

ROSE TREMAIN'S THE SWIMMING POOL SEASON AS A STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS NOVEL

¹M. Saravanan ²Dr. P. Premalatha and ³Dr. V. Chanthiramathi

¹Research Scholar (Reg No. 12460)

PG & Research Department of English

V.O. Chidambaram College, Tuticorin

(Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Abishekapatti, Tirunelveli – 627 012)

tcsaravanan@gmail.com

²Associate Professor

Department of English

Sri KGS Arts College, Srivaikundam

³Associate Professor

PG & Research Department of English

V.O. Chidambaram College, Tuticorin

The point of view, in which a story is narrated, decides how the characters impact the readers. In general, there are four types of point-of-view widely used by novelists across the literary scape. Every point of view has its pros and cons. Stream of consciousness is one such narrative technique which is mostly attempted by modernist novelists who try to create a realistic picture of what is going through the characters' minds uncensored, unedited and so on. The novelists use it as a chance to distance themselves from the characters or it gives them a chance to hide their all-knowing perspectives and to hand over the authenticity of voice to their characters. It is an attempt to disown the novelists' thoughts or ideologies or perspectives without actually doing it. A novelist may use it to expose the cross-section view of his characters' psyche as a justification for how they behave in certain situations. However, it is difficult to read and understand the thought process of different characters that move back and forth in time. This paper is an attempt to prove how and why stream-of-consciousness is used in her *The Swimming Pool Season*.

KEYWORDS: *Point-of-view, Modernist novelists, Stream-of-consciousness, Perspectives*

The first person point of view, with the pronouns 'I' and 'we', is used for making an intimate relationship with the readers. It looks as if the narrator wears his or her soul on their sleeves. However, the readers are not well-informed about the other characters' thought processes. The second person point of view with 'you' as the pronoun makes the readers part of the story. Without a doubt, it has greater engagement with the audience. However, it cannot sustain the plot of a whole novel. Perhaps, it is suitable for short stories. The third person point of view - using 'he', 'she' and 'they' - has two sub-points of view. The first one is 'Third-person Limited' which offers an unbiased way of presenting the characters' perspectives. As the type itself suggests, it is limited in its view. The second is 'Third Person Omniscient'. The perspective is all-knowing. However, it is difficult to jump from one character's consciousness to another.

Stream of consciousness was first used by William James in 1890 in his book titled *Principles of Psychology*. James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence and William Faulkner are some of the modernist novelists who are expert users of this technique. *A Glossary of Literary Terms* defines it as a phrase that is used "to describe the unbroken flow of perceptions, memories, thoughts and feelings ... in detail, what (that) passes through a character's awareness ..." (380). Mostly, the thoughts of the characters are raw, unpolished and unique. So, they are incoherent and may be ungrammatical. The syntax may differ from one another as characters think differently. The mental images, associations and comparisons are inimitable.

In short, in streams of consciousness narrative, jumbled thoughts stream back and forth in time. Unconventional use of punctuation marks - such as ellipses or dashes or break in lines to show a break or pause in the stream of thoughts – is quite common. The word order or syntax does not always follow ordinary rules. As thoughts are often a response to sensory impressions such as seeing, hearing smelling and so on, they make different connections and comparisons. They may be illogical or metaphysical.

In *The Swimming Pool Season*, Rose Tremain artfully uses many similes or comparisons which are exceptionally original and incredibly illogical. Larry compares the warmth of his wife “to central heating, warming the core, the centre of himself” and “Inventions are like sleeping pills” (5). Agnes Priere, a cousin of Herves who is a doctor by profession and remains a bachelor even in his fifties, lies down on her bed and compares his soldier lover, Luc, with an enemy. She thinks, “With this enemy she will be safe – from poverty, from other, sadder worlds, from change” (172). It is quite irrational to compare a lover with an enemy. In addition, she believes that with this enemy her life will be safe and secure. Moreover, she imagines her virginity to be like incense that is burnt with the kisses of his lover. Thus, all the comparisons are illogical: one of the features of stream-of-consciousness narration.

Xavier, one of the sons of Gervaise – a native lady and the English Larry’s neighbour – sees Agnes in the church of Pomerac. He falls in love with her at first sight. He thinks, “He would take her to the pike river and let his love for her spring up. After loving her, he would ask her to wash him with freezing water. They would stumble about, splashing and laughing. There would be blood on her thigh. And they would be lovers very often after that. For years. It breaks Xavier’s heart to know this will never happen” (177). In the blink of an eye, Xavier starts a love life and enjoys living with her for many years and immediately he realises the truth: the impossibility. Thoughts are incoherent and swaying to and from in time and space. The improbable situation is expressed using ‘would’ and the reality is indicated using the present tense, “It breaks Xavier’s heart”.

Mallelou is Gervaise’s husband and Xavier’s father. The day before Christmas, Gervaise goes to the mass but he does not. Through the psyche of the old Mallelou, Rose Tremain writes that he hates God. She says, “That plaster-of-Paris Jesus at Ste. Catherine had started to seem stupid to Mallelou” (272). Through the stream of consciousness method, Rose Tremain presents her perspective via Mallelou and has made it authentic. In simple terms, she has disowned her voice yet it is her voice.

After breaking up with Agnes, Xavier comes back to the city. He needs company. But his friends are not available. But the memories with Agnes are unbearable. A solemn conversation within his mind or ‘interior monologue’ goes on in imperative sentences. They are instructions given by himself to himself:

Crazy-headed virgin. Cunt of debutante. Love is for the middle classes. Romantic crap. Forget it. Get yourself laid, Xavier. Get a piece of hard-working city arse. Ride that till it doesn’t hurt anymore. Forget the river. Forget that time you first saw her in the church. Forget your pathetic high-and-mighty notions of dignity. Dignity. Humanity. They’re just words. Life’s about making it through. Get a job. Get a woman. Forget her. (263)

As the emotions are getting intense, words shrink to two-word sentences. This is a cross-section view of the disturbed mind of Xavier and his struggle to cope without Agnes and her memories. He lies down on his bed and sees his room very clean. Immediately, Agnes’ memories come rushing. His mind tells him to go to France and kidnap her. At the same time, he thinks of the consequences too. Then, he complains about her. He feels sleepy and before falling asleep he thinks of his mother. In his dream, Agnes and he go to a restaurant. All of a sudden, they both are running. Then he wakes up with a start. Finally, he decides to join a college. However, he is not completely able to wipe her from his memories. This emotional drama of going back and forth in time and space is better expressed through the stream of consciousness method.

Nadia, a Polish neighbour of Larry, talks to him in a dejected mood as her love is constantly rejected including by Larry. She accuses Larry of longing for Agnes, a virgin. As she speaks the raw feelings of her heart, the language also is raw and grammatically inaccurate. She says, “When I am young and in the teashop with my uncle Leopald, I don’t know what I *have*...” (189). Instead of using the past simple tense to describe a past event, she says it in the present. Moreover, she says, “I am amaze”, “I am just confuse” and “this world is so badly arrange”, instead of using the verbs in the past participle form as “I am amazed”, “I am just confused” and “this world is so badly arranged”.

Rose Tremain has made almost all her characters form illogical comparisons, has made them talk to themselves and has visually shown the readers what is going through their minds. Thus, it is evident that *The Swimming Pool Season* is a stream-of-consciousness novel narrated using almost all of its features.

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