



**TREATMENT OF SENSE OF INDIVIDUAL'S ISOLATION THROUGH STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS –  
VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *Mrs. DALLOWAY***

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**Abstract**

The sense of the individual's isolation is one of the features of the metropolitan life of today and it has been treated in the stream of consciousness technique with all its details. The sense of isolation which the individuals feels in this complicated, mechanical and highly organized society has found frequent expression in the twentieth century literature. In Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* this theme has found the finest treatment to be met with in the entire range of modern fiction. In the word of David Daiches, "the novel open with the heroine planning to give a party; parties bring people together ..... but do they really live together is one lonelier still in a crowd? As she moves about London shopping, every encounter she has produces responses colored by the whole texture of her earlier experiences, so that as we follow the stream of consciousness we learn all her previous history, or at least all that matters.

**Key Words:** Isolation, Sense of Individual's Isolation, Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, Stream of Consciousness, James Joyce

**Introduction**

It is a matter of common literary knowledge that a new technique in literature is the outcome of a profound change in socio-economic conditions and stream of consciousness is not an exception to it. The English novel was essentially bourgeois in its origins, and throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries it was solidly anchored in a social world. The fact of social class was not only taken for granted but even depended on by English novelists; it provided humour and atmosphere and local color as well as motivation for self-advancement. The loss of the confident sense of a common world, a public view of what was significant in human action had an effect on both the themes and the technique of fiction. New concepts of time, influenced by or at least akin to





William James' view of the 'specious present' also was another factor that brought about the emergence of the new technique of fiction known as the stream of consciousness.

### **Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway**

The stream of consciousness technique that Virginia adopted regards life as a flowing reality and hence it is believed that the task of the novelist is not to describe the happenings or events in an individual's life or in the lives many individuals, but to record the impressions of the mind of one or many characters. Mrs. Dalloway is a characteristic specimen of the new technique and we find that the novelist has taken up the incidents of a day in Mrs. Dalloway's life and the accompanying visual, mental and emotional impressions are set down from moment to moment.

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The events of Mrs. Dalloway's day, artfully organized so as to project in a host of different ways the nature of this question of possibilities of communication, are counter-pointed against the events in the day of Mr. and Mrs. Septimus Warren Smith, whom she never meets, but with whom she has a symbolic relationship, which is emphasized when the specialist who treated Smith comes to her party that evening and, in telling of Smith's suicide, produces in her a feeling of identification with the poor man. Septimus warren Smith goes mad because ( as a result of his experiences in the First World War) he has lost all sense of contact with other people at all, is driven into the isolated emptiness of himself, and is dragged back by representatives of crude conventionality, who imagine that by imposing their artificial social norms on him they can restore his sense of communication. The pattern of the novel is woven with extreme delicacy, and the various elements from Mrs. Dalloway's past are brought into the present through a variety of persuasive devices. The prose itself is carefully cadenced and at times almost poetic, though never rhetorical. The highly individual sense of significance which provides the basis for the plot-pattern is conveyed through style and imagery, through the suggestiveness and cunning of the language."





## In the novels of James Joyce

After the analyzing the sense of isolation in the novels of Virginia Woolf, David Daiches has explained in two of the major novels of James Joyce, “James (1882-1941) faced the implications of the loss of world of public values in a very different way. His attitude was complicated by the fact that he early adopted the new technique developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, of the alienation of the artist. The artist had to be outside all conventions of normal society, and this was not only because those conventions and that society as Joyce found them in Dublin represented a paralysis.” An artist had to be outside the norms of the society to be objective. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) he transmuted autobiography into objective fiction and organized his account of potential novelist from infancy to the moment when he realized that art implies exile in such a way as to emphasize at every point the connection between the artist’s objective comprehensive, microcosmic vision and his inevitable alienation. Stephen Dedolus, the hero, is at the beginning of the novel firmly anchored in his family and in the institution of his country. They continue to put forth claims on him throughout the period of his growing up. But when he realized at last that his destiny is to be free of all these claims – it is a brilliantly rendered in moment the novel he has to learn to escape from them, to cultivate the terrible neutrality of the artist.

## In Ulysses

*Ulysses* is the work of exiled artist re-creating at a distance, but with total knowledge, the life he has escaped from. In its rendering of events of one day in Dublin (June 16<sup>th</sup>, 1904) Joyce achieve a realistic surface so brilliant, so convincing in its life and color and movement, that the book can be enjoyed merely for its superficial vitality. But its true vitality goes much deeper. Joyce presentation of the hero is noteworthy. He not only shows all of him, including his whole past (for his whole past is contained in the texture of his present consciousness), but also shows him as everybody else. All points of view are applicable, the same man is hero and fool depending on how you look at him. *Ulysses* is the comedy of multiple identity.

## Conclusion

The strength of the new technique of fiction is that it enables us to know character more intimately than is possible by another method. We know the inner workings of a character’s mind because the mental states of an individual are analyzed by this method in an astonishing manner and with a surprising fidelity to psychological accuracy. One great disadvantage of this method is that it makes an extraordinary demand on the readers since the novelist does not adopt logical time sequence, and since he has a tendency to go into the minutest details, he easily





falls a prey to the defects of incoherence and mere virtuosity. The other disadvantage is that it does not create the characters that are as living as the creatures of flesh and blood are.

It is necessary to bear in mind the fact that the socio-economic factors that brought about the emergence of the stream of consciousness technique were not entirely very desirable features. It must, however, be said to the credit of Virginia Woolf that she has not sacrificed abiding human feeling under the irresistible impact of the new factors.

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