

The Converted Fictionality in Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*

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Jacob's Room (*JR*) published in 1922 is a turning point in Virginia Woolf's career in writing novels. Though the story seems to be a bildungsroman which describes a hero Jacob Flanders, this novel embodies Woolf's attempt to undermine the established way of writing novels. Her new way of writing fiction is also explored in Woolf's essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" ("MB & MB") published in 1924. This essay, which criticizes such Edwardian writers as Arnold Bennett and H. G. Wells, includes a short story in which Woolf describes a woman in a carriage. This embedded short story which could be Woolf's exemplary short fiction presents Woolf's new characterization in fiction. There are two narrative levels in this essay: the level of nonfiction, or Woolf's commentary, and that of fiction. In the same manner, we notice that *JR* consists of the level of fiction and the level of commentary, though the commentary is not as dominant as that in "MB & MB." This novel as well as "MB & MB" justifies its own way of writing fiction in the commentary. The inlaid commentaries devise a self-defense system. This metafictional self-defense system can be effectual in the double-layered levels of the narrative. This paper explores the metafictionality implied in the narrative of *JR*, and I will demonstrate how the metafictional characteristics are connected with the operation of the narrative levels.

The two narrative levels I suppose in *JR* are the level of a virtually real

world where the characters live and that of a non-virtually-real world where the narrator's nonfictional commentary happens. The narrator introduces the virtually real world in fiction as a primary narrative level. The virtual reality in fiction is defined as one of the five levels of *vraisemblance* which are categorized by Jonathan Culler. It involves "a specifically literary intelligibility: a set of literary norms to which texts may be related and by virtue of which they become meaningful and coherent" (Culler 145). This level of *vraisemblance* is the dominant narrative level in *JR*. I will call this narrative level the "virtually real level."

The narrator is impersonal except for several passages, which I will discuss later, where the level of the narrative is ambiguous. The narration is, in Seymour Chatman's term, "overt narration" in which "[t]he 'narrator,' when he appears, is a demonstrable, recognizable entity immanent to the narrative itself"; the narrator is the "someone—person or presence— actually telling the story to an audience, no matter how minimally evoked his voice or the audience's listening ear" (Chatman 33-34). Such an overt narrator, as the narrator of *JR*, makes comment on something intrusively at the virtually real level. The commentary, which is inserted in the virtually real level, is problematic because the commentary has a non-virtually-real nature.

The narrator comments on characterization by quoting the opinion of the characters. After the narrator gives his/her commentary—"cataloguing features is the worst. One word is sufficient. But if one cannot find it?" (65)— he/she shifts the point of view almost in every sentence and collects the characters' opinions under a topic presented by the narrator. After presenting the characters' opinions about Jacob's characteristics in one sentence in each character, the narrator insists on his/her opinion:

"I like Jacob Flanders," wrote Clara Durrant in her diary. "He is so

unworldly. He gives himself no airs. . . .

Then Julia Eliot said "the silent young man. . . ."

Timothy Durrant never made any comment at all.

The housemaid found herself very liberally rewarded.

Mr. Sopwith's opinion was as sentimental as Clara's, though far more skilfully expressed.

Betty Flanders . . . was unreasonably irritated by Jacob's clumsiness in the house.

Captain Barfoot liked him best of the boys; but as for saying why. . . .

It seems then that men and women are equally at fault. It seems that a profound, impartial, and absolutely just opinion of our fellow-creatures is utterly unknown. Either we are men, or we are women. Either we are cold, or we are sentimental. . . . In any case life is but a procession of shadows. . . . And why, if this and much more than this is true, why are we yet surprised in the window corner by a sudden vision that the young man in the chair is of all things in the world the most real, the most solid, the best known to us—why indeed? For the moment after we know nothing about him.

Such is the manner of our seeing. Such the condition of our love.

