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Time, Images, And Symbolism in The Novels of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce

¹Neelima Dwivedi and ²Dr. Suresh Singh

¹Research Scholar, Mahakaushal University, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, India

²Professor, Mahakaushal University, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, India

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Corresponding Author: Neelima Dwivedi

Abstract

James Joyce and Virginia Woolf offer deep psychological insights into the thoughts of their characters that go beyond conventional narrative structures and characterization. James Joyce's use of stream of consciousness in his novels: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Ulysses*, and *Finnegans Wake*, emphasizing the techniques he employs to depict characters' inner states and emotive experiences. Both chapters explore shared techniques such as soliloquy, interior monologue, and flashbacks, highlighting similarities and differences in Woolf's and Joyce's approaches to consciousness.

Keywords: Society, History, Literature, Modernism, European

Introduction

Among the pivotal periods in the history of literature, modernism stands out for its rejection of canonical literary practices and its pursuit of new forms of storytelling. An important player in this movement was the Irish writer James Joyce, whose legacy is felt in many different literary traditions around the world and extends well beyond modernist literature. Research and study of Joyce's works make it clear that contemporary literature scholars and academics still need to study them. This is because Joyce's works provide endless material for understanding the origins of modernist experiments and narrative innovations, which are closely tied to the general literary image.

James Joyce, a prominent figure in European literary modernism, is known for his "composer of exquisite late Edwardian lyrics who subsequently created the radically new narrative styles of 'Ulysses' and 'Finnegan's Wake'. Joyce's peripatetic career and complex reinvention of modern Western culture have made him a fascinating and mysterious figure, and he is a subject of enduring fascination. Even in the modern intellectual spectrum, the ideas presented by Joyce are very pertinent. There has been no change in the prevalence of issues such as alienation, existential confusion, and cynicism regarding reality over

the years and centuries. Studying Joyce's thematic themes has a dual purpose: first, it satisfies scholarly interest; second, it reveals universal qualities of the human experience that elevate art; and third, it becomes relevant even when this or that society faces challenges related to identity and navigating a world that is changing at a rapid pace.

In order to evaluate and address the "heap of broken images" of Modernity and contemporary times, the modern novel of the twentieth century showcases a great deal of diversity, complexity, risk-taking, and creativity. Rescue operations in the dark, with cross gusts of wind influencing the movements of a large number, are what Conrad sees as the novelist's job.

James Joyce was one of the best contemporary authors; his works often dealt with universal themes of liberty and humanity. His writings focus on people as individuals rather than on society as a whole. James Joyce had a significant impact on the fictional method of authors of the twentieth century, spanning realists and postmodernists, since he consistently probed the whole spectrum of language in all of his works. There is no need to recreate the Stephen hero story if the artist's childhood portrait serves as a stand-in. Its original publication was as an autobiography in the 1914–

1915 issue of *The Egoist*, and its subsequent publication as a book in 1916 is the most recent development. The novel was acknowledged as a masterpiece by the author. In the work, Joyce portrays himself as Stephen Dedalus, a character based on the legendary Greek mythology master Daedalus, and recounts his early existence. This is where James Joyce paints a vivid image of late 19th-century Ireland for his readers, along with the elements that, in his view, contributed to the decline of his people and nation: religion and the death of the proletariat.

Through the eyes of the narrator, we see Dublin as he develops from a Catholic youth into a young adult with artistic aspirations, who travels to Paris to pursue his dream. Starting with his early upbringing and continuing until his departure to Paris, Joyce writes the narrative of Dedalus with a mix of pity and mockery toward his alter persona. Throughout his journey, Joyce has a number of profound realizations about concepts. He created a new language via the use of symbols and other narrative forms, drawing from mythology, literature, and history. His love of language shone through in his experimental writing. Some have likened James Joyce to the likes of the great thinkers Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein, whose legacies to society are immense and unparalleled. When published, the book was groundbreaking in terms of both style and substance. This work popularized Joyce's stream of consciousness style, which involves recounting a character's thoughts as they occur to them. The story progresses thus by following Stephen's mental journey.

