate (this distinguishes it from both the soliloquy and the dramatic monologue, where conventional syntax is respected); it is free from introductory expressions like "he thought, he remembered, he said"; there are two levels of narration: one external to the character's mind, the other internal; it lacks chronological order and the presence of subjective time; it disregards the rules of punctuation; it lacks formal logical order.

It is necessary to distinguish three kinds of interior monologue:

- the indirect interior monologue, where the narrator never lets the character's thoughts flow without control, and maintains logical and grammatical organisation; the character stays fixed in space while his/her consciousness moves feeling in time. For example in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, there is a passage where the action takes place within the mind of the protagonist, Mrs Ramsay, as a series of memories, associations, reflections and feelings stimulated by apparently unimportant things;
- the interior monologue, characterised by two levels of narration: one external to the character's mind, the other internal. For example in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Molly's monologue: this is an example of interior monologue with the mind level of narration. Molly Bloom lies in bed thinking over her day; various scenes from her past life crowd into her mind. She thinks of her husband, Leopold Bloom, in particular.
- the interior monologue where the character's thoughts flow freely, not interrupted by external events. For example Molly's Monologue.

An extreme form of interior monologue is the STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS, a sort of experimental technique in which the narrator disappears and thoughts are represented in their free flow. Grammar rules are not respected and punctuation is not used. This particular technique very often makes the text incomprehensible.

The American psychologist William James (1842-1910) coined the phrase "stream of consciousness" to define the continuous flow of thoughts and sensations that characterise the human mind. This definition was applied by literary critics to a kind of 20th-century fiction which focused on this inner process. At the beginning of the 20th century writers gave more and more importance to subjective consciousness and understood it was impossible to reproduce the complexity of the human mind using traditional techniques; so they looked for more suitable means of expression. They adopted the interior monologue to represent, in a novel, the unspoken activity of the mind before it is ordered in speech. Interior monologue is often confused with the stream of consciousness, although they are quite different. The former is the verbal expression of a psychic phenomenon, while the latter is the psychic phenomenon itself.

Differently from Joyce's characters who show their thoughts directly through interior monologue, sometimes in an incoherent and syntactically unorthodox way, Woolf never lets her characters' thoughts flow without control, and maintains logical and grammatical organisation. Her technique is based on the fusion of streams of thought into a third-person, past tense narrative. Thus she gives the impression of simultaneous connections between the inner and the outer world, the past and the present, speech and silence. Similar to Joyce's *epiphanies* ("the sudden spiritual manifestation" caused by a trivial gesture, an external object or a banal situation, which used to lead the character to a sudden self-realisation about himself/herself or about the reality surrounding him/her) are Woolf's *moments of*

being, rare moments of insight during the characters' daily life when they can see reality behind appearances.

While Joyce was more interested in language experimentation and worked through the accumulation of details, Woolf's use of words was almost poetic, allusive and emotional. Fluidity is the quality of the language which flows following the most intricate thoughts and stretches to express the most intimate feelings.

<p>DIRECT SPEECH Narrator's presence <i>He said, "I'll come back here to see you again tomorrow".</i></p>	<p>INDIRECT SPEECH <i>He said he would come back to see her the following day.</i></p>
<p>FREE DIRECT SPEECH More direct than direct speech. The characters apparently speak more immediately without the narrator as intermediary, no " ", or no introductory reporting clause. <i>He said I'll come back here to see you again tomorrow.</i> <i>"I'll come back here to see you again tomorrow".</i> <i>I'll come back here to see you again tomorrow.</i> Without the introductory clause confusion is gradually produced in the reader's mind.</p>	<p>NARRATIVE REPORT OF SPEECH ACTS A minimal account of the statement is given. <i>He promised to return.</i> <i>He promised to see her again.</i></p>
	<p>FREE INDIRECT SPEECH Mixed form between direct and indirect speech. The reporting clause is omitted, but the tense and pronoun are those of the indirect speech. <i>He would return there to see her again the following day.</i> This form gives the flavour of the original speech, the character's words, but it also keeps the narrator in an intervening position, between character and reader.</p>
<p>DIRECT THOUGHT <i>He wondered, "Does she still love me?"</i></p>	<p>INDIRECT THOUGHT <i>He wondered if she still loved him.</i></p>
<p>FREE DIRECT THOUGHT <i>Does she still love me?</i></p>	<p>NARRATIVE REPORT OF A THOUGHT ACT <i>He wondered about her love for him.</i></p>
	<p>FREE INDIRECT THOUGHT <i>Did she still love him?</i></p>

Virginia Woolf was interested in giving voice to the complex inner world of feeling and memory and conceived the human personality as a continuous shift of impressions and emotions. So the events that traditionally made up a story were no longer important for her; what mattered was the impression they made on the characters who experienced them. In her novels the omniscient narrator disappeared and the point of view shifted inside the characters' minds through flashbacks, associations of ideas, momentarily impressions presented as a continuous flux. Her contribution to Modernism is made clear by a statement contained in her essay *Modern Fiction* (1919): "Examine for a moment an ordinary

mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad of impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came to here but there; so that, if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street sailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning to the end”.

MODERNISM

A break with the past.

The Great War of 1914-18 marks a fundamental break between the old world and the new. The experience of the war shattered people’s faith in society and its institutions. People were horrified by the effects of war and mechanised society in general. They were interested in recovering the unique experience of the individual by exploring his/her inner world. The Victorian moral universe collapsed and was replaced by a climate of moral ambiguity, by a sense of emptiness and lack of values. The Modernist novel broke with most of the conventions which had characterised Victorian fiction. First of all the omniscient narrator as moral guide was replaced by the direct or indirect presentation of characters’ thoughts and feelings. Secondly many novels no longer followed a linear plot or a chronological sequence of events. The Modernists turned away from the idea of the novel as a mirror of society and from the sense of social responsibility felt by the Victorian novelists. A novel can be set in one day and the analysis of a single moment can tell us more about a character than a traditional narrative life-story. The development of the Modernist novel was deeply influenced by the theories of **Sigmund Freud** (1856-1939), who, in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), proposed a theory of human consciousness as multi-layered, involving different levels of experience and memory. The most significant level was the unconscious, accessible through dreams only. Freud argued that much of man’s conscious behaviour was governed by irrational unconscious drives. This represented a challenge to the idea that the world was rationally ordered. Freud suggested that man’s perception of reality was fundamentally subjective, because man organised the information he received from the outside world according to his interior experience, desires and impulses. Man’s childhood experience therefore had a great influence on his behaviour as an adult because the memory of it was preserved in his unconscious and continued to influence his adult self.

Another thinker who influenced the techniques of Modernism was **Henri Bergson** (1859-1941), who in his major works *Time and Freewill* and *Matter and Memory* elaborated a philosophical position in contrast to the scientific materialism and positivism dominating the Victorian period. Bergson argued that time could not be measured according to units (such as hours, minutes, etc.) because it is a flow, a duration and not a series of points. We do not experience the world moment by moment but in a continuous way. Instead of perceiving time as linear, we experience a mixture of past, present and future in the same moment. His theories contributed to Modernist fiction challenge to the traditional idea of linear narrative. Linked to Bergson’s notion of time is the psychologist William James’s (1842-1910) notion of “stream of consciousness” discussed in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890).

Consciousness, James said, “does not appear to itself chopped up in bits” but is something that “flows”.