(65-66)

In the above quotation a threshold marked by the elision in Woolf's text is presented between the sentence, "Captain Barfoot liked him best of boys; but as for saying why" and the narrator's commentary, "It seems then that men and women are equally at fault." This threshold, which I think is a frame of the virtually real level, differentiates the levels of narrative. This frame distinguishes the virtually real level from the non-virtually-real level and makes the world inside the frame authentic. The virtually real level and the non-virtually-real level in *JR* could almost correspond to what Gérard Genette calls intradiegetic level and extradiegetic level: the intradiegetic level pertains to or is part of the fictional world in which the

situations and events narrated occur; the extradiegetic level is external to that fictional world (*Narrative Discourse* 227–28; *Narrative Discourse Revisited* 129). In the passage quoted above, the transformation from the virtually real level into the non-virtually-real level where the narrator's commentary happens is crucial for the existence of the virtual reality in this novel because after reading the narrator's commentary, we almost doubt the authenticity of the virtually real level.

We can also say that the inserted commentary is not so long and influential as to become the dominant level in *JR*. The commentary of this kind just bulges out over the virtually real level. However, the commentary in *JR* sometimes has a subversive role to destroy the virtual reality of this level. Through this commentary, the distinction between the virtually real level and the non-virtually-real level becomes ambiguous, because the intrusion of the narrator's commentary suggests not so much the transition of the narrative levels as the mutation of both narrative levels. The inserted commentary might almost relegate the virtually real level to the exemplification of the narrator's commentary. As a result of the overt narrator's interruption into the virtually real level, the narrator's commentary almost occupies the virtually real level and makes this level contribute to his/her commentary by making it a subordinate level. This subordinate level under the commentary could be a kind of "narrative in the second degree" which is called a narrative at the metadiegetic level (Genette *Narrative Discourse* 228). As long as the virtually real level is suspended under the order of the narrator's commentary, that level oscillates between the independent level and the mere evidence of the narrator's commentary. The narrator's attitude to convert the whole virtually real level, which is the primary level, into a secondary level under the commentary is quite metafictional. This metafictional characteristic subverts the virtual reality in *JR*.

The metafictional operation by the narrator is shown in the topic of his/her commentary. The topic of the narrator's commentary, especially characterization, makes the virtually real level a tool of his/her documentation and transposes this level all the more into the secondary level. As if the narrator pretends to be a supporter of new way of writing novels, he/she treats the virtually real level as a sample of the new method. Although the virtually real level formally functions as the authentic world in the fictional construction, in the above quotation (65-66), as well as in the passages where the narrator tells his/her opinion about "character-mongering" (149), and where the narrator provides a topic about letter-writing (120-22), we cannot help doubting the authenticity of the virtually real level. The characters and their speeches partake of "simulated fictionality" under the narrator's commentary. Here the narrative level becomes ambiguous, and the virtually real level is presumed to become secondary and exist for the sake of the narrator's commentary. Therefore the frame which constructs the virtually real level does not function stably. The reader has to presuppose an unusual literary norm in reading such metafictional sections as those in *JR*. The ambiguous narrative level manifests itself as an unframed level.

The unframed narrative level is also brought about by a particular usage of the narrating subject. That can be perceived clearly in the passage where the narrator uses the first-person pronoun, "I," ambiguously which signifies him/herself as a thinking mind that is suddenly closed up. This self-conscious narrator cannot detach him/herself from the virtually real level. Through the intrusion of the ambiguous "I," the narrator breaks the frame of the virtually real level from the inside. I will focus on three remarkable passages where this process occurs.

The first case of an unframed level is the narrator's simulated imagination. The narrator describes the scenery in Italy and offers an opinion in the

present tense: "It is a strange reflection that by travelling two days and nights you are in the heart of Italy. . . . And what I should like would be to get out among the fields, sit down and hear the grasshoppers, and take up a handful of earth—Italian earth, as this is Italian dust upon my shoes" (131); "No doubt we should be, on the whole, much worse off than we are without our astonishing gift for illusion. . . . The point is, however, that we have been brought up in an illusion" (132-33). Just after these passages, the narrator says: "Jacob, no doubt, thought something in this fashion, the *Daily Mail* crumpled in his hand; his legs extended; the very picture of boredom" (133). The subject of the opinion is at some point transposed from the narrator to Jacob. Although the narrator pretends to narrate at the virtually real level, we can say that the discourse in the first person is transformed to the secondary level where the point of view is intentionally and overtly mediated by the narrator, because the discourse is the narrator's imagination of Jacob's thought.

