

Finding Artist's True Path in Life (Stream of Consciousness in Joyce's novel A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man)

Nazira Mukhitdinova

Jizzakh State Pedagogical Institute, Uzbekistan.

E-mail address: naziramukhitdinova07@gmail.com

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Abstract: The literature at the beginning of twentieth century becomes totally different. Now the writers are fascinated with the inner lives of teeming impressions. The novel of Irish writer James Joyce A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man is distinguished by its use of various techniques; most remarkable "stream of consciousness" which is an attempt to describe the inner thoughts and memory of the hero. This article is an effort to research the "stream of consciousness" as a technique used in Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man (1916) which is one of the greatest of modern novels. Joyce created his novel in five chapters which describe the protagonist's life, from childhood to manhood.

Keywords: stream of consciousness, technique, artist, narrative technique, inner life.

1. Introduction

A portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is one of the earlier examples in English literature of a novel, which makes extensive use of stream of consciousness. "stream of consciousness is a narrative technique in non-dramatic fiction intended to render the flow of myriad impressions-visual, auditory, physical, associative, and subliminal- that impinge on the consciousness of an individual and form part of his awareness along the trend of his rational thoughts" (Burkdall, p. 24). The narrative appears in the interior life of a character rather than from the perspective of an objective third-person narrator. While in Paris in 1902, Joyce discovered the French novel Les Lauriers sont Coups; Joyce credits this novel with the inspiration for creating his own style of stream of consciousness narrative.

In his introduction on the use of this technique, Robert Hurley shows that it was first

used, as literary term, in the late 19th century. He defines it as following: "employed to evince subjective as well as objective reality. It reveals the character's feelings, thoughts, and actions, often following an associative rather than a logical sequence, the technique was perhaps brought to its highest point of development in early twentieth century novels where stream of consciousness plays an important role." (Hurley, p. 19)

While Portrait lacks the ambition and scope of Joyce's later stream of conscious masterpiece, Ulysses, in many ways it was a brand new novel. The opening part is in stream of consciousness with a child protagonist, and the novel is marked by an increasing sophistication of narrative voice as the protagonist matures. Although many parts of the novel are written in a relatively direct style, Joyce creates long passages that sustain a complex and difficult language attempting to approximate the workings of human

thoughts. Even when the work is narrated in a straightforward manner, the narrative voice never strays from the interior life of Stephen Dedalus. We see events through Stephen's prism.

However, there is no agreed precise definition of the term and no consensus has been arrived as to how it is best used. This has caused much confusion in discussions of modernist technique.

This term is often used as a synonym of interior monologue, but they can also be distinguished, in two ways. In the first sense (psychological), the stream of consciousness is the subject matter while interior monologue is the technique for presenting it. In the second sense (literary), stream of consciousness is a special style of interior monologue: while an interior monologue always presents a character's thoughts directly, it does not necessarily mingle them with the impressions, nor does it necessarily violate the norms of grammar, syntax and logic; but the stream of consciousness technique also does one or both of these things.

Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man shows a wide range of narrative styles. There are lush and intricate passages, sections narrated in direct style as it was mentioned above, and highly experimental sections. The closing part is simply done, all in the form of Stephen's journal entries before leaving Ireland, the variety of styles is part of what makes novel such an enjoyable to read.

2. Stephen's Childhood

In his novel, Joyce is experimenting with many different techniques and styles, especially the use of stream of consciousness. He uses the third person to describe the thoughts of Stephen Dedalus, but everything in the novel is given through the prism of Dedalus. Joyce does not describe what is happening objectively; he just explains it as Dedalus experiences it subjectively. In short, he opens episodic accounts. The narrative prose follows and reflects the stages of Stephen's intellectual development. It swoops when Stephen

is high; it crashes when he is brought low. The beginning of the book – describing Stephen's life as a baby- represents the thoughts of an infant as well as other people's so called baby talk to an infant:

“Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo... His father told him that story: his father looked at him through a glass: he had a hairy face. ” (A Portrait, ch. 1, p.7)

This passage shows the use of stream of consciousness technique. Joyce exposes direct to Stephen's interior world. We are given no hints how to feel or react. It describes the way that Dedalus interacts mentally with his world rather than objectively describing that world itself. Other techniques are used as well, but much of the novel is represented in a form of stream of consciousness. Joyce uses the third person narrative and this adds an additional layer of complexity. In fact, this is considered one of the great modernist works of fiction.

Joyce follows the character of Stephen Daedulus from his childhood up till his manhood, making a great use of stream of consciousness. We can clearly see the transformation of Stephen's mind and vision of the world, all generated by the circumstances. We can watch the evolution and sensibilities by illuminating the moments from the novel: listening to the melody of the prose and the organization of Stephen's thoughts. It becomes clear; Stephen is stepping into adult world.

Manhood starts at Clongowes, the reader understands that the hero is more accepted by classmates, even if he is still an outsider: he is sensitive and many boys try to bully him. But all the thoughts are gone when he thinks about returning home soon.

After the incident when wells would shoulder him into the square ditch Stephen felt sick. “the cold slime of the ditch covered his

whole body; and, when the bell rang for study and the lines filed out of the playrooms, he felt the cold air of the corridor and staircase inside his clothes". (A Portrait, ch.1, p. 15)

This incident makes Stephen think about his funeral and people who would be sorry for him. Joyce, now, masterly uses the technique of stream of consciousness.

