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STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN JOYCE'S *ULYSSES*: LITERARY AND NON-LITERARY INFLUENCES

Abstract
This paper aims to examine both literary and non-literary influences on James Joyce's innovative use of the stream-of-consciousness technique, focusing in particular on two sections of his novel *Ulysses* (1922): the thirteenth episode, "Nausicaa", and the final episode, "Penelope". Since Dorothy Richardson's novel *Pilgrimage* (1915) represents the earliest example of the stream-of-consciousness style in the English language, her influence on Joyce will be explored in detail. On the other hand, the non-literary influence of Joyce's wife, Nora Barnacle, who wrote unpunctuated letters to her husband, will be considered as a possible source of inspiration for the punctuation-free monologue of Joyce's character Molly Bloom in the final episode. In analyzing these influences, the paper relies on Randall Stevenson's study *Modernist Fiction* (1992) and Brenda Maddox's biographical work *Nora: The Real Life of Molly Bloom* (2000).

Key words: James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson, Nora Barnacle, stream of consciousness, modernist novel

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1. Dorothy Richardson and the Stream of Consciousness

The writers' use of what literary critics refer to as the "mind's-eye view" has been one of the primary characteristics of novels written in the early 20th century (Edel 1963: 45). The exploration of the workings of the mind in these novels entailed developing a new writing technique, stream of consciousness, which is generally regarded as one of the most important formal achievements of the modernist movement. The term "stream of consciousness" was introduced by the philosopher William James in his book *Principles of Psychology* (1890). In the chapter "Stream of Thought" James compares the human consciousness and its flux to a stream, while describing the tides of thought with their continuities and discontinuities. Consequently, when employed as a literary device, "the stream of consciousness describes the mental meanderings that are on the edge of dissolving into unconsciousness" (Pope 2013: 103). It is a storytelling technique in which the author tries to provide "a direct quote of the mind", not only from the language area but from the entire awareness (Bowling 1950: 345). Those novels which employ the stream-of-consciousness technique center around the consciousness of one or more characters, so that the reader views the content of the novel through their eyes (Smallwood and Schooler 2015: 489).

In 1918, May Sinclair[1] was the first critic to use the term "stream of consciousness" to describe the literary work of Dorothy Richardson, a twentieth century author whose writing style will later influence James Joyce and Virginia Wolf. When examining Richardson's method of writing, Sinclair focuses on the novel *Pilgrimage*[2] which is comprised of 13 volumes in total and which focuses on the life of Richardson's protagonist, Miriam Henderson, whose consciousness we follow as the novel progresses. Miriam's persona, as well as the rendering of her experience, is representative of the stream-of-consciousness technique, whereby the flow of Miriam's thoughts and emotions serve as a medium for insightful philosophic revelations, striking observations, and crucial experiences that the character undergoes

[1] Sinclair uses this term in an article titled "The Novels of Dorothy Richardson", published in *The Egoist*, 5(4), 57.

[2] The first volume of *Pilgrimage*, titled *Pointed Roofs*, was published in 1915, whereas the last volume which appeard during Richardson's life was *Dimple Hill*, published in 1938. Another, unfinished manuscript was included in the posthumous edition of the novel sequence, published in 1967.

(Matz, 2008: 32). Sinclair describes the approach used by Richardson in the following way:

> She must not interfere; she must not analyze or comment or explain. Rather less obviously, she must not tell a story or handle a situation or set a scene. She must avoid drama as she avoids narration. And there are some things she must not be. She must not be the wise, all-knowing author. She must be Miriam Henderson. She must not know or divine anything that Miriam does not know or divine, she must not see anything that Miriam does not see. (Sinclair 1918: 57–58)

In *Pilgrimage*, Miriam's consciousness serves as a focal perspective which readers track as the narrative unfolds. The narration of consciousness, the absence of authorial intrusion, and the fragmentation typical of modernism are all emphasized in the novel. For Sinclair, the value of *Pilgrimage* is found in how these methods mimic various constraints imposed by life – social expectations, economic pressures and personal struggles of the heroine (Podnieks 1994: 68). The collected volumes of Richardson's work focus on Miriam's mental responses to various external stimuli. All the other characters and the story's events are presented to the reader subjectively; however, Miriam is presented to us objectively due to the fact that her views are offered to us directly and without authorial commentary (Pope 2013: 102). Miriam's thoughts and feelings about certain situations and events are foregrounded instead of her actions. As a consequence, Miriam's world can only be understood by extrapolating what she believes about it.