In the other two cases, the identity of "I" is almost the same as the narrator's. The second case is as follows. The narrator's mind follows Jacob, who is first in his room and then walks on Oxford Street, visits St. Paul's Cathedral, and finally goes into the Opera House. The narrator describes, in the third person and in the past tense, the space which Jacob might see. During this narration, the point of view gradually becomes that of the narrator, not of Jacob:

In short, the observer is choked with observations. Only to prevent us from being submerged by chaos, nature and society between them have arranged a system of classification which is simplicity itself; stalls, boxes, amphitheatre, gallery. The moulds are filled nightly. There is no need to distinguish details. But the difficulty remains—one has to choose. For though I have no wish to be Queen of England — or only for a moment —

I would willingly sit beside her; I would hear the Prime Minister's gossip. . . . But no — we must choose. Never was there a harsher necessity! or one which entails greater pain, more certain disaster; for wherever I seat myself, I die in exile: Whittaker in his lodging-house; Lady Charles at the Manor. (63)

In this passage, the narrator, who describes the situation in the Opera House and narrates his/her opinion, would be almost a living character in the virtually real world. In Genette's words, the narrator who is heterodiegetic temporarily becomes homodiegetic here. According to Genette, the narrator is "heterodiegetic" if he/she is not a character in the story; the narrator is "homodiegetic" if he/she is a character (Genette *Narrative Discourse* 244-45). Additionally, though he/she has no proper name, nor any physical body, the narrator transiently shares the same temporality with the characters when he/she uses the first-person pronoun.

The point of view in the above quotation is more like that of autonomous monologue when we superimpose this point of view on Jacob's. A lot of discourses in *JR* have the characteristics of autonomous monologue whose technique is said to be "synchronization." If synchronization is used, the "evocative' present . . . though it must logically refer to a past experience, momentarily creates an illusory ("as if") coincidence of two time-levels, literally 'evoking' the narrated moment at the moment of narration" (Cohn 198). Even in the passage where the narration is impersonal, the narration "springs not from the narrating but from the *experiencing* self" (Cohn 198). It could be said that the technique of the stream-of-consciousness is demonstrated still in an inarticulate manner in *JR*.

The third case is a part of the passage where the narrator discusses letters while Jacob reads his mother's letter beside Florinda. It begins with: "Let us consider letters" (86).

Life would split asunder without them [letters]. . . . Am I doomed all my days to write letters, send voices, which fall upon the tea-table, fade upon the passage, making appointments, while life dwindles, to come and dine? Yet letters are venerable; and the telephone valiant, for the journey is a lonely one, and if bound together by notes and telephones we went in company, perhaps—who knows?—we might talk by the way.

(87)

But at the end of this discussion on letters we find that the narrator's point of view is displaced by Jacob's point of view at some point, and suddenly the point of view is transformed to the narrator's external focalization of Jacob. Since the turning point from the narrator's point of view to Jacob's is concealed, we cannot know where the discourse from Jacob's point of view begins:

Mrs. Flanders wrote letters; Mrs. Jarvis wrote them; Mrs. Durrant too; Mother Stuart actually scented her pages, thereby adding a flavour which the English language fails to provide; Jacob had written in his day long letters about art, morality, and politics to young men at college. . . . Florinda could no more pretend a feeling than swallow whisky. Incontinence was her rejection. Great men are truthful, and these little prostitutes, staring in the fire, taking out a powder-puff, decorating lips at an inch of looking-glass, have (so Jacob thought) an inviolable fidelity.

Then he saw her turning up Greek Street upon another man's arm.

(88)

The transition from one narrative level to another in general takes effect by drawing the reader's attention to the shift itself. But in the above quotation the transition or the threshold is intentionally concealed by the narrator. The narrator's commentary is identical with Jacob's thought here. From

this evidence we can say that the non-virtually-real level dissolves in the virtually real level. The disappearance of the narrator's self and its covert inflow into Jacob, for one thing, make the impression of failure in front of the reader, and for another thing, "un-frame" the virtually real level by concealing the threshold and make that level unstable.