"He wondered if he would die. You could die just the same on a sunny day. He might die before his mother came. Then he would have a dead mass in the chapel like the way the fellows had told him it was when Little had died. All the fellows would be at the mass, dressed in black, all with sad faces.....and he would be buried in the little graveyard of the community off the main avenue of limes. And Wells would be sorry then..." (A Portrait, ch.1, p. 22)

Stephen is extremely sensitive child and the fact that he is not strong and athletic enough makes him nervous and fearful. Throughout the initial phase of the hero's life, we can see some traits in Stephen that are the seeds of complicated personality. The writer uses the stream of consciousness to show different features of Stephen's outlook and his attitude to the events in his life. The dramatic manner of narration is best illustrated in the account of the Christmas dinner party in the first chapter, in which the reader feels something of the strained atmosphere throughout the narration. This section is probably the one which is least connected with the stream-of-consciousness method, for Stephen's mind is so shocked at the behaviour and language of grown-ups, and is so totally engaged by the fearful quarrel taking place before his eyes, that he does not have the opportunity to think for himself while the incident is in progress

3. Artist's Adolescence

The second chapter, tracing Stephen's adolescence from the first awakening of sexuality and his growing isolation from his family, has a greater fragmentation of styles than the first, and

these various styles are often mixed together to show Stephen's outer and inner realities coming into contact with each other. In Chapter I Stephen came into contact with words through the reality of life in school and at home. In Chapter II the reverse happens, and he begins to apprehend reality imaginatively through words and symbols. This imaginative interpretation of external reality continues till Chapter IV, after which, in Chapter V, Stephen comes into maturity and loses this romantic personal world. In Chapter II, though the narrator escapes into the labyrinth of language, there are contrasting passages of vivid descriptions of cheerless reality, in expressions like "stale odours of the foreshore" and "foul, green puddles and clots of liquid dung", which echo the "square ditch" images of the first chapter. Joyce's stylistic perfection is best seen when, after such nauseating observations, the second chapter ends with Stephen finding an avenue of escape in romantic literature, searching for an idealized woman to match his own dreams. Till the end of Chapter IV Stephen's flight of spirit expressed in language clashes with images of external reality – as in the description of the two removal vans.

Adolescence is a critical time for our hero and a very crucial one. Stephen understands that he has changed. Now his childhood became dim memory. He has read *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and imagines himself traveling throughout the world, thinking about his old love, Mercedes:

"...When he had broken up this scenery, weary of its tinsel, there would come to his mind the bright picture of Marseilles, of sunny trellises and of Mercedes. Outside the Blackrock, on the road that led to the mountains, stood a small whitewashed house in the garden of which grew many rosebushes; and in this house, he told himself, another Mercedes lived. Both on the outward and on the homeward journeys he measured distance by this landmark: and in his imagination he lived through a long train of adventures, marvelous as those in the book itself, towards the close of which there appeared an

image of himself, grown older and sadder, standing in a moonlit garden with Mercedes...”

(A Portrait, ch.1, p. 58)

4. Dedulus' Manhood

The writer uses St. Francis Feast Day as a beginning of manhood phase of Stephen's life. It is the time of rebellion against the Catholic values. At first he enters a state of moral paralysis and confusion.

“He had sinned mortally not once but many times and he knew that, while he stood in danger of eternal damnation for the first sin alone, by every succeeding sin he multiplied his guilt and his punishment. His days and works and thoughts could make no atonement for him, the fountains of sanctifying grace having ceased to refresh his soul... his sin, which had covered him from the sight of God, had led him nearer to the refuge of sinners”(A Portrait, ch.3, p. 98)

Joyce is trying to portray Stephen's fears and spiritual pains. On each day of the three days retreat, “Stephen hears a fiery sermon on the torments of hell and the punishments meted out by the just but stern God. Stephen is made sick with fear; the sermons seem as though they were written specially for him. He thinks about his sins, and is too fearful to confess to God, Who seems to him too fearful, or the Blessed Virgin, who seems too pure”(A Portrait, ch.3, p. 31)

The writer now presents the hero as a sinner who can not overcome his feeling of guilt and remorse. He sees awful nightmares about hell; the dreams are so intense that he wakes at night and digs in his thoughts.

“That was the work of devils, to scatter his thoughts and overclouded his conscience, assailing him at the gates of the cowardly and sin corrupted flesh: and, praying God timidly to forgive him his weakness, he crawled up on to the bed and, warping the blankets closely about him, covered his face again with his hands. He had sinned. He had sinned so deeply against heaven and before God that he was not worthy to be

called God's child. Could it be that he, Stephen Daedulus, had done those things?...Goatish creatures with human faces, horny browed lightly bearded and grey as India-rubber. The malice of evil glittered in their hard eyes, as they moved hither and thither...”(A Portrait, ch.3, p. 123-127)

Stephen's mind and soul are filled with great determination to change from a degraded sinner to a devoted man. He is afraid and comes back. He tries various forms of unpleasantness to punish himself. He is back to Church.

The writer now uses the stream of consciousness masterly. Joyce presents Stephen during at this phase of his life as a young discontented man. The vivid movement for Church to an acceptance of his body as a part of beauty is central moment in this chapter. The very new ideas about beauty are his obsession. The hero now moved from sensitivity of love to an obsessive contemplation of aesthetics.

5. Conclusion

In the novel A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man the writer showed hero's life from early childhood to manhood, using one of the most superior techniques ever used in English literature. We can see how Stephen grew up. He matures through all events in his life such as family conflicts and study at Jesuits school. Then he rebels against everything: his family, his religion, his nation. At last, he leaves for Paris to find himself as an artist.

The very gradual point in A Portrait is its narrative style, language, which shows different stages of Stephen's intellectual development.

The use of stream of consciousness technique holds the reader focused on the hero's inner world and sensitivity through the whole text.

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