Rendall Stevenson points out that due to the fact that Richardson was a woman author representing a female character, *Pilgrimage* ought to be placed in the context of the changing status, viewpoint, and social role of women during the time when she was writing (1992: 39). One of the prominent themes in Richardson's narrative is Miriam's struggle to gain financial independence within the rigid class system, and to maintain her creativity and imagination. On a similar note, Micki Nyman explains that Richardson sought to undermine the male conventions in fiction by placing female subjectivity at the heart of her work: "She directed her narrative towards intimate knowledge gathered by women from women" (2011: 108). Richardson's fiction delves into the intricacies of female consciousness not to define a singular way of thinking for women, but to illustrate how women adapt their thoughts in response to societal limitations. By weaving together personal and political elements in

Miriam's subjective journey, Richardson explores how social norms hinder Miriam's autonomy and agency, highlighting the challenges women face in asserting their independence through their struggle with such constraints (Nyman 2011: 117).

It is important to notice, however, that when Richardson herself talked about the technique she used for representing a character's point of view, she refused to employ the stream-of-consciousness metaphor because she believed that it was "a wholly inaccurate description of the action of the consciousness" (Richardson, quoted in Rose 1969: 367). According to Richardson, one's consciousness does not undergo the action of flowing, so that the stream image is not an entirely convenient label for this phenomenon. Instead, she highlights the mind's stability and broadness. A person's consciousness, as she argues, "sits stiller than a tree" and consists of a central core that only expands from birth to maturity as we gather new information and contemplate (Rose 1969: 368). In line with her analogy, Richardson believes that literature is the result of this unwavering consciousness.

2. Nora Barnacle's Letters

Nora Barnacle was born to Irish middle-class parents in Galway, Ireland in March 1884. Her father, Thomas Barnacle, was an illiterate baker and her mother, Annie Honoria Healy, worked as a dressmaker. After the brith of her sisters, when she was approximately three years old, Nora was entrusted to her grandmother Catherine Mortimer Healy. Brenda Maddox claims that "Nora gained many social advantages by leaving the crowded nest, such as gaining access to education, and the opportunity to interact with well-mannered women" (2000: 12). Nora enrolled at the national school in October 1892, where she studied the three R's in addition to grammar, geography, and drawing. Maddox highlights the fact that Nora dropped out of school when she was twelve years old in order to start working (Maddox 2000: 13).

James Joyce was twenty-two when he first met Nora Barnacle on Nassau Street in Dublin on June 10, 1904. He sent Nora his first letter on June 15, 1904 when she failed to honor his invitation and meet him at an appointed date and time. A day later, their relationship officially started. Maddox suggests that Joyce's decision to set *Ulysses* on June 16th

likely stemmed from his first outing with Nora Barnacle on that day (2000: 27). According to Richard Ellman, there is convincing evidence within the novel itself that Nora and Joyce began their relationship on June 16th: "To set *Ulysses* on this date was Joyce's most eloquent if indirect tribute to Nora" (Ellman 1966: 156). As their courtship progressed, Nora began replying to Joyce's letters in intervals. Maddox explains that Joyce desired Nora's words because he relied on words to court her as well. She also mentions that while Joyce's first letter to Nora was rather reserved, formal, and carefully crafted, Nora's first letter to Joyce was "careless, confident, and unashamedly passionate" (Maddox 2000: 29). In the first letter to Joyce that survived, Nora did not employ any punctuation marks, and the sentences were devoid of any syntax:

> 23 June 1904
>
> 2 Leinster Street
>
> My Precious Darling a line to let you know I cant possibly meet you this evening as we are busy but if it is convenient for you on Saturday evening same place with love from N Barnacle
>
> excuse writing in haste (quoted in Maddox 2000: 30)

In her book, *Nora: The Real Life of Molly Bloom* (2000), Maddox explains that Nora had her own unique prose style. Firstly, Nora capitalized words that did not occupy the first position in the sentence so as to achieve the effect of a shamelessly passionate declaration of love (2000 4). She also employed the non-standard contracted forms such as "cant", "Im", "Ill" and "woulnt" in her writing which created the impression that the author was not well-versed in the English language, despite the fact that Nora had received a grammar school education. The lack of commas, after words such as "darling", "busy", "evening", and "place" create ambiguity in the location of syntactic boundaries, which makes it challenging for readers to understand the text's semantics as they read. Additionally, the omission of full stops, commas, and capital letters creates a language style that is fluidly organized and freely associative (Lawrence 2010: 240). Furthermore, Nora frequently conveyed pauses through the use of blank spaces, as is seen in the letter above.

Nora's passionate and unpunctuated manner of writing caught Joyce's attention, confirming his belief that all women were intuitive beings who acted without deliberation (Maddox 2000: 32). Once, when conversing

with his younger brother Stanislaus, he asked him whether it occurred to him that all women deliberately avoided the use of punctuation marks when writing: "Do you notice, how all women when they write disregard stops and capital letters?" (Stanislaus Joyce quoted in Maddox 2000: 36). Despite the fact that Nora had no literary knowledge, had not studied literature academically or had any professional experience in writing, Joyce was drawn to the straightforwardness and availability which she exhibited in the letters, and he begged her to write to him. Because of Joyce's fascination with Nora's writing style, scholars argue that she should be regarded as the primary rhetorical influence for Molly Bloom's protracted internal monologue in the final chapter of *Ulysses*. The unfiltered passion and disregard for established norms that Joyce encountered in Nora's letters became a significant influence when he wrote Molly's monologue (Knowlton 1993: 86). The same as Nora in real life, Molly in Joyce's novel is a sexually liberated individual who has the freedom to talk and act in accordance with her own, freely expressed desires. Maddox explains that formal and stilted letters could never have conveyed Nora's "warm and passionate outpouring" of her emotions (2000: 37). The quoted letter is written from the heart without regard for presentational style, which would otherwise suggest calculation rather than love. As Eloise Knowlton points out, Nora's love letter is "characterized by direct intent, direct expression, and direct communication. Therefore, the language of the love letter is transparent" (1993: 93).

3. The Influence of Dorothy Richardson on *Ulysses*

Most critics believe that, although Dorothy Richardson is credited as the first novelist to use the stream of consciousness in her writing, James Joyce and Virginia Wools have eclipsed her in the history of the genre. Their main argument is that Richardson did not sufficiently explore and refine this technique (Kumar 1964: 54).

As Randall Stevenson points out, Joyce himself did not start using experimentation from the outset of his writing career, and his writing went through several stages of development. Thus, his collection of short stories, *Dubliners* (1914), is written in the naturalist style, whereas his first published novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), employs the Free Indirect Style, a narrative device that combines the characteristics

of third-person narration with the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of a character (Stevenson 1992: 49). The Free Indirect Style served as a precursor and stepping stone for Joyce's exploration of the stream-of-consciousness technique (Stevenson 1992: 50). Therefore, in *Ulysses,* the Free Indirect Style gradually evolved into a more pronounced stream-of-consciousness technique as Joyce began to break free from traditional narrative constraints, abandoning traditional punctuation and sentence structure in favor of a more fluid and associative approach to language. As a result, the stream-of-consciousness passages in *Ulysses* present a cascade of thoughts, memories, sensory perceptions, and inner monologues without clear demarcations or transitions.