Substantial literary movements occurred in the early 20th century, when authors abandoned conventional story structures in favor of more experimental approaches that more accurately portrayed the contemporary world's fractured reality and intricate psychological landscapes. The groundbreaking narrative experiments of these trailblazers are most notably those of D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf. Their works shed light on the complexities of human mind and the inner lives of their characters via the use of Modernist literary devices such as stream-of-consciousness, free indirect speech, and fragmented temporal structures. Woolf, Joyce, and Lawrence all contributed new narrative approaches to the English novel, which this article analyzes. This research sheds light on the ways in which Woolf, Joyce, and Lawrence reworked literary story to reflect a dynamic and unpredictable reality by analyzing their use of symbolic realism, psychological depth, and narrative innovation, respectively.

Literature Review

Belga, Chloe. (2024) ^[1]. This research seeks to examine the impact of the narrative strategies found in modernist literature, namely the stream of consciousness technique-which is closely tied to psychology-on high school students' level of sympathetic involvement when reading this genre. Few studies have specifically examined the modernist genre in relation to involvement, since much of the prior study has been on fiction. When it comes to modernism in particular, there is a dearth of empirical research on sympathetic involvement, and nobody has yet targeted high school students as a demographic to study this topic. In this study, a questionnaire was used to quantify the following aspects of empathetic engagement: narrative understanding, narrative

presence, cognitive and affective empathy or combined empathy, and distractions.

This analysis of James Joyce's *"The Dead"* (1914) delves into the narrative space of the work and how it contributes to its thematic power, highlighting the paralysis of the Dubliners, particularly Gabriel. The paralysis of Gabriel's mind is a result of the novel's examination of spiritual death, societal standards and character loss, love and marriage, nationalism and cultural identity of Dubliners. Using Gabriel Zoran's idea of spatial critique, this study examines three narrative spaces in James Joyce's *"The Dead"*. Topographical, chronotopic, and textual spaces are the aforementioned three types of narrative spaces. Important to the story's protagonists and its "paralysis" motif, the geographical locations allude to the hotel and the Misses Morkan's Annual Dance.

Al-Sheikh, Nawal. (2024) ^[2]. Using a biography of Woolf and a narrative summary of her 1927 book *To the Lighthouse*, this study analyzes the work from a structuralist perspective. Before developing an effective structuralist framework, it is necessary to thoroughly analyze each section to see how Woolf deals with narrative components such as chronology, viewpoint, and character connections. When characters like Lily Briscoe and Mrs. Ramsay face the contemporary anxieties associated with their social situations, we analyze the narrative measures and important binary oppositions at work.

Zaki, Asst. (2024) ^[3]. The usage of stream of consciousness in *Ulysses* by James Joyce is the subject of this article. One kind of storytelling is the "stream of consciousness," which allows the reader to follow the protagonist's or antagonist's internal monologue as it unfolds. In *Ulysses*, Joyce expertly utilizes this approach to explore the intricate brains of Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom. Joyce delves into the complexities of human mind and transports readers to the characters' inner lives by forgoing conventional linear narration.

Ellmann, Maud. (2011) ^[4]. Maud Ellmann, a leading literary critic of her time, brings together her writings on modernism, psychoanalysis, and Irish literature in this seminal new volume. She explores the links between modernity's expanding technical networks and the structures of modernist fiction via her intricate readings of Henry James, James Joyce, and Virginia Woolf. She draws linkages between these two realms and Freudian psychoanalysis. *The Nets of Modernism* delves at the meaning of depictions of physical and psychological violence, such as bites, scars, and wounds, and how these pictures link to the early 20th-century cultural obsessions with "vampirism" and similar themes. This delightful, subtle, and thought-provoking book from 2010 sheds new light on the long-lasting impact of Freudian psychoanalysis and Anglophone modernism via their interconnected consequences.

Time in The Novels of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce

Henri Bergson's concept of "la duree" in France and William James's concern in the continuity of awareness in America separately articulated the new idea of time as a continuous flow rather than a collection of discrete moments. Even authors who had not studied Bergson were impacted by the prevalent Bergsonian theories of time in the

1920s. The old type of plot, which moved the characters from one moment to the next in a precise chronological sequence, became suspicious as a result. Instead, a new type of narrative texture emerged that moved back and forth with a new freedom to try to capture the sense of time as it actually operates in human awareness of it.

