

**Women and stream of consciousness in Virginia Woolf's Novel:
"Mrs. Dalloway" and "To the Lighthouse"**

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I n s p i r i n g E x c e l l e n c e

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I would like to dedicate this work to my beloved parents, because I believe that without them I would not have been able to reach at this stage

Maksuda Rahman

And

Mizanur Rahman

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to study the field of literature. It is your colossal blessings and inspiration that have made me what I am today.

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Abstract

Virginia Woolf is best known for her novels, especially “Mrs. Dalloway” (1925) and “To the Lighthouse” (1927), Woolf also wrote pioneering essays on artistic theory, literary history, women’s writing, and the politics of power.

Two of Virginia Woolf’s most notable novels, “To the Lighthouse” and “Mrs. Dalloway”, are good examples of the narrative device Stream of Consciousness. At the time, the use of this device was highly experimental. Virginia Woolf applies what is called indirect interior monologue to her writing, which allows her to explore her characters’ stream of consciousness in the third person. For all intents and purposes, this is stream of consciousness as we know and discuss it.

Before Woolf, writers had used this stream of consciousness, but their application of it was chaotic and difficult to follow, and it was not very well received by readers. Woolf wrote “Mrs. Dalloway” by exploring the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of her characters, which was very experimental for the time. Woolf’s work exploring the thought, feelings, moods, and expectations of characters in a seamless way changed the structure of writing in a significant way.

In this thesis paper, I will discuss and explain the women characterization in these two novel of Virginia Woolf's "Mrs. Dalloway" and "To the Lighthouse" and will discuss how the term Stream of Consciousness has been applied in these two novel. This thesis divided into four chapters, where several aspects have been discussed from different perspective. The novel "Mrs. Dalloway" and "To the Lighthouse" is the primary source and I have used different articles and several writers' thoughts for writing this paper.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The story of "Mrs. Dalloway" was written by Virginia Woolf in 1925, and it relates to her own life. Virginia was born on January 25, 1882 and she belonged to an upper-class family. At the age of 13, Woolf's mother died, which was the beginning of her mental illness. After two years, Woolf's older sister and primary care giver Stella also died. After their death, Virginia Woolf began suffering from more severe depression and manic episodes that would stay with her intermittently for the rest of her life.

"To the Lighthouse" is a book in three parts, in three movements. All of it is laid at the Summer home of an English family named Ramsay in the Hebrides, the first portion occupying an afternoon and evening, the second portion constituting an interlude of ten years during which the house remains unoccupied, the third portion occupying a morning at the end of these ten years. The Ramsays are a middle-aged couple, when the book opens, with eight children, who have with them at their Summer place about half a dozen friends. Husband and wife, though very different, are in love with each other. Mrs. Ramsay, who though fifty is beautiful, has charm, intelligence, understanding; also she is a little anxious to have a hand in things, a little anxious to be liked, a little anxious to keep her illusions

and have others keep theirs. Her children love her; they do not love their father-- she works harder than compelling. She watches those about her without mingling too much; both because she chooses a vantage point--symbolized by the window-- and because of her personality she becomes the dominant and focal figure of the group.

When first reading Virginia Woolf's autobiographical memoirs in *Moments of Being*, I was struck by her reflections on memories. In a description of her childhood so poetic that it could hardly be distinguished from a passage in any of her novels, Woolf writes:

A great hall I could liken it to; with windows letting in strange lights; and murmurs and spaces of deep silence. But somehow into that picture must be brought, too, the sense of movement and change. Nothing remained stable long. One must get the feeling of everything approaching and then disappearing, getting large, getting small, passing at different rates of speed past the little creature [Virginia herself; T. H.]; one must get the feeling that made her press on, the little creature driven on as she was by growth of her legs and arms, driven without being able to stop it, or to change it, driven as a plant is driven up out of the earth, up until the stalk grows, the leaf grows, buds swell. That is what is indescribable, that is what makes all images too static, for no sooner has one said this was so, than it was past and altered. How immense must be the force of life which turns a baby,

who can just distinguish a great blot of blue and purple on a black background, into the child who thirteen years later can feel all that I felt on May 5th 1895 – now almost exactly to a day, forty-four years ago – when my mother died. (Woolf 1978: 92, italics mine)

Despite the colour and detail in this impressionistic imagery, Woolf insists on something “indescribable” about the phenomena – that she may barely put it into words before it is “past and altered”. These memories, which she says are essential to her life, remain in a perpetual motion of “movement and change”. And despite the fleeting and incomprehensible nature of such memories, life has continued in the direction of growth. What also comes to mind is the similarity between this description and the representation of experience in her novels. At the height of her authorship, from the mid twenties and onwards, Woolf’s protagonists are immensely occupied with similar problems of memory. In these, the major contradiction seems to be the following: How do an individual’s memories, in their fleeting and fragmented nature, constitute a sense of completeness? How can the broken pieces of an uncertain past build a life that seems whole? For while memories are untrustworthy and random, they do continue to uphold that thing we call our “self”, whether fictitious or not. These are the major research questions I wish to explore in my thesis by way of analyses of Mrs. Dalloway and *To the Lighthouse*. Woolf’s authorship supports the view that the present is founded on the