Chapter Thirteen of Joyce's *Ulysses*, titled "Nausicaa", focuses on the encounter of the novel's protagonist, Leopold Bloom, with Gerty McDowell, a young woman sitting on the beach in Sandymouth. In terms of perspective, the chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, Joyce uses the Free Indirect Style to represent Gerty's daydreams and fantasies. Gerty projects an idealized image onto Bloom, spinning in her mind a romantic tale in which he is a mysterious stranger whom she heals from despair; in her fantasy, the two of them fall in love and eventually get married. At one point, aware that Bloom is watching her, Gerty intentionally reveals her undergarments, and he responds by engaging in a voayeristic act. The second half of the episode focuses on Bloom's thoughts after he ejaculates. In his inner monologue, Bloom touches upon a range of themes and experiences a mixture of guilt, longing and frustration as he contemplates his own sexual urges and the reality of his marital situation. Bloom's mind is presented to reader more directly than Gerty's, through the use of the stream-of-consciousness technique:

> A defect is ten times worse in a woman. But makes them polite. Glad I didn't know it when she was on show. Hot little devil all the same. Wouldn't mind. Curiosity like a nun or a negress or a girl with glasses…I have such a bad headache today. Where did I put the letter? Yes, all right. All kinds of crazy longings. Licking pennies. Girl in Tranquilla convent that nun told me liked to smell rock oil. Virgins go mad in the end I suppose. Sister? How many women in Dublin have it today? Martha, she. Something in the air. That's the moon. But then why don't all women menstruate at the same time with same moon, I mean? Depends on the time they were born, I suppose. (Joyce 1922: 351)

Bloom speaks in incomplete phrases due to his fatigue following a hard day and his ejaculation. He is stationary, and there is little outside stimulation. In addition, he is not surrounded by any other characters with whom he could interact. Bloom's thoughts are revealed when he is not on his guard and when his mind is exhausted but at ease. Joyce's use of the internal monologue in this case parallels the style of discourse that Richardson uses to describe Miriam Henderson's thoughts when she is completely relaxed and alone. As Shirley Rose explains, "Richardson uses this form of interior monologue in sections where Miriam is close to reverie either in a daydream or just as she is going to sleep" (1965: 76). Bloom's thoughts are presented in a similar discontinuous manner, as he introduces people and things he is thinking about. Therefore, it is believed that Joyce strove to achieve the incoherence and fluidity which are likewise typical of Richardson's writing (Rose 1965: 77). In the above quoted passage, it is revealed that Bloom maintains his attraction to Gerty even after he finds out that she is lame, and is perhaps even further aroused by her "defect". Bloom makes a little regression and complains that he has a headache. His thoughts then shift to the letter he has written to Martha (another love interest of his), as he tries to recall where he has left it. Finally, he contemplates the nature of menstruation. Bloom's uninterrupted stream of consciousness manages to portray a series of associations as they emerge in his mind, for his thoughts jump from one topic to another (Dahl 1970: 52).

Furthermore, there is a similarity in the aspirations of Dorothy Richardson and James Joyce, resulting in a parallel between the two characters, Richardson's Miriam and Molly Bloom in Joyce's *Ulysses*. In the foreword of *Pilgrimage*, Dorothy Richardson explains that her aims for writing were "to present the feminine view of the life of the current masculine realism" (Richardson, quoted in Stevenson 1992: 44). In other words, she wanted to create "a new woman", one who rejects many Victorian cultural norms, who smokes in public and cycles alone. Consequently, Miriam's endeavors to cultivate her own intelligence and creativity are the main themes of the novel. Similarly, critics argue that Joyce through Molly "starkly deviates from the normal patriarchal standards that coded women during the early twentieth century" (McMullen 2004: 3). They claim that Joyce understood the difficulties faced by "modern" women trapped in a class system controlled by men. This is especially evident from the way he wrote Molly's soliloquy in the final chapter of *Ulysses*, titled "Penelope". Joyce has been celebrated for his complex portrayal of women and their

