

MEMORY, PERCEPTION, TIME AND CHARACTER

IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S

MRS. DALLOWAY and *TO THE LIGHTHOUSE*

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SAMMENDRAG

Oppgaven er en analytisk tilnærming til hukommelse og persepsjon slik disse begrepene arter seg i Virginia Woolfs romaner *Mrs. Dalloway* og *To the Lighthouse*. Med utgangspunkt i Woolfs selvbiografiske memoartekster fra *Moments of Being*, spør oppgaven hvorvidt minner, i sin flyktige og omskiftelige natur, kan sies å danne helhetlig erfaring og positiv selverkjennelse. Dette innebærer også uteskingen av nye aspekter ved Woolfs poetikk, da memoartekstene problematiserer minnenes rolle i skriveprosessen. For å vise hvordan deler av Woolfs forfatterskap kan leses innenfor et relevant teoretisk rammeverk, henter oppgaven sentrale momenter fra Henri Bergsons *Matière et Mémoire*, med støtte fra Gilles Deleuze sin monografi om Bergson. Blant de mest vesentlige innsiktene er ideen om hvordan hukommelse og persepsjon aldri er uavhengige prosesser, men opererer hånd i hånd for å danne vår bevissthet. Som sekundært teorimateriale låner oppgaven begreper fra J. Hillis Millers *Ariadne's Thread* og *Fiction and Repetition*, hvor sistnevnte blant annet tar for seg en undersøkelse av de intrikate, narrative grepene i *Mrs. Dalloway*. I oppgavens analyse av *Mrs. Dalloway* undersøkes det særlig hvordan romanens primære teser om liv, død og samhörighet utspiller seg gjennom karakterenes kontinuerlige strøm av inntrykk, som både er persepsjoner og minner. I lesningen av *To the Lighthouse* går analysen lengre i å granske hvordan bevisstheten både skaper og avgrenser den subjektive tilgangen til den materielle virkeligheten, hvilket problematiseres mest eksplisitt ved kunstnerskikkelsen Lily Briscoes gjentatte forsøk på å gjengi virkeligheten på et maleri. Øyeblikkene hvor karakterenes innsikter synes å nå dypest, deriblant ekstasene og epifaniene, er alltid preget av at karakterene gjenkjenner den virkeligheten som Bergson kaller *den sanne varigheten*, hvor alle tings kvaliteter oppfattes som en uavbrutt prosess av intern, kreativ differensiering. Med henblikk på resultatene fra analysen identifiseres gjenkomsten av to grunnleggende prosesser figurert i *linjen* og *intervallet*, som sammen danner en positiv helhet, både i hukommelse, persepsjon og karakter. Slik belyses minnets funksjon i de overnevnte romanene og i Woolfs poetikk.

Preface

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1. Introduction

When first reading Virginia Woolf's autobiographical memoirs in *Moments of Being*, I was struck by her reflections on memories. In a description of her childhood so poetic that it could hardly be distinguished from a passage in any of her novels, Woolf writes:

A great hall I could liken it to; with windows letting in strange lights; and murmurs and spaces of deep silence. But somehow into that picture must be brought, too, the sense of *movement and change*. Nothing remained stable long. One must get the feeling of everything approaching and then disappearing, getting large, getting small, passing at different rates of speed past the little creature [Virginia herself; T. H.]; one must get the feeling that made her press on, the little creature driven on as she was by growth of her legs and arms, driven without being able to stop it, or to change it, driven as a plant is driven up out of the earth, up until the stalk grows, the leaf grows, buds swell. That is what is indescribable, that is what makes all images too static, for no sooner has one said this was so, than it was past and altered. How immense must be the force of life which turns a baby, who can just distinguish a great blot of blue and purple on a black background, into the child who thirteen years later can feel all that I felt on May 5th 1895 – now almost exactly to a day, forty-four years ago – when my mother died. (Woolf 1978: 92, italics mine)

Despite the colour and detail in this impressionistic imagery, Woolf insists on something “indescribable” about the phenomena – that she may barely put it into words before it is “past and altered”. These memories, which she says are essential to her life, remain in a perpetual motion of “movement and change”. And despite the fleeting and incomprehensible nature of such memories, life has continued in the direction of growth.

What also comes to mind is the similarity between this description and the representation of experience in her novels. At the height of her authorship, from the mid-twenties and onwards, Woolf's protagonists are immensely occupied with similar problems of memory. In these, the major contradiction seems to be the following: How do an individual's memories, in their fleeting and fragmented nature, constitute a sense of completeness? How can the broken pieces of an uncertain past build a life that seems whole? For while memories are untrustworthy and random, they do continue to uphold that thing we call our “self”, whether fictitious or not. These are the major research questions I wish to explore in my thesis by way of analyses of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*.

Woolf's authorship supports the view that the present is founded on the past, and that memories strongly inform the present. She writes about previous experience as being decisive

for further living. She shows how all new perceptions are filtered through the old. The short time-span of *Mrs. Dalloway* is filled with characters who are immensely occupied with their pasts, effectively unfolding whole lives in the course of a single day. *To the Lighthouse* even surpasses this feat by dividing its two days of action between a decade-long interval. It is in these two novels that Woolf seems most obsessed with exploring the link between the immediate world of exterior perceptions and the remembered world of subjective memories.

The problem of memory is inherently the problem of time as associated with the dawn of modernism. Cities that were becoming increasingly adapted to standards of clock-time organized entire economical structures around the idea of a universal measurement of time. As part of living in a big city, the importance of following standardized time would inevitably cause friction in the individual's subjective sense of experienced time.

Woolf had followed the experiments of Joyce, Proust and Dorothy Richardson while she sought to explore themes of time and consciousness herself. While the *stream of consciousness*-term of psychologist and philosopher William James became widely applied to studying the works of the aforementioned writers, it has later survived predominantly as a characterization of a variety of literary devices which seek to portray consciousness in flux. To study memory as the primary device in the creation of Woolf's worlds of consciousness, it seems more relevant to employ the notion of Bergson's *durée*. Duration designates the successive states of quality as experienced by the mind. To arrive at a point between the material word and the life of the mind, Bergson asserts that experience unfolds through an oscillating movement between matter and memory – a contraction of spirit and a dissolution of matter. The aforementioned excerpt from Woolf's memoirs indicate that one may operate with a similar matter-memory dichotomy in exploring her means of bringing together consciousness and reality.

1. 1 Materials and method

By proceeding through close-reading, I will aim at an understanding of memory in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* which is both Bergsonian and text-oriented. This entails looking at how memory allows for characters to remember and create themselves, so to speak. I will also be concerned with excerpts from the novels which display processes of memory

and character-creation at work. While investigating these processes as part of Woolf's poetics, I will make supportive use of relevant notions from her memoirs and diaries.

To provide a tenable link between a Bergsonian approach to a text-oriented approach, I will employ insights from J. Hillis Miller's *Ariadne's Thread* and *Fiction and Repetition*. Some of the deconstructivist means in these theoretical and analytical works seem to serve appropriately in extending the multiplicity of Bergson's *durée* into a multiplicity of textual meaning. But while analytical dissection may tend to allow for closer observation of the parts as opposed to a totality, I wish to maintain that the texts, with their characters and structural elements, may simultaneously be seen as a "whole".

In understanding Bergson, I have found helpful support in Deleuze's monography. *Bergsonism* (1966) reawakened interest in Bergson at a time when he had become close to a footnote in history. Though Deleuze offers enlightening perspectives on Bergson's philosophy as a whole, I will refer primarily to the work which is most relevant to my thesis, which is Bergson's own *Matter and Memory* (1896).

1. 2 Previous studies

To Leonard Woolf's knowledge, Virginia had never read, met exchanged letters with or attended lectures of Bergson. The Woolfs were however avid intellectuals, and there is little doubt that they were relatively familiar with a philosopher who achieved such enormous fame in their time. Woolf's sister-in-law even wrote a book on Bergson¹, and already in the 1930's, while Woolf was still alive, the first known article on Bergsonism in Woolf surfaced in France.² There is little point in speaking of a direct Bergsonian influence on Woolf, though there are striking parallels to be observed.

In "Virginia Woolf and modernism" (2000), Michael Whitworth remarks that Woolf "never met, and may never have read, Einstein, Bergson, Nietzsche or Rutherford. Yet her novels apparently respond to their works and employ their ideas". While Whitworth delineates the intellectual atmosphere of Woolf's life, he finds that her biographical and bibliographical contexts suggest "how she was able to encounter these thinkers indirectly" (Whitworth 2000: 147). It is such a connection between Woolf and Bergson that I find

1 Karin Stephen (1922) *The misuse of mind; a study of Bergson's attack on intellectualism*.

2 Floris Delattre (1932): "La durée bergsonienne dans le roman de Virginia Woolf".

relevant to follow. The line from Woolf's memoirs to her novels traces the nexus of the subjective experience of an individual and the world of ideas as manifested in Bloomsbury.

It is surprisingly hard to find a Bergsonian approach to memory in the reception of Woolf's novels. Earlier Bergsonian Woolf-studies are predominantly chapter- or article-length, and concerned with *time* rather than memory. A recent approach to memory in Woolf is Gabrielle McIntire's book-length study *Modernism, Memory, and Desire: T. S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf* (2008). McIntire occasionally refers to Bergson, but is rather concerned with the *eros* she finds inherent in select works of both authors' literary and essayistic corpus. Similar to my study, McIntire sees connections between Woolf's memoirs and her fiction, yet McIntire endeavours to show their representations of the past as sexually charged, or "how memory is constructed vis-à-vis sexual and textual forms of desire" (McIntire 2008: 3). This approach, though interesting, is of little relevance to my own study, as it only incorporates Bergsonian notions of memory when they can fit within a strictly sexual framework.

Shiv Kumar's *Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel* (1962) remains the foundational work on Woolf's Bergsonism. It is a short, comparative study of the Bergsonian notions found in the stream of consciousness-devices of Joyce, Woolf and Dorothy Richardson. Kumar finds *time* rather than *memory* at the heart of Woolf's similarity to Bergson: "Time being one of the most significant aspects of the work of Virginia Woolf, it should be able to trace her development as a novelist in terms of her gradual swing from a traditional view of time to Bergson's *durée*" (Kumar 1962: 71). Though Kumar states that *Mrs. Dalloway* "shows a clearer understanding and presentation of *la durée* as the true essence of all aesthetic experience" (75), he summarizes this understanding and presentation in the space of two pages, to make the point that Clarissa and Septimus represent the time of duration, while Sir William Bradshaw and Big Ben represent the opposing time of the clock. His equally short account of *To the Lighthouse* merely sketches a similar overview of the different notions of time that the novel's characters represent. Kumar's study seems founded on an uncritical assimilation of Bergson's durational flux and literary modernism's stream of consciousness, and somewhat rushes past the novels' profoundly intricate displays of memory, whose exploration with Bergson requires considerably higher detail and precision. In my view, it is precisely Woolf's complex work with memory that lends itself to a Bergsonian approach.

1. 3 Vitalism

Though any Bergsonian approach makes *vitalism* a term difficult to bypass, it is unnecessary to apply potentially pejorative -isms when close-reading. If anything, the forthcoming analysis may be labelled a memory-study. But I do wish to insist on a positive reading of Woolf's fiction – in fact, the motivation for my thesis initially sprung from an affirmative feeling of joy and will-to-life in the novels in question. The London of Clarissa Dalloway is not hostile to life, but rather bright and spirited. The idyllic surroundings of the Ramsays' summer house shines through despite their major conflicts. The “little creature” in the excerpt from Woolf's memoirs is mysteriously growing, evolving, daintily “driven as a plant is driven up out of the earth” (92). The manic-depressive writer who walked into River Ouse relentlessly gained a mythical status by doing so, but Virginia Woolf is not an author all about melancholy and nostalgic despair. On the contrary, a by-product of this thesis will be a display of the optimism Woolf's fiction shares with Bergson – a view on life as a principle of creation, creativity and endless growth. I aim to show how two of Virginia Woolf's novels are such creative triumphs.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Mnemosynic thought: Some historical approaches to recollection as creativity

She was not inventing; she was only trying to smooth out something she had been given years ago folded up; something she had seen. For in the rough and tumble of daily life, with all those children about, all those visitors, one had constantly a sense of repetition – of one thing falling where another had fallen, and so setting up an echo which chimed in the air and made it full of vibrations. (*To the Lighthouse*, 215)

As suggested by their morphological composition, the word *recollection* renders a dynamic, creative implication to the act of remembering. Re-remembering as opposed to dis-membering finely allocates certain members into a group of perceptions in a remembered event. It is not extracting or adding, but simply altering the composition of the same parts, reshaping them into a new sequence. Recognition is identifying something which is already perceived – *cognitio* as perceiving, knowing. The insistent presence of the prefix *re-* suggests an activity which is not original, but repetitive in nature. What is *being done* primarily consists of the repetition of something which has already *been done*. Acts of repetition thus subordinate the sense of an original, primordial genesis – repetition admits to its predecessor, its genetic make-up or ancestry.

Plato's *mimesis* rejected art because of its imitative (and thus unideal) nature. Platonic metaphysics founded art on the notion of its status as a faximile. Though Aristotle redeemed poetry from Plato's banishment, the first of Aristotle's five rhetoric principles, *inventio*, implies that any act of creation depends on the collection and ordering of already-existing composites. The fourth principle, *memoria*, states the importance of attaching the whole process to memory (Barthes 1998: 48-49). All poets were re-enacting popular myths in their lyrics and tragedies, while all rhetoricians were gathering their arguments from pre-conceived materials.

In Greek mythology, Mnemosyne was the personification of memory who, with Zeus, bore the nine muses whom the rhapsodist would invoke for poetic inspiration. In the underworld, she represented the counterpart to the river of forgetfulness, Lethe, which the deceased would drink from when entering the afterlife. Literature before written language

obviously depended on collective memory as well as the individual memory of the poet. Memory and creativity thus have shared an intimate relation over millennia. Since Simonides, rhetorical mnemotechniques display not only the elevated importance of recollection, but also its configuration as something essentially spatial: to recall various topics or points of interest to be made during a speech, one would visualize a house through which one would walk and enter the rooms, each attached to a single topic, thus mentally materializing the literal content in visual ideas before oral execution (Carruthers 1993: 22).

When the romantic poets' notion of originality rejected classicist views of art as imitation, a new poetics centered on the individual became possible. The most decisive stage of individual authenticity/originality was the individual's childhood, located in the past, where an ocean of uncorrupted impressions lay dwelling for the creative sentiment of the poet later in life. The repetitive nature of art then no longer lay in imitating classical forms, but in recalling the past for creative utilization. Longing for the past thus asserts itself as a secondary aspect or result of creative memory, which became a distinct motive in high-romantic poets like Wordsworth, Shelley and Nerval.

Mircea Eliade's seminal study of ancient religious and mythic thought finds the ongoing theme of *return* in long-established cultures dating back to neolithic times. In *The Myth of Eternal Return* (1954), Eliade develops the idea of endless repetition of primordial events, an idea which has preoccupied thinkers of modern literary theory since Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* (1882) and Benjamin's *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928). Cyclic time in the archaic sense indeed entails determinism, which Eliade applies onto his contemporary cold-war era. Yet one of Eliade's most creative insights is his justification of the notion of *return* as a constant universal dynamic in human cultures.

In the western metaphysical tradition, any reference seems to refer backwards, any extension extends in retrograde motion. Nietzsche's method of genealogy insists that all statements evoke the authority of earlier statements, relying on an ancestry which ultimately has no single source, no primordial genesis. Hillis Miller's seminal work on repetition, *Fiction and Repetition* (1982), traces the many levels on which recurrences seem to generate meaning in novels; from words and figures of speech to large-scale duplications of events and scenes. Many great literary texts seem to be structured around repetitions. Among the novels Hillis Miller reads is *Mrs. Dalloway*, in which he finds that “[s]torytelling, for Woolf, is the

repetition of the past in memory, both in the memory of the characters and in the memory of the narrator. *Mrs. Dalloway* is a brilliant exploration of the functioning of memory as a form of repetition” (Miller 1982: 176-7). Hillis Miller’s brilliant reading does not exhaust the potential of tracing the various aspects of memory in the novel, but rather identifies central moments and motions in the text which shall be further explored in the course of my thesis.

The quoted paragraph from *To the Lighthouse* follows the thoughts of painteress Lily Briscoe as she organizes her picture. Her remarks about repetition suggest a natural means of organization, a cyclical day-to-day structure which ensures continuity where there would otherwise be chaos. Repetition is an inherent motion in things, and as she attempts to recall the past that she wishes to represent on her canvas, it takes shapes as something “folded up” that she needs “to smooth out”. The discoveries she might make, then, are of things that were always already there. The operations of memory seem in some way analogous to the motion of repetition, as a kind of recognition. What is repeated, whether in memory or in material reality, implies a double sided nature, being recognized as something familiar and different, something old and new at once. This repetitive motion is also found in Bergson’s ideas on memory and perception, which will be explored in the following chapter.

2. 2 On Bergsonian memory

The aim of this chapter is to present the aspects of Bergson's *Matter and Memory* which will be most relevant to my analyses, without exhausting the terminology. I base my understanding of Bergson's concept of intuition on *Creative Evolution (L'Évolution Créatrice, 1907)* and Deleuze's *Bergsonism* (1966). While Deleuze's presentation of his greatest idols in his serial monographies might tend to radicalize their ideas more or less, *Bergsonism* (a relatively early work of Deleuze's) is a brilliant and enthusiastic study, more devout than deviant. I will however make use of Deleuze's insights only as provisional and rely primarily on Bergson's translated works

Ideally, Bergson's most relevant ideas will be described sufficiently to provide background for my analysis of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, while allowing room for more thorough explanation during the course of the analysis itself. In this way I aim to keep the central ideas and points of interest fresh and fertile as I proceed.

2. 2. 1 Between spirit and matter

Henri-Louis Bergson (1859-1941) was born in Paris to a Polish-Jewish pianist father and an English-Irish-Jewish doctor mother, growing up with a fluency in both French and English which would later allow him to revise the earliest English translations of his works himself. Though Bergson proved to be a remarkably gifted mathematician, he soon moved to psychology and philosophy. Already in his first academic publication, “On Unconscious Simulation in States of Hypnosis” in the *Revue Philosophique* of 1886, Bergson marked his interest in unconscious memory. It led to his doctoral thesis *Time and Free Will (Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience, 1889)* and later to *Matter and Memory (Matière et Mémoire, 1896)*, which secured him a position in the prestigious Collège de France.

Matter and Memory sets forth his most important ideas in a highly developed form, seeking to “affirm the reality of spirit and the reality of matter” (Bergson 2004: vii). Bergson's approach to time thus has evident parallels to the aims of the impressionist and post-impressionist painters, as well as to the innovators of the stream of consciousness novel (both of which were associated with the Bloomsbury group). His theoretical background from the “hard” sciences is evident in his concerns for the contemporary mechanistic approach to the

mind, consciousness and nature. The idea of time had become misconstrued and mixed with the idea of space, rendering both ideas abstract, fixed and superficial categories. In an attempt to transcend the division between spirit and matter, Bergson inquired into time as “measured” by its felt intensity – its *quality* – rather than as a spatial configuration as show by the hands on a clock – a quantity. Spatial concepts have led to the belief that time may be divided into quantifiable units, while Bergson's new idea of time, *durée*, encompasses a fleeting succession of states which is heterogeneous, indivisible and completely mobile.

2. 2. 2 Image

Man is a tool-making animal. Our intellects seek the useful. Our bodies prefer the habitual. We always perceive first that which we can immediately relate to, in order to decide quickly upon an appropriate reaction. It follows that our perceptions are always determined by recognition, that is, by *memory*. For the useful aspects of any object to appear, they must first coincide with a memory which relates to that usefulness.

However, perceptions do not arise in the mind alone. Since you and I both seem to be perceiving the same things, however differently, our individual memories can not be held accountable for the existence of objects, or, *matter*. Our perceptions must be *reductive*, for they amount only to a few select aspects of the infinitude of matter. But had we no memories to filter and distill, matter would appear to us in all its infinity, overwhelming us with a sense of dizziness and disorientation. It seems that matter is an aggregate of perceptions, and that all perceptions must be “full of memories” (24), neither *pure perception* nor *pure memory*. Perceptions then must always be “impregnated with the past” (24), yet always built up afresh. Matter reaches out to our senses when we perceive, and lies at rest within itself when we do not; it must coincide with memory in order to be *actualized*. Our individual experiences of the world are then *images*, which appear between the world and our individual minds; between matter and memory.

The world, however, seems to be set in space; and we perceive the distance between objects and our body, a spatial separation. In space, must pass through point A to reach point B. A concept of pure space has set dimensions, sizes, distances and quantities which differ only in degree. Yet with time, we experience that things differ in quality, in kind – the most intense experience of variations in quality we experience in ourselves. But these changes

seem only to occur through time. In time, the qualities of our sensations pass fluidly and autonomously, and we seem to be able to reach point B without passing through point A; we can feel extreme joy without first having to feel mild joy. The intensity of our inner lives doesn't coincide with the spatial measurements of clock-time – time's movement signifies a *duration* rather than a location or a size. A concept of durational time seems to be closer to reality than the concepts of space and clock-time, as we constantly pass through qualitatively different states.