However, contradictorily, the narrator's strange subjectivity, as well as the point of view overtly mediated by others modifies the semiotic system of representation which includes the structure of the narrative communication. It could be said that the sense of virtual reality is also converted.

The strange characteristics of the narrator are perceived not only in the usage of the pronoun "I" as I discussed, but also in the way of the presentation of the narrator's subjectivity. The operation of the narrator's subjectivity is connected with the new sense of virtual reality. Sometimes the narrator describes things themselves or an inhabited space. Being different from the scene where the narrator makes use of the characters' points of view and narrates his/her commentary, the scene is presented from the point of view of "no one." Let us see the passage where the narrator's point of view visits Jacob's room when he is dining in Hall, and describes things one after another there:

Jacob's room had a round table and two low chairs. There were yellow flags in a jar on the mantelpiece; a photograph of his mother; cards from societies with little raised crescents, coats of arms, and initials; notes and pipes; on the table lay paper ruled with a red margin. . . . Listless is the air in an empty room, just swelling the curtain; the flowers in the jar shift. One fibre in the wicker arm-chair creaks, though no one sits there.
(33)

In the above quotation, a pure enumeration of "things" is described.

Borrowing Rachel Bowlby's words, " 'the facts speak for themselves' and no rhetorical ornamentation detracts from the clarity of names naming the objects to which they refer" (121). The creak is repeated in the last chapter in the same sentences as the last two sentences in the above quotation. Daniel Frank Chamberlain states that those creaks are "hints of presence in an emptiness" and "transmit the movement of time from the objective present to a past subject now absent" (208). The point of view in Jacob's room in the above quotation could be that of "no one" who sits in the arm-chair in timeless space. This point of view describes the room according to the sense not only of sight but also of hearing as if he/she is experiencing the present time.

The enumeration of things signifies nothing but the referents themselves which are mediated by the "no one" 's point of view at present. That is to say, we can find that this system of signification excludes the connotation, whereas some readers might freely extract some connotational elements from there. In other cases when the narrator borrows the viewpoints of "fox" (128-29), "moors" (129), "insect" (158), in almost timeless scenes, the narrator is also reduced to the organs of seeing and hearing which denote things themselves: he/she is just recording the scene objectively through the medium of others' viewpoints. In these scenes the duration or the speed of the narrative is "pause." In pause we cannot perceive the passing of the story time but we recognize that the time of the narration passes.

Furthermore the narrator plays the role of code as "no one." The following passage is the narration, approximately, from the point of view of the newspaper:

Five strokes Big Ben intoned; Nelson received the salute. The wires of the Admiralty shivered with some far-away communication. A voice kept remarking that Prime Ministers and Viceroys spoke in the Reichs-

tag; entered Lahore; said that the Emperor travelled; in Milan they rioted. . . . The voice continued, imprinting on the faces of the clerks in Whitehall (Timothy Durrant was one of them) something of its own inexorable gravity, as they listened, deciphered, wrote down. . . .

The voice spoke plainly in the square quiet room with heavy tables, where one elderly man made notes on the margin of type-written sheets, his silver-topped umbrella leaning against the bookcase. (168)

The newspaper's silent voice is heard, or rather read by an elderly man. But "[t]he voice" is the subject of the narration, and it speaks itself. This narrating code has only systematic aspect as media of communication. The narrator sometimes comments on the media of communication, and his/her point of view is occasionally a substitute for these media themselves (*JR* 168). An earlier commentary explains the role of the media of communication: "These [letters] lace our days together and make of life a perfect globe. . . . And the notes accumulate. And the telephones ring. And everywhere we go wires and tubes surround us to carry the voices that try to penetrate before the last card is dealt and the days are over" (*JR* 87). The narrator's point of view shifts from one place to another extremely quickly; it can go everywhere almost from sentence to sentence. We could say that the narrator's point of view simulates the system of communication itself in the modern age which physically transcends the former spacial limit.