exploration of sexuality (O'Brien 2004: 233). Molly Bloom, in particular, is seen as a groundbreaking character in literature due to the fact that she actively addresses issues such as gender roles, marriage, and the limitations imposed on women by culture. In this soliloquy, Molly rejects the stringent Catholic beliefs about women and their function in society. Due to the fact that the Catholic Church disapproved of non-reproductive sex, women who were openly sexually liberated were not socially respected, whereas males with comparable sexual proclivities were regarded as virile. However, Molly believes that priests are driven by the same basic desires, and have the same flaws and vulnerabilities as any other human being. She sees through the façade of authority and sanctity that the society assigns to priests, and views them as ordinary individuals who should not hold power over her life or decisions. Joyce's creation of a female character in Catholic Ireland whose beliefs were at odds with those of the Church was most likely not an accident. In fact, it can be inferred that he was influenced by the writings of Richardson who explored themes of female independence, agency, and empowerment, and offered alternative perspectives that challenged traditional gender roles and structures (Schwartz 1987: 213). In *Ulysses,* Joyce enables Moly to be aware of the social and religious establishments' hypocrisy on gender and sexuality, while his distinct fluid design and the striking content parallel Richardson's use of the stream-of-consciousness technique when describing Miriam's thoughts and convictions.

4. The Non-Literary Influence of Nora Barnacle on *Ulysses*

The focus in this section will be on exploring the non-literary influence of James Joyce's muse and wife Nora Barnacle on his writing by examining the unpunctuated letters that she sent to him. Nora's letters were first published by Richard Ellman in 1976; however, they have not been extensively studied by scholars because they are "exuberantly obscene" and because they are widely perceived as going against our cultural training (Boheemen – Saaf 2008: 471). When examining the letters that Nora and Joyce had exchanged over the course of five years, it became evident that Nora's letters seamlessly mirrored her conversational style, and that they were often "indistinguishable" from her spoken expressions (Boheemen – Saaf 2008: 472).

It has been postulated that some aspects of Nora's writing process may have had an impact on how Joyce wrote Molly's monologue. Although "Penelope" was originally perceived by readers as "the amorphous warbling of a sleepy Dublin soprano" (Voelker 1979: 147), it has, in fact, a carefully ordered rhetoric structure that was influenced by Nora Barnacle's personality. Maddox believes that the absence of punctuation and the perception of a voice that is pure and unadulterated by sarcasm, technique, or literary artifice are the most glaring resemblances between the young Nora's letters and Molly's inner monologue (2000: 36). Maddox also argues that Joyce's innovative depiction of a woman's stream of thinking may have been greatly influenced by the speed with which Nora transfers her inner spoken dialogue into the written form: "Whenever she wrote a letter to him, the words would come rushing off the page" (Maddox 2000: 37). In order to demonstrate the textual similarities between Barnacle's letters and Molly's monologue in the final chapter of *Ulysses*, an extract from one of Barnacle's letters (dated 12 July, 1912) is quoted below and juxtaposed to a passage from "Penelope":

> I am quite tired of Ireland already well I arrived in Dublin on Monday ...I feel very strange here but the time wont be long slipping round till I am going back to you again well Jim I am sure you would like to know something about your publisher well on Tuesday your Father Charley and myself went in and just pinned that charming gentleman well I asked what he meant by treating you in such a manner... well Jim dear I hope you are minding yourself Charley will do all he can he says he will watch him everyday then he will write to you. (Nora Barnacle, quoted in Ellmann II 1976: 296–297)

> itd be great fun supposing he stayed with us why not theres the room upstairs empty and Millys bed in the back room he could do his writing and studies at the table for all the scribbling he does at it and if he wants to read in bed in the morning like me as hes making the breakfast for he can make it for 2 Im sure Im not going to take in lodgers off the street for him if he takes a gesabo of a house like this Id love to have a long talk with an intelligent welleducated person Id have to get a nice pair of red slippers like those Turks… I want to buy underclothes then if he gives me that well he wont be too bad I dont want to soak it all out of him like other women do. (Joyce 1922: 694–695)

