

Many Lives, One Mind:

Stream of Consciousness in the Fiction of Virginia Woolf and Kawabata Yasunari

Keiko Matsui Gibson

I. *Stream of Consciousness in Fiction*

In this paper I shall discuss the origins of stream of consciousness, showing how Virginia Woolf used this technique in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927), then explain how the technique was introduced in Japan, where Kawabata Yasunari made use of it in *Crystal Fantasy* (1931), and finally compare the two authors with respect to their suggestion of a universal mind.

"Stream of consciousness" refers to an actual psychological process of perception and thought, and also to a literary technique reflecting that process. The term was originally coined by the psychologist and philosopher William James in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) to refer to the psychological flow of interior experiences. As a literary term, "stream of consciousness" first appeared in a critical essay by May Sinclair in 1918, concerning Dorothy Richardson's novels.¹ The literary technique expresses the natural flow of feelings, perceptions, fantasies, and thoughts, without apparent logic, in character's minds. This technique provides novelists with a way of grasping reality suitable for a modern world-view. In the early twentieth century, stream of consciousness was an innovative departure from the objective realism and naturalism of major nineteenth century novelists such as Zola, Flaubert, Dickens, and Balzac, for example. Stream of consciousness was a kind of subjective realism compatible with modern psychological and philosophical trends such as psychoanalysis and Bergson's ideas of creative process. Sigmund Freud

himself had listened to and analyzed the free associations of his patients as a way of understanding the unconscious.

According to Nakamura Shinichiro, there are two main reasons that writers had to reject the approach of objective realism.² One is that authorial omniscience ceased to seem valid because it was not realistic enough: it did not reveal the depths of consciousness and unconsciousness sufficiently. The other reason is that objective realism was based on the premise of chronological time of clock and calendar, which seemed quite unrealistic for new writers. They emphasized the awareness of various aspects of psychological, inner duration, which is much more meaningful to us. The philosopher Henri Bergson established his own theory of time as immeasurable and multidirectional process, which seems more appropriate to modern life than nineteenth century mechanistic time. In the twentieth century, people have come to recognize reality as a mysterious, dynamic stream of events after being loyal to the materialistic world-view of the nineteenth-century, based on a logical-empirical frame of mind.

James Joyce, for example, the most famous promoter of stream of consciousness and many other innovations in the novel, originally admired and practiced Flaubertian objective realism, but gradually became doubtful about it as he encountered the problem of rendering the inner world: so he created *Ulysses* (1922), which proved what could be done with stream of consciousness.³

II. *Virginia Woolf (1882-1941): Mrs. Dalloway*

Virginia Woolf was never a mere imitator of Joyce. On the contrary, she was at first quite critical of *Ulysses*. According to Robert Martin Adams, she and her husband Leonard declined to publish *Ulysses* from their Hogarth Press.⁴ In her diary of September 6, 1922, she objected to its indecencies and its bad form, as well as to Joyce's egotism. And yet, on the very next day, being influenced by a favorable review by Gilbert Seldes in the *Nation* of August, 1922, she admitted that *Ulysses* might be the product of a

genius. On the other hand, she agreed with T. S. Eliot on September 26, 1922, that Joyce was a crude and dangerous writer. In fact, she seemed both jealous and afraid of him. In 1941, however, she wrote in her diary that Eliot had previously been enthusiastic about Joyce's work, enticing her to re-evaluate him.

It is apparent that Virginia Woolf's stream of consciousness is her own, and not directly borrowed from Joyce. Rejecting the plot-centered novel, Woolf sank deeply into the realm of the consciousness of her characters. She did not find any significance in narrating the development of external action. She wanted to express the internal realization of her characters. She participated in the process of enriching the fictional world by concentrating on intuitions, visions, and other irrational phenomena in much more detail than nineteenth-century writers had typically done in fiction. In other words, she helped to make those illogical, irrational aspects of psychic life more valuable objects of fiction.

Her view of life is that of a mystic, whose characters are often in search of the ultimate oneness of the universe. Her intention in writing fiction was clearly stated as follows:

Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? [...] Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness.⁵

Woolf sees life as a "luminous halo" which does not have a clear shape or solidity, "a semi-transparent envelope" which cannot be described objectively. Her view of ephemeral, mysterious qualities of life is symbolized by the "luminous halo." Then she

expresses her mission as a novelist to communicate this transient spirit as it is. She admits no need to give the formless spirit any artificial order. She advocates recording “the atoms” which constitute a “luminous halo” of the mind. In this way, the stream of consciousness technique was the most natural, suitable device to realize her view of life.