The characteristics of the narrator as "no one" are, to some extent, created from the narrator's pretending to be a medium which consists of "everyone" but appears to be "no one." The narrator arranges the virtually real level — the characters, other extras who appear as proper names, their speeches, their thoughts, and so on—according to his/her system of representation; for example, according to the headings such as "letters" (86-88),

“[the] scrap of conversation; the time about eleven in the morning; the scene a studio; and the day Sunday” (122), “What for” (157), etc. The narrator makes a pretense that the arrangement is arbitrary. These headings or the topics of the narrator’s commentary are nothing but indexes to constrain the elements of the virtually real level arbitrarily under the headings. In this regard, the narrator modifies the semiotic system of representation by means of the coercive intrusion and the viewpoints of the media themselves.

Not only the virtually real level, but also the sense of virtual reality, is modified in *JR*. The sense of virtual reality, in other words, the sense of verisimilitude, functions with the consensus of the reader about the semiotic system of representation. But in *JR* the modification of the narrator’s subjectivity as well as the narrated object converts the sense of verisimilitude. This operation is possible by imitating a new “medium” of the viewpoint.

Modification of the semiotic system of representation can be observed in the presentation of such extra characters as “proper names.” Jacob is on the opposite side of the large number of proper names, which, cooperating with the names of the places, indicate Jacob’s movement as a temporal index. The commentaries of those proper names at the virtually real level on Jacob make his characteristics mediated by others, because those are the commentaries of the characters at the virtually real level who could be “no one” as well as everyone.

Most of the proper names do not amount to what we call characters, because they are too many and transient; most of them do not appear constantly from the beginning to the end. Their proper names are just like Minnie Marsh in “An Unwritten Novel” (“AUN”) or Mrs. Brown in “MB & MB,” to whom the narrator artificially gives a name: “The elderly lady, however, whom I will call Mrs. Brown, seemed rather relieved” (“MB &

MB" 93). The extras in *JR*, though they have proper names, are nothing but "moulds [which] are filled nightly" (*JR* 63), and the proper names are analogous to "stalls, boxes, amphitheatre, gallery" (63) that classify the moulds, and "prevent us from being submerged by chaos" (63). The proper names as moulds indicate a particular space indexically, though they are almost anonymous.

The proper name is sometimes nothing but a sign of a person's presence in a particular space. For example, when the narrator's point of view describes a restaurant after Fanny has had lunch and left there, the voices uttered by the proper names are narrated:

She spent tenpence on lunch.

"Dear, miss, she's left her umbrella," grumbled the mottled woman. . . .

"Perhaps I'll catch her," answered Milly Edwards, the waitress. . . .

"No good," she said, coming back a moment later with Fanny's cheap umbrella. . . .

"Oh, that door !" grumbled the cashier. . . .

"Pie and greens for one. Large coffee and crumpets. Eggs on toast. Two fruit cakes."

Thus the sharp voice of the waitresses snapped. The lunchers heard their orders repeated with approval; saw the next table served with anticipation. Their own eggs on toast were at last delivered. Their eyes strayed no more.

Damp cubes of pastry fell into mouths opened like triangular bags.

Nelly Jenkinson, the typist, crumbled her cake indifferently enough. . . .

The coal merchant read the *Telegraph*. . . .

"Did you ever hear the like of that for impertinence ?" Mrs. Parsons wound up, brushing the crumbs from her furs. . . .

The door opened and shut. (114-15)

The proper name in narrative generally “is a kind of ultimate residence of personality, not a quality but a locus of qualities, the narrative-noun that is endowed with but never exhausted by the qualities, the narrative-adjectives” (Chatman 131). But in this novel, the proper names are no more than loci which have no quality. They are deictic in the sense that they point at a particular space where they exist, but nothing is hypostatized by the names. Character in general can be perceived “as a paradigm of ‘trait’ ” that is a character’s quality recurring in a situation and events (Chatman 126), but the proper names have no such connotation. The proper names are sometimes no more than crowds of people as a whole, as if they reflect the dramatic increase in population of urban society. When the narrator describes them, as Chamberlain observes about the usage of narrator’s person, “the subjectivity of ‘person’ is shifted to the objectivity of ‘non-person’” (206). That is to say, on the one hand, “I” who narrates is sometimes identical with the subjectivity of the narrator. On the other hand, the narrator presents not only the point of view of “no one,” but also those of so many proper names as “no one” which often describe Jacob. Coexistence of the two extreme viewpoints, namely, the narrator’s overtly personal viewpoint and the point of view of “non-person,” produces such a disordered narrative as this novel.

