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THE CONCEPTION OF TIME IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S NOVELS IN
RELATION TO THE NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES USED BY THE
AUTHOR

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Anotace

Tato diplomová práce zkoumá pojetí času v románech Virginie Woolfové ve vztahu k narativním technikám, které autorka ve svých románech používá. Cílem práce je nejen rozebrat samotné pojetí času typické pro tuto autorku, ale také poukázat na to, jak úzce je toho pojetí spjaté právě s moderními narativními metodami. Aby byl v práci jasně zachycen vývoj autorčina pojetí času a narativních technik, kompletní novelistické dílo Virginie Woolfové je analyzováno chronologicky podle data vydání. Nemalá část práce je věnována také filosofickému, vědeckému a historickému kontextu, ve kterém byly romány napsány, protože autorčina práce s časem a experimentálními narativními technikami má svou inspiraci práce ve filosoficko-vědeckých teoriích a socio-historických změnách konce devatenáctého a začátku dvacátého století.

Klíčová slova

Virginia Woolfová, čas, narativní technika, relativita, subjektivita, objektivita, Bergson, James, Ricœur, realita, identita, paměť

Abstract

This diploma thesis focuses on Virginia Woolf's conception of time in relation to the narrative techniques the author uses in her novels. The aim of this diploma thesis is to analyse the conception of time characteristic of Woolf's prose but also to point out how closely related this conception of time is to the narrative techniques used by the author. To capture the development of Woolf's conception of time and narrative methods, the novels are analysed chronologically according to their dates of publication. Significant part of this thesis is also devoted to the philosophical, scientific and historical context in which the novels were written because the author's treatment of time and narrative techniques are directly inspired by philosophical and-scientific theories and socio-historical changes at the turn of the 20th century.

Key Words

Virginia Woolf, time, narrative technique, relativity, subjectivity, objectivity, Bergson, James, Ricœur, reality, identity, memory

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1 Introduction

While reading Virginia Woolf's novels, the reader is very often fascinated and struck by several things. First, it is her art to depict ordinary things in a very poetic and extraordinary way, second, it is her unusual and experimental style of narration and third, it is the amount of narrative space she dedicates to time. The latter relates to many other traits of Woolf's works, for example to a depressive tone of her novels, constant reminder of death, quick passage of time, frequent mentions of clock striking or natural life cycle. Time stands out from all the author's novels as if it were one of its characters. Moreover, it may be deduced from Woolf's diary that time was really something precious for her as she always tried to use it in the most efficient way between her terrible headaches and fits of depression (Leaska 373). Exactly this preciousness of time related not only to Woolf's works but also to the author herself inspired the choice of theme of this diploma thesis. Therefore, this diploma thesis focuses on Virginia Woolf's conception and treatment of time in her novels in relation to the narrative techniques the author uses to express time in her works. Writing a bachelor's thesis only on Woolf's conception of time in her works inspired the idea how closely related the conception of time and a narrative technique in each work are. For this reason, the diploma thesis aims to analyse both notions equally. The main focus of this thesis is to examine the way Woolf treats time in her works, distinguish and describe various kinds of time that she contrasts and juxtaposes at the same time. It is also important to hint at the notion's significance for the interpretation of the novels. Concerning Woolf's narrative techniques, the emphasis is put on a brief analysis of each technique and on the way a particular narrative technique enables the author to enrich, develop and extend her temporal conception. Last but not least, quite a large part of the thesis is dedicated to Woolf's inspirations for her conception of time and narrative techniques, i.e. to the literary, scientific, historical and philosophical context at the turn of the 20th century. One of the thesis's secondary aims is thus to point out that Woolf's treatment of time and her experimentation with time by means of various narrative techniques is not a mere result of her originality but that it is heavily influenced by the intellectual context of the period which was ground-making in many aspects. High number of technical inventions, new scientific theories, for example the invention of aeroplanes, the introduction of the theory of relativity or the birth of psychoanalysis as well as social changes, for example the relative economic growth at the beginning of the 20th century, acquisition of voting rights or the outbreak of the First World War made writers reflect on the necessity to reform writing and implement the foregoing changes

into their works. Of course, Woolf represents no exception and as she mentions in her essay “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown”, “about December 1910, human character changed” to which a modern writer must respond.

As far as the methodological aspect of this diploma thesis is concerned, the thesis analyses Woolf’s novels chronologically despite the original intention to devote each chapter to a particular temporal or narrative aspects which would be analysed in relation to relevant novels. This thematic structure of the thesis would disable analysis of gradual development of Woolf’s conception of time and narrative techniques from the very first novel to the last one. The body of this diploma thesis is thus divided into three parts – early novels, chefs-d’oeuvres and late novels according to the dates of publication. This chronological structure permits to depict Woolf’s conception of time and narrative techniques in a particular stage of her writing career and compare it with other stages of her writing career.

The first part of the thesis focuses on three early novels *The Voyage Out*, *Night and Day* and *Jacob’s Room*. Although the first two novels resemble more traditional novels of the period, for example Arnold Bennett’s *Hilda Lessways* or John Galsworthy’s *The Forsyte Saga*, it is possible to trace several temporal aspects that were developed further in Woolf’s following novels, for example the intense awareness of time’s passage leading to death, the inseparability of the past, the present and the future or the very germ of the division of objective and subjective perception of time, scientific and individual perception of time. All these features are developed in *Jacob’s Room* that represents Woolf’s first real experimental novel in which she abandons the traditional narrative form and gives way to less traditional and fragmentary means of narration.

The second part of the thesis is concerned with Woolf’s most famous novels *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando* and *The Waves*. These novels represent the author’s most innovative works in which she makes full use of the stream of consciousness technique, moments of being and the tunnelling process. A special focus is put on the theme of death, particularly on the pure shock of death characteristic of the early novel *Mrs Dalloway* leading to the reconciliation with death and the triumph over death in the latter novels *Orlando* and *The Waves*. Apart from that, the aim is to highlight how time is more and more represented in the novels and how temporal traits, for example clock-striking the sense of hastiness, dominate and structure the novels. Moreover, it is important to hint at Woolf’s constant effort to break through the limits of the novelistic genre from *Mrs Dalloway*, novel that preserves certain novelistic features, to *The Waves*,

highly experimental work that represents the author's most abstract and demanding work providing no coherence, main characters or a plot.

The third part of the diploma thesis is dedicated to Woolf's late novels *The Years* and *Between the Acts*. Woolf abandons her highly experimental fiction of the 1920s and 1930s and returns to a more traditional narration in *The Years* but explores the possibility of a play within a novel in her posthumously published novel *Between the Acts*. Although Woolf partly develops further her conception of time in the late novels, her main focus is on history. In both novels, she is interested in the importance of English history as well as in a family or an individual's history and the theme of personal identity related to it. The two novels are written at the dawn of the Second World War and Woolf's intensified awareness of history, mainly references to prehistory that we discuss in the chapter dedicated to the last novel, may be considered as the author's means to fight the danger of the upcoming war and to point out what may be lost by the horrors of the war.

As far as individual chapters of this diploma thesis are concerned, each chapter focuses on one of Woolf's novels and contains several sub-chapters. After setting context of a particular novel, the focus is on the analysis of the narration and then on the analysis of temporal aspects. We always try to point out how temporal aspects of a particular novel are linked to its narrative strategy and techniques. The analyses of the novels have shown that most of Woolf's titles reveal something about the novels' narrative and temporal aspects. For this reason, some space is left for the analysis of the novels' titles. Apart from the analysis of the narrative structure and the conception of time in a novel in question, each chapter also comments on motifs or various narrative traits that are closely or sometimes less closely related to Woolf's treatment of time, for example on memory and its importance in the novels, the theme of death and re-birth, natural descriptive passages or the problem with the definition of the self and identity.

As far as the methodological aspects of the diploma thesis are concerned, the analysis of each novel proceeds from examination of one theme to the analysis of another theme and these analyses are mostly supported by a close reading of chosen quoted passages and relevant ideas from secondary sources. The aim is also to provide an original insight into the novel in question. Individual narrative techniques or specific temporal aspects are always described and analysed in connection to the novel in which they are prevalent. For example, we discuss the stream of consciousness narrative technique and the tunnelling process in the chapter focused on *Mrs Dalloway*, moments of being in the chapter focused on *To the Lighthouse* and the natural time in the chapter dedicated to *The*

Waves. Despite of that, it is also significant to point out how particular narrative or temporal aspects are treated in the other novels and whether there is a difference in their use in comparison to the previously discussed novel.

2 Early Novels

2.1 *The Voyage Out*: A Traditional Novel or the Foundation Stone for Further Experiments?

Virginia Woolf's first novel *The Voyage Out* was first published in 1915 and it is interesting to analyse this novel in terms of its similarities or differences with Woolf's latter novels. The novel introduces some aspects of Woolf's poetics that are further developed or modified in the following works.

As far as the narrative technique is concerned, Woolf chooses to use the traditional third-person narration, more precisely the omniscient narrator characteristic of the 19th century's Victorian novels. On the one hand, her omniscient narrator does not participate and intervene in the novel's story but on the other hand, he lets us take a look into a character's mind, which is replaced by the use of the stream of consciousness technique in her latter novels. By using gradually more daring modifications of the traditional novelistic narration, Woolf tries to innovate her narrative techniques and the representation of characters as she states in her essay "Character in Fiction", published in 1924 under the title "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown". She says that "about December 1910 human character changed" (Woolf, *Essays* 38) and that a Georgian novelist must search for new ways to depict his characters and focus on their inner thoughts rather than on minute descriptions of external details and a character's background as the Edwardian writers did. In *The Voyage Out*, Woolf is halfway between the Edwardian narration and modern Georgian one because she achieves to "supplement the narrator's voice by establishing an interaction between it [the narrator] and the voice of each of the main characters" (Galbiati and Harris 68). Woolf thus combines the direct speech and indirect speech where the narrator informs us about the characters' feelings and thoughts.

Regarding the conception and representation of time in this novel, it is also quite traditional because the experimentation with the conception of time is always very closely related to the narrative technique. However, it is possible to trace several temporal aspects that are further developed in Woolf's latter novels. As far as the title of the novel is concerned, it has, as other Woolf's novels, for example *To the Lighthouse* or *The Waves*, both literal and possible symbolic meaning, and is descriptive both of time and space as Hermione Lee points out in her *The Novels of Virginia Woolf* (32). The title refers to the voyage to South America that Rachel Vinrace undergoes on her father's ship, thus to a

physical journey made from homely England to an unknown exotic destination, as well as to the psychological inner voyage of Rachel's young soul that matures during its course. She starts the journey as an innocent virgin-like character who knows nothing about life, namely about its sexual aspects, but discovers its secrets, grows mentally, gains experience and knowledge, and matures. This journey-process, of course, takes certain time and results in Rachel's death caused by a serious exotic illness. The title thus has both spatial and temporal dimension because the "voyage out" represents certain period of Rachel's life. Woolf sets her first novel in a distant exotic wilderness that she presents as a secluded extraordinary and only possible place where her characters can make their psychological journey and mature. However, she does not need such a "crutch" in her latter novels. There, she is already able to create a self-sufficient inner space-time for her characters in familiar places, for example in London as in *Mrs Dalloway*, by different narrative techniques, namely by the already mentioned stream of consciousness or her moments of being. Lee points out that "after *Night and Day* [Woolf's second novel] the characters are increasingly enabled to create a balance between the demands of an ordinary external landscape and the sensations of their inner lives" (35).

From the temporal perspective, the novel may be regarded as the very condensation of Rachel's life, of human life in general, which is often defined by Woolf as a journey towards death. Already in this novel, Woolf emphasises human lives' fleetingness and the subjective rapidity of its passage perceived by the characters of her novels:

And life, what was that? It was only a light passing over the surface and vanishing, as in time she would vanish, though the furniture in the room would remain. Her dissolution became so complete that she could not raise her finger any more, and sat perfectly still, listening and looking always at the same spot. [. . .] She continued to be conscious of these vast masses of substance for a long stretch of time, the clock still ticking in the midst of the universal silence. (Woolf, *The Voyage* 136)

In the quotation above, it is possible to notice the division between the physical, chronological, time and subjectively perceived time which is most vivid in Woolf's latter novels, for example in *Mrs Dalloway* where the chronological time is constantly reminded by clock-striking but within this linear temporal frame the characters re-experience past events or recall randomly certain memories and do not fully live in the present moment. Moreover, it is characteristic of Woolf to make clear distinction between

the material that is durable and does not perish and the spiritual that is transient and vanishing. However, it sometimes is the spiritual that is durable and the material that decays in Woolf's works. Fragility of human beings is highlighted several times in the novel, for example when Rachel points out that "the world is composed entirely of vast blocks of matter, and that we're nothing but patches of life" (330).

The novel also contains the very germ of Woolf's "moments of being" discussed later in this thesis in relation to the novel *To the Lighthouse*. In *The Voyage Out*, there are similar moments when characters plunge into a mild state of trance or ecstasy during which they experience powerful sensations and are able to liberate themselves from the chronologically ordered reality. At the very beginning of the novel we are introduced to Mr and Mrs Dalloway whom we meet as main characters in the latter novel *Mrs Dalloway*. In *The Voyage Out*, Clarissa Dalloway expresses the same joy of life as in the latter novel as she pronounces out loud these exclamations "I often wonder what I've done to be so happy!" or "How good life is!" (61). Clarissa experiences the very same grateful feeling during her conscious state of being near the beginning of *Mrs Dalloway* when she is lying in bed and listening to the clock's striking. On the other hand, these characters who are enabled to live very intense inner life incline to be aware of a life's finite nature and think constantly about death. Woolf, as an author, suggests a remedy to this cruel reality of natural temporal cycle and lets her characters live after their death as spiritual residues in material things left after them or in minds of the living who keep thinking or them. The feeling of nostalgia and regret related to someone's death is very frequently present in Woolf's novels, namely in "impersonal passages" such as "Time Passes" in *To the Lighthouse* or descriptive passages:

She [Evelyn] took the photograph of her father and mother, and, before she laid it away in her box, she held it for a minute in her hand. Rachel had looked at it. Suddenly the keen feeling of someone's personality, which things that they have owned or handled sometimes preserves, overcame her; she felt Rachel in the room with her; it was as if she were on a ship at sea, and the life of the day was as unreal as the land in the distance. (411)

In this way, Woolf renders her characters immortal and explore the motif of "Time's scythe" so often evoked by many poets and novelists from Shakespeare, Wordsworth to Joyce or Barnes. The same process of immortalization is connected to the characters of Jacob, Mrs Ramsay, Septimus Warren Smith or Percival in Woolf's latter novels.

2.2 *Night and Day*: A Step Back to the Traditional Novel or an Apprentice Work Leading to Elaboration of Innovative Authorial and Narrative Voice?

Whereas writing of Woolf's first novel worsened the author's mental disorder because the author was identifying her depressive attacks with Rachel Vinrace's hallucinations and fits of exotic illness, the writing of the second novel *Night and Day* should have provided a creative therapy (Harris, *Virginia* 56). Woolf was allowed to write only an hour a day and preferably write something amusing with happy ending, thus she wrote a comedy instead of the tragedy of her first novel. The novel *Night and Day* written during the Great War and published in 1919 is undoubtedly the most traditional novel Woolf ever wrote and may be even considered as a step back in the early modernist tone she introduced in her first novel. The publication of the novel did not meet much success, moreover, E.M. Forster called it "a deliberate exercise in classicism" (Raitt 38), which is confirmed by Woolf when she writes in a letter to Ethel Smyth that the novel is "an exercise in the conventional style" (Harris, *Virginia* 56). However, apart from resembling a traditional novel and being an imitation of domestic farce, Shakespearian comedies and Austen's satirical novels (Lee, 54-55), *Night and Day* is Woolf's attempt, maybe a less obvious one, to step out from traditional way of writing, and represents a milestone in the elaboration of the narrative voice prefiguring her latter novels. Moreover, it is possible to trace even the germs of the author's temporal conception in *Night and Day*, similarly as in the first novel.

For the narrative and temporal analysis of the novel *Night and Day*, it is crucial to start with the title. As Lee points out (53), the novel is concerned with two kinds of temporal experience – the private and the social, in other words the internal and the external. The novel is about individuals who struggle within the limits of the conventional. Katharine Hilbery, the heroine of the novel, faces the question whether she should stay an emancipated free young woman or whether she should conform to the conventions of society and get married. The other characters, for example the feminist Mary Datchet, struggle with the same problem and the reader is allowed to look into the characters' thoughts by the means of the omniscient narrator. The word "night" in the title thus represents the internal private reality of the novel's characters and the word "day" stands for the ordered external reality bound with social conventions. The characters may be likened to daydreamers who try to "actualize their daydreams" (68) established in the night of their chaotically ordered thoughts and who seek for light and reconciliation of their psychological internal night with the daylight of everyday physical reality. This is

the crucial problem appearing in all Woolf's novels, for example in *Mrs Dalloway* in relation to Septimus or in *The Waves* in relation to Rhoda. It remains unresolved very often because the author permanently emphasizes how difficult it is to sustain the "vision of an orderly world" (70) and catch a glimpse of truth. Woolf's characters are often able to see the beam of truth and organise the maze of their thoughts only by intense moments of plunging deep into their memory, consciousness or even sub-consciousness, by so-called moments of being similar to Joyce's epiphanies. Such moments of realisation are experienced also by the main characters of *Night and Day* at the very end of the novel:

"It's all so easy - it's all so simple," Katharine quoted, remembering some words of Sally Seal's, and wishing Ralph to understand that she followed the track of his thought. [. . .] Together they groped in this difficult region, where the unfinished, the unfulfilled, the unwritten, the unreturned, came together in their ghostly way and wore the semblance of the complete and the satisfactory. The future emerged from splendid than ever from this construction of the present. [. . .] She felt his arm stiffen beneath her hand, and knew by this token that they had entered the enchanted region. She might speak to him, but with that strange tremor in his voice, those eyes blindly adoring, whom did he answer? What women did he see? And where was she walking, and who was her companion? Moments, fragments, a second of vision, and then the flying waters, the winds dissipating and dissolving; then, too, the recollection from chaos, the return of security, the earth firm, superb and brilliant in the sun. (Woolf, *Night* 488-489).

This passage resembles Woolf's abstract philosophical passages in her most known novels, namely passages from *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*. However, the plunge into an intense "proto-moment of being" is mediated by the omniscient narrator who respects Woolf's traditional way of describing these moments. It means that the narrative proceeds from a concrete image, here two lovers walking hand in hand through streets of London, to an abstract, more general and universal dimension which is represented in the passage by the disappearance of the two main characters [this idea results from the fact that the questions in the passage have no specific addressee but rather general one and may be considered as rhetorical] and re-establishment of order in the form of light shed on the characters' minds full of chaotic thoughts. It is important to point out that the quoted passage is set at night, thus the reference to sunlight corresponds to

the actual moment of vision, to the revelation of truth. The characters' psychological change, therefore, may be likened to a journey from obscurity to light, thus from a night till a day as the title of the novel suggests. As Lee points out, it is also worth noticing how the novel *Night and Day* develops in terms of language that becomes more metaphorical and impressionistic at the end of the novel where the two lovers Katharine and Ralph “aspire to the vision of truth and their relationship is described in terms of light” (Lee 69). Both, the moments of being and the impressionistic language are crucial narrative features in Woolf's most emblematic novels that are analysed later in this thesis. Despite the length and conventional narration of *Night and Day*, novel may be considered the first stage in the elaboration of not only Woolf's specific authorial voice but also the subjective narrative voice as the author slowly gives up the omniscient narration.