Among Woolf's novels, it is generally agreed that stream of consciousness is most effective in *Mrs. Dalloway*. There are three main characters in this novel: the protagonist Clarissa Dalloway, elderly, kind, graceful, but superficial, snobbish, and vaguely unhappy; Septimus Smith, a shell-shocked war veteran whom Clarissa never meets in person; and Pater Walsh, Clarissa's old suitor who has just come back from India, and whom she invites to a party at the climax of the novel. As for the plot, on a day in June in London, Clarissa prepares for a party. Just before it, Septimus becomes so deranged, hearing his dead friend, Evans, talking to him, that he commits suicide. Doctor William Bradshaw reports it at the party that evening, but it is a successful party anyhow.

As Robert Humphrey has pointed out, the surface narrative covers a little less than twenty-four hours and yet the inner, psychological time is eighteen years, and the places involved in the characters' minds shift from India to Bourton to London to a French battlefield of World War I, which about a dozen characters remember in pieces.⁶ Although the external plot is rather simple, the inner reality is depicted in intricately woven symbols and associations. According to David Daiches, “Each character who makes contact with Mrs. Dalloway in space (crossing her path in London), in time (doing something at the same moment that she is), or in memory (the third dimension, as it were) has symbolic relation if not to Mrs. Dalloway herself then to the main theme of the book.”⁷ Now we can see that time, space, and memory mingle in the whole experience presented to the readers. Stream of consciousness frees us from the chronological limits of clock-time. In order to avoid chaos, Woolf was thoughtful enough to emphasize certain places where time is more fluid than usual, and certain

times when space is fluid. As Professor Daiches says, "We are either moving freely in time within the consciousness of an individual, or moving from person to person at a single moment in time."⁸

A typical passage showing the mingling of minds in the novel occurs at the beginning of the party, when Clarissa fears that it will not be successful:

Oh dear, it was going to be a failure; a complete failure, Clarissa felt it in her bones as dear old Lord Lexham stood there apologizing for his wife who had caught cold at the Buckingham Palace garden party.⁹

Here, her anxieties mingle with sympathy for the Lexhams; then she becomes critically conscious of Peter who she guesses is being critically conscious of her, though they do not speak to each other at this point; so their minds mingle:

She could see Peter out of the tail of her eye, criticising her, there, in that corner. Why, after all, did she do these things? Why seek pinnacles and stand drenched in fire? ... It was extraordinary how Peter put her into these states just by coming and standing in a corner. He made her see herself; exaggerate. It was idiotic. But why did he come, then, merely to criticise? Why always take, never give? Why not risk one's little point of view?¹⁰

It seems to me that here Clarissa's sensitivity to Peter's criticism may reflect Woolf's sensitivity to literary criticism, and the artist's general resentment of critics who lack sympathy, creativity, and the courage to take risks: they take more than they give. And the rhetorical question about "point of view" may suggest Woolf's own risks in departing from a single point of view in order to reveal several minds through stream of consciousness.

After Clarissa intuits the thoughts of Ellie Henderson and other

guests who are conscious of Clarissa, she thinks of the party in a way that Virginia Woolf must have been thinking about her art: was it realistic or not?

Every time she gave a party she had this feeling of being something not herself, and that every one was unreal in one way; much more real in another. It was, she thought, partly their clothes, partly being taken out of their ordinary ways, partly the background, it was possible to say things you couldn't say anyhow else, things that needed an effort; possible to go much deeper. But not for her; not yet anyhow.¹¹

Clarissa does not go deeper, perhaps because she is not a creative artist; whereas Woolf does, because she is. Both, however, lose some sense of their own selves in going out sympathetically to others, perhaps to enter some kind of universal mind.

Whereas Joyce engaged in the bare transcription of psychological processes because he wanted to suggest several points of view equitably, Woolf shows her personal viewpoints and openly shares some of Clarissa's feelings.¹² Woolf seems to have entered her creation, unlike Joyce, who stayed out of it like God. Also unlike Joyce, Woolf does not apply stream of consciousness objectively to her characters, but usually uses reporting phrases such as, "she thought," "so it seemed to her," and "she could remember," as Daiches has pointed out.¹³ Also, the frequent use of the half-logical conjunction "for" helps control free association to give a certain order to the book.

