

The Stream of Consciousness Technique as Reflected in Five Selected Novels

Imelda L. An¹

Abstract

This article aimed to find out the use of Stream of Consciousness in the following novels: Mrs. Dalloway, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, The Sound and the Fury, State of War and Pilgrimage. Findings showed that The SOC technique is characterized by the following salient features: unorganized succession of images, fluid ramblings of the mind's conversations with itself, focused contents of a character's mind at a given point in space and time and evident skip from one character to another in the middle of the page. In presenting the SOC technique, the different authors have used the following literary devices: flashback, foreshadowing and motif. To enhance the teaching of stream of consciousness technique in fiction, the following suggestions are offered: using motivation strategy through using slides presentation of snippets or excerpts from the novel', developing literary competence in vocabulary, form, conventions and symbols, giving prior library research on stream of consciousness; likewise, a mini lecture after film viewing, and inclusion of SOC fiction in the preparation of syllabi in literature subjects.

Keywords: Stream of Consciousness, SOC technique, literary analysis

1. Introduction

Stream of Consciousness fiction is one of those literary genre which most often than not bewilder the readers. This stream of consciousness is sometimes confused with interior monologue, but the latter technique works the sensations of the mind into a more formal pattern; a flow of thoughts inwardly expressed, similar to a soliloquy. The technique of stream of consciousness; however, attempts to portray the remote, preconscious state that exists before the mind organizes sensations. Consequently, the recreation of a stream of consciousness frequently lacks the unity, explicit cohesion and selectivity of direct thought.

An informal survey conducted by Canares (2004) revealed that students and teachers alike are baffled by the stream of consciousness fiction. Its very unconventional techniques of narration and its not –too-ordinary psychic material have made the genre doubly confounding. Just like Canares, the proponent has taught literature in tertiary education and similarly, she finds among her students the attitude of indifference to fiction with these techniques.

This research therefore is an offshoot of Canares' investigation where she uses Stream of Consciousness in the analysis of novels, specifically, Ninotchka Rosca's "State of War". The writer's main concern is to contribute to the field of literary study by showing how the textual features of the SOC fiction lend themselves well to the teaching of literature as a subject. Moreover, it hopes to offer clear pronouncements as to the enrichment of the selected genre as an art of fiction; hence, helps the teacher several ways on how to make SOC fiction a fun-filled experience of teaching and learning.

Objectives

This article aimed to find out the use of Stream of Consciousness in selected novels. More specifically, it answered the following objectives: to identify the characteristics of the Stream of Consciousness technique; to determine how Stream of Consciousness technique is reflected in the five selected novels; to

¹College of Education, Arts & Sciences, Lyceum of the Philippines University-Batangas Capitol Site, Batangas City

enumerate literary devices which have been used by the different authors in presenting the stream of consciousness technique; and to offer some suggestions to enhance the teaching of stream of consciousness in fiction.

2. Method

The researcher used content analysis in five selected novels namely: Mrs. Dalloway, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, The Sound and the Fury, State of War and Pilgrimage. These were chosen based on their being representatives or models of the genre under study. This paper tried also to present how the selected novels manifest the characteristics of SOC as a literary technique. Further, it uncovered other devices that helped the authors in presenting SOC. Finally, the researcher attempted to suggest enhancement in teaching of the same fictions.

3. Findings

Based on the findings, it is therefore generalized that:

1. The five stream of consciousness novels which are characterized by: unorganized succession of images, fluid ramblings of the mind's conversation with itself, focused contents of a character's mind at a given point in space and time, and evident skip from one character to another in the middle of the page make the reading of a character's thoughts difficult to follow since the monologues are not wholly developed.

2. The characteristics of the stream of consciousness technique are reflected in the five selected novels through:

2.1 Unorganized succession of images is shown by listing accidental appearances of sensory impressions in Mrs. Dalloway, and remembering and forming ideas triggered by external world in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. In State of War, employment of factual narratives intervened by different impressions in their environment, the loss of verbal communication in Pilgrimage, and also non-verbal communication of thoughts in The Sound and the Fury. Instead of verbal exchange of thoughts, the authors present the concepts through sense perceptions.

2.2 Fluid ramblings of the mind's conversation with itself is evident by dramatizing mental states rather than summarizing in Mrs. Dalloway, shifting from narrated SOC to direct quotation of character's silent speech in A Portrait of the Artist..., dramatic train of thought also flowing fluidly with or without narrator's intervention for State of War. In Pilgrimage, the character's self analysis and affirmation produced aimless conversation within her mind which is also evident for The Sound and the Fury.

2.3 Focused content of a character's mind at a given point in space and time is elaborated more by: showing what time of the day, how long and how far does the mental action take place. This is manifested both in Mrs. Dalloway and A Portrait ... while Clarissa can't get to sleep at 3 o'clock in the morning and in between drowsiness for Stephen. Focusing on using the motifs as the characters' contents of the mind in both State of War and the Sound and the Fury. For Pilgrimage, the author apparently used sentence fragments, suspension points and lightness in punctuation to convey the characters' moment to moment experiences informally and flexibly.

2.4 Skip from one character to another in the middle of the page is done by: brief snatches of dialogue from speaker to listener, abrupt entry of an all-knowing narrator into the mind of his character without any warning, using of chaos and carefully woven dialogues from a number of characters to stage the need of the heightened climax.

3. The following literary devices were used to manifest stream of consciousness technique.

3.1 Flashback Virginia Woolf employed the words "lake" and "Peter" as one of her character to introduce the recalling method in Mrs. Dalloway. Likewise, for Joyce, play of conversation triggers Stephen's past experiences, for State of War, Rosca used the linear progression, shifting the narration from a direct to an

indirect monologue. While Dorothy Richardson used images in the environment, Faulkner in addition to images, also became very sensitive with the sounds that help his characters connect to their past.

3.2. Foreshadowing Sudden change of Clarissa's behavior was used by the author to foretell an upcoming change of decision, Stephen's new discoveries in his Christian school, the bell's ringing and cocking of the crows in *State of War*, daydreaming of future events in Richardson's *Pilgrimage* and shadows, likewise time denote forecasting in the novels.

3.3 Motif Woolf recurrently used both time and water while Joyce employed echoing thought of apology, music in forms of prayers, secular songs and latin phrases. Bells, likewise emerald stones in *State of War*, gender and death in *Pilgrimage* and lastly, time and shadow in *The Sound and the Fury*.

4. The researcher has offered a number of suggestions to enhance the teaching of stream-of-consciousness fiction among students.

4. Recommendation

The researcher recommended that both secondary and tertiary educational institutions must introduce the characteristics of stream of consciousness through the stories they take up in class. Teachers need to take up the genre of any literary piece first in the level where students are more comfortable with. Literal level of comprehension may take the form of vocabulary expansion, character, setting and plot identification. Inferences can be drawn from taken passages or quotations. Stream of consciousness technique and other literary devices may be discussed in critical analysis and integrative level includes appreciation and application of the novel as a whole. Other literary devices like echo, allusion, alliteration and symbolism employed to manifest stream of consciousness technique may be used as a focus for a further research. The suggestions enumerated may be tried and evaluated. Future research on SOC technique particularly the novel "Gagamba" by F. Sionil Jose may be undertaken also.

References

- Arreola, "Psychological Truisms in Selected Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature Winning Plays from 1953-1973." Unpublished Dissertation, MLQU, 2003.
- Barnet, Sylvan. (1997). *An Introduction to Literature*. 11th ed New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Bongcac, Roque A. "The Gendering of Speech and Thought Presentation in Ninotchka Rosca's *Twice Blessed: A Stylistic Analysis*." Unpublished Dissertation, Philippine Normal University, 2003.
- "Bookrags Book Notes on "BookRags. Retrieved 28 November 2008, from the World Wide Web, <http://www.bookrags.com/notes/saf/>
- Bradford, R. (1997). *Stylistics*. London: Routledge.
- Burney, Christie Lamon and Shirupa Dhar, "Stream of Consciousness in *To the Lighthouse*," 2002.
- Canares, Milagros F. "The stream of Consciousness Short Stories: A Stylistic Investigation." Unpublished Dissertation, Philippine Normal University, 2002.
- Carter, R. ed. (1997). *Language and Literature An Introductory Reader in Stylistics*. New York: Routledge.
- Chatman, S. (1973). *Story and Discourse*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
- Cox, C.B.(1963). *The Free Spirit A Study of Liberal Humanism in the Novels of G. Eliot, Hen James, E.M. Forster, V. Woolf, Augus Wilson*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury:s A Hypertext-Windows Internet Explorer* <http://www.usask.ca/English/Faulkner/main/april 7/index.html>

- Felber, Lynette. (1995). *The Gender and Genre in Novels Without End. The British Roman-Fleuve*. Florida, USA: University Press of Florida.
- Friedman, Norman. (1955). "Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept." *FMLA*.
- Gavanes, Virginia B. "Empowerment of Filipino Women as Reflected in Twenty Filipino Short Stories in English," Unpublished Dissertation MLQU, 2005.
- Gateway to the Great Books 5. Robert Hutchins ed. (1963). *Critical Essays*. Toronto: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.
- Heiney, Donald W. (1954). *Contemporary Literature*. Woodbury, New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc.
- Hogan, Patrick Colm. (1995). *Joyce Milton and the Theory of Influence*. USA: University Press of Florida.
- Holman, Hugh C. and William Hamman. (1992). *Handbook to Literature*. 6th ed. New York: McMillan.
- Humphrey, R. (1954). *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel*. Los Angeles, CA: University of CA Press.
- Joyce, James (1991). *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, New York: Penguin Putnam Inc.
- Kaplan, C. (1986). *Criticism: The Major Statements*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Leech G.N. and Short, M.H. (1987). *Style and Fiction*. London: Longman.
- Lomeda, Restituto R. "Realism in the Selected Poems of E.E. Cummings, T.S. Eliot and Robert Frost." Unpublished Dissertation, MLQU. 2004.
- Manansala, Daisy Cauilan, "The Filipino Woman as Projected in the Chosen Works of Nick Joaquin: An Analysis", Unpublished Dissertation, MLQU, 1998.
- Mendiola, C. (1995). *Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway: A Stylistic Analysis* in V. Mendiola and V. Ramos eds. (1994) *Kritisismo, Teorya at Paglalapat*. Manila: Rex Book Store.
- Mepham, John, "Stream of Consciousness," *The Literary Encyclopedia* 17 October 2003. (<http://www.litency.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&VID=1062>, accessed >Nov 2008)
- Mills, S. (1995). *Feminist Stylistics*. London: Routledge.
- Naremore, James. (1973). *The World Without a Self. Virginia Woolf and the Novel*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Padget, John B. "The Sound and the Fury: Commentary" *William Faulkner on the Web*. 19 July 2008 <<http://www.mcsr.olemiss.edu/~egjbp/Faulkner/n-sf.html>>.
- Pointed Roofs (Pilgrimage1) by Dorothy Richardson <http://www.fullbooks.com/Pointed-Roofs-Pilgrimage-1,3,4-4.html>
- Peck, J. and Coyle, M. (1993). *Literary Terms and Criticisms*. London: McMillan Press, Ltd.
- Resnais, Alain, "The Stream of Consciousness in the Films", Columbia University. http://www.tau.ac.il/~haim/s_chaptr.htm
- Rosca, Ninotchka (2005). *State of War*, Pasig, Philippines: Anvil Publishing, Inc.
- Santiago, Jr. Andres Julio V. (2007). "Magical Realism as Reflected in Five Selected Novels of Non-Latin American Writers," Unpublished Dissertation, MLQU.
- Shumeyko, Amelia Mari. (April 30, 2008). "Gender Within Stream of Consciousness: To the Lighthouse and the Sound and the Fury." Senior Thesis, Boston College.
- Schapiro, Barbara Ann. (1994). *Literature and the Relational Self*, New York: New York University Press.

- Schultz, Duane P. and Sydney Schultz. (1996). *A History of Modern Psychology*. 6th ed. New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.
- (1962). *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Major Authors edition. USA: WW Norton & Company, Inc.
- Tosca, Susana. (2001). "Hypertext and Literature: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man." Dissertation, Universidad Complutense de Madrid.
- Weinstein, Philip M. ed. (1995). *The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner*, USA: Cambridge University.
- Woolf, Virginia (1992). *Mrs. Dalloway*, New York, USA: Penguin Books USA Inc. Valbuena, Victor T. (n.d.) *Qualitative Content Analysis*.