The above-mentioned change in narrative style is related to Woolf's specific temporal conception already prefigured in her 1919 novel. As in the preceding novel *The Voyage Out*, it is possible to trace here the influence of French philosopher Henri Bergson, namely his idea of “durée” or “duration”. Bergson, who influenced also the most famous French modernist author Marcel Proust and his concept of “mémoire affective”, makes a distinction between time as a linear scientific phenomenon that is measurable and “durée” as the subjective perception of the constant flow of time that is measurable only in terms of quality. He explains that every present moment bears some traces of the past and anticipates the future. Therefore, the present moment is in fact non-existent and transitory. It is precisely this idea that is expressed by Katharine's mother, Mrs Hilbery, in *Night and Day*:

“I'm sure Mr. Denham would like to see our things, Katharine. I'm sure he's not like that dreadful young man, Mr. Ponting, who told me that he considered it our duty to live exclusively in the present. After all, what *is* [sic] present? Half of it it's the past, and the better half, too, I should say,” she added, turning to Mr. Fortescue. (Woolf, *Night* 6)

This quotation is rather illustrative since it summarises quite simply the attitude Woolf's characters usually have towards time. If they live in some temporal dimension, it is definitely not the present. They are usually quite hostile to the present moment and unable to live fully in the present from which they escape into the past or they anticipate the future. This perception of time may be imposed on the characters by Woolf's own experience. As we know from her essays, for example from “A Sketch of the Past”, she was very reluctant to give up the past, which results in the elegiac nature of her novels.

Moreover, Katharine's mother Mrs. Hilbery, who tries to write a biography of her father, a famous poet, struggles with the question how to represent the past reality and she finds no solution till the end of the novel. She wants to represent her father's life in an orderly and preferably chronological way but it seems impossible because she recollects the thoughts and images from the past only randomly and involuntarily. She shows a written part of the biography to her daughter who suggests that the text should be more organized:

"It's very beautiful," she stated, "but, you see, mother, we ought to go from one point to point."

"Oh, I know," Mrs. Hilbery exclaimed. "And that's just what I can't do. Things keep coming into my head. It isn't that I don't know everything and feel everything (who did know him, if I didn't?), but I can't put it down, you see. There's kind of blind spot," she said, touching her forehead, "there. And when I can't sleep o' nights, I fancy I shall die without having done it." (105)

Throughout the novel, Mrs Hilbery struggles with the completion of the biography similarly as Lily Briscoe struggles to finish her painting in *To the Lighthouse* and as Woolf herself struggles with writing of the biography of her friend Roger Fry. These struggles are reminiscent of Woolf's own struggle to find a modern and satisfactory way of artistic creation and representation of reality, or, to put it more precisely, the impossibility to represent external reality and her tendency to focus on the subjective internal reality. In the quotation above, Mrs Hilbery hints at the modernist innovations in portraying literary characters, which is rather precisely summarised in Paul Ricœur's commentary on modernist literature in his *Time and Narrative*: "What now holds the centre of attention is the incompleteness of personality, the diversity of the levels of the conscious, the subconscious, and the unconscious, the stirring of unformulated desires, the inchoative and evanescent character of feelings" (10). The same ideas Virginia Woolf expresses in her essay "Mrs Bennett and Mrs Brown" where she points out that the traditional writers, "the Edwardians", concentrate too much on external details and the chronological order of events. Mrs Hilbery's ideas expressed in the quotation above thus coincide with the functioning of memory described by Bergson in his *Time and Free Will*. The philosopher often interchanges the term "memory" for "consciousness" and claims that human consciousness tends to abandon the linear idea of time, and instead of linear exposition of events and impulses, it exposes them in a manner that they permeate one

another, as if one coincided with the other, and cooperated with the other: “distinct states of external world give rise to states of consciousness which permeate one another, imperceptibly organize themselves into a whole, and bind the past into the present by this very process of connexion” (Bergson, *Time* 121). Bergson's concept of “durée” described in the previous sentence is very similar to Mrs Hilbery's problem to separate events of her father's life and recount them in a chronological order since she is able to recollect only one unified image of her father's life.

As in the first novel *The Voyage Out*, time is often referred to as some divinity and it is sometimes written with the initial capital letter. There is a long tradition in literature to consider time as something hostile and merciless because of its very fast passage that causes anxiety in human minds. Gradually, time's role in Woolf's novels becomes more and more important that it seems to be one of the main characters in her most known novels *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*. It is interesting that Woolf mentions an exact hour or exact temporal references in most of her novels and the second novel *Night and Day* is not an exception. This is traceable in the following quotation from the novel:

At a quarter-past three in the afternoon of the following Saturday Ralph Denham sat on the bank of the lake in Kew Gardens, dividing the dial-plate of his watch into sections with his forefinger. The just and inexorable nature of time itself was reflected in his face. He might have been composing a hymn to the unhasting and unresting march of that divinity. He seemed to greet the lapse of minute after minute with stern acquiescence in the inevitable order. His expression was so severe, so serene, so immobile, that it seemed obvious that for him at least there was a grandeur in the departing hour which no petty irritation on his part was to mar, although the wasting time wasted also high private hopes of his own. (Woolf, *Night* 315)

The quotation perfectly sums up the relation of Woolf's characters to time. The characters are usually described as small beings who must submit to the omnipotent divinity of time that devours them with an hourly regularity. They also seem to have this idea constantly in their mind as it is “reflected in their face”.

2.3 *Jacob's Room*: Woolf's First Genuine Narrative Experiment

2.3.1 Narrative Experiment

Woolf's third novel *Jacob's Room* published in 1922 by the Hogarth Press as the publishing house's first full-length novel, which Mitchell Leaska mentions in his *Granite and Rainbow: The Hidden Life of Virginia Woolf* (218), represents a turning point in her writing career and anticipates her most accomplished novels. The novel steps out from the traditional way of writing characteristic of the first two novels. In *Jacob's Room*, Woolf abandons the omniscient and impersonal narration and launches her experiments with the novelistic form. In this aspect, the novel may be comparable with the most prominent modernist works published in the same year, Eliot's poem *The Waste Land* and Joyce's novel *Ulysses*. In the spring of the same year, Woolf discovers Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* via its first English translation and she is completely fascinated by it as she confides to her friend Roger Fry (220). However, the experiment of *Jacob's Room* was not created out of blue. Even though Woolf herself claimed that it was just an experiment, its narrative innovations are based on her short fiction "The Mark on the Wall", "An Unwritten Novel" and "The Mark on the Wall" written in 1919 and grouped later in the collection of short stories *Monday or Tuesday*. First, the discussion focuses on the influence of the former and it proceeds to the analysis of the novel.

There is a doubt whether it is appropriate to classify Woolf's first published short story "The Mark on the Wall" as a short story because it breaks the conventions of this genre. It has no plot and even no proper character because it is only a plunge into a character's mind provoked by the external stimulus of the mark on the wall that turns out to be a snail at the end of the short story. Woolf thus chooses a quite ordinary subject of her writing that she uses to establish a new form of narration focusing on the internal and subjective perception. That, of course, implies a very personal narrative viewpoint, which is one of the key features of modernist fiction. The short story consists of a list of associations provoked by the stimulus of the mark and these association and random thoughts are juxtaposed and presented to the reader in an illogical and haphazard way. Fragments of already stored sensual perceptions produced by our consciousness also give rise to the temporal play in the short story because the main character can recall sensations experienced long time ago as easily as the most recent ones. Woolf's fragmentary nature of narration is often labelled as impressionist because the way she describes separate poetic images reminds us of impressionist paintings that, no matter of how many small brush strokes they consist and in which order they are put on a canvas, create one organic

unity. This may be also applied to the fragments of perceptions evoked by our consciousness in a non-organized way as the separate fragments create the overall image. As it is known, Woolf was fascinated by London's first Post-Impressionist exhibition entitled "Manet and the Post-Impressionists" and organized by her close friend Roger Fry in 1910. The impressionist paintings are based on the technique that juxtaposes small brush strokes in order to depict the transitory nature of our impressions. These paintings often depict appearance of a single scene changing according to a given day time or a season and how these changes affect our perception. The perfect example of this artistic intention are Monet's paintings of the cathedral in Rouen. As Leaska points out (12), the impressionists were accused of creating nonsensical images of reality but in fact, these representations may seem more authentic as they intend to depict human impressions and mood raised by the external. On the contrary, realist painters focus on mere copying of the external without paying attention to its fleeting nature. Leaska thus draws the parallel between the realist painters and the Edwardian writers who worshipped the external, excluded transient nature of human perception and only copied the external reality.

The end of the short story anticipates the leitmotif that interests Woolf in *Jacob's Room*, the war: "Though it's no good buying newspapers. . . .Nothing ever happens. Curse this war; God damn this war! . . . All the same, I don't see why we should have the snail on our wall" (Woolf, *Monday* 54). The snail represents a central theme also in Woolf's short story "Kew Gardens" that might be labelled not only as impressionist but also as cinematographic because the reader has to adopt the viewpoint of the snail that records its surroundings in the park as a kind of video camera. Everything is described very precisely as if "external figures appeared and disappeared with such brilliant clarity that we could almost photograph them from the words" (Holtby 111). The viewpoint is thus even narrower and smaller than in the previously discussed short story. The snail is the tool that Woolf uses to provide the reader with the images and sensations connected to a sunny afternoon spent in a park. She is interested in the way external reality affects human consciousness, similarly as Nathalie Sarraute two decades later in her *Tropismes*. Moreover, the language of these two short stories becomes very poetic, which is characteristic of Woolf's latter works. The short story "An Unwritten Novel" focuses on the idea how difficult it is to depict a character in a novel. Whole story is based on a very simple plot – the narrator [probably Woolf herself] is sitting opposite an elder lady on a train and imagines writing a novel about that lady. She makes up her name, family, purpose of the journey by train but focuses so much on unimportant details that it is

impossible to represent her character as one whole. The character is represented only through impressionist fragments of thoughts and images, which is, in fact, the technique used in *Jacob's Room* and Woolf's latter novels. This innovative approach in creation of characters had to be later defended in Woolf's essay "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown".

The novel's title reveals the name of the main character Jacob and suggests that there is a special focus on his room in the strict sense of the word but also in much wider sense referring to "Jacob's world" in general. The title also emphasizes the material reality, compared to latter novels that tend to have more abstract title. Considering the title that does not consist only of the name "Jacob", it may be deduced that the character of Jacob is not the main character and theme of the novel, moreover, that what surrounds and is related to this character is even more important than the character itself. That is exactly the case in *Jacob's Room* where Woolf tries to treat characters in a new way and focuses on the personality of a character, internal reality and external influences that a character is "composed of". She tends to exclude facts, for example important dates in the life of a given character or descriptions of his or her family background. Woolf prefers to represent the character of Jacob only by fragmental episodes of his life mostly offered to the reader through subjective perspectives of people who are somehow related to Jacob. This renders the character of Jacob rather enigmatic as the reader must compose this character of the above-mentioned fragments, which is not quite easy. Despite the effort on the reader's part, the character is far from representing the whole of a personality at the end of the novel. Therefore, title of the novel corresponds mainly to the net of personal or material relations concerning Jacob. Moreover, the title refers to the theme implying at least partly the circular structure of the novel since the reader finds himself or herself in Jacob's nursery in Cornwall at the beginning of the novel and in his "adult room" in London at the end of the novel. The circular themes are typical of Woolf's latter novels, in *Mrs Dalloway* we meet Clarissa Dalloway on the first page of the novel and we bid her farewell at the very end, in *To the Lighthouse* we face the image of the lighthouse at the beginning of the novel and the desired expedition to the lighthouse takes place at the very end of the novel. Woolf thus tends to close "a full circle" at the end of her novels, which hints at the fact how meticulously she thinks her novels through.

As it has already been intimated above, the novel is very interesting in terms of its narrative structure. As Theresa Prudente points out in her *A Special Tender Piece of Eternity: Virginia Woolf and the Experience of Time*, Woolf "de-constructs the traditional development of plot into fragmented episodes" (140) that only very approximately follow

the stages of Jacob's life. First, we learn about his childhood in Cornwall, then, about his studies at Cambridge and early professional life in London followed by travels to France, Italy and Greece where he dies during the war. Moreover, these episodes of Jacob's life are narrated from different perspectives, mainly feminine perspectives, for example the first chapter depicting his childhood is conceived from the viewpoint of his mother and nanny and the chapters devoted to his life in London are narrated from the viewpoint of women with whom he has love affairs. The novel thus consists of succession of nearly impressionist tableaux that create a very incoherent incomplete idea of who Jacob actually is. Moreover, the circular structure of the novel is given not only by the recurrent image of Jacob's room but also by the repetition of the exclamation "Ja-cob! Ja-cob!" shouted by Archer in search of his brother at the beginning of the novel but also by Bonamy with regret over his friend's death at the very end. In addition, it is also the reader who asks for Jacob to learn more about him throughout the novel but till the end of it, he or she is not able to put the fragments of this character together. Woolf thus shows in the novel that the plot is not important for her and that the crucial thing is the actual way she conveys something. She uses the novel as her narrative experiment in which the form of the novel becomes its subject (Lee 72). As for the nature of the narration, this novel does not deal with plunges into its characters' consciousness as her latter novels where Woolf makes use of the stream of consciousness and the tunnelling-process techniques, which are considered as heights of her narrative subjectivism. In *Jacob's Room* she focuses mainly on the characters' external actions that reveal their personality and emotions. As Holtby points out, the novel's "story deals mainly with the external evidence of emotions" and these emotions are expressed mainly by "changing positions and gestures of the characters" (117). On the one hand, Woolf focuses more on the external details in this novel and seems to be a great observer, which links her, against her own displeasure, to the Edwardian novelists she criticises. On the other hand, she abandons objective narration by the means of the subjective narrative fragments discussed above.

2.3.2 Temporal Aspects

Firstly, it is important to point out that the novel is more interesting in terms of narration than of its temporal conception. Secondly, it is necessary to highlight several temporal issues that are characteristic of Woolf's novels. *Jacob's Room* is meant to be Jacob's biography and even though it is only sketchy and rather incomplete, the novel covers the timespan of twenty years of Jacob's life. Despite the readers' expectation of

coming across many important facts and precise dates of Jacob's life, the novel contains only one date, October 1906, the year Jacob started studying at Cambridge University: "Jacob Flanders, therefore, went up to Cambridge in October, 1906" (Woolf, *Jacob's Room* 24). Other important dates are omitted and the reader is exposed to several scenes of Jacob's life and must create his or her own idea of it. This deliberate omission of facts and dates hints at Woolf's disbelief and aversion towards magnification of certain people, events, actions or moments. It is not accidental that there is an essay lying on Jacob's desk entitled "Does History Consists of the Biographies of Great Men?" (34), which coincides with Woolf's doubting of the relevance of Whitaker's Almanack of great facts and men in the short story "The Mark on the Wall". Woolf rather emphasizes the importance of observation of every detail and of living consciously at every moment, which sometimes results in the reader's disinterest in her novels that he or she thinks to be nothing about. In *Jacob's Room*, Woolf does not describe the plunges into a character's consciousness, use the stream of consciousness method or depict moments of being, which disables the temporal play and excludes blurring of the distinction between the past, the present and the future typical of her latter novels. Separate stages of Jacob's life are given in the chronological order, only sometimes, she dares to represent the simultaneity of several actions (Holtby 138). Nevertheless, there are few temporal issues in *Jacob's Room* that appear in Woolf's following novels. First, it is the constant reminder of physical, scientific time measured by a clock-striking that is very often mentioned in the novel. Woolf's characters are usually very conscious of time's passage and they seem to be aware of human mortality in the sense of temporary being, which is also the case of Jacob in the following passage:

The stroke of the clock even was muffled; as if intoned by somebody reverent from a pulpit; as if generations of learned men heard the last hour go rolling through their ranks and issued it, already smooth and time-worn, with their blessing, for the use of the living.

Was it to receive this gift from the past that the young man came to the window and stood there, looking out across the court? It was Jacob. He stood smoking his pipe while the last stroke purred softly around him. Perhaps there had been an argument. He looked satisfied; indeed, masterly; which expression changed slightly as he stood there, the sound of the clock conveying to him (it may be) a sense of old building and time; and himself the inheritor. . . (Woolf, *Jacob's Room* 40)

The quoted passage mentions a clock-striking twice. These mentions are very frequent throughout the novel, maybe as frequent as in Woolf's following novel *Mrs Dalloway*. More importantly, the sense of time's passage is connected with Woolf's perception of time as a continuous flow in which the present moment is rooted in the past and the past and the present merge. The idea of the clock conveying the sense of continuity and Jacob as the inheritor refers to the tradition linked to the past and to the inability of a human being to step out of the constant passage of time and get rid of the past and tradition. Lastly, it is important to point out the nature of narrative strategy in the quoted passage. The reader learns first about the details of the scenes setting and its atmosphere and only then, he or she finds out that it is Jacob who experiences the moment of serene meditation. This is a perfect example of the novel's narrative technique. In *Jacob's Room*, the main character seems to be often mentioned only incidentally and to be unimportant and incomplete while considering the novel as a whole. This leads again to the same issue discussed in the previous paragraphs. The importance of the past always present in a person's life is also hinted at in the following quotation from the novel: "Each had his past shut in him like the leaves of a book known to him by heart; and his friends could only read the title. . ." (62). There is also one beautiful lyrical passage in *Jacob's Room* that contrasts the natural time, described by the changing appearance of nature during a day, with scientific artificial time measured by a clock:

The snow, which had been falling all night, lay at three o'clock in the afternoon over the fields and the hill. Clumps of withered grass stood out upon the hill-top; the furze bushes were black, and now and then a black shiver crossed the snow as the wind drove flurries of frozen particles before it. The sound was that of a broom sweeping-sweeping.

The stream crept along by the road unseen by anyone. Sticks and leaves caught in the frozen grass. The sky was sullen grey and the trees of black iron. Uncompromising was the severity of the country. At four o'clock the snow was again falling. The day had gone out.

A window tinged yellow about two feet across alone combated the white fields and black trees. . . . At six o'clock a man's figure carrying a lantern crossed the field. . . . A raft of twig stayed upon a stone, suddenly detached itself, and floated towards the culvert. . . . A load of snow slipped and fell from a fir branch. . . . Later there was a mournful cry. . . . A motor car

came along the road shoving the dark before it. . . . The dark shut down behind it. . . .

Spaces of complete immobility separated each of these movements. The land seemed to lie dead. . . . Then the old shepherd returned stiffly across the field. Stiffly and painfully the frozen earth was trodden under and gave beneath pressure like a treadmill. The worn voices of clocks repeated the fact of the hour all night long. (96-97)

The above-quoted passage is very similar to natural and lyrical interludes appearing in the novel *The Waves* where passing hours are described by the movement of the sun in the sky and changing colour of the sea. It may be noticed that the two times, the natural and the scientific times as if competed one with the other. The natural time is very nicely expressed by changes of light and weather during a day and this natural cycle seems to be disturbed by the “voices” of mechanical clocks. Special emphasis is to be put on the word “treadmill” and the expression “worn-voices of clocks” that refer to the irrevocability of every hour and approaching death.

The relevance of scientific time is also questioned in the following quotation where Woolf doubts that this kind of time somehow directly influences nature: “There was a church behind them, of course. The church clock struck ten. Did the strokes reach the furze bush, or did the thorn tree hear them?” (131).

2.3.3 The Result of the Experiment

The theme of inevitable passage of time and of approaching death leads to the reflection on what is the novel about and what is its main message. At the beginning of the novel, the reader may be given an impression that the novel is a sort of eulogy of Jacob Flanders as he or she comes to the conclusion that Jacob is the central and unifying element of the novel similarly as Clarissa Dalloway in *Mrs Dalloway* or Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*. While reading the novel further on, the reader may notice something tragic about it, which results in Jacob’s death that is, according to Holtby (120), foreshadowed by certain indicators, for example by the sentence following the exclamation “Ja-cob! Ja-cob!” at the beginning of the novel:

“Ja-cob! Ja-cob!” shouted Archer, lagging on after a second.

The voice had an extraordinary sadness. Pure from all body, pure from all passion, going out into the world, solitary, unanswered, breaking against rocks – so it sounded. (Woolf, *Jacob’s Room* 3)

There is no reason for Archer to use such a tragic tone of his voice. Woolf probably tries to point out the fact that neither Archer, not the reader is going to get an answer from Jacob. There is a sense of vacancy and gradual decay in the sentence following the exclamation, which may intimate Jacob's death at the end of the novel. Gradually, the eulogy changes into an elegy to Jacob, which is the most evident at the end of the novel:

“Jacob! Jacob!” cried Bonamy, standing by the window. The leaves sank down again.

“Such confusion everywhere!” exclaimed Betty Flanders, bursting open the bedroom door.

Bonamy turned away from the window.

“What am I to do with these, Mr. Bonamy?”

