

## The Maturation Journey of the Stream of Consciousness Technique from Henry James to James Joyce

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### Abstract

The distinctive feature of the modern fictional writing is its interior turning to communicate the flow of human psychological experience. This has been extensively called the stream of consciousness. The stream of consciousness narrative method has become an exhilarating arena of exploration to which criticism has stretched out in this era. It is appealing for it tenders the opportunities of investigating a work of literary art or the mind of the novelist from multitude points of view. This essay rightly talks of the surfacing and the journey of this ground-breaking method of narration from the writers Henry James to James Joyce.

**Keywords:** stream of consciousness, interior monologue, flow of thoughts, modern narrative technique, psychological device, novel writing, henry james, james joyce

### I

The twin fames, i.e. the introduction as well the use of the phrase 'stream of consciousness' go to America. In his 1890 work *Principles of Psychology*, William James beckons the idea as:

Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life.

His brother Henry James recorded the art of the 'stream of consciousness' through the mind of the beautiful heroine Isabel Archer in his novel *The Portrait of a Lady* like shadow lines in an elaborate pages.

After that, the roots of the above technique spread in Europe rapidly like speedy clouds in fictions. At the same time, the autobiographical thirteen sequences of Dorothy Richardson's *The Pilgrimage* created a heavy storm in the realms of literature. While writing a review of *The Pointed Roofs*, one among the *tour de force* serials, in *The Egoist* in 1918, May Sinclair called her way of storytelling as the technique of 'stream of consciousness'. Thus the innovative Promethean view of the above two English women of letters opened a new epoch in the history of world literature. Though Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* appeared after William James' book, the technique of 'streams of consciousness' had already been found used by many classical authors directly or indirectly. For example, the 'flashback' technique practiced by filmmakers nowadays is a technique well handled *in medias res* by Homer in his twin epics namely *The Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Similar techniques were also found by his followers Virgil in his *The Aeneid* (when recounts the pathetic tale of Troy's collapse), Dante in his *The Divine Comedy*, Ovid in his *Metamorphosis* (there are copious numbers of flashbacks and flashbacks-within-flashbacks) and Shakespeare in many of his plays (through soliloquy and interior monologue).

Even a common layman reader of world literature can easily identify this art. *The Inferno* is related to the souls of limbo that are not properly baptised as they were born before the advent of Christ. Their worries about their sins in the living life are well reflected here seeking repentance through their cries. Thus, the subaltern literature speaks about the pity and pathos of the low life of the modern society as well as their fallen life such as poverty and prostitution. The 'streams of consciousness' is also having a scientific background. The Earth is just rotating like an apple fruit in the space as a part in the Universe. Here, social values justified are meager. Man has to exist through sorrows and sufferings and natural law is the ultimate, according to Arthur Schopenhauer and Søren Kierkegaard. These laws essentially decide human behaviour. Schopenhauer in his *The World as Will and Representation* states: "[I]n all that happens or indeed can happen to the individual, justice is always done to it."

Human mind is like a big roaring ocean, a speedy jumping river, an unstoppable wind and an incessant sound. Similarly, it is a vast desert, a high mountain waterfall, a powerful revolving cyclone, a vertex, a fertile plain, a green mountain landscape and a dark dense forest. The comparisons go on like this. As F.H. Bradley insists in his *Appearance and Reality* speaks:

"In every case the communication must be made indirectly, and through the medium of our outsides. What is true is that, with certain elements, the ways of expression may be shorter and less mistakeable; and again the conditions, which secure a community of perception, are, with certain elements, more constant and more subject to our control."

Memories, thoughts, records, shadows, shocks, beams, entanglements and entwinements and similar terms are close to the phrase 'streams of consciousness' and writers carefully knotted in their works like a labyrinth

path of a palace.