In relation to Woolf's control, an interesting observation by Daiches is that "Woolf maintains her compromise between reported thought and direct, unedited transcription of consciousness. That transitional pronoun 'one', midway between the first and third person in its implications, is called on to help out..."¹⁴ For example, "For having lived in Westminster—how many years now? over twenty,—one feels even in the midst of the traffic, or waking at night, Clarissa was positive... For Heaven only knows why one

loves it so, how one sees it so..."¹⁵

It seems to me, then, that the pronoun "one" suggests something like a universal experience rather than a definite specific thought of one individual, and effectively serves as a literary device to demonstrate Woolf's sense of one mind. With the same aim she uses symbols such as clocks (Big Ben and St. Margaret's), a car containing an unnamed royal personage, and an aeroplane that makes a strange, recurring noise.¹⁶ As Jean Love points out, Big Ben strikes regularly through the novel, and its sound generates a kind of order and unifying function.¹⁷ Several characters are aware of these symbols in what seems to be a kind of transpersonal consciousness. In spite of the fact that the physical coverage of time is so short, *Mrs. Dalloway's* symbolic images flow so abundantly that they give us impressions resembling those of a lyrical poem. The symbolic vision backed up by a lyrical style is overwhelmingly important in creating a mood in which significant, crucial moments of insight and true wisdom are shown, such as Clarissa's eventual enlightenment at the party.

This highly symbolic book seems to have encouraged two rather contradictory reactions. As E. W. Hawkins put it, "To one reader, the highly developed manner of such a novel as *Mrs. Dalloway* seems intolerably artificial; to another it seems an excellent vehicle for wit, for acute sympathy, for the sense of beauty, above all for the sense of life as a thing, 'absorbing, mysterious, of infinite richness.'"¹⁸ Arnold Bennett gave a harsh, unsparing criticism, on the other hand, by saying that "logical construction is absent; concentration on the theme (if any) is absent; the interest is dissipated... Problems are neither clearly stated nor clearly solved."¹⁹

However, critical opinion has treated *Mrs. Dalloway* favorably, in the long run. Daiches has, for example, praised her stream of consciousness for being logical,²⁰ and T. S. Eliot praised Woolf because "Her work is perhaps more representative than that of Joyce."²¹ In my opinion, *Mrs. Dalloway* is a masterpiece because its stream of consciousness reveals the participation of its characters

in one mind, and does so in an aesthetically organic way.

III. *Woolf's To the Lighthouse*

Woolf's use of stream of consciousness became more complex in *To the Lighthouse*. At the outset of the novel there is no description of external conditions. After Mrs. Ramsey's initial speech, the reader is exposed to her son James's mind. The reader can sense James's excitement by reading a rather long sentence in the impatient tone of the child:

To her son these words conveyed an extraordinary joy, as if it were settled, the expedition were bound to take place, and the wonder to which he had looked forward, for years and years it seemed, was, after a night's darkness and a day's sail, within touch.²²

As Mitchell Leaska points out, Woolf's primary method in *To the Lighthouse* is "manifold perspectives" or "multiple points of view."²³ And the point of view shifts four or five times within some of the long sentences. Also there is a repetitious alternation between direct and indirect monologues. The language of indirect monologue is difficult to distinguish from Woolf's own language because of their linguistic similarities. Sometimes it is almost impossible to make a distinction between her characters and her omniscient narrator. According to Leaska, several specific words can be clues to judge omniscient statements: "as if," "seems/seemed," "something," "perhaps." Ironically enough, these words, being so uncertain, make the reader wonder about the credibility of the narrator's omniscience.²⁴ Here I cannot help but recall Nietzsche's remark that God is dead. Since God died, novelists seem to have become reluctant to present a definite, single omniscient narrator in their work. There is no absolute power, no supreme consciousness or authority in the universe. That is why the stream of consciousness novel presents interrelationships of different charac-

ters without any central intelligence dominating the whole work. This very lack of authority seems to justify Erich Auerbach's remark about Woolf's "representing herself to be someone who doubts, wonders, hesitates, as though the truth about her characters were not better known to her than it is to them or to the reader."²⁵ In comparison with Joyce, Woolf showed her personal viewpoints both independently and through some of her characters, whereas Joyce was engaged in the bare transcription of psychological processes mainly through direct interior monologues because he wanted to suggest several points of view equitably. Joyce maintained impersonality and objectivity towards his characters partly because of his ironic view of life, whereas Woolf's subjectivism results from her more sympathetic view of life.