She held out a pair of Jacob's old shoes.” (179)

The reader may notice even more hints at Jacob's approaching death, for example when Clara, Jacob's lover, calls, only for herself, “Jacob! Jacob!”. Then, a page later, another female character, Julia Eliot, is aware of the tragic fact that all people “are passing to destruction”:

Yet five minutes after she had passed the statue of Achilles she had the rapt look of one brushing through crowds on a summer's afternoon, when the trees are rustling, the wheels churning yellow, and the tumult of the present seems like an elegy for past youth and past summers, and there rose in her mind a curious sadness, as if time and eternity showed through skirts and waistcoats, and she saw people passing tragically to destruction. (169)

Another hint may be found at the beginning of the novel where the narrator says that Jacob's childish voice “mixed life and death inextricably, exhilaratingly” (10).

The novel *Jacob's Room* is considered a war novel by scholars of Woolf's novels because of Jacob's death in Greece during the Great War. As we know from Woolf's diary, she was very much troubled with both wars and her depressions worsened during their course, which resulted in her suicide in 1941. *Jacob's Room* is often referred to as Woolf's tribute to hundreds of men killed in the Great War and to their wives, mothers and sisters who had to deal with the vacancy left after them (Raitt 42). However, it may be suggested that the novel is mainly an elegy to time and death. Reconciliation with someone's death in general is one of the main themes in the most of Woolf's novels. Jacob's maturing to death resembles the plot of *The Voyage Out*, namely Rachel's

initiation into adult life and premature death. The novel is sometimes regarded as “the masculine counterpart of the feminine story” (Holtby 117) of *The Voyage Out*. Despite the initial eulogising tone that turns into an elegy at the end of both novels and identity of their themes, the ways these themes are treated are completely different. Woolf sticks to the traditional form of narration in the early novel, whereas she dares to experiment in *Jacob’s Room*. It is an important point that Woolf does not focus on the death itself since its actual course is very often omitted from her novels, and that the main focus is on the impact of someone’s death. In *Jacob’s Room*, this impact is most evident in the final passage of the book quoted above in which Bonamy and Mrs Flanders enter the deceased Jacob’s bedroom and find the material things left after him. They face the absence of Jacob’s physical body and the reader realises that the deliberate non-responding to the call “Jacob! Jacob!” and the sense of vacancy connected to it is only a preparation for the final scene. Moreover, the reader also becomes aware of a certain sense of doom or fatality that penetrates the whole novel. The novel is above all about loss. Woolf asks what remains after one’s death and what is the meaning and purpose of life in general. She does not provide the answer immediately but it is to be found in her latter novels focusing on the spiritual impact that someone’s death has. To conclude, it is important to highlight the idea that in *Jacob’s Room* Woolf only intimates this question that is answered later in her following works.

2.3.4 “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown” as an Explanatory Supplement to the Novel

Woolf’s essay “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” was written as a direct response to Arnold Bennett’s claim that “foundation of good prose is character-creating and nothing else” (Woolf, *Selected Essays* 32) and his critique of Woolf’s characters who according to him “do not survive in the mind because the author has been obsessed by details of originality and cleverness” (Leaska 233). The essay was written in 1923, it was revised later and given the title “Character in Fiction” and finally published by the Hogarth Press in 1924 under the original title. It has become a significant key not only to Woolf’s prose but it is often considered a modernist manifesto.

The essay deals mainly with the distinction between the Edwardians, novelists writing during the reign of Edward VII, and the Georgians, writing during the reign of George V (1910 – 1936). Bennett also claimed that there was no talented writer among the young generation of writers. However, he did not realize that the literary and social conventions started to break down as Woolf points out in the essay: “All human relations

have shifted – those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same a change in religion, conduct, politics and literature. Let us place one of these changes about the year 1910” (Woolf, *Selected Essays* 38). Woolf is aware of the fact that novelists such as Bennett or Galsworthy are no longer able to create round characters corresponding to the taste of the new era. Woolf takes as an example Bennett’s novel *Hilda Lessways* in which the creation of a good character is based on minute descriptions of places, family background or social status without any relevance to the actual character. Woolf begs Bennett to come to describing Hilda at last and let the reader hear her voice. His treatment of characters is contrasted with Mrs Brown, an unknown woman whom the narrator of the essay, probably Woolf herself, meets on a train. Woolf describes how novelists similar to Bennett would present her and suggests her proper way of treating Mrs Brown. She insists that the duty of a novelist is to never abandon her and always try to relate everything to that character. She praises the attempts to get rid of all irrelevant artificial “trash” of external reality and asks for looking into the character's mind. She also emphasizes that a novelist is not supposed to impose one and only possible image of his characters on his readers but that he or she needs to provide his readers with the freedom to create their characters themselves. That is the change Woolf talks about in the above-quoted passage. Society, namely human knowledge and perception, changes at the turn of the 20th century not only due to scientific progress and influential philosophical theories but also due to the war that shattered fundamental values of human society and questioned the certainties people gained in the second half of the 19th century and during the “Belle époque”. Above all, there is a great influence of the special theory of relativity that, in general, enabled the acceptance of multiple viewpoints in connection to time and space. Einstein found out that the notion of duration or perception of simultaneity depends on the observer’s position in space. This is the idea generally reflected in modernist fiction. Modernist authors, Woolf, Joyce, Proust or Gide tried to implement this new knowledge into their works that often deal with the question of individual perception and interpretation of the world, of which the perception of time is, of course, only one part. The modernist prose mainly deals with plurality of voices or polyphony of narrative voices, which is exactly the technique used in Woolf’s *Jacob’s Room*. That is the new way of treating characters Woolf defends in her essay. She criticises the Edwardians for imposing their “absolute truth” on their readers and emphasises the role of the reader in the process of a novel’s creation. She talks about readers as of writers’ “strange travelling companions” (50).

Moreover, Woolf points out that modern readers cannot expect “a complete and satisfactory presentment of a character” and need to “tolerate the spasmodic, the obscure, the fragmentary, the failure” (54). Preceding sentence very nicely responds to Bennett’s critique that “The Georgians fail as novelists because they are more interested in details than in the full creation of their individual characters” (32). After reading Woolf’s essay carefully, it is possible to conclude by inverting Bennett’s claim and suggest that the reason why the Georgian authors “fail” is exactly because they care too much how they represent their characters. As we know from Woolf’s diary, she was very much afraid of the public’s response to her experimental novel but fortunately, the novel won not only critical acclaim but also established the core of the author’s readership (Leaska 221 - 222). *Jacob's Room* serves to Woolf as a great practice in her innovative way of characters’ representation that is more elaborated in her following novels.

2.4 What Is Left Behind and What Passes On

This sub-chapter summarizes the first part of the thesis concerning Woolf's early novels *The Voyage Out*, *Night and Day* and *Jacob's Room*. First, the focus is on the narrative aspects of these novels and then on their temporal conception.

The early novels demonstrate Woolf's gradual separation from the traditional narration that was still preferred at the turn of the 20th century. In *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*, she uses the third person narration and omniscient narrator but there are some minor hesitations where it is obvious that she tries to innovate this form of narration. It is more evident in *The Voyage Out* where the omniscient narrator often merges with his characters and tries to speak their mind and describe their inner thoughts and feelings. Woolf thus tends to abandon the objective omniscient narration in favour of more subjective representation, which later results in her stream of consciousness technique and moments of being. In *Night and Day*, the author does not develop further her innovative approach launched in the first novel but she remains closer to more traditional narrative techniques. Her third novel *Jacob's Room* is thus regarded as a rupture and parting with the tradition. The narrative experiment of *Jacob's Room* is prefigured in her short stories "The Mark on the Wall", "Kew Gardens" and "An Unwritten Novel" written at the same time. These short stories demonstrate her attempt to write more subjective and less orderly prose, which results in impressionist literary technique and fragmentary representation of reality. There, Woolf also points out the necessity of a new approach to the creation of characters that she later summarises in her essay "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown". *Jacob's Room* thus becomes Woolf's first important novel where she practises the technique of narrative polyphony and fragmentary representation of the main character. She abandons the traditional chronological narration based on the abundance of external and significant facts and tends to explore more subjective, narrow and incomplete narrative perspectives. This new way of writing enables writers to provide their readers with more freedom of interpretation and also with the privilege to participate in the creation of a novel. Therefore, it is the reader who "co-writes" and completes a novel with its author. Narrative techniques and approaches to writing and literary representation traceable in *Jacob's Room* are later elaborated and improved in the following novels.

As far as the temporal conception of Woolf's early novels is concerned, it is worthy to notice several temporal aspects that are characteristic of all her following novels and prefigure the temporal experiments in *Orlando*, *To the Lighthouse* or *The Waves*.

Already in the early novels, the reader may point out that Woolf certainly struggles with the acceptance of rapid passage of time and emphasizes this notion in her novels by the means of her characters' expressed feelings. Their awareness of time passing mercilessly is often expressed by the sense of approaching death. It is demonstrated in *The Voyage Out* and *Jacob's Room*, novels that try to condense the main characters' lives in order to show that life is only "a light passing over the surface and vanishing" (Woolf, *The Voyage* 136). The presence of death in Woolf's early novels sets the elegiac tone of her latter novels where time and death seem to be one of the main characters. However, the fact that the characters are conscious of the evanescence of human life enables them to live intensively every moment and experience Bergson's concept of "duration" based on the idea that every moment bears some traces of the past and foretells the future, the present moment is thus nearly non-existent. Another temporal aspect connected to the awareness of time's passage is the constant reminder of time by the means of clock-striking that is mentioned very often already in Woolf's early novels, mainly in *Night and Day* and *Jacob's Room*. Clock-striking represents the scientific, linear time that is often contrasted in Woolf's novels with natural time expressed by the movement of the sun in the sky and other natural movements as it has been pointed out in relation to *Jacob's Room*. The most artful representation of the natural time may be found in Woolf's novel *The Waves*. Moreover, the scientific time is usually contrasted even with the subjective perception of time that enables the perceiver to give up the chronological succession of events and experience their a-linear recollection, which is the focus of Woolf's latter novels.

3 Chefs-d'oeuvre

3.1 *Mrs Dalloway*: Connected Caves and Time's Party

Woolf's fourth novel *Mrs Dalloway* was published in 1925 and it is based on the short story "Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street" that the author wrote in 1923. The short story introduces Mrs Dalloway who is walking the streets of London and buying gloves before a party. Woolf explores new narrative techniques in this short story because it is narrated from constantly changing perspectives of people Clarissa Dalloway meets during her walk. The author decided to develop this technique in a novel, which results in *Mrs Dalloway*, novel that is very interesting in terms of its narration but also its temporal conception.

The novel, if it may be classified within the genre of the novel, was originally entitled "The Hours" [this title was borrowed later by Michael Cunningham for his pastiche of *Mrs Dalloway*]. This title tends to emphasize the abstract concept of time that dominates the novel often considered to be a story about time as proposed by Ricœur in his *Time and Narrative* (101). Time is really one of the crucial elements of the novel and it may be even regarded as one of its characters because it is constantly represented throughout the novel by Big Ben's and other London's bells' striking reminding us of so-called "clock-time" that is contrasted with "consciousness time" corresponding to human subjective perception of time (Lee 112). However, Woolf finally decides to use more concrete image and entitles the novel after its main character Clarissa Dalloway, which is quite significant since it suggests that the novel deals thoroughly with this person and provides the reader with a "plunge" [this word appears very frequently in the novel and is very important for its analysis] into her inner and outer life. In comparison with *Jacob's Room*, Woolf forges ahead from the sketchy external narration intimated by the title "Jacob's Room", as it is analysed in the previous chapter, towards the subjective narration enabling truthful and an inner-directed representation of characters via various narrative techniques, predominantly the stream of consciousness technique and "tunnelling process" technique. Woolf's hesitation about the novel's title, whether she uses time-centred "The Hours" or character-centred "Mrs Dalloway", points out the fact that the novel's theme is as important as its narrative structure and temporal frame and how closely the temporal conception is related to the narrative techniques used in the given work. The following sub-chapter analyses first the novel's structure and second its temporal conception.

3.1.1 Interrupted Stream of Consciousness and Caves Connected by the Tunnelling Process

As Lee points out, *Mrs Dalloway* is Woolf's first novel where she tends to abandon the external narrator and "penetrates right into human hearts" (91). This penetration is achieved by the use of the stream of consciousness method that she practised in her short fiction mentioned in the previous chapter. This technique was first described by William James in his scientific work *The Principles of Psychology* (Chapter 15) as the ever-flowing succession of various feelings and thoughts which strike our consciousness:

If the present thought is of A B C D E F G, the next one will be of B C D E F G H, and the one after that of C D E F G H I -- the lingerings of the past dropping successively away, and the incomings of the future making up the loss. These lingerings of old objects, these incomings of new, are the germs of memory and expectation, the retrospective and the prospective sense of time. They give that continuity to consciousness without which it could not be called a stream.

The functioning of consciousness described in the passage is very nicely demonstrated on the novel's characters whose sense perception of the present is bound with the past and anticipates the future. Even though Woolf uses this technique, it is not pure stream of consciousness poured out by a first-person narrator but it is often introduced by a third-person narrator. Only after this introduction, the reader plunges into an authentic stream of consciousness and the third-person narrator merges with the character's subjective voice. Moreover, the stream of consciousness passages in *Mrs Dalloway* are interspersed with descriptive passages and third-person narratives of external action. Pure long first-person stream of consciousness passages, similar to Molly's final internal monologue in Joyce's *Ulysses*, appear in Woolf's latter novels, namely in *The Waves*. The free indirect speech mostly used in the novel is the author's powerful tool to represent the characters' consciousness – their thoughts, emotional states and ideas, which enables the reader to relate naturally to them. However, the reader does not face the abundance of one character's internal feelings because Woolf often changes perspectives and shifts her focus from one character to another one. This is most striking in the long chapter set in Regent's Park where the narrative focus shifts without a warning and a clear boundary from Clarissa to Septimus and Rezia and various passers-by. This long scene reminds us of the changing narrative focus in Woolf's short story "Kew Gardens" also set in a park.

Another technique closely connected to the stream of consciousness method is the tunnelling process. This technique is described by Woolf when she thinks about writing in her diary's entry of the 30th August 1923: "My discovery: how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters: I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humour, depth. The idea is that the caves shall connect and each comes to daylight in the present moment" (Woolf, *A Writer's Diary* 59). The novel *Mrs Dalloway* deals with the timespan of approximately twelve hours and it describes an ordinary day in lives of its characters. Even though the author narrates the characters' agenda in chronological order, it is completed with long accounts of their past. These accounts usually result from subjective streams of consciousness when a character is reminded of something from the past and plunges into his or her memory. The reader thus learns more about that particular character. This technique is demonstrated on the following passage from the very beginning of the novel:

Mrs Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself.

For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges; Rumpelmayer's men were coming. And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway; what a morning – fresh as if issued to children on a beach.

What a lark! What a plunge! For 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 window 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? [. . .] – Peter Walsh. He would be back from India one of these days, June or July, she forgot which . . . (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 3)

The beautiful fresh morning described in the passage above reminds Clarissa of her frequent stays at Bourton when she was young. The present moment is immediately abandoned at the very beginning of the passage, the rupture is represented by the word "plunge", and the reader is dragged into the past. The past is recollected by the means of free associations and the description is quite incomplete since Woolf does not explain

who Peter Walsh is or where Bourton is. She reveals to us only one separate incoherent piece of information at a given time. The characters' past is thus told in instalments (Prudente 35) until one character's tunnel is completed and joins the tunnels of all the other characters. Finally, the "caves" [refers to the passage quoted from Woolf's diary] are all connected in the present moment. This junction of tunnels is represented by the party at the end of the novel where the characters' stories are connected even though all characters are not present in the same place. Woolf masters her narrative strategy while she treats her characters as separate "units" that barely interact with each other and who finally meet, or do not physically meet, at Clarissa's party. For example, Clarissa and Septimus are linked together only by the mediator of doctor Bradshaw. Woolf discussed the fictional form with Jacques Raverat, a French painter who was a friend of the Bloomsbury Group, and they agreed on the necessity to give up flat linearity and give way to a more profound, almost "plastic" narrative form. Woolf suggests to Raverat that "it is the task of the writer to go beyond the formal railway line of the sentence and to show how people feel or think or dream all over the place" (Lee 93). It may be suggested that the tunnelling process represents the same technique described in the preceding sentence. By the means of this technique, the author can link and juxtapose the past, the present and the future and gather the novel's characters at the very end of the novel without respecting linearity or chronology. The last quoted extract from the novel shows the effort to merge the past, the present and the future and to escape linearity. The novel starts in the present moment and in medias res. Clarissa Dalloway is introduced and then the scene immediately shifts deep into the past. Finally, the reader is brought back into the present moment while Woolf mentions Peter's arrival from India. Moreover, the mention of the arrival may seem to be a proleptic reference to Clarissa's upcoming meeting with Peter Walsh. The technique of tunnelling process concerns also all the other characters of the novel, most importantly Septimus Warren Smith whose life story is also narrated "in instalments" and the reader can assemble the fragments of this character only after his death at the very end of the novel. Lee points out that the sequence of events represents only the novel's "bare bones" (98). It may be added that the flesh of the novel is represented precisely by the instalments of the characters' past, alienation from the present moment and vivid streams of consciousness and impressionist descriptions. The actual events are only of a little importance. It is more interesting how "all the activity [of the novel] is carefully held together by a specific use of time and place" (98). This phenomenon is analysed in the following subchapter.

3.1.2 Novel About Time

As it has already been mentioned in the introduction to the novel, time is one of its most important elements and may be nearly considered one of its characters. Time is represented in the novel by the clock-striking of Big Ben and St. Margaret. The striking creates the temporal frame of the novel that takes place within twelve hours. The novel begins in the morning and the first Big Ben's striking is mentioned when Clarissa gets out to buy flowers:

For having lived in Westminster – how many years now? Over twenty-one feels even in the midst of the traffic, or waking at night, Clarissa was positive, a particular hush, or solemnity; an indescribable pause; a suspense (but that might be her heart, affected, they said, by influenza) before Big Ben strikes. There! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 3-4)

The bell-striking mentioned in the passage opens the day dedicated to Clarissa's party. The sound is described repeatedly throughout the novel. It sets the rhythm of the narrative and also serves as a unifier. This attempt to impose the unity on the novel's structure is most evident while considering the often-repeated sentence "The leaden circles dissolved in the air". The sentence does not only appear at the very beginning and end of the novel, which would hint at the circularity of the narrative, but it also aims to represent the sound waves flying in the air and affecting all the people who hear them. The novel's separate characters are thus unified by time in the form of clock-striking. The same unifying effort appears also in Woolf's latter novels, for example in *To the Lighthouse* where it is the beam of light from the lighthouse that unifies the two sections of the novel and its characters, and in *The Waves*, the novel where unity is achieved by lyrical descriptions of waves breaking at the seashore. Generally, Woolf is not the only modernist author who tries to bound an incoherent and subjective narrative within a clear structure and external unity. Joyce's attempt in *Ulysses* to impose very similar spatial and temporal structure on the novel [a day in the streets of Dublin seen from various perspectives] or Eliot's sophisticated organisation of *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* where several sentences have the same function as the refrain "The leaden circles dissolved in the air", for example "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME" in the former or variations of line "Time present and time past" in the latter.

Moreover, the constant reminder of time in *Mrs Dalloway* does not serve only as a unifier but it also foreshadows important moments of the novel (Holtby 146) and signalizes the change of narrative focus. The former may be demonstrated on the description of a clock-striking right after Peter Walsh visits Clarissa all of a sudden and declares his love for a married woman: “The sound of Big Ben striking the half-hour struck out between them [Clarissa and Peter] with extraordinary vigour, as if a young man, strong, indifferent, inconsiderate, were swinging dumb-bells this way and that” (35). The description of the bell-striking is subjective since it comments on the significance of the moment by the expression “with extraordinary vigour”. The same applies to the moment of Septimus’s death near the very end of the novel followed by another description of clock-striking:

It happened to her [Septimus’s wife Rezia] as she drank the sweet stuff that she was opening long windows, stepping out into some garden. But where? The clock was striking – one, two, three: how sensible the sound was; compared to all this thumping and whispering; like Septimus himself. She was falling asleep. But the clock went on striking, four, five, six . . . (109).