In almost all the novels of Dorothy Richardson, pains and failures of the author themselves are a powerful element. In Conrad Aiken's novels, his use of impressionism is apparent, especially in *The Blue Voyages*. Marcel Proust's *The Remembrance of Things Past* is a peak achievement in the above 'streams of consciousness' technique and many critics consider it bigger than Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. The novels of Virginia Woolf are almost the waves of thoughts and her *Mrs. Dalloway* can be compared with James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The time struck of London Big Ben Wall Clock is exactly like that of the one-day actions of Mrs. Dalloway from the early dawn to the closing night. In *Ulysses*, the duration is from morning 8 am at Martello Tower to 2 am on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1904 at 7 Eccles Street. It is an interesting parallel to note that Mrs. Dalloway's day is celebrated for the return of her husband and as a wedding day. Joyce's is a Bloomsday, in other sense, lovers' day or the author's elopement to Paris from Dublin with his wife-to-be Nora Barnacle. Thus, memories and matter are playing like inner and outer of the mind and the body in almost all the novels of the 'stream of consciousness'. As regards the novels of Woolf, the title itself echoes the technique of *SOC* – *The Waves*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Between the Acts*, *A Room of One's Own* and *Years*. This newly evolved psychological device in fiction best decorated the detective novels of Graham Greene. He demonstrated a profound and vast effect of *SOC*. The settings of his novels were rightly called as 'Greenland,' though lower in quality. The Greek historian Hesiod's *Works and Days* delivers his mixture of proverbs, advices, and wisdom works in the style of *SOC*. His famous *Theogony* that speaks the history of Gods is an important milestone in Mythology. In it, he classifies the age into five as The Golden Age, Silver Age, Brass Age, Iron Age and Heroic Age. Though it is not covering the physical aspects of time, it exhibits the moral changes in the humanity. During the Heroic Age, the story of Helen and Fall of Troy took place and many warriors died in the battle. Unable to see the atrocities in the war, it is told that Astarte, the goddess of justice, flies to heaven from the Earth and she never returns. After the arrival of Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* with its powerful 'magical realism', *SOC* technique lost its charm and *Ulysses*, *The Sound and The Fury* were dethroned from the market value.

In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, a sleepy language is handled and it is a token of a waving mentality of the character. Similarly, Hamlet is told as a patient of somnambulism and his indecision of 'To be or not to be' is charged as his love towards his mother. Freud in his *Interpretation of Dreams* proposes that the prominent work of dreams is to fulfil the wishes of life. Indeed, the mind of Prospero is nothing but Shakespeare himself due to the treachery of his wife - Miranda lives in a utopian island without any people and when she sees Ferdinand she exclaims, 'O brave new world.' It is a dream language and Aldous Huxley took this phrase for his novel. There are a lot of stories about time. In Keats' *Endymion*, Venus, the goddess of love, appears in his dream and incessantly bears children to him. This is an excellent dream myth. Homer speaks that Odysseus witnessed a permanently dark-covered island without any sun beam and he returned with fear. It is also a pebble of *SOC* technique already in force.

According to William James, the mind of an individual contains miscellaneous memory stairs and it is a fort of labyrinth. It is also a well ripe fruit hanging downwards and a rolling ball in the centre of space like the Earth. It is his definite logic. The mind is bloodily related to miscellaneous external activities mingled with various reasons and the collective consciousness of individual mind is not a solid one but like disturbed pond water. This conclusion enabled the writers to record the fluctuation of mind. He in his *Principle of Psychology* states: "Every definite image in the mind'is steeped and dyed in the free water that flows round it. With it goes the sense of its relations, near and remote, the dying echo of whence it came to us, the dawning sense of whither it is to lead. The significance, the value, of the image is all in this halo or penumbra that surrounds and escorts it." Memories are compared to a chain of thoughts, a pendulum, a train, an aeroplane and a floating jar. These are not standing but movable from one to another. Mind is also compared to a monkey and a fly.

