

Streams of Consciousness

Virginia Woolf and James Joyce are often called modernist because of their use of original techniques like stream of consciousness. A stream of consciousness – novelist seeks to show the reader, the direct mental experience of the characters. He seeks to discover and recreate life as the people feel who live it.

Virginia Woolf rejected the traditional way of telling a story and believed that older novelists had failed to give a true picture of life. Hence, she rejected the conventional technique and adopted a new technique more suited to her purposes. It is for this reason that in 'To The Light House' she has not told a story, in the sense of a series of events, and has concentrated on a small number of characters, whose nature and feelings are conveyed to us largely through their interior monologues.

In the first section, the action is restricted to one evening. The hours between six O' clock and dinner. Part I 'The window' starts with Mrs. Ramsay sitting by the window. After Mrs. Ramsay and James, first to come to scene are Mr. Ramsay and Charles Tensley. They exchange a few words. Thus, Mr. Ramsay and Charles Tensley insistence, that there would be no going to Light House, creates violent reactions in Mrs. Ramsay which points direction for the exploration in her consciousness while Mr. Ramsay moves away from the window Virginia Woolf superbly traces an emotion in her mind until Mr. Ramsay looks calmly at Mrs. Ramsay. Mrs. Ramsay's concerns about children, guests and her husband are given in detail. The part comes to an end with the famous dinner scene where Woolf captures consciousness of all the characters.

Section two of the novel "Time passes" shows the passage of time. The actors of the place grow older, and house at the sea shore ages – free from the habitation of its owners. Mrs. Ramsay dies suddenly and two of her children lose their lives. And time sways. This middle section shows death and rebirth of the deserted house. Lilly Briscoe comes back and remembers the time:

"How aimless, how chaotic, how unreal it was --- a house full of unrelated passions".

Ramsay's friends are again indicated through Lilly's recollections in the final section 'To The Light House'. It survives ten years of Chaos. Lilly Briscoe continues with her stream of consciousness. Through her stream of consciousness, we come to know about Rayleys. (Paul Rayley and Minta). Things had not gone well after the first year of their marriage. Prue Ramsay died of Child-birth. Andrew was killed in shell explosion. Tensley got his fellowship, lectures to a half empty hall. Carmichael achieves fame as a poet. A trip is shown going to 'To The Light House'. It was a trip planned by Mrs. Ramsay. Thus,

Lilly gets her vision and story comes to an end.

“I’ve had many vision”.

- i. Stream of consciousness.
- ii. Virginia Woolf rejected to 'To The Light House' direct interior monologue.
- iii. 1st section ----, the window evening to dinner.
- iv. 2nd section – Lilly – Ruloys (Paul – Minta) Carmicheal. Tensely. Pure-Andrew.