The description comments on the consequences of Septimus’s death and, in fact, defends the man’s decision to end his life while he is referred to be as sensible as the clock-striking. Moreover, it points out the insignificance of limited human time compared to the significance of the never-stopping flow of time, which is one of the main themes of the novel.

As it has already been mentioned, the clock-striking is also used as the means to divide two different narrative perspectives in the novel, for example in the scene in Regent’s Park where the narrative focus shifts several times. On the one hand, the clock-striking serves as a clear distinction between two different viewpoints but on the other hand also as their unifier:

It was precisely twelve o’clock; twelve by Big Ben; whose stroke was wafted over the northern part of London; blent with that of other clocks, mixed in a thin ethereal way with the clouds and wisps of smoke and died up there among seagulls – twelve o’clock struck as Clarissa Dalloway laid her green dress on her bed, and the Warren Smiths walked down Harley Street. (69)

The above-quoted passage is preceded by the description of Septimus's opposition to Dr Holmes and the clock-striking interrupts this train of thoughts by a reminder of Clarissa Dalloway's existence. The narrative focus is then shifted further on Hugh Whitbread and Richard Dalloway:

Shredding and slicing, dividing and subdividing, the clocks of Hurley Street nibbled at the June day, counselled submission, and pointed out in chorus the supreme advantages of a sense of proportion, until the mound of time was so far diminished that a commercial clock, suspended above a shop in Oxford Street, announced, genially and fraternally, as if it were a pleasure to Messrs Rigby and Lowndes to give up the information gratis, that it was half-past one. [. . .] so Hugh Whitbread ruminated. . . (76).

3.1.2.1 Contrasting Nature of Time

Mrs Dalloway is one of the novels that Ricœur calls "tales of time" (101) in the second volume of his *Time and Narrative*. It is not accidental that Woolf "gathers the whole significance of fifty years into twenty-four hours" (Holtby 162). Woolf is not only interested in structuring the novel's narrative events within this strict temporal chronological frame but she is more concerned with the impact of generally accepted worship of scientific chronological time and "sense of proportion" [shell-shocked Septimus is diagnosed with the loss of the sense of proportion] on the individual experience of time. According to Ricœur, there are several kinds of time appearing in the novel. These kinds of time are analysed and demonstrated in the following paragraphs.

Generally, the novel demonstrates the contrast between the chronological "scientific" time and psychological time corresponding to individual and subjective experience of time (Ricœur 110). As it has already been mentioned in the previous subchapter, the chronological time is expressed by "the tolling of powerful strokes of Big Ben and other bells in London" (103) that accompany the sequence of the novel's events. The strokes thus represent "the world of action" (104) that is permeated with the world of introspection represented by flashbacks, streams of consciousness and other forms of subjective narration enabling the alienation from linear narrative and incorporation of the past into the main storyline set in the present. Ricœur dares to proceed one step further and defines so-called "monumental time", time of which "chronological time is but the audible expression" (106). This kind of time

is related to external authority, such as the royal family, political representatives or unerring and respected intellectuals. The monumental time in *Mrs Dalloway* is thus not represented only by Big Ben, one of London's landmarks and symbol of the British parliament, but also by Richard Dalloway, member of the parliamentary committee, the presence of a member of the royal family in the streets of Westminster at the beginning of the novel, the plane leaving behind letters of condensed vapour in the sky while advertising something, Peter Walsh as the representative of the British colonialism or Septimus's two psychiatrists worshipping the sense of proportion.

As Ricœur points out, it would be very incomplete and simplified to make only the distinction between the two times described in the previous paragraph. He suggests that the most valuable is the novel's characters' various responses to this phenomenon. The individual experience of time may be demonstrated on Clarissa's and Septimus's different approaches to time that tend to resemble and unify at the very end of the novel. The first clock-striking appears at the very beginning of the novel where Clarissa describes her excitement caused by this reminder. She welcomes it as something that makes her feel alive:

There! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. Such fools we are, she thought, crossing Victoria Street. For Havens only knows why one loves it so, how one sees it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh; but the veriest frumps, the most dejected of miseries sitting on doorsteps (drink their downfall) do the same; can't be dealt with, she felt positive, by Acts of Parliament for that very reason: they love life.
(Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 4)

Clarissa's joy of life is obvious not only from this passage but also from a beautiful impressionist description of her mornings errands. She is described by Woolf as a vivid and enthusiastic person. She does not have problem to accept time's fleeting nature, she is only surprised how fast the day she has for the preparation of her party passes: "Three, good Heavens! Three already!" (86). She accepts even the monumental time described in the previous paragraph. She worships the authority of Big Ben connected also with the authority of her husband:

Love – but here the other clock, the clock which always struck two minutes after Big Ben, came shuffling in with its lap full of odds and ends, which it dumped down as if Big Ben were all very well with his majesty laying

down the law, so solemn, so just, but she [Clarissa] must remember all sorts of little things besides . . . (93)

Clarissa is more emotional in comparison to the reasonable Richard who never loses his sense of proportion. In this regard, she resembles Septimus whose relationship to time is, however, more violent and fearful than Clarissa's. He suffers from the shell-shock as the consequence of his involvement in the Great War, which causes his problem to live in the present moment and forget the past. He constantly experiences flashbacks that drag him from the present moment into the past. Moreover, he writes his nonsensical "odes to time" and every reminder of external time irritates him:

"It is time," said Rezia.

The word "time" split its husk; poured its riches over him; and from his lips fell like shells, like shavings from a plane, without making them, hard, white, imperishable words, and flew to attach themselves to their places in an ode to Time; an immortal ode to Time. He sang . . . (53)

Septimus is reluctant to accept the phenomenon of time as a human construct of external reality. It is the reason why his two psychiatrists label him as a fool who lost his sense of proportion:

To his patients he gave three-quarters of an hour; and if in this exacting science which has to do with what, after all, we know nothing about – nervous system, the human brain – a doctor loses his sense of proportion, as a doctor he fails. Health we must have; and health is proportion; so that when a man comes into your room and says he is Christ (a common delusion), and has a message, as they mostly have, and threatens, as they often do, to kill himself, you invoke proportion [. . .].

Proportion, divine proportion, sir William's goddess, was acquired by Sir William walking hospitals [. . .] Sir William not only prepared himself but made England prosper, secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalised despair, made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views until they, too, shared his sense of proportion . . . (73)

The loss of the sense of proportion suggests that the individual struggles with his position in space and time, is unable to conceive external reality and prefers plunging into his or her subjective internal world. Is it not a theme Woolf deals with in most of her novels? Does she not warn us against the external and constructed on the level of writing but also on the level of general human experience? Septimus has serious problems to reconcile

the external and the internal because for him “the exit from linear perception does not originate a temporary suspension and expansion of time which ends in a re-definition of ordinary perception, but instead marks a more radical and definitive alienation from reality” (Prudente 123), which leads to his suicide near the end of the novel. He is afraid of being locked as a fool who is forced to regain his sense of proportion and to surrender to the monumental time as well. Although Clarissa’s plunges into the past and alienation from linearity do not lead to the loss of sense of reality, it is possible to trace some elements that relate her to Septimus. First, her plunges into the past often give rise to the feeling of regret over the present state of things. Second, Woolf lets Clarissa often pronounce the same lines from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* as Septimus does several times in the novel:

Fear no more the heat o' the sun

Not the furious winter's rages. (Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* 7)

However, Clarissa’s approach to life seems to be quite ambiguous. Her joy of life described in the quoted passage from the very beginning of the novel is often shadowed by fear and feelings of despair and vanity. Precisely this happens at the end of the novel where Dr Bradshaw mentions Septimus’s suicide. This mention lets finally merge the two story-lines of the novel and forces Clarissa to face death:

What business had the Bradshaws to talk of death at her party? A young man had killed himself. [. . .] She had once thrown a shilling into the Serpentine, never anything more. But he had flung it away. They went on living (she would have to go back; the rooms were still crowded; people kept on coming). They (all day she had been thinking of Bourton, of Peter, of Sally), they would grow old. A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was defiance. Death was 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. (134)

At the very end of the novel, Clarissa’s joy of life is thus attenuated as she seems to perceive life in a similar way as Septimus and she admits that death may be a means of escape from the merciless external world dominated by authorities. Unlike Septimus, she decides to bear the oppression of monumental time but admits that she sometimes feels “somehow very like him – the young man who had killed himself” (135). Ricœur

develops this idea and suggests that Septimus may be considered Clarissa's double who dies instead of her. This claim is supported by Lee who adds that Clarissa's and Septimus's responses to external experience are very similar since these responses are mostly expressed in physical terms. Both of them, for example, feel a certain pain in their spine while responding to an unpleasant experience. Septimus's death may represent the embodiment of Clarissa's longing for escape from the everydayness of external reality and for freedom of intense internal and subjective perception of reality. Clarissa's party, which is supposed to be the merriest part of the day, turns out to be an elegy for the young man but also for Clarissa's time wasted on worshipping social conventions and monumental time. However, the melancholic thoughts at the very end of the novel are again interrupted by clock-striking that drags the reader and also Clarissa back into reality. Clarissa remains a "perfect-hostess", as Peter Walsh calls her, who must "assemble" (135). Moreover, the clock-striking marks very emphatically the end of the day as well as the end of the novel, which intimates how cleverly the novel is structured. The end of the novel thus probably expresses the message about the insignificance of human life that is temporally limited in comparison to eternal external reality. However, in the following novels, mainly in *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, Woolf tends to depict death as an entrance ticket to eternity, which represents another milestone in her writing career.

3.2 *To the Lighthouse: Elegy and Search for Permanence and Eternity*

Woolf's fifth novel *To the Lighthouse* was published in 1927 and written with the therapeutic intention to help the author reconcile with the past and with the loss of her parents as she states later in her diary's entry from November 28, 1928, the day of late Leslie Stephen's birthday:

He would have been 96, 96, yes, today; and could have been 96, like other people one has known; but mercifully was not. His life would have entirely ended mine. What would have happened? No writing, no books inconceivable. I used to think of him and mother daily; but writing the *Lighthouse* laid them in my mind. And now he comes back sometimes, but differently. (Woolf, *A Writer's Diary* 138)

As Woolf writes in her diary but also in "The Sketch of the Past", her father was a very authoritative and rational person who tended to overshadow all the other members of the family, mainly the female members of the family. Leslie Stephen and Julia Duckworth (later Julia Stephen) thus represent the models for the characters of Mr Ramsay and Mrs Ramsay in the novel *To the Lighthouse*. The novel thus seems the most autobiographical of the author's novels. Woolf herself admits in her diary entry from June 27, 1925 that she conceives the novel as an elegy and sets the mourning tone of the narrative: "I have an idea that I will invent a new name for my books to supplant "novel". A new – by Virginia Woolf. But what? Elegy?" (80) Apart from the parents, Woolf manages to depict also her sister, a painter, Vanessa Bell. Nevertheless, if the autobiographical aspects of the novel are left aside, a special focus on must be devoted to the novel's most important theme - the treatment of the past, memory and continuation or permanence of it. The novel provides a deep plunge into the author's and the characters' past that tend to be always contained in the present moment and aims to assume its place also in the future, which leads to its transformation into something permanent and in a way eternal as the author provides "a specially tender piece, of eternity" (Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* 114). Woolf's idea to re-define the past and make something permanent is reflected in several aspects of the novel. First, it is the actual process of writing the novel about her past in order to reconcile with it. Second, it is Mr Ramsay's reflection on the possibility of making a difference in the future by his written philosophical treatise but also Mrs Ramsay's attempt to unify the family and make some moments unforgettable for them. Third, it is Lily's struggle to immortalize Mrs Ramsay in her painting and fourth, Mr Ramsay's final decision to re-shape the past and carry out the trip to the lighthouse.

However, this re-definition of the present moment and re-shaped perception of time would not be possible without so-called moments of being that appear in the novel and enable its temporal extension. These moments leading to revelation and re-definition of reality experienced by the novel's characters have certain aspects in common with mystic experience and with Joyce's epiphanies, which is further developed in the following chapter. First, the focus is on the novel's narrative structure and narrative technique in relation to its temporal conception and second, it shifts to the analysis of main motifs and themes dominating the novel.

3.2.1 Two Blocks Joined by a Corridor

Woolf started making notes for a new novel already before the publication of *Mrs Dalloway*. On March 14, 1926 she made some notes concerning themes of short stories she wanted to write and on the following page she mentions also some of the ideas about her following novel. She describes its structure as "two block joined by a corridor", which is exactly the structure of *To the Lighthouse*. The novel consists of three parts, the first and the third parts are much longer than the one in between. The brief medial part connects the two lengthy parts. The first part is called "The Window" and it depicts the Ramsay family's stay in their summer house on the Isle of Skye. This part is set a few years before the Great War and focuses mainly on the character of beautiful, warm-hearted Mrs Ramsay who loves her children and her husband who is a very rational philosopher and who is often very strict. He opposes his wife's and children's opinions and wishes, for example his son's wish to visit the lighthouse that may be seen from their house. This part is followed by the second part of the novel "Time Passes" that, as its title suggests, shifts the narrative in time. This short passage briefly, and in an impersonal way, summarises ten following years and major events in the life of the Ramsay family, for example their absence in the summer house and series of deaths including Mrs Ramsay's death. This part is followed by the third part of the novel entitled "The Lighthouse" that depicts the return of the survived Ramsays and of their friend, woman painter Lily Briscoe. In this section, the promised trip to the lighthouse is finally carried out by Mr Ramsay and Lily finishes the painting of Mrs Ramsay she started in the first section of the book. The story thus reaches its completion. The trip to the lighthouse is very important for the novel as its title suggests. It is worthy to point out that this title has, as the titles of Woolf's previous novels, multiple meanings, both concrete and abstract. On the literal level, it refers to the lighthouse that is seen from the Ramsays' house, but

on the abstract level, it represents a quest to be completed and also the character of Mrs Ramsay as we learn later in the novel. It is also worthy to point out that Woolf's two blocks of the novel are structured in the way that the first one serves as a kind of mirror for the second one. In fact, many motifs and images are doubled or mirrored in the second block of the novel, for example Mrs Ramsay, who is the centre of the first block, remains, despite of her death, the centre of the second block, then, the promised trip to the lighthouse takes place in the second block. Lily paints one picture in the first block but re-paints it in the second one. The first part of the novel, therefore, introduces not only the above-mentioned quest but also the novel's characters and the family's history. The first block, if we borrow Woolf's idea, is entirely concerned with the past and represents the past that is mostly narrated through subjective streams of consciousness or free-indirect speeches culminating in so-called moments of being. The middle part "Time Passes", the corridor, links naturally the two blocks together but the narrative technique used there is quite unusual because Woolf uses one long lyrical passage depicting the changes and a slow decay of the family house that was abandoned for years. This passage is highly impersonal because it does not express any internal feelings until Mrs McNab [the Ramsays' helper] comes and laments over the shabby state of the house. Woolf achieves to describe very masterly the effect that fleeting time has on the house and relate it to the family's history by short and very direct notes in brackets that inform the reader about deaths affecting the family. This information is given as if only incidentally but prepares the reader to the final section of the book focusing on the stay in the summer house without the physical presence of Mrs Ramsay. This section represents the present that is built upon the past described in the first section of the novel.

3.2.2 Moment of Being and Temporal Extension

Moments of being are Woolf's tool to disrupt the linear narration and assimilate the narrative to the natural flow of human consciousness that does not work on the basis of linearity. She summarizes her idea of these moments in her latter memoir "A Sketch of the Past" where she suggests that the most of our everyday lives is filled with "moments of non-being" and that it is mostly a matter of luck if we experience also some "moments of being" during an ordinary day. According to her, the former may be understood as "a kind of nondescript cotton wool" (*Moments* 70) or routine activities that are not lived consciously. On the contrary, the latter is described as moments that a person experiences very consciously and remembers it for a long time, maybe the whole lifetime. She gives

three examples, the first one is a childish fight with her brother when she first realised that people hurt each other, the second one is the moment she was looking at a flower planted in their garden and experienced a feeling of unity and order. The third one is when she heard their parents talking about their family friend who killed himself. She considers these moments as exceptional but points out that only the second one brought her the feeling of satisfaction unlike the other two that aroused a serious state of despair in her. More interestingly, she adds that a lot of these moments “brought with them a peculiar horror and a physical collapse; they seemed dominant; myself [Woolf] passive” (72). This description very aptly depicts similar overwhelming moments experienced by characters of Woolf’s novel, for example experienced by Lily Briscoe and Mrs Ramsay. To proceed to the analysis of a moment of being, it is necessary to quote first Mrs Ramsay’s moment of being and then Lily’s moment of being:

Always, Mrs. Ramsay felt, one helped oneself out of solitude reluctantly by lying hold of some little odd or end, some sound, some sight. She listened, but it was all very still; cricket was over; the children were in their baths; there was only the sound of the sea. She stopped knitting; she held the long reddish-brown stocking dangling in her hands a moment. She saw the light again. With some irony in her interrogation, for when one woke at all, one’s relations changed, she looked at the steady light, the pitiless, the remorseless, which was so much her, yet so little her, which had her at its back and call (she woke in the night and saw it bent across their bed, stroking the floor), but for all that she thought, watching it with fascination, hypnotised, as if it were stroking with its silver fingers some sealed vessel in her brain whose bursting would flood her with delight, she had known happiness, exquisite happiness, intense happiness, and it silvered the rough waves a little more brightly, as daylight faded, and the blue went out of the sea and it rolled in waves of pure lemon which curved and swelled and broke upon the beach and the ecstasy burst in her eyes and waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and she felt, It is enough! It is enough! (*Lighthouse* 72)

She [Mrs Ramsay] had let the flowers fall from the basket, Lily thought, screwing up her eyes and standing back as if to look at her picture, which she was not touching, however, with all her faculties in a trance, frozen over superficially but moving underneath with extreme speed [. . .] The

waves sounded hoarse on the stones beneath. They went, the three of them together, Mrs. Ramsay walking rather in front, as if expected to meet some one round the corner.

Suddenly the window at which she was looking was whitened by some light stuff behind it. At least then somebody had come into the drawing-room; somebody was sitting in the chair. For Heaven's sake, she prayed, let them sit still there and not come floundering out to talk to her. Mercifully, whoever it was stayed still inside; had settled by some stroke of luck so as to throw an odd-shaped triangular shadow over the step. It altered the composition of the picture a little. It was interesting. It might be useful. Her mood was coming back to her. One must keep looking without for a second relaxing the intensity of emotion, the determination not to be put off, not to be bamboozled. One must hold the scene – so- in a vice and let nothing come in and spoil it. One wanted, she thought, dipping her brush deliberately, to be on a level with ordinary experience, to feel simply that's a chair, that's a table, and yet at the same time, It's a miracle, it's an ecstasy. The problem might be solved after all. Ah, but what had happened? Some wave of white went over the window pane. The air must have stirred some flounce in the room. Her heart leapt at her and seized her and tortured her.