2. 2. 3 Duration

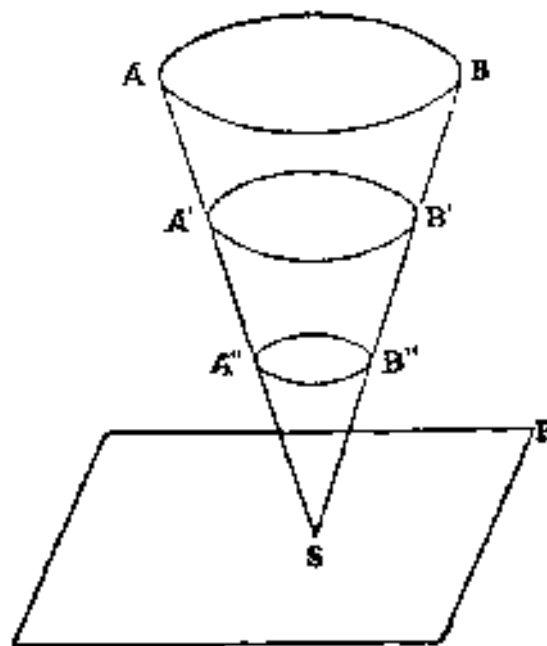
Since the multiplicity of the world is being conveyed to us in singular fractions, the selection of images also suggests that our perceptions are constantly altering. We are defined by an incessant motion of *movement and change*, a duration. As opposed to a space which is static, constant and homogenous, duration transforms space into incessant differentiation, a principle of inner variation. Duration gives events a sense of fluid, unmeasurable sequence, as Bergson illustrated with a dissolving sugar cube: The spatial configurations of the sugar cube make it simple to grasp and distinguish from other objects, but in time it becomes less distinguishable. Its duration gives it a way of being in space which, if only partially and momentarily, reveals how it also differs from itself.³

Duration gives the present a past to speak of. Yet the status of the present amounts to little more than the totality of the past; the present we are perceiving is always passing, always *becoming* the past. Deleuze observes that “[t]he past would never be constituted if it did not coexist with the present whose past it is” (Deleuze 1991: 59). Bergson thus grants the past a virtual coexistence with the present through *memory*; the past is a condition through which we can speak of a present. The past gains an ontological status in that every present must pass through it, genuinely existing alongside the present which it conditions. The past is all that *is*, the present is always *becoming*. As soon as something has shaped itself enough for us to comprehend, it has already become the past. Here, Bergson clarifies the mind/matter-dichotomy by letting matter *act* the past and the mind *imagine* it. In order for the virtual realm

3 In *Bergsonism*, Deleuze elaborates on Bergson's sugar cube example to show how Bergson not only divides space and time, but also shows how the principle of inner variation of quality rather than quantity divides difference in kind from difference in degree, so as to separate the *real* philosophical problems from the false ones. See *Deleuze* 1991: 31.

of our minds to become actual, our bodies must act on matter. Our actions on matter are the actualization of memory.

Bergson's cone-shaped model of duration shows point *S* (perception, sensor-motor mechanisms, subjective conception of a present) as the point of greatest *contraction*, and *P* (matter) as the most *relaxed*, while points *A* and *B* disperse the totality of memories into infinity. Our inner lives are the constant oscillating movement between *S* and *AB*, an incessant motion of contraction and relaxation.



While elaborating on what he calls “an essential problem of mental life,” Bergson speaks almost in deconstructive terms:

We tend to scatter ourselves over *AB* in the measure that we detach ourselves from our sensory and motor state to live in the life of dreams; we tend to concentrate ourselves in the *S* in the measure that we attach ourselves more firmly to the present reality, responding by motor reactions to sensory stimulation. In point of fact, the normal self never stays in either of the extreme positions; it moves between them, adopts in turn the positions corresponding to the intermediate sections, or, in other words, gives to its representations just enough image and just enough idea for them to be able to lend useful aid to the present action. (Bergson, 2004: 210-212)

Memory drills into matter, matter flings itself at memory, so the present perception is constantly altered at a rate according with our *attention to life*; there is no determinable point of balance or stand-still. Reality is thus always in the making, neither fully subjective nor objective since the material world endures without us, yet will not appear to us unless we recognize it. Duration is reality becoming actualized; it is matter becoming memory.

2. 2. 4 Intuition⁴

Our movements in space are ordinarily defined by coordinates, the position of our body in relation to other bodies and objects. To illustrate movement in time, Bergson takes the example of how we sense the movement of our arm if we shut our eyes. Instead of perceiving the various positions the arm assumes in space, one perceives a fluid succession of qualitative sensations in the arm. Perceiving or sensing inner variations in kind is a non-analytic and intuitive ability. Deleuze calls Bergson's intuition a philosophical “method”, in which we discover genuine differences in kind and apprehend real, durational time. In becoming aware of our own duration, notions of perception and recollection, of present and past, become quite fleeting and relative. In space all things are separate, but in duration they all blend into each other. Duration is thus the real object of intuition.

Unable to directly insert ourselves into other bodies and objects, we can nevertheless recognize their duration by the method of intuition. We insert ourselves into other things by analogy, that is, through an imaginative act. By expansion of consciousness we are capable of attributing an inner reality to things that seem external in space. In moments of great intensity, we feel the material world become infinitely richer than we are able of perceiving – thus recognizing other durations and how they differ from our own. No longer restricted to the needs and interests of the instinct and intellect, intuition discerns real differences in kind. While our minds are primarily limited to focusing on decision and our bodies primarily on action, intuition transcends such limitations to recognize the true movements and qualities of nature, independent of our possible interactions with it, freeing us from the mechanistic patterns of lower life forms. Intuition overcomes both the interests of the instincts and the atomistic divisions of rational analysis. In uniting spirit and matter in an immediate communion with nature and reality, intuition allows us to recognize our place in the universe.

4 A minor term until his 1902 essay “Introduction à la métaphysique”, from thereon remaining his philosophical method, thus not fully hypothesized in his *Matter and Memory*.

As our pasts are always becoming larger, our intuition may always become more highly developed. Bergson puts absolute faith in our possibility of gaining true knowledge: ultimate reality is essentially positive, accessible and readable, so to speak.

In the following chapter, I will show how also Woolf feels she is apprehending something real, as she begins her memoirs and elaborates on the significance of memory in her life and authorship.

2. 3 Reading *Moments of Being*

It is a general sense of the poetry of existence that overcomes me. Often it is connected with the sea and St. Ives. (June 13th 1923, in Woolf 1973: 55)

2. 3. 1 Sketching a Woolfian poetics

Virginia Woolf's fragments of autobiographical memoirs show strong implications of the importance of memory in her authorship. Published posthumously, *Moments of Being* comprises a selection of texts that were either incomplete or not originally intended for publication, stretching from the short "Reminiscences" (1907) of young Virginia Stephen to the more fully fledged beginning of her own memoirs in "A Sketch of the Past" (1939), written barely two years before her death. Their eloquent style of prose has secured them a central place in Woolf-criticism as works of significant literary value in their own right. Yet criticism has also dealt with the striking light they shed on the status of memory, reminiscence and recollection in Woolf's fiction and poetics, as well as in her life. The importance she explicitly attributes to the function and process of memory in "A Sketch of the Past" not only opens up for closer inspection, but lends itself as a particular scope through which we might peer deeper into her works of fiction.

Alongside selected excerpts from her letters and diaries, *Moments of Being* may be treated as a source of Woolfian poetics. The memoirs not only give away cherished memories and biographical detail, but also the process and devices involved in writing these. Hermione Lee remarks that "The 'Sketch of the Past' has the depth and experience of her whole writing life behind it, and is able to make a profound, detailed analysis of how she writes about herself" (Lee 1996: 20). It follows that this sketch is a source of insight into and perhaps the closest we can come to a Woolfian poetics.

Furthermore, one may argue that *Moments of Being* has the strength and capacity of being treated as a philosophical work in its own right. It is no secret that Woolf adored Montaigne, whose works stand as the epitome of philosophical inquiries by force of the heart and being of the author himself. Woolf's outspoken admiration for the romantic poets (particularly Shelley), whose manifests of introspective analysis also attest to the same possibilities of self-conscious (not self-centered) thought, might legitimize the "Sketch" of

1939 as a self-conscious, philosophical work. Though Woolf self-consciously explains her motives in the very beginning of both these texts – “Reminiscences” being a letter to her nephew; “A Sketch”, a belated memoir while approaching old age – her following account seems less a simple act of retrospection than an attempt at defining a personal poetics or what she herself calls “a philosophy” (Woolf 1978: 84).

2.3.2 “Reminiscences”

The reminiscences were written as a letter to her nephew Julian Bell – the first child of Virginia's sister Vanessa – whose brother, Quentin, would write the first authoritative, prize-winning Virginia Woolf biography several decades after her death. Young Virginia Stephen's letter is intended to describe the Stephen sisters, including herself and Vanessa. Though only in her mid-twenties, having published but a single anonymous memoir (on her father, after his death), Virginia in “Reminiscences” already proves herself a skilful stylist. The warm glimpse into the Stephen-siblings' coming-of-age foreshadows themes she will continue to work on throughout the rest of her life. Virginia's brief descriptions of childhood games are conveyed with a humble simplicity, yet remain vivid and enchanting.

The Stephen-siblings' childhood comes to an abrupt end with Julia Stephen's death in 1895 (Virginia was only thirteen at the time), described as “the greatest disaster that could happen” (46). The importance of her mother and the devastation of her passing are of a magnitude she cannot go on to outweigh. There is instead provided a brief, yet sharp portrait of Julia Stephen, where Virginia's early capacity for poetic character description becomes striking in its short analogies: “She had been as happy as few people are happy, for she had passed like a princess in a pageant from her supremely beautiful youth to marriage and motherhood, without awakening” (37).

The portrayal of Julia Stephen takes on a somewhat sad character. The fact that Julia was already a widow (formerly married to Herbert Duckworth) when she married and had children with Leslie Stephen, attaches a sense of perpetual loss to her. Virginia writes about her mother's persistent mourning over the loss of her first husband and their marriage, stating that to her mother “he was dead when she determined to consecrate those years as the golden ones” and “now that she had none to worship she worshipped the memory” (37). Woolf seems

duly aware of how memory functions in regard to feelings of loss and longing, though her own memories have yet to culminate in the reminiscent splendour of her forthcoming novels.

2. 3. 3 “A Sketch of the Past”

57-year-old Virginia Woolf opens this text with an anecdote, saying that her sister Vanessa had told her she must write her memoirs before she'd be “too old”. Later, when fleeing London together with Leonard while Britain had entered the war, Virginia prioritizes bringing her 41-volume-diary, so that she might one day begin to write her memoirs – that was what her perpetual ‘life-writing,’ as she called it, should culminate in. Hermione Lee remarks that any biographer of Woolf is indeed faced with the challenge of having too much material rather than too little (Lee 1996: 4).

Woolf placed a double importance on her literary survival; one on her historical survival as an author of canonical heritage, and one on assuring the survival of her own past. Both are recorded in her diaries, and are evident in her attempt to detail as much of her life as possible. It seems clear, then, how memories establish the base for such modes of survival.

2. 3. 3. 1 “A base that life stands upon”

In “A Sketch of the Past” Woolf begins her memoir-writing by introducing her earliest memories, while emphasizing their tremendous importance in the following metaphor: “If life has a base that it stands upon, if it is a bowl that one fills and fills and fills – then my bowl without a doubt stands upon this memory” (75). At a closer glance three levels can be identified in this statement (the base, the bowl, the filling of the bowl). Among these we can assume that the third level (the filling of the bowl) is experience, perception, memory and day-to-day experience; life itself is second (the bowl), while “this memory” in particular is primary (the base). Asserting “this memory” as the deepest foundation of her life is attributing a sense of provenance to it, the memory being her birth as a person, the initial marker and first personal point of reference in the world.

The memory of lying in the nursery in Talland House at St. Ives becomes a founding event in Woolf's life and work. She remembers listening to the waves breaking against the cliffs, watching the daylight pierce through the blinds of her bedroom window, hearing the

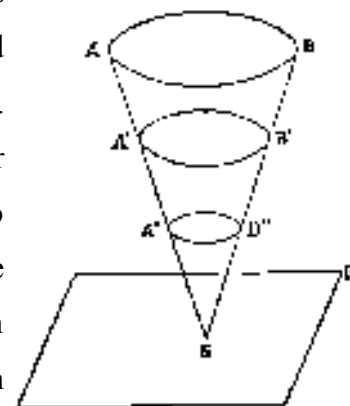
sound of the little acorn hanging from the blinds drawing across the floor, and her lying silent, “feeling the purest ecstasy which I can conceive» (75).

The line of chief Woolfian metaphors here are instantly recognizable: the waves, the window, the room, the ecstasy. As typical as any Woolfian case of ecstasy, this incident brings together certain material objects as relics in an abundant moment of unity. Woolf’s oeuvre displays a writer who has grasped on to particular objects, spaces and states of mind, continuously enriching and reshaping their symbolic value until they establish an independent realm of meaning. The Woolfian protagonist is often faced with profound experiences, epiphanies – while looking through a window, immersed in the spatial perception of a room, often reaching the near-intoxicating conditions of rapture and ecstasy. It is comparable to Bergson’s hypothesis of *pure perception*, where perceptions spring forth in their totality and overwhelm the subject. Being an infant without memories or a fully developed brain, it is quite probable that the situation Woolf recalls undoubtedly would have left her with an impression like the one we have just read.

Woolf then muses on why childhood seems to keep such a distinct aura:

I am only the container of the feeling of ecstasy, of rapture. Perhaps this is characteristic of all childhood memories; perhaps it accounts for their strength. Later we add to feelings much that makes them more complex; and therefore less strong; or if not less strong, less isolated, less complete. (78)

The lack of experienced life here allows for richer perception, an *image* less balanced between objective matter and subjective memory. In fact, Woolf’s employment of the metaphor of *the bowl standing on a base* somewhat corresponds to Bergson’s model of duration, the inverted cone – insofar as Woolf would admit to the *base* being subject to constant flux and reshaping. The contracted point *S* would be faced with the plane of matter *P* without the same extent of memories in points *AB* to intermingle with. If memory is the filter through which we perceive the world, a less rigid filter would be prone to fail in reducing the infinite aspects of matter, resulting in such an overwhelming ecstasy that Woolf here describes.



Woolf's base-memory has taken on a variety of shapes. Hermione Lee notes that Woolf treated this particular memory in fiction before she handled it in memoirs. Going back to the writing of *Jacob's Room* (1922), Lee finds a cancelled draft of the beginning of the novel, a scene with Jacob falling asleep in a nursery while listening to the wind through the blinds and the waves beating ashore. The definite book of Woolf's childhood memories is of course *To the Lighthouse*, recapturing her experience of their summer holidays at Talland House, though in that case without this one particular memory. It resurfaces in *The Waves* (1933) in the first of the interludes, describing the stirring of the blinds, prefiguring the children's perceptions. Lee points out that this room, as well as the Talland House and its gardens, are thus mythologised in Woolf's oeuvre (Lee 1996: 23-24). The base that Woolf rests her life upon proves to be a foundation of her authorship as well.

2.3.3.2 “A Complete Character”

While the childhood perception of lying in the nursery at St. Ives allows the richest memory Woolf can conceive of, certain later childhood memories of hers also hold that richness, in the form of persons. She describes an older man with whom she only met a few times and who – because he died while she was still a child – was never altered in her mind: “He never said a word all the time I knew him. But he still seems to me a complete character; and whenever I think of him I begin to laugh” (Woolf 1978: 85). Woolf thus implies that if she had kept seeing this man, her memory of him would not have been what it is. Her memory only seems untouched because the man's physical presence in her world was actually cancelled. The remaining impression of a person or an event as something *complete* would continue to obsess Woolf throughout her entire writing life.

A Bergsonian take on this would agree with the notion of completeness being due to lack of experience; Woolf's character would not seem complete had she observed him for a longer period – that is, at several different points in time – for all things qualitatively differ from themselves in duration, are heterogeneous so to speak. But while a childhood memory of completeness would capture a sense of homogeneity and permanence, such images are relentlessly superficial in adulthood. Woolf's perceptive abilities have grown, rendering such one-dimensional, atemporal impressions impossible. The adult intellect dissects wholes into parts, “we add to feelings much that makes them more complex [...] less isolated, less complete”

(78). Is it possible to regain the completeness of childhood's perceptions despite the dissecting operations of the adult's intellect?

Woolf's artistic vision involves the continuous attempt at creating something complete, while maintaining its reality within duration. In the "Sketch", she describes her philosophy of writing as a mode of research and contemplation which also implies a process of discovery and healing. Creative writing is an act of unification, whenever it allows all that seems fragmented to come together anew, or to make language transcend its own concepts.

Perhaps this is the strongest pleasure known to me. It is the rapture I get when in writing I seem to be discovering what belongs to what; making a scene come right; making a character come together. From this I reach what I might call a philosophy; at any rate it is a constant idea of mine; that behind the cotton wool is a hidden pattern; that we – I mean all human beings – are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. (84)

The philosophical gravity of the last sentence might invoke similar ideas suggested since baroque thinkers such as Leibniz, Shakespeare and Spinoza – a monist, pantheist, intrinsic, immanent attitude. Belief in a "pattern" or a harmony permeating all creation seems too common an artistic tradition to need further exploration. Attempting to unify sensory elements into a scene or a character which seems whole and complete, especially when in search of childhood's lost unity, is what might bring Woolf closer to romantic poets than to the existential crisis typical of modernists like Eliot and Joyce.

One could call this part of Woolf's poetics a positive counterforce to the chaos of modernist stream of consciousness. Woolf believes in the possibility of accessing an ultimate reality, "the hidden pattern", a positivity which separates her from other high-modernists who inhabited a forever broken world. For Woolf, the fundamental fragmentation which many of her contemporaries thought an unsurmountable abyss, hides a "wholeness" which may be abridged in life and in art. Woolf deeply believes and thoroughly demonstrates that there are possibilities of healing in both artistic practice and in living; it gives her "a great delight to put the severed parts together" (84).

Woolf's idealism is primarily romantic in the sense that the "pattern" may be accessed, while the process of accessing it, achieving unity and completeness, is more of a modernistic struggle, entirely separate from ideas of an artistic genius directly receiving the breath of

divine inspiration. Woolf's positivity is comparable to the *vitalism* of Bergson, where life's perpetual changes do not result in fragmented alienation, but in continuous growth and enrichment. As shown in chapter 2. 2. 4 "Intuition", one of Bergson's central views was namely the belief that human beings could rejoin with the essential impulses of life at a fundamental level, through intuition. Though all human beings possess intuition, artists in particular make use of this qualitative property at the cross-section of intelligence and instinct.

This "philosophy" or "constant idea" of Woolf's affirms how language and literature may access things as "complete" or "whole". It now remains to explore how the reading and writing of such completion may be shown at work in her fiction. For though Woolf's characters are acutely preoccupied with with making sense of the present through their memories of the past, they each succeed (or fail) in different ways. The "triumphs" of memory and creativity will be particularly discussed in reading the characters of Clarissa Dalloway, Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe.

3. *Mrs. Dalloway*

3. 1 Context and reception

By 1923, the Hogarth Press at Rodmell – which Leonard had originally intended as a hobby to occupy Virginia's fragile mind – was bringing enough revenue for the Woolfs to stop worrying about money. Though they continued to be intensely occupied with editing, reviewing and proofing, as well as working on their own projects of fiction and criticism, the Woolfs were highly social beings, each week-end spent hosting or visiting close family, friends and members of the Bloomsbury group. Their upper middle-class society parties were filled with discussions of sexuality, feminism, books, post-impressionist painting and the war. Virginia's diaries from this period attest to a feeling of being torn between the immense stimulus of party-going and her determination to become a writer.

Having released three novels and several short-stories, she was just beginning to establish herself as a significant literary figure, but the great breakthrough was yet to come. Woolf had followed *Ulysses* since it began to appear in the *Egoist* in 1918, and though she was rather critical of it, she took notes on its display of the psychological phenomenon that William James had coined *the stream of consciousness* – a term which critics were now employing to describe a trending novelty in contemporary fiction since Dorothy Richardson's *Pointed Roofs* (1915). The influence of Woolf's close friend and writer Katherine Mansfield can also not be disputed; Mansfield's short story “The Garden Party” (1922) follows a young woman through the course of a day as she prepares for a party, at which she hears news of the death of a man from the working class, which she does not know how to handle.

Woolf also continued to enjoy and marvel at the literary talents of Proust while she began enlarging her short story “Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street” into a novel in 1923. She however struggled with the main character Clarissa, and nearly decided to give up the entire project at one point: “I remember the night at Rodmell when I decided to give it up, because I found Clarissa in some way tinselly. Then I invented her memories” (Woolf 1978: 32; Jun 18th 1925). She records her “great discovery” in her diary on October 15th, “what I call my tunnelling process, by which I tell the past by instalments, as I have need of it”. After a lapse of mental illness, having moved back to London, Woolf began retyping the book towards the

end of 1924, eager to see it come out the following spring, shortly after the release of her essays on modern fiction known as *The Common Reader* (1925).

Woolf was conscious that, like with *Jacobs Room* (1922), she would be read as one among the many experimenters of her time. Yet with *Mrs. Dalloway* she is finally confident that it is “one of my most tantalising and refractory books” (Aug 29th 1923), asserting that “I think the design is more remarkable than in any of my books” (Oct 15th 1923). The *New York Times*' review at once acknowledged and praised “the intricate yet clear art of her composition” (*NYT*, May 10th 1925). The extreme opposite was expressed by her arch-rival, Victorian critic and novelist Arnold Bennett, who rejected the design for its lack of logical cohesion, as he associated it with “the new school of painting” – post-impressionism (Majumdar 1975: 190). Later reception has largely been concerned with the novel's intricacy, which according to professor David Dowling “may roughly be divided into three kinds: stylistic, sociopsychological, and feminist” (Dowling 1991: 21). Among the first kind is Hillis Miller's reading in *Fiction and Repetition*, which will be further discussed.

To explore memory in *Mrs. Dalloway* I will focus on character: mainly because the novel seems to be about how the different characters complete each other, how they are different parts of a whole; and because of the narrative's striking insistence on their interconnectedness.

3. 2 Analysis

3. 2. 1 “Was that it?”: Time and perspective

What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her, when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) solemn, feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen; looking at the flowers, at the trees with the smoke winding off them and the rooks rising, falling; standing and looking until Peter Walsh said, 'Musing among the vegetables?' – was that it? – 'I prefer men to cauliflowers' – was that it? He must have said it at breakfast one morning when she had gone out on to the terrace – Peter Walsh. He would be back from India one of these days, June or July, she forgot which, for his letters were awfully dull; it was his sayings one remembered; his eyes, his pocket-knife, his smile, his grumpiness and, when millions of things had utterly vanished – how strange it was! – a few sayings like this about cabbages. (Woolf 2000a: 3)

First I'll attempt to map the times and places of the opening passage of *Mrs. Dalloway*. Clarissa Dalloway sets off from her home in Westminster to buy flowers for the party she will be giving later that day. It is early in the morning. She has ordered the doors to be taken off their hinges for her party, and upon hearing them squeak, she recalls bursting open a window in her home in Bourton as an eighteen-year-old, seeing Peter Walsh, who is identified as someone who will soon return from a long trip to India. Clarissa dwells upon the memory of him while also remarking how strange it is that she should remember a random line he spoke that day, rather than remembering more fundamental things such as physical attributes and personality traits.

The free-indirect discourse positions the present in the past; what is told of the novel's action as it takes place, always takes place as it *happened*, not as it *happens*. The past perfect tense indicates a more distant past, always a recollected moment; here, the recollection is brought on by the squeaking sound of the hinges, then Peter Walsh becomes a part of that recollection due to his (probably recent) letter to Clarissa. Their flirtatious exchange is remembered as more significant than Clarissa consciously admits, when she reduces it to “a few sayings like this about cabbages”.