Bergson's "la duree" hypothesis explains consciousness and time. In his work *Time and Free will: An work on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, he first presented the idea of duration. One of the key elements of the novel *Stream of Consciousness* is duration, or "la duree." Duration is a condition of perpetual flow in which the past, present, and future are all one and the same. It describes how the clock and the length of an experience as seen by the human mind are used to measure time concurrently. "Duration is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances," according to his definition. And just as the past continues to expand, so too does its preservation have no boundaries.

Our basic intuition allows us to understand that the past, present, and future are all part of an inseparable continuity. There are two types of time: mechanical time, sometimes known as clock time, and psychological time, also known as inner time or "duree." Clock time, which is determined by the clock striking, is the passing of hours. Events are governed by time in a chronological linear sequence based on their temporal occurrence. The separation into past, present, and future is artificial and mechanical; the psychological time, or "duree," is thought of as a flow, a continuous flowing stream and a trip from youth to age, from the present to the past, and to the future. In the human mind, experience is referred to as psychological time. To be precise, psychological time is the amount of time we believe to be involved in our experiences. According to Bergson, the relative emotional intensity of a moment may be used to quantify psychological time, both internal and subjective, rather than time and place. He contends that man's inner sense of duration, or "duree," is the primary source of reality and that chronological or clock time is illusory. Mathematical time is broken down and made fluid by memory, which is the main component of time in the mind. The only real way to understand aesthetic experience, according to modern novelists, is to embrace the inner duration against chronological time.

Time does not influence consciousness. Consciousness is an ongoing process, much like time. A person's consciousness extends beyond the here and now. Sometimes a person lives in the present while thinking about the past or dreaming about the future. As a result, awareness is ever-changing, ever-flowing, ever-forward, ever-backward. Psychological time is characterized by the ongoing impact of the past on the present, the coexistence of the past, present, and future in the mind, and the simultaneous operation of the past, present, and future in human consciousness. These occur because the human mind is dynamic and ever-evolving, never static or fixed. It is necessary to see a sequence of moments as a part of the dynamic flow of time. The past exists in the subconscious, and memory and remembrance bring the unconscious to the conscious level in a matter of seconds. Psychologists Freud, Adler, and Jung provide this idea. The human psyche is a complex and multifaceted thing.

Generally speaking, it is not identity *et al.* but rather a sort of dreamlike tangle of feelings and responses that are so sudden and unplanned that we are never aware of them. In many ways, the soul is really a jet of energy shared by our race, sex, or social group rather than being uniquely assigned to one ego or another. Only in certain situations and for specific lengths of time, while under the influence of an immediate practical necessity, does our consciousness-a little portion of our soul-act rationally or coherently. For the most part, it follows an association of concepts so bizarre-yet natural-that we are unable to track its development, continuously veering off into what appear to be irrelevancies when measured against any acknowledged prevailing interest. The soul is completely unaffected by the past, present, and future.

Human personalities are ever-changing. Bergson's world of reality, which "we all seize from within, by intuition and not by simple analysis," is the focus of stream of consciousness novels, which explore the incomprehensible ways in which human personalities are dealt with. The self that survives is our own individuality as it evolves throughout time. We may not have intellectual sympathy for anyone else, but we do have empathy for ourselves. Experienced time differs from both ordinary time and the scientific understanding of time. Bergson concentrates on two types of time: clock time and interior or subjective time. Clock time is quantifiable and measurable, but subjective time is qualitative and not. Bergson asserts that science cannot understand subjective time *et al.* The scientific understanding of time is quantitative as it can be measured. Space may be used to understand quantitative changes that have happened across time. Time and distance cannot explain the qualitative shift that took place in awareness.

Imagery and symbolism in The Novels of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce

Anything, whether living or inanimate, that symbolizes or stands for something other than a notion that is often connected to it is considered a symbol. It blends a private or global thought with a picture. The sensory perception of an item, scene, or event is described through imagery. The collection of images is called imagery. It should be mentioned that visuals are used to communicate symbols. Symbols make language more expressive and allow the writer to express abstract concepts and underlying tone that are not possible to express clearly using language's standard tools. They are figures, characters, objects, and colors that are used to symbolize abstract notions or ideas. When words are given underlying meaning instead of significance, they even become symbols. The symbols' suggestiveness arouses feelings and communicates reality.

Therefore, a good symbolism will be more than just a diagram or an allegory; it will make the most of the resources of passion and beauty, provide glimpses of mystery and surprise, and captivate the mind it is intended for with dreamy moments. It will appeal to man's intuitive sense and eager heart rather than his astute intellect.

