A River of Thoughts: The Use of Stream of Consciousness in Two Essential Modernist Novels

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Final Thesis at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences
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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely the result of my own work except as indicated in the text

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I hereby declare that this final-project satisfies, in my opinion, requirements for a B.A-degree in Modern Studies at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences

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Abstract

This thesis provides an analysis of the nature and use of the stream-of-consciousness narrative method in two fundamental Modernist works of literature, *Ulysses* by James Joyce and *Mrs Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf. The discussion is preceded by an introductory overview of the concept of the stream of consciousness in psychology, Freud's related therapeutic technique of free association and his ideas about the unconscious, and the way in which his techniques and ideas impacted Modernist literature. The analysis is followed by a comparison between the two novels, coupled with an evaluation of their contribution to literature and human understanding in general.
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I. Introduction

“The rush of the thought is so headlong that it almost always brings us up at the conclusion before we can rest it…As a snowflake crystal caught in the warm hand is no longer a crystal but a drop, so, instead of catching the feeling of relation moving to its term, we find we have caught some substantive thing, usually the last word we were pronouncing, statically taken, and with its function, tendency, and particular meaning in the sentence quite evaporated. The attempt at introspective analysis…is in fact like seizing a spinning top to catch its motion, or trying to turn up the gas quickly enough to see how the darkness looks....” (James, 1890, p. 245) Thus the American philosopher and psychologist William James expressed the futility of attempts to deconstruct and structurally analyze the fluctuations of the human mind. By contrast, the concept of the stream of consciousness that he introduced was that of an externally-unregulated flow of thoughts which psychoanalysts would later use to illuminate the unconscious generators of desires, fears and conflicts. This notion became widely-accepted, popularized significantly by the founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud, who championed the technique of free association, heavily relying on the free mental flux.

Freud’s psychoanalytic theory profoundly changed the way people regard the nature of the mind, by drawing their attention to the innermost needs and notions, which are submerged beneath the surface of the waking consciousness (Freud, 1913. p. 113). The freely expressed stream of thoughts lifts the veil of repression from significant conflicts, memories and emotions that have influenced, undetectably but crucially, one's life. Without attempting to create a structural whole, the monologue of words and images
illuminates both the way one perceives the reality of the outside world, and one's inner, often forcefully obscured, psychological world, allowing the individual to come closer to knowing himself.

The men of art, the writer, the poet and the musician, express their hidden drives by embodying them in the characters of the fictional realities that they create. Thus, as the stream of consciousness became a popular psychological concept during the age of Modernism, it eventually entered the field of literature, spawning a new narrative mode. *Ulysses*, “the demonstration and summation of the entire [Modernist] movement” (Beebe, 1972, p. 172-188), by Irish author James Joyce, and *Mrs Dalloway*, “one of the most moving, revolutionary artworks of the twentieth century” (Cunningham, 1990 p.5) by British author Virginia Woolf, both rest on this new literary stream of consciousness, as they attempt to verbally capture the intense psychological experience of several social outcasts during the course of one day, all viewed through a psychoanalytic lens.

By presenting their inner monologues, Joyce and Woolf allow us to peak into their characters’ mental sanctuaries and catch a glimpse of their most intimate dreams, fears, and desires, pure and raw, essential to Modernism. Although different in numerous aspects, both novels fundamentally rest on the uninhibited flow of their character’s thoughts, the stream of consciousness.
II. The Stream of Consciousness and the Unconscious in Psychology and Literature

The concept of the stream of consciousness was introduced in 1890 by William James, the scholar considered by many to be the greatest American psychologist, in his monumental *Principles of Psychology* (I, p. 239). James did not agree with the then-influential Structuralist method of analyzing mental processes by breaking them down into the smallest possible units, similar to what chemists and biologists were doing in the “exact sciences” with resounding success, and instead contended that consciousness “flows” in an unbroken, although fluctuating, manner. In the *Principles*, James explains that thought “does not appear to itself chopped up in bits....It is nothing jointed; it flows. A ‘river’ or ‘stream’ are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life” (I: p. 239). The content of this stream of consciousness is not exclusively comprised of verbal thoughts but also includes tendencies and vague notions – in other words, the complete spectrum of conscious human experiences. Whether or not he was aware of the fact, William James thus helped to remove the mathematical exactness and propensity towards disintegrating reality, typical of Enlightenment rationalist thinking, from the popular approach to the human mind.

When the Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud came on the scene with his brainchild, psychoanalysis, the focus was radically shifted from the waking consciousness to the submerged “six-sevenths” of the mental iceberg, the unconscious mind. In what is probably his most important contribution to personality theory, Freud maintained that at the unconscious level rages a chaotic sea of raw desires, notions and conflicts. These
irrational drives, almost all of which can be grouped under one of two fundamental principles (sexual satisfaction or destruction, Eros and Thanatos) are the primary motivators of conscious human action. Due to their tendency, when exposed in their “naked” state, to cause anxiety and social condemnation, the innate primal instincts are never revealed in their natural form but frequently climb up to the waking consciousness in the disguise of dreams, jokes, artistic impulses, etc. Thus, according to Freud, man spends the overwhelmingly greater part of his life in an area of himself he is virtually unaware of, and almost all of his problems are due to unresolved unconscious conflicts that have taken place during childhood.

Almost a century later, the controversy over Freud's ideas still carries on but the radical influence his theory had on the way people saw themselves and society, especially after World War I, is undeniable. Naturally, the concepts of psychoanalysis had a tremendous impact on the emerging Modernist movement which strove to break with its optimistic Enlightenment antecedents in philosophy and art, and to establish its own. Man could no longer be seen as the Rational Master of the natural world but, instead, was revealed to be a loosely organized pleasure-seeking system of psychological energy that flows between two contradictory principles, the sexual and the destructive one – a creature hardly capable of mastering itself, let alone the universe. The irrational impulses, however, were no longer seen as “wrong” and destined to be rooted out. Instead, the focus of criticism was shifted towards the social structures that had been suppressing the free expression of human nature for far too long.

Freud, however, was not (completely) brought down by the implications of his discoveries but believed that his methods could be of help to the lost souls of the Modern
age by allowing them to gain partial knowledge of themselves and resolve their inner struggles.

First, of course, these inner conflicts would have to be revealed to both the analyst and the analysand which was no simple task, as the mind naturally represses anxiety-building thoughts, memories and emotions and does not let them come back to light easily. “Our therapy works by transforming what is unconscious to what is conscious, and it works only so far as it is in a position to effect that transformation” (Freud, 1917, p.280). When Freud abandoned his earlier highly-suggestive and nearly coercive hypnosis-like approach, he turned to utilizing what William James had discovered not too long ago, the stream of consciousness, in his developing psychoanalytic therapy. The Austrian psychologist championed a non-suggestive method of investigation called “free association”, which allowed patients not only more freedom but, eventually, more insight into their psyche on their own terms (Thurschwell, 2000, p. 24). Analysands are asked to relate their thoughts in verbal form, without censoring them, however odd, insignificant, discomforting, immoral or socially unacceptable they may appear to be. The analysand starts with a present idea and follows the current of the river of thoughts, wherever it may lead. As psychoanalysis assumes that crucial conflicts are concealed by mental defense mechanisms, it is paramount that any possible censorship-activating stimulus be removed from the environment and the patient be encouraged to lay down his internal fears of self-exposure, if the technique is to work.

Free association is not pre-planned and is not interfered with by attempts to impose organization and structure on the mental output but rather, enables the patients to “work through their own material” (Thurschwell, 2000, p. 24). As contemporary British
psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas points out, “the logic of association is a form of unconscious thinking” (2008, p.21). The following is an abridged example of free association by a patient of psychoanalytic therapy:

“I am thinking of the fluffy clouds I seem to see with my very eyes... They are fluid because they are condensed water particles... I am thinking I may have an obsession about this water. The doctor has told me I am dehydrated; there's not enough water in my body... I thought there is a connection between my need to add salt to my food and thirst. My body has found itself a pretext - salty food - to make me drink more water.... Everybody has in fact got an inner physician in oneself. What need is there of an outside doctor then?” (Chiriac, 2013 n.p.).

Freud's psychoanalytic ideas not only influenced the direction of the accelerating Modernist movement but also provided it with numerous concepts and inspired new artistic techniques. This was especially true in literature, where the unconscious became an important theme, and interior monologue – an essential in psychological novels. In fact, the unconscious and its expression had already been explored by famous novelists, who wrote before Freud brought his ideas to light. Significantly, the famous Russian novellist of the 19th century, F. M. Dostoevsky, considered by some critics to have been the greatest psychologist in world literature, drew attention to the unconscious forces that motivate human actions and, on several occasions, sharply criticized the then-dominant idea of the supremacy of Reason. Particularly important, in this regard, is his 1864 novella *Notes from the Underground*, in which the protagonist goes against the grain of
Enlightenment philosophy by proclaiming that human beings rarely, if ever, act according to rational self-interest, and instead constantly commit irrational acts in order to express their freedom.

“Here I, for instance, quite naturally want to live, in order to satisfy all my capacities for life, and not simply my capacity for reasoning, that is, not simply one twentieth of my capacity for life. What does reason know? Reason only knows what it has succeeded in learning (some things, perhaps, it will never learn; this is a poor comfort, but why not say so frankly?) and human nature acts as a whole, with everything that is in it, consciously or unconsciously, and, even if it goes wrong, it lives.” (Dostoevsky, 1918, 1/VIII)

Another significant pronouncement made by the so-called “Underground Man”, can be connected to Freud's later concept of the mind's defense mechanisms, particularly the repression of memories.

"Every man has reminiscences which he would not tell to everyone, but only to his friends. He has other matters in his mind which he would not reveal even to his friends, but only to himself, and that in secret. But there are other things which a man is afraid to tell even to himself, and every decent man has a number of such things stored away in his mind.” (Dostoevsky, 1918, 1/XI)

Freud himself admitted that the concept of the unconscious was part of human understanding long before he had published his findings: "The poets and philosophers
before me discovered the unconscious; what I discovered was the scientific method by which the unconscious can be studied” (Lehrman, 1940).

The notions of classical psychoanalysis, especially the unconscious sexual and destructive drives, repression and sublimation, provided literature with the perfect tools for expressing the anxiety, disillusionment and alienation of Modern man, as well as his rebellion against Victorian values and stifling political authority.

The unconscious found perhaps its fullest and most vivid expression in verbal form in the Modernist novels. The two fundamental psychoanalytic methods of mental investigation, dream analysis and free association, were both appropriated in fiction writing, with the latter being used with greater frequency as plots usually revolve around characters, who are in a state of wakefulness. The literary technique of interior monologue was pushed to the limit, as the psychological concept of the “stream of consciousness” was transformed into an avant-garde free-associative narrative technique. Much like Freud would encourage his patients to say whatever comes to their mind, Modernist writers endowed their characters with ultra-expressive abilities, by verbalizing their thoughts for the readers. This was combined with a daring disobedience to the rules of written language and chronology, similar to the disregard of the ordinary human mind for those limitations. Although the stream of consciousness in psychology involves more than just thoughts translated into words, but also abstract notions, images and tendencies, Modernist writers were careful to depict those subtleties of the mind as well, albeit inevitably in verbal form. Therefore, the stream of consciousness was not simply an innovation within the grammatical, syntactical and logical framework of the novel; rather it cracked and burst through this framework by breaking the literary conventions that
constitute it. Faithful to Ezra Pond's call to “make it new” (1934), this narrative method revolutionized the very concept of the novel. With important precursors like Laurence Sterne, Edgar Alan Poe and Édouard Dujardin, the stream of consciousness was depicted in its full-blown literary form by two of the greatest Modernist writers, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf.

III. Ulysses

The Irish writer and poet James Joyce was born in 1882 in Dublin, where he spent his childhood and early youth, but later immigrated to continental Europe, switching several locations of residence over his lifetime. Joyce started writing what was to be his most important contribution to literature, the novel Ulysses, in 1914 and began publication four years later in the United States amid much controversy, including charges of obscenity. Planned as a kind of sequel to Joyce's earlier semi-autobiographical work A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, the novel is an ultra-realistic psychological plunge into the subjective minds of three Irish citizens, as they spend an apparently ordinary day. The radical uncensored use of the stream-of-consciousness narrative method in depicting the unconscious played a crucial role in establishing Ulysses as a landmark novel not only in the Modernist movement, but also in world literature in general.

Set in pre-World War I metropolitan Dublin, Ulysses presents the mental wanderings of three socially isolated individuals: the dissatisfied spouses Molly and Leopold Bloom, and the guilt-stricken Stephen Dedalus. The novel lacks a linear plot
projected by an omniscient narrator, but rather jumps in and out of the heads of its protagonists. The actual, *objective*, state of affairs is not provided by the author and while certain inferences can be made by an analysis of the characters' perceptions, it is one of the goals of the novel to shift the focus of realism inward, depreciating the objectivity of reality. “Real” objects and actions reach the reader only in their latent reflections in the psyche. The threads of words, images and notions, which seem chaotic and inconsistent at face value, are meant to depict the world as human beings perceive and interpret it, not as it “really” is. They also serve to express the alienation of Modern man, after the loss of Enlightenment certainty in human progress, from both the world and his fellow human beings.

Joyce's mournful characters seem to be detached not only from their physical surrounding but also from their own social lives. These isolated unfortunates live solely in the solitary confinement of their inner worlds, filled with grief over unfulfilled relationships, unatoned failures, and the shattering loss of close ones. Unable to fight off what they perceive as the darkness of their own thoughts, and to establish real and objective connections with one another, these modern souls undergo their lives as never-ending spiritual toil, without a moment of relief. It is as if these three Dubliners lack the capability to communicate with their fellow human beings, similar to Kafka's character Gregor Samsa from *The Metamorphosis* who is prevented from communicating with his family by a mysterious and unexplained physical transformation (Kafka, 1915, n.p.).

Joyce's protagonists constantly struggle with the memories of their past deeds, but also never cease analyzing worrisome scenarios of the future, which they have put together in their minds. These dark heroes long for fulfillment and meaning, which the conservative
and oppressive urban society falsely promises to provide them with.

Locked in a dysfunctional marriage after suffering a tremendous family tragedy – the death of their son – both Leopold and Mary Bloom desperately seek emotional and physical pleasure but are unable to attain it, due to their total inability to communicate and co-operate. Thus, the novel illustrates the full isolation of Modern individuals and their lack of connection with one another, especially gender-wise.

In a parallel story, Stephen Dedalus is also chained to unhappiness, in his case, by the haunting feeling of guilt in the death of his mother.

"In a dream, silently, she had come to him, her wasted body within its loose graveclothes giving off an adour of wax and rosewood, her breath bent over him with mute secret words, and a faint odour of wetted ashes. Her gazing eyes, staring out of death, to shake and bend my soul. On me alone. The ghostcandle to light her agony. Ghostly light on her tortured face. Her hoarse loud breath rattling in horror, while all prayed on their knees. Her eyes on me to strike me down. *Liliata rutilatium te confessorum turma circumdet: iubilatium te virginum chorus excipiatur.* Ghou! Chewer of corpses! No mother. Let me be let me live.” (Joyce, 1992, pp.10-11).”

Unable to find their way through the labyrinth of life, Joyce’s characters attempt to escape from the “outer world” and find refuge in the asylum of their minds. One is reminded of the “aesthetic contemplation” method, proposed by the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer as the solution to human suffering. According to Schopenhauer, the world is an expression of a blind, impersonal, dynamic “Will to Live”, which can never
achieve the satisfaction and tranquility it is moving towards and, thus, subsists in a process of constant striving (Copleston, 1994, p. 273-274). Being part of this process, man experiences it as constant suffering and dissatisfaction and the only temporary way for him to escape this living hell is to mentally observe and appreciate the forms of aesthetic beauty with a transcendent, “disinterested”, attitude (277). The protagonists of *Ulysses* have apparently appropriated this attitude and have applied fully it to their lives, impassively contemplating everything around them, both events and people. The almost radical disinterestedness of Joyce's characters is exemplified in Leopold Bloom's thoughts, as he observes one of his pupils during class.

“Ugly and futile: lean neck and tangled hair and a stain of ink, a snail's bed. Yet someone has loved him, borne him in her arms and in her heart. But for her the race of the world would have trampled him under foot, a squashed boneless snail.” (Joyce, 1992, p.33).

While, for Schopenhauer, disinterested aesthetic contemplation is liberation from the tortured struggle for existence, in *Ulysses* it is, on the contrary, that which confines the protagonists within a solipcistic mental prison. In a crazy way, the solution to their inability to cope with real life – namely, their escape to the inner world – is also the main cause of that inability.

Apathetic to the external world, they are overwhelmingly focused on their most basic animalistic sexual drives, although it seems that their fantasies almost never translate into reality. As their fundamental, yet hidden, desires are demonized and, therefore, suppressed by the industrialist religion-motivated urban society of Dublin, the
only way for these sufferers of the Modern age to express themselves is through an intense inner monologue, illustrating their stream of consciousness that breaks the limits of social and religious conventions. Thus, the reader is bombarded with words, images and notions, completely disobedient to the rules of logical reasoning, but mysteriously connected through Freudian free association (Freud, 1990, V.11 p.223-24). The task of the reader to penetrate through the gloomy and dissatisfied thoughts, characterized by diffusion and disjunction, becomes even more difficult as the inner monologue is merged with the external dialogue, with no clear distinctions given between the two. Moreover, the reader is not allowed by the “structure” of the narrative to distinguish between the subconscious and the conscious inner voices of the protagonists. The following excerpt from Molly Bloom's famous soliloquy is vividly illustrative:

“I was a Flower of the mountain yes when I put the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfumed yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will yes” (Joyce, 1992, p. 933).

At times, the narrative seemingly frees itself even from the providential guidance of its author and becomes almost purely associative. In a way, it turns into the literary equivalent of the word-association test of the renowned analytical psychologist C. G.
Jung, in which the analysand is presented with a set of stimulus words and is asked to respond to each of them with the first word that comes to mind (Jung, 1916, p.95). Leopold Bloom’s mental record from his absent-minded visit to the pharmacy provides a good example:

“Peau d’Espagne. That orangeflower. Pure curd soap. Water is so fresh. Nice smell these soaps have. Time to get a bath round the corner. Hammam. Turkish. Massage. Dirt gets rolled up in your navel. Nicer if a nice girl did it. Also I think I. Yes I. Do it in the bath. Curious longing I. Water to water. Combine business with pleasure. Pity no time for massage. Fell fresh then all day. Funeral be rather glum” (Joyce, 1992, p.105).

Although exceedingly hard to understand for the reader, this disconnected play of words has a profound meaning for the characters, though even they may not present the signs of this realization. The mental emanations of prohibited desires, based on primal instincts, allow the characters to discover their inner drives and face themselves.

Joyce’s work can be viewed as a psychoanalytical journey of three Dubliners who are dissatisfied not only with their own lives but also with that of society. Their struggles, depicted vividly through free association in literary mode, can easily be connected to the Freudian notion of the pleasure principle of the Id, which they, more often than not, fail to satisfy. The characters also suffer from unsuccessful attempts to fulfill the reality principle of the Ego and the ideal principle of the Superego by finding meaningful goals for their lives and establishing connections with one another. The neurosis theory of the social psychoanalyst Karen Horney may provide further insight
when applied to *Ulysses*: in an attempt to escape from their basic anxiety, “a feeling of being small, insignificant, helpless, deserted, endangered, in a world that is out to abuse, cheat, attack, humiliate, betray, envy” (Horney, 1937, p.92), Joyce's characters have adopted the neurotic trend of “moving away from people”, relinquishing all emotional involvement with the word and becoming detached from one another (Feist & Feist, 2009, p. 173). Thus, evaluated with the psychoanalytic approach, these individuals prove to be psychologically dysfunctional. However, when their ordinariness is taken into consideration, *Ulysses* can be interpreted as the author's hint that all Modern men, disillusioned and depraved of hope in humanity, are, in a way, psychologically dysfunctional.

Society is left to carry its share of the guilt for human miscommunication, as it labels and, without fair trail, condemns the natural human impulses to exile in the minds of their possessors. Through his novel, however, Joyce liberates his characters from social and religious accords and allows them to reveal, to themselves and to the world, the torrent of notions and feelings they harbor within.

To sum up, it is misleading to call *Ulysses* a “novel”, at least in the ordinary sense of the word, as it presents no clearly defined storyline (or characters, for that matter) and, surprisingly for a psychological work, no analysis of its characters’ experiences. Virginia Woolf would later criticize Joyce’s work as too wrapped up in a single consciousness and locked in “the damned egotistical self” of the author (Kain, 1959, p. 18). However, it must be said that the novel does not *intend* to record facts, describe an environment or employ an analytic framework of human reflections. Instead, it is not only based on the uninhibited stream of consciousness, it *consists almost entirely* of it. The narrative
illustrates a fluctuating mix of physical and mental impulses, tailored to corresponding freely-associated concepts and ideas. Logic and its inductive and deductive forms of reasoning, the centerpieces of the now-passed Age of the Enlightenment, are completely rejected as vestiges of the past, which, however, still dominate the façade of social life. Instead, what the reader is given are the hidden from the public eye, volatile, fluctuating, egotistical, primitive, animalistic, ultra-subjective drives of human nature, which Freud was so keen on uncovering in psychology, and Joyce – on depicting in literature. The author's meticulous planning of the narrative makes this work even more remarkable in its apparent “freedom of thought”. A language manipulator par excellence, James Joyce dealt the final blow to the Victorian novel, by removing the reader from the linear safety of the external world and pushing him into the chaos of the subjective mind. The only way the reader can interpret the mish-mash of words, memories and fantasies is through language, semantics and psychoanalysis, establishing connections between the peculiar thoughts of the characters and the general stream-of-consciousness narrative.

Thus, as a piece of Modernist art, the novel is not supposed to make sense; it is meant to express irrational impulses as they translate into verbal thoughts. It is not intended to provide a strict analysis of its characters’ mental states, just as, according to William James, we are not supposed to scrutinize each individual bit of mental information, but rather to capture the general flow of the mind, both the unconscious and the conscious. To put it simply, the novel is not meant to analyze, but to present. It is left for the reader to discover the delta, where the river of thoughts flows into the sea of reality, and, perhaps, discover the spring of his or her own inner drives.
IV. *Mrs Dalloway*

One of the foremost modernists of the past century, Virginia Woolf was born in London in 1882 and raised in an upper middle class family. Woolf’s life fluctuated between moments of rapturous happiness and periods of unbearable misery, which translated into artworks that shook the literary world. Woolf began writing one of her most famous works, *Mrs Dalloway*, in 1924 and completed it two years later. The novel played an essential part in the literary revolution, brought about by the Modernist movement, that erased the boundaries of what is deemed acceptable in novel-writing.

The story consists of two parallel sub-plots and, like in Joyce's *Ulysses*, takes place in a single day but is not restrained by it, as it moves back and forth in time, following the memories of its protagonists. The main characters in Woolf’s novel, Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith are, again similarly to the lost souls of *Ulysses*, socially isolated individuals, who have willingly incarcerated themselves in the recesses of their own minds. During the course of this apparently mundane and insignificant day, the member of the London upper class, Mrs Dalloway, passes through an existential journey with her memories and impressions, while the disillusioned war veteran Septimus Smith is thrown around by past and present experiences that finally persuade him to end his agonizing existence.

Woolf’s novel contrasts Joyce’s psychoanalytical verbal frenzy with a highly-structured and significantly easier to follow narrative. While, as a Modernist piece of literature, *Mrs Dalloway* naturally does not conform to the pre-war Victorian linear narrative conventions and freely moves back and forth on its fictional timeline, it,
nevertheless, follows a certain narrative path which combines both the objective flow of events in reality and the subjective flow of thoughts in the characters’ minds. Enabling the reader to not only enter, but also to exit the protagonists’ minds, the novel accomplishes a rigid and well-defined storyline, which transcends the inner world of the individual consciousness with vivid ultra-realistic descriptions of the characters’ environment. Nevertheless, the novel still rests on the intense internal psychological experience of its protagonists, translated into the stream-of-consciousness narrative, which not only reveals their true natures but also provides an existential mirror-image of the spiritually torn apart British society, as it slowly re-emerges from the ashes of the Great War (Naremore, 1973, p. 85).

Mrs Dalloway, the wife of a wealthy conservative member of parliament, lives hedonistically in her comfortable environment of choice, consisting of her home and parts of Bond Street, Regents Park and Harely Street, an environment which she neither ever leaves nor renovates. Apparently superficial in her mental deliberations about the present, being part of the materialistic cult of the high classes, the lady interacts decently well with her respected husband and the random people she meets on the safer streets of London. The author, however, is not willing to let the reader be blindfolded by this social façade. With the very first paragraph, as Clarissa steps out into the crispy autumn morning to buy flowers for her upcoming party (“What a lark! What a plunge!”), the illusion quickly dissipates as the reader is allowed to peak into the character’s mental world (Woolf, 2005, p.5). There, under the upper layer of mundane thoughts pertaining to society, exist a myriad of memories of a joyful and careless childhood and of a vivacious and uplifting love affair with Peter Walsh.
“She SEEMED, anyhow, all right, glowing, like some bird or air ball that has flown in, attached itself for a moment to a bramble. But nothing is so strange when one is in love (and what this except being in love?) as the complete indifference of other people” (Woolf, 2005, p. 8).

What was once Mrs Dalloway’s unhindered happiness, was later transformed by fateful life decisions into powerful mental images and sensations that run through her stream of consciousness. The focus of the narrative gradually shifts inward and builds up toward the unique moments, in which Clarissa vividly re-experiences her past, and then moves steadily away and out of her mind. The intense conscious-emotional experience she has when she is drawn to reminisce about the love of her youth – “a moment of being” - is so strong that it influences the way she perceives everything during the rest of the day (Urquhart, 2013, n.p.). These moments seem to be the only fulfillment she experiences in her life.

Although Mrs Dalloway is apparently in possession of certain social skills, her total and true inability to communicate with other human beings is quickly revealed when her mental world is examined. A reference to Jung’s concept of the “persona” may provide understanding of the dynamics of social life as portrayed in Woolf’s novel. According to the late Swiss psychiatrist, each individual reserves a side of his personality as a public face, the part of his psyche to be exhibited to the outer world (Feist & Feist, 2009, p.106). This actor's mask or persona may be a useful tool in social interactions, yet one must remain conscious of the fact that it is only a part of personality and not the whole of it.
Although Mrs Dalloway has successfully evaded the danger of identifying too closely with her persona, she has grown unable to take off her mask and reveal her soul to a fellow human being. As she feels that the outer world, including her own sector of society, is only tangent to her true self, she is overwhelmingly alone in her environment. The gloomy atmosphere around and the hypocrisy and boredom in the members of her social sphere push her to the depressing realization that her life is an empty shell. “We are a doomed race, chained to a sinking ship” (Woolf, 2005, p. 85).

Although, much like Mrs Bloom in *Ulysses*, Clarissa earnestly longs for fulfilling relationships with fellow human beings, due to the spiritual damage caused by her past decision to break with the drives of her youth, she is unable to communicate with individuals on any level, other than the most mundane one. This is illustrated especially well in the scene where she finally meets her former lover, Peter Walsh, five years after they have parted their ways when “‘Clarissa!’ He cried. ‘Clarissa!’ But she never came back. It was over. He went away that night. He never saw her again, and Clarissa 'It was awful, he cried, awful, awful!’” (Woolf, 2005, p. 72). Now, having firm roots in the present reality, Walsh quickly observes the effects, which their split has had on Mrs Dalloway's inner being.

“She looked at Peter Walsh: her look, passing through all that time and that emotion, reached him doubtfully: settled on him tearfully: and rose and fluttered away, as a bird touches a branch and rises and flutters away. Quite simply, she wiped her eyes” (Woolf, 2005, p. 12).
In two beautifully depicted inner monologues, the former lovers’ streams of thought move closer to and further from each other, but even when they meet, they still cannot overcome the formidable barrier of the inability to communicate and never pass on into words or actions.

“She's grown older, [Peter] thought, sitting down. I shan't tell her anything about it, he thought, for she's growing older. She's looking at me, he thought, a sudden embarrassment coming over him, though he had kissed her hands. 'Exactly the same, thought Clarissa, the same queer look”’(Woolf, 2005, p. 40).

Thus, Mrs Dalloway, desiring to protect the privacy of her soul, subsists almost entirely in her past, like a fish that can only survive inside the waters of its stream (of consciousness). Her acute experience of what the psychoanalyst Erich Fromm has termed “the need of relatedness”, the drive for union with another human being, is apparently insufficient to push Mrs Dallow above and beyond her inner self (Fromm, 1981, p.3). Not even when Clarissa's memories appear vividly before her in their tangible living form, is she able to ascend from the interior world of her foregone youth (Hafley, 1954, p. 38). This longing for youth in the face of slowly impending death is expressive of the new, modernist, outlook on time, one of the fundamental motifs in the story.

The notion of time, especially in the Bergsonian concept of an undifferentiated flow of events, is critically important in Woolf's novel. Despite the attempts of scientists to measure time by treating it as a line of sequential events, in reality time is an indivisible whole (Bergson, 1950, p.100). It flows smoothly, continuously, freely and
unstoppably, much like the uninhibited current of thoughts, images and emotions in the mental realm. William James, who introduced the concept of the stream of consciousness, describes the nature of time in a way that again reminds of a stream:

“The best way to absorb the present moment is to notice it, to attend to it. One of the most baffling experiences occurs. Where is it, this present? It has melted in our grasp, fled ere we could touch it, gone in the instant of becoming.” (James, 1890, p.15)

Time and consciousness are critically tied to one another. If the human mind is a river, then time is the water in which the thoughts of the mind flow. Thus, if one attempts to change the content of the water, by fragmenting and mechanizing time, this will inevitably have a tremendous effect on consciousness as well. Nevertheless, the London society, similar to that of Mrs Bloom's Dublin, still clutches its pre-war rationalist ideas in an attempt to impose strict order on the temporal flux. This is best illustrated by the immutable Big Ben, one of London's most identifiable landmarks, whose exact strokes represent the artificial connection between social regulations and the flow of time (Hafley, 1954, p. 36).

“Big Ben struck the half hour. How extraordinary it was, strange, yes, touching to see the old lady move away from the window, as if she were attached to that sound, that string. Gigantic as it was, it had something to do with her. Down, down into the midst of ordinary things the finger fell, making the moment solemn” (Woolf, 2005, p.113).
Although society earnestly upholds the illusion that it has tamed time, the truth of the uncontrollability of this natural force is clearly seen, through the influence of Modernist ideas, by the outcasts of society, like Mrs Dalloway. The unembellished vision of time terrifies her, for she has realized that this unstoppable flow is bringing her closer and closer to a mighty waterfall, the end of her youth. “There! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical: then the hour, irrevocable. The leaden circles dissolved in the air” (Woolf, 2005. p.4). The long-awaited party that Clarissa spends most of the day preparing turns out to be only a façade of social entertainment; it is in fact a vigil before the burial, in which the fear of old age and death is hidden behind a delicate but hollow masquerade of Jungian personas.

Septimus Smith, who can be interpreted as an alter ego of Mrs Dalloway, also lives in the solitary reflections on his past and senses the coming end. A shell-shocked war veteran, Smith is overwhelmed by the horrors of war, which have numbed his emotions even in the tragic loss of his wartime comrade Evans. Stripped of his ability to feel and interact, Smith is pushed into a passive introspective grief, whose locus is the death of his friend. “There was his hand: there the head. White things were assembling behind the railings opposite. But he dared not look. Evans was behind the railings!” (Woolf, 2005, p. 20). The romantic idealism and patriotic sense of duty that have motivated the young man to throw himself into the fires of the European war, have been completely dispelled by his first-hand experience of the evil in human nature. The soul-shattering personal losses during the conflict have left Smith with profound disillusionment not only with the “just war” but also with humanity in general.

The chasm that Septimus’ traumatic experiences on the front have opened between
him and those who have not fought for their country, has made it next to impossible for the soldier to adapt to post-war society. Despite the fact that fighting has ended, the madness of war has transferred itself into the mind of the shell-shocked veteran. This quite literal madness, with which he returns home, serves as a brand of condemnation in the cold eyes of society. Unceasingly haunted by the hallucinatory images of his personal Great War, Smith begins to suffer from a loss of reality:

“But they beconed: leaves were alive: trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibers with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down: when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement” (Woolf, 2005, p. 22).

Compared to Mrs Dalloway, who, despite being more or less indifferent to them, interacts well with other individuals, Septimus Smith is completely unable to communicate with people and lives in an almost antagonistic relationship with society, disobedient to its rules and suspicious of all its members. He is locked in his own madness and perceives everyone around him as a potential threat. This takes a toll on Smith's closest living person, his wife Lucrezia, who in spite of her strong desire to help him, is unable to penetrate through his wall of experiences that the war has erected. “Though his wife was beside him, he didn’t take notice of her, but looked away, which made her lonely and full of fear. ‘I am alone; I am alone! She cried, by the fountain in Regent’s Park’” (Woolf, 2005, p. 26)

Unable to find a cure for his post-traumatic stress disorder, Smith desires neither to return to the past, nor remain in the present. “I went under the sea, I have been dead, and
yet am now alive, but let me rest still: he begged.....and as before waking....the sleeper feels himself drawing to the shores of life, so he felt himself drawing towards life” (Woolf, 2005, p. 69).

The unbearability of his life is decisively reinforced by the verdict of the psychiatrist, “the symbol of authority”, who intends to commit Septimus Smith involuntarily to a mental institution. Most importantly, however, Smith is emotionally numb – his empathy for other people and his motivation to pursue life-goals have evaporated. He is constantly drowning in his stream of consciousness, that rages in an isolated riverbed with no connection to the sea of human beings around it. The embittered soldier perceives the loss of his ability to feel for others as critical and irreversible, leaving him with only one, fatal, course of action – suicide.

Septimus Smith's suicide is the event that finally unifies the two plotlines into one story. The preceding lack of tangent points between the two narratives, those of the disillusioned upper-class lady and the shell-shocked war veteran, subtly expresses the sharp social division in interwar Britain. The surviving members of “the lost generation” live their lives almost completely unnoticed by the upper-class minority, which is on top of the social structure that the soldiers have fought to preserve. Nevertheless, both sides seem to share the same disillusionment not only with the values of the day but also with the meaning of life. The climax of the story, when Clarissa Dalloway learns of the death of the total stranger Septimus Smith, unifies the novel in an existentially-significant way. Leaving the long-waited party, Mrs Dalloway retires in her room to reflect on the event, which has hardly moved any of the other attendants. “If it were now to die, ’twere now to be most happy,” she exclaims in her mind.” (Woolf, 2005, p. 202).
Septimus Smith has achieved what Mrs Dalloway has fervently desired for herself - the freedom of the soul:

“Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the center which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded; one was alone. There was an embrace in death.” (Woolf, 2005, p. 202)

Although all thinking members of British society have sensed in some degree the meaninglessness of social life, with its class regulations, temporal strictness and lack of emotional communication, it is Septimus Smith who has had the courage to defy it, keeping his personality independent and intact. Thus, Smith's schizophrenic visions, which have portrayed him as a “Messiah” who has understood the mystery of life and has come to renew society, acquire significance as he sets an example in defying the world, even if it is only Clarissa Dalloway who will pay attention to it.

Virginia Woolf's novel presents a moving portrayal of the “human predicament” of the Modern age, with both its individual and social aspects, through a synthesis of uninhibited intrapersonal stream-of-consciousness narrative and vivid external realism. The Modern soul both loves life and fears it. It longs for vivacious youth, full of meaning and bright prospects of the future, and fears the pointlessness, despair and profound loneliness of maturity. Oblivious to this fundamental existential contradiction, society continues in its regulated course, shutting its eyes to those who are unable to bear its burden of false meaning. When all artificial deflections have been removed, however, the
stream of consciousness finally reaches its goal – the infinite ocean – and, flowing into it, ceases to exist. Death becomes the only solution, a way for the individual to express himself in a time of alienation and despair. The words of the great Modernist writer Franz Kafka are forcefully brought to mind:

“One of the first signs of the beginning of understanding is the wish to die. This life appears unbearable, another unattainable. One is no longer ashamed of wanting to die; one asks to be moved from the old cell, which one hates, to a new one, which will only in time come to hate. In this there is also a residue of belief that during the move the master will chance to come along the corridor, look at the prisoner and say: 'This man is not to be locked up again. He is to come with me.'“ (Kafka, 1915, n. p.)

V. The Contrasts and Similarities in Stream-of-Consciousness Narrative in *Ulysses* and *Mrs Dalloway*

Compared to Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, with its strangely complicated clarity and beauty of written expression, James Joyce's *Ulysses* can hardly be called a “perfect novel”. Indeed, it is not certain whether it can properly be called a *novel* at all. However, *Ulysses* fulfills the modernist goal of making everything “new” in a much fuller sense than *Mrs Dalloway* does. Joyce's radical, all-encompassing, stream-of-consciousness narrative seems to defy not only the general conventions of grammar and punctuation, but the very concept of the novel itself. Joyce's completely uninhibited stream-of-consciousness narrative elevates the expressive value of language to unimaginable
heights. Thus, it is more of a carefully planned linguistic experiment in human expression, than simply an attempt to craft a beautiful novel.

Although apparently apathetic towards objectivity, *Ulysses* pushes realism to a new level, the subjective mental realm. In a way, the subjective realism of the novel is further reinforced by the fact that it, more or less, rests on the experiences and sensations of the author, who is, after all, a real person. The raw portrayal of human thoughts serves as a mirror that reveals humanity beneath the mask of external appearance. More than that, like Dr. Nicolaes Tulp from Rembrandt's famous painting, Joyce dissects the conscious layer of the mind with his free-associative narrative and illuminates the unconscious psychodynamic core of human beings. The way this is conveyed to the reader is through language, daringly experimental language. Thus, if *Ulysses* is imperfect, it is only as far as language itself is imperfect. As Kafka points out, “all language is but a poor translation.” James Joyce, with his famous novel, proves to be the master interpreter for the alienated Modern mind, providing the best possible translation of its desperate calls to be heard.

A century after its publication, *Ulysses* is still a work of art, unsurpassed in its originality. In a way, it switches the roles of the psychoanalyst and the analysand – the reader, usually a lay person, becomes the one who is to evaluate and interpret the mental output of the characters. The stream of consciousness is present in all human beings, yet, as with almost everything, it can only be fully appreciated when observed from a distance. This is what *Ulysses* ultimately achieves through its consciousness-altering narrative substance, which, when consumed, allows the reader to see the world from a new perspective.
Although, like Joyce's novel, an essentially Modernist work, *Mrs Dalloway* explores several profound psychological, philosophical and sociological concepts that are lacking in the unrestrained unconscious fluctuations of *Ulysses*. While *Ulysses* is more about the stream of consciousness as a value in itself, Woolf's novel connects the river of thoughts to the broader existential situation of Modernity. The stream of consciousness runs back and forth in time in its search for meaning, usually gaining intense but short-lived fulfillment from “moments of being”, when the joy from memories of youth becomes more real than the present despair. Furthermore, the stream of consciousness, by its very nature, provides a subtle social critique. When the Modern structure of synthetic human interaction is put side by side with the uninhibited human mind, the reader intuitively begins to penetrate through the mask created by society.

Another contrast to *Ulysses* is the inner obsession of the protagonists with their own past. While in Joyce's novel, the characters are predominantly focused on their suppressed sexual instincts and the way they translate into their conscious fantasies, Woolf's novel provides a broader view that includes the importance of memories, decisions, time and death. Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith, both sharing the same isolation from society, the same fears and weaknesses, are predominantly occupied with their past memories, which they are unable to either realize or remove. The longing of the adult for his bright and joyful youth, as he is now hit by the uncertainty of his age, is another significant idea in Modernism. Naturally, only through the free flow of consciousness one is able to face and appreciate this desire, as one struggles to find meaning in this time of anxiety.

Moreover, the social and individual trauma caused by the First World War, while
hardly mentioned in *Ulysses*, plays a crucial role in *Mrs Dalloway*, especially through the character of Septimus Smith. Although the war has just ended, it seems that the times of patriotic fervor and determined belief in the principles of nationalism and just war have passed long ago. What is left is the disillusionment caused by human tragedy, shattering the faith in the values of a society that had so readily and naively thrown itself into war. The crushed soldiers, who are supposed to take their place in the confused British society, are left to cope with their own wartime demons which continuously haunt them with images of fallen comrades. Septimus Smith, the embodiment of post-war trauma, finds it impossible to return to his previous life and, like a cornered beast, silently gnarls at society. Unable to deal with the horrible flashback fluctuations of his stream of consciousness, he abruptly cuts it off for good. By doing this, however, Smith sends out a signal, like a distressed sailor in a stormy sea of meaninglessness. This signal generates an impulse in Mrs Dalloway's stream of consciousness, a wave that takes her to profound existential realizations.

Having considered some of the main contrasts between *Mrs Dalloway* and *Ulysses*, two of their essential points of thematic convergence should be acknowledged. The two monumental modernist works share the same perspective of experiencing and evaluating the world – namely, the subjective one. More than a century prior to the ascent of Modernism, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant shook the ideological foundations of his day by turning the philosophical gaze inward and laying the emphasis on the human subject, who spontaneously “creates” the world through his mental faculties and ideas (Pinkard, 2002, p.40). The external objects or “things-in-themselves” can only reach the individual through his perceptions, which are themselves shaped by
his cognitive filter (40). Thus, it became of less importance what the objective world is really like, than how humanity perceives it to be, for each individual basically lives in a phenomenal realm that is the product of his own psyche – as Schopenhauer laconically summarized, “the world is my idea” (Schopenhauer, 1937-41, v.II, p.3). Much as Kant had carried out a “Copernican revolution” in philosophy, so a hundred years later, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf have executed their own Kantian revolution in literature by radically shifting the narrative focus inward, to the subjective human mind. While the German philosopher analyzed the subject from the point of view of an outside observer, the two novelists depict the mind from the mind's own perspective by creating a verbal channel for its stream of consciousness. Finally, precisely because of this shift of attention inward, *Ulysses* and *Mrs Dalloway* both express an elevated humanism in their approach to the individual. The two novels are not so much trying to put forth original new ideas or to even analyze the human psyche, than they constitute an honest attempt to understand the alienated Modern man, by seeing the world as he sees it.
VI. Conclusion

The two Modernist masterpieces strongly differ in their narrative structure, thematic and conceptual content, but fundamentally share the same, essentially Modernist, core - the stream of consciousness. In spite of the fact that Joyce focuses more on the Freudian subconscious realm, while Woolf examines human consciousness in general, both novels rest on the free flow of thoughts, images and emotions, as they translate verbally into the narrative text. These Modernist works shatter the Victorian literary conventions of grammatical ordering, linear narrative and veiled inappropriate themes by allowing the human mind to fully express itself in its anxious confusion of the post-war age.

Moreover, Joyce and Woolf achieved what Freud and the psychoanalysts could never do – they picked the exploration of the human mind up from the analytic couch and pushed it out into everyday life, with all of its uncertainties and discomforts.

James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, as professional artists, conveyed in their works not only the general feelings running through society, not only the war-weariness of the masses, not only the personal battles of the soldiers, not only individuals’ protest against the tyrannizing over their human natures, but also the fundamental existential nucleus of human life, his consciousness, unrestrained by artificial regulations and vividly expressed through the uninhibited stream of thoughts.

“The tremendous world I have inside my head. How to free myself, and this world, without tearing myself to pieces. And rather tear myself to a thousand pieces than be buried with this world within me.” (Kafka, 1915, n. p.).

Franz Kafka
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