Narration in *Mrs. Dalloway* is barely grounded in the present, spatial, concrete surroundings. Instead, the dominant perspective is in the past, in memory. Clarissa mentions that “the doors would be taken off their hinges” and then, upon hearing the hinges squeak,

completely leaves this space to delve into the past. In the present she is walking somewhere between her home and a flower shop close to Regent's Park, but we are predominantly situated at her bedroom window thirty-four years ago. We are induced to looking out on her garden in Bourton, sensing the quality of the air, sounds, smells and colours, and given a glimpse into the main character as a young woman and the man she was then in love with. The introduction of these two central characters happens through this memory, so we first become acquainted with an earlier version of them. This particular impression of them is, of course, only Clarissa's personal recollection, which she hardly trusts herself, for they are merely a few details among "millions of things [that] had utterly vanished".

One understands early on that the characters and events of *Mrs. Dalloway* will all be told without objective or impartial access. All perspectives are attached to the mind of a character, the privileged view is retrospective, the predominant mode of narration is recollection. Apart from displaying how each present moment is pregnant with the past, this mode of narration offers insight into entire lives through the course of a single day, without having characters explicitly talk much about themselves. Through movements of recognition and recollection, narration simply follows the thoughts of each character as it gently hovers between perceptions and memories. This day in June is told without breaks in chapter, and thus the flow of consciousness remains intact throughout the novel in its entirety.

Consciousness in Bergsonism is always perception seeped with memory. This remains true to the various character consciousnesses in *Mrs. Dalloway* too, where narration often makes it hard to tell whether a description is either a perception or a memory. Several of the characters make the same objection to their memories, that they seem inaccurate, impoverished or untrue. They are then aware of themselves having a single, individual glimpse into something bigger which they cannot remember – something which in fact unifies them. In some cases, we shall see, such insecurity leads to feelings of frustration, despair and isolation. But there are by all means also cases where characters recognize themselves as a smaller part of a whole, and chose to celebrate this interconnectedness. As part of a whole, Clarissa sees the reflection of the world in herself – Septimus, as her counterpart, sees himself as a broken part which cannot longer reflect or participate in the immense whole of reality. I will demonstrate several of the constructive ways in which *Mrs. Dalloway* showcases the problems of perception and memory. As a novel which sets up large dualities within the theme of life and death, *Mrs. Dalloway* is also a brilliant example of Bergsonian themes of time,

freedom and creativity, and of how these may be put to work in literature. Here, perspective itself becomes a present and predominant problem.

3. 2. 2 “What she loved; life; London; this moment of June”: Clarissa Dalloway

How does the narrative embroider a vivid, urban landscape and an individual, personal portrait both at the same time? Clarissa Dalloway's walk through London City demonstrates how perceptions and recollections are always intermingling to create a reality which lies between the interior and the exterior. Not only does narration show this development from the very opening of the novel, but it shows it through the focalization of a character who *loves* being subject to the immense stimulus of the big city. The city stimuli are the reason Clarissa asserts that she wants to buy the flowers herself, and Clarissa's love of the city is one of the reasons that she so outstandingly demonstrates the narrative's capability of hovering between matter and memory.

The walk through London must also be read as Clarissa's strategy to keep herself busy and distracted from her helpless brooding; in the story that follows, her curiously vivid world-view is juxtaposed with her low self-perceptions. She appears to be an under-stimulated upper-class lady, with a heightened sensitivity. As soon as she reaches traffic and pauses on the kerb to wait for a van to pass, narration leaves Clarissa's reminiscences behind and follows her as she delves into the multiplicity of the urban experience. The city of London with its multitude of perceptions serves to characterize several of Clarissa's traits and motivations, while it also reveals the explosive dynamic of narrative character-creation at work. We learn not only what kind of character we are dealing with, but how the novel deals with characters.

Clarissa recognizes genuine differences in kind; the durational nature of things is evident to her, and she realizes that while perceptions and recollections constantly intermingle, they are not of the same kind. As she attempts to recall specific things, her present surroundings might be interfering with the exactness of her recollections. This problem is highlighted when she asks herself whether her memories are exact: “‘Musing among the vegetables?’ – was that it?”, then “‘Having lived in Westminster – how many years now?’” (4). Clarissa is aware that the present perceptions condition the quality of her recollections, and vice versa – the perceptions of her surroundings are conditioned by the

recollections she relates them to. Her self-consciousness is a heightened critical introspection and recognition of her own line of duration as differing from other lines of durations. Her own memories are not a true, precise, universal parameter – Clarissa knows that she is merely one individual among many others. Narration thus refrains from portraying her one-sidedly as an egocentric high-society snob. Even if her world-view might be restricted to certain spheres of high-society London, Clarissa is curious to explore the seemingly oceanic range of social and sensory qualities within these spheres.

Before coincidentally meeting Hugh Whitbread, to exclaim how she *loves* walking in London, she asks herself “[...] why one loves it so, how one sees it, [...] creating it every moment afresh [...]” to conclude that this is “what she loved; life; London; this moment of June” (4). Clarissa is positive, over-abundant, full of curiosity, anticipation and love rather than bourgeois hesitancy and loathing. The intensity of images is due to her attention to life. Narration provides a large space for sympathy towards Clarissa despite the conservative framework she is placed within. Some of her reasoning may tend towards the simple and trivial, but does not judge nor condescend; there are few prejudiced judgements among her perceptions – initially only towards the homeless who “drink their downfall” (4).

Clarissa's perceptions in London do indeed seem created “every moment afresh”, retaining a lot of immediate, sensory detail, lacking intellectual evaluation, simply appearing and disappearing in a continuous flux. Uncertainty about her own recollections suggests that she does not (consciously) give them priority in her urban mode of being. They appear random and uncertain to her, like autonomous sensations which tend to confuse the present rather than clarify it. Since she questions her memories, Clarissa is aware of herself as following a different duration than the many events in her surroundings; “the shopkeepers fidgeting in their windows” follow a different duration, and “on entering the park; the silence; the mist; the hum; the slow-swimming happy ducks” all designate other durations. Under the booming strikes of Big Ben, after “an indescribable pause” (4-5), clock-time becomes an absurd contrast to the multiplicity of durations in the city. None of the described perceptions have a duration which matches Clarissa's or Big Ben's. Duration's incessant differentiation is shown through Clarissa, as she sees it operate through the city's motions of movement and change. Clarissa's “love” of the city is a recognition of her free position in the universe, how other things resemble and differ from her at all times, signifying endless freedom.

Passing through the chaos, Clarissa's character melts into the immense multiplicity of perceptions where the line between her individual consciousness and the phenomena she perceives becomes near indeterminable. Simultaneously, the qualitative difference between her and everything else reaffirms the boundaries of her mind and body. Consciousness oscillates in a movement of contraction and relaxation as she perceives, now individual, now universal; now reminiscent, now material. Momentarily she loses sense of herself, and the richness of this moment in June is felt so intense that it resembles Bergson's concept of *pure perception*, where the memories of the individual consciousness fail to select only a few aspects of matter, thus resulting in matter appearing in its overwhelming, pure totality. The equation of "love", "life" and "this moment" alludes to the intensity of Clarissa's presence and attention to the world. The narrative shows how the character of Clarissa is constituted by much more than her private recollections alone. Yet character-creation in *Mrs. Dalloway* proves to be an imbalanced movement between perceptions and recollections, as the discussed scene tended more towards perceptions than recollections.

3. 2. 3 "[H]e could not read the language yet": Septimus Warren Smith

The second major character of *Mrs. Dalloway* introduces a stark, almost caricatured contrast to the protagonist. As the narrative jumps from Clarissa to a car as it breaks down outside the flower shop, people assemble in curiosity and each person gives his or her opinion on who they think might be sitting behind the car's curtain windows. One of the passers-by spots an aeroplane advertising by writing with smoke in the sky above them, and the narrative follows a handful of people guessing what is being written. At the same time, side-characters are induced to think about the war and its victims, as the car's breakdown gives off a loud bang followed by the drone of a plane engine reminiscent of the German bombers. The narrative finally focuses on a bench in Regent's Park, as Rezia Warren Smith cries to her husband Septimus that he must pay attention to the sky. The first introduction of this central character lends a mode of perception that is unlike anything else we have yet encountered:

So, thought Septimus, looking up, they are signalling to me. Not indeed in actual words; that is, he could not read the language yet; but it was plain enough, this beauty, this exquisite beauty, and tears filled his eyes as he looked at the smoke words languishing and melting in the sky and bestowing upon him in their inexhaustible charity and laughing goodness one shape after another of unimaginable beauty and signalling their intention to provide him, for nothing, for ever, for looking merely, with beauty, more beauty! (23)

Even in comparison to the high sentiments of Clarissa Dalloway, the quoted assessment of the smoke words seems unreasonable, or at least exaggerated. The hyperbole of Septimus' expression has no equivalent in the simplicity of the observed scene, and narration hence seems weakly grounded in concrete surroundings. Following this statement, Septimus and Rezia are immediately told by an accompanying nursemaid that the words are merely advertising toffee, as to definitely seal off any suspicion that Septimus' perception was accurate. Septimus' breakdown in perception presents a contrast to the rich, even healthy flux of Clarissa's perception, signalling that we are dealing with character doubles.

Schizophrenic, manic-depressive or shell-shocked; all attempts to diagnose Septimus are left to the reader, while narration simply observes the symptoms, as well as the (useless) advice from his visit to doctor Bradshaw much later. Due to the frequent apparition of a friend of Septimus' who fell in combat (Evans) and to his suspicion of hidden messages in the world around him, little doubt is left as to what has fractured Septimus' mind: his ability to create ordinary coherence between matter and memory has been lost in the war.

Yet Septimus' perceptions are not annulled altogether. He understands that the skywriting *means* something, he recognizes it as something else than merely clouds. Due to war-trauma, the breakdown between perceptions and recollections makes him imagine that the smoke letters intended to "provide him" with "unimaginable beauty", attesting to his poetic mindset (we are later told that he had dreamed of becoming a poet). He cannot relate the sight of the skywriting to a useful recollection, but vaguely recognizes it as a medium of sorts, something carrying a message. Upon hearing a nursemaid spell out the letters in the sky, Septimus has a psychosomatic response to the mellow sound of her voice, sending chills up his spine, leading him to another strange conclusion: "A marvellous discovery indeed – that the human voice in certain atmospheric conditions (for one must be scientific, above all scientific) can quicken trees into life!" (24). If anything can be deduced from this line of reasoning, it is the display of Septimus' need for rigorous and "scientific" reason. His need for science serves to counteract a vaguely remembered madness, and he implicitly admits to his own insanity while refuting it: "[...] he would not go mad" (24).

Following his connection between the human body and the trees in the park, Septimus has an epiphany: "But they beckoned; leaves were alive; trees were alive. And the leaves

being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement” (24). With this statement, the narrative has progressed from sudden and irrational illusions towards a more delicate, humble acknowledgement, the likes of which we have seen in Clarissa as well, in her feeling of interconnectedness between the private sphere of the individual mind and the universal sphere of the material world. Thus Septimus does have a faculty of recognition, yet lacks control of it. This implies that he has once possessed that normal, sane ability to recognize images between matter and memory, but has lost it. Due to his trauma, Septimus' recognitions and movements in duration are limited to the extent that he may barely act physically or reason intellectually.

Though Septimus “could not read the language yet” (23), he recognized how the letters of smoke changed themselves and melted into thin air, reminding him how all things that seem solid in space, are fluid in duration. The duration of the smoke letters cause Septimus' epiphany of “beauty”, since they reveal that the material world is not constant, despite the disturbances in his memory. This gives him a brief glimpse of feeling interconnectedness in the excessive, qualitative nature of duration. Bergson describes matter in a manner reminiscent of the connection Septimus felt with the tree: “Matter thus resolves itself into numberless vibrations, all linked together in uninterrupted continuity, all bound up with each other, and travelling in every direction like shivers through an immense body” (Bergson 2004: 276). In loss of the instinctual interests of his body and the rational interests of his memory, Septimus feels connected to the tree. But only momentarily, since his attention to life cannot uphold an equilibrium between matter and memory. Insanity is much like dreaming insofar as it cannot hold perceptions steady enough to prepare the body for action, let alone return appropriate reactions to the external world. The natural responses that connect the virtual and the real are not actualized, and therefore create a mental disturbance (227).

Septimus' perceptions are not negated, but distorted; he is not ignorant, but broken. His character, like Clarissa's, is woven out of powerful sense perceptions in the present that reawaken memories of a perceived past, yet in Septimus' case the closest memories are of a violent, scattered and incoherent war-time. Still, material perceptions in the present enable Septimus to also reconnect with a deeper past: the infant's natural bodily communion with nature.

Narration lets the reader decide as to judgements and sympathies rather than embrace a single perspective, by enriching each character with the temporal facets of his or her past as well as with the spatial facets of sense impressions and of surrounding characters' viewpoints. As an emblem of duration, the skywriting-motif connects the title-character to her opposite across a legion of people who will never be mentioned again. In the park, nature's "millions of fibres" served to connect Septimus with a tree. They are both among the many processes which showcase different durations in the novel, connecting individuals with masses and spirit with matter. The part of Clarissa that saw the crowd outside the flower shop literally extends through the sky into Septimus, but arrives as something different. The dissolving smoke letters brilliantly embody this transition, as the last letters barely manifest before the first have dissolved, representing the motion of contraction and relaxation between matter and memory. The "language" that Septimus refers to is simply the durational flux he has lost connection with, which means something to him – if only he could read it.

3. 2. 4 "[A] whole life, a complete life": Making a life

Bourton is repeated as a central place of commemoration in the novel; a mnemonic topos in the lives of Clarissa and Peter. It is the place where the love-triangle of Peter, Sally and Clarissa unfolded, which is so often referred to in their conversations. Recollections from Bourton remain fundamental to the characters and the way they view their lives. In the following scene it becomes clear how memories "make" a life, and how the past may repeat itself and exist contemporaneously with the present.

Clarissa's recollections and life-making are displayed as soon as she returns to her home in Westminster, having left the urban space. No longer distracted by powerful sensations in her surroundings, the perspective shifts to the intensity of Clarissa's inner sensations. She decides she will mend the dress for her party herself, and her interior monologue casually drifts through remarks about her servants, of death and her mirror-image and of the old woman in the window across from hers – all amidst Clarissa's high expectations for the upcoming party.

Sally Seton, an old friend from her adolescent days at Bourton, is introduced through several remembered episodes, both comical and affectionate sketches of the fun and mischief

Clarissa and Sally would concoct while she still lived with her parents. A short glimpse is given of her father Justin Parry, and Peter Walsh appears again, as her rejected suitor. Clarissa describes a memory from their garden, where Sally had kissed her, as “the most exquisite moment of her whole life” (38) – an event interrupted by Peter Walsh, which she disliked him for. But then she realizes that Peter has shaped her with his words, attitudes and sentimentality. While mending her dress, the motion of her sewing curiously parallels the motions of her wandering mind. Clarissa's sewing becomes a meditative activity as it concludes the long dive into her memories of past love, creating a relaxation which shifts her perceptions from the exterior to the interior, as a contrast to her walk in the city. Her sewing reinstates balance:

Quiet descended on her, calm, content, as her needle, drawing the silk smoothly to its gentle pause, collected the green folds together and attached them, very lightly, to the belt. So on a summer's day waves collect, overbalance, and fall; collect and fall; and the whole world seems to be saying 'that is all' more and more ponderously, until even the heart in the body which lies in the sun on the beach says too, That is all. (43)

Her act of recollection parallels the motion of her needle running through the green material of her dress, which threads, joins and reinforces the fabric of her consciousness. The sewing-meditation lets her pause. She is present only in bodily habit, performing a task by bodily memory. The wave-like motion of sewing is clearly described as something constructive, as also observed later by Septimus when Rezia makes a hat: “She built it up; first one thing, then another, she built it up, sewing” (160).

Something is indeed being built up during this sewing scene. The scene represents an antithesis to the city spectacle where Clarissa's duration is shown at its most contracted. Now it is shown at its most relaxed as she retires to her room, having asked her maids not to disturb her. Clarissa “collects” herself here, building herself up between a myriad of recollections, the spectacle of the city and the anxious anticipation of the upcoming party. By choosing to buy the flowers herself and mend the dress herself, Clarissa posits herself as that agent who collects, threads or “binds all things together”. It is Clarissa's triumph of creating unity that allows her to proclaim “That is all” at several instances throughout the novel (walking through London, 7; here, 43). And it is also her ability of joining the recollected parts of her life into a whole, as is shown in her strange reaction to the sudden encounter with Peter Walsh.

Peter Walsh unexpectedly turns up at her home after five years in India – interrupting this very moment of recollection like he interrupted the event of kissing Sally. His stay is cut short by their inability to converse without referencing a past of which Peter is still ashamed. For Peter, Clarissa's rejection of his marriage proposal will always be contained within his image of her. The moment of rejection will always exist alongside the present Clarissa. It has become a taboo to both of them because it pains him so: “For why go back like this to the past? he thought. Why make him think of it again? Why make him suffer, when she had tortured him so infernally?” (46). Clarissa hastily (and unfortunately) breaks an awkward silence by asking Peter if he remembers “the lake”, possibly the place of his proposal, when she suddenly has a very strange fantasy of herself being at that very lake:

[...] coming to her parents who stood by the lake, holding her life in her arms which, as she neared them, grew larger and larger in her arms, until it became a whole life, a complete life, which she put down by them and said, 'This is what I have made of it! This!'” (46).

If Peter's recollection of the lake represents pain and rejection, Clarissa's recollection of the lake represents flattery. It is not only with humble need of her parents' affirmation, but with a little pride that Clarissa imagines her life as a complete creation to be presented to her parents – the people who gave her this life in the first place.

But if Clarissa's life is actually being presented to anyone in the present situation, it is to Peter. Peter's visit has caused a moment of indetermination. The encounter has led both Peter and Clarissa to evaluate not only the past five years, but their entire lives. By invoking her parents' virtual response to what she has “made” of her life, Clarissa implies that marrying Richard instead of Peter was in accord with *their* wishes. At the same time, Clarissa is now literally standing in front of Peter, not her parents, and thereby she is defending her life against someone who might be a ghost from the past or a lost love. She is ultimately only confronting her inner self with the making of her life, which she appears to find “whole” and “complete” nevertheless. The image of “holding her life in her arms”, like holding an infant, which is growing “complete”, remains curious when Peter breaks into tears and Clarissa thinks of his sensitivity, his vulnerability and emotional delicacy. As Peter weeps, Clarissa draws him to her, takes his hand, caresses him like a child and thinks “If I had married him, this gaiety would have been mine all day!” (51). Though Clarissa has succeeded in becoming a central figure of London's high society, she cannot answer to herself whether her choice of

husband was right. There is an infantile, dependant aspect in Peter she warmly recognizes as a “gaiety”.

Sally, and the infatuation she represents, opens a new world of radical perspectives and forbidden sensations to Clarissa. Their discussions, their games and the books they read are all central to what Clarissa has become, making her into the animated and curious person she has remained; it was Sally “who made her feel, for the first time, how sheltered the life at Bourton was” (36). Clarissa attributes a high value to the original events, but also indicates the importance of the remaining memories. In fact, she does not distinguish between them, but treats them as though the events still exist alongside her till this moment. The quality of this reminiscing monologue attests to the durability of her memories, how they have left marks on her spirit, how they are still developing her as a person. Growing up at Bourton with friends like Peter and Sally has shaped her life, transcended the “sheltered” life and “made” it a “whole” life. She is still growing – if not growing-up, if not at Bourton – Clarissa is still living alongside a past which indicated the fullness of her present day, of her existential presence. When Peter Walsh abruptly rushes upstairs to her room, telling himself “Oh yes, she will see *me*,” (43) it is as if to act out the past again. Peter's virtual presence becomes real, Clarissa's memory becomes actualized, and as they collide in this moment after a five-year interval, we see the affirmations and the problems caused by the past-present confrontation: they do not manage to lead a conversation which is not entirely preoccupied with reproducing the past.

As an interruption, Peter's visit is a repetition which serves to highlight development in plot and character. Clarissa recalls Peter interruption of her kiss with Sally as “shocking” and “horrible”, attesting to his “hostility” and “jealousy” (39) towards hers and Sally's companionship. Now, Peter's interruption of her sewing makes her “so surprised [...] so glad, so shy, so utterly taken aback” (43), while Peter, kissing her hands (as if re-enacting his proposal), trying to charm her, is still feeling shame and rejection. Upon seeing him, Clarissa finds Peter looking “[e]xactly the same”; Peter finds Clarissa has “grown older” (44). With no authoritative commentator, one must take these differing accounts to be more or less relative; it indeed seems correct that Clarissa would look older due to her openness to change – and Peter, who repeatedly makes the same mistakes (going to India to marry, returning to England to divorce), might appear very much the same as the naïve boy who once proposed to

Clarissa. Clarissa still sees her young, charming suitor; Peter still faces a reality which clashes with his detached expectations. Their view of each other is equally introspective.

We have seen Clarissa as she is shaped by city sensations and how she succeeds in relaxing afterwards. The large contrast between the city and her home reflects duration's motion of contraction and relaxation. There is a duality in Clarissa's consciousness throughout the day: becoming part of the city as opposed to assembling herself in the quiet of her room. This will be discussed again when Clarissa becomes part of the social fabric at her party, and when she retires from the party upon hearing the news of Septimus' death. Life is put forward as something to be “made” between the exterior world and the interior world, and it is something to be made with care and responsibility, like raising a child. Peter's unexpected visit caused both him and Clarissa to question themselves and their life-making, creating an interval, a moment of decision. Peter's visit also shows how repetitions become central to highlight movement and change, since all repetitions contain difference and novelty. But while Clarissa recognizes change with a positive and responsible attitude, for Peter it becomes yet another painful reality-check which attests to his immature character.

3. 2. 5 “Why speak of the past?”: Peter Walsh, repetition and habit

The black and white world of Peter Walsh causes a great deal of trouble. Peter realizes that he struggles with repetitive behaviour patterns: he has “been a fool; wept; been emotional; told her [Clarissa] everything, *as usual*” (53, italics mine). He is faced with a kind of fruitless repetition, a habitual pattern locked into repeating the same mistakes, “feeling hollowed out, utterly empty within” because this repetition is the only structure within which he can act, a “skeleton of habit [which] alone upholds the human frame” (54). While narration leaves the Dalloways' home and follows Peter, Clarissa's refusal of him becomes a clear and logic part of the plot, while Peter's inner life stands forth as a severe disruption. His aimless wandering through London City showcases an antithesis to the constructive equilibrium of Clarissa's perceptions and memories. If Septimus can be deemed Clarissa's broken counterpart, Peter represents her naïve inferior.