Symbolism is one of the key literary devices employed by Woolf and Joyce in their stream-of-consciousness works. As authors of stream-of-consciousness books, they delve into the inner lives of their characters. Since the unconscious is by definition unknowable and can only be understood by

symbols, this investigation can only be carried out using symbols. In addition to soliloquies and monologues, symbols and imagery delve into the inner workings of the human mind. An author might use the imagery to convey his or her point of view, establish a tone, depict the thoughts of characters, and convey abstract concepts and emotions.

Mrs. Woolf approaches symbols in a novel, nearly revolutionary way. She undermines a symbol's ability to function as a signifier and questions the direct connections between the symbol and the signified item. As a stream-of-consciousness author, she suggestively and indirectly conveys complicated mental processes via the use of both natural and manufactured images. Mitchell's view on weft is as follows: "She knew how an image could grow to symbolic potential in order to carry her narrative forward; and she was sensitive to the way poetic connotations occur to define the numerous inflections upon which the meaning of her novel would rest." The separation of symbolic parts from the rest of the narrative and from each other is ludicrous since the imagery and symbols are so linked. Woolf explains the nature of symbols and attempts to explain how they function, impact the mind, and quickly expose the depths of their meaning. She says:

If we attempt to analyze our feelings, we will discover that we are affected as though by music—the senses, not the intellect, are stimulated. The sentence's rise and fall instantly calms us to a mood and transports us to a place where the particular is quenched and the near vanishes. As he stands "between an open window and a dead body on a summer's day," our minds are thus widened and lulled to a width of apprehension, standing open to receive one by one in slow and stately procession the ideas that De Quincy wishes us to receive: the glory of the flowers below, the pomp of the heaven above, and the golden fullness of life.

The concept is reinforced, enhanced, and expanded upon. The sense of stillness and eternity is heightened by the thought of haste and fear, of grasping for something that flies eternally. We are kept in the same mood by recurrent waves of feeling, such as the sound of bells on summer evenings, the swaying of palm trees, and the eternally sorrowful breezes. The feeling is never spoken; instead, it is hinted at and gradually brought to life by the visuals that are shown to us again until it remains, in all its complexity, whole.

To the Lighthouse is a meaningful title in and of itself. It alludes to the voyage that Mr. Ramsay and his kids had as well as a number of the main characters' inner journeys. The towering, massive lighthouse is encircled by the water. It is the novel's most significant and intricate symbol. "The lighthouse sends its beam across the sea to the house and land." because the references become continuous and the imagery become part of the book's overall texture. The lighthouse itself serves as the "objective correlative" for the entire range of emotions evoked by *To the Lighthouse*, and any attempt to explain it would be pointless. Woolf's brother purchased the Talland House, where she spent her vacations with her family. The environment, including the stunning coastline, the waves, and the lighthouse, captured the attention and imagination of Leslie Stephen's four children and nearly became subconsciously ingrained in their thoughts, particularly in Virginia's.

To the Lighthouse projects the actual sensations, which

include youngsters playing along the beach, the rising and falling of the waves, the sound of the waves, and the rising and setting of the sun. Woolf spent her actual childhood summer at the little Talland House in Cornwall, England, with her parents, brother, and sister. It is significant because, even after the visits have ended, it still has control over her emotions. The Stephens continued to visit the location every summer with their kids until the year before Julia passed away. Characters perceive the lighthouse from their own perspectives, and it resides within their awareness. The Ramsays family seeks to reach and satisfy this symbol of human longing and inaccessibility. Throughout the narrative, the lighthouse has been associated with a variety of emotions and delusions. For James, it is both a goal and a destination. At the start of the novel, he yearns intensely for a trip *To the Lighthouse*. James's wish to visit the lighthouse makes it obvious how important it is.

After a night of darkness and a day of sailing, the amazement he had been anticipating for what felt like years and years was now within reach. James Ramsay, sitting on the floor cutting out pictures from the illustrated catalogue of the Army and Navy Stores, gave the picture of a refrigerator, as his mother spoke, a heavenly bliss because, even at the age of six, he belonged to that great clan that cannot keep this feeling separate from that and must let future prospects, with their joys and sorrows, cloud what is actually at hand. For these people, even in the earliest childhood, any turn in the wheel of sensation has the power to crystallize and transfix the moment its gloom. It was rimmed with happiness.