“Mrs, Ramsay! Mrs. Ramsay!” she cried [. . .] Mrs. Ramsay – it was part of her perfect goodness to Lily – sat there quite simply, in the chair, flicked her needles to and fro, knitted her reddish – brown stocking, cast her shadow on the step. There she sat. (217-219)

The moments of being are often described as a “static break or a pause in time” (Carter 19) that in a way to break the linear narration of the novel, interrupt it and introduce a-linearity [the alienation of linear temporal conception]. This is exactly what happens in the two passages quoted above. The first passage, Mrs Ramsay's moment of being is preceded by linear and chronological narration of Mrs Ramsay's day routine resulting in an evening spent knitting but the constant and rhythmic sound of waves and the constant beaming of the light from the lighthouse drags her into a state of fascination, hypnosis, trance and finally of ecstasy. In this state she alienates herself from the present moment and is able to perceive the past, the present and sometimes even the future simultaneously. In the passage, it is evident from the constant change of tenses – past simple, past

continuous, past perfect and finally present simple again. The same happens in the second quoted passage. This moment of trance results from Lily's determination to finish her painting of Mrs Ramsay while standing in front of her canvas and constantly watching the window, where Mrs Ramsay was sitting in the first section of the novel. The passage is also marked by changing tenses as the first quoted passage. Moreover, the passage is again related to the feeling of ecstasy and intense emotion. Both moments thus represent moments of intense sensual perception and are connected with the feeling of rupture and ecstasy and with the passivity on the part of the perceiver or experiencer by which Woolf describes a moment of being. It is also important to point out that both moments lead to a kind of realisation, revelation, re-definition of reality or "epiphany" as it is to be analysed later. In the first passage, Mrs Ramsay realises how bound and sometimes hypocritical her life is [it is evident not only from the final sentence of the passage but also from longer philosophical passage preceding the quoted passage]. In the second passage, Lily finally reaches the state of mind in which she can finish her painting, re-create Mrs Ramsay and bring back the past (Prudente 7). Prudente summarises Woolf's moments of being as moments of which extraordinary experience results in "ecstasy represented by the writer not as a detachment from reality, but rather as a circular movement, in which the subject, in opposition to Mr. Ramsay's act of thinking, undergoes a deep plunge into reality, experiences transcendence, and finally goes back to the perception of the 'real world' which is now seen in the light of new significance" (7-8). In this way, Woolf can extend not only the temporal aspect of reality [the present moment] but the subject's whole perception of reality. However, moments of being do not appear only in the novel *To the Lighthouse* but their germs may be found also in the previous and following works. For example, the main character of the short story "The Mark on the Wall" is dragged into the state of trance and ecstasy by the constant perception of the mark, experiences a deep plunge into her consciousness, recalls various images both from the past and the present, and "wakes herself up" in the present moment enriched with everything experienced in the plunge. It is possible to find some "proto-moments of being" in *Mrs Dalloway*, for example at the very end where Clarissa, who learns about Septimus's death, watches an old lady in the opposite window and plunges into a reflexion on the meaning of life, which results in her embrace of death and understanding of the young man's unfortunate action. It is worth highlighting that only sensitive female characters are usually able to experience these moments. Rational Mr Ramsay, Charles

Tansley in *To the Lighthouse* or Richard Dalloway in *Mrs Dalloway* have no privilege to achieve this extension of reality and alienation from linearity.

Woolf's moments of being are to be related to Joyce's epiphanies in this subchapter. Joyce describes an epiphany in his book *Stephen Hero*, his first autobiographical novel that served as a first draft for *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*:

This triviality made him [Stephen] think of collecting many such moments together in a book of epiphanies. By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself. He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments. He told Cranly that the clock of the Ballast Office was capable of an epiphany. Cranly questioned the inscrutable dial of the Ballast Office with his no less inscrutable countenance:

-Yes, said Stephen. I will pass it time after time, allude to it, refer to it, catch a glimpse of it. It is only an item in the catalogue of Dublin's street furniture. Then all at once I see it and I know at once what it is: epiphany.

-What?

-Imagine my glimpses at that clock as the gropings of a spiritual eye which seeks to adjust its vision to an exact focus. The moment the focus is reached the object is epiphanised. It is just in this epiphany that I find the third, the supreme quality of beauty. (Joyce, *Stephen* 211)

In the passage quoted above, Joyce summarises the tendency and goal of modernist authors to convey and manifest brief moments of revelation and higher understanding in their writing. This attempt consists in implementing descriptions of a character's sudden enlightenment caused by external stimuli. This moment of revelation is described also in Woolf's already quoted memoir:

What then has remained interesting? Again those moments of being. Two I always remember. There was a moment of the puddle in the path; when for no reason I could discover, everything suddenly became unreal. Next, the other moment when the idiot boy sprang up with his outstretched mewing, slit-eyed, red-rimmed; and without saying a word, with a sense of the horror in me, I poured into his hand a bag of Russian toffee. But it

was not over, for that night in the bath the dumb horror came over me. Again I had that hopeless sadness; that collapse I have described before; as if I were passive under some sledge-hammer blow; exposed to a whole avalanche of meaning that has heaped itself up and discharged itself upon me, unprotected, with nothing to ward it off, so that I huddled up at my end of the bath, motionless. (Woolf, *Moments* 78)

First, it is important to point out the result of the moment of being that Woolf describes in the passage above. She highlights that while experiencing these two moments, she was “exposed to a whole avalanche of meaning”, which hints at the revelation caused by these moments. Moreover, she describes these moments as a rupture, an escape from reality [“everything suddenly became unreal”], thus even as an escape from time, which may not be understood only as denial of time but also as its extension. The result of this alienation from reality experienced by Woolf’s characters during moments of being is very often the realisation of some general truth about life beneficial not only to the characters but also to the readers. It may be demonstrated on the following quoted outcome of another Lily’s moment of being produced by her intense effort to finish her painting that leads to the loss of awareness of outer things (Woolf, *Lighthouse* 174) and a plunge into the past: “What was the meaning of life? That was all – a simple question; one that tended to close in on one with years. The great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps never did come. Instead there were little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark [. . .]” (175-6). Moreover, in the description of the moment of being preceding the quoted moment of revelation about the meaning of life, Woolf constantly uses the personal pronoun “she” related to Lily but while introducing the revelation she replaces it with “one” referring to everybody, even to the readers.

It may be thus deduced from Woolf’s and Joyce’s outlines of their conception of moments of intense perception and revelation that the basic ideas of the two authors are very similar. A moment of being or an epiphany both rise from the focus on an external stimulus that drags the perceiver to the plunge into his consciousness and leads to a certain re-definition of the present perception based on the past experience and revelation of truth. This is the fundamental and very simplified characteristics of traits that Woolf’s moments of being and Joyce’s epiphanies have in common. However, their secondary features differ in various aspects. First, in comparison to Woolf’s moments of being, Joyce’s epiphanies seem to be more related to the characters who experiences them as “all epiphanies, some more subtly than others, are really, even if unstated, the epiphanies

of characters themselves. In every case, the language of the epiphany is the language of the character involved in its formulation” (Bowen 106). Bowen’s quotation hints at the fact that Joyce’s epiphanies vary in language according to the person who experiences them and he also points out that the languages of an artist’s epiphany and a worker’s epiphany differ in their poetic quality. On the contrary, Woolf’s language of her moments of being remains the same regardless the character who experiences them. It may be thus inferred that there is always the author implicitly present in the moments of being who expresses his view of life or a general truth about life. This leads to the second major difference between moments of being and epiphanies. Joyce does not intend to reveal any general truth about life, but mostly focuses on understanding provided for his characters who realize something about their past or that they erred. In this way, epiphanies may be also connected to the revelation of a moral, which is never the case in Woolf’s novels. It is necessary to provide several examples from *Dubliners* where most of the short stories contain an epiphany. The short story “The Dead” ends with Gabriel’s realization of how proud and ridiculous he was when he was jealous of his wife’s dead lover. Moreover, he also realizes how unpatriotic he is towards his country. In “An Encounter” the two boys who play truant gradually realize that an ordinary day at school is much safer than dangerous and odd life outside of the institution. In “Araby”, the main character, a boy who want to buy something for his sweetheart in a bazaar realizes his insignificance and the ordinariness of human relationships while overhearing a frivolous conversation and being ignored by the stand-keeper. On the contrary, Woolf’s moments of being, that are often related to moments of ecstasy, usually do not lead to such understanding related to the given character but they mainly result in a general truth about life. In this way, these moments do not concern just a novel’s characters but also its readers. The readers are often invited to the characters’ minds and the “I” of the character in question is usually broadened to “we” or “one” as we have already intimated in Lily’s moments of being quoted on the previous page. The same may be applied to Woolf’s short story “The Mark on the Wall” which may be considered one long moment of being. Moreover, the main character suddenly disappears and the author presents her own vision of life. Second, Joyce’s epiphanies seem to be rather brief in comparison to Woolf’s moments of being. Joyce deals with brief and sudden revelations and Woolf’s moments of being are usually described at length as if the author were more interested in the actual process of realization (Carter 2) than in its result. Moreover, the emphasis on the process also enables the author to extend the timespan of moments of being as she often juxtaposes the past and the

present in them. In Joyce's epiphanies, the process of the re-evaluation of the past is often only indicated and meant to be guessed by the reader.

3.2.3 Mrs Ramsay and the Lighthouse

This subchapter focuses on two main features of the novel – its centres, the first one is Mrs Ramsay who is a real character in the first part of the novel and becomes a mythical figure, the second one is the lighthouse always visible from the Ramsays' summer house. The following analysis tend to hint at an interesting fact that the two motifs have very much in common and their resemblance leads to their possible interchangeability in the novel. The reader realizes very soon that Mrs Ramsay represents a symbolical lighthouse of the whole family and the physical building of the lighthouse symbolises Mrs Ramsay, particularly after her death.

Mrs Ramsay is the central character in "The Window". She makes an effort to unify all the other characters and organise their everyday agenda. She wants to have them under her control and the only character she cannot get hold of is Mr Ramsay. She cares too much for everybody, lets their friends, whose lives she tries to organise as well [for example Paul and Minta's marriage], spend all summer with them and seems to be hostile to the passage of time. For example, she pronounces a wish to stop the ageing of her children early in the novel: "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" (Woolf, *Lighthouse* 64-5). Mrs Ramsay secretly hates her husband and Charles Tansley for disappointing her son every time he asks them to go to the lighthouse and they refuse. The lighthouse thus becomes an evidence of Mr Ramsay's authoritative behaviour and embodies Mrs Ramsay's regrets over her husband's unscrupulousness. Mrs Ramsay's constant awareness of the presence of the lighthouse and its light sometimes arouses in her the sense of identification with the lighthouse:

Losing personality, one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir; and rose to her lips always some exclamation of the triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity; and pausing there she looked out to meet that stroke of the Lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of the three, which was her stroke, for watching them in this mood always at this hour one could not help attaching oneself to one thing especially of the things one saw; and this thing, the last stroke, was her stroke. Often

she found herself sitting and looking, sitting and looking, with her work in her hands until she became the thing she looked at – the light for example. (70)

Moreover, the reader can read later on the same page that when Mrs Ramsay met the third stroke of the lighthouse, it was as if she met her own eyes. It may be deduced from the above-quoted passage that there definitely is a very strong bond between Mrs Ramsay and the lighthouse.

The lighthouse is represented in the novel as something solid, changeless and permanent as its light is often referred to as “steady” (71). Despite Mrs Ramsay’s mortality, her temporally limited nature, she also tries to “make of the moment something permanent” and lasting in the minds of those who love her. In this regard her character is as lasting as the lighthouse, which is obvious in the second section of the novel.

The role of the lighthouse in the novel is the same one as that of Mrs Ramsay since both are the centres and unifiers of the novel. The beam of light transmitted from the lighthouse connects all the characters of the novel as they have it constantly before their eyes. Therefore, it has the same function as the sound waves produced by Big Ben’s strokes represented in *Mrs Dalloway* by several times repeated phrase “leaden circles dissolved in the air”. Moreover, the light strokes are sometimes depicted to have the same portion of authority as Big Ben in *Mrs Dalloway*: “When darkness fell, the stroke of the Lighthouse, which had laid itself with such authority upon the carpet in the darkness, tracing its pattern, came now in the softer light of spring mixed with moonlight gliding gently as if it laid its caress and lingered stealthily and looked and came lovingly again” (144-5). As it may be noticed, the description of light coincides with subjective descriptions of clock-striking that always reveal something about the sound’s effect on those who hear it. It is also interesting that the light beam pursues the characters similarly as Mrs Ramsay’s eyes [because she tries to control everything], which is evident from the following quotation:

He would go straight to Mrs. Ramsay, because he felt somehow that she was the person who had made him do it. She had made him think he could do anything. Nobody else took him seriously. But she made him believe that he could do whatever he wanted. He had felt her eyes on him all day to-day, following him about (though she never said a word) as if she were saying, ‘Yes, you can do it. I believe in you. I expect it of you.’ (86)

The same feeling of being followed by Mrs Ramsay is experienced by Lily throughout the whole novel, especially after the woman's death as it is highlighted in the following subchapter.

3.2.4 Lily's Re-creation of the Past

The steadiness of the lighthouse is magnified in the middle section of the novel "Time Passes" where the light penetrates the empty house as if it searched for its inhabitants, especially Mrs Ramsay whose death is lamented over by the family helper Mrs McNab. The second section of the book called "Lighthouse" evokes Proust's theme of the *Remembrance of the Things Past* because Mrs Ramsay is constantly searched for not only by Lily who tries to "dip into the past" (187) or "tunnel into the past" (188) by the means of her painting but also by Mr Ramsay who insists on carrying out the trip to the lighthouse in order to fulfil his son's and wife's wish. It seems that the picture of Mrs Ramsay haunts these two characters similarly as Woolf is haunted by the picture of her parents, mainly her mother: "It is perfectly true that she obsessed me, in spite of the fact she died when I was thirteen, until I was forty. Then one day walking round Tavistock Square I made up, as I sometimes make up my book, To the Lighthouse; in a great, apparently involuntary, rush" (*Moments* 81). Lily seems to be similarly obsessed with Mrs Ramsay whose name she "howls" as a wolf many times in the book. Maud Ellmann analysis this notion in her book *The Nets of Modernism*, especially in the chapter "The Woolf Woman". Ellmann aims to link this aspect of the novel as well as Woolf's own obsession and mental disorder to psychoanalysis, particularly to Freud's famous patient "the Wolf Man". The Wolf Man, similarly as Woolf, lost his parents quite early. This fact itself already represents a germ of their mental disorder. The Wolf Man, however, had one very strong memory of his parents and that was the memory of them making love before his eyes when he was very small. This "primal scene" [the psychoanalytical term referring to a witnessing of a sexual intercourse between parents by a child] shocked him and gave rise to his later trauma as he was a child who was not able to understand the situation. From that time on, he dreamt regularly about an opened window in his nursery and a pride of white wolfs sitting on a tree in front of the window. Many years later, he revealed to his psychoanalyst that the parents making love reminded him of fighting wolfs from a fairy-tale. Ellmann emphasises that the trauma caused problems only après coup and deepened the patient's mental disorder. Ellmann relates this case of the Wolf Man to Woolf's experience of sexual harassment by her half-brothers George and Gerald

Duckworth described in “A Sketch of the Past”. On the same page of the memoir, Woolf later describes her dream in which she was looking into a mirror and a horrible face of an animal suddenly appeared behind her shoulder (69). Woolf says that “she has always remembered the other face in the glass, whether it was a dream or a fact, and that it frightened her” (69). The writer’s life-long fight with mental disorder and clinical depression is often attributed to this traumatic experience from her childhood. There is more or less obvious connection of this experience with the character of Lily in *To the Lighthouse* as she seems to be Woolf’s projection of herself. Similarly as the author, she struggles with men’s authoritative voices and clings to warm-hearted Mrs Ramsay. Ellmann points out that Lily’s urge to finish and re-paint her picture is related to Freud’s idea that “the finding of an object is always a re-defining of it” (Ellmann 82). Lily tries to re-find and immortalize Mrs Ramsay in her painting and she is constantly urged to do it, similarly as Woolf herself is urged to write a novel about her parents in order to define them anew and settle them in her memory. Lily’s effort may also be related to Freud’s idea of compulsive repetition of a “primal scene” or a scene of violence and consequent trauma by the subject who once perceived it. There is also a kind of “primal scene” appearing in *To the Lighthouse*. It is several times repeated scene in which Mrs Ramsay is sitting with James on her lap and knitting or reading to her son. However, this peaceful scene is interrupted by Mr Ramsay, his moaning or brutal denial of his son’s wish to make the trip to the lighthouse. As Ellmann points out, this scene has a certain sexual connotation because Woolf describes Mrs Ramsay to “raise herself with an effort, and at once pour erect into the air” and that into “this delicious fecundity, this fountain and spray of life, the fatal sterility of the male [of Mr Ramsay] plunged itself, like a beak of brass, barren and bare” (Woolf, *Lighthouse* 42-3). These scenes of certain domestic drama are quite frequent throughout the novel, especially in relation to Mr Ramsay’s authoritative behaviour to his wife, son or daughter in the final part of the book. Lily Briscoe constantly witnesses these scenes, which leads to her decision to paint Mrs Ramsay exactly in her usual position, thus sitting by the window knitting or holding her child. However, Lily is not able to draw distinct lines, she manages to draw only a certain “triangular purple shape” that, as Mr Bankes objects, “no one could tell it for a human shape” (58-9). Lily returns several times to the completion of her picture but she is not able to finish it. She probably needs some time to settle the picture of Mrs Ramsay in her mind and re-collect it later in order to re-define it. In this regard, she resembles the Lake Poets who were able to see their object of perception more clearly after they recollected it in tranquillity after

some time. Lily is thus able to finish her painting only after several moments of being that in a way enlightened her and after the final realisation of the trip to the lighthouse. The trip to the lighthouse represents Mr Ramsay's way to reconcile with the past and re-define it. He fulfils his son's and wife's wish to visit that place and frees himself of his "guilt". It may be highlighted that this re-definition of the past would not be possible without the change of perspective in the final chapters of the novel. This change is related to Mr Ramsay's and his two children's short retreat from the house while they recede and increase the distance between the shore, where their house is, and the boat heading to the lighthouse:

"See the little house," he said pointing, wishing Cam to look. She raised herself reluctantly and looked. But which was it? She could no longer make out, there on the hillside, which was their house. All looked distant and peaceful and strange. The shore seemed refined, far away, unreal. Already the little distance they had sailed put them far from it and given it the changed look, the composed look, of something receding in which one has no longer any part [. . .].

"But I [Mr Ramsay] beneath a rougher sea," Mr Ramsay murmured. He had found the house and so seeing it, he had also seen himself there; he had seen himself walking on the terrace, alone. He was walking up and down between urns; and he seemed himself very old, and bowed [. . .].

But Cam could see nothing. She was thinking how all those paths and the lawn, thick and knotted with the lives they had lived there, were gone: were rubbed out; were past; were unreal, and now this was real; the boat and the sail with its patch; Macalister with his earrings; the noise of the waves – all this was real. (180-2)

The quoted passage aptly describes the change of perspective and the moment of final revelation. The characters change their position in space, they separate themselves for a while from the house full of the past and they can see the past through different eyes. Cam sees it changed, more peaceful and settled, moreover, she cannot see their house clearly and doubts whether it exists after all. Mr Ramsay is able to see the house but his picture is completely re-defined because he is able to see himself walking on the terrace between the urns. Is he watching the future? That is quite possible because Woolf may have deliberately chosen the ambiguous word "urns" meaning not only urns for flowers but also urns for dead people's ashes. It is thus possible that he is watching himself walking

between the remains of his deceased family members. It is important to highlight that Cam's sense of reality connected to the actual trip to the lighthouse and the sense of unreality linked to the house hints at the image of lighthouse as something steady and unperishable as it is described in the section "Time Passes". As we have already intimated, the lighthouse also represents Mrs Ramsay. Therefore, she may also be considered as unperishable and immortal in the minds of her family members. By the realization of the trip to the lighthouse, Mr Ramsay and his children pay tribute to their dead wife and mother. Lily is able to finish her painting only after this satisfaction. She manages to plunge into the past, revive Mrs Ramsay's appearance and proceed further. However, she still cannot paint the realistic portrait of Mrs Ramsay as she moves forward from the "triangular shape" to "a line in the centre" (226). In fact, Lily moves the tree in her painting into the central position which is occupied by the lighthouse in the novel. The view of lighthouse being "conquered" at last by Mr Ramsay and his children reminds Lily of Mrs Ramsay again and enables her to finish the painting in a new unexpected way, thus in a re-defined way. Moreover, Ellmann points out that the Wolf Man's obsessive dream of wolves on the tree was broken, as his latter psychotherapist claimed, by the re-painting of the scary tree in a more pleasant way and without wolves on it. The analysis of Lily's creative process and Wolf Man's dream thus suggests one possible means of reconciliation with the past and that is to re-define it and settle it down in the subject's memory in a certain way for ever. By the completion of the painting, Lily offered Mrs Ramsay a special place in her memory, thus even "a special tender piece of eternity" that Mrs Ramsay herself wanted to give as a present to all her relatives and friends. Gillian Beer points out in her essay "Hume, Stephen and Elegy in to the Lighthouse" that Woolf's father Leslie Stephen studied and commented on Hume's philosophy of solipsism, similarly as the philosopher Mr Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* reflects on "subject and object and the nature of reality" (Beer 30). Woolf herself is interested in the nature of reality and perception in the novel. Through Lily and Mr Ramsay, she explores what remains in one's mind after he or she stops perceiving a beloved object (or a person) and faces the absence of it. Therefore, the novel explores "what lasts" (31) after Mrs Ramsay's death as Woolf tries to oppose Hume's idea that objects do not exist unless they are perceived by a subject. Throughout the novel, she hints at the fact that although the objects (or persons) are absent, they always leave behind steady, undeniable traces that are eternalized, magnified and materialized in the object of the lighthouse and Lily's painting. Contrary to *Jacob's Room* where Woolf explores the actual absence of the main character,

she analyses the consequences of death and absence in *To the Lighthouse* by the means of re-definition of the past and eternalization of it. In the following novel *Orlando*, Woolf proceeds one step further and achieves a triumph over death as she whimsically lets the main hero live for several centuries.