Peter's distracted mind is full of self-pity, creating hallucinatory fantasies almost like those of Septimus, while the sounds of the clock-tower of St. Margaret's meld with his own

worries about Clarissa, leading to what he mistakes for “an extraordinarily clear, yet puzzling recollection of her” (54). For when the clock strikes, Peter has an associative leap, thinking that Clarissa and St. Margaret's alike are the one's who are preoccupied with time, stuck in the past: “women live more in the past than we [men? T. H.] do” (60). This is quite an ironic statement coming from Peter, as he is not only stuck in the past himself, but less capable of dealing with the present than Clarissa. Peter represents a stark opposition to “that divine vitality which Clarissa loved” (7), her lucidity and insight. When Peter assimilates Clarissa and St. Margaret's in a feminised notion of time which he detests, it represents a contrast to the Big Ben-time as represented from Clarissa's point of view. While Big Ben's clock-time possesses universal, quantitative time, Peter's idea of feminised time signals repression doom and imprisonment in memories. St. Margaret's shocks of sound brings back painful memories from the past, suddenly tolling for “death that surprised in the midst of life, Clarissa falling where she stood” (54). Peter's past is characterized by Clarissa's rejection, which has led to his fearful and nervous relation to femininity. As a milder version of Septimus' involuntary, trauma-related repetitions, Peter's past-obsession is detached and unhealthy in its repetitive nature. His love for Clarissa is corrupted by his entangled, imaginary inner life.

As an anxious and upset Peter runs into the city, he encounters a flock of marching boys on the street. Their march is temporarily upholding the traffic and seem to signal a temporary delay, or interval, within Peter himself. Their persistent, rhythmic procession confronts him with yet another notion of time which he cannot keep up with.

I can't keep up with them, Peter Walsh thought, as they marched up Whitehall, and sure enough, on they marched, past him [...] and life, with its varieties, its irreticences, had been laid under a pavement of monuments and wreaths and drugged into a stiff yet staring corpse by discipline. (56)

The “varieties” and richness of life appear “drugged” and suppressed in the uniform motion of these young men. Peter's somewhat sinister characterization of their march affirms his anxiety towards “discipline”: he feels all of them have “made the same renunciation”: he thinks that the boys “don't know the troubles of the flesh yet” (56). Interpolating “life”, “varieties” and “the flesh” against a “corpse” of “discipline” attests to panic rather than control and clarity, fear rather than insight. If their march points towards a notion of uniform, universal time, this notion also scares Peter. But why can't Peter accept this notion of time either?

The march is rhythmic rather than fleeting, repetitive rather than variable. The boys, which Peter sees younger versions of himself in, seem trapped in “discipline”. Peter's fear of the “skeleton of habit” is projected onto the repetitive motion of the march. Habit is the reason why Peter struggles to accept the changes that have taken place in the five years he's been abroad. While being bound by motor-mechanisms and habit, veering through London as if on an anxious auto-pilot, Peter cannot ground himself in reality nor reassure himself in his virtual reservoir of illusions. Even the rhythmic, patriarchal, ritualistic march, which disrupts the city's pace and stabilizes the environment for a while, is unable to calm Peter, who admits he “can't keep up with them”. Durations that differ from his own are always terrifying; he cannot answer to the masculine duration of the marching boys nor the feminised duration of Clarissa – he is incapable of action, and as a result, perpetually torn between decisions.

As with the other characters, narration follows Peter to a more relaxed state after showing him at his most intense. After more fingering of his pocket-knife and running after random women on the streets, Peter finds himself in Regent's Park and remembers walking there as a child – though he finds it “odd” that he should remember such a thing, and attributes this to having visited Clarissa, since “women live much more in the past” (60). He decides to take a nap, and delves into sensations of people and passing traffic, sinking into sleep on a bench next to an elderly nurse knitting over a sleeping baby – another motherly figure, who reflects relaxation, allowing men with “troubles of the flesh” to have complacency in a pause. The nurse becomes yet another figure in the repetitions of female guardians, knitting like Clarissa was sewing, to accompany the relaxation of duration while Peter's mind slips from waking perceptions to sleep. The distance between Peter and the sleeping baby diminishes as the motherliness of the nun increases; “she seemed like the champion of the rights of sleepers” (62). His sleep is also described through his inner sensations, seemingly as a restorative activity, a pause where “all this fever of living were simplicity itself; and myriads of things merged into one thing”. This is a description reminiscent of duration due to its fleeting and heterogeneous character – a wholeness of multiplicity, where objects meld into each other. His subjective consciousness asks to “blow to nothingness with the rest”, to lose itself under the supervision of some higher, motherly figure.

Peter has the most explicitly problematic sexuality in the novel. The homosexual desires of Clarissa seem reconciled, safely at rest in her memories of Sally, while a repressed sexuality is more subtly indicated in Septimus' longing for the fallen Evans as well as his

marital troubles with Rezia. As the foremost representative of heterosexuality in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Peter evokes patterns of meaning from the psychoanalytical realm: the ominous, phallic pocket-knife and the sexual desire of a motherly figure are clear enough – a sense of distress and aggression seems linked to his encounters with females. It explains why he wakes from his dreams of obliteration with a slip of the tongue, “with extreme suddenness, saying to himself, 'The death of the soul'” (64), as if testifying to the uncanny return to the womb that his sleep may be reminiscent of.

At this point in narration, Peter is located between the relaxed equilibrium of Clarissa and the impending obliteration of Septimus. Wherever the lines of balance and disturbance are rooted, their symptoms arise primarily in a mental life that goes beyond sexuality, though they are manifest there too. When Bergson says that “the past tends to reconquer, by actualizing itself, the influence it had lost” (Bergson 2004: 169), he is not speaking so much of a return of the repressed as he is attributing an actual, contemporaneous existence to the past. As Peter – unconsciously and involuntarily – continues to be obsessed with the past, he is in fact granting it a genuine existence alongside the present. His nap on the bench next to the nurse who is watching over a baby, then, is figured as a factually unconscious return to the womb, a pre-natal state being symbolically actualized in the present moment, which Peter abruptly (and to his own surprise) announces as “The death of the soul”.

We have seen the motion of contraction and relaxation in the narrative that follows Peter between his encounter with Clarissa and his restful withdrawal in Regent's Park. Now that three of the novel's characters have been built up with this motion, a strange scene takes place which seems less related to individual characters and thus becomes difficult to make sense of.

3. 2. 6 “[T]he voice of an ancient spring”: A(-)temporal landscape

A strange event interrupts Peter's interior monologue as he leaves the park. After more lament over Clarissa's refusal, Peter is interrupted by

a frail, quivering sound, a voice bubbling up without direction, vigour, beginning or end,
running weakly and shrilly and with an absence of all human meaning into
ee um fah um so
foo swee too eem oo – (Woolf 2000a: 88)

Is Peter really awake, or is he falling back into sleep? The description of the voice marks a sudden narrative shift in style, elevating the lyric quality of “the voice of an ancient spring” (88). The voice is a beggar woman's, yet it is as if it issues from the earth. J. Hillis Miller has ascertained the beggar's song as a loosely translated version of Richard Strauss' “Allerseelen” or “All Souls' Day”, alluding to the annual day of remembering the dead.⁵ As a key-scene, Hillis Miller says, the beggar's song strangely represents Clarissa's party as an event of the raising of the dead, bringing Peter, Sally and the rest back together, resurrecting them from the past. This is what causes all the characters' obsession with the past on this particular day, as the narrative brings them back “not just to repeat the past, but to resurrect it in another form” (Miller 1982: 191).

The idea of repeating the past in an “another form” emulates well with our previous discussions of Bergsonian memory, though Hillis Miller makes no explicit reference to Bergson. His reading of the higher narrative function of this scene is astounding, yet the aesthetic depth and lyrical quality of the scene seem unaccounted for. For readers and the characters who do not catch the reference to All Souls' Day, the scene still remains a somewhat uncanny disturbance.

The woman has stood here since mammoths roamed the place, singing of “love which has lasted a million years” (Woolf 2000a: 90). If Peter is awake and conscious, he might be creating an imaginative world around the woman just as he has around Clarissa. If still drowsy, half-asleep, the abundance of his otherwise naïve imagination is quite intensely outlined here, transforming the urban environment into a pre-historical landscape. What if Peter's perceptions are taken literally? Standing at a crossing as this happens, normally Peter would be paying extra attention to his surroundings in order to avoid an accident. Standing there, the “sound interrupted him” – suspending his train of thought about Clarissa and her coldness. His self-pity is interrupted by a woman in the lyrics whose fate has the mythological proportions to justify Peter's sadness: she is “[s]till remembering how once in some primeval May she had walked with her lover” (89). The vast temporal horizon is bolstered by means of answering to Peter's misery; now, Peter finds himself in a world where lost love has happened before, and happens again and again, a world where lost love is an existential axiom. As soon as his personal failure is made a universal, cosmic constant, it becomes meaningful, interpretable and acceptable. Peter is simply repeating the mistakes of his human nature, being

5 See chapter “*Mrs. Dalloway*: Repetition as the raising of the dead” in *Fiction and Repetition* (1982)

only one instance of a greater, timeless force which immigrated to the British Isles with the human race itself. Peter's self-assurance, as an "interruption", is not a conscious mechanism, but precisely an "interruption", as if duration opens itself up to him and comfortably reveals the ever-changing yet repetitive essence of the world. Peter now feels sorry for the beggar woman, and by "giving the poor creature a coin" (90), he has temporarily reverted his destructive introverted pity to an extrovert including sympathy.

The narrative "interruption" from Peter's incessant self-loathing to this mystical, unreal scenario is interesting. The interrupted inner monologue is obvious as such, while the phenomenal, interrupting event has an uncanny effect. What seemed to be the duration of some hours of a single day in London regresses to "when the pavement was grass, when it was swamp", the time of mammoths, when a pre Indo-European woman crossed the canal "where the sea flows now", whose eventual demise will concur with the end of "the pageant of the universe" (89). The universe, then, is upheld by lament of lost love – an extreme notion even for the melodramatic inner life of Peter Walsh. It is chilling, absurd, even sublime to make such tremendous leaps in time. By interruption, the beggar's song causes the narrative to lose itself momentarily, yet still reaching a peak, a mid-way climax. It is an "interruption" from a narrative exterior which might hold an interpretative key to the novel. Is it an interval between perception and action, or an enveloped state which carries within it the reflection of a whole?

As a temporal contrast (eternal vs. temporary) to this day in June, the beggar's song renders the entire assembly of characters naïve – on a scale of a million years Peter is not the sole character who clutches onto misconstrued conceptions of matter, space and time. We leave Peter here, as he gives the beggar woman a shilling for her song of lost love, before narration turns to Rezia Warren Smith, who also witnesses the song, thus affirming the existence of the beggar woman. Rezia, whose humiliating public appearances with her mad husband have led her to depression, learns an invaluable lesson. Now "this old woman singing in the street 'if some one should see, what matter they?' made her suddenly quite sure that everything was going to be right." (90). The large difference between her and the beggar seems to have widened Rezia's perceptions to a scale where she finds herself in a better situation. Their genuine difference in kind, if only material, allows her to recognize her own true conditions. Their differences also illuminate their similarities, as they are both women who lament the loss of their beloved one. It adds a thrust to Rezia's memories of a sane

Septimus, only hours before she witnesses his suicide, as if suggesting the prophetic vision of an oracle coming from the mystical beggar. Like the beggar, Septimus must fall for the others to remember the true value of life. Sitting next to the entrance to Regent's Park's underground station, the beggar's song also acquires a metonymic relation to the anabasis, as a voice re-emerging from the underworld. This resonates with Hillis Miller's reading as well as Woolf's own intentions of structuring the novel around the main theme of life and death. In a novel with scenes that explicitly deal with history, remembering the dead also refers to the first world war – a tragedy which claims still another casualty with Septimus.

Rezia earlier had a similar experience of sudden insight amidst the tumults of Septimus' fractured mind. Before leaving the park, as Septimus raves about the secret messages in the sky, Rezia's mind wanders through the park's landscape. At first she is “[f]ar [from] Italy” and wishes she could tell Septimus that he “should see the Milan gardens”, but her words don't reach him – he is “gone” (25-26). As loneliness descends upon her, she recognizes in the park the outlines of her home. Memories enshroud the actual landscape and transform it to a well-known place where she would not be alone, and suddenly

the country reverts to its ancient shape, as the Romans saw it, lying cloudy, when they landed, and the hills had no names and rivers wound they knew not where – such was her darkness”
(26)

This short interlude of Rezia's breaks up Septimus' hallucinations in a lyrical, interrupting manner similar to the beggar's song that interrupted Peter's despair. We are cast into the virtual sphere, this time exclusively Rezia's, who's past is best represented in London through the Romans. Rezia's feels a connection between her Italian heritage and the Roman establishment of Londonium. Whether this daydream succeeds in comforting her at the present moment or not, it widens the temporal horizon into something greater. Similar to the beggar's song, an ancient narrative subverts notions of individuality, nationality and personal despair. In learning to recognize a duration greater than their own, a sense of freedom and loss of instinctual-intellectual interests is achieved. Rezia thinks that “To love makes one solitary” (25), a lesson both she and Peter have learnt. Through an act of imagination, Peter and Rezia become able to apprehend real duration and thereby make sense of their loss. The narrative interruptions create a temporal landscape which alters their past and their present together. It places them in a state of in-between, like at an interval, where they may live without worry and course of action.

3. 2. 7 “There was an embrace in death”: Assembling at the party

Mrs. Dalloway is a novel very much about death, but also about the subversive power of death. Between birth and death, there is life and unity. Hillis Miller notes that the movement which causes the characters to piece together and actualize the continuity between past and present “lifts them up into the daylight world in a gesture of ecstatic delight, sustaining the wholeness so created over the dark abyss of death” (Miller 1982: 192). Clarissa, as a creator of unity, counteracts the destructive movement of clock-time. The “leaden circles” of the clock which “dissolve in the air”, may also be reminiscent of gunfire, as one of the novel's many echoes from the recent war. Peter's thoughts about the clock which “tolled for death that surprised in the midst of life” (54) attribute an eerie sense of *memento mori* to the clock. Death and clock-time are linked to the fear of forgetfulness, as expressed by Clarissa's cries “Remember my party tonight!” (52) when Peter abruptly leaves her, and by Miss Kilman's “Don't quite forget me.” (145) when Elizabeth leaves. The on-going rhythm of the novel is characterized by the dialectic of unity and disparity, life and death.

If Clarissa's party is in fact, as Hillis Miller writes, a raising of the dead, or an event of commemoration, how can Clarissa's strange reaction to the news of Septimus' death be explained? Clarissa has no knowledge that Septimus' suicide was a consequence of war-trauma, but in lack of that fact she attributes an even wider meaning to his demise.

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

This might perhaps strike one as an understatement of Septimus' tragedy. Clarissa builds upon it, projecting her fear of death and forgetfulness into a destiny which, from a distance, might seem “defiant”. Perhaps this is why Clarissa again spontaneously recalls the image of holding her life in her hands:

Then (she had felt it only this morning) there was the terror; the overwhelming incapacity, one's parents giving it into one's hands, this life, to be lived to the end, to be walked with serenely; there was in the depths of her heart an awful fear. (202-3)

The fear also arouses a sense of guilt and duty. Being given a life, Clarissa needs a means of perfecting it, of shaping it as a whole. Having even the prime minister attend her party, Clarissa cannot be reassured enough of whether she succeeds in living, in unifying people and in creating images of perfection. Like Sir William Bradshaw had remarked to Septimus upon

their doctors appointment, “Nobody lives for himself alone” (107), Clarissa indeed lives to create unity in the life of others. The double-sided persona of Clarissa and Septimus is such a person that exists through, among and for others. Unable to continue this kind of existence at the moment of hearing about the suicide, Clarissa withdraws to her room. Besides the final “For there she was” (213), this is the last we hear from Clarissa before the novel ends roughly ten pages later:

She felt somehow very like him – the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away while they went on living. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. But she must go back. She must assemble. She must find Sally and Peter. (204)

Clarissa's temporary withdrawal to her bedroom reinstates subjectivism, the “room of one's own” which we know from Woolf, a space where one encounters oneself, gathers one's consciousness in an interval between actions. Death lurks here too, as the old lady in the window across from Clarissa's bedroom, an apparition, Doppelgänger or *memento mori* that appears in both of the novel's two occasions of Clarissa's temporary withdrawal. To “assemble” and re-enter the party entails becoming a part of that collective which Clarissa feels so organically connected with. The ecstasy that ends the novel marks the point where individuals become less fixated on bodily action and instead achieve the relaxed state of intuition, which spreads “like a mist between the people she knew best” (10). The party is a climax in the dichotomy between the sensations of the private mind, and the commemorative act of a both a private and social body.

Another dualistic trait of *Mrs. Dalloway* is that of the individual and the crowd. In his introduction to Woolf's modernism, Michael Whitworth detects a probable influence from the contemporary French philosophical movement known as *unanimism*, which was concerned with the idea of the collective consciousness of a group, the *one mind*, as opposed to the modernist idea of the individual articulated in Nietzsche's *übermensch*. The seminal thinker in this school, Jules Romain, drew inspiration from Whitman and Bergson as he wrote the novel *Mort de Quelqu'un* (1913), which follows the news of the death of a retired engine driver as it spreads across France. Two friends of the Woolfs, Sydney Waterlow (who reviewed works on and by Bergson) and Desmond MacCarthy, translated *Death of a Nobody* in 1914. Leonard Woolf spoke highly of the novel, as it seemed to display the possibility of writing a novel without a plot (Whitworth 2000: 160). The early scenes in *Mrs. Dalloway* where crowds assemble around the event of the backfiring car and the sky-writing show similar approaches

to the idea of a collective consciousness. The news of Septimus' death reaching the party is similar in that he is also a “nobody”, whose death has caused ripples in the collective consciousness as it disturbs the party, upsetting Clarissa. Septimus' demise is another such event that assembles and unifies the many individual minds into a larger whole.

3.3 “For there she was”: Preliminary conclusion

Woolf indicated in her diary that the ending of *Mrs. Dalloway* was meant to have a unifying function. As Woolf neared the ending of novel, she wrote “There I am now – at last at the party, which is to begin in the kitchen, and climb slowly upstairs. It is to be a most complicated, spirited, solid piece, knitting together everything [...]” (Woolf 1973: 65; Sep 7th 1924). During this gradual contraction of the plot, a sense of closure and completeness arrives on several levels. Indeed it is “complicated”, but as the ending “knits” the novel together, it becomes still more simple and whole. It becomes necessary to ask which ends have been knitted together and which might still be loose, as we trace the several character-exits while Clarissa's party fades out.

The fading social atmosphere as the party comes to an end is compensated by the expansion of the characters' inner lives. The number of guests steadily decreases and the social body comes to rest. The spatial interior of the environment contracts and is replaced by the durational interior of the mind. The remaining guests (Sally and Peter) remark that they feel *more* now than they did when they were young, but not more *clearly*: “But I do not know,’ said Peter Walsh, ‘what I feel.’” (210). The increasing abundance of feeling also implicates a greater well of obscure, unidentifiable feelings. Emotion expands at a rate quicker than what intellect can follow. They now feel “more deeply, more passionately, every year” Peter says, and feeling “goes on increasing in his experience” (212). They can be likened to that “bowl that one fills and fills and fills” (Woolf: 1978: 75) in Woolf's memoirs, as well as the ever-increasing memory of Bergson's philosophy: positive, over-abundant and continuously enriched.

Sally – suddenly referred to as “Lady Rosetter”, in an apparent means of showing her change of status since the days of Bourton – adds the second last line, saying “What does the brain matter [...] compared with the heart?” (Woolf 2000a: 213), when Peter convinces her to

go and talk with Richard, despite her reluctance and her jealousy of Richard's relation with Clarissa. When Sally decides that she wants to follow her heart rather than her brain, it implies a recognition that the brain always seeks to reduce and simplify perceptions, while the heart wishes to inflate their quality. Now Sally may re-encounter that old rival of hers and Peter's.

The significance of recognition is also played upon as a means of wrapping up the plot. The dynamic of character-creation at work in *Mrs. Dalloway* is a literary mode of what Bergson calls “the choice of images” (Bergson 2004: 17-34), namely a means of recognition. Characters arise between the immediacy of matter and their reverberation with memory. “He's not going to recognize *us*” (207), says Sally to Peter when she sees Hugh Whitbread, for he wasn't dramatically involved in the Bourton love-triangle. Peter and Sally ridicule him behind his back, while waiting for Clarissa to return. The legacy of Bourton comes to recognize its current standing in light of its past. This is explicitly made problematic with Richard Dalloway, who had a shorter, less significant role at Bourton, and who in some ways ended the Bourton-days when Clarissa chose him. Immediately before the novel breaks off, Richard is involved in a conspicuous episode of failed recognition, upon seeing his own daughter;

For her [Elizabeth's] father had been looking at her, as he stood talking to the Bradshaws, and he had thought to himself, who is that lovely girl? And suddenly he realised that it was his Elizabeth, and he had not recognized her, she looked so lovely in her pink frock! (212)

As if Elizabeth looked completely different, she surprises her own father. They join each other in a communion of past and present, a recognition of a legacy similar to the final one taking place between Sally, Peter and Clarissa. Past and present unite and create a sense of closure and completeness.

“What is this terror? what is this ecstasy? [...] It is Clarissa, he said. For there she was” (213).

Peter's final statement, a question and an answer, evokes the notion of *anagnorisis*, as both the critical insight of the plot and the event of recognition *par excellence*. It poses the double question of what *Mrs. Dalloway* means, both the character and the novel. And if anyone should see who she really is, how could that be Peter, whom we know to be the novel's most quixotic character?

Despite the large number of characters who appear and exit during the end scene, the only one who stays till the very end is Peter – waiting for Clarissa. Peter can not yet be said to

perceive an actual Clarissa, still only an image of her. The character most distant, most hopelessly in love with Clarissa, actually does recognize what she represents. It is not directly stated anywhere on the last pages that Clarissa in fact reappears before Peter. Instead, the closing line answers to the preceding lines, Peter's question. Clarissa is a container of memories, of the past and both its most terrifying and blissful emotions. At this point, she is only actualized as an image between matter and memory. While Richard fails to recognize his daughters physical appearance in matter, Peter succeeds in recognizing Clarissa's virtual presence in duration. Clarissa's material presence is substituted with an image; Clarissa is indeed "there", as qualities of "terror" and "ecstasy" despite not being there in person. Peter recognizes this, circumventing the negative Clarissa that represents his loss, confrontation, anxiety and humiliation. Peter takes in the atmosphere left over from her successful party, for the party is successful only in retrospect, and it radiates this success with the same aura that Clarissa does; she is now indeed "laid out like a mist between the people she knew best" (10).