Parts of *To the Lighthouse* are too painful and too subjectified, as if the characters were elaborately made glass dolls. Mrs. Ramsay, for instance, seems severely fragile and worn-out because she overly sympathizes with everyone who comes to her. And the painter Lily Briscoe is so uncertain of herself that she seems about to break until she attains her final vision. Mr. Ramsey, who is apparently a pompous philosopher, displays in his stream of consciousness a tender sensitivity. So Woolf reveals the contradictory, subtle complexities of the characters by means of this technique.

Woolf's diary indicates that in planning this novel she had wanted to show her memories of childhood in her family's summer cottage in St. Ives.²⁶ The setting of the novel, however, is not St. Ives, but an island near Scotland. The novel is far from a mere reproduction of her childhood. Mr. Ramsay is modelled on her father, Leslie Stephen, but she treats him with emotional detachment. The reader has trouble trying to determine who in the novel corresponds to Virginia Woolf. Lily Briscoe seems rather close to Woolf, but Mrs. Ramsay provides some resemblance also. Lily and Woolf are both artists, trying to attain vision; and Lily attains hers just as Woolf finishes the novel. Mrs. Ramsay seems to be as sensitive as Woolf, who apparently overcame the danger

of succumbing to banal sentimentality, in deriving characters from her life and family, by employing multiple points of view.

The book consists of three parts. "The Window" centers on Mrs. Ramsay and her relationships with about a dozen characters. "Time Passes" is primarily presented through the omniscient narrator, who poetically deals with man's smallness in nature; and Mrs. Ramsay, her son, and daughter die. "The Lighthouse," mostly presented through Lily Briscoe, shows how Mr. Ramsay completes the trip to the lighthouse that had been suggested originally by Mrs. Ramsay. In the first part, she disagrees with Mr. Ramsay about the next day's weather and has complicated dealings with many characters, some of whom she tries to pair up in marriage; then she organizes a grand dinner party to unite her friends. The second part is a poetic interlude which covers ten years of her absence from the cottage where the action of the first part had occurred. The cottage deteriorates, her son dies in the war, her daughter dies in childbirth, and Mrs. Ramsay dies.

[Mr. Ramsay, stumbling along a passage one dark morning, stretched his arms out, but Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, his arms, though stretched out, remained empty.]²⁷

Before this is an extremely poetic and intense paragraph concerning the helplessness of human beings and culminating in "no image with semblance of serving and divine promptitude comes readily to hand bringing the night to order and making the world reflect the compass of the soul."²⁸ Then the report of Mrs. Ramsay's death is like a sudden stage direction—which seems to be an artificially made let-down, as if our intense emotional involvement with Mrs. Ramsay has been suddenly and totally betrayed. But perhaps this is true for death, which is seldom expected. And Woolf's rejection of the traditional plot development probably caused her to treat Mrs. Ramsay's death so abruptly—to avoid sentimentality. Similarly, in the last part of the novel, she avoids

sentimentality even when Mr. Ramsay makes the disputed trip to the lighthouse, as if they had planned it a day before, instead of ten years before. Mr. Ramsay, along with his children James and Cam, attains reconciliation and self-realization on the way to the lighthouse, just as Lily, back in the cottage, attains vision just as she finishes the last stroke of her painting. So the ending is optimistic.

Woolf's multiple perspectives mingle delicately with the omniscient narrator's statements. For example,

What damned rot they talk, thought Charles Tansley, laying down the spoon precisely in the middle of his plate, which he had swept clean, as if, Lily thought (he sat opposite to her with his back to the window precisely in the middle of view), he were determined to make sure of his meals.²⁹

This passage starts with Tansley's disgust and the following present participle functions as the omniscient narrator's stage direction, which interrupts the thoughts in Lily's mind about Tansley's devouring. In this long single sentence, three perspectives are differentiated sensitively and subtly. I get the impression that the ordinary mind, in an ordinary scene, is revealed as if each particle of consciousness or action were a grave event.

