



Stream Of Consciousness technique used in Virginia Woolf's Novel *Mrs Dalloway*

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Abstract:

English literature consists various periods from Old English to Post modern literature. In each periods, there are different authors. These authors differ from their own style of writing in different periods. During 19th century, authors deal with the social, economical and political problems in their works. Writers of the first decades of the twentieth century emphasis on inner thoughts of characters. Authors like Henry James, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf have used the stream of consciousness technique. The stream of consciousness deals with the flow of ideas, thoughts running in inner mind of character without any logical and reality. Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) is considered as one of the most important modernist novelists in twentieth century. She is a pioneer in the use of stream of consciousness as a narrative device. This paper tries to show how Virginia Woolf succeeded in using stream of Consciousness technique in her novel *Mrs Dalloway*. *Mrs Dalloway* is the story of a day in June 1923, London. It does not possess a vivid plot and actual events. It is about the characters who spend their time in memories and hopes.

Keywords: Steam of consciousness, Psycho-analytical, Interior Monologue

Introduction

The American psychologist William James introduced the term “Stream of Consciousness” in his book *The Principles of Psychology* (1890). It denotes the unbroken flow of thought and awareness of the waking mind. In a literary context, the term is used to describe the narrative method where novelists describe the unspoken thoughts and feelings of their characters. This technique was first employed by Edouard Dujardin in his novel *Les Lauriers Sont Coupes*.

M.H.Abraham defines the term “Stream of Consciousness” as:

A mode of narration that undertakes to captures the full spectrum and flow of a character's mental process, in which sense perceptions mingle with consciousness and half consciousness thoughts, memories, feelings and random associations. (Abraham 164-165)

Stream of Consciousness writing aims to provide a textual equivalent to the stream of fictional characters's consciousness. It creates the impression that the reader is eavesdropping on the flow of conscious experience in the character's mind, gaining

intimate access to their private thoughts. During twentieth century writers like James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, D.H.Lawrence Dorothy Richardson, William Faulkner are associated with this Stream of Consciousness. In Indian writing in English, the Stream of Consciousness technique is used by very few writers. According to Robert Hurley,

“Stream of Consciousness is employed to evince subjective as well as objective reality. It reveals the character's feelings, thoughts, and actions, often following an associative rather than a logical sequence, without commentary by the author. Widely used in narrative fiction, the technique was perhaps brought to its highest point of development in early twentieth century novels where stream of consciousness plays an important role”.
(19)

Stream of Consciousness in *Mrs. Dalloway*

Virginia Woolf introduced two techniques- interior monologue and free indirect style in the novel *Mrs. Dalloway*. First technique interior monologue is presented indirect way without using the personal pronoun ‘I’. The second technique free indirect style was employed in the first line of her novel. Mrs Dalloway said that “She would buy the flowers by herself” (Mrs Dalloway 1). This sentence is an indirect style which does not explain that who is Mrs. Dalloway and why she buys flowers.

Mrs. Dalloway, a novel takes place in a single day, a Wednesday mid-June 1923. Clarissa is the main character in the novel. She is the narrator. In the beginning of the story, Clarissa Dalloway is preparing for a party in the evening. She buys flowers for the party. One another character namely Peter Walsh, who once loved Mrs. Dalloway. In the story, Mrs. Dalloway is standing at the open window and thinks of Peter Walsh. Hugh Whitbread is the next character that is introduced later on. He and Mrs. Dalloway have known each other since childhood. In the story, Richard Dalloway, husband of Clarissa is another character enters. Peter, Hugh and Richard loves Clarissa Dalloway.

Virginia Woolf succeeds in the using of stream of consciousness in her novels. Mrs. Dalloway is the best example of stream of consciousness technique. Stream of consciousness technique is characterized by the thoughts of the main character. The character goes back in the past memories and comes back in the present. Through stream of consciousness technique, Virginia Woolf shows readers the actual spoken dialogue and what the different characters are actually thinking. Novel has a unique narrative style, salient for its shifts in a point of view to occur within one same paragraph, accentuating the psychological and analytical nature of the narrative. Virginia Woolf uses a literary technique called free indirect speech to achieve the quick transition. Mrs Dalloway is the story, that captures a character's thoughts and uses them to tell a story. In the beginning of the novel, Clarissa Dalloway prepares for a party, that is giving in the evening. She reminds her youth days spent in Burton. She wonders about the choice of her husband Richard rather than Peter.

Another character namely Septimus Smith and his wife Lucrezia enter into the story. Septimus Smith, who served in a World War I (1914-18), suffering from traumatic stress. He struggles with the after effects of the war. He feels that life has little meaning. He lost his good friend Evans in the war. He continues to carry on conversations with this lost friend.

Septimus Warren Smith, aged about thirty, pale-faced, beak-nosed, wearing brown shoes and a shabby overcoat, with hazel eyes which had that look of apprehension in them which makes complete strangers apprehensive too. The world has raised its whip; where will it descend? (Mrs. Dalloway 32)

Peter goes to a park where Septimus and Lucrezia are also walking. Peter sees that the couple is discussing about suicide and quarreling each other. He does not realize the depth of their emotions. Lucrezia has made an appointment with Sir William Bradshaw to dismiss the complexity of Septimus's madness. Septimus and Lucrezia go to their apartment to wait for the attendants, who will take him to the asylum. When they arrive, Septimus escapes from them and jumps out of the window. Clarissa gives party and guests come including Peter Walsh and Sally Seton. Richard has still been unable to tell her that he loves her. After Sir William and Lady Bradshaw arrive. Lady Bradshaw explains that one of Sir William's patients, Septimus has committed suicide that day so they are late. The party ends with Clarissa surprisingly disappointed at the success of her party.

The novel follows no conventional plot or tragedy. In the novel, emphasis is laid on the manipulation of words, not on the organization of the story. Mrs. Dalloway thinks from London to her girlhood days in Bourton through morning, London. This helps us to know about what she actually thinking. The past and the present are involved with each other as it can be seen in Clarissa remembering Peter's remarks about the vegetable, Peter's playing with pocket knife. Similarly, how Peter thinks about Clarissa, who rejected him in the past. On the other side, We get to know about Septimus's trauma through Lucrezia, who also ends up painting her solitary picture that we pity.

In this novel, Virginia Woolf has used the stream of consciousness. She has mingled various thought processes of various humans. She also uses the Big Ben Tower and Airplane to avoid the chaos which have been created due to complex nature of the brain. The characters think like a river flowing. This novel shows the frustrated inner life of the characters through the stream of consciousness technique.

Conclusion

Unlike other novelists, Virginia Woolf tries to go inner minds of every characters, who are constantly thinking about their past days. She was influenced by the advancement of psychology. In Mrs. Dalloway, characters's thoughts are vividly presented. By using the narrative method, Virginia Woolf does not only create

continuity between the past and present time but also between the minds of characters. She illustrates the relationship between exterior world and inner world.

References

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