The novel reaches a conclusion by answering to itself; Peter asks the grand question ("What is this terror? What is this ecstasy?") and answers it tautologically by referring to the character, phenomenon and novel that Mrs. Dalloway is. The conclusion as such has three levels: Mrs. Dalloway is a woman who lives to create unity in the lives of others; Mrs. Dalloway is Peter's terror and ecstasy of past love; *Mrs. Dalloway* is the narrative that encompasses the social and psychological reality of these characters in form of a novel.

Clarissa "is" not there, she "was" there, indicating a sense of wholeness and *becoming*. The end sentence represents a synthesis of the two reigning temporalities that are contrasted in the novel, as earlier discussed, the Big Ben clock-time and the inner time of the characters. An article on Woolf's Bergsonism observes a "union of the two times" (Gillies 1996: 128), which I claim reaches perhaps no greater union than in this very ending. The "there" refers to an outside, a spatial presence, while "she was" asserts her temporality, her way of being in time, which is only perceived as it passes. This union is what makes everyone remember, re-evaluate and recreate the ever-expanding past within the somewhat ritualistic nature of the party. The end of the novel might answer to the beggar's song of the couple who had walked together in May. On this day in June, all that holds the universe together is the memory of past love.

The memories which permeate the novel's structure don't only remember, but also anticipate. Having waited for the party from the very first page, the “building up” of the plot is intimately structured around both recollection and anticipation. For a novel which spans over a very short space of time and contains very few dramatic incidents (primarily Clarissa's reunion with Peter, his emotional outburst, and Septimus' suicide), the frequent anticipatory references to the upcoming party makes anticipation itself a pivotal dramatic element. The feeling of anticipation has actual consequences for the perception of time. Deleuze uses the effect of this particular emotion as an example, when asserting the following about Bergson's sugar cube:

Bergson's famous formulation, “I must wait until the sugar dissolves” has a still broader meaning than is given to it by its context. It signifies that my own duration, such as I live it in the impatience of waiting, for example, serves to reveal other durations that beat to other rhythms, that differ in kind from mine. (Deleuze 1991: 32)

The myriad of memories, the hustle of London and the impatience of waiting for the party have all served to make the characters recognize durations that beat to other rhythms. The movements and actions of this day have been the continuous actualization of anticipation, sensations and memories. This has led to a coming-to-terms with real duration, which is neither the temporality of Big Ben nor the temporality of a naïve (Peter's) or fractured (Septimus') mind. Real duration lies in the oscillating movement between matter and memory, as seen first and foremost in the temporal landscapes of Rezia and Peter. The ability to recognize durations that are greater than we are normally able to experience in our everyday lives creatively affirms the possibility of a freedom of movement and change. *Mrs. Dalloway* has explored and affirmed ways in which true duration may be accessed. Woolf's next novel goes even further in its exploration of how it may be represented.

4. *To the Lighthouse*

4.1 Context and reception

The increasing interest in Virginia Woolf's authorship became clear when *To the Lighthouse* had sold 1690 copies before its release – more than twice of its predecessor, to which it presumably owed this initial success (Woolf 1973: 105; May 5th 1927). In accordance with Woolf's own feelings about her new novel being an improvement upon her last one, Leonard, Vanessa and all of her Bloomsbury associates immediately praised *To the Lighthouse* as her most supreme achievement yet. Leonard himself apparently used such approving words as “a masterpiece” and “entirely new – 'a psychological poem'” (102; Jan 23rd 1927).

A main tendency in the reception have been biographical readings. Woolf is often cited as the definitive authority on the matter of the novel's meaning and context, as her diaries and memoirs reveal an extremely self-conscious writer. The writing process of this particular novel she described as a final stand against her parents, whom she had not been able to lay at rest in her mind until the writing was complete; “I suppose I did for myself what psychoanalysts do for their patients” (Woolf 1978: 94). The influential contemporary critic F. R. Leavis, who had deep reservations against Woolf's novels, asserted that *To the Lighthouse* was not only Woolf's very best novel, but her only genuinely good one, precisely because it gathered its material directly from lived experience.⁶ Still today any version of *To the Lighthouse* found in any bookstore will cite Woolf on this biographical information on the back of the cover or in the introduction, implicitly encouraging a historical-biographical interpretation.

As a motif, the lighthouse has attracted a lot of allegorical reading; ironically, a considerable amount of the critical reception makes the very error that the novel warns against. In reading the lighthouse as either a phallus or a search for God, one forgets James Ramsay's insight, that “the other was also the Lighthouse. For nothing was simply one thing” (Woolf 2000b: 201). Janet Winston's *Woolf's To the Lighthouse. A Readers Guide* has a remarkably detailed chapter devoted to the many critical tendencies of the novel's reception, remarking that it was this novel which finally sparked curiosity, controversy and debate

⁶ Cited in Beja, M. (1970): *Virginia Woolf To The Lighthouse: A Casebook*.

around Woolf's fiction (Winston 2009: 73-4). One much disputed reading claims the entire meaning can be found through biblical allegory;⁷ another detects patterns compatible to Greek mythology;⁸ a number of critics have taken interest in the novel's Oedipal triangle, opening for Freudian and psychoanalytical symbol interpretation. The last mentioned school finds that "James's hatred for his father and his fantasies of killing him are connected to, in the classic Freudian fashion, his strong attachment to his mother, for whose love and affection he and his father compete" (80).

An initial review in *Times Literary Supplement* makes the interesting remark that "while it [the novel] depends almost entirely on the passing of time, it *expands or contracts the time-sense very freely*" (Majumdar & McLaurin 1975: 193, italics mine). This notion of time is similar to what will be the central object of my reading, in relation to the workings of memory.

A general interest in Woolf's development of the stream of consciousness -device has also generated canonical reading of her novels. With *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf had proved herself a master of style, having brought this technique to perfection while still asserting it as her own true voice. Eric Auerbach's praise for Woolf's achievement did not go unheard when he dedicated the final chapter of his monumental *Mimesis* to a certain scene in *To the Lighthouse*, drawing his detailed analysis from Woolf's multiple layers of narration towards a broader discussion and summary of the western canon's representation of reality.

James Hafley's article-length study "The Creative Modulation of Perspective"⁹ makes a few nods to Bergson, employing terms from *Matter and Memory* while reading some central scenes in the novel, but also makes a number of references to other theoretical fields, as it finds them useful. Inquiries into the novel's dominant theme of *time* have, however, rather been oriented aesthetically than philosophically. The artist personage of Lily Briscoe has made the novel a stepping stone for numerous investigations of Woolf's aesthetics. These have tended to detect the influence of post-impressionism on Woolf through the Bloomsbury group and her close ties with Roger Fry, the front figure of British post-impressionism. One must also not forget that Virginia's sister Vanessa Bell was a painter, who illustrated the first edition covers of numerous of her sister's works. Woolf in fact used to write standing when living at

7 Overcash, F. L. (1950) "The Lighthouse, Face to Face"

8 Blotner, Joseph L. (1956) "Mythic Patterns in To the Lighthouse"

9 In: Hafley, J. (1954) *The glass roof: Virginia Woolf as novelist*.

Rodmell, so that she could step back from the pages like a painter steps back from her easel, to get a clearer view. It remains to investigate how such shifts in perspective are rendered in the novel itself.

4. 2 Analysis

4. 2. 1 “The Window”

4. 2. 1. 1 Time and perspective

The lighthouse immediately becomes the discursive centre when each character in turn presents a reason or comment on whether they should voyage to the lighthouse the following day or not. The voyage becomes postponed due to bad weather, nevertheless leaving the question of *postponed until when* as one of the novel's central points of tension. The sight of the lighthouse through the dining-room window, as a visible yet unreachable point in space, invites allegorical reading: it embodies James' unfulfilled wish, Lily's failure at artistic representation, Mr. Ramsay's lack of access to objective truth, and Mrs. Ramsay's hopes and dreams for her children's future lives. The lighthouse functions in a manner reminiscent of Kafka's castle: it stays perpetually inaccessible, yet visible in the horizon, through a window or a veil of fog. In this sense, the novel's title might be read both as a future journey and an address, a promise (of progress) which might not be kept.

A certain view on childhood is evoked when six-year-old James Ramsay's (the youngest character) enormous expectations barely are put forth before they are shattered. His mother promises him they will go to the lighthouse the following day, while his father outright denies it, a trip to which James “had looked forward, for years and years it seemed” (Woolf 2000b: 7). An extensive commentary on childhood is put forward already in these first sentences, when James' longing to visit the lighthouse makes him belong

... to that great clan which cannot keep this feeling separate from that, but must let future prospects, with their joys and sorrows, cloud what is actually at hand, since to such people even in earliest childhood any turn in the wheel of sensation has the power to crystallize and transfix the moment upon which its gloom or radiance rests ... (7)

James seems essentially differentiated from his older family members. His perceptions demand more, yet have a right to less, and are as such unstable. He lacks the emotional maturity which resists massive variations in mood like those which arise when denied the fulfilment of a strong wish. His sensitive consciousness is seeped with perceptions and expectations in a fragile stream which doesn't separate this from that, and as such is both direct and disordered at the same time. The wait James feels has lasted for years is attributed

to his young age. In childhood, fewer memories and recognitions impoverish perceptions at hand, bringing the child's psychologically perceived time, or, duration closer to *pure perception*, a more contracted, eventful and qualitative state, where he is more firmly attached to present reality, less fixated in concepts and ideas. Time might not actually move slower for James than anyone else, rather time is less conceptualized, and when a promise is made, James' lack of conceptualized clock-time will make the waiting time seem extensive. The high pace of movement and change in James' duration makes anything seem possible to him – the lighthouse might seem only a day's voyage away at one moment, eternally unreachable at the next.

This naïvety of childhood is at once contrasted to the firm rationality of Mr. Ramsay, who makes sure that his children “should be aware from childhood that life is difficult” because “one needs, above all, courage, truth, and the power to endure” (8). This introduces Mr. Ramsay's general melancholy, yet simultaneously a loving responsibility, as if his children might evade life's disappointments if they learn as early as possible. His sharp presence functions as an anti-sentimental force, counteracting the potential ecstasies of his children and the sensitivity of his wife. Ramsay perceives duration at it's most dilated, close to *pure memory*, where movement and change is resisted (not blocked) by solid virtuality, imprisonment in memory (rigid concepts and ideas), a kind of repetitive dream world where habit reigns with a few select images. He is “incapable of untruth” (8) as objects appear to him only through his preconceptions, which impoverish perception and diminish the infinity of matter. The idea of voyaging to the lighthouse seems incompatible with his world of uncompromising facts.

Abriding James' and Mr. Ramsay's antithetical relation is the novel's heroine, Mrs. Ramsay, desperately (yet discreetly) attempting to fulfill everyone's wishes at once, knowing how her son is shattered with disappointment while her husband's rule of law cannot be contradicted. She recognizes the evanescent, ever-changing nature of things; she intimately knows the forces which separate and connect the past with the present. Her creative intelligence makes her capable of pondering how dreadful it would be to be locked up in the lighthouse, never being able to see anyone else, perpetually torn between boredom and fear. With her creativity, she embodies the lighthouse that James longs for and Ramsay denies. She decides that “one must take whatever comforts one can” (9). Filling the space between naïve abundance and sterile rationality, Mrs. Ramsay, while knitting a stocking for the little boy of

the lighthouse keeper, embodies unification through an imaginative act. Mrs. Ramsay too lives in a dream world, but hers is entirely different from her husband's, though influenced by him. She actively draws on her own memory through independent recollections to represent imagined scenarios, like how miserably bored the lighthouse keeper and his son must be. Mrs. Ramsay is selfless, curious and caring in all her images of other people, even those she dislikes. Together with her husband (the philosopher) and Lily Briscoe (the artist) she becomes a central perspective in the novel, remaining even after she is gone. The other characters in the story are more susceptible to Mrs. Ramsay's images than anyone else's, and as such she becomes not only the symbolic painter of the novel's first section, but also a central motif, like the lighthouse itself.

We realize that subjective stance or personal philosophy determines duration rather than vice versa. Though a more mature person should be more capable of decision in regard to his or her world view, duration might also act like a container one grows into. Memories are decisive for acting upon matter (the world) and *To the Lighthouse* agrees that one's upbringing is susceptible to determine one's world view to a large extent. In cases like Alzheimer's, we see the faltering contact between matter and memory, making perceptions less recognizable, short-term memory less consistent, and action more demanding. In a healthy old person, memory-determined action may have become habit to the extent that matter is only perceived through the narrowness of habits. Mrs. Ramsay has created different images than her husband, projecting love, growth and marriage on the other characters whenever she can, keeping herself at bay. She seems to cherish the present like she cherishes the past. Anything or anyone acquires true meaning through her images – she connects the present to the past and projects the present onto the future to see any image take shape as a whole.

4. 2. 1. 2 A Ramsay who differs from himself

William Bankes gives one of very few insights into a different Mr. Ramsay than that rock-hard father and failed philosopher he is primarily characterized as. A brief glimpse is given into his character when Bankes, gazing at the local landscape with Lily Briscoe, imagines Ramsay walking along a road by himself. A scene suddenly flashes before Bankes' eyes. He supposes it is an actual memory, of him and Ramsay walking along a country road many years ago, observing a hen nestling her chicks with straddling wings:

[...] this was suddenly interrupted, William Bankes remembered (and this must refer to some actual incident), by a hen, straddling her wings out in protection of a covey of little chicks, upon which Ramsay, stopping, pointed his stick and said 'Pretty – pretty,' an odd illumination into his heart, Bankes thought it, which showed his simplicity, his sympathy with humble things; but it seemed to him as if their friendship had ceased, there, on that stretch of road. (25)

This “illumination into his heart”, which adds depth to Ramsay's character, shows how a person qualitatively differs from himself in duration. Bankes sees such a different Ramsay that it leads him to think that “their friendship had ceased, there” with a person of a difference kind.

The recollected impression seems to take Bankes by surprise, as if his old friend had been buried. Bankes can't decide to which degree his imagination might have intermingled with the original event and so chooses to reject the involuntary memory. Bankes has acquired an image of Ramsay and their friendship which he prefers, without being conscious of the image selection itself (which Bergson would attribute to perception's sensory-motor mechanisms) – contrary to Lily, whose conflict with her own memories will later be discussed. Memory has put the ideal at a safe distance. Nowadays, Bankes considers that the purpose of their relation is repetition: “It was to repeat that they met” (26).

Though Bankes devalues their present relation in comparison to the friendship they once seem to have had, he still admires Ramsay. Because “repetition had taken the place of newness” (26), Bankes asks himself if Ramsay isn't now much more like the hen with the chickens, having a house full of children. This might have put an oddly sentimental end to Ramsay's personal growth after he married: the implied question is whether Mr. Ramsay's career and personality could have evolved without marriage, or if marriage and raising children is a restraint to his personal ambition.

Accompanying Bankes on this walk, we must remember, is Lily Briscoe, who remains the main contender in the marriage discourse throughout the novel, constantly measuring herself against Mrs. Ramsay. We see constellations taking shape in these (inter-)generational pairs: the fulfilled yet fragile Ramsay-couple in discussion with the would-be couple of Briscoe and Bankes. Woolf's prose seems to distrust her own feminist, anti-Victorian edge when neither of these characters admits to having found life's solutions beyond marriage. Sixty-year-old Bankes is widowed and completely self absorbed; Lily is unable to lead a life without feeling she is standing in someone else's shadow; Ramsay is already lamenting his

failure to leave something in the world by which it will remember him. If anyone, Mrs. Ramsay is the one who has reached any kind of acceptance and recognition. She is the most fulfilled, perhaps most *complete* character in the story. This central point of tension will be further discussed in the last section when Mrs. Ramsay has passed and the other characters' attempts at consolidation will be brought full circle.

4. 2. 1. 3 Recollection as artistic practice: sketching the Ramsays

Criticism has had much to deal with regarding Lily's painting and "vision", since *To the Lighthouse* demonstrates how perception itself can be a mode of artistic vision. What is going on in the scenes where Lily tries to capture on a canvas what the reader tries to capture in the narrative? Do we accept Lily's artistic vision as autonomous, or do the creative ambitions of the author seem to slip through the pages? Lily is in many ways the exemplary reader of the novel itself. Lily has the poetic insight that the other characters lack and which at the same time is not barred from her like it is from the reader, who exclusively has access through the narrative. If Lily's painting is an attempt to provide herself with access to the nature of things, which she then offers to the reader as an entrance to the novel, the lines and limits of this attempt must be established. Lily's painting demands a response to the discourse of recollection as artistic practise and the limits thereof, in light of Bergson.

In the story, Lily is reduced by the other characters (and because of them, slightly by herself too) to someone who experiments with painting as a trivial hobby only. Lily's ever-diminishing confidence in herself intermingles with and soon becomes a diminishing confidence in the possibilities of representation. Despite the negative discourse on painting, the narrative repeatedly reaches its aesthetic climaxes through Lily's distinct artistic perception. Though every character's consciousness is narrated with a high degree of impressionistic detail through the narrator's own artistic vision, Lily is given the voice of the artist-personage, who perceives events and surroundings with an image-like quality. Lily's understanding of interpersonal relations is also a facet of her artistic mentality, when she interprets Bankes' affection for Mrs. Ramsay as a kind of love which is "distilled and filtered; love that never attempted to clutch its object; but, like the love which mathematicians bear their symbols, or poets their phrases, was meant to be spread over the world and become part of all human gain. So it was indeed" (53). Her high awareness of social dynamics might

suggest why she remains unmarried, seeking union only through art – her approach to things must always keep them at a safe distance, where she can see them as an eternal ideal, a reassuring contrast to human life and relations.

Lily's self-consciousness places her in a shadow, a position of indebtedness, like an apology towards the man she will not marry and the children she will not bear. She is supposed to (artistically) affirm the myth of family at the same time as she denies this myth to unfold in her own life. Her attempt to paint both portrait and landscape on the same canvas poses a serious difficulty; how can she place a tree next to Mrs. Ramsay and James; moreover, how will she incorporate the lighthouse? Representing the family myth through barely-recognizable shapes (“a purple shadow without irreverence”, 59) puts the family at a distance from her, while allowing her to remember them since she cannot abandon them completely. Her artistic practice lies between personal homage and involuntary duty, as she thinks while struggling and arguing with Bankes during her attempt at painting: “Her tribute took that form, if, as she vaguely supposed, a picture must be a tribute” (59). She wishes to make a tribute, but then is confronted with the formal necessities of what a tribute “must be”. Bankes' authoritative, physical presence behind Lily, Lily's trembling figure behind the canvas, the canvas on an easel behind a landscape, house and family which seem quite impossible to capture in their entirety, together represent the three-fold tension that stirs throughout *TL*. Subjective perception, objective reality and interpersonal relations are blurred into that impressionist canvas which Lily simultaneously creates and distrusts, where Mrs. Ramsay and her son (to the dismay of Bankes) are represented merely by a triangular, purple shape.

Lily might seem to agree with Bergson regarding the impoverishment of perception in contrast to the intensity of life. Bergson writes: “[T]o perceive consists in condensing enormous periods of an infinitely diluted existence into a few more differentiated moments of an intenser life, and in thus summing up a very long history. To perceive means to immobilize” (Bergson 2004: 275). The immobilization might also be said to take place in artistic practice, when Lily is confronted with the impossibility of conveying life's intensity. Painting becomes, for Lily, a lesson in remembering and perceiving.

In this sense, selection and rejection of elements in artistic composition simulate perception's “choice of images” (27) in which Bergson asserts that all representations of matter must be reductive. *To the Lighthouse* attributes the same limitation to artistic practice.

One must stand back from the text, while Lily stands back from her easel, and admit defeat to the problem of representation. At the same time, paradoxically, the reader might remember that among all the novels in Woolf's oeuvre, there can be little doubt that the composition of *To the Lighthouse* stands out as her greatest attempt at artistic perfection. What Lily does when she blurs the Ramsay family into a purple triangle (her making of a scene in front of her), and what Woolf does when she writes her childhood vacations at St. Ives into a novel, is at once a reductive and creative act of recollection. Perceptions and recollections are condensed into an immobilized form where it may stay put.

4. 2. 1. 4 Mrs. Ramsay and the dialectic of childhood and adulthood

While reading *The Fisher King* (a Grimm fairytale) for her youngest son James before putting him to bed, Mrs. Ramsay's mind wanders off, skimming through various trivial thoughts and conversations from earlier on that day. The employment of stream of consciousness brilliantly demonstrates the mind's capacity to read and think simultaneously, showing how mood, memory, perception and spontaneous/trivial phenomena extend through the layers of the mind. Mrs. Ramsay thinks about each of her children, about her adolescent daughters and whether they will marry, and lastly about Cam and James, the youngest of her eight children.

Her evening temper seems to settle on the less complex lives of the youngest kids, in their lack of such looming issues as career, independence and marriage. Though she claims to be reading and thinking "quite easily, both at the same time" (Woolf 2000b: 63), the childish simplicity of the nursery rhymes seems to seep into her consciousness. The entwined act of reading and thinking is softening her thoughts, while the text being read is transmitting its gentle, docile tone. As a result of this, Mrs. Ramsay associates this with childhood itself, and concludes in wishing her children an endless share of this comfort:

Oh, but she never wanted James to grow a day older or Cam either. These two she would have liked to keep for ever just as they were, demons of wickedness, angels of delight, never to see them grow up into long-legged monsters. Nothing made up for the loss. (64)

A transference is taking place between the text of Mrs. Ramsay's automatic reading and the conscious thoughts she has. She cherishes her children's naïvety as if for a moment it were her own. But what "loss" is there to be made up for? She elaborates on this sporadically until the

end of the chapter, reminiscing how the simplest things would fill her children with joy for days. Her children possess an image of happiness that Mrs. Ramsay fears losing:

And, touching his hair with her lips, she thought, he will never be so happy again, but stopped herself, remembering how it angered her husband that she should say that. Still, it was true. They were happier now than they would ever be again. (65)

Unable to resign herself to that mild complacency of childhood, her consciousness counteracts it with sentimental views of what life becomes in adulthood, with such melodramatic conceptions as “love and ambition and being wretched alone in dreary places” (67), echoing her sombre fantasy of being locked up in the lighthouse. In reaction, she rejects *the loss* altogether as nonsense, leaving it at “They will be perfectly happy” (67). Now she attempts to settle the problem by drawing a full circle, implicitly stating how this is her motivation for telling people to get married and have children, that bringing a child into the world provides the greatest escape for someone who has lost their childhood themselves. This may be the reason why she pressures her oldest daughter to marry – fear of ageing.