"Do you write meny letters, Mr. Tansley?" asked Mrs. Ramsay, pitying him too, Lily supposed; for that was true of Mrs. Ramsay—she pitied men always as if they lacked something—women never, as if they had something. He wrote to his mother; otherwise he did not suppose he wrote one letter a month, said Mr. Tansley, shortly.³⁰

Here, Mrs. Ramsay's question to Mr. Tansley triggers Lily's impression that Mrs. Ramsay pities him. Then a quite uncertain, hesitant narrator comments on the possibility of Mrs. Ramsay's pitying Tansley. But as Leaska has mentioned, Woolf's use of diffident

expressions—“as if they lacked something” and “as if they had something”—contributes to dissolve the borderlines between the narrator and the characters: in this case, it is Lily. Then the sentence is followed by Tansley’s answer to Mrs. Ramsay.

The following example of Woolf’s indirect interior monologue yields almost equally vivid impressions as the direct interior monologue after one becomes familiar with her skillful technique:

He was really, Lily Briscoe thought, in spite of his eyes, but then look at his nose, look at his hands, the most uncharming human being she had ever met. Then why did she mind what he said? Women can’t write, women can’t paint—what did that matter coming from him, since clearly it was not true to him but for some reason helpful to him, and that was why he said it? Why did her whole being bow, like corn under a wind, and erect itself again from this abasement only with a great and rather painful effort?³¹

This minutely detailed expression of Lily’s psyche, consisting of crisp, short statements, with “she” instead of “I,” seems somehow frustrating, for we expect more direct, personal spontaneity, instead of this distancing.

Another astonishing effect, as Leaska has mentioned, is where she skillfully presents “mutually shared interior monologues” of James and Cam:

Now they would sail on for hours like this, and Mr. Ramsay would ask old Macalister a question—about the great storm last winter probably—and old Macalister would answer it, and they would puff their pipes together, and Macalister would take a tarry rope in his fingers, tying or untying some knot, and the boy would fish, and never say a word to any one.³²

This is a delicate presentation of two consciousnesses at the same time, although it looks as if it is the omniscient narrator’s state-

ment. The speedy advancement with the repetitive use of "and" and the subjunctive "would" implies the children's strong emotions. One advantage of the well-controlled indirect interior monologue is that one can use the pronoun "they" with great effect.

Japanese find stream-of-consciousness interesting and artificial at the same time, because it shows the possibilities of verbalizing experiences which Japanese do not verbalize. Because of our homogenous society we can intuit each other's thoughts and feelings without relying on words as much as Westerners do. However, during the 1920's, when the works of Joyce and Proust were translated into Japanese, Kawabata Yasunari, Yokomitsu Riichi, and other novelists experimented with stream of consciousness with moderate success, but without enduring influence, because of excessive verbalization which seemed artificial. Nor is Woolf's work appreciated much in Japan, not only because of her obscure style, but also because of her world view, which seems psychotic. Perhaps I am unusual in finding her novels fascinating, because of her poetic insights into aspects of the mind that I could not possibly understand as a foreigner. Since English people seem not to express their feelings as openly as Americans, her stream of consciousness technique helps me figure out hidden psychological activity. Her world is narrow and deep, reminding me of Murasaki Shikibu's world of Prince Genji during the Heian Period in Japan; so someday I would like to investigate comparisons between the two authors, especially their feminine sensitivities that transcend the emphasis on overt action in many novels by men. This contrast between men and women is shown through the Ramsays: he believes only in factual truth, whereas she cherishes feelings, intuitions, mystical experiences, and harmony, social and psychological. Woolf presents art as a means of reconciliation of men and woman and other opposites, achieved through stream of consciousness, in which feelings are united with thoughts. This is certainly true of *Mrs. Dalloway*, in which the heroine, like Mrs. Ramsay, achieves a vision at a party.

In Joyce's *Ulysses* stream of consciousness goes much deeper

than Woolf's. He sees every element of life equitably and leaves out nothing, not even obscene thoughts and words, whereas she is restrictive in representing the mind. *Ulysses* is a grand universe, combining ancient and modern times, the vulgar and sublime, whereas Woolf's world is a microcosmos. One of the reasons that her world is restrictive is her predominant use of indirect interior monologue, which makes her interact with her characters all of the time, instead of leaving them alone objectively as Joyce does. She chooses characters more or less like herself so she can meddle in their minds. Her sincere concern for people and the world could not let her distance herself from her characters the way that Joyce could treat his characters so comically. She thought that people were precious; Joyce thought that they were absurd. I admire Joyce's bold attempt to create a mythological world based on the sterile modern world, and his diversified talents and styles; but at the same time I appreciate Woolf's graceful, poetic, and more compassionate presentation of people.

Woolf's strong concern about each human being could be associated with Kant's moral principle: "act so as to treat each person as an end, not as a means." She seems to give each person equal consideration as a unique being, regardless of social status. Children mean as much to her as adults. Woolf thought that six-year old James would have a mental scar all of his life because his father cruelly disappointed his wish to go to the lighthouse, but she treats the father as well as the son with sympathy. Kant's moral principle seems to be translated into the aesthetic technique of multiple points of view, although she does not seem to think in terms of this or any other abstract doctrine. Rather, she thinks this way because of her feminine sympathy. And stream of consciousness flows out of this sympathy for all human beings.

This sympathy, however, is directed to individuals rather than to social masses. She seems unconcerned about war generally, though Mrs. Ramsay's son Andrew dies in battle. Other current events are ignored, and so is history. But because of this exclusion of social-historical events, she could concentrate on each

person's consciousness.

The theme of *To the Lighthouse* is self-realization in ordinary daily life—reminding me of the Zen Buddhist teaching of enlightenment in familiar routines, rather than in esoteric spiritual practices. Such routines as sweeping the floor, cooking meals, gardening, flower arranging, or just sitting, if done with awareness, are ways to enlightenment. Woolf seems to show this in stream of consciousness, in such unspectacular events as Mrs. Ramsay's party, Mr. Ramsay's boat ride to the lighthouse with the children, and Lily's completion of her painting, when these characters realize themselves and life. As in Zen, their realizations are not explicitly expressed or explained, but are intuited, felt, and suggested. Mrs. Ramsay seems enlightened throughout the story because she lives above most conflicts and sympathizes with everyone, even her husband, despite disagreements; but at the party she is even more enlightened than usual because she sensed that her mind touched everyone else's mind. On the boat, after Mr. Ramsay speaks affectionately to the children—for the first time to James—they realize that he is not just the opposite of the mother: he is himself as a whole, now loved instead of hated. They see him now for what he is instead of through the mother's eyes. They understand the importance of multiple perspectives in comprehending reality—and so did Woolf, and so do we, in reading her novel. In the case of Lily, realization comes through understanding Mr. Ramsay after being so attached to Mrs. Ramsay that she could not appreciate him. Lily then finished her painting after having left it for ten years because she suddenly transcends the male-female dichotomy and sees art as a means of sublime reconciliation of opposites. Now she is a real artist.

And so was Virginia Woolf.

IV. *Kawabata Yasunari (1899–1972): Crystal Fantasy*

Stream of consciousness entered Japan primarily through Joyce's work, rather than Woolf's. The first substantial introduction to

Joyce's work in Japan was offered in an essay by Doi Kōchi, "Joyce's *Ulysses*," in the journal *Kaiō*, in 1929. And translations of *Ulysses* by several Japanese started coming out in September, 1930. What was called "Joyce fever" culminated around 1931 and 1932 when such writers as Itō Sei, Masamune Hakuchō, and Kitasono Katsue (editor of the international journal *Vou*) published stream of consciousness fiction one after another, and Kawabata issued *Crystal Fantasy* in 1931. When Kawabata read his rival Yokomitsu Riichi's "Machine," a short story masterpiece of stream of consciousness, in September, 1930, he praised it sky-high, though he had pointed out the dangers of stream of consciousness several months before, when Itō Sei had used it in "Kanjōsaibō no Danmen" ("A Section of an Emotional Cell"). Around 1933 and 1934, more criticism and translations were published by various authors before "Joyce fever" suddenly came to an end, like other fads.³³

Stream of consciousness in Kawabata's work, however, was not faddish because of his serious exploration of its possibilities for Japanese literature, and because of his creative genius, which won him the Nobel prize, the second person in Asia after Tagore. His work tends to be considered an exclusively Japanese product, partly because he found himself more and more attached to "old Japan." And yet we should not overlook the fact that he was quite sensitive and open-minded towards western literature. In fact, he had entered Tokyo University, majoring in English literature for a few years, until switching his major to Japanese literature. Kawabata himself was reluctant to admit the influence of western literature on his own work. But of course we cannot always trust the author's own judgment or opinion about his work.