The characterization of Jacob is at times overtly mediated by the points of view of those anonymous proper names. This is shown in the relation between Jacob and Mrs. Norman, who is one of those proper names. Mrs. Norman is sitting in a railway carriage with Jacob:

Taking note of socks (loose), of tie (shabby), she once more reached his face. She dwelt upon his mouth. The lips were shut. The eyes bent down, since he was reading. All was firm, yet youthful, indifferent, unconscious — as for knocking one down! No, no, no! . . . Grave, unconscious . . .

now he looked up, past her . . . he seemed so out of place, somehow, alone with an elderly lady . . . then he fixed his eyes — which were blue — on the landscape. He had not realized her presence, she thought. Yet it was none of *her* fault that this was not a smoking-carriage — if that was what he meant. (24-25)

Mrs. Norman observes Jacob, imagining what he is thinking. It is a simulation of the fictional construction, because the content of the character's imagination is the characterization of Jacob. The content of the imagination, that is, the imagination about Jacob, is in this case overtly mediated by Mrs. Norman.

The points of view that narrate Jacob, as well as the points of view of no-one, of the moors, of the media, and so on, are mediated by others' viewpoints. The narrator's way of presenting the mediated viewpoints of this kind is identical with the fictional presentation of Minnie Marsh and Mrs. Brown in "AUN" and "MB & MB." Though "MB & MB" is an essay, the reality is only that there is a woman in front of the narrator "I" in the train. The narrators are ordered by the present time which is indicated by the movement of the train. But the narrative level of the stories about these women happens on a different level from that of the narrators. The stories about the women and their proper names are fictional constructions in which "I [the narrator] read her message, deciphered her secret, reading it beneath her gaze" ("AUN" 16). The embedded stories of Mrs. Brown and Minnie Marsh are overtly mediated by the narrator and function as a documentation of the narrator's opinion. As a result those characters have a metafictional nature.

Furthermore, Jacob's character also becomes metafictional when the narrator comments on characterization itself after the presentation of Mrs. Norman's viewpoint:

It is no use trying to sum people up. One must follow hints, not exactly what is said, nor yet entirely what is done — *for instance*, when the train drew into the station, Mr. Flanders burst open the door, and put the lady's dressing-case out of her, saying, or rather mumbling: "Let me" very shyly; indeed he was rather clumsy about it. (25; emphasis added)

This seems to be a lesson of characterization by using a sample-character, Jacob. Jacob's case is a mere example of the narrator's commentary under the words: "for instance." In fact, the virtually real level in this case is a fiction about fiction, that is, a metafiction, under such a narrator's commentary as I quoted above. The narrator's tendency to include self-referential element makes not only the narrative level ambiguous, but also the distinction between the narrator and the author obscure.

Jacob becomes the sign of absence, as many critics state, because his room, his pair of slippers and shoes, death, etc. are the substitutes for him. He is also often absent as a referent of a character's voice who calls his name, "Jacob." But other reasons, I should say, are that, far from causality, his movement has indexical characteristics which designate a linear passing time, and that the virtually real level where Jacob exists is sometimes used as an example of the narrator's document in his/her commentary. In other words Jacob is the sign of absence because he is presented almost as a metafictional character.

Even though Jacob becomes a metafictional character as I discussed, we could not easily say that he is not virtually real. On the contrary he could be verisimilar in the modified sense after the conversion of the "medium" of the viewpoint. Consequently, in *JR*, two forces — the force of metafiction to convert the virtually real level into the non-virtually-real level and the force of fiction to generate a new sense of verisimilitude — oscillate with each other.