past, and that memories strongly inform the present. She writes about previous experience as being decisive for further living. She shows how all new perceptions are filtered through the old. The short time-span of Mrs. Dalloway is filled with characters who are immensely occupied with their pasts, effectively unfolding whole lives in the course of a single day. To the Lighthouse even surpasses this feat by dividing its two days of action between a decade-long interval. It is in these two novels that Woolf seems most obsessed with exploring the link between the immediate world of exterior perceptions and the remembered world of subjective memories. The problem of memory is inherently the problem of time as associated with the dawn of modernism. Cities that were becoming increasingly adapted to standards of clock-time organized entire economical structures around the idea of a universal measurement of time. As part of living in a big city, the importance of following standardized time would inevitably cause friction in the individual's subjective sense of experienced time. Woolf had followed the experiments of Joyce, Proust and Dorothy Richardson while she sought to explore themes of time and consciousness herself. While the stream of consciousness-term of psychologist and philosopher William James became widely applied to studying the works of the aforementioned writers, it has later survived predominantly as a characterization of a variety of literary devices which seek to portray consciousness in flux. To study memory as the primary device in the

creation of Woolf's worlds of consciousness, it seems more relevant to employ the notion of Bergson's *durée*. Duration designates the successive states of quality as experienced by the mind. To arrive at a point between the material word and the life of the mind, Bergson asserts that experience unfolds through an oscillating movement between matter and memory – a contraction of spirit and a dissolution of matter. The aforequoted excerpt from Woolf's memoirs indicates that one may operate with a similar matter-memory dichotomy in exploring her means of bringing together consciousness and reality.

Chapter 2

Definition of Stream of Consciousness

Stream-of-consciousness is a style of speaking or writing in which one says everything unfiltered, flowing out of a person exactly as it comes to the mind. Since our brains are capable of producing thousands of thoughts and impressions at once, however, it's not possible to speak or write *exactly* as we think. Thus, stream-of-consciousness is impressionistic, designed to imitate a direct cognitive process.

When we say that someone speaks in a "stream-of-consciousness" manner, we are not necessarily paying them a compliment. Stream-of-consciousness can seem random and "spacey," disorganized and even a bit pretentious.

In writing, stream-of-consciousness is a deliberate literary device most often associated with the Modern movement. Modernists believe that the writer has a subjective experience and cannot make him or herself fully understood to another

person. Stream-of-consciousness becomes a way of representing the subjective self.

For some modernists, subjectivity might be grounded in a character with developmental disabilities or psychological limitations. For instance, Benji, one of the characters in William Faulkner's *Sound and the Fury*, is "an idiot" whose stream-of-consciousness narrative stems from the way his brain processes the outside world. For other writers, stream-of-consciousness is an attempt to recreate the truth of human thought without any attempt to explain or organize concepts. Such experimental writing leaves the process of interpretation completely to the reader.

Stream of Consciousness is a type of writing that originated with the works of psychologist William James (Brother of Novelist Emeritus Henry James). Basically, its purpose is to emulate the passage of thought through your mind without any inhibitors. For that reason, sentences become longer, less organized and more sporadic in style. Its lack of structure is not for everybody, but that doesn't mean there isn't any order. Stream of consciousness permits deeper patterns of order to emerge, ones based on the *genuine* movement of information in your brain. It also permits writers to simulate different forms of consciousness,

such as dreams, comas, drug use and hallucinatory scenes. There are some writers who use Stream of Consciousness better than anybody else are given below ;

William Faulkner :

Recipient of both the Nobel Prize in Literature and the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, American author William Faulkner used the stream of consciousness technique to great effect in *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*, exploring the depths of different characters' inner conflict through disjointed, unpunctuated narrative. In one short paragraph, the reader is at once exposed to different smells, sounds and movement:

“Nonsense you look like a girl you are lots younger than Candace color in your cheeks like a girl *A face reproachful tearful an odor of camphor and of tears a voice weeping steadily and softly beyond the twilit door the twilight-colored smell of honey suckle. Bringing empty trunks down the attic stairs they sounded like coffins [...]*” – from *As I Lay Dying*.

James Joyce :

Dublin born writer James Joyce employed the stream-of-consciousness style in all of his novels, including *Finnegans Wake*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and – of course – the 1000-page, 265,000-word long *Ulysses*. It is easy to get

lost in any paragraph in the novel, as the protagonist Stephen Dedalus guides us quickly – and disjointedly – through his thoughts and surroundings. One moment he is asking himself, “Would you go back to then?” and the next he is on Grafton street, pondering whether to buy a pincushion while the “jingle of harnesses” sounds in his ears. Then, out of the blue, he answers himself and concludes that it would be “useless to go back.” Next thing you know, he’s moved on to Duke Street and we’re not quite sure how he – or we – got there.

Samuel Beckett :

The second French writer on this list, Samuel Beckett used the stream of consciousness technique in his *Three Novels* (Molloy, Malone Dies and the Unnamable) to deliver a stream of observations and musings on time and existence. In fact, Molloy defies conventional grammar and tense rules in order to emphasize the continuity of the narrator’s non-stop train of thought:

“What shall I do? What shall I do? now low, a murmur, now precise as the headwaiter’s And to follow? and often rising to a scream. And in the end, or almost, to be abroad alone, by unknown ways, in the gathering night, with a stick.”

