

THE USE OF THE STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN
A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN AND
TO THE LIGHTHOUSE

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ÖZET

Hem James Joyce hem de Virginia Woolf sırasıyla A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man ve To the Lighthouse adlı eserlerinde bilinç akımı tekniğini kullanmışlardır. Ancak, sözkonusu iki yazar değindikleri konularda, konularında birlik sağlama yollarında, karakter çizimlerinde, önemli noktaların vurgulanmasında, dili kullanımlarında ve yarattıkları karakterlerin bilinçaltı dünyasından romanın dünyasına çıkışlarında farklılık gösterirler.

SUMMARY

Both James Joyce and Virginia Woolf have employed the technique, the stream of consciousness in their works, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and To the Lighthouse respectively. They differ in subject matter, the way the subject matter is unified, the way characters are drawn, their emphases of important points, their use of language, and the transitions from the sub-conscious to the world of the novel.

The stream of consciousness technique whose roots lay far back in the 18 th century with Sterne's Tristram Shandy has been employed by many modern novelists among whom are James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. The two contemporaries have both tried to eliminate the author as a mediator, and in its stead, put the reader in the mind of a character or characters, thus enabling him to observe firsthand information. In a sense, we, as readers, share the present continuous of the mind of the characters with them. We are together with Stephen Dedalus as he listens to the story of the moocow, goes to a Catholic school or as he is on the verge of exile, and similarly, the minds of those in To the Lighthouse envelope us as Mrs. Ramsay or Lily Briscoe continuously speculate.

1. James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (Hunt, Barnard and Co., Bucks, 1916), pp. 246-47.

Yet, the two authors show differences in employing the technique in their representative novels, To the Lighthouse and A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. The most obvious difference arises mainly from the fact that they each have a different subject matter. The Portrait is the story of formation of character, an account of the intelligent baby and child growing into young manhood with decreasing financial means and his responses to life and community at large. The theme is the sensibility of the artist. As Stephen Dedalus grows, he realizes his closeness to his namesake and awakes to the reality of his being different. Thus, the novel relates a process. And in this process Stephen is the only character that is lit as a central figure. Consequently, the stream of consciousness, begun with an impersonal opening and ending with the artist's notes, illuminates the inner world of Stephen to the extent that toward the end other characters are instrumental for revealing and elucidating his reactions. His dialogue with Cranly is a good example of this.

-What then is your point of view? Cranly asked.

...

++ - Look here, Cranly, he said. You have asked me what I would do and what I would not do. I will tell you what I will do and what what I will not do. I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland, or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use—silence, exile, and cunning.¹

++ Meanwhile, the figures, of Mother and Father become paler as Stephen is alienated more and more from his surrounding. Even the heroine exists in the book in the initials E.C. and in some references. The unifying element behind the choice to bring out the process of Stephen's becoming an artist is Stephen himself. That is why the rest of the characters in the book are subsidiary.

In To the Lighthouse, however,, we see a host of characters with almost each character having a unique and intensive point of view. Whereas, in this book the unifying factor is not only the lighthouse to be visited but also the cross-evaluation and speculation of characters. Mrs. Ramsay and her husband or Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe think of the same thing, sometimes, in the same manner as in the case of Mr. Ramsay's demanding sympathy- they are both irritated by the manner of Mr. Ramsay always demanding sympathy - or Mrs. Ramsay thinks of one thing and then Lily thinks that Mrs. Ramsay is thinking of this. "Was that not Lily Briscoe strolling along with William Banks? ... Did that not mean that they would marry? Yes, it must! What an admirable idea! They must marry!"² One page later Lily is thinking: "So that is marriage, Lily thought, a man and a woman looking at a girl throwing a ball... oh, she's thinking we're going to get married..." (1,84) As stated above, unity is achieved through the same topics reflected in slight variations in the mind of each character. This point is further developed by Walter Allen, who says about Virginia Woolf.

But the range of those she creates is very small. They belong not only to a certain class, the upper-middle-class intelligentsia, but also to a certain temperament. They tend to think and feel alike, to be the aesthetes of one set of sensations: they drink and feel alike and express their thoughts and feelings, in fact, exactly as Virginia Woolf does.³

One can only agree with Walter Allen. Despite the variations between the speculation of issues in the characters in general, there is a pervading similarity in the manner the characters live "an ordinary day" and

2. Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse (C. Nicholls and Co. Ltd., 1964), p.83.

3. Walter Allen, The English Novel (Hazell Watson and Vincy Ltd., 1954) p.361.

"their mind receives a myriad impressions." There are no stylistic differences in the varying meditations of various characters.

Not only is each character more developed in Virginia Woolf, but the mother figure, equally important in the Portrait, is drawn as the strongest in To the Lighthouse. Mrs. Ramsay is the force that keeps things and that holds everything together. The set-up she has created in her family and her relations with all other characters are admired by everyone. The Ramsays with their eight children and six guests are on a holiday in the Hebrides. Up till the half of the book, there is only one main issue. Will they be able to row to the lighthouse? This is the one theme that predominates the first section. All the rest is the common everyday life lived by each character, as they share the experience of staying in one place. The minor daily-life occurrences like Minta (one of the guests) losing her brooch or Mrs. Ramsay knitting a stocking for the lighthouse-keeper's son are indications of the characters being in flesh and blood. Otherwise, what counts is that which goes on in their minds.

While Joyce and Woolf both reflect in their works how the mind takes in the events, they differ in their emphases. Virginia Woolf brings out the psychological sensitivity of each character. Joyce, on the other hand, dwells on artistic reaction. Language and a play on words aid Stephen in conceiving all stimuli artistically.

Suck was queer word. The fellow called Simon Monan that name because Simon Monan used to tie the prefect's false sleeve behind his back and the prefect used to let on to be angry. But the sound was ugly (I,II)

How beautiful and sad that was. How beautiful the words where they said Bury me in the old churchyard! A tremor passed over his body.

How sad and how beautiful. He wanted to cry quietly but not for himself: for the words, so beautiful and sad, like music. The bell! The bell! Farewell! O farewell! (I,24)

Names, words, phrases, schoolboy slang, or stanzas continuously flood Stephen's mind. All this concern for language and words is associated with one of the questions considered in the book: the attitude of the artist toward his subject. As Stephen thinks of his aesthetic theory which he takes from Aquinas but which he secularizes, he finally favors establishing beauty in the objectivity of the work of art. This is the dramatic form where the artist is totally objective to his work of art.

Despite the fact that Virginia Woolf's language is more poetic, language itself does not play an important role in To the Lighthouse. Poetic speculation and issues make up the pattern of the subject matter. Issues like death, life, marriage, family, children, success, identity, aging and the difference they make are continuously speculated by characters. Every member staying in the house of the Ramsays' evaluates his or her own life, the lives of other characters and life at large. Each has his or her limitations in the things they have tried to accomplish. In a sense, they all sit by and watch their thoughts flow. It is these meditations which constitute the presence and the being of each single individual. In contrast to Stephen's development and alienation from society, there is the static yet active flow of consciousness from all sides, sometimes merging into each other and sometimes flowing in different directions.

Rather than what people do and how they change within a period of time, there is an emphasis on how people are in the minds of other characters at certain moments in the perpetual flow of their consciousness. Mr. Ramsay's constant demand for sympathy is a good example to illustrate this point. Mrs. Ramsay, William Banks, Lily Briscoe and Cam (one of the daughters of the Ramsays) all evaluate Mr. Ramsay respectively.

(Mrs. Ramsay)

Charles Tansley... she said. (most probably she means admires you) But he must have more than that. It was sympathy he wanted, to be assured of his genius, first of all, and then to be taken within the circle of life, warmed, and soothed, to have his senses restored to him, him his barrenness made fertile... But he must have more than that. He must have sympathy. (VII, 44).