JR is a fiction about the author's own way of making fiction, or a fiction "for the sake of style" (Daiches 62). The embedded metafictional parasites un-frame the fixed narrative levels. Meta-fictionalization of the virtually real level and the protagonist is so unsystematically done that *JR* cannot be called metafiction as a whole. Nor could we say that this novel is successful: the incompleteness of this novel results in the dislocation of narrative levels and the fragmentary spatiotemporality.

Metafiction, in general, "is a tendency or function inherent in *all* novels" (Waugh 5), and "the lowest common denominator of metafiction is simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction" (Waugh 6). The metafictional technique "self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Waugh 2). But there are many modes and forms in metafiction. Linda Hutcheon categorizes the characteristics of metafiction into overt forms of narcissism which are "present in texts in which the self-consciousness and self-reflection are clearly evident" and covert forms of narcissism in which "this process [seen in the overt forms] would be structuralized, internalized, actualized" (Hutcheon 23). *JR* is a kind of overtly narcissistic novel, but the fictionality, structure of the novel itself or language itself is not placed at the core of this novel's content. Consequently the metafictionality is not the main stream of this novel. It is incoherently embedded in some parts of the narrative. However, if we look at the metafictional sections and analyze them, they almost have a subversive power which may cancel the virtual reality of the novel. They may also cause the reader to lose the frame of reference of reality in the fiction.

It can be said that the narrator makes the unframed virtually real level in this novel function as "parergon." "Parergon" has various meanings in the context of Jacques Derrida's works which derive its several definitions

from Kant's text. It "comes against, beside, and in addition to the *ergon*, the work done, . . . the fact, . . . the work, but it does not fall to one side, it touches and cooperates within the operation, from a certain outside. [It is] Neither simply outside nor simply inside. [It is] Like an accessory that one is obliged to welcome on the border, on board" (Derrida 54). It depends on the critics whether the narrator makes a frame "define the requirement of formality, the opposition of . . . the inside and outside," or "*determines* the frame as *parergon*, which both constitutes it and ruins it [*l'abîme*]" (Derrida 73).

"Parergon" might function as a frame which surrounds something or puts a border around as a picture frame. It could be formally used to designate a "primary framework" in Erving Goffman's sense. Some of the primary frameworks are "neatly presentable as a system of entities, postulates, and rules; others—indeed, most others—appear to have no apparent articulated shape, providing only a lore of understanding, an approach, a perspective" (Goffman 21). The framed objects have "status as untransformed reality" (Goffman 156), and according to the frame, "one can think of the strip that results as exhibiting one transformation and two layers or laminations — the modeled after and the modeled, the copied and the copy —and one can see the outer layer, the rim of the frame, as establishing the status in reality of the activity" (Goffman 156).

But the crucial difference between the frame as "parergon" and the primary framework is that "parergon" makes a frame of distinction but simultaneously effaces the distinction between the untransformed reality and the transformed reality. It un-frames the objects by its mock-framing activity. We can say that metafictionality, as well as "parergon" creates the copy of fiction in the copied fiction and the level of the transformed reality in the virtual reality of fiction. In *JR*, the virtually real level does not always function as a frame to stabilize the virtual reality, or as a

primary framework which might support nineteenth-century realism. The virtually real level is sometimes transformed into the non-virtually-real level and sometimes overtly mediated by others. The converted narrative of these kinds, taking in metafictionality, parasitically undermines the virtual reality of the novel, and at the same time generates a new sense of verisimilitude in fiction. In this sense the non-virtually-real level and the overtly mediated narrative in *JR* generate the frame as “parergon” which basically ruins the frame of the virtually real level from the inside.