3.3 Orlando: Triumph over Death and Time

Woolf's following novel *Orlando* was published in 1928 as a caprice inserted in between a sequence of more serious works – *To the Lighthouse*, *A Room of One's Own* and *The Waves*. This novel, dedicated to Woolf's close friend and possibly homosexual lover Vita Sackville-West, stands out from all the other Woolf's novels because it is not written primarily with the intention to set a new narrative doctrine and display a work of genius but it is meant to entertain. Despite Woolf's apprehension about ruining her promising career and success, the novel impressed not only Sackville-West herself but all Woolf's friends and general readership. Although it may seem that the novel is very unlike the other novels, there are many similarities with her previous works, namely similarities in its temporal aspects. In addition, Woolf does not only reexplores her conception of time but she proceeds a few steps further. In *Orlando*, she handles again her traditional themes of time's passage, death, absence and memory but she also dares to surpass death and explores the realms of eternity already foreshadowed in the previous works. Moreover, the following analysis of the novel aims to accentuate that although the novel is meant to be a poetic joke, it remains consistent in the context of other Woolf's novels and also in terms of the conception of time. It is also interesting to trace parallels to the novels *To the Lighthouse* and *The Waves*.

3.3.1 Experimenting Within the Limits of Biography

As it has been mentioned above, *Orlando* is meant to be a playful and partly imaginary biography of Vita Sackville-West, Woolf's close friend and lover whose extraordinary character has both manly and womanly traits, which Woolf symbolises by Orlando's change of sex in the middle of the novel. It may seem that Woolf retrogrades in her effort to pioneer a new way of writing by the choice of biography as the genre for her following novel but she masterly manages to write the biographical novel in the spirit of innovation and experiment, similarly as in *Flush: A Biography*, the biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning mediated through the eyes of her spaniel. In addition to the linear narration, Woolf chooses an omniscient narrator who comments on his narrative strategy but also on the characters' behaviour and opinions, which is not the innovative subjective approach to narration the author prefers in her other works.

Woolf opens her novel with the chapter depicting Orlando's youth in his family's manor house. The boy is surrounded with luxury and destined to be an important and highly respected person, which he achieves by becoming the preferred page of the queen

Elisabeth I. Woolf enriches his mental faculties with intense sensual perception of reality, contemplativeness but also emotional fragility. He experiences an emotional trauma caused by his Russian lover who betrays him and Orlando becomes the British ambassador in Constantinople during the reign of Charles II, later he undergoes the change of sex and as a woman, she guides the reader through the society of the 18th and 19th century. Woolf thus gives Orlando immortality as a present to develop her temporal play that takes place within the linear narrative of Orlando's life.

The above-mentioned temporal play consists in the fact that although the novel deals with the timespan starting during the reign of Elisabeth I and ending in the moment Woolf revised the manuscript of the novel, thus in October 1928. The main character Orlando is not four hundred years old at the very end of the novel but only about forty years old. He, later she, ages only ten years in every century. As Lee points out, Orlando's immortality and description of his life as a voyage through centuries is "a light-hearted metaphor for her [Orlando's] historical consciousness" (Lee 150). This is obvious from the analysis in the following subchapter focused on Orlando's memory and the fact that he or she seems to be partly stuck in the past and re-defines it similarly as Lily in *To the Lighthouse*. However, Woolf's decision to unfold the novel throughout several centuries metaphorizes not only Orlando's historical awareness but also Woolf's own conception of history and its importance.

The novel is not only Orlando's biography but also a "guided tour" through centuries as well as through different literary periods. The novel opens at the end of 16th century, the period of the reign of Elisabeth I who favoured literature imitating the Italian Renaissance, mainly its drama. Concerning this characteristics of the 16th century, Woolf lets Orlando write dramas about "Vice, Crime, Misery, Kings and Queens" (Woolf, *Orlando* 6). The period's preference of return to "courtly love" is embodied by Orlando's disastrous relationship with Russian princess Sasha. The narrator also hints at the then way of thinking and the poetic taste of the period:

Sunsets were redder and more intense; dawns were whiter and more auroral. Of our crepuscular half-lights and lingering twilights they knew nothing. The rain fell vehemently, or not at all. The sun blazed or there was darkness. Translating this to the spiritual regions as their wont is, the poets sang beautifully how roses fade and petals fall. The moment is brief they sung; the moment is over; one long night is then to be slept by all.

(12)

The above-mentioned quotation hints at the period's awareness of time's fleetingness expressed in poetry, for example in Shakespeare's sonnets [Time's scythe], Marvell's [time's winged chariot] or Donne's poems [rags of time]. In fact, Woolf herself seems to be one of these poets as she expresses the horror of the fast passage of time in her novels. Allowing Orlando to age more slowly and to "reach the tender piece of eternity", she attempts to fight the horror of death. At the same time, Orlando also tries to become immortal through his poetic creation, similarly as Mr Ramsay through his philosophical writing in *To the Lighthouse*.

The 18th century is depicted by Woolf as the century of great geniuses anticipating the age of reason, she thus lets Orlando make acquaintance with Pope, Swift of Addison and the fourth chapter "consists largely of anecdotes and quotations" (Lee 146) of these writers. Although the narrator mentions only a few exact dates, the period in question may be very often recognised either from the references to the literary context or from the hints at the then king. Woolf does not contest the succession and continuity as she does for example in *Mrs Dalloway* or in "The Mark on the Wall". Moreover, it is very interesting and witty how Woolf depicts the transition from the 18th to 19th century and later the turn of the 20th century. The following quotation depicts the former:

Now - she [Orlando as a woman] leant out of her window – all was light, order, and serenity. There was a rattle of a coach on the cobbles. She heard the far-away cry of the night watchman - 'Just twelve o'clock on a frosty morning'. No sooner had the words left his lips than the first stroke of the midnight sounded. Orlando then for the first time noticed a small cloud gathered behind the dome of St Paul's. As the strokes sounded, the cloud increased, and she saw it darken and spread with extraordinary speed. At the same time a light breeze rose and by the time the sixth stroke of midnight had struck the whole of the eastern sky to the west and north stayed clear as ever. Then the cloud spread north. Height upon height above the city was engulfed by it. Only Mayfair, with all its lights shining, burnt more brilliantly than ever by contrast. With the eighth stroke, some hurrying tatters of cloud sprawled over Piccadilly. They seemed to mass themselves and to advance with extraordinary rapidity towards the west end. As the ninth, tenth, and eleventh strokes struck, a huge blackness sprawled over the whole of London. With the twelfth stroke of midnight, the darkness was complete. A turbulent welter of cloud covered the city.

All was darkness; all was doubt; all was confusion. The Eighteenth century was over; the Nineteenth century had begun. (Woolf, *Orlando* 110-111)

The transition between the two centuries is counted down by a clock striking midnight. The strokes are used here to announce an important event, similarly as in other Woolf's novels, namely *Mrs Dalloway* where the whole story is framed and accompanied by clock-striking. The striking announces the turn of the two completely different centuries as Woolf describes the 18th century as a century of light and the 19th century as the century of gloominess. In addition to the generally dim atmosphere of the 19th century that is obvious for example from Dickens's novels, Woolf adopts her narrative technique and thematic plan to the literature of the period. She implements social conventions of the period into the novel by letting unmarried Orlando long for a husband and marriage that were nearly obligatory for every woman in the period. Then, she describes her problems related to the position of women in the 19th century society. However, St Paul's strokes accompany also other important moments in the novel and the narrative strategy remains the same:

[. . .] St Paul's struck the first stroke of midnight. Four times more it struck remorselessly. With the superstition of a lover, Orlando had made out that it was on the sixth stroke that she would come. But the sixth stroke echoed away, and the seventh came and the eight, and to his apprehensive mind they seemed notes first heralding and then proclaiming death and disaster. When the twelfth struck he knew that his doom was sealed. It was useless for the rational part of him to reason; she might be late; she might be prevented; she might have missed her way. The passionate and feeling heart of Orlando knew the truth. Other clock struck, jangling one after another. The whole world seemed to ring with the news of her deceit and his derision. (28)

The above-quoted passage comments on another key event in the novel, Orlando's disappointment about his lover Sasha who betrays him. This unfortunate experience causes a trauma resulting in Orlando's seven-day-long sleep or trance that represents a landmark in the character's past and memory. Moreover, there is a sense of fatality emanating from the quoted passage. As we have already foreshadowed in the previous chapters, this is quite characteristic of Woolf's mentions of clock-striking. It usually announces the end of something and anticipates the beginning of something else. Similarly as in *Mrs Dalloway*, the clock-striking in *Orlando* affects only the characters

gifted with more intense sensual perception. The following quotation on the one hand introduces the present moment at the very end of the novel and on the other hand describes Orlando's response to the reminder of time:

[. . .] she could hear ever whisper and crackle in the room so that the clock ticking on the mantelpiece beat like a hammer. And so for some seconds the light went on becoming brighter and brighter, and she saw everything more and more clearly and the clock ticked louder and louder until there was a terrific explosion right in her ear. Orlando leapt as if she had been violently struck on the head. Ten times she was struck. In fact it was ten o'clock in the morning. It was the eleventh of October. It was 1928. It was the present moment. (147)

The clock-striking mentioned in the passage is likened to a violent attack experienced by the perceiver. This vivid description of the effect produced by a clock-striking emphasises the intensity of the present moment and the awareness of the concept of time. Woolf makes us aware of this intensified perception to characterize the beginning of the twentieth century when life was simplified, modernized and accelerated. This is also projected in the narrative style of the final chapter that seems to be very brief because Woolf uses shorter sentences, juxtaposes verbs, lists actions and includes modern inventions, for example a motorbike or a train. However, the present moment is depicted on the final pages as "the narrow plank" that lies on the past. Woolf thus again introduces the already mentioned sense of historical consciousness as she recapitulates the historical periods Orlando went through over four centuries. Woolf does not let Orlando subject to the present moment: "But she did not allow these sights to sink into her mind even the fraction of an inch as she crossed the narrow plank of the future, lest she should fall into the raging torrents beneath (148)." What Woolf means by "the sights" is the most probably the appearance of new innovations in everyday life and their oddity to Orlando. In this regard, the author emphasizes the fact that the present is based on the tradition of the past, similarly as it is highlighted in Eliot's essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent", which is partly at odds with the modernists' intentions to find new approaches to literary creation. Despite this fact, Woolf's works always emphasize the importance of the past and its significance for the present.

3.3.2 Memory and Re-definition of the Past

The fact that *Orlando* is meant to be a biography leads to the conclusion that the novel is concerned primarily with the self. As Beer points out, *Orlando* and *The Waves* are Woolf's novels the most preoccupied with the self and the author "explores the written and the bodily self, the self of biographer, reader and subject" (58). Woolf explores Orlando's physical appearance as well as his mind. The author also intimates the biographer's narrative approach and hints at the reader's confusion and difficulties while reading the novel. Although Beer claims that the centre of the novel's discourse is the body [mainly Orlando's body], it may be argued that Woolf is predominantly concerned with Orlando's conception of memory and the way he or she proceeds the past.

In short, Orlando grows up in his native mansion, becomes the queen's favourite page and later falls in love with the Russian princess Sasha who breaks his heart when she cheats on him. After this experience, Orlando faces an emotional and nervous shock and shortly after falls into a week-long sleep reminding trance from which he wakes up a little bit different. He shows no signs of remembering this "blank week" but the biographer hints at the change that the character underwent during this state: "Yet, some change, it was suspected, must have taken place in the chambers of his brain, for though he was perfectly rational and seemed graver and more sedate in his ways than before, he appeared to have an imperfect recollection of his past life" (Woolf, *Orlando* 31). The shock and following state of trance partly caused the loss of Orlando's memory and the biographer mentions that Orlando was not much distressed by a reminder of something from the past except a reminder of the Russian princess that made him "fall into a gloom of an uneasy kind" (32). A few lines later, the biographer reflects on the nature of these trances:

But if sleep it was, of what nature, we can scarcely refrain from asking, are such sleeps as these? Are they remedial measures – trances in which the most galling memories, events that seem likely to cripple life for ever, are brushed with a dark wing which rubs their harshness off and gilds them, even the ugliest and basest, with a lustre, an incandescence? Has the finger of death to be laid on the tumult of life from time to time lest it rend us asunder? Are we so made that we have to take death in small doses daily or we could not go on with the business of life? [. . .] Had Orlando, worn by the extremity of his suffering, died for a week, and then come to life again? (32)

In the above-quoted passage, the biographer representing Woolf herself points out the healing effect of trances caused by traumatic events. During these states, painful memories are settled down and reconsidered so that the person is ready to start anew. Death, likened to Orlando's trance, is referred to in this passage as a moment when a person loses memories, as something that enables the shocked and depressed person to erase memory and fill the emptiness that has arisen. Woolf deals with traumatic experiences and similar states of trance in her memoir "A Sketch of the Past". Woolf names there several moments when she felt a sudden shock and got into a state of mind similar to trance. First, she was fighting with her brother and she just subjected to him because she saw no point in violence. Second, she felt a sense of wholeness while watching a flower in the garden and third, she felt horror while approaching a tree connected to her family's friend's suicide. All the three instances were followed by a horribly depressing feeling and hopeless sadness. Woolf describes her state as trance of horror that paralysed her. However, she evaluates these shocks as positive because they are the impulses for "revelation of some order" and "tokens of some real things behind appearances" (Woolf, *Moments* 72). For Orlando, the result of these trances is not exactly a revelation, although the character achieves one at the very end of the novel. His revelation consists in his awareness of the possibility to re-configure his memory. Orlando tries to start anew and focus on his poetic creation as he continues working on his poem "The Oak Tree". However, when he wants to start writing, he cannot find words similarly as Lily cannot finish her painting until her memory is enlightened again. Orlando cannot write since his memory produces only chaos from his past life:

Memory is seamstress, and a capricious one at that. Memory runs her needle in and out, up and down, hither and thither. We know not what comes next, or what follows after. Thus, the most ordinary movement in the world, such as sitting down at a table and pulling the inkstand towards one, may agitate a thousand odd, disconnected fragments [. . .] (38)

Orlando's traumatic experience thus disabled his memory to work in a desired way and blocked his memories from the past in order to heal from it and focus on his new self. He is no longer able to recall what he wants to remember but his memories arise randomly and spontaneously.

Nevertheless, Orlando experiences another trance or a portion of death when he serves as the British ambassador in Constantinople. He gets himself again to a sleep-trance state and makes no sign of life for another seven days. He is resurrected by a magic

spell and finds himself to be re-born as a woman but in the same body. The only thing that changed is his memory:

His memory - but in the future we must, for convention's sake, say 'her' for 'his', and 'she' for 'he' - her memory then, went back through all the events of her past life without encountering any obstacle. Some slight haziness there may have been, as if a dark drop had fallen into a clear pool of memory; certain things had become a little dimmed; but it was all. (67)

The above-quoted passage directly says that Orlando's inability to recollect the past is corrected by his second trance followed by the change of his sex [gender]. The two shocks and acquisition of another self helps him to reconcile with the past and recollect events painlessly. Therefore, the second trance perfects the first one. Prudente uses Deleuze's claim that when "the subject faces death he reaches a temporal awareness which allows him to perceive 'the empty form of time'" (37). She also mentions Ricœur for whom the oblivion represents "mental space where the potentialities of memory wait to be activated" (37). It is precisely this that happens after Orlando's first trance, he acquires the distance and oblivion needed and after the second trance when he undergoes the radical transformation of sex that enables the "re-construction of memory" (38). From that moment on, Orlando is able to recollect the past life, thinks about the past and as Prudente points out, intentionally tries to assemble the mosaic of the past. After Orlando's return to England, the character finds it different and compares it with the former situation: "Here, she had first met Sasha [. . .] All that corruption was gone. Gone too was the dark night, the monstrous downpour, the violent surges of the flood" (Woolf, *Orlando* 81). Moreover, she also compares the historical context of the preceding centuries with the present period. She remembers everything she experiences as a man and attempts to order the events, which restores the sense of linearity that is interrupted several times throughout the novel. The novel *To the Lighthouse* also handles the problem of memory symbolized by Lily's painting and her inability to complete it. Contrary to Orlando's recollection, Lily's processing of the past is spontaneous since she is invaded by the flux of memory (Prudente 36). Nevertheless, the re-definition of the past and memory is also achieved only after taking distance, both temporal and spatial, as it has been highlighted in the chapter dedicated to the novel. After the reactivation of her memory, Orlando is able to finish his poem "The Oak Tree" as her pen "began to curve and caracole with the smoothest possible fluency" (117). By the theme of the poem, unhappy love and solitude, she returns to the period when she suffered from the betrayal of Sasha and lost her

illusions. However, at the very end of the novel, Orlando's memory seems to be unsettled again and the character becomes aware of the change of her perception: "Time has passed over me," she thought, trying to recollect herself; "this is the oncome of middle age. How strange it is! Nothing in any longer one thing" (150). Orlando realises that after her memory's reactivation, she is again able to perceive the present moment only through its reference to the past, which lead us again to Bergson's idea about the inseparability of the past and the present. Orlando experiences the awareness of the past while walking through her mansion turned into a museum: "The house was no longer hers entirely, she sighed. It belonged to time now; to history; was past the touch and control of the living" (157). Despite her immortality, Orlando realises her insignificance and temporariness in comparison to the history of her family or the history of England in general as she reminds us of all the monarchs who are somehow related to her house. At the very end of the novel, the narrator either intimates Orlando's death or another phase of her self while she is climbing the hill above her mansion:

Her mind began to toss like a sea. Yes, she thought, heaving a deep sigh of relief, as she turned from the carpenter's shop to climb the hill, I can begin to live again. I am by the Serpentine, she thought, the little boat is climbing through the white arch of thousand deaths. I am about to understand [. . .] (159).

It is important to point out the imagery Woolf uses in the passage. She likens the Serpentine, lake in Hyde Park, to the mythological river Styx, which suggests either the anticipation of Orlando's death or another escape from death as the boat climbs through the thousand deaths. Woolf does not provide the reader with an unambiguous ending, she lets him wonder whether Orlando defeats time one more or dies at last after the revelation of the insignificance of his particular existence in time. This is probably the thing Orlando is about to understand in the above-quoted passage.

3.4 *The Waves*: Timeless Polyphony of Voices

Woolf bore in her mind an idea of her sixth novel *The Waves* already in 1928 but the actual writing did not start until June 1929 because of her work for the Hogarth Press, travels to Europe and several aggravations of her illness. The novel was to be originally entitled *The Moths* according to Vanessa Bell's observation of a moth behind a window pane but it was later renamed *The Waves* because of the main image that appears in the novel. The author describes her idea of the novel's opening in the diary entry of June 23, 1929: "I think it will be like this: dawn, the shells on a beach . . . then all the children at a long table – lessons . . . this shall be childhood . . . the sense of children; unreality . . . there must be great freedom from 'reality'." The key words of the quoted passage are the beach and the unreality. The former, particularly the sound and the image of waves, is omnipresent in the novel. It appears literally not only in the natural interludes inserted between the novel's chapters but also metaphorically as something fixing its narrative rhythm. The latter radiates from the novel as the author decides not to set the novel into a particular time or a place and chooses to blur the distinction between the characters who are represented in the novel only as speaking voices. Everything in the novel thus seems to be rather vague and unreal. Interestingly, the English word "vague" comes from French word "vague" meaning "wave", which is derived from Latin word "vagus" meaning "wandering" or "uncertain". It is only a matter of speculation whether Woolf herself was aware of this significant coincidence that is very relevant to the novel's analysis in the following chapter.