In poetry, Wordsworth's *The Prelude* is an example of remembering the past. In paintings, Pablo Picasso, Rembrandt, Spinosa, Vincent van Gogh, and Leonardo da Vinci utilised symbolism of *SOC* and surrealism. Da Vinci's *Mono Lisa* is a puzzle and her smile is baffling - whether his mother's or his lover's. In science, it grew itself connecting with the theories of time and space of Einstein, the center of gravity of Newton, the discoveries of Galileo and Copernicus. The doctrine theory of evolution of Charles Darwin and Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' theory of political economy are similar endeavors. Eminent psychologists like Sigmund Freud, Henri Bergson, Alfred Adler and Carl Jung analysed dream, memory and other internal-hidden mysteries. The century years from 1850 to 1950 is called the golden age of *SOC* novels. The credit goes from Henry James to James Joyce for their experimental efforts.

## II

In America, William James first opened an institute of psycho analysis and analysed the case history of patients for his research. His *Principles of Psychology* was written with his twelve years strenuous effort. He studied abroad and he was also under careful guidship of William Morris Hunt. There among the intellectual giants of psychology, he boldly opposed the ideologies of Hegel and Immanuel Kant. Though human brain is functioning

as an inner part of the body, its external activities and irregularities are affected by the external factors and it has to adjust itself according to the situations. It is James' major principle. His quests are a further practical study on biology, religion, anatomy and the evils of addiction to drugs. He compared the consciousness with a stream. When the abstract of a human mind begins to act, it attains reality. The real world draws its force only from the interior mind of the universe. Just within this unity, i.e., the inner force bursts and outer force is exhibited. He gives five characteristics of thought:

- 1) Every thought tends to be part of a personal consciousness.
- 2) Within each personal consciousness thought is always changing.
- 3) Within each personal consciousness thought is sensibly continuous.
- 4) It always appears to deal with objects independent of itself.
- 5) It is interested in some parts of these objects to the exclusion of others, and welcomes or rejects chooses from among them, in a word all the while.

For instance, the first one, that is related to subjective, i.e., self-oriented, does not bother about the ambitions, oppositions and willingness of others. One cannot enjoy the sensation of a thing three or more times as in the case of first one. A mental agony or a drug experience will be the same of the first experience. Thus the substance is perpetual and the mind alone differs. For example, when we first see the electric light, we wonder and attain an extraordinary sensation. The same experience when we feel next time, the speed of the feelings is reduced. The unconsciousness mind is like a running river. It is also an apprehension of the interval of time and space. When the bomb blasts, it is only a change. The same happens when it moves to the second stage; we cannot arrest. These are solid principles of James.

Henri Bergson is one another French philosopher and expert of psychology. In his *Time and Freewill*, he differentiated time between wall clock and natural one and his debates on duration are a rising storm in the history of psychology. His other great book *Matter and Memory* speaks about the element of remembrance and an analysis of the human psychology. He is a contemporary of William James and was awarded Nobel Prize in 1927. According to him, the time past is mingled with the time present, only human personalities appear in a novel way, the memories are the same and nothing new and it is only a collection of the past: "The pure present is an ungraspable advance of the past devouring the future. In truth, all sensation is already memory." He, in his *Introduction to Metaphysics* further validates:

"Inner duration is the continuous life of a memory which prolongs the past into the present, the present either containing within it in a distinct form the ceaselessly growing image of the past, or, more profoundly, showing by its continual change of quality the heavier and still heavier load we drag behind us as we grow older. Without this survival of the past into the present there would be no duration, but only instantaneity."

His writing style itself is entirely novel type and not essay-like and even common readers easily apprehended his philosophy. 'The quest for lost time' of Marcel Proust is bound to the philosophy of Henri Bergson. Further, James Joyce, William Faulkner, Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson, the four great *SOC* novelists are indebted to the consumption theory of time of Henri Bergson. Here, Carl Jung emphasized the 'collective unconscious' that it is like tiny floating islands of a big ocean that is connected at the bottom. According to him, the language of unconsciousness is like a painting or a picture language. With this background, Joyce wrote his *Finnegans Wake*, a dream masterpiece with the mixture of seventeen languages of portmanteau style with seventeen years effort. While *Ulysses* covers actions of one day, *Wake* deals with the duration of an hour of a night.