Having momentarily resolved her nervous fantasies, Mrs. Ramsay finishes the story for James, seeing a genuine wonder in his eyes. But then, as the house keeper (Mildred) comes to fetch him, Mrs. Ramsay’s sentiment has still not come to rest, as she imagines James’ disappointment:

In a moment he would ask her, ‘Are we going to the Lighthouse?’ And she would have to say, ‘No: not to-morrow; your father says not.’ Happily, Mildred came in to fetch them, and the bustle distracted them. But he kept looking back over his shoulder as Mildred carried him out, and she was certain that he was thinking, we are not going to the Lighthouse to-morrow; and she thought, he will remember that all his life. (67)

Although James does not express his disappointment explicitly, Mrs. Ramsay is not just imagining it – echoing the novel’s opening scene, James’ disappointment is also *recalled*, recognized from a past moment which coexists with the present. Any image, whether we call it a perception or a memory, has an uneven amount of both in it.

Mrs. Ramsay’s anxious image of James’ disappointment is precisely such a compound of perceived and remembered reality. Not only James, but Mrs. Ramsay too will remember that all her life, as she goes on chanting throughout the chapter, “Children don’t forget, children don’t forget” (70). Her mechanical repetition is unconscious, involuntary, and she reproaches herself when she slips that “We are in the hands of the Lord” (70). Mrs. Ramsay seems to be dealing with issues on a deeper psychological level. Perhaps the act of reading for

her son has a certain meditative or even hypnotic effect, so when we follow her thoughts they become less grounded and contracted, more virtual and relaxed. The reappearing image of disappointment (as memory) extends into a past coexisting with the present. All her consciousness is directly concerned with self-reproach, blaming herself for her son's disappointment.

As mentioned earlier, the amount of different processes operating simultaneously in Mrs. Ramsay's consciousness through the course of this chapter displays Woolf's stream of consciousness as a fitting device to represent duration. In regard to Bergson, this chapter also shows us the multiplicity of duration while matter and memory intermingle. Let us attempt to observe this coming together between matter and memory, at a scene in which Lily and Mrs. Ramsay are both inside and outside of representation, both represented and representing, both elements of composition as well as the composers thereof. To which extent is a character present in matter or in memory? How do we account for a presence in a scene where those who take part do so merely to a certain degree, partially attending the scene as a physical presence, partially as a consciousness spread across a distant array of places in memory? And in precisely who's memory?

The concrete action taking place, little as it may be, consists of Cam almost knocking down Lily's easel as Lily paints Mrs. Ramsay reading for James outside their summer house. Cam's near accident with Lily's painting is emblematic of the child's direct presence in opposition to the adult's sentimental mind-wandering, be it the attempt at remembering a scene or the attempt at painting one: the adult is never actually *being* present in a scene like a child, but passively takes part like a blot of colour on a canvas. Yet Mrs. Ramsay's reaction to Cam's restless running around is asking "What was she dreaming about" (61), wondering if her intense play is caused by something in her childish imagination, a "vision" or a "fairy kingdom" or any generic children's fantasy she can think of. Mrs. Ramsay cannot fathom that the cause of Cam's intensity of life is merely the direct presence of the perceived surrounding world.

However, intensity in the life of a child is not stirred alone by overwhelming perceptions unbridled by memory: movement and change are always a twofold dynamic, also in young age. Though Cam apparently interacts with the present surroundings in a more real and direct manner, her perceptions are equally as shaped by memory as by matter, or, equally

by the virtual as by the actual. In order to perceive the fantastic landscapes surrounding their summer house, Cam's duration counteracts these impressions with complementary impressions from whatever her memory might be filled with so far; fairy kingdoms or a few learned facts about nature, literature or dreams, a myriad of previous impressions jumbled and reinforced, now without logical order or sense, yet extremely sensory and fantastic. Mrs. Ramsay later picks up this idea of the child's duration again, when she comments that "one's children so often gave one's own perceptions a little thrust forwards" (88).

A point of grounded action in this scene is Mrs. Ramsay's act of reading aloud. But while the telling of a fairytale might be seen as action, this same action (immersing oneself and/or others in fiction) implies a loss of grounded connection with the immediate surroundings: even James' young mind is sent far away from the present, as his mother observes when she concludes the tale and his far flung attention reappears, turning from the tale to the memory of being denied the trip to the lighthouse. Their real surroundings manifest themselves only as a brief glimpse through the virtual, when the flashes of light from the lighthouse beautifully re-ground the stream of consciousness again, as Mrs. Ramsay witnesses:

... she saw in his eyes, as the interest of the story died away in them, something else take its place; something wondering, pale, like the reflection of a light, which at once made him gaze and marvel. Turning, she looked across the bay, and there, sure enough, coming regularly across the waves first two quick strokes and then one long steady stroke, was the light of the Lighthouse. (68)

The quoted paragraph might be taken as an emblem of how continuity is recognized (not established, for there is always continuity, though it escapes observation) between matter and memory through rhythmic intervals, quick strokes or short flashes of landscape in the background of individual character portraits. They are glimpses of the actual world reappearing behind or between the incessant dramas of the characters' consciousnesses. Their presence becomes clear only, as Mrs. Ramsay puts it, when "now and again we rise to the surface and that is what you see us by" (69), or, as Lily poetically phrases it later, like "matches struck unexpectedly in the dark" (176).

4. 2. 1. 5 “Something ... immune from change”

Mrs. Ramsay echoes herself when talking about her daughter Minta and the man she hopes will marry her, Paul Rayley. While they explain to Mrs. Ramsay that they went looking for a missing brooch on the beach, they use the word “We” a number of times, reinforcing Mrs. Ramsay's hopes for a future union. She then echoes herself: “‘We’ did this, ‘we’ did that. They’ll say that for all their lives, she thought ...” (109). But why does Mrs. Ramsay insist on people doing or saying or remembering something for *the rest of their lives*?

Mrs. Ramsay seems to find a comforting notion of control, of a certain knowledge, in asserting that some things will not cease to be, but will keep repeating themselves, some things will endure beyond herself in someone else's duration. Mrs. Ramsay's hopeful belief in endurance is itself of a repetitive, rhythmic nature, as she iterates this image of endurance throughout the entire section. This is just as much an attempt at control as an act of creation, reshaping an idea through duration into a whole. The tense and insistent repetition displays however that endurance and duration are antithetical ideas – permanence versus incessant change. Mrs. Ramsay just as much as any other character in *To the Lighthouse* wishes to create something durable and permanent, to solidify a human relation by uniting her daughter and Mr. Rayley in marriage. The slippery state of her own marriage paradoxically defeats the idea of marriage as something immune from change. Evidently, endurance is not found in the materiality of a brooch nor the concept of a marital union, but in the human heart itself, since “one must take whatever comforts one can” (9).

Towards the end of the first section of the book, Mrs. Ramsay's and Lily Briscoe's characters more clearly take on the outlines of each others' doubles. It now becomes even more clear that one of the novel's main themes is that of successful creation and artistic perfection, as the two lead characters seek to shape the present moment only to see it become a memory of the past. First I will focus on Mrs. Ramsay's memory-shaping at the dinner party, before I go on to comparing it with Lily's defeat as she watches the same party coming to an end. Again, Woolf constructs a tableau which lends itself to be read as a miniature of the story as a whole, a play-within-the-play served up through a single character's (Mrs. Ramsay's) train of thought as she perceives and partakes in the novel's central (yet commonplace) event: the dinner party.

There it was, all round them. It partook, she felt, carefully helping Mr. Bankes to a specially tender piece, of eternity; as she had already felt about something different once before that

afternoon; there is a coherence in things, a stability; something, she meant, is immune from change, and shines out (she glanced at the window with its ripple of reflected lights) in the face of the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral, like a ruby, so that again to-night she had the feeling she had had once to-day already, of peace, of rest. Of such moments, she thought, the thing is made that remains for ever after. This would remain.

'Yes,' she assured William Bankes, 'there is plenty for everybody.' (114)

Mrs. Ramsay's image of eternity seems on a par with Bergson's notion of duration, though completely opposite to the notion of being "immune from change", since incessant change is a principle of duration. The past is eternally preserved in duration, and as Mrs. Ramsay observes with her exceptional intuition, the mind can recognize the transition between past and present. If the passing of time is to be explained at all, it is through images of "the ripple of reflected lights" she sees shining through the window, completely "flowing" and "fleeting". Mrs. Ramsay's complacency is brought on by her successful management of the moment, including everyone in it, dishing out to them piece by piece what is at once a meal and a moment, of which there is "plenty for everybody". She has created a scene that will remain in the memory of everyone who participates. Their communion with the present unites them as people and characters, and envelops the moment in something they will remember.

After dinner, Lily has an elegiac epiphany as she witnesses a scene while it dissolves in duration:

With her foot on the threshold she waited a moment longer in a scene which was now vanishing even as she looked, and then, moved and took Minta's arm and left the room, it changed, it shaped itself differently; it had become, she knew, giving one last look at it over her shoulder, already the past. (121)

Lily then sees Mrs. Ramsay vanishing upstairs on her own, and asks herself why she seems to be hurrying. The following paragraph makes no explicit turn from Lily's consciousness to Mrs. Ramsay's. It first becomes clear a page later, due to the latter's continued pondering on Minta and Paul's union, that the consciousness we have been following must suddenly have become Mrs. Ramsay's, no longer Lily's. The confusion arises not only from the unmarked shift in focalization, but also in the similarity in trains of thought: Mrs. Ramsay is evaluating the dinner, trying to pin-point the event, to "pick out one particular thing, the thing that

mattered; to detach it; separate it off” (122) in order to decide how it had turned out. The scene is past, but not yet complete, not yet matured as memory.

Then, Mrs. Ramsay “unconsciously and incongruously, used the branches of the elm trees outside to help stabilize her position. Her world was changing: they were still. The event had given her a sense of movement” (122). The materiality of the tree effectively regrounds Mrs. Ramsay after the “sense of movement” that all the phenomena of the event have washed over her. These thoughts might as well have been expressed by Lily while contemplating the composition of her canvas again. Like Lily, Mrs. Ramsay seeks material appearances for order to arise. The material world seems more stable than the sensations of the mind. The elm tree does indeed assist Mrs. Ramsay in shaping the memory as a whole: she observes its steadfast appearance, then she recollects the event “cleared of chatter and emotion, it seemed always to have been, only was shown now, and so being shown struck into stability” (122). An event thus restored and stabilized, she is confident that everyone involved will remember it: in fact she implies that the memory will outlive her, that she in a sense has immortalized the evening. A part of her successful creation is other people's memories, that they will “never forget”. The success of the party stands out as a memorial triumph for the Woolfian character, as I have more extensively discussed in my reading of *Mrs. Dalloway*.

The aforementioned passage is among the most unmistakable showcases of Bergsonism in *To the Lighthouse*. At the height of her artistic sensibility, Lily momentarily transcends the spatial conception of time and witnesses duration. The scene that “changed” and “shaped itself differently” is a scene that differs from itself qualitatively. What is witnessed as it becomes the past is exactly what Deleuze describes in Bergsonian terms; the past as virtually coexisting with the present; the past as all that really *is*; the present as always *becoming* (Deleuze 1991: 55). On this note, the Ramsay family brings the day to an end, closing the first section of the novel as they go to bed. In the following section, *becoming* will permeate all sense of movement and instability, as ten years pass with an extraordinary pace.

4. 2. 2 “Time Passes”

4. 2. 2. 1 What is “Time Passes”?

“Time Passes” poses a serious challenge to the traditional idea of the novel more than any other part of *To the Lighthouse*. The sudden shift in style and perspective suggests that narration is leaving the characters – or rather, narration is staying at the house while the characters leave, allowing them ephemeral appearances only in a few short, bracketed sentences. At the house, narration follows the movements of winds, bugs, flowers, clothing, woodwork, light and air. It perceives merely the stirring of “nothing” and the occasional household activities of the housekeeper Mrs. McNab, as she regularly attends to cleaning and maintenance. How does one reconcile the notion of duration with this section, in which there hardly seems to be a dominant perspective other than the ghostly half-presence of the narrator? How do we analyse and characterise the narrative perception in a text segment where there is no predominant character or character consciousness, more or less no mind to perceive matter and no memory to intermingle with perception?

Woolf's and Bergson's reciprocal interest in the cross-section of subjective experience and objective reality has already been discussed in “The Window”, the theme Andrew Ramsay describes as “Subject and object and the nature of reality” (28) when Lily Briscoe asks about Mr. Ramsay's books. The following, middle section of the novel indeed appears to stand at something like a cross-section itself, in between the novel's two-day duration: the day on which the lighthouse-trip is promised, and the day a decade later when the trip is fulfilled. Or perhaps this section invites us to compare the structure of the novel with that of a wave, first building up (plot, setting and characters), then breaking (avoiding plot, killing off characters) and finally contracting and pulling back into the ocean (remaining characters return to a different setting).

Of the several ways in which “Time Passes” can be said to resemble and anticipate *The Waves*, the most predominant might be how narration is swept by the movements of fleeting time and nature, or, by duration between fragmented statements and abrupt silences. “Time Passes” might appear to have been devoted to nature rather than to people, narration outlining landscapes rather than portraits, movement stirred by weather and seasons, not by dialogue or action. My close-reading will investigate the complex dialectic of narration at work here, which cannot be defined as simply subjective nor objective.

This middle-section, by far the novel's shortest, functions like a chorus which attempts to comment, interpret and explain, and which links together the plot of the first and the last sections by fragmented summary of certain character-related events in between. The notion of the chorus (*chorós*) as a collective voice seems to be apt here, offering insights which cannot be given by the perceiving and acting characters themselves. "Time Passes" is certainly the most lyrical section of *To the Lighthouse*, not only by the musical quality of language but also in its high attention to the themes of nature and time, while dwelling on details and how they resonate with other established images in the novel. Indeed, the story here becomes more of an image than a narrative, as ten years pass with only minimal reference to plot-advancing action while the summer house is painted on an impressionist-style canvas where traditional representation is melted into duration. Perhaps the narrator has picked up the incomplete canvas which Lily left behind. As a singer of this chorus, the voice questioning the house's endurance against the passing of time, the narrator will be discussed below.

Finally, "Time Passes" may also be treated as an interval receptacle (*khôra*), a spatial matrix in a fleeting, non-fixed state, strictly in-between states, as described in Plato's *Timaeus*, where ideal or phenomenal forms inaugurally take place before existing in full and symbolically (Plato 2012: 10). Julia Kristeva's understanding of the *khôra* also evokes the theme of a maternal, primordial and semiotic state through which creativity and femininity are paired, which "is analogous only to a vocal or kinetic rhythm" (Kristeva 1984: 26). The *khôra* anticipates events but gives them no set form, it eludes subject and object and has no symbolic representation or direction. Deleuze discusses recollection similarly, though not as *khôra*, but as a mode of subjectivity in Bergsonism. Recollection is "what comes to fill the interval", the interval being the moment of indetermination between perceiving matter and acting upon it with memory. The subjective interval arrives after the introduction of an object, before the object is actualized; "the primary aspect of memory" is to enter the interval to allow for action upon matter (Deleuze, 1991: 53). This should allow us to read the section more specifically, if we single out the house-motif as an interval "receptacle" instead of treating the entire text. For there *are* passages in this section which evade the characteristics of the interval, but the house itself is insistently written as a something like a pre-original yet inaugural void, something left behind, in a sense empty, yet in process, awaiting phenomenal action. Reading the house as an receptacle evades logical thought and oscillates between matter and memory.

We might understand “Time Passes” as negation, something pre-positive, conditioning action, perhaps anticipating the climax of the novel's last section. The ruling forces in “Time Passes” might seem oblitative and oblivious, disintegrating all that was positively and symbolically created in the preceding section, like a negation of Bergson's idea of duration as a clear-cut *creative* principle (however, the criticism of negation put forward in *Creative Evolution* suggests not a void, but an almost platonic realm of possibility – the heterogeneous character of duration does not let one thing negate another, but allows all to coexist). Endorsing or devaluing already set and detailed ideas of destruction and creation is of little relevance in duration. Movement and change tend to both oppositions of contraction/creation and dilution/destruction continuously, though unequally portioned; “Time Passes” doubtlessly focuses on the last mentioned tendency. Here, matter is more dominating than memory, the house is torn and dissolved through a duration which lacks subjective recollection. With no subject to enfold and circumscribe this duration with its memory, time passes at an incomprehensible pace. With no character subject to perceive the passing of these ten years, closer investigation of Woolf's narrative device must be pursued in order to determine the point of perspective, and to discuss how textual meaning can arise from such conditions.

4. 2. 2. 2 “Life as it is when we have no part in it”¹⁰

Initially, narration picks up exactly where it left in the previous section: Each of the house's visitors has gone to bed. They sleep safely in their beds, and the house already seems left empty, since no one is interacting with it any more. No account is given of them leaving the house, but it becomes clear as things start to wither away at a pace that indicates the house's abandonment – it is as if their falling asleep implied a complete withdrawal of human presence. Suddenly, the Ramsays' summer house fades, while *no one* is striving to perceive or remember it – a specific emphasis is put on the presence of “no one”, “nothing” and “nothingness” (Woolf 2000b: 137-138) as night creeps into the empty rooms and the house seems to take on a life of its own with its furniture, walls, doors, garments, pottery, and various inventory slowly disintegrating by the pressure of “nothing”.

10 From Woolf's essay “The Cinema”, in *Collected Essays II*. London: Hogarth, 1966 (267–272).

The obliterative force does, however, have a voice – one that questions. As it enters and stirs through the house, it asks some of the objects whether they will “fade” or “fall”, whether they are “enemies” or “allies” (but of whom? we might add), and for how long they will “endure”. These forces may, however paradoxical, be described as an apparition of nothingness, yet with a voice, which tries on and forsakes various shapes. This voice enters the house rhythmically, primarily as a dance of light and air; secondarily, it takes on new shapes as the air brings movement to dust, grains of sand, flapping wall-paper, sea-moistened woodwork, slamming doors, etc. – gradually gaining material presence, though never retaining any shape for more than a brief moment. A light that emanates “from some uncovered star, or wandering ship, or the Lighthouse even” (138), simply brings back into view and observation what night had covered into obscurity, though these lights reflect a radically different reality compared to what daylight shows.

This lyrical passage, the second chapter of “Time Passes”, serves to transform the world of daylight which has until now been displayed in “The Window”, bringing forth a different sphere which counteracts and balances the taken-for-granted clarity and sternness of daytime living. It reminds us that night-time fathoms an obscurity of greater depth; darkness is more than the black, two-dimensional canvas as it appears to human eyes. There is perspective beyond the illusion of flatness. Obscurity is not lifted as by sunlight, yet is dived into. There is no mystical realm of dreams and symbols in this night, but all the more subtle forces, small changes and gentle movements of duration which prove – and now beyond doubt creatively – that though they may seem more quiet and restful, these forces are always intensely at work. Night-time and moonlight, typically associated with femininity, are made visible and sayable *as such*, in a poetic manner, without succumbing to the personal mechanisms of consciousness in any individual character. Character is forsaken, expelled to short, bracketed descriptions while this other voice takes the lead somewhere *between* the characters and the restless, reshaping material activities of duration. Vision is adjusted to the darkness.

A direct, un-encoded confrontation with landscape is represented in this chapter. When “those sliding lights, those fumbling airs” (138) enter the bedrooms, they are denied the right to “touch or destroy” (138) the sleepers in the beds, to which the forces respond by gently creasing the blankets on top of the sleepers before they respectfully retreat and continue to permeate the house itself instead. A special priority is given to the living, there suddenly again

seems to be a hierarchy, for as soon as the bedroom doors are reached, the forces “must cease. Whatever else may perish and disappear, what lies here is steadfast” (138). The nothingness thus must have *something* which makes it less indifferent to the living than to the material. Perhaps reminiscent of that vital force (*élan vital*) which Bergson believed was the essential difference between lifeless matter and organic life, the original life-impulse might be what lies here as a barrier between the seemingly destructive yet indifferent forces of duration and the sleepers in the summer house. But the essential difference might not be located to the sleepers alone, since the forces also question objects on their durability, duration and their friendship (“questioning [...] the torn letters in the wastepaper basket, the flowers, the books, all of which were open to them and now asking, Were they allies? Were they enemies? How long would they endure?” 138).

The forces and this voice seem to question with a mind of their own. We are likely to read the action of questioning as an affirmation of tension, of causing stress and resistance from an extrinsic body – the forces do, after all, “rub” and “creep” and “brush” against things, they actively wear on and wear out the surroundings, as the chapter concludes,

At length, desisting, all ceased together, gathered together, all sighed together; all together gave off an aimless gust of lamentation to which some door in the kitchen replied; swung wide; admitted nothing; and slammed to. (139)

Accordingly, the house seems governed primarily by extrinsic forces, slowly moulded, dis- and reintegrated by them while the sleepers are primarily maintained by their intrinsic forces, the life impulse, perhaps autonomous, resistant. Nevertheless, we have from Bergson that the intrinsic principle of movement and change does also apply to matter – material as well as organic: both life and materiality are qualities of duration. Deleuze offers insight on the workings of duration in matter: “Movement is undoubtedly explained by the insertion of duration into matter: Duration is differentiated according to the obstacles it meets in matter, according to the materiality through which it passes, according to the kind of extension that it contracts” (Deleuze, 1991: 94).

Even though duration is differentiated according to the resistance it passes through, it does pass through everything. Whether people or furniture, both differentiate not only from each other but also from themselves. What we have in “Time Passes” is duration in its tendency to actualize material conditions. Focusing on landscape and household interiors

rather than characters, the narrator delineates (in highly lyrical prose) the extreme boundaries. The difference between a human individual and a material thing is so extreme that when compared, the latter becomes simply a crease on the blanket of a sleeper. The forces that stir and move throughout the house are represented as extrinsic, approaching from an outside; Bergson would however argue that the principle of inner differentiation is what we see at work, and that all movements are stirred from within. In space, the objects appear separate and independent of each other; in durational time, they intermingle and are continuous.

The third chapter comments on the confrontation with pure negation, alluding not only to the night any longer, but to the winter, and to creativity's condition of possibility: negation as such. At one point this force is called "divine goodness", now suddenly a contrasting masculine power who "covers his treasures in a drench of hail" because "it does not please him" that they are displayed. If only for a glimpse, he

breaks them, so confuses them that it seems impossible that their calm should ever return or that we should ever compose from their fragments a perfect whole or read in the littered pieces the clear words of truth (140).