As it is foreshadowed above in relation to the unreal aspect of the novel, *The Waves* is undeniably Woolf's most difficult novel. It is not based on a certain framed story or strong characters but on the rhythm of sea waves representing the main unifier of the novel. Woolf herself refers to the novel as to a "play-poem" and not as to a novel. It is quite apt because there is a general struggle to label the most of Woolf's latter works as novels and *The Waves* meets the requirements of the genre the least. It has no consistent narrative, distinct and round characters, plot or conclusion and it rather resembles a collection of soliloquies of characters linked together by an indefinite time and space, their friendship, common childhood and similar succession of their lives' events. The following subchapters aim to analyse the novel in regards to its main aspects: the waves as the crucial image and indicator of the narrative rhythm and its impact on the narration, the connection between the image of the waves and time, introduction of natural time, the struggle with time's passage and fear of death.

3.4.1 The Image of Waves: Metaphor of Life and the Key Element of the Narrative Structure

The image of waves suggests that the novel could be considered “a novel of the sea” (Holtby 193). Contrary to sea-novels where the sea setting enables the adventures and usually the main plot, Woolf’s sea serves mainly as a metaphor for human life being rocked as a ship on the waves of time: “The sea over which Rachel Vinrace sailed to Santa Marina, over which Tim Durrant and Jacob sailed to Cornwall, over which Cam and James and Mr. Ramsay sailed to the lighthouse, has overflowed from its geographical significance. It has passed into time [. . .]” (195). Despite of this metaphorical aspects, the sea also appears as a concrete image in the novel, for example in the introductory chapter describing the childhood of the novel’s six characters or in natural interludes introducing each chapter. These interludes consist of lyrical descriptions of the sea changing according to the shifting position of the sun in the sky during a day and according to a given season.

Waves or flowing water representing the metaphor of human lives and flow of time is not Woolf’s original invention but it dates back to the distant past. Similar conception was suggested already by Heraclitus’s flux representing constant changes of everything, later also by Shakespeare in his sonnets, but it is important to point out that Woolf was influenced mainly by the philosophy and physics of the first decades of the 20th century. She was fascinated by new scientific and philosophical theories, whether it was the gravitational waves, the wave nature of light or de Broglie’s ground-breaking discovery that even the particles such as electrons, protons, atoms, molecules and things created out of these are of wave-nature, thus may behave as waves. Woolf was well acquainted with new theories in physics and philosophy of the period due to her varied interests and the meetings of the Bloomsbury Group created thanks to Thoby Stephen’s affiliation with the Apostles [Cambridge University’s intellectual society]. The Bloomsbury Group’s members thus had the privilege to meet important thinkers of the turn of the 20th century such as G.E. Moore or Bertrand Russell. Beer mentions in her essay called “Physics, Sound, and Substance: Later Woolf” that “wave-particle theory at the end of the 1920s and through the 1930s caught the imagination” and it was handled in most of the newspapers and journals of the period (113). She highlights de Broglie’s theory of “ondes fictives” that intimates the non-solid substance of the world. In relation to the perception and nature of reality, Beer mentions also James Jeans whose works were read by Woolf in the 1930s (114). Jeans shares de Broglie’s ideas and writes in his

influential book *The Mysteries of Universe* that “the waves which form the universe, are in all probability fictitious – they exist in our minds” (115). In addition, Beer mentions one more important scientist of the period who is also Woolf’s exact contemporary [both were born in 1882] – Arthur Eddington. Interestingly, Woolf and this Cambridge professor who managed to link science and mysticism, have much in common. In his important book *New Pathways in Science*, he summarises scientific theories born at the beginning of the 20th century, including, of course, the wave-particle theory or Einstein’s theory of relativity. At the very beginning of his book, Eddington lays out the main change in the scientific, mostly physical, environment at the beginning of the 20th century: “The frank realisation that physical science is concerned with a world of shadows is one of the most significant of recent advances. . . . It is difficult for ourselves to treat the physical world as purely symbolic. . . . Untaught by long experience we stretch a hand to grasp the shadow, instead of accepting its shadowy nature” (*The Nature*, Introduction xv). Eddington thus points out that the modern physicists no longer deal with solid substances and do not measure exact properties of matter but they focus on the abstract world of particles invisible to the naked eye and theories concerning these particles. Consequently, physics becomes more abstract and symbolic, which makes it even more likely to be a source of inspiration for the writers of the period. The nature of reality, its substantiality or non-substantiality, is one of the crucial themes of *The Waves* where this problem is constantly hinted at, for example in the following quotation from the novel: “Let us pretend that life is a solid substance, shaped like a globe, which we turn about in our fingers. Let us pretend that we can make out a plain and logical story, so that when one matter is dispatched – love for instance – we go on, in an orderly manner, to the next” (Woolf, *The Waves*). In this quotation, Woolf emphasizes our tendency to worship reality of life with its chronological succession of events. The end of the quotation intimates the misconception that a situation results naturally in the following one. Similarly, waves are considered to be something successive as one wave follows another one which is partly created from the preceding one. However, as Beer points out and quotes the Victorian physical chemist John Tyndall, the motion onwards and continuation may be only apparent:

The particles in front reach in succession the crest of the wave and as soon as the crest is passed, they begin to fall. They then reach the furrow or sinus of the wave, and can sink no further. Immediately afterwards they become the front of the succeeding wave, rise again until they reach the

crest, and then sink as before. Thus, while the waves pass onward horizontally, the individual particles are simply lifted up and down vertically. Observe a seafowl, or, if you are a swimmer, abandon yourself to the action of the waves; you are not carried forward, but simply rocked up and down. (Beer 89)

The preceding quotation expresses perfectly the narrative strategy Woolf uses in *The Waves*. The whole novel consists of the six characters' soliloquies that are interspersed with natural interludes depicting the changes in the apparition of the sea and light during the day and different seasons. Although Woolf achieves to sketch the six characters' lives from childhood to later adulthood, this temporal progression is attenuated by the sense of simultaneity of the characters' speaking voices that permeate one another. This leads to the reader's confusion and struggle to distinguish them. There is no evident progression in the action and multi-layered voices resemble the particles rocking up and down. The juxtaposition of the characters and their interchangeability is depicted in the following quotation from the novel: "I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am – Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda or Louis: or how to distinguish my life from theirs" (Woolf, *The Waves* 156). The soliloquies revealing and intermingling the characters' consciousness thus resemble wavelike narrative stream in which all the particles are connected and cannot be divided. In relation to the particles, the sense of unreality of the novel and merging soliloquies, Ettinger, who studies the influence of relativity and quantum physics in *The Waves*, summarizes the novel as follows:

The novel discloses a world beyond sense perception, one in which nothing is separate or solid as it appears, time expands and contracts in wavelike patterns, and the voices and identities of six characters become the many facets of a 'mass mind individualized', calling into question the very existence of discrete objects and individual personalities. (2)

Ettinger emphasizes the interconnection of not only the characters but also of individual consciousness. Moreover, Woolf's decision to let her characters speak in a sort of collective narrative or collective stream of consciousness corresponds to her narrative strategy consisting in the abandonment of author-centred writing in favour of multiplicity of narrative viewpoints (Prudente 141). The novel predominantly deals with the definition and re-definition of the self, which is analysed in the following subchapter. However, Woolf's intention to unify the characters is introduced already in the first chapter of the novel:

I take the trees, the clouds, to be witnesses of my complete integration. I, Louis, I, who shall walk the earth these seventy years, am born entire, out of hatred, out of discord. Here on this ring of grass we have sat together, bound by the tremendous power of some inner compulsion. The trees wave, the clouds pass. The time approaches when these soliloquies shall be shared. (Woolf, *The Waves* 21)

The quotation depicts both, the sense of individual belonging into the organic unity of reality and the internal bond between the characters and their soliloquies. There is also a sense of close bond between the individual and nature, which is the subject discussed in relation to natural interludes in the following subchapter.

The “rocking” [as described by Tyndall] nature of waves is also implemented into the novel’s basic narrative structure and represents its narrative rhythm. *The Waves* is considered to be Woolf’s most rhythmic novel. Graphical representation of the novel’s narrative flow would resemble a sinusoid. Woolf mentions in her letter to Ethel Smyth from 28 August 1930 that she neglects the plot of the novel in favour of its rhythm: “I am writing to a rhythm and not to a plot.” The separate soliloquized chapters of the novel are always introduced by natural interludes that represent the initial phase of a wave. The actual chapter represents the crest of a wave but represents one unique wave as it depicts certain simultaneity and time progression. There is very often a sort of climax or culmination [the crest of a wave] in each chapter. The final phase of the wave is represented by the natural interlude introducing the following chapter. Woolf thus copies in a precise way the movement of waves succeeding one another. Woolf uses this movement also as a metaphor for human life as she writes in her diary entry from January 4, 1929:

Now is life very solid or very shifting? I am haunted by the two contradictions. This has gone on for ever; will last for ever; goes down to the bottom of the world – this moment I stand on. Also it is transitory, flying, diaphanous. I shall pass like a cloud on the waves. Perhaps it may be that though we change, one flying after another, so quick, so quick, yet we are somehow successive and continuous we human beings, and show the light through. (*A Writer’s Diary* 138)

Woolf compares human life to the transitory nature of the foam created on the crest of a wave and to the successive movement of waves. The same idea results from natural

interludes analysed in the following subchapter but there, it is done only implicitly as no character appears in these lyrical descriptions.

3.4.2 Individual Temporal Experience and the Dissolution of the Self

First, it is important to start the analysis of the temporal experience with the analysis of tenses used in the novel. Although the novel depicts the characters' lives chronologically from childhood to the late adulthood, the chapters consisting of the characters' soliloquies are generally written in the present tense. If the author uses a different tense, there is always a reason for it as it is expressed by Neville at the beginning of the novel: "‘Each tense,’ said Neville, ‘means differently. There is an order in this world; there are distinctions, there are differences in this world, upon whose verge I step. For this is only a beginning’" (Woolf, *The Waves* 10). The use of the present tense emphasizes the notion of simultaneity of the monologues even though they should also progress in time. The present tense also highlights Woolf's tendency to intensify the perception of the present moment and fix it:

‘This is here,’ said Jinny, ‘this is now. But soon we shall go. Soon Miss Curry will blow her whistle. We shall walk. We shall part. You will go to school. You will have masters wearing crosses with white under a portrait of Queen Alexandra. That is where I am going, and Susan and Rhoda. This is only here: this is only now. Now we lie under the currant bushes and every time the breeze stirs we are mottled all over.’ (12)

Except for the emphasis on the present moment and the characters' sense of belonging into their setting or natural scene, there are also hints at future events happening later in the characters' lives. Proleptic references appear quite frequently in the novel, for example in relation to Rhoda's suicide that takes place first as an imaginary event before Bernard's announcement of Rhoda's suicide in the following chapter. Woolf often refers also to the characters' past in the latter chapters of the novel. The incorporation of the past and the future into the present-moment narrative corresponds to Woolf's probable inspiration by the scientific and philosophical context, moreover, it also reminds us once more of Tyndall's already quoted principle of the wave creation – the progression is only apparent and the particles remain exactly in the same position. There is no distinction between the past, the present and the future in the novel since these three categories incorporate one another.

One of the crucial important themes of the novel is the individual perception of time. As the most of Woolf's novels, *The Waves* deals with different approaches to the chronological [scientific, external or objective] time. All the characters realize the transitory nature of a moment and express certain anxiety about the rapid passage of life: "“But listen,’said Louis, ‘to the world moving through abysses of infinite space. It roars; the lighted strip of history in past and our kings and queens; we are gone; our civilisation; the Nile; and all life. Our separate drops are dissolved; we are extinct, lost in the abysses of time, in the darkness’” (127). This quotation depicts Woolf's aim to point out human insignificance and fatality. The reference to the abysses of space and time in comparison to the smallness of human being aptly describes Woolf's intention to introduce the characters of the novel as indistinct outlines, which she reveals in her diary entry from April 9, 1930: “What I now think (about *The Waves*) is that I can give in a very few strokes the essential of a person's character. It should be done boldly, almost as caricature.” The abysses mentioned in the quotation also hints at the vastness of time-space and people's mere role of observers and experiencers.

The mention of kings and queens hints at the monumental time analysed in relation to *Mrs Dalloway*. Most characters of *The Waves* seem to have no problem with the acceptance of the external monumental time imposed on them, except Rhoda. Rhoda is generally very different from her friends, she struggles to fit into her group of friends already in her childhood. Later, she expresses her disappointment with life and reveals her depressive nature resulting in her suicide. It is important to point out that all the novel's characters have something in common with the personality of the author herself and Rhoda is undeniably the embodiment of her mental struggles. She is very similar to Septimus from *Mrs Dalloway* who also suffers from depressions and has the problem to adopt the external scientific time. Rhoda, similarly as Septimus, has the impression to be outside the temporal frame:

Miss Hudson goes. I am left alone to find an answer. The figures mean nothing now. Meaning has gone. The clock ticks. The two hands are convoys marching through a desert. The black bars on the clock face are green oases. The long hand has marched ahead to find water. The other painfully stumbles among hot stones in the desert. It will die in the desert. The kitchen door slams. Wild dogs bark far away. Look, the loop of the figure is beginning to fill with time; it holds the world in it. I begin to draw a figure and the world is looped in it, and I myself am outside the loop;

which I now join – so – and seal up, and make entire. The world is entire, and I outside of it, crying, “Oh save me, from being blown for ever outside the loop of time!” (11)

Rhoda shows more intense perception of time in the above-quoted passage. She visualizes the movement of clock hands and makes a story of it. Then, she is aware of the passage of time while she lets “the figure fill with time”. Her feeling of being outside the loop of time and thus also out of the organic unity of the world may hint at her incapability to be a part of a higher unity, similarly as Septimus. Later in the novel, Rhoda expresses her inability to conceive the succession of moments, fear of this succession and doubts about her future life:

One moment does not lead to another. The door opens and the tiger leaps in. You did not see me come. I circled round the chairs to avoid the horror of the spring. I am afraid of you all. I am afraid of the shock of sensation that leaps upon me, because I cannot deal with it as you do – I cannot make one moment merge in the next. To me they are all violent, all separate; and if I fall under the shock of the leap of the moment you will be on me, tearing me to pieces. I have no end in view. I do not know how to run minute to minute and hour to hour, solving them by natural force until they make the whole and indivisible mass that you call life. Because you have an end in view – one person, is it, to sit beside, an idea is it, your beauty is it? I do not know – your days and hours pass like the boughs of forest trees and the smooth green of forest rides to a hound running on the scent. But there is no single scent, no single body for me to follow. And I have no face. I am like the foam that races over the beach or the moonlight that falls arrowlike here on a tin can, here on a spike of the mailed sea-holly, or a bone or a half-eaten boat. I am whirled down caverns, and flap like paper against endless corridors, and must press my hand against the wall to draw myself back. (72)

In the above-quoted passage from the novel, Rhoda explains to Neville and Jinny her struggle with time and disappointment over her solitary life. In fact, she expresses her problem to conceive time, especially the flow of moments. This sets her completely apart from her friends. She is not able to “merge one moment to the next one”, which is one of the main processes that are performed by human consciousness as it has been pointed out in relation to Bergson’s ideas on the functioning of memory and James’s conception of

stream of consciousness. It may be deduced that Rhoda deals with major troubles connected to the perception of reality. Concerning the relation to reality, Lee points out that Rhoda “expresses an extreme version of the tension between isolation and participation” (175). It may be suggested that this is precisely the reason why she decides to escape from reality by committing a suicide. Moreover, it is also the very same reason for Septimus’ suicide in *Mrs Dalloway*. The loss of the ability to perceive reality is also intimated in the quoted passage by Rhoda’s impression of losing distinct physical appearance and becoming only a foam-like substance. However, Ettinger points out that Rhoda tries to fight the loss of time and reality perception by searching for geometrical shapes of objects. He also suggests that her tendency to depict things as having an internal regular structure, may be connected to “relativity’s use of geometric models to account for objects in space” (9). Rhoda thus struggles to find a regular pattern in space-time in order not to feel excluded from it and lost. It is necessary to provide several examples of Rhoda’s geometrical expressions: “hard line of a cottage roof” (Woolf, *The Waves* 116), “my mind is printed with brown-paper parcels” (115), “the circle is destroyed” (79). Despite Rhoda’s effort to reacquire time perception and her place in reality, she fails and decides to commit a suicide that is not directly described in the novel. Woolf depicts only Rhoda’s imaginary suicide preceding the actual one. Her death is described as her complete disappearance and dissolution of her self in the depths of the waves as well as in the depths of time:

There is only a thin sheet between me now and the infinite depths. [. . .] I touch nothing. I see nothing. We may sink and settle on the waves. The sea will drum in my ears. The white petals will be darkened with sea water. They will float for a moment and then sink. Rolling me over the waves will shoulder me under. Everything falls in a tremendous shower, dissolving me. (116)

However, Rhoda is not the only character of the novel who is concerned with the dissolution of the self. As it has been foreshadowed in the introductory paragraph of this chapter, the problem of the self is one of the main themes of the novel. It is handled also in connection to Bernard, writer who explores the distinction between his individual self and the collective self of the group of friends. There are multiple hints at Bernard’s inclination to conceive the group of the six friend as one collective personality: ““The flower”, said Bernard ‘the red carnation that stood in the vase on the table of the restaurant when we have dinner together with Percival, is become a six-sided flower; made of six

lives’” (129). Moreover, his sense of belonging is not limited only to his five friends but to the whole humanity:

The crystal, the globe of life as one calls it, far from being hard and cold to the touch, has walls of thinnest air. If I press them all will burst. Whatever sentence I extract whole and entire from this cauldron is only a string of six little fish that let themselves be caught while a million others leap and sizzle, making the cauldron bubble like boiling silver, and slip through my fingers. Faces recur, faces and faces - they press their beauty to the walls of my bubble – Neville Susan, Rhoda and a thousand others.
(145)

The above-quoted passage suggests the idea to consider one’s life to be wrapped in a transparent airy foil that is penetrated by other people’s foils. These foils may penetrate one another to the greatest extent and finally, they may merge and become inseparable: “. . . what I call ‘my life’, it is not one life that I look back upon; I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am – Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda or Louis: or how to distinguish my life from theirs” (156). Later on, Bernard also speaks about seeing the world without the self (162) and doubts the “fixity of tables” and solidity of things. Ettinger points out that the characters merge into one “supraconsciousness” (8), collective consciousness, and experience moments simultaneously. However, this collective perception and merging of one character into another one is usually disrupted by the reminder of time or the external reality:

Yes, but suddenly one hears a clock tick. We who had been immersed in this world became aware of another. It is painful. It was Neville who changed our time. He, who had been thinking with the unlimited time of the mind, which stretches in a flash from Shakespeare to ourselves, poked the fire and began to live by that other clock which marks the approach of a particular person. (Woolf, *The Waves* 154)

The reminder of time in the passage above interrupts the intimacy of the moment and drags the characters from their isolated world into reality. The passage is narrated by Bernard who points out that the split into separate individuals is due to Neville’s down-to-earth act of poking the fire. Therefore, characters are forced to return to the chronologically ordered reality and deal with everyday trifles. This reality in which each individual is depicted as a separate being floating in a space-time is often contrasted in Woolf’s novels with states of being enabling the characters to transcend this reality.

Consequently, the characters' selves merge one with the other in a unified flow of time in which their selves are dissolved.

3.4.3 Interludes Depicting Natural Time that Corresponds to the Rhythm of Human Life

Although the natural interludes introducing each chapter of the novel may seem to be Woolf's another narrative experiment, they intensify the author's intention to write a rhythmic novel where the main rhythmic syllable is the floating movement of a wave. The interludes, exceeding not more than two pages, depict the rhythm of nature, particularly the changing appearance of the sea and light during a day and also during different seasons. There are no human beings involved in the interludes except a house built by people. As we learn at the end of the novel, it is Elvedon, the house where all six characters of the novel grew up and were educated. First, the focus is on the image of the house and then on the image of the sea echoing the lives of the six novel's characters.