In an essay, "Rakka Ryūsui" ("Falling Flowers and Flowing Water," 1962), Kawabata compares his own work with that of some western writers:

I like to write with the flow of associations, which emerge one

after another as I write on. Perhaps all writers are like that, but I suspect I am more addicted to the habit than most. I am probably lacking in ability to screen my associations. I could defend myself by saying categorically, that the new “psychological” writers—the so-called stream of consciousness writers—like Joyce, Woolf, Proust, and even Faulkner have also produced a literature of associations and memories. But I have always felt that their kind of psychological novel reflects the infirmities, corruptions, and derangements of the modern age, in sharp contrast to the solid, well-balanced classics of older times.³⁴

Nevertheless, Kawabata makes an attempt to find common characteristics between stream of consciousness writers and himself. He also wrote that “I would welcome any new styles. For example, expressionism, dadaism, and surrealism, whatever their ideas may be have a great many things to teach me, at least from the point of view concerning the conception of writing. I would not hesitate to admit these new literary movements as examples of liberation from old methods of conception.”³⁵ This shows how flexible, open-minded, and innovative Kawabata actually was.

Crystal Fantasy is his most successful early experiment with stream of consciousness, which in his later masterpieces matured harmoniously with more traditionally Japanese aesthetic methods. In *Crystal Fantasy* the stream of consciousness stands out boldly against the background of Japanese conventions. So some critics argued that the technique seemed artificial and undigested. But that is so only if the work is juxtaposed to later masterpieces such as *Yukiguni* (*Snow Country*) and *Nemureru Bijo* (*The House of the Sleeping Beauties*), where the protagonists’ flowing consciousness contributes greatly to the structure. Nevertheless, in my opinion, *Crystal Fantasy* is remarkable because its stream of consciousness reveals philosophical ideas more openly than was possible in traditional Japanese fiction, in which intellectual controversies seldom emerge.

The meaning of the title of this work comes out in the following passage:

The crystalline eye of a near-sighted fish. A crystal gem. Glass. The prophets from the East, India, Turkey, Egypt, are gazing at a large crystal gem. In that crystal gem, past and future float up like small models, moving-pictures. Crystal fantasy.³⁶

So crystal symbolizes the mind, and fantasy is the stream of consciousness. Just as a six-sided crystal refracts and reflects real and virtual images, so the mind-stream includes past, present, and future, reality and unreality. The coldness of crystal suggests the protagonist's unemotional, intellectual view of life. The protagonist is the repressed, frustrated wife of a geneticist studying human sexuality on the level of animal procreation. This unhappy couple, and the other characters—an unmarried young lady and a dog-dealer—are given no names, to suggest universal themes rather than specific characterization. The husband is an archetypal scientist, his wife symbolizes sterility, and the young lady is an archetypal virgin. Her female dog and the wife's male dog—given the only proper name in the story, Playboy, symbolize sex, and when they mate, the wife's desires for a baby intensify in a long stream of consciousness passage.

One of Kawabata's original inventions is the use of frequent parentheses in stream of consciousness passages. The parentheses separate the flowing internal world from the objective external world.

"Look, when this mirror is placed here, it is not a luxury for me. It always reflects sperm and ova," said the wife when the western-style dresser-mirror arrived from the department store, . . . She herself did not notice a peculiarity of the words, but the reason why (Oh, the blue sky!) was that she was enthralled by the blue sky in the mirror. (Birds falling like

silver pebbles in the blue sky. Boats running like silver arrows in the sea. Fish swimming like silver needles in the lake.)³⁷

Here it is clear that birds, boats, and fish are symbols for sperm; and the sky, sea, and lake are symbols for mother-nature. The most frequent use of parenthetical stream of consciousness is integrated into the narrative:

“According to my husband,”... the wife suddenly started laughing. Feeling her own beauty of the laughter, (husband! I never used the word ‘husband’ to refer to my husband before. According to my husband? It is not my husband, it seems to be the husband in general.)³⁸

In this way, stream of consciousness becomes harmoniously and naturally part of the description and narration.

Stylistically, Kawabata makes use of highly specialized terms from genetics, Greek and Roman mythology, Christianity and Buddhism, and diverse kinds of philosophy, all of which are integrated with ordinary language, which divides into traditionally Japanese male and female diction. The male diction is used for authorial narration, and female diction is the protagonist's. He weaves these diverse kinds of language into an intricate tapestry, thanks to stream of consciousness.

V. *Kawabata and Woolf: Comparisons and Conclusions*

Kawabata's sensibility seems more akin to Woolf's than to Joyce's. Joyce is more objective than Woolf and Kawabata, whose main characters are both women whose feminine consciousness expands to include other minds. Unlike Joyce, Woolf uses stream of consciousness indirectly, by using reporting phrases, which help to control the story; whereas Kawabata uses parentheses and male and female languages to obtain order. Both of their works are

lyrical and poetic. Each book deals with one day as the actual span of time, and nearly twenty years of psychological time. Both authors read *Ulysses* in English, but they created their own original styles of stream of consciousness without imitating Joyce's technique. Both use myths and symbols to unite several minds into one. Clarissa Dalloway and the geneticist's wife both reveal a sense of participating in other minds. Philosophically, Kawabata's Buddhism transcends dichotomies of self and other, joy and sadness, man and woman, life and death; and Virginia Woolf's outlook is similar. According to Jean Love, "Clarissa is more than an ordinary hostess. She has powers almost like those of some mythic goddess or great earth mother, as if she were visible manifestation of Brahma or Mana."³⁹ Universal mind is realized in Mrs. Dalloway's party, as well as in the dominant image of *Crystal Fantasy*.

Notes

- 1 May Sinclair, "The Novels of Dorothy Richardson," *The Egoist*, Volume 5 (April, 1918), p. 58; cited by K. Shiv Kumar in *Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel*, (New York: New York University Press, 1963), p. 14.
- 2 Nakamura Shinichiro, *Gendai Shōsetsu no Sekai (The World of Modern Novels)*, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1969), pp. 35-39. In this paper Japanese names will be written in the normal Japanese order of family name followed by personal name. See also Kumar, *passim*.
- 3 Nakamura, p. 49.
- 4 Robert Martin Adams, *After Joyce: Studies in Fiction after Ulysses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 67-68.
- 5 Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction" (from *Collected Essays*, II), cited by T. E. Apter in *Virginia Woolf, A Study of Her Novels*, (New York: New York University Press, 1979), pp. 73-74.
- 6 Robert Humphrey, *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 100.
- 7 David Daiches, *Virginia Woolf* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979), p. 62.
- 8 Daiches, p. 65.
- 9 Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovano-

- vich, 1953), p. 254.
- 10 Woolf, pp. 254–255.
 - 11 Woolf, pp. 259–260.
 - 12 Daiches, p. 71.
 - 13 Daiches, p. 71.
 - 14 Daiches, p. 72.
 - 15 Woolf, pp. 4–5.
 - 16 Jean O. Love, *Worlds in Consciousness: Mythopoetic Thought in the Novels of Virginia Woolf* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 153.
 - 17 Love, p. 153.
 - 18 Robin Majumdar and Allen McLaurin, Editors, *Virginia Woolf: the Critical Heritage* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 188.
 - 19 Majumdar, p. 190.
 - 20 Cited by Ralph Freedman, *The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hermann Hesse, André Gide, and Virginia Woolf* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 218.
 - 21 Majumdar, p. 192.
 - 22 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
 - 23 Mitchell A. Leaska, *Virginia Woolf's Lighthouse: A Study in Critical Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 9.
 - 24 *Ibid.*, pp. 58–59.
 - 25 Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Book, 1957), p. 472.
 - 26 Manly Johnson, *Virginia Woolf* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1973), p. 26.
 - 27 *Lighthouse*, p. 194.
 - 28 *Ibid.*, p. 193.
 - 29 *Ibid.*, p. 128.
 - 30 *Ibid.*, p. 129.
 - 31 *Ibid.*, p. 130.
 - 32 *Ibid.*, p. 244.
 - 33 Imamura Tateya, "Suishō gensō no hihaku bungaku-teki kōsatsu" (*Comparative Study of Crystal Fantasy*) in *Hijō no kōkan (Mingling of Cold Senses)*, edited by Hasegawa Izumi and others (Tokyo: Kyoiku Shuppan Center, 1978), p. 8.
 - 34 Translated and quoted by Ueda Makoto, *Modern Japanese Writers and the Nature of Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), p. 208.
 - 35 Chiba Senichi, "Kawabata Yasunari to modanizumu" ("Kawabata Yas-

- unari and Modernism"), *Kawabata Yasunari sakuhin kenkyū* (*Study of Kawabata Yasunari's Work*), edited by Hasegawa Izumi (Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 1969), p. 489.
- 36 Translated by Keiko Matsui Gibson from *Kawabata Yasunari zenshū* (*Collected Works*), Volume 2 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1960), p. 196.
- 37 Translated by Gibson from *Zenshū*, pp. 189–190.
- 38 Translated by Gibson from *Zenshū*, p. 208.
- 39 Love, p. 146.

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