Then, a sleeper is placed on the beach, searching for "an answer to his doubts, a sharer for his solitude" (140). The sleeper wanders, questioning like the air funnelling through the house, both at night, both merely brushing against something laid in obscurity, if only to reaffirm their own presence in a radically novel manner, recreated. Questions remain questions in the darkness of winter: "the clear words of truth" belong to daylight and brighter seasons. We have already seen duration working through people, through weather, landscape and inanimate matter; here narration accounts for the cycle of seasons. Woolf's lyrical vein is attending to every grand motif of nature, as duration is also represented at this level: the qualitative differentiation of the seasonal cycles and their apparent interrelatedness with all other movements. This is where the shocking death of Mrs. Ramsay is briefly mentioned in brackets while the house keeps deteriorating, where nothing is spared and all is vulnerable. The truth-seeking sleeper is also to be understood as the character of Mr. Ramsay, who stretches after his lost wife in bed, yet finds nothing – no one.

Mrs. McNab, the housekeeper, enters at the end of the fourth chapter, as the only interruption to the intense workings of duration inside the house. Perhaps she is rather an addition to the house's continuous inner differentiation, when she starts cleaning and dusting

as directed by the Ramsays. But instead of providing narrative insight into the house, Mrs. McNab provides primarily insight into herself, as she judges both her abilities and her appearance for being worn by age. She sings old songs, complains of having to get up early in the morning and makes a long list of references to agedness, weariness, witlessness and memories while she struggles to maintain the house in its proper state. Mrs. McNab is working against duration's deterioration of both the house and her own body. She pauses in front of a mirror and leers and smiles "aimlessly" at herself. Thereupon, we perceive "some channel in the depths of obscurity through which light enough issued to twist her face grinning in the glass" (143), and she starts singing again. The recognition of time's passing may be met with the celebration of memories and old songs, as well as the withdrawal into the safety of these past phenomena.

4. 2. 2. 3 Indifferent and indiscriminate duration

Can poetry arrive at a point between living emotion and inert matter? Does "Time Passes" locate a force in nature which lives, but has no life? Is meaning found or given, and can it in the latter case be given by something which is itself indifferent? The forces stirring, moving, breathing and seeing are not totally indifferent or wholly antithetical to human values, though all worries and cares are human attributes and belong to humans only. The range of duration extends and melds into a cross-section of spirit and matter, rendering such boundaries hard to distinguish. The two-fold movement of duration – contracting spirit, dissolving matter – creates a foundation for some kind of meaning, as seen in the extremities of the change of seasons, spring approaching summer:

As summer neared, as the evenings lengthened, there came the wakeful, the hopeful, walking the beach, stirring the pool, imaginations of the strangest kinds – of flesh turned to atoms which drove before the wind, of stars flashing in their hearts, of cliff, sea, cloud, and sky brought purposely together to assemble outwardly the scattered parts of the vision within (144)

Though nature moves, it has no memory of its past movements. Nature too contains within itself all of its past, but has no manner of reflecting upon it before acting. The "flesh turned to atoms" may at some point have been human, but once dissolved, where does it arrive?

When bringing together “the scattered parts of the vision within”, there must be memory. To arrive from a great number of vague images (scattered parts) to fewer but more distinct images (a vision), implies a fixed proportion between quantity and quality. Obscure images are devalued by the mind, which limits its perceptions to immediately recognizable and useful shapes which may be acted upon. The vague and fleeting, yet rich character of “Time Passes” appears as literature displaying such “useful” distinctions being challenged: the selection of words might resemble the mind's selection of images. The issue of meaning and indifference as time passes in nature inevitably becomes a poetic issue as well.

Without succumbing to Jungian interpretation, while knowing that Woolf had some interest for psychoanalysis, an archetypal reading of the ocean in *To the Lighthouse* is not entirely unreasonable. It is derived from the text itself that the constellation of these natural forces, or, archetypes, reflect a “vision within” from “those pools of uneasy water” (144), which can be understood as a well of emotions, a repressed or obscure ocean of inner forces. The “wakeful” and “hopeful” who walk the beach lend their “imagination” to express or “assemble” their “scattered” inner lives, thus finding some relief or *katharsis* in the artistic nature of perception.

The unification of microcosmos and macrocosmos represented in the magnificent walk on the beach, however, poses a problem to the notion of classical, balanced harmony. The walker on the beach sees only the surface of the ocean – there is no point at which *complete* harmony is achieved in the spirit-matter dichotomy. Duration finds no rest “within” or “outwardly”, leaving images to represent nothing but themselves in their extreme, poetic movement.

Some attempts are made at reconciling nature and the individual, the meaningful and the indifferent, as two of the Ramsays die. At the height of spring, with nature at another extreme, spirit and matter seem on the verge of implosion, contracting into “some crystal of intensity”, “like a diamond in the sand” (144). This diamond is reminiscent of Minta's lost brooch on the beach; it is an inherited artefact which has passed through generations, only to be swallowed up by the indiscriminating forces of duration. Then spring is impersonated to take “upon her a knowledge of the sorrows of mankind” (144) before the death of Prue Ramsay is chillingly announced in brackets:

[Prue Ramsay died that summer in some illness connected with childbirth, which was indeed a tragedy, people said. They said nobody deserved happiness more.] (144)

Prue and the spring both have promises of creating life, if so at the cost of their own. The burdened, feminised spring is a poetry that endows nature with human characteristics, which is more meaningful than an indifferent spring. Prue also achieves significance within the cosmic framework. But such meaning is soon rejected again; Woolf's poetic pendulum swings back towards the void of apparent indifference when, shortly after, Andrew Ramsay's meaningless death is mentioned with some sympathy:

Then again silence fell; and then, night after night, and sometimes in plain mid-day when the roses were bright and light turned on the wall its shape clearly there seemed to drop into this silence this indifference, this integrity, the thud of something falling. [A shell exploded. Twenty or thirty young men were blown up in France, among them Andrew Ramsay, whose death, mercifully, was instantaneous.] (145)

Death in labour acquires double, contrapositioned meaning: childbirth and war, life given and life taken. Death happens by itself within a certain proximity of a land mine or childbirth; the exploding shell is indifferent like the nothingness that is destroying the house. It is nothingness eating away at life. The short sentences in brackets do not only marginalize the events or indicate their simultaneity, their lack of relevance or their impossibility of interweaving with the primary narrative. They also attest to their significance (and lack thereof) in the grand narrative. Andrew is only “among” 20-30 others who were blown up. Narration finds nothing to dwell upon in the event of death. The world keeps spinning. Instead, the silence and the interplay of light and shadow are paid attention to, they are both “this indifference, this integrity” (145) at once.

Meaning, then, is bestowed upon nature by humanity. Following the pointless deaths of the Ramsays, the next brackets, concluding the chapter, tell of Augustus Carmichael's release of a collection of poetry. Due to the war, people's interest in poetry has been “revived” (note the irony of the expression in this particular context), and Carmichael's poems are well received. The goal of poetry is again to endow the apparent meaninglessness of nature with meaning, quite contrary to the question of “Did Nature supplement what man advanced?” (146). In attempting to write a poetry of time passing by the presence of no one, a poetry without a subject, the novel finds this position which oscillates between the high-romantic and the naturalistic at once, both brutally concise and mildly meditative, self-aware and selfless. “Time Passes” is where “subject, object and the nature of reality” are constructed and

deconstructed within their own literary universe. The “answers” found in poetry act like the “surface glassiness which forms in quiescence while nobler powers sleep beneath” (146).

4. 2. 2. 4 Passing, pausing: Music and silence during the interval

After having given up on maintaining the house for a while, Mrs. McNab receives notice that the family will be returning, expecting “to find things as they had left them” (151). Towards the section's closure, the intermediary status of the house is described while the house is entirely cleaned, repaired and once again fully prepared for visitors after a long period of emptiness:

And now as if the cleaning and the scrubbing and the scything and the mowing had drowned it there rose that half-heard melody, that intermittent music which the ear half catches but lets fall; a bark, a bleat; irregular, intermittent, yet somehow related; the hum of an insect, the tremor of cut grass, dissevered yet somehow belonging; the jar of a dor beetle, the squeak of a wheel, loud, low, but mysteriously related; which the ear strains to bring together and is always on the verge of harmonising but they are never quite heard, never fully harmonised, and at last, in the evening, one after another the sounds die out, and the harmony falters, and silence falls (154)

The intermittent sound recalls the characteristics of the interval; “half-heard”, obscure and “mysteriously related”: relation is sensed, but not made sense of.

What comes to fill Woolf's interval is music and silence. Their rhythm runs seamlessly through polar opposites, between all and nothing. Creativity does not exclusively indicate creation. Time's obliteration is a dynamic that confirms a unity of all being. There is no complete indifference in nature or duration, only differences in quality and shifting relations. Differences between spirit and matter are more calm and stable outside of human nature, in life as it takes place without us. The ten years of the summer house showcases a duration much greater than our own: there is a subtle comfort in proving the status of matter as less than alive, yet more than inert.

Rather than measuring a duration, the interval serves a function within duration. The existence of the interval is indicated by the friction it causes in duration. As a musical interval, “Time Passes” reveals the rhythmic structure of the novel. The two-fold, dialectic movements of *To the Lighthouse* are presented in tableaux which might be sketched as parts of a wave-

like pattern. The first movement, the section of “The Window”, perceives problems and conflicts. The subject matter is introduced, and scenes unravel, diluting and flinging themselves against memory. The interval of “Time Passes” then displays the differentiation at work in an immeasurable moment of indetermination. The interval prepares for recognition and action. It arrives after the introduction of objects in “The Window”, before these objects become memory and are actualized and acted upon. Lastly, “The Lighthouse” represents memory and its recognition of matter, creating an image that adds itself to the ever-increasing amount of memories. The initial object becomes memory and may be perceived as it moves and changes in duration. The oscillating movement between matter and memory is not broken, but linked by the interval.

Arriving at the summer house again, after the interval, will thus reflect a lot of the original problems in new shapes. Consequently, the question of recognizing and acting upon these problems becomes a central point of tension in the story that follows.

4. 2. 3 “The Lighthouse”

4. 2. 3. 1 Intuitive chanting: phrasal adoption and the significance of rhythm

What does it mean then, what can it all mean? Lily Briscoe asked herself, wondering whether, since she had been left alone, it behoved her to go to the kitchen to fetch another cup of coffee or wait here. What does it mean? – a catchword that was, caught up from some book, fitting her thought loosely, for she could not, the first morning with the Ramsays, contract her feelings, could only make a phrase resound to cover the blankness of her mind until these vapours had shrunk. For really, what did she feel, come back after all these years and Mrs. Ramsay dead? Nothing, nothing – nothing that she could express at all (159)

Indeed, what *does* it mean? The third and final section of *To the Lighthouse*, one might assume, would answer to the preceding sections. The expectation of meaning is held on both the level of the text and that of the reader, and in the story itself, where the characters return after a decade-long interval. The question of “What does it mean?” becomes “what did she feel” (and later, echoed as “What is the meaning of life” 175) and it concludes in “Nothing [...] that she could express”. Not able to “contract her feelings” – for they are spread across “all these years”, a wide array of memories – Lily searches for words to match the inexpressible feeling. Something *is* felt, hence the question of what.

Lily is experiencing something laid in obscurity, which does not quite shine clearly or recognizably, but all the same is real, valid and distinct. The problem lies in generalizing such a distinct and obscure notion through its resemblance to a concept, Bergson would say. Lily's feeling is characterized by its difference from rather than by its resemblance to something, and as such renders the search for apt words counterproductive. In continuation from "Time Passes", she questions that obscurity, that thing which won't rest and that demands attention and recognition. She asks herself now what she feels, later while painting she asks what she sees, for she is – like Bergson's artist – always full of attention to life, always trying to recover, like the sleeper walking on the beach, a whole from the fragmented parts.

Meaning is not arranged into a classical schema of balance and clarity, instead it is felt, intuited, yet only vaguely enough for it to "resound" with some phrase in memory. Intuition recovers meaning between knowledge and instinct, but requires time. In the time it takes for Lily to realise what this feeling is, duration keeps shifting her memories into the foreground of her perceptions, almost more like a mechanism than an independent recollection. The "whole" to be recovered is always represented in its components.

Perception, thought and vision are continually blurred throughout the last section of *To the Lighthouse*, where the characters approach reconciliation with the past. What is remembered from the summer day ten years ago persistently reappears in rotating perspectives. First, memory lends enough of itself to allow for matter to be recognized and acted upon, then comes a movement of rotation in order for several aspects of matter to be revealed. The apparent passivity (lack of action) of each character in "The Lighthouse" might turn out to be a veil for a mental activity perhaps even more intense than in "The Window".

Lily's repetitive thoughts are also posing a challenge to the foundation of meaning. She admits that her question is in fact "a catchword that was, caught up from some book, fitting her thought loosely" as she fails to pose a question of her own in her own words. Still the words are repeated in an attempt to explain a feeling beyond immediate recognition. We have read a similar incident of foreign words being adopted by a character when Mrs. Ramsay involuntarily thought "We are in the hands of the lord" (70) in chapter 4. 2. 1. 4 "Mrs. Ramsay and the dialectic of childhood and adulthood". It seems as if meaning is being forced upon the characters by something beyond their consciousness, which in fact equals the motor mechanisms of memory. Memory is persistently intermingling with the internal monologues

of the characters, such as with the reinsertion of the nursery rhyme “Luriana Lurilee”, which is explicitly repeated by different characters at several occasions.

As Lily sits alone at the coffee table, she remembers something Mr. Ramsay had said before he left for the lighthouse, “‘Alone’ she heard him say, ‘Perished’ she heard him say” (160). Throughout the entire section, “We all perish, each alone”¹¹ is repeated both on land and on sea. The repetitions resound in obscurity; their significance indeterminable, their meaning unfixed, they are recognizable only as containers of meaning, not as meaning in itself. Repetition brings attention to rhythm and flow, like a web spun in the background, connecting subjects and topics which would otherwise have seemed isolated. In asking “What does it mean?” Lily might more precisely mean to ask *How is it connected? How do they relate, these words that have attached to me?* When Lily thinks that “the link that usually bound things together had been cut” (160), she implies that things were once connected. At this point, analysis must thus be substituted with intuition. Woolf said that when she wrote *The Waves*, she was writing to a rhythm, not a plot.¹² The significance of rhythm in *To the Lighthouse* is not only its interweaving of character and plot, nor the lyrical qualities of rhythm alone – it is as an additional means of sensing the text. As pointed out in a Bergsonian article on *The Waves*,¹³ text can only “fix” duration while rhythm allows for “affective” reading. Rather than a means of *making sense*, rhythm accordingly becomes a means of *sensing* the text. Rhythm allows text to transcend the barriers of linguistic concepts.

At this entrance, among the resounding echoes of broken links and lost meaning, the final section of *To the Lighthouse* reinstitutes and echoes several of the established images and metaphors from the first section. In an attempt to find a means of wrapping up the novel in a complete whole, as a perfected artwork in the classical sense, “The Lighthouse” endeavours to bring all questions to an answer and all conflicts to a resolution. But while the novel starts preparing a full circle-ending, a new series of problems arise from the conflict between past and present. Recollections interfere with each character's presence while they make efforts at completing what they had left behind a decade earlier – namely the voyage and the canvas. Perception is so full of memory that they struggle to manoeuvre through the landscape as if

11 Taken from the poem “The Castaway” (1799) by William Cowper (1731-1800).

12 In her letter to composer Ethel Smyth, see *A Reflection of the Other Person: The Letters of Virginia Woolf, Vol 4: 1929-31*, Hogarth Press, London 1978.

13 Mattison, Laci (2010), “The Metaphysics of Flowers In *The Waves*: Virginia Woolf's 'Seven-Sided Flower' and Henri Bergson's Intuition”.

they were enshrouded in thick fog. “The Lighthouse” is a melancholy study in coming to terms with the past as well as an inspiring approach to the creative potential of memory. The oscillating movement between matter and memory in this final section will allow for an exploration of why Lily, despite her overwhelming frustration and sadness, has her triumphant “vision” at the story's end.

4. 2. 3. 2 Nostalgic tribute and memory-worship

The landscape after “Time Passes” is pervaded with an eerie quality of silence and loss. While Mrs. Ramsay, Prue and Andrew have died, Mrs. Ramsay still remains the central character in the story. The death of the heroine has elevated her to a mythical status, as her family and Lily stand back to mourn and worship her memory. Mrs. Ramsay's memory is invoked through the excessive chanting of her name, culminating in Lily's weeping cries at the end of chapter 5 and the beginning of chapter 7: “Mrs. Ramsay!’ she said aloud, 'Mrs. Ramsay!’ The tears ran down her face” (196). Between these two chapters, the two-sentence long chapter 6 figures this state of fundamental loss by way of a fish caught while the Ramsays make their way to the lighthouse. The fish is dismembered for bait; a square is cut out of its body before it is thrown back into the sea, where it might continue to swim in a state beyond repair, or chase its own severed flesh.

Mrs. Ramsay, once an extension of Lily, James, Cam and Mr. Ramsay, has left a sense of disseverment after her passing. Her negated presence is a remnant of the negated landscape in “Time Passes”, which forces the other characters to introspection and later proves to be fertile ground for creativity and memory.

“As she dipped into the blue paint, she dipped too into the past there” (188). Lily Briscoe resumes the painting she left unfinished ten years earlier. Again, the entwined acts of recollection and artistic creation are highlighted. Lily's consciousness enters into “a high cathedral-like place, very dark, very solemn” (186) as the painting, which Lily once thought “must be a tribute” (59), opens up this memory-space, a spiritual setting associated with worship. Perceptions start to intermingle with memory while establishing contact between the surroundings in their immediacy and in the memories she has of them. The cathedral-space of memory is also referred to as such in Woolf's *Sketch*; she alludes to the process of about

writing her mother (the character of Mrs. Ramsay) as follows: “Certainly there she was, in the very centre of that great Cathedral space which was childhood; there she was from the very first” (Woolf 1978: 94). The connotations of this space are strikingly humbling, even cosmogonic; it encloses the origin of personal identity.

While standing next to the house on the hill and observing the Ramsays' sailing boat setting off towards the lighthouse, Lily also “seemed to be sitting beside Mrs. Ramsay on the beach” (Woolf 2000b: 186), imagining her asking about the painting. Charles Tansley, William Bankes and Minta are there too. Lily is recalling the actual day they all went to the beach, yet far from precisely – the most precise visual detail Lily remembers is the hole in Minta's stocking. Instead, a few particular events are remembered: Charles sending stones skipping through the water; all of them getting up to have lunch; all beautiful details in no particular order or priority, like an impressionist canvas with background and foreground melting into a temporal landscape. Lily's creative act is impelling independent recollection, resulting in a perception so full of memory that the past seems to be coexisting with the present moment. Through successful recollection, Lily's painting is starting to take on a new shape.

A particular detail from the beach-memory then stands out and leads Lily's train of thought into irritation: of Minta walking ahead to meet Paul. Because the subsequent Rayley-marriage didn't turn out the way things had seemed back then, Lily's memories of them together in the house that day are given a darker tint. Perhaps the reappearance of the marriage-discourse overshadows the persons remembered; the resulting image is now her remembering them as “withered” and “careless” (188) persons. Lily then bitterly realizes how her perspective has become skewed:

And this, Lily thought, taking the green paint on her brush, this making up scenes about them, is what we call 'knowing' people, 'thinking' of them, 'being fond' of them! Not a word of it was true; she had made it up; but it was what she knew them by all the same. She went on tunnelling her way into her picture, into the past (188).

Forsaking the distorted recollections of the Rayleys, Lily goes on “tunnelling” her way into the past via her picture – an expression Woolf is known to have used herself when discovering a technique for letting characters reveal their past. What shall we make of Lily's choice to go on tunnelling? Why would her artistic representation of the past be more correct than the memory that came to her spontaneously? Wouldn't the seemingly unrefined, raw recollection

perhaps provide a truer glimpse into the affairs of that day as they actually were? Lily has realised that this recollection is no less refined than the picture she is trying to paint – time has rearranged it, rigid concepts (like marriage) have coloured it. There is no memory more or less true than another. That is why she feels less blame for choosing, or seeking at least, a refined version: to continue the work of painting and recollecting.

The obsession with marriage has a negative effect upon the feelings Lily attaches to the Rayleys – though not upon the quality of the memory as such. To come to terms with the past, Lily must also defend the fact that she has remained unmarried herself. Her involuntary marriage-obsession, derived from Mrs. Ramsay, might seem linked to Victorian values, reproductive instinct and death-awareness (as the chain of life survives the individual being). But we must also remember the value Mrs. Ramsay attributed to marriage as a means of endurance and preservation.

Besides any political or sexual implications, marriage and parenthood allows for re-experiencing childhood, though at second-hand. When Lily decides to reject her memory of the Rayleys, she is also rejecting Mrs. Ramsay and her insistence on marriage. Her picture then becomes less of a tribute to Mrs. Ramsay, more of a personal revolt. At the risk of psychoanalytic reading one might detect a parricide in Lily's painting, as she thinks: “She would feel a little triumphant, telling Mrs. Ramsay that the [Rayley] marriage had not been a success.” (189). The reappearance of the marriage-discourse might then temporarily be resolved, if not put at rest – Lily has asserted her rejection of tradition. But narration does not end on this note, as we will see in my further discussion of Lily's artistic tribute and triumph.

4. 2. 3. 3 The trip to the Lighthouse: Recollection as restoration

James, Cam and Mr. Ramsay finally endeavour to complete the belated trip to the lighthouse, a commemorative act sought to lay the past to rest. On board the boat, James recalls when his father had denied him the trip to the lighthouse, evoking the novel's opening scene. This recollection creates a chiasmic structure signalling closure, again reminding us of the double level of in search for meaning: both the characters and the reader must refer back to a remembered origin.

Their boat is standing still on the ocean between the shore and the lighthouse, due to lack of wind. Cam experiences the scene as “[e]verything in the whole world seemed to stand

still. The Lighthouse became immovable and the line of the distant shore became fixed” (199). This dramatic moment contains another interval of silence and intense reminiscence. James sees the lighthouse from a closer distance than ever before and struggles to believe in its reality. He decides that the lighthouse he is seeing at the present moment is no more real than the lighthouse he recalls from his childhood; they are both equally real: “For nothing was simply one thing” (201). James' acceptance of this multiplicity in perception and memory attests to his achieved maturity; he is no longer the character who is so constantly overwhelmed with sensations that he fails to fathom several concepts at once – James now recognizes the durational nature of things, how all things differ from themselves in time, including himself.