(William Banks and Lily)

... and rather pitiable and distasteful to William Banks and Lily Briscoe, who wondered why such concealments should be necessary; why he needed always praise; why so brave a man in thought should be so timid in life; how strangely he was venerable and laughable at the same time. (VIII, 53)

(Cam)

... so Cam now felt herself overcast, as she sat there among calm, resolute people and wondered how to answer her father about the puppy: how to resist his entreaty-forgive me, care for me... (191)

How do characters go into the subconscious in the two novels?

In other words, how is the transition from the outer world, the present course of action and activity, to their inner worlds achieved? With Joyce, the five senses play an important role. They are instrumental in taking Stephen to the subconscious. The sense of hearing is mainly related with language, which is discussed above. Then, it represents, in a sense, the imaginative life of the artist. Language is the medium through which the artist applies his art. The senses of touch and smell which are related with sex form the link between the outer and the inner worlds of Stephen Dedalus. In one instance, the cold in the outer world takes him first to the study hall; then to a window of the study hall on to an incident of a hat being thrown from one of the windows, and from there to a poem in one of the teacher's books. The poem, then takes him to the warmth of the hearthrug, and back he comes to the outside world with the cold again. This time the cold takes him to his subconscious.

It would be better to be in the study hall than out there in the cold... That was mean of Weels to shoulder him into the square ditch because he would not swap his little snuffbox for Wells's seasoned hackling chestnut, the conqueror of forty. How cold and slimy the water had been. (I,10)

As stated above, the five senses all take part in the succession of associations and lead him to his inner world. The shifts in his head as he daydreams of his funeral (When he is sick and lying in the infirmary because one of the boys has pushed him into a ditch full of water), or meeting his family are natural and true to the way the mind works. In general, it can be commented that the shifts in and out of consciousness are fewer in number and their duration is longer with respect to those employed by Virginia Woolf.

While the five senses play an important role in taking Stephen to the subconscious, comments and associations bring reminiscence and speculation in Virginia Woolf. The association between the doors of the servants' room being open and Marie, the Swiss servant girl, bring out the memory of Mrs. Ramsay's dying father.

She had said 'the mountains are so beautiful.' Her father was dying there, Mrs. Ramsay knew. He was leaving them fatherless... all had folded it-self quietly about her, when the girl spoke, as, after a flight through the sunshine and the wings of a bird fold themselves quietly and the blue of its plumage changes from bright steel to soft purple. She had stood there silent for there was nothing to be said. He had cancer of the throat... and there was no hope whatever. (V, 33)

Mrs. Ramsay is thinking in the above manner as she is measuring a stocking on her son James. All of a sudden there is a sharp return to the outer world, and following it, a second return to the subconscious. Her own comment, this time, is the link of association.

... She had a spasm of irritation, and speaking sharply, said to James:

'Stand still. Don't be tiresome', so that he knew instantly that her severity was real, and straightened his leg and she measured it...

'It's too short', she said, 'ever so much too short' Never did anybody look so sad, bitter and black, halfway down, in the darkness, in the shaft which ran from the sunlight to the depths, perhaps a tear formed; a tear fell... (V, 34)

The fact that the stocking is too short for the light-keeper's son leads her to her acknowledgement that life falls too short of our expectations and hopes. Suddenly, life and the meaning of life gain an importance surpassing the present issue, that of the stocking for the son of the light house keeper. Similarly, a *durée* or a life experience suddenly gains importance with Virginia Woolf and thus leads to the discovery of new aspects of the issue at hand: thus, enabling a further understanding of the present issue which many characters ponder over as they live their private lives of the subconscious. Finally, the goings in and out of consciousness are faster and more frequent in Virginia Woolf. In a sense, her characters are like the skin divers (who need oxygen frequently) who come up to the surface, every now and then, to get a breath of air.

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