When James and his father visit the lighthouse at the book's conclusion, James muses, "The lighthouse was then a silvery, misty-looking tower with a yellow eye..." He appears to be viewing a different image from what he had intended to see. On a naked rock, it is actually a stark tower. The one he had seen through the window 10 years ago is very different from this one. Unconsciously, he anticipates being let down. As the omniscient narrator, the author presents this view of reality to the reader. Woolf is able to convey reality to the reader in addition to representing James's mental content through the use of omniscient author description. However, it might be argued that they overcome mystery along their voyage. For Mrs. Ramsay, the lighthouse represents security and contentment.

During her last creative vision, Lily develops a kind of obsession with the lighthouse. When the boat arrives at the lighthouse, she has completed her painting. Lily relies more on her instincts than her intellect when choosing colors. The lighthouse metaphor unites the many characters' states of awareness and again connects the novel's overall structure to the nature of reality on a more nuanced level. In the end, the real landing at the lighthouse not only puts a stop to the long-delayed plan, but it also eliminates the character discrepancies and achieves harmony in both texture and structure. Lily's long-standing painting issue is resolved, and James's animosity against his father is swapped out for compassion and love. It depicts the continuity and togetherness of people and endures from generation to generation. It symbolizes the unbroken continuation of mankind and human ideals since it can endure the devastation caused by the water. Joy and grief are suggested by the lighthouse's alternate light and shadow. The mind's

continuous transition between darkness and light is symbolized by the beacon. As a result, the lighthouse is a significant symbol that affects a number of individuals and has a nuanced and fluctuating impact on feelings and ideas throughout the book. (Feldner M, 2015) ^[5].

The lighthouse is located on a smaller island that faces the island where the Ramsays' vacation home is located. In contrast to the untamed blackness of nature, the home represents civilization and order. The home is said to be "sinking" into "the depths of darkness" in the narrative. A microcosm of society is presented by this group of people, who are likewise cut off from the rest of civilization on this secluded island. Mrs. McNab is later dispatched to save it. She must fight against the elements, the conflict between the insensibility of the outside world—a destructive force that brings about a terrible death—and human nature, which strives for its own existence. Following Mrs. Ramsay's passing, the home is destroyed by the elements.

Woolf's use of natural elements as symbols is one of its distinctive qualities. She makes symbolic use of natural forces. Every color and sound of nature served as a lesson to her in her early years. For her, the huge ocean did not remain silent; *The Waves* sent eternal lessons. She developed with the powers of nature, which molded her very being. The sea serves as a potent emblem in the novel's setting. Mrs. Ramsay perceives her own mental condition reflected in the waves. As a result, the sound of *The Waves* is calming when Mrs. Ramsay is content and safe, but it is terrible and menacing when she is confused and uneasy. Mrs. Ramsay is terrified by the noises of the waves. In her fight to preserve "order and dry land," she perceives natural forces as hostile and chaotic. Mrs. Ramsay also finds solace in the ocean: "Of the children playing cricket, had ceased; so that the monotonous fall of *The Waves* on the beach, which for the most part beat a measured and soothing tattoo to her thoughts and seemed consolingly to repeat over and over again as she sat with the children the words of some old cradle song, murmured by nature, 'I am guarding you - I am your support.'" ⁷. The narrative is filled with the sound of the waves. The constant onward motion of *The Waves* represents the everlasting flow of time and life. We represent impermanence, while *The Waves* represent permanence. The abrupt springs of energy in the human soul are like *The Waves* of water. The idea that *The Waves* are consuming land is a metaphor for how people gradually perish over time. They constantly remind the characters that things are happening in real life.

Conclusion

James Joyce puts all of his creative energy into his books. In his fervent effort to develop a style that differs greatly from that of his peers, he is a lone advocate. He is different from his Irish friends who support Irish culture and heritage because of his unyielding attitude and complete dedication to creating a unique style. A multifaceted importance has been added by psychologists Freud, Jung, and Adler; philosophers Bergson and Berkeley; historians and philosophers Vico; anthropologists Frazer and Levy-Bruhl; physicist Einstein; symbolists and naturalists. The strongest examples of the stream of consciousness approach are found in Woolf and Joyce.

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