In relation to modernism, Waugh states: “modernism and post-modernism begin with the view that both the historical world and works of art are organized and perceived through such structures or ‘frames’ [as established order, plan, system, and underlying support or essential structure of anything]” (28). The recognition of those frames is indispensable for escaping from them. *JR* is a process to visualize those frames and to make the reader realize them. At the earlier stage in making fiction, Woolf was seriously conscious of the nineteenth-century realism as well as the contradiction between the framework of reality and herself. In order to un-frame the reality, realization of the technique itself is necessary for the subversion of the frames from the inside. Although *JR* is not ranked as a first-rate novel because of the narrator’s incoherent point of view, to practice writing novel in *JR* was expedient to Woolf’s purpose. “Frame-break” (Waugh 31), by using the metafictional technique, is able to subvert nineteenth century realism.

This technique is an important device to escape from the binding by the frames—in other words, the frame of reference, of the nineteenth century—because the frame of reference becomes perceptible when it is “un-framed” and one realizes the bound situation. The binding could be a complicated trap in which Woolf originally was caught, and from which she escaped by realizing the traditional frame of reference. Woolf is closely

related to the narrator of *JR* as the narrator is sometimes almost identical with the character in *JR*. The narrator of *JR* is highly conscious of the technique of writing novel and sometimes explores a theory of fiction metafictionally through the process of writing fiction. This means the narrator/Woolf tries to escape from the bound situation by practicing to reconstruct the frame of reference itself. The inclination to “[draw] attention to the irredeemably fictional nature of fiction” takes shape as “an internal crisis of presentation” (Fletcher 395) in the movement of the modernism.

This crisis, in other words, is a confusion of the reality and the fictional world. Woolf and the narrator exist in one side of a threshold and the other side of it. This threshold, which is identified as “parergon,” effaces the distinctions between Woolf and the narrator, the narrator and the character, and the non-virtually-real level and the virtually real level in *JR*. The threshold metaphor is quite useful for explaining the metafiction, that is, a fiction of closure.

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Synopsis

The Converted Fictionality in Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*

by Yuko Ito

In *Jacob's Room* what is seen as real is dislocated; as the narrator says: "life is but a procession of shadows." What is immediately experienced as real by the reader in reading fiction is undermined by the tendency to imitate fiction itself. This is the metafictional characteristic of this novel. This paper explores how

metafictionality un-frames the virtual reality of the novel by the operation of several kinds of narrative levels.

Although metafictionality is not a consistent characteristic throughout *Jacob's Room*, the narrative sometimes partakes of metafictionality when the narrator subordinates a "virtually real level," that is, in *Jacob's Room*, the primary narrative level where the characters live, to his/her commentary at the "non-virtually-real level." In other words, the metafictionality is generated through the passages where the narrator's commentary converts the virtually real level into an exemplification of his/her commentary. This conversion is caused mainly from two factors. First, the topic of the narrator's commentary which is about characterization relegates the virtually real level into the secondary level. Secondary, since the narrator's usage of the first person pronoun, "I," is sometimes ambiguous and the identity of the "I" can be either the narrator or a character, the virtually real level freely dissolves into the non-virtually-real level. As a result, the frame of the virtually real level which gives this novel authenticity is subverted.

However, the force to generate a new sense of verisimilitude should not be ignored. This force takes effect by imitating a new "medium" of the viewpoint. The narration from the viewpoint of "no one" modifies the semiotic system of representation by means of the presentation of pure enumeration of "things" and the point of view of media of communication themselves. Furthermore the points of view overtly mediated by the large number of proper names which are nothing but spatial indexes or a crowd of people make Jacob a metafictional character and at the same time an example of a new verisimilar character. These points of view, generating a new sense of verisimilitude in fiction, contribute also to the metafictional devise in *Jacob's Room*.

The frame of the virtually real level constitutes the authenticity of the novel, but in *Jacob's Room* the narrator's commentary and the overtly mediated point of view un-frame the virtually real level from the inside. In the unframed level, we cannot easily distinguish the copied and the copy, and the untransformed reality and the transformed reality in fiction. Metafictionality creates the copy of fiction

in the copied fiction and the level of the transformed reality in the virtual reality of fiction. In order to establish "the transformed reality," that is, "a new sense of verisimilitude" as fiction, Woolf devoted to the new technique of writing novel itself and the exploration of it in the novel. The experimental technique of *Jacob's Room* of this kind is an archetype of Woolf's later fictions.