### III

It is only during the First World War, several *SOC* novels were written and the form created an epoch in the history of English novels. Let us see a few major novels as a backward journey: The theory of relativity of Einstein is a major invention in physics. In *Ulysses*, the above wave is evident. The father X son, i.e., Bloom X Stephen relationship is forced from one end to another. Man is not a holy creature, he is simply one among the animals - is a Darwinist view, according to Bloom's socialism. The survival of the fittest perhaps is the motto of Hungarian Jew, Leopold. The unquenchable sexual passion of Molly, thus, gratified by Boylan in a comic way. Some may argue that it is debauchery. But here Joyce account Molly as a modern Penelope.

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* may be a suitable match with *Ulysses*. Through the memories of the heroine, her past life is remembered and retold. Only Peter Walsh, after his return from India approaches for her alliance. He is nothing but the real husband of Virginia Woolf, Leonard Woolf. Clarissa Dalloway celebrates her birthday in the opening of the novel and like the every strike of Big Ben Wall Clock of London, the events of the story move. At the end of the dinner party, the political, social and sexual failures are described in a subtle method and the technique of *SOC* is well handled by the author. Similar attempt is also made by William Faulkner in his *As I Lay Dying*.

Joyce and Dorothy are the victims of short-sightedness and smell and lightning are important motifs in their works. If a reader raises a question - who are Stephen Dedalus and Miriam Henderson?, the answer will certainly

be Joyce and Dorothy as the self element is entwined in the hero and the heroine. The dramatic monologue is already used by Robert Browning and the feminists used this anti-slavery aspect in their work to throw away male chauvinism. It is told that Freud while reading Dostoevsky novels, confirmed his theory and before that *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* of R. L. Stevenson and *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* of James Hogg attracted him and finally his psychoanalysis ego X libido concluded. Identification within the same character both the bad and the good and the hero and the villain are like Satan and God and looking at the figure of one's own before the mirror. This strange case history enables the cinematographers to create dual role by a single actor. In Henry James, this sort of reflex element echoes through many characters. In Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, we can see two different characteristics within the same hero, Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov. Similarly, the Oedipus complex of Freud is an incest theme of mother – son relationship. T.S. Eliot also comments that there is a close impact between *Hamlet* and *Mona Lisa*.

Dorothy Richardson is a well-versed translator and reporter. Bronte sisters, Jane Austen and George Eliot's works influenced her in her youth itself and her fictional persona of the 13 sequences of *The Pilgrimage* is considered to be a woman's Kunstlerroman. In the last book, readers can realize that the heroine Miriam starts her self-story. In it, the method of third person narration and sometimes direct speeches are mixed like a journey of an autobiography. The suicide of her mother, bankruptcy due to the poverty of the family, her teaching experience in Germany and as a typist and clerk in London, her intimacy with H. G. Wells (Hypo G. Wilson), her attachment with politics, religion, philosophy, her *avant garde* friendship with the intellectuals, her look for creating a feminist language steps towards modernism, etc. are told in a realistic language. The term Miriam is hidden as 'Myriad I am' in a multiple facet.

Virginia Woolf strained hard for creating *SOC* novels. Blooms circle and Hogarth Press are related to her in this success. Feministic thought and male chauvinism are Woolf's motives of writing. Woolf created a strong interior monologue through her characters. Joyce and Faulkner attained peak achievement in *SOC* novels. Bloom, after completing his routine works returns with tiredness. His wife Molly just sleeps with him as a pretended wife. But actually her thoughts are revolved around her lover Boylan who gave a violent pleasure to her at 4'o clock. Further, her thoughts go to the Gibraltar days and her lovers there. Her inner thoughts go very deep and they are budding like bubbles in the water. A.L.P. is Joyce's heroine in *Finnegans Wake*. Her thoughts too flow like a river.

The heroine Caddy in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* has sexual affair with her brothers. This is the worst culture of America in which Faulkner openly attacked such illicit culture of the American family. Faulkner created the Mississippi province and his fictional Yoknapatawpha County for his achievement of *SOC* novels. The decay of the change of generation is an important motif. Life, according to him, is a tale told by a fool. This Shakespearean line affected him much.

Here, it had better told more about Joyce. 16.06.1904 is a Bloomsday. On that day, the story of *Ulysses* happens. That is actually the day of Joyce and Nora's elopement to Paris. Amalia Popper is Joyce's Jewish lover and Emma Clery is said to be her shadow. All the works of Joyce are told as his autobiography. Stephen Dedalus is a twin pseudonym. He is a Jewish priest who taught independently escaping from Catholicism. Dedalus is a Greek craftsman who invented saw and many parts of ships. In Greek mythology, queen Pasiphaë, mates with an artificial bull sent by Poseidon as a curse. In this union, is born Minotaur –with the head of a bull and the body of a man. The creature was put in a palace that had labyrinthine ways. The palace being built by the advice of Dedalus, he knew the routes. In order to keep the secret, King Minos ordered to arrest Dedalus but he escaped by inventing wax feathers along with his son Icarus in air route. We are all Hellenists basically and accordingly he transformed Irish culture and described Dublin as a paralysed city. However, he praised the Irish nationalist Parnell and the society pull him down as he had an illicit connection with another man's wife. Joyce condemned Catholicism throughout his life but he supported the doctrines of Thomas Aquinas' and Giambattista Vico's.

Nobody can enter through *Finnegans Wake* as it is a dark cave. The name of the hero is Here Comes Everybody, i.e., H.C.E. It is an exponent of Carl Jung's 'Collective Unconsciousness'. In *Ulysses*, not only the method of *SOC* used but many literary doctrines were experimented. This method was used before Joyce by Édouard Dujardin in his novel of Paris, *Les lauriers sont coupés* and later by the other Irish writer Brian O'Nolan's *At Swim - Two Birds*. The style of Lawrence Sterne in his *Tristram Shandy* is also one of the models to *Ulysses*. In *Ulysses* novel, search of father for son and son for father are major motifs. In Homer, it took twenty years while in Joyce, a single day.

Stephen wakes up at 8'o clock and shaves then goes to the school and teaches history and mathematics. He then returns to a magazine office, hospital, Sandy Mount Beach, brandy shop, brothel house, and graveyard. Afterwards, he meets Bloom, his supposed father. In the contrary, Bloom prepared breakfast to his wife Molly and travelled to Westland Row Post Office, medical shop, bookshop, advertisement office, hotel, etc. and meets Stephen, his supposed son. Thus, they join here. The novel moves just like a diary notes, an encyclopaedia and finally they meet at Molly's house and eat cocoa and depart.

In the last episode, through the memories of Molly Bloom, the events are shadowed like a beehive. The

novel ends with the word 'yes' similarly it opens with the same. 20000 words are written without any punctuation. In the morning the events of her husband bringing the breakfast to the bed, his stay at City Arms Hotel as a patient, are aroused as a wave in Molly's mind. As an advertisement singer, she thinks about the future programmes and imagines to have stayed with Boylan. Her imagination thus flies. In such a situation, the sound of train remembers her of Gibraltar youth. Father Major Brian Tweedy Major Tweedy, classmate Hester, the medical students who have never seen her face, the twenty-five suitors who asked her hand, captain Mulvey perhaps, now no more, etc. appear in her sweet memory. The wall clock of St. John Cathedral strikes twice. She appreciates her husband's day to day activities and his trickery attracts her. She likes roses. She embraces Bloom passionately and the eyes closed with the word 'Yes': "Yes I said yes. I will Yes.,Yes."

Thus, the dreams and thoughts of the authors or their characters, without any hindrance, directly flow into pages as stream of consciousness and evolved with their literary charm. As a sincere academic attempt, it is only an analysis and a bare bone observation on the major Stream of Consciousness novels from Henry James to James Joyce. Considering the infinite applicability of this category of novels, it can be perceived that time is its major field and space its stage.

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