The inclusion of the house in the interludes may remind us of the description of the house in "Time Passes" in *To the lighthouse* where the house and its interior also serve as a mirror of time's effects. The beginning of the novel deals with the characters' childhood that is represented as a phase of life open to all future possibilities and where everything seems to be uncertain, undecided and in shadow. The description of the house connected to the characters' childhood corresponds to the uncertainty of the future: "The light struck upon the trees in the garden, making one leaf transparent and then another. . . . The sun sharpened the walls of the house, and rested like the tip of a fan upon a white blind and made a blue fingerprint of shadow under the leaf by the bedroom window. The blind stirred slightly, but all within was dim and unsubstantial" (3). Near the middle of the novel, the house is depicted as something vivid and glorified by the sunshine penetrating inside: "The sun fell in sharp wedges inside the room. Whatever the light touched became dowered with a fanatical existence. A plate was like a white lake. A knife looked like a dagger of ice. . . . Everything was without shadow" (61). The clarity and "fanatical existence" described in the preceding quotation correspond to the period of life of the characters who are in their thirties, still full of life energy and in their prime. The clarity refers to the fact that the paths of the characters' lives are no longer wide-open but more or less decided and lined up. The chapter announcing Percival's death is preceded by an interlude describing the slow descend of the sun and reappearance of shadows and depths of darkness:

Sharp-edged wedges of light lay upon the windowsill and showed inside the room plates with blue rings, cups with curved handles, the bulge of a great bowl, the crisscross pattern in the rug and the formidable corners and lines of cabinets and bookcases. Behind their conglomeration hung a zone of shadow in which might be a further shape to be disencumbered of shadow or still denser depths of darkness. (83)

The last chapter of the novel that begins with Bernard's words "Now to sum up", as if he were preparing the end of the story and anticipating his death, is introduced by the settling of night and darkness all over the place: "All the colours in the room had over-flown their banks. The precise brushstroke was swollen and lopsided; cupboards and chairs melted their brown masses into one huge obscurity. The height from floor to ceiling was hung with vast curtains of shaking darkness" (134). The changing appearance of the house aptly corresponds to the passage of time depicted throughout the span of the novel.

A day's hour is to be recognized by the reader according to the natural scene depicted in a particular interlude. The reader is never told the exact hour but it is always deducible from the description of the sky and the changing light. Moreover, the changing natural scene of the interludes corresponds to the natural flow of the narrative similarly as the description of the house analysed in the previous paragraph. For example, Percival's death represents the climax and turn of the novel, which is emphasized by Woolf's decision to introduce his death after the interlude describing the noon, thus the climax of the day. Therefore, the important milestones and progression of time in the characters' lives are likened to a given day time. The following quotation provides an exemplary passage from the first interlude opening the whole novel as well as announcing the beginning of the story about the six characters, mainly their childhood:

The sun has not yet risen. The sea was indistinguishable from the sky, except that the sea was slightly creased as if a cloth had wrinkles in it. Gradually as the sky whitened a dark line lay on the horizon dividing the sea from the sky and the grey cloth became barred with thick strokes moving, one after another, beneath the surface, following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually. (3)

Moreover, the stages of the six characters' lives correspond also to different seasons. Their childhood is likened to spring, the early adult life and first loves to summer, later adulthood to autumn and their first encounters with death in their group of friends to winter. This natural metaphor of human life represents so-called natural time that not

contrasts but also complements both the chronological scientific time and the monumental time introduced in *Mrs Dalloway*. This kind of time is not Woolf's original invention but it dates back to distant history when time was determined exclusively by the same means described in the interludes, thus by the movement of the sun in the sky or phases of the moon. For example, time is depicted as a natural phenomenon also in Shakespeare's sonnets, particularly in Sonnet 12 or 60 echoing Woolf's waves:

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,

So do our minutes hasten to their end;

Each changing place with that which goes before,

In sequent toil all forwards do contend. (Shakespeare 202)

Shakespeare likens minutes of human life to waves rushing to the shore and emphasizes their briefness and constant decay. The very same idea is expressed by Woolf in an interlude in the second half of the book:

The waves broke and spread their waters swiftly over the shore. One after another they massed themselves and fell; the spray tossed itself back with the energy of their fall. The waves were steeped deep-blue save for a pattern of diamond-pointed light on their backs which rippled as the backs of great horses ripple with muscles as they move. The waves fell; withdrew and fell again, like the thud of a great beast stumping. (Woolf, *The Waves* 83)

Besides the idea of briefness of human life, Woolf also hints at the natural cycle of death and rebirth as she repeats the verb "fall" several times in the passage. The last interlude deals with the arrival of darkness and winter that symbolizes death, which is one of the main themes of the novel and the crucial motif of its very end. The novel deals with two deaths, Percival's and Rhoda's, but the physical end of human life is apprehended by all the novel's characters, particularly by Bernard. Contrary to *Orlando* where Woolf intentionally avoids death by the main character's immortality, *The Waves* explores people's longing for triumph over death. At the very end of the novel, Bernard faces death and he is described as a knight fighting death like Percival who fought for the empire in India: "Death is the enemy. It is death against whom I ride with my spear couched and my hair flying back like a young man's, like Percival's, when he galloped to India. I strike spurs into my horse. Against you I fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!" (167). The novel ends with the sentence appearing in the interludes in multiple variations but Woolf decides to rid it of all embellishment at the very end: "The waves broke on the

shore” (167). The sentence follows Bernard’s decision to challenge death and it ironically ridicules his intention. The briefness and decisive tone of the final sentence intimates the irrevocability of time’s passage and ultimate death. Moreover, the author’s decision to end the novel with the sentence hinting at the never-ending natural cycle perfectly coincides with her intention to write the novel according to natural rhythm and to describe the characters only as of temporary and non-distinct nature.

Although it may seem that fatality and the fear of approaching death are main themes of the novel, they are overshadowed by Woolf’s effort to depict the interconnectedness between six main characters of the novel. Despite all the fear of the future and of getting lost in the “abyss of time and space”, the characters hold together because they love each other and their struggle with fleetingness of time is overcome by their mutual love, search for love and understanding. The refusal of time in favour of love is nicely expressed by Neville in the following quotation:

You are you. That is what consoles me for the lack of many things [. . .].
‘But if one day you do not come after breakfast, if one day I see you in some looking-glass perhaps looking after another, if the telephone buzzes and buzzes in your empty room, I shall then, after unspeakable anguish, I shall then – for then is no folly of the human heart – seek another, find another, you. Meanwhile, let us abolish the ticking of time’s clock with one blow. Come closer.’ (101)

The quotation hints at Neville’s constant need to love and to be loved which represents the only means to overcome the horror of time’s mercilessness. In the proximity of a beloved person, he forgets about external reality ruled by the chronological succession. Interestingly, a similar strategy to avoid external reality is introduced also in Woolf’s late novels *The Years* and *Between the Acts*. The former depicts a family history that overshadows the reality of the given period and the latter focuses on a local community and the net of its members’ relationships endangered by the approaching war. Therefore, Woolf follows her intention not to express an objective view of reality and perception of time in her novels, favours individual viewpoints of reality and deals with subjective experience of time.

4 Late Novels

4.1 *The Years: Time Travel Through the Family's History*

Woolf's eighth novel *The Years*, the penultimate novel, was published in 1937 although the author started working on it already in 1932. Its original title was "The Pargiters" and comprised over 900 pages that were gradually revised and cut down. After highly abstract and experimental novel *The Waves*, Woolf decides to give her readers a present in the form of more traditional and comprehensible novel. As Woolf states in her diary entry from 25 April 1933, she intends to write a novel that would be more concerned with facts and would describe the society of the period: "I want to give the whole of present society, nothing less: facts, as well as the vision. And to combine them both. I mean, *The Waves* going on simultaneously with *Night & Day*" (Woolf, *A Writer's Diary* 197-8). In the preceding quotation, the author emphasizes her intention to return to objectivity and to conventional narrative, which is characteristic of her penultimate novel. Nevertheless, she does not reject her more experimental novels but tries to make use of the techniques and motifs that she has already explored in her prominent works. This is the main feature of her last two novels alongside the increased emphasis on the changing society, reconsideration of history and description of the individual and national identity, which arise from the historical and political context of the period. Although the danger of upcoming war is partly intimated in this novel, it is developed later in *Between the Acts*. *The Years* is focused on the transition between the late 19th century's conservative lifestyle and more relaxed and gradually freer beginning of the 20th century. As far as the temporal conception is concerned, time and experimenting with it is not so important in this novel as in Woolf's previous novels. The author is more interested in the historical aspect of time as she aims to depict a family's history at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Despite that, Woolf uses her traditional temporal features, for example the clock-striking that determines the narrative frame of several chapters of the novel, the interchangeability of the present and the past or the natural time expressed in *The Years* similarly as in *The Waves*.

4.1.1 Family Saga with Fragmentary Chronology

Woolf originally chose the title "The Pargiters" for her eighth novel since she wanted to describe the history of the Pargiter family but finally, she chose a more abstract title indicating the narrative structure of the novel. The novel is divided into ten chapters

and each chapter is dedicated to a particular year that also represents the title of a given chapter. This hesitation and final choice of the title is interesting because Woolf hesitated in a similar way over the title of *Mrs Dalloway*. The choice of this title has already been discussed in this thesis but it is important to remind that the original title “The Hours” prioritized the temporal reference. However, Woolf decides to name the novel according to its main character, which may seem quite traditional for an exemplary modernist novel. Moreover, this choice overshadows the importance of time that is essential for the novel. Surprisingly, Woolf does the exact opposite in *The Years* as she favours the temporal reference foreshadowing the novel’s narrative structure and attenuates the importance of the main theme of the novel – the members of the Pargiter family. These choices are quite paradoxical because time is definitely more important in *Mrs Dalloway* where it may be considered as one of the novel’s characters, maybe its most important character, contrary to *The Years* where time has no major role because the novel is dominated by its characters. As it has already been concluded in the chapter dedicated to *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf may have struggled to separate the thematic aspects of her novels from their narrative intentions. The two are very closely related. In addition to that, she may intentionally confuse her readers as she chooses less telling titles for her novels.

The novel is often likened to family sagas popular at the turn of the 20th century, for example to John Galsworthy’s *The Forsyte Saga* or Hugh Walpole’s novels. However, Woolf experiments with the genre of family saga. Although the author depicts the family’s life over a period of time, it is not done in a logical and coherent way. As it has already been intimated, the novel is divided into ten chapters and each of them represents a particular year. The family’s history is thus not provided as one coherent narrative but through fragments suggesting only a brief insight into the members’ lives. A lot of information and facts are thus omitted and must be figured out by the reader. As Lee points out the reader does not “have the satisfaction of knowing any person’s life completely” (188). Moreover, the narrative focus shifts in each chapter and the characters are not given the equal portion of attention. In fact, the novel differs from the other Woolf’s novels by an increased number of characters, which is quite unusual for the author and makes the orientation in the novel’s story more difficult.

4.1.2 Lyrical Weather Descriptions

Woolf incorporates something similar to natural interludes appearing in *The Waves* to her eighth novel and begins each chapter with a lyrical description of weather

that was affecting the particular period concerned in a given chapter. These introductory descriptive passages were originally meant to represent separate interchapters, similarly as in *The Waves*, but finally finally decided to include them in the text of the given chapter (Lee 187). These descriptions provide necessary information about the setting of each chapter, hint at historical context, sometimes also reveal a few clues about a character's current life, but most importantly, they set the mood of the following chapter. This is demonstrated in the following descriptive passage introducing the chapter set in 1891:

The autumn wind blew over England. It twitched the leaves off the trees, and down they fluttered, spotted red and yellow, or sent them floating, flaunting in wide curves before they settled. In towns, coming in gusts round the corners, the wind blew here a hat off, there lifted a veil high above a woman's head. Money was in brisk circulation. The streets were crowded. . . .

But in England, in the North, it was cold. Kitty, Lady Lasswade, sitting on the terrace beside her husband and his spaniel, drew the cloak round her shoulders. . . .

In Devonshire where the round red hills and steep valleys hoarded the sea air leaves were still thick on the trees – too thick, Hugh Gibbs said at the breakfast. . . .

The smoke hung in veils over the spires and domes of the university cities. Here it choked the mouth of a gargoyle; there it clung to the walls that were peeled yellow. Edward, who was taking his brisk constitutional, noted smell, sound and colour; which suggested how complex impressions are. . . . (Woolf, *The Years* 64-65).

As it can be inferred from the quoted passage, Woolf aims to evoke the sense of simultaneity and binds the individual characters of the novel by natural and meteorological elements that affect the whole territory of England. Moreover, she anchors the chapter in time as she chooses autumn to represent the year 1891. The autumnal description raises the gloomy mood of the chapter that focuses on Eleanor's widow-like and deadening life with her father in their family house after the death of the mother. Woolf describes her feelings of loneliness and self-sacrifice after all her siblings moved out of the house. As far as the historical context is concerned, the above quoted reference at "money in brisk circulation" hints at the economic prosperity of the end of the 19th century. In connection to the intended interconnection of the characters in the descriptive

passage, it is important to notice that the author advances the story and its chronology by providing further information about the characters – Kitty’s [Eleanor’s cousin] moving to the north of England, Hugh’s [Edward’s friend] settling with his wife in Devonshire or Edward’s decision to become a classical scholar.

Despite the autumnal gloominess of the year 1891, the most represented seasons in the descriptions are spring and summer. For example, the year 1907 is metaphorized by a fruitful, happy and glamorous summer since the chapter describes one midsummer evening when Digby [Eleanor’s uncle], his wife and daughter attend a ball in London. This social event underlines the economically stable, culturally and socially lively period before the First World War. However, the following chapter representing the year 1908 is introduced by the description of a harsh spring with cruel winds, which coincides with the narrative events of the chapter – Digby and his wife are dead and Eleanor becomes more and more depressed with her current situation (Lee 185). There are also two winters represented in the descriptions, the first one represents the year 1913 when its coming seems to have appeasing effect mainly on Eleanor who is relieved after her father’s death and decides to get rid of their large and uneconomical family house:

It was January. Snow was falling; snow had fallen all day. The sky spread like a grey goose’s wing from which feathers were falling all over England. [. . .] It was still snowing when the young man came from the house agent’s to see over Abercorn Terrace [the family house]. The snow cast a hard white glare upon the walls of the bathroom, showed up the cracks on the enamel bath, and the stains on the wall. Eleanor stood looking out of the window. [. . .] She turned. The young man turned too. The light was unbecoming to them both, yet the snow – she saw it through the window at the end of the passage – was beautiful, falling. (Woolf, *The Years* 149)

On the contrary, winter has the very opposite effect in the chapter representing the year 1917. Harsh winter, darkness and freezing weather metaphorize the hard times and oppression caused by the war. The last chapter entitled “The Present Day” is set in summer and is introduced by the description of fine weather and sunset, which is characteristic also of the interlude introducing the last chapter of *The Waves*. However, the last chapter of *The Years* is complemented with a brief lyrical description of sunrise at its very end: “The sun had risen, and the sky above the houses wore an air of extraordinary beauty, simplicity and peace” (298). The description of sunset foreshadows the novel’s end, as well as the slow coming of the Second World War but its darkness is

beaten by the sunrise described in the quoted sentence. The sunrise symbolizes hope and a new beginning. This ending also leaves the novel open-ended and hints at the fact that Woolf chose only several representative years of the Pargiter family's history that continues and may be described further.

To conclude, it is crucial to highlight the importance of these lyrical descriptions at the beginning of each chapter of *The Years*. On the one hand, the descriptions represent a regular narrative pattern of the novel and animate the intended factual nature of it. On the other hand, they link naturally the historical time represented by the years marking the important events in the family's history and by the hints at historical context of the novel and the natural time that the reader has already encountered in *The Waves*. This proves that Woolf does not abandon her conception of time even in her late novels where she also emphasizes the possibility of different perceptions of time and kinds of time that complement each other.

4.1.3 History, The Family History and the Individual Memory and Identity

As far as the temporal aspect of the novel is concerned, *The Years* and *Between the Acts* are Woolf's novels that deal with history and memory in the first place. *The Years* is not concerned only with History, meaning the great history of human civilisation, but mainly with the family and individual history that is sometimes contrasted with the great history. However, the individual history often complements the great history.

As Julia Briggs points out in her essay "The Novels of the 1930s" and as it has already been intimated in the previous chapters, "since she had begun writing, Woolf had shown her impatience with a particular kind of history, history as the 'lives of great men', of heroes and hero-worship" (Sellers 76). Since Woolf decides to deal with facts and a family history as well as with fictitious facts in *The Years*, she cannot entirely avoid the above-mentioned kind of history in the novel if she wants it to be more realistic. As a result, she decides to describe the lives of the Pargiter family's members over the timespan from the year 1880 to the present, which means the year of the novel's publication. Apart from the family's important events and dates, Woolf provides brief hints at historical events. These historical facts are always only briefly announced in the novel and do not have major importance for the characters. Woolf includes the death of Queen Victoria and Parnell, women's suffrage movement, the death of Edward VII [which represents a fundamental change in society as Woolf declares in her essay "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown"] or the First World War.

All the historical events mentioned in the novel coincide with important events in the Pargiter family. Woolf divides the family's story into chapters according to years that all represent changes and twists for the family. For example, the year 1880 is marked by the death of the mother, the year 1911 by the death of the father or the year 1913 by selling of the family's house. In connection to the family's house and the Pargiters' typical Victorian household, Woolf deals with the question of family and individual memory. The house represents the past and revives past memories of the characters, similarly as the summer house in *To the Lighthouse*. Till the year 1913 when Eleanor decides to sell the house, it embodies the unhappy family situation – the dying mother, father who looks for pleasure in a public house, very formal and not a very cordial relationship between the parents and their children and hypocrisy of the upper-class. Descriptions of life in that house at the end of the 19th century and at the very beginning of the 20th century are predominantly dim and uselessly lengthy. The family's members seem to be imprisoned in the building. From this reason, all the Pargiters' children, except unmarried Eleanor who is obliged to look after her father, leave the place as soon as they can. The reader thus may have the impression as if time were stuck in the house. However, this changes when the father dies, Eleanor decides to get rid of the house and liberate herself. This major change in Eleanor's life enables her to abandon the past and focus on her present life, which coincides with major changes in society and its cultural, political and scientific development in the first two decades of the 20th century. The narrative tempo suddenly accelerates and even the mood is more cheerful and hopeful. As it has already been intimated, the important historical events coincide with important events in the lives of the novel's characters and the example given above proves how Woolf intentionally shapes the story-line so that the two times, the historical and individual [subjective], complement each other.

As far as the acceleration of the narrative is concerned, it is most evident in the chapter representing the year 1914. This chapter reminds the reader of *Mrs Dalloway* because it is similarly patterned by a repeated clock-striking that creates the sense of time's fleetingness and irrevocability. Moreover, the refrain about sound waves of clock-striking from *Mrs Dalloway* appears also in *The Years*: "But the last stroke dissolved in the air" (Woolf, *The Years* 33). The above-mentioned reminder of time plays crucial role in the novel because it introduces the Great War that, according to Briggs, represents another turning point and a real transition between the past and the present: "Both in *To the Lighthouse* and *The Years*, the First World War lies across the centre of the book, as

the great divide between past and present, though the transition is marked rather differently” (Sellers 79). According to Briggs, this historical milestone also has its corresponding transitional event in the individual history of the characters and that is Kitty’s night travel by train from London [where she organizes a party for her relatives and friends] to her home in the north of England:

She lay listening to the humming noise which the train made, now that it had got into its stride. Smoothly and powerfully she was being drawn through England to the north. I need do nothing, she thought, nothing, nothing, but let myself be drawn on, She turned and pulled the blue shade over the lamp. The sound of the train became louder and louder in the darkness; its roar, its vibration, seemed to fall into a regular rhythm of sound, raking through her mind, rolling out her thoughts.

Ah, but not all of them, she thought, turning restlessly on her shelf. Some still jugged up. One’s not a child, she thought, staring at the light under the blue shade, any longer. The years changed things; destroyed things; heaped things up – worries and bothers; here they were again. [. . .]

The train rushed her on. The sound had deepened; it had become a continuous roar. How could she sleep? How could she prevent herself from thinking? She turned away from the light. *Now* where are we? She said to herself. *Now*, she murmured, shutting her eyes, we are passing the white house on the hill; *now* we are going through the tunnel; *now* we are crossing the bridge over the river . . . A blank intervened; her thoughts became spaced; they became muddