
**STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS STYLE IN KINCAID'S
*WHAT I'VE BEEN DOING LATELY***

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Abstract: Stream of consciousness is used by writers of fiction for presenting characters' thought and feeling. It allows the readers to experience the characters' emotion thought from inside a character's head. This article aimed to find out the use of Stream of Consciousness in *What I've Been Doing Lately* short story by Jamaica Kincaid. Kincaid successfully reflects characters' mental experiences through interior monologue. Some literary devices are used to strengthen the power of stream of consciousness. She uses foreshadowing and repetition to illustrate pessimistic thought of the character.

Keywords: stream of consciousness, interior monologue, mental experience, literary device

INTRODUCTION

By talking in particular point of view, narrator controls a story. Stream of Consciousness can bring near the characters to the reader. According to Kennedy (2009, 145), stream of consciousness is a kind of selective omniscience. It is the presentation of thoughts and sense impressions which mingled randomly.

Stream of consciousness refers to the description of mental activity as set forth by the psychologists Sigmund Freud and William James. It is used by the writers of fiction to create works center on human experience. According to Lacan (2001, 1293), unconscious is the center of instincts in the human mind which must be brought to the consciousness

This stream of consciousness is sometimes confused with interior monologue, but the latter technique works the sensations of the mind into a more formal pattern; a flow of thoughts inwardly expressed, similar to a soliloquy. The technique of stream of consciousness; however, attempts to portray the remote, preconscious state that exists before the mind organizes sensations. Consequently, the recreation of a stream of consciousness

frequently lacks the unity, explicit cohesion and selectivity of direct thought (Imelda 2014, 75-79)

Dr. Mirjana Lončar-Vujnović (2013, 69-76) in *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education* explains that stream of consciousness technique is not more than an attempt to solve the conscious and chaotic string of human psyche thought by making it real and more authentic. The process of stream of consciousness writing has been an application of the simple psychological reflection on human mind

There are two kinds of consciousness of character in fiction, speech level (when it is spoken) and pre-speech level (before spoken). Pre-speech level happens illogically and not considering the basic level of communication. Pre-speech is in the inside of character's mind so sometimes the images can be unorganized or random. Otherwise, speech level is organized logically using the basic elements of communication. Stream of consciousness is used in fiction at the pre-speech level.

As a literary technique, stream of consciousness combines a series of thought and images into a flowing narrative. Rational or irrational,

feeling, expression and thought are unfolded in the same pattern and at the same speed those occur in human mind. There are some techniques in stream of consciousness. Those are direct and indirect interior monologue and soliloquy. Stream of consciousness becomes a popular technique which enhances trend of narrative style in twentieth century.

James Joyce (1882-1941) used it for the first time in his *Ulysses*, and then followed by Virginia Wolff (1882-1941), DH Lawrence (1885-1930), and William Faulkner (1897-1962). Jamaica Kincaid is also a modernist writer who apply stream of consciousness to let the reader aware of the uncensored thought in characters' mind as in her short story *What I've Been Doing Lately*.

Kincaid is considered one of the most important women Caribbean writers. She depicts the tenuous relationship between mother and daughter as well as themes of anti-colonialism vividly. *What I Have Been Doing Lately* was first published in the *Paris Review* in 1981. *At the Bottom of the River* (1983) was her first published book and she included this piece of story in. It earned her the Morton Dauwen Zabel Award of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

DIRECT INTERIOR MONOLOGUE IN *WHAT I'VE BEEN DOING LATELY*

What I've Been Doing Lately is set in recent past at Caribbean. Without sacrificing the rich details of the external world on which that imagination thrives, Kincaid is great to articulate the internal workings of a potent imagination. It can be seen from the opening of the story:

What I have been doing lately: I was lying in bed and the doorbell rang. I ran downstairs. Quick I opened the door. There was no one there I stepped outside. Either it was drizzling or there was a lot of dust in the air and the dust was damp. I

stuck out my tongue and the drizzle or the damp dust tasted like government school ink (Kincaid 1981, 110)

The narrator in this story is 'I'. The use of the first person point of view is to give an accurate picture of the narrator. The reader can explore the narrator thought and feeling in an optimal. The point of view in this story is stable. Kincaid used it consistently from the beginning to the end of the story. The passage above comes from 'I' as the narrator, but there are no quotation marks in the text. It shows that those sentences come from the narrator's mind. There are not enough clues about the narrator; but the evidence "I have been listening carefully to my mother's word, so as to make a good imitation of a dutiful daughter" leads to an interpretation that the narrator is a female. Nameless narrator makes the reader focus on the content of narrator's mind not about her identity or who she is.

The use of colon at the first sentence are represented the manner of straight narration by the author to show clearly what are in narrator's mind. Narrator's daily experiences arouse her conscious awareness of both worlds which are revealed through perceptual experiences and her own inner states – her bodily sensations, thoughts, and mental images and so on.

I walked for I don't know how long before I came up to a big body of water. I wanted to across it but I couldn't swim. I wanted to get across it but it would take me years to build a boat. I wanted to get across it but it would take me I didn't know how long to build a bridge (Kincaid, 1981, 110)

From the text above, we can see that narrator has conversation itself. The narrator left its function out for a while and speaks to herself as the character. It reflects the character's consciousness and inner thought. This direct interior monologue challenges the reader to identify whether "I" at the

point as character or narrator. The character speaks to her mind arguing what she wants and the obstacles she has to face. Having selected her experiences; she considers how these experiences are related to each other from moment to moment. There is a clear relationship between these experiences. By using the conjunction 'but' Kincaid reflects the disillusionment of narrator. It shows the deep regret as her mental experience. Pressure and conflict happen because of two or more contradictive ideas which control and possess the character.

Stream of consciousness literature is concerned with is either a mental or a spiritual experience both of subject and manner or style. The subject includes the categories of mental experiences: sensations, memories, imaginations, conceptions, and intuitions. Kincaid puts her interior monologue also in the parentheses as displayed in the following passage:

I set out on a path that stretched out straight ahead. I passed a house, and a dog was sitting on the verandah but it looked the other way when it saw me coming. I passed a boy tossing a ball in the air but the boy looked the other way when he saw me coming. I walked and walked but I couldn't tell if I walked a long time because my feet didn't feel as if they would drop off (Kincaid 1981, 110).

The passage above illustrates a confusing situation in character's mind. Kincaid successfully combines imagination and reality. There is a dream world in character's mind. Her imagination and conception illustrate her mental experience.

INDIRECT INTERIOR MONOLOGUE IN *WHAT I'VE BEEN DOING LATELY*

Since it comes from the inside of characters' head so the images can be unorganized. The flowing of unconsciousness as the representation of thoughts and sense impressions is

mingled randomly. It can be seen in the passage below:

"I looked north. I looked south. I decided to start walking north. While walking north, I noticed that I was barefoot. While walking north, I looked up and saw the planet Venus. I said, "It must be almost morning." I saw a monkey in a tree. The tree had no leaves. I said, "Ah, a monkey. Just look at that. A monkey." (1981: 110)

Space and time in unconsciousness is unlimited. Human mind can travel from one memory to another. While walking to north, she saw planet Venus then a monkey in a tree, thus filling in the space of time which had been jumped. The events are presented in unorganized succession of images. Ideas are connected by association rather than by narrative sequences. The action takes place and the plot develops through the mind of the principal character.

The use of "I said" shows that the interior monologue is depicted through indirect technique. Using this technique, Kincaid tries to give more information about the character. 'I' doesn't act as a character only but also as the narrator. The passage below supports the explanation.

The hole was deep and dark and I couldn't see the bottom. I thought, what's down there, so on purpose I fell in. I fell and I fell, over and over as if it were an old suitcase. On the other sides of the deep hole I could see things written, but perhaps it was in a foreign language because I couldn't read the sign.

Falling made me feel sick and I missed all the people I had loved. I said, I don't want to fall anymore, and I reversed myself (Kincaid 1981, 110).

Kincaid chooses to use "I thought" and "I said" to differentiate which thought refers to 'I' as the narrator and which thought refers to 'I' as the character. At the moment the narrator disappears and changes its function to a character. Her feeling on regretting the mistake she made is delivered clearly

trough the passage above. The reader can experience the guilty feeling inside of the character's mind.

LITERARY DEVICES TO DEMONSTRATE STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

There are some literary devices are used by Kimcaid to strengthen the power of stream of consciousness in *What I've been Doing Lately*.

Foreshadowing

Not every event use foreshadowing, but every incident needs it. Writers of fiction use it to build suspense or prepare the reader for something that would otherwise seem to come out of nowhere. It can be seen from the passage below.

Looking at the horizon again, I saw a lone figure coming toward me, but I wasn't frightened because I was sure it was my mother. As I got closer to the figure, I could see that it wasn't my mother, but still I wasn't frightened because it was a woman. When this woman got closer to me, she looked at me hard and then she threw up her hands. She must have seen me somewhere before because she said, "It's you. Just look at that. It's you. And just what have you been doing lately?"

That passage begins with the words "looking at the horizon again"; that words are used by Kincaid to give the reader a clue what is in her head. The word "again" shows that the character ever done it before. Relate it to the regret she feels, her unconscious world wake her memory up and build imagination and hallucination. She thought as if she saw her mother. When she gets closer to her, she realizes it wasn't her mother but still a woman. Her imagination and hallucination about her mother come up from the dreams that couldn't be real. Her unfinished feeling toward her mother brings her unconscious to make it more

authentic through imagination and hallucination.

At this point, Kincaid points out beautifully the relation of mother and daughter. "As I got closer to the figure, I could see that it wasn't my mother, but still I wasn't frightened because it was a woman." illustrates a very deep regret of a daughter. It reflects a hope to fix the mistake or the failure she made. *What I've Been Doing Lately* is presented in two parts (it will be discussed further at the next point), that passage is the turning point of the first part to the second part. Another evidence to support the explanation can be seen from the passage below.

I could have said, "I have been praying not to grow any taller." I could have said, "I have been listening carefully to my mother's words, so as to make a good imitation of a dutiful daughter." I could have said, "A pack of dogs, tired from chasing each other all over town, slept in the moonlight."

Kincaid used "I could have said" to show that she could say but she didn't. Actions that she should or shouldn't. She wishes she would be a good imitation of a dutiful daughter in front of her mother. The reader experience deeply the thought and feeling in character's head. Another clue of foreshadowing can be seen from the next passage.

What I've been doing lately: I was lying in bed and the doorbell rang. I ran downstairs. Quick, I opened the door. There was no one there I stepped outside. Either it was drizzling or there was a lot of dust in the air and the dust was damp.

I felt so sad that I rested my head on my knees and smoothed my own head. I felt so sad I couldn't imagine feeling any other way again. I said, I don't like this. I don't want to do this anymore. And I went back lying in bed just before the doorbell rang.

Table: *Two Parts of What I've Been Doing Lately Story*

No	First Part	Second Part
1.	What I've been doing lately: I was lying in bed and the doorbell rang. I ran downstairs. Quick, I opened the door. There was no one there I stepped outside. Either it was drizzling or there was a lot of dust in the air and the dust was damp.	Instead, what I've been doing lately: I was lying in bed on my back, my hands drawn up, and my fingers interlaced lightly at the nape of my neck. Someone rang the doorbell rang. I went downstairs and opened the door. There was no one there I stepped outside. Either it was drizzling or there was a lot of dust in the air and the dust was damp.
2.	"I looked north. I looked south. I decided to start walking north. While walking north, I noticed that I was barefoot.	"I looked north. I looked south. I started walking north. While walking north, I wanted to move fast, so I removed the shoes from my feet.
3.	While walking north, I looked up and saw the planet Venus. I said, "It must be almost morning."	While walking north, I looked up and saw the planet Venus and I said, "If the sun went out, it would be eight minutes before I would know it."
4.	I saw a monkey in a tree. The tree had no leaves. I said, "Ah, a monkey. Just look at that. A monkey."	I saw a monkey sitting in a tree that had no leaves and I said, "A monkey. Just look at that. A monkey." I picked up a stone and threw it at the monkey. The monkey, seeing the stone, quickly moved out its way. Three times I threw a stone at the monkey and three times it moved away. The fourth time I threw the stone; the monkey caught it and threw it back at me. The stone struck me on my forehead over my right eye, making a deep gash. The gash healed immediately but now the skin on my forehead felt false to me.
5.	I walked for I don't know how long before I came up to a big body of water. I wanted to across it but I couldn't swim. I wanted to get across it but it would take me years to build a boat. I wanted to get across it but it would take me I didn't know how long to build a bridge.	I walked for I don't know how long before I came up to a big body of water. I wanted to get across so when the boat came I paid my fare. When I got to the other side, I saw a lot of people sitting on the beach and they were having a picnic. They were the most beautiful people I had ever seen.

The first passage is the beginning of story, and the second passage is the closing of the story. If we read the opening passage only, the reader may

think that the story happens in several places. The story is told like someone who travels from one place to other places. When the reader comes to the

end of the story, it can be seen that the story is started at the bed and finished at the bed also. The clue given by Kincaid at the beginning and the end of the story give more information about the setting of place. It illustrates that the character didn't move from her bed but it was her thought which travels. Physically the character stays on her bed but psychologically her thought and soul are somewhere else. Her imagination on her unconsciousness world jumped up the space and time. As a modernist author, Kincaid beautifully employs the foreshadowing to strengthen the stream of consciousness technique she uses.

Repetition

Besides foreshadowing, Kincaid also employ repetition to explore the character thought and feeling vividly. Many words and sentences even passages are repeated. Those will be discussed one by one.

I walked for I don't know how long before I came up to a big body of water. I wanted to across it but I couldn't swim. I wanted to get across it but it would take me years to build a boat. I wanted to get across it but it would take me I didn't know how long to build a bridge (Kincaid 1981, 110).

A big body of water symbolized an obstacle. "I wanted ... but I ..." is repeated several in the passage above. It was repeated to point out that "I" was very pessimist on facing the obstacle.

On making her dreams come true, she has to face many obstacles. She was thinking some solution to overcome the problem. The repetition shows the character's discomfort feeling. Her unconsciousness offers her some solution but still make her insecure. Pessimistic feeling on solving the problem is clearly described through repetition.

As it is explained in a brief before that Kincaid told *What I've Been Doing Lately* by dividing it in two parts. The turning point or the climax of the

story is when 'I' met a woman as her visualize dream of her mother. There are some events of the first part which are repeated in second part. There are some similarities and difference found after comparing those parts. It can be seen at the *Table: Two Parts of What I've Been Doing Lately Story* and it will be discussed separately.

At data 1, the events were described more in narrative sequence. The events are similar but by giving more clues in the second part, Kincaid tries to show the difference. It is supported by the use of "instead" at the beginning of the second part. Lying in bed on her back, with her hands drawn up, and fingers that interlaced lightly at the nape of her neck illustrates how she is in a pleasant position. It was comfortable enough to let her mind go deeper to her unconsciousness world.

By putting the finger interlaced at the nape of her neck, 'I' consciously travel in her pre-speech level. Recall and memorize her experience in the past. At this time, she relates her past experience to her future imagination. She visualizes hope and wish that she couldn't bring it into reality in her consciousness world. Kincaid illustrates it clearly by showing the flowing of unconsciousness comfortably.

At data 2, the narrator uses the word 'decided' at the first part, it shows that walking to north is the decision that she just decided. After walking a while, she just realized that she was barefoot. It shows that 'I' made a decision only short in time. The word "noticed" reflects that it was the consequences that she just realized during his journey. At the first part, Kincaid characterize 'I' as someone who didn't think in straight to make a decision. She didn't consider the consequences she would get before she makes the decision.

The second part, Kincaid uses 'started'. She tries to depict the changes of the character's mind. 'Started' reflects to thinking and examining. It

shows that before make a decision, she considers the consequences in the future. While walking, she thinks more about the decision; she examines the path she chooses. She knows what she wants and what she has to do to get. It reflects how she knows to handle the consequences of her choice.

From data 3, it can be seen that 'I' has another view about Venus. At the first part, "It must be almost morning" reflects the day that comes will be just the same like the previous day. There is no hope or interested feeling on waiting the next day. At the second part, the character looks more having plan or something to do while waiting for the next day. The day that comes after today will be a day that gives hope for the future. Kincaid illustrates how the character has been waiting for that day until she knows how long she still has the time to prepare the day. Venus becomes a sign for the character to start and prepare anything for the day.

After saw a Venus, she saw a monkey in a tree. It can be seen from data 4. Kincaid depicts it differently in the first and second part of the story. "I saw a monkey in a tree. The tree had no leaves. I said, "Ah, a monkey. Just look at that. A monkey." It reflects time that runs slowly. Kincaid use full stop to describe the same thing. She describes the monkey in a tree then a tree itself in separated sentence. Describe it in that way; Kincaid tries to show the time of action which is suspended. The time that runs slowly reflects her unconsciousness that controls her body.

Otherwise, at the second part of the story, Kincaid describes it directly. It can be seen from the sentence "I saw a monkey sitting in a tree that had no leaves and I said, "A monkey. Just look at that. A monkey". Time runs faster at the second part of the story. 'I' did some actions when she saw the monkey. Her consciousness controls her body more than her unconsciousness. She knows

what to do. Her body moves comfortably doing some actions.

The first part of data 5 shows that when "I" finds obstacle on her journey, she is confuse how to solve it. "But I couldn't swim... but it would take me years to build a boat... but it would take me I didn't know how long to build a bridge" it illustrates how desperate she is. She feels like she can't do anything to encounter the obstacles. Kincaid shows narrator's disappointment feeling. Her regret wakes her unconsciousness up. Her mind brings her to visualize her hope and dream in more authentic imagination. It can be seen from data 5 part 2.

Narrator tries to fix the mistake she made. She represents her past experiences. She memorizes her past obstacles and its solutions. She knows what she wants and what she wants to do. Kincaid illustrates her imagination and hope beautifully. "They were the most beautiful people I had ever seen" shows how narrator hopes her past would be end in happiness. She imagines her past life would be different. By repeating the events and showing the differences, Kincaid depicts narrator's thought and feeling more vividly. There are more repetition at the end of the story.

I thought, If only I could get out of this, so I started to walk. I must have walked for a long time because my feet hurt and felt as if they would drop off. I thought If only just around the bend I would see my house and inside my house I would find my bed, freshly made at that, and in the kitchen I would find my mother or anyone else that I loved making me a custard. I thought if only it was a Sunday and I was sitting in a church and had just heard someone sing a psalm. I felt very sad so I sat down. I felt so sad that I rested my head on my knees and smoothed my own head. I felt so sad I couldn't imagine feeling any other way again. I said, I don't like this. I don't want to do this anymore. And I went back lying in bed just before the doorbell rang.

“I must have walked for a long time because my feet hurt and felt as if they would drop off” illustrates how Kincaid tries to bring character’s mind back to consciousness. She realizes that that was just the imagination. She realizes that she couldn’t change her past life. She couldn’t turn back the time. When she gets tired of imagining dream that she couldn’t make it true, she wants to control her body back. “I felt so sad I couldn’t imagine feeling any other way again” reflects how the narrator is really frustrated and desperade on herself. It can be supported by this sentence “I said, I don’t like this. I don’t want to do this anymore. And I went back lying in bed just before the doorbell rang”.

It can be concluded that Kincaid employs repetition in optimal to point out the pessimistic feeling she has. Guilty feeling that comes into the flow of unconsciousness. Reader can feel the pessimistic thought of the character vividly.

CONCLUSION

Kincaid’s carefulness on employing diction and some literary devices make *What I’ve Been doing Lately* natural and vivid. Intimate feeling between the reader and the characters can be felt since she writes it with such clarity and precision. Reader can feel as if they were between the characters and experience the same experiences. Kincaid can depict the psychological aspect vividly using stream of consciousness technique.

Her choice to presenting the story into two parts of repetition makes it more interesting. It strengthens the story. She used repetition to point out the character’s disappointment, dissatisfaction, and insecurity feeling intensively in *What I’ve Been doing Lately*. Pessimistic thought and feeling can be reflected strongly through foreshadowing and repetition.

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