Due to the fact that both texts exhibit an absence of punctuation, the position of syntactic boundaries is ambiguous. As a result, it becomes challenging for readers to interpret the text semantically as they read. Nevertheless, transitional words like "yes", "well", "then" and "now" are used in the two texts to make up for the lack of punctuation. These words either signal pauses before a change in theme or begin to elaborate on the earlier subject matter. The lack of punctuation and the inclusion of the discourse marker "well" demonstrate how much the spoken mode's characteristics are used in both texts (Ceccori 2007: 5). This is in line with the fact that there are twenty-four occurrences of "well" in Molly's monologue, which mimics Barnacle's usage of the word (Ceccori 2007: 5). Furthermore, in Molly's speech, Joyce recaptures Nora's eccentric use of the contracted form (Im, Ill, wont, dont) and systematizes it to make it one of Molly's mental speech's quirks. There are further similarities between the two passages other than punctuation. The third person pronoun that repeatedly appears in Nora's letter bears grammatical uncertainty for it is difficult to determine the referent due to the syntactic construction of the sentences (Maddox 2000: 38). In Barnacle's letter, the first three occurrences of the pronoun "he" refers to Charley, but the final "he" may designate the editor who was previously mentioned or prior subject Charley. This foreshadows similar instances that occur in Molly's monologue, and where Joyce explores the possibility of using the third person pronoun to create syntactic ambiguity (Ceccori 2007: 4). In the quoted excerpt, for instance, the pronoun "he" switches from Stephen to Bloom, then back to Stephen, and ultimately back to Bloom. By comparing the idiosyncrasies of Molly's monologue to aspects of Nora's writing style, the analysis above intended to show that some characteristics of Molly's monologue may have been influenced by Barnacle's manner of writing.

5. Conclusion

It is important to recognize that Dorothy Richardson's writing style was one of the earliest examples of stream-of-consciousness writing, and that she paved the way for other modernist writers who experimented with the stream-of-consciousness technique. It has thus been argued that Richardson's narrative technique played a significant role in influencing James Joyce's style. Thus, Joyce's portrayal of characters' inner lives, their

perceptions of the external world, and his utilization of various narrative perspectives all reflect Richardson's influence (Ulin 2011: 43). Both writers shared an interest in exploring the subjective experiences of their characters and delving into the depths of human consciousness, and in *Ulysses*, Joyce took Richardson's stream-of-consciousness technique to new heights.

While Richardson's influence on Joyce is notable, it is essential to recognize that Joyce's wife, Nora Barnacle, also significantly shaped his writing style and influenced the way he portrayed Molly Bloom, especially in the chapter titled "Penelope". Nora Barnacle was Joyce's lifelong partner and muse. Therefore, their relationship played a crucial role in shaping his artistic vision. Since the first obscenity accusations against *Ulysses* in the early 1920s, Joyce's character Molly Bloom has been scrutinized, dissected, and deconstructed, while Nora Barnacle, Joyce's common-law wife, has received less attention. Many academics have consequently neglected Nora and her contribution to Joyce the artist and Joyce the man. More specifically, Maddox claims that the monologue that Molly delivers at the conclusion of Joyce's masterwork was inspired by the unpunctuated letters that Nora sent to him (2000: 40). She argues that it is evident that Joyce based Molly's fluid phrases, free of punctuation, on Nora's writing style. By taking into account the non-literary influence of Barnacle's writing style on Joyce's innovative use of language in the final chapter of *Ulysses,* Maddox offered a unique insight into his creative writing process.

It is notable that Joyce drew inspiration from both literary and non-literary sources, particularly from women. This tendency may reflect his broader fascination with gender issues, female identity, and the societal roles of women in the early 20th century, a period which was marked by significant movements towards gender equality, with women increasingly questioning and challenging their traditional roles. Joyce's focus on these themes offers a counterbalance to the male-dominated perspectives that had long prevailed in literature and paves the way for future generations of writers to continue examining and challenging gender norms.

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