James' epiphany in the boat can be taken as a master insight of the novel, as we have also seen it in Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe. James then attempts to remember what his mother was like by “following her from room to room” (203) in the house, remembering something she said about a blue dish. James thinks “She alone spoke the truth” (203), subverting what he had thought about his father as a child, “What he said was true. It was always true. He was incapable of untruth [...]” (8).

Instead of a complete subversion of logic in James' mental life, his ability for reason has transcended to intuition, where polar oppositions may be held in harmony and the real duration of things is seen. The stand-still comes to an end as the boat suddenly “woke and shot through the waves. The relief was extraordinary” (203). When the lighthouse is finally reached, James' reaction is barely expressible, yet positive: “It satisfied him. It confirmed some obscure feeling of his about his own character” (220). James' character has developed to a whole, having accomplished his original mission. Even Mr. Ramsay salutes James for his steering, thus restoring James' confidence, as Cam comments, “There! Cam thought, addressing herself silently to James. You've got it at last” (203). The lines running parallel through the narrative meaning and James' character have grown complete, rendering his mental life fully fledged and completing the novel as a work of art.

4. 2. 3. 4 The intuitive vision: movement and artistic expression

She felt curiously divided, as if one part of her were drawn out there – it was a still day, hazy; the Lighthouse looked this morning at an immense distance; the other had fixed itself doggedly, solidly, here on the lawn. (171)

So coming back from a journey, or after an illness, before habits spun themselves across the surface, one felt that same unreality, which was so startling; felt something emerge. Life was most vivid then. [...] It was some such feeling of completeness perhaps which, ten years ago, standing almost where she stood now, had made her say that she must be in love with the place. Love had a thousand shapes. There might be lovers whose gift it was to choose out the elements of things and place them together and so, giving them a wholeness not theirs in life, make of some scene, or meeting of people (all now gone and separate), one of those globed compacted things over which thought lingers, and love plays. (208)

Now feeling divided; now complete; there can be no doubt that some radical change is taking place in Lily's consciousness through the course of the novel's end. Her solemn dwelling upon the landscape with an ever expanding artistic intuition is reaching a state of balance. Lily learns to see the temporal qualities of objects and phenomena; she starts to transcend spatial conceptions and as a result, employs her intuition. More than the melancholy longing for people who have passed away and events that are long finished, Lily starts to see things as a remnant of the past, each thing a fragmented token of its own duration. The ability to give things “a wholeness not theirs in life” evokes the image of Mr. Ramsay, whose gift Lily always envied. It is noteworthy that the shape of such a wholeness is “globed”, reminiscent of the life-globe of Clarissa Dalloway. The ability to create such wholeness is connected to the “unreality” she feels in that intuitive mode, “before habits” take over. This is precisely what Bergson states when saying that breaking out of automatism to recognize real differences and freedom of mobility, is when “[l]ife” is “most vivid” (208).

Lily's intuitive ability is sparked when she observes a line in the air above the ocean, the remaining smoke from a boat's steamer: “The steamer itself had vanished, but the great scroll of smoke still hung in the air and drooped like a flag mournfully in valediction” (204). The smoke indicates a line of path, a past presence, and as a series of spatial configurations which are only aligned in duration, Lily's intuition recognizes the whole. The remaining smoke has a shorter duration than the the house, the canvas and the things that Lily has battled with on this day. Like Bergson's sugar cube, the smoke gives of a way of being in time that shows how it differs from its surroundings and itself. Instead of viewing the remnant as something broken or fragmented, Lily recognizes it as a surplus, an excess, a triumphantly

surviving element from the past, a component carrying within it the qualities of a whole. Her present perceptions are still *becoming*, her past memories are all that *are*. The sense of movement she felt necessary to include in her picture finally became clear to her with the image of the line.

The feeling of being divided belongs to the present moment; the feeling of completeness, Lily places in the past. In her painting, she wishes to represent “the thing itself before it has been made anything” (209), to show its way of being in time without interest or course of action; she sees duration. Deleuze notes that duration is “a change that is substance itself” (Deleuze 1991: 37), and Lily's recurring glimpses into “the thing itself” is indeed that recognition of change:

She seemed to be standing up to her lips in some substance, to move and float and sink in it, yes, for these waters were unfathomably deep. Into them had spilled so many lives. The Ramsays'; the children's; and all sorts of waifs and stray things besides. A washerwoman with her basket; a rook; a red-hot poker; the purples and grey-greens of flowers: some common feeling which held the whole together. (Woolf 2000b: 208)

The list of things that add up to the “substance” is a miniature summary of motifs from the entire novel. Even the washerwoman (Mrs. McNab), the poker (from James' fantasy of killing his father), and the description of flowers are components of the narrative such as it had led up to this point. In recognizing the various part of this substance, Lily is helping the reader remember them too. The transference from Lily's recollections to her canvas seem to reflect a similar movement between the text and the reader. We are learning to see how the past is contained in the present, and how the past holds “the whole together”. Assembling into memory, canvas and narrative are a motion of contraction, as described by Bergson.

The motion of Lily's artistic practice is a “razor edge of balance” between being and becoming, a battle with spatial concepts: “... so much depends, she thought, upon distance: whether people are near us, or far from us ...” (207). A spatial concept of time becomes inevitable in transferring the landscape onto a canvas – transferring a perceived space to a representational miniature space. Yet the spatial conceptions are precisely what is causing Lily's representational crisis. The recollected spatial presence of Mrs. Ramsay sitting on the stairs might not be required but perhaps preferred in order for perception to bring forth other adequate memories. Mrs. Ramsay is only seen in relation to the stairs she once sat on, recognized as a part of the stairs' duration. This new, durational mode of vision finally lets Lily recognize true differences, bestowing on her a moment of clarity:

Quickly, as if she were recalled by something over there, she turned to her canvas. There it was – her picture. Yes, with all its greens and blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something. It would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be destroyed. But what did that matter? she asked herself, taking up her brush again. She looked at the steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision. (226)

Here is a recognition that her painting is blurred, that the canvas will be hung in the attic, and that it will be destroyed by time, like Mrs. Ramsay. There is acceptance in this recognition, when Lily asks herself if it really matters. With that insight, she draws the final stroke in the centre, representing the lighthouse. Vision, clarity, come only in glimpses – like the novel has told us all along “little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark” (176). She resolves the problem by drawing a line, both in the most literal and in the most figurative sense. The line, which in painting typically creates a sense of movement, is Lily's acknowledgement that the destructive aspects of duration do not matter. Lily realises that she herself is a triumphant survivor of all past experiences, and a representative of them as such. Lily is the container of a past coexisting with the present. She carries within her the complete sum of all her perceptions and continually adds to them in an ever-enriching splendour. The balance she sought turned out to be a perpetual motion; balance is never a coming to a standstill, but is a discovery of the different rhythms. There are thus no concrete answers to be found in “The Lighthouse”; there are merely processes to be revealed and rhythms to be attuned to through the method of intuition.

4. 2. 3 Continuity of life: Preliminary conclusion

Hermione Lee remarks that the novel both opens and closes with sentences beginning with “Yes”, and that the novel thus is about repetition, about beginning over, again and again (Lee 1996: 483). Though Lee highlights the melancholy, perhaps deterministic aspect of such repetition, it is vital to acknowledge its opposite motion as well; to begin again is a life-affirming embrace and a strife towards continuity. But what can account for continuity in the event of death? Has any character in *To the Lighthouse* achieved something that “endures”, something “immune from change”, and if so, how?

Mrs. Ramsay represents the Victorian way of continuity. As showed in chapter 4. 2. 3. 2 “Nostalgic tribute and memory-worship”, marriage is her way of ensuring the continuity of life. Its double function consists in 1. Child-bearing as a creative act, perpetuating the chain of life, leaving behind something or someone by which oneself is remembered, and 2. The child as a means of re-experiencing childhood, though at second-hand, a renewed (though inevitably sentimental) means of access to the lost perfection of childhood. Re-experiencing childhood entails a renewed mode of perception, as articulated by Mrs. Ramsay, “one's children so often gave one's own perceptions a little thrust forwards” (Woolf 2000b: 88).

Again, Lily is the authority on the matter, since she represents the artist, the visionary and, to a certain extent, the author herself. It is Lily who survives and stands back in the last section to learn from the mistakes of others; it is she who has learned how the world may be seen, while at the same time teaching the reader how to see it. Lily's perhaps greatest revelation comes spontaneously, in the dinner-party scene. It is significant enough for her to recall it as she attempts to finish her canvas ten years later; while remembering the failed Rayley-marriage and defending her own solitary way of life, she recalls the dinner-party revelation as a triumph, something that had saved her:

She had only escaped by the skin of her teeth though, she thought. She had been looking at the table-cloth, and it had flashed upon her that she would move the tree to the middle, and need never marry anybody, and she had felt an enormous exultation (191).

Solving a major problem of pictorial representation and deciding upon the aversion to marriage are entwined conclusions to her sudden revelation. It suggests that marriage is viewed as a concept of artistic perfection, and painting as a method of insight – reminiscent of what Woolf would later describe in her memoirs as “a philosophy” (Woolf 1978: 84). When Lily recognizes this, she finally admits that Bankes hadn't only been the obstacle and rival she always resisted: “Indeed, his friendship had been one of the pleasures of her life. She loved William Bankes” (192).

The heroine's triumphant endurance is no Victorian sacrifice of virginity, but an impetus of flinging oneself towards the perceived abyss between one self and others – not longing for stoic reconciliation but illuminating the differences and representing them creatively. Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe have different means of bringing new shapes into the world. To make real distinctions, objects must be seen in duration rather than conceptual

space. That is why fear of death, hope of continuation, and artistic practise inherently all are acts of recollection.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The line as motion and image

The linearity of the novel is always temporal. It is an image of time as a line. (Miller 1992: 5-6)

Woolf is an author who “digs out tunnels” behind her characters with the idea that they shall connect (Woolf 1973: 59; Aug 30th 1923); Clarissa's “sewing” of threads binds the people in her life together with her unifying power of memory. The final line in Lily's painting traces and seals a scene which has been ten years in the making. Lines of smoke form above the crowd in London and droop behind the steamer before the lighthouse.

Images of the line seem to reappear in crucial moments of both the novels, as well as in the writing of the novels, during processes of creation and recollection. Duration and recollection appear in the shape of the line as image and motion. Hillis Miller notes that in Heidegger's (an outspoken admirer of Bergson) *Being and Time*, it is “shown how all the language of temporality is contaminated by spatial terms” (Miller 1992: 6). Texts as spatial arrays are linear, but what are they as temporal bodies? Do the narratives of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* draw one line each or a multitude of lines? Might their line(s) be perceived as a static image and a differentiating motion at the same time?

I have focused on Bergson's line of duration at several points during the analysis. In *Creative Evolution*, we read the earnest conviction of a mathematician crossed with the vitalism of a philosopher in arguments such as the one about his image of the curve:

A very small element of a curve is very near being a straight line. And the smaller it is, the nearer. In the limit, it may be termed a part of the curve or a part of the straight line, as you please, for in each of its points a curve coincides with its tangent. So likewise “vitality” is a tangent, at any and every point, to physical and chemical forces; but such points are, as a fact, only views taken by a mind which imagines stops as various moments of the movement that generates the curve. In reality, life is no more made of physico-chemical elements than a curve is composed of straight lines. (Bergson 1998: 38)

Lines as spatial concepts may represent real movement, though the two are antithetical. The freedom of movement within Bergson's line of duration may be called philosophical at one point and poetic at another, such as his Nobel Prize winning *Creative Evolution* attests to. This is the struggle between a distrust and a belief in the possibilities of representation, such as I have discussed in Woolf's novels and memoirs – most explicitly in Lily Briscoe's struggle

with painting. Representations cannot completely avoid linearity or spatiality. By working through language, Woolf and Bergson coincide at the same indeterminable point that philosophy coincides with literature. Bergson's philosophy was poetic because he believed that literature offered the possibility of experiencing true duration; by way of analogy, literature is a means of becoming one with the characters and durations it represents. By way of intuition, movement and change are attributed to paintings, texts and other spatial images.

The concept of a line is “only views taken by a mind which imagines stops as various moments of the movement”, while the reality that Woolf seeks to represent has no such static conceptions. Hermione Lee notes that Woolf's “concept of tunnelling into 'caves' behind characters enfranchised her from the unwanted linear structure in which an omniscient narrator moves from points A to B. She arrives instead at a form [...] patterned like waves in a pond rather than a railway line” (Lee 1977: 93). Woolf's line is in continuous movement, curved, wave-like and musical; the celebrated rhythm and flow of her stream of consciousness engenders the fact that balance is never achieved at a stand-still, but through staying in motion. *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* represent such motions and how they are related to the oscillating motion of matter and memory.

Clarissa's “lark” and “plunge” is a motion that permeates from the second she “bursts” open her windows till Septimus flings himself out of another window. The incessant movement of rising, falling, building it up, making it whole, contracting and relaxing oscillates to a rhythm much more intense through this single day in London than during the two summer days in the Scottish Hebrides of the Lighthouse.

These lines indicate a quality, a directed motion. The two novels in question suggest the binary of directions, namely the vertical and the horizontal. The narrative of *Mrs. Dalloway* arranges its discourse vertically; its concerns are social, its critique is hierarchical and its many different characters overlay each other in a varying degree. Many critics have taken note of the novel's pervasive display of the motion of plunging, bursting, rising, falling and diving. I must also point to the more static representations of verticality, such as the overlooking authority of Big Ben and Clarissa's reiterated plan of standing at the top of her stairs. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, the vertical is linked to the personal, the emotional and the evanescent. Take the subtle insights into Clarissa's sexuality, how discreetly it climbs as the initial introduction of homosexual undertones are projected onto the attic of the Dalloways'

house. Clarissa describes the “emptiness at the heart of life; an attic room. [...] Narrower and narrower would her bed be” (33). Accompanying her apparent frigidity we find her failure to satisfy Richard: “[...] through some contraction of this cold spirit, she had failed him” (34). The narrowness of the bed and the contraction of spirit evoke vertical rather than horizontal shapes – as does the phallic pocket-knife of Peter Walsh.

The recurring image of the tree has an affinity to both vertical and horizontal lines, such as the tree which Septimus connects with in Regent's Park, and the tree of the frequently quoted poem “Luriana Lurilee” (“That all the lives we ever lived / And all the lives to be / Are full of trees and changing leaves”). The tree yields to the notion of verticality; but though the tree's initial movement is upwards, many trees grow both vertically and horizontally at a complimentary pace. There are general directions of growth in the tree, whether the “intersubjective” trees of Clarissa and Septimus or the “ontological, grounding” trees of Lily and Mrs. Ramsay. Bergson also finds the image of the tree revealing in a similar sense:

[...] there is no universal biological law which applies precisely and automatically to every living thing. There are only *directions* in which life throws out species in general. Each particular species, in the very act by which it is constituted, affirms its independence, follows its caprice, deviates more or less from the straight line, sometimes even remounts the slope and seems to turn its back on its original direction. It is easy to argue that a tree never grows old, since the tips of its branches are always equally young, always equally capable of engendering new trees by budding. But in such an organism – which is, after all, a society rather than an individual – *something* ages, if only the leaves and the interior of the trunk. (Bergson 1998: 16)

Whether the subject is individual or interpersonal/societal, Woolf insists on a coexistence of the permanent and the ephemeral. In this way its lines may reach towards enveloping a whole.

While the tree in *Mrs. Dalloway* seems emblematic of a social fabric, the tree in *To the Lighthouse* embodies the very fabric of reality. The lines of the tree do not pervade the actual landscape of *To the Lighthouse* as it haunts Lily's attempt to represent it on a canvas. Lily is concerned with her painting's affinity to reality, which she realizes is neither objective nor subjective. Mrs. Ramsay, the heroine and heart of the story, also employed the image of the tree to effectively ground herself as she temporarily leaves her successful dinner-party, signalling that we are dealing with an awareness that transcends the social body. Though the characters are more individuated in *To the Lighthouse*, they are attempted to be aligned in the

sort of simultaneity that the recurring brackets indicate; they align in time as they add up and “rise to the surface” (69) and subtract as they “perish, each alone” (185).

The Bergsonian notions of contraction and relaxation do however demarcate a motion which is not merely vertical or horizontal, but spherical; lines extending first in all possible directions, then returning back upon themselves. Perhaps this is why Woolf would consistently view life as a spherical shape. From at least as early as the writing of *Mrs. Dalloway* in 1923 until the sketching of her memoirs in 1939, life is something shaped as a “globe”. Lily Briscoe also pondered upon a pure insight into life, comparing love to a spherical shape: “Love had a thousand shapes [...] one of those globed compacted things over which thought lingers, and love plays” (208). The spherical motion of contraction and relaxation may well be likened to the pumping motion of the heart. There distance is short, or rather the interval brief, between the qualities of “love” and “life”. Clarissa Dalloway makes this clear early on: “what she loved; life; London; this moment of June” (4), the heart being the agent of loving and living, as she excessively chants in a rewriting of Shakespeare: “Fear no more, says the heart. Fear no more, says the heart” (43).

We arrive at something which is elastic, self-sustainable and resilient; a life which may be created “every moment afresh” (4). The spherical motion gives off the experience that Woolf described as her memory of childhood, “the feeling of everything approaching and then disappearing, getting large, getting small, passing at different rates of speed” (Woolf 1978: 92). Woolf’s creative memory thus traces a dynamic between the static image of a line and the line as a spherical motion of contraction and relaxation.

5. 2 The interval

Even in Bergson’s incessant movement of duration, there is a point between received excitations and executed action. Bergson says that “the body is only a place of meeting and transfer” (Bergson 2004: 227), so something must condition the qualitatively different states of matter and memory – an interval.

The interval has taken several shapes in the novels I have discussed. The “indescribable pause” at each strike of Big Ben, “[f]irst a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable” designated a point between a contraction and a dilution of time, before the

“leaden circles dissolved in the air” (Woolf 2000a: 4). Woolf’s repetitions of these phrases throughout *Mrs. Dalloway* act as markers of a point in time where certain directed motions return upon themselves. The interval here marks a point between the hour as it is signalled and the hour as it becomes effective in London through the dissolving sound – the point between reception and execution, a decisive point of change, of time being actualized.

The large interval of “Time Passes” thoroughly investigates the idea of a situation between states. It shows how the interval itself contains nothing, but merely performs a function of hyphenation, of acting as the link between differences. Carrying the theme of life and death even further here, Woolf granted the possibility that life may be read as the interval between the fundamental creative acts in *To the Lighthouse*, which are to be born and to give birth. Seen from a duration much larger than ours, such as the forces that stir the cycle of seasons, the duration of human life may be reduced to such an interval between being born and giving birth, between matter and memory.

Life and creation are feminine principles in Woolf. Their strife towards creating meaning in life is divided by Woolf’s rejection of Victorian values. The mothers who give life and create memories are Victorian women (Clarissa and Mrs. Ramsay) who feel complete when they succeed in assembling a social fabric and create positive memories as such. The post-Victorian feminine principle creates meaning through artistic vision, recollection and creative expression. The chain of life may be perpetuated biologically or artistically, quantitatively or qualitatively – but it is women who perform and express this hyphenation. These characters complete themselves by creatively expressing the material reality which has entered their memory. They actualize memory by creatively altering it, and as such they become part of the movement and change they recognize in duration. Their masculine antithesis is the blundering naïvety of Peter Walsh and the cold rationality of Mr. Ramsay, whose fixations have led to fruitless, quantitative repetition – repetition without creativity, difference, movement or change. The conclusion brings us to Woolf as a writer of her age: anti-Victorian, feminist and preoccupied with the notion of durational time through the means of artistic expression. To triumph over the past is to creatively reshape the present conditions. For Woolf, the interval is an agent which connects, binds and succeeds material reality with spiritual life. It is to link together a positive whole, “to put the severed parts together” (Woolf 1978: 84).

5.3 Summary

By letting the novels in question undergo analytical dissection until the underlying processes of lines and intervals have been identified, I am concluding my thesis in a similar, paradoxical manner as that which I have introduced it with. Woolf's reflections on how the fragmented units of memory can constitute a person or a character as complete, seem to imply such a movement between the parts and the whole. It is a fundamental movement in Woolf's poetics which submits to the singular experience of the moment, while simultaneously attempting to maintain the idea of lives, characters and artworks as "wholes". Bergson makes a relevant example from his experience as a biologist, where analysis may go on *ad infinitum*, but achieves little if it loses the bigger perspective:

We have said that in analyzing the structure of an organ, we can go on decomposing forever, although the function of the whole is a simple thing. This contrast between the infinite complexity of the organ and the extreme simplicity of the function is what should open our eyes. (Bergson 1998: 89)

Dissection does not only abstract and obscure; it makes concrete enough for the smaller parts to reflect the whole. That is what memory does: it completes the present by impregnating it with the entirety of the past. Having dissected the novels into some fundamental parts, I hope to also have kept the function of the whole within visible reach, as the idea of wholeness has proved completely central to both Woolf and Bergson in the texts I've analysed.

By exploring my initial research questions of how an individual's memories constitute a sense of completeness, and how the pieces of an uncertain past build a life that seems whole, my analyses have revealed the nexus between the individual analysed components and a whole as the Bergsonian workings of matter/memory, past/present, perception/recollection and space/duration.

I have showed that *Mrs. Dalloway* presents the problems that memory gives to the notion of individuality as part of a social body. This novel succeeds in displaying that intricate web of psychological dynamics that binds and separates individual consciousnesses like the twigs and branches connected to a single tree. In Woolf, ideas of parallelism and overarching unity are put forth as a set of processes rather than a set of concrete solutions, and as such, *Mrs. Dalloway* represents perspectives on memory, life and consciousness that I have shown to be on a par with several of Bergson's ideas.

In *To the Lighthouse* I have shown that a number of these ideas are taken into a deeper realm where Woolf even more completely embroiders a landscape which is permeated with both a personal past, a philosophical outlook/aesthetics, and a poetics as such. Both novels display lyrical rhythm and repetition as a means of surpassing the fixations of language, concepts and text, so as to progress towards the free and heterogeneous nature of duration. It is both Woolf's and Lily Briscoe's feat of complete representation that resembles Bergson's philosophical method of intuition. From this, I hope to have demonstrated a philosophy and development central to Woolf's authorship, which has shed light on processes in the novels in question and which may be carried further in the analysis of other parts of her fictional prose.

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