– from Molloy

Chapter 3

The Women character in this novel “Mrs. Dalloway”

In this novel all the characters are stuck in past and it seems that they are not happy with their present situation; for example Peter thinks about Clarissa even when he married with Daisy, Clarissa as a married woman think about Peter and Sally, also Septimus thinks about his dead friend, Evans, when he was in the park. When Clarissa goes to flower shop she remembers past time and remember her old friend Peter Walsh suits her. Here memory plays an important role here. There is famous Indian proverb that says: if someone carries past memories on his back it curves person's back; he should smash the past under their feet to become tall. Clarissa thinks about past all the time suddenly she finds herself in present. She can't concentrate on present, by this way she not only destroys her present but also eradicate her future. When someone suspend in past lose present, too; because today is the tomorrow that someone waiting for. One of the negative consequences of world war was feeling insecurity and the author of ‘Mrs. Dalloway’ depicts it skillfully. Clarissa as the main character of this novel has this insecure feeling from beginning. When she was single in her father’s estate suddenly she felt that

something terrible might be happened. She thought that her party is not going to perform well and it was true feeling because Lady Bradshaw announces Septimus's suicide. In the party, she saw Sally that married and have five children. In spite of this fact, among all guest in party she feels lonely. At the party she feels insecure because she thinks that Peter teases her dress. All proves her insecure feeling. It was in her unconscious before war and after war. This insecurity comes from war and male leadership structure. Both inflicted by men. The women of in this novel are :

Clarissa Dalloway –

The eponymous protagonist. The novel begins with Clarissa's point of view and follows her perspective more closely than that of any other character. As Clarissa prepares for the party she will give that evening, we are privy to her meandering thoughts. Clarissa is vivacious and cares a great deal about what people think of her, but she is also self-reflective. She often questions life's true meaning, wondering whether happiness is truly possible. She feels both a great joy and a great dread about her life, both of which manifest in her struggles to strike a balance between her desire for privacy and her need to communicate with others. Throughout the day Clarissa reflects on the crucial summer when she chose to marry her husband, Richard, instead of her friend Peter Walsh. Though she is

happy with Richard, she is not entirely certain she made the wrong choice about Peter, and she also thinks frequently about her friend Sally Seton, whom she also once loved.

Clarissa Dalloway, the heroine of the novel, struggles constantly to balance her internal life with the external world. Her world consists of glittering surfaces, such as fine fashion, parties, and high society, but as she moves through that world she probes beneath those surfaces in search of deeper meaning. Yearning for privacy, Clarissa has a tendency toward introspection that gives her a profound capacity for emotion, which many other characters lack. However, she is always concerned with appearances and keeps herself tightly composed, seldom sharing her feelings with anyone. She uses a constant stream of convivial chatter and activity to keep her soul locked safely away, which can make her seem shallow even to those who know her well.

Constantly overlaying the past and the present, Clarissa strives to reconcile herself to life despite her potent memories. For most of the novel she considers aging and death with trepidation, even as she performs life-affirming actions, such as buying flowers. Though content, Clarissa never lets go of the doubt she feels about the decisions that have shaped her life, particularly her decision to marry Richard instead of Peter Walsh. She understands that life with Peter would have been difficult, but at the same time she is uneasily aware that she sacrificed passion

for the security and tranquility of an upper-class life. At times she wishes for a chance to live life over again. She experiences a moment of clarity and peace when she watches her old neighbor through her window, and by the end of the day she has come to terms with the possibility of death. Like Septimus, Clarissa feels keenly the oppressive forces in life, and she accepts that the life she has is all she'll get. Her will to endure, however, prevails.

Sally Seton –

A close friend of Clarissa and Peter in their youth. Sally was a wild, handsome ragamuffin who smoked cigars and would say anything. She and Clarissa were sexually attracted to one another as teenagers. Now Sally lives in Manchester and is married with five boys. Her married name is Lady Rosseter. Sally Seton exists only as a figure in Clarissa's memory for most of the novel, and when she appears at Clarissa's party, she is older but still familiar. Though the women have not seen each other for years, Sally still puts Clarissa first when she counts her blessings, even before her husband or five sons. As a girl, Sally was without inhibitions, and as an adult at the party, she is still effusive and lacks Clarissa's restraint. Long ago, Sally and Clarissa plotted to reform the world together. Now, however, both are married, a fate they once considered a "catastrophe." Sally has changed and calmed down a great deal since the Bourton

days, but she is still enough of a loose cannon to make Peter nervous and to kindle Clarissa's old warm feelings. Both Sally and Clarissa have yielded to the forces of English society to some degree, but Sally keeps more distance than Clarissa does. She often takes refuge in her garden, as she despairs over communicating with humans. However, she has not lost all hope of meaningful communication, and she still thinks saying what one feels is the most important contribution one can make to society.

Clarissa considers the moment when Sally kissed her on the lips and offered her a flower at Bourton the "most exquisite moment of her whole life." Society would never have allowed that love to flourish, since women of Clarissa's class were expected to marry and become society wives. Sally has always been more of a free spirit than Clarissa, and when she arrives at Clarissa's party, she feels rather distant from and confused by the life Clarissa has chosen. The women's kiss marked a true moment of passion that could have pushed both women outside of the English society they know, and it stands out in contrast to the confrontation Peter remembers between Sally and Hugh regarding women's rights. One morning at Bourton, Sally angrily told Hugh he represented the worst of the English middle class and that he was to blame for the plight of the young girls in Piccadilly. Later, Hugh supposedly kissed her in the smoking room. Hugh's is the forced kiss of

traditional English society, while the kiss with Clarissa is a revelation. Ultimately, the society that spurs Hugh's kiss prevails for both women.

Lucrezia Smith (Rezia) –

Septimus's wife, a twenty-four-year-old hat-maker from Milan. Rezia loves Septimus but is forced to bear the burden of his mental illness alone. Normally a lively and playful young woman, she has grown thin with worry. She feels isolated and continually wishes to share her unhappiness with somebody. She trims hats for the friends of her neighbor, Mrs. Filmer.

Elizabeth Dalloway –

Clarissa and Richard's only child. Gentle, considerate, and somewhat passive, seventeen-year-old Elizabeth does not have Clarissa's energy. She has a dark beauty that is beginning to attract attention. Not a fan of parties or clothes, she likes being in the country with her father and dogs. She spends a great deal of time praying with her history teacher, the religious Miss Kilman, and is considering career options.

Doris Kilman –

Elizabeth's history teacher, who has German ancestry. Miss Kilman has a history degree and was fired from a teaching job during the war because of society's anti-German prejudice. She is over forty and wears an unattractive mackintosh coat because she does not dress to please. She became a born-again Christian two years and three months ago. Poor, with a forehead like an egg, she is bitter and dislikes Clarissa intensely but adores Elizabeth. Killman's point of view to Clarissa is full of aversion when she compares herself with Clarissa. She realizes that those things that Clarissa has she doesn't have. She doesn't express these things to Clarissa directly but shows it indirectly through both her action and her looking. Sometimes things can't say by our tongue but our eyes express them very clearly. If people tell a lie their eyes reveals it. People eyes are a mirror that reflect what is in their inside; through people eyes one can understand their depth of heart and essence. Mrs. Killman's ugliness is her weak point. She thinks that Clarissa teases her and all the time asks a question from herself why should I suffer and have such a face? With these ideas Mrs. Killman kills herself emotionally. She also suffers from her own classification, her German name, her appearance and her social position as a person who lost her job because of war. Killman wants to have dominance on Elizabeth's belief like Sir William that has dominance on his patients. This dominance on Elizabeth refers to her thought that her class in

society, her faith and her appearance which all dominated her; that's why she wants to retaliate on Elizabeth. Her faith become under the question several times. She pretends to be religious but she destroyed religion through some actions like envy, homosexuality, aversion, rage and gluttony. As a religious person, she searches a guilty for her condition. As the novel shows us, she satisfied herself with shopping and eating greedily.

Lady (Millicent) Bruton –

A member of high society and a friend of the Dalloways. At sixty-two years old, Lady Bruton is devoted to promoting emigration to Canada for English families. Normally erect and magisterial, she panics when she has to write a letter to the editor and seeks help from Richard Dalloway and Hugh Whitbread. She has an assistant, Milly Brush, and a chow dog. She is a descendant of General Sir Talbot Moore.

Miss Helena Parry (Aunt Helena) –

Clarissa's aunt. Aunt Helena is a relic of the strict English society Clarissa finds so confining. A great botanist, she also enjoys talking about orchids and Burma. She is a formidable old lady, over eighty, who found Sally Seton's behavior as a youth shocking. She has one glass eye.

Ellie Henderson –

Clarissa's dowdy cousin. Ellie, in her early fifties, has thin hair, a meager profile, and bad eyesight. Not trained for any career and having only a small income, she wears an old black dress to Clarissa's party. She is self-effacing, subject to chills, and close to a woman named Edith. Clarissa finds her dull and does not want to invite her to the party, and Ellie stands alone nearly the whole time, aware that she does not really belong.

.Mrs. Filmer –

The Smiths' neighbor. Mrs. Filmer finds Septimus odd. She has honest blue eyes and is Rezia's only friend in London. Her daughter is Mrs. Peters, who listens to the Smiths' gramophone when they are not at home. Mrs. Filmer's granddaughter delivers the newspaper to the Smiths' home each evening, and Rezia always makes the child's arrival into a momentous, joyous event.

Daisy Simmons –

Peter Walsh's lover in India, married to a major in the Indian army. Daisy is twenty-four years old and has two small children. Peter is in London to arrange her divorce.

Stream of consciousness in “Mrs. Dalloway”:

In Mrs. Dalloway, the narration and point of view changes from one character to the next often. This was not just Virginia Woolf’s writing style, but rather a technique she used to emphasize the importance of certain characters.

The story starts off in the perspective of Clarissa Dalloway. Immediately the narration becomes what she is thinking and what she observes, like when she opens her French window and “feels the still air.” The narration especially the fact that it jumps from one thought to the next seems much more realistic because it is told how a person would actually think, which we refer to as “stream of consciousness.” We can tell Clarissa is the main character here because she is the narrator and the thoughts that are conveyed are her thoughts. Occasionally the narration is taken to the perspective of a different character, but for the main part, Clarissa narrates.

An important man in Mrs. Dalloway’s life in this novel is Peter Walsh. The first mention of him is when Mrs. Dalloway is standing at the open window and thinks of him. Later on in the story, we find out that Peter once loved Mrs. Dalloway. Hugh Whitbread is the next character that is introduced. He and Mrs. Dalloway have known each other since childhood. Through a thought, we are introduced to Richard Dalloway, Clarissa’s husband. These three people; Peter, Hugh, and Richard, are the lovers of Clarissa Dalloway.

Virginia Woolf helped to pioneer the writing style known as stream of consciousness, and this technique is prevalent in the wandering sentences of Mrs. Dalloway. Stream of consciousness is characterized by the thoughts of the main character and the dialogue taking place weaving seamlessly together to give the narrative a rambling, dream-like quality. Woolf implements several techniques in order to achieve this goal, including long, adjective-laden sentences. Woolf use of dialogue also contributes to the stream of consciousness effect: the actual spoken dialogue and what the various characters are thinking are written intentionally similar, differentiated only by the presence of quotation marks. Also, there are very frequent shifts of points of view between the characters, giving readers insight into what each character is thinking. Together, these elements blur together what is actually happening and what is happening in the minds of the characters, creating a more visceral and realistic mood of the novel.

Moreover, this 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 . To achieve the quick transition, Woolf uses a literary technique called free indirect speech (which uses some characteristics of third person along with the essence first person direct speech). MRS.DALLOWAY refers to a story that captures a character's thoughts and uses them to tell a story. The novel addresses Clarissa a Dalloway's preparations for a party she will host

that evening. The nice day reminds her of her youth spent in Burton and makes her wonder about the choice of her husband-Richard over Peter or Sally Seton (a female friend). It also talks about Septimus Smith (an alter ego of Mrs. Dalloway), a World War I veteran suffering from traumatic stress, who commits suicide. Clarissa's party is a slow success and she hears about the death of this veteran who is in fact a stranger to her. But this death affects her and she considers his suicide an act to preserve the purity of his happiness.

The novel follows no conventional plot or tragedy or love interest or catastrophe. For example: Septimus' death is casually reported in the party (although it affects and impacts Mrs. Dalloway in a huge way). The emphasis is laid on the manipulation of words and not on the organization of the story.

According to the mechanical time of the Big Ben, the action of the novel is limited to a single day. But, going by the psychological time (as was put by Bergson), the characters' disorganized experience of the past which has an impression on their mind makes them be in the present through the past and contemplate about the future. We move in Mrs. Dalloway's mind from London to her girlhood days in Bourton through the air enveloping her in a fine London morning. This helps us to be very close to Mrs. Dalloway's mind as she is thinking about the myriad things around her. As, David Daiches points out – This technique of the stream of consciousness helps a person in the novel to move back and forth in time again

and again. The characters are shown as they think about themselves and about others. The past and the present are thus involved with each other as we see Clarissa remembering Peter's remarks about the vegetables, he playing with a pocket knife, which he still does. Similarly, Peter's thoughts about Clarissa, how she rejected him for a rich man in the past and his comment about her being the 'perfect hostess', outline Mrs. Dalloway's present character which is materialistic and cares a lot about her freedom. We get to know about Peter's possessiveness and Clarissa's sense of freedom when they both think about themselves and about each other.

On the other side of the coin, we've got Septimus Smith who is attuned to life's deep meaning and has intense reactions, like those triggered by the noise of the tyre. We get to know about his trauma through Lucrezia, who also ends up painting her solitary picture that we pity. We also get to know about the characters like Mrs. Dalloway through the strangers like Scrope Pervis who gives some idea about her outward personality. Similarly, Peter's senses of sight and sound are triggered when he sees and hears the bell of an ambulance that has picked Septimus. He also thinks that Septimus and Lucrezia are having a serious quarrel and then suddenly goes on to think about Manchester (due to the scenic beauty) and then about Sally Seton, when he goes to visit a lawyer. The reader is made

aware of Clarissa's lesbian relationship with Sally in a similar fashion when Clarissa has taken a 'plunge' into her memories.

Virginia Woolf has used the stream of consciousness brilliantly in this novel. She has intermingled various thought processes of various humans, but has intelligently used the Big Ben and Airplane to avoid the chaos which might have been created due to the complex nature of the brain. The symbols unite everyone. The impressions and expressions are linked up emotionally by the law of association and one even recalls another. The characters think and reality is shown through their fluidity – almost like a river flowing. MRS. DALLOWAY is thus one of the best examples of the novel form of writing that uses the technique of Stream of Consciousness to explore the inner life of the characters, expose their follies, frustrations and complexity.

Chapter 4

Women and Stream of Consciousness “To The Lighthouse”

Mrs. Ramsey:

Beautiful, charming, and nurturing, Mrs. Ramsey holds the Ramsay family together as she holds together every social context she enters by her charisma and instinct for putting people at ease. Mrs. Ramsay also holds *To the Lighthouse* together, for the novel's shape is structured around her: her perspective dominates Chapter 1 and, even after she dies in Chapter 2, Mrs. Ramsay remains central in Chapter 3 as the surviving Ramsay's manage their grief and Lily revisits her memories of Mrs. Ramsay and makes peace with her ghost. For her own part, Mrs. Ramsay exalts in the beauty of the world and, though she insists she is no thinker, frequently reflects on the nature of time and human experience. An eager matchmaker, Mrs. Ramsay is also, as Lily sees, an artist who can make out of the fleeting moment “something permanent”

Mrs. Ramsay was, no doubt, advanced in age and the mother of the eight children, still she possessed great physical charm and attractiveness. There are frequent references and appreciation of her beauty in the novel and one of the great

secrets of her personal appeal unmistakably lies in her physical charm. Her charm elicits high admiration not only from the male members of the circle of her friends but also from women who are equally fascinated by her. Mrs Woolf tells us how Mr. Bankes feels about her charm while telephoning to her. “He saw her at the end of the line, Greek blue eyed, straight.....The graces assembling seemed to have joined hands in meadows of asphodel to compose that face.” And her husband says: “Indeed, she had the whole of the other sex under her protection.”

Sheer physical charm alone cannot account for so much of appeal and attractiveness. Beauty without grace and dignity cannot have so much influence on others. She has abundant feminine graces. She is polite and cultured in her manners and kind and considerate in her temperament. She is absolutely free from all egotism and is never in a mood to assert herself. Hence her graceful manners and kind disposition combined with her extraordinary physical charm cast a healthy spell on all who came in contact with her.

Mrs. Ramsay may also be taken as a symbol of the female principle in life. Probably that is why she has never been called by her first name in the novel as Clarissa Dalloway in *Mrs. Dalloway*. This symbolism seems to be evident when we have a peep into her mind in the dinner scene. Virginia Woolf tells us “Again she felt, as a fact without hostility, the sterility of men, for if she did not do it nobody would do it,...” She wants men and women to be united and become

fruitful like herself. At the intellectual level she offers her protection and inspiration to both science and art—to Lily Briscoe the painter, to Bankes the botanist, to Carmichael the poet, to Tansley the scholar and above all to her husband the philosopher. Thus she seems to have the whole of the other sex under her protection. For all this, critics like James Hafley hold the view that Mrs. Ramsay has been treated as a symbol and has not been individualised by the novelist. But this seems to be stretching too far. In spite of this indefiniteness and symbolic traits Mrs. Ramsay is quite an individualised three-dimensional figure and is undoubtedly one of the great immortals of English literature.

The most outstanding trait of Mrs. Ramsay's character is her compassion for the poor and the unfortunate, the great concern and consideration for the children and infinite sympathy for the unhappy and neglected souls. Her heart overflows with the milk of human sympathy and kindness. In the very first few chapters we find her very busy in knitting stockings for the sick son of the Lighthouse-keeper. She feels for them all as they are to live a dull and unhappy life in a lonely island. Not only this, we also find her going to the town to help the poor and the needy.

Then we find her having great affection and sympathetic consideration for the children. She knows the truth, yet not to dishearten her seven year old son she deviates from truth. But Mr. Ramsay shatters the hope of a young soul by bluntly telling him that they won't be able to go to the Lighthouse the next day due to

inclement weather. And this difference of attitude reveals the sharp contrast between the husband and the wife.

LILY BRISCOE :

Lily Briscoe is one of the three most important characters in this novel. She is a complex and in some respect unique figure. It may be noted at the very outset that our novel expresses her reflections on art through this important character. We have the first glimpse of her in the third chapter of the first part. She is standing on the edge of the lawn painting Mrs. Ramsay's figure. And we gather our first impression from Mrs. Ramsay's musings on her. "Lily's picture! Mrs. Ramsay smiled. With her little Chinese eyes and her puckered up face she would never marry: one could not take her painting very seriously; but she was an independent little creature. Mrs. Ramsay liked her for it, and so remembering her promise, she bent her head". So when we first meet her Lily is a spinster and is not so beautiful woman. And although Mrs. Ramsay does not take her painting very seriously she is a devoted artist caring very little for the pains and pleasures of a family life.

As an earnest votary of art Lily feels that marriage and family life are likely to come in way of her artistic activities. She knows that an unmarried woman is likely to miss some of the best things of life. Mrs. Ramsay very much wants them all to marry. And she considers her dear Lily to be a fool for her typical attitude. She

often feels like giving way to such dreams and desire. But she is capable of overcoming such sentiments and “gathering a desperate courage she would urge her own exemption from the universal law; plead for it; she liked to be alone; she liked to be herself; she was not made for that;...” The artist in Lily prevailed over the woman in her. So when we meet Lily again in the summer-house after ten years, she is the same spinster who thanks her stars for not succumbing to the wishes of Mrs. Ramsay.

Lily’s ideas and feelings regarding love seem to be rather conflicting. Watching Paul deeply in love with Minta and the consequent reactions on him, love seems to her to be the stupidest and the most barbaric of all human passions that turns a nice young man into a bully. But at the same time this love seems to her so beautiful, so exciting and she experiences the emotions, the vibrations of love. But it seems that the platonic sort of love has greater fascination for Lily Briscoe. Watching elderly William Bankes gazing at Mrs. Ramsay with profound admiration and strange rapture she feels this is ‘love that is distilled and filtered; love that never attempted to clutch its object, but, like the love which mathematicians bear their symbols or poets their phrases, was meant to be spread over the world and become part of the human gain.’ So, to her love is a mystery. It has a thousand shapes.

Lily is not incapable of admiring the other sex. What she cannot stand is the ordinary sex relationship between man and woman. She has profound love and admiration for William Bankes. This is how she has expressed her feelings about him. "I respect you (addressed him silently) in every atom, you are not vain,...you are finer than Mr. Ramsay; you are the finest human being that I know.....generous, pure-hearted, heroic man". But she cannot allow her lofty feelings to degenerate into ordinary sex relationship.

Nancy Ramsay :

One of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay's children, Nancy accompanies Andrew, Paul, and Minta on their walk along the cliffs and intuitively understands Minta's inward desperation, though she is too young to fully understand its cause.

Minta Doyle :

A golden and voluptuous tomboy of whom Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay are both extremely fond, Minta stays at the summerhouse in Chapter 1. At Mrs. Ramsay's encouragement, Minta is engaged to Paul Rayley, though the marriage turns out to be a failure.

Prue Ramsay :

The most beautiful of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay's children, Prue is just on the verge of entering womanhood in Chapter 1 and admires Minta wonderingly. In Chapter 2, Prue marries soon after Mrs. Ramsay's death, then dies a few months later in childbirth.

Rose Ramsey:

One of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay's children, Rose has a sophisticated aesthetic sense despite her young age and arranges the fruit bowl on the dinner table in Chapter I to breathtaking effect.

Mrs. McNub :

The world-weary caretaker and housekeeper for the summerhouse who maintains (then abandons) the house in the Ramsays' absence and prepares it for their return.

The Swiss Maid :

A young maid in the summerhouse, the Swiss Maid's melancholy about her father dying in the mountains touches Mrs. Ramsay to the core.

Stream of Consciousness in “To the Lighthouse”:

When we mention Virginia Woolf’s ‘To The Lighthouse’, it’s very natural to talk about her stream of consciousness technique. In this novel, the structure of external objective events is demised in scope and scale, or almost e completely dissolved. It is composed of the continual activity of characters’ consciousness and shower of impressions. External events occupy little space in the novel the writer as an omniscient narrator has almost completely vanished and almost everything stated appears by the way of reflection in the consciousness of the dramatic characters and the novel does not progress on “what – happens – next” basis, but rather moves forward through a series of scenes arranged according to a sequence of selected moments of consciousness and the techniques to which Mrs. Woolf mainly employs are interior and free association.

Virginia Woolf, among the stream of consciousness writers relies most on the indirect interior monologue and she uses it with great skill. In ‘To the Light House’ Virginia Woolf succeeds in producing a much subtle effect through the use of this technique. This novel contains a great deal of straight, conventional narration and description but the interior monologue is used often enough to give

the novel its special character of seeming to be always within the consciousness of the chief characters. Virginia Woolf says in her essay *Modern Fiction*:

“Let’s record the atom as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall. Let’s stress the pattern however disconnected and incoherent in appearances, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness.”

This is the best description in her method. Let’s see the following passage in the first chapter of part one.

For how would you like to be shut up for a whole month at a time, and possibly more in stormy weather, upon a rock the size of a tennis lawn? She would ask; not to know how your children were if they were ill, if they had fallen down and broken their legs or arms; to see the some dreary waves breaking weak after weak and then a dreadful storm coming and the windows covered with spray, and birds dashed agonized the land and the whole place rocking, and not able to put your nose out of doors for fear of being swept into the sea? How would you like that she asked?

The passage above is represented in the manner of straight narration by the author but it is clearly what the character feels and thinks and it reflects the character's consciousness and inner thoughts. In this passage Woolf facilitates the indirect interior monologues with her unique skills. Firstly, she uses the conjunction "for" as an indication of the beginning of this monologue and produces an easy and natural swift from objective description to the character's interior monologue, secondly, she presents Mrs. Ramsay's consciousness by guiding phrases "She would ask" and "She asked" to make the reader wonder about unheard in Mrs. Ramsay's consciousness. Thirdly, here she employs semicolons to indicate the continuation of the consciousness. The use of semicolons is characterized Woolf's skill in dealing with indirect interior monologue, as she also shown in this novel.

In the case of indirect interior monologue the omniscient author's continuous intervention is essential to guide the reader in reading and the character's mind. The use of frequent parenthesis can be signals of digression and of simultaneity as this one

“Teaching and preaching human power, Lily suspected.(She was putting is beyond away things.)” Parenthesis can also be little aside, explanations, pointers to what is going on. Lily in this passage is thinking about Mr.Bankes:

“I respect you (she addressed him silently). In every atom; you are not vain: you are entirely impersonal; you are finer than Mr.Ramsay. You are the finest human being that I know; you have neither wife nor child (without any sexual feeling, she longed to cherish that loneliness) you live for science (involuntarily section of potatoes and rose before her eyes); praise would an insult to you; generous, pure hearted heroic man!”

Here the parenthesis signal sudden and momentary switches in perspective, the narrative is thrown backward and forward.

With her unique devices, such as guiding phrases, semicolons, and parenthesis embroidered to her interior monologue, Virginia Woolf successfully overcomes the short comings of stream of consciousness novel of being incoherent and chaotic, and achieves great explicitness, coherence, vividness and surface unity

in presenting the character's inner world. However, it should be noted that her presentation of the character's interior monologue is not only coherent in meaning, but also conventional in appearance.

In "To the Light House", Woolf usually encloses free association into the indirect interior monologue to represent the psychic process of her characters. We may take the 7.10th chapter of the first part of To the Light House as an example.

The continuity of the section is established through an exterior occurrence involving Mrs. Ramsay and James: Mrs. Ramsay tells James the story of the Fisherman's wife. After consoling her despair-stricken husband, Mrs. Ramsay began to read the story to James. Here her narration of the incidents is not coherent and she describes the events of her life without having the continuity and order of the actions. At that time, the stroke of the lighthouse came into her eyes. Then Mildred came into fetch them and here chapter 10 ends.

There are some Sources of unity which helps the Story they are:

Isolation :

A number of devices have been used to impart structural unity to the novel. First, she has introduced only a limited number of characters, and they have been isolated in a remote island away from society. Further, out of this isolated group, she has focused attention only on two or three personalities, and exploited their stream of Consciousness alone. Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, and Lily Briscoe are the main figures. Others are only of a Secondary importance.

The Role of Central Intelligence :

The readers are not placed directly within the minds of characters, as in the modern psychological novel, but the central intelligence of the novelist is constantly at work as the narrator, controlling and organizing the material, and illuminating it with its comments, and order emerges out of chaos.

Lily's painting:

It is another device by which the novelist has patterned her material. The novel begins with Lily at her easel and her paints and brush on the lawn of the Ramsay's Summer House, and it ends with her having her vision and completing her picture.

The Lighthouse :

The lighthouse is another important source of unity in the novel. It shines throughout at a distance, and all the lines of the novel Converge towards it. The expedition to the lighthouse is planned in part I, and it is actually undertaken in part.III.

To the Emotional Unity:

To the Lighthouse may not have a logical unity, a logical sequence of Cause and effect, it is have a unity of a higher and stronger kind i.e. emotional unity. Jean Guignet has considered the point in detail, and we may be excused for quoting from him at length;

“Lily Briscoe, painting on the lawn, from time to time casts a glance towards the bay to watch the boat on which Mr. Ramsay, James and Cam are sailing. But this link is purely eternal; the real unity of the sections lies in the Coincidence of Project and thought me the Completion of Lily’s Canvas, the fulfillment of James’ plan. It is not so very important that Lily sees the sails fall and Flap; what common is their common immobility: “Life stands still here, and “The boat made no motion at all.”

And further on, the mixture of charm and tyranny in Mr. Ramsay occupies the thoughts of Lily, and so on the end, where Mr. Ramsay's unexpressed vision is identified with Lily's- his defeat and triumph. The brackets enclosing the brief section 7 and 10 irresistibly recall the events inserted in the same fashion in Time Passes. Like these, they are hard kernels of a different nature to the flux out of which they emerge. The mutilated fish interrupting Lily's tragic cry, the sea having apparently swallowed up the little boat and obliterated the lives of the passengers while, all the time, James, Mr. Ramsay and Cam pursue their own train of thought. But heterogeneous as they are, these observations, like the events in time passes, have a secret relationship with the context that they seem to interrupt. The mutilation and survival of the fish is, at the same time, the survival of Mrs. Ramsay and the mutilation of Lily's universe peace evoked by the scene she is contemplating emphasize the remoteness of the past which the occupants of the boat are remembering and the feeling of reconciliation which is doing amongst them at this movement.

Thus, seeing all the characteristics of the novel 'To the Light House' and comparing it with all contents of the stream of consciousness technique. It is

clearly noticeable that Mrs. Ramsay has used the stream of constructional lines of one person to that of another. There is very little complication 'To the Light House' is a masterpiece of construction.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Instead of delineating the characters from outside, superficially, like in the traditional novels Virginia Woolf unfolds her characters as thinking individuals in constant evolution. Like all the other modernist writers, Virginia Woolf was influenced by the advancement of psychology and the various theories it had generated and all the characters' thoughts are vividly presented in "Mrs. Dalloway" and "To the Lighthouse". Characters are revealed from different viewpoints, the technique of multiple narrative points of view being another characteristic of modernist literature. Finally, it is the reader who reconstructs the final picture of these characters and he or she is involved in this dynamic presentation instead of being a mere spectator. "To the Lighthouse" has not the formal perfection, the cohesiveness, the intense vividness of characterization that belong to "Mrs. Dalloway." It has particles of failure in it. It is inferior to "Mrs. Dalloway" in the degree to which its aims are achieved; it is superior in the magnitude of the aims themselves. For in its portrayal of life that is less orderly, more complex and so much doomed to frustration, it strikes a more important note, and it gives us an interlude of vision that must stand at the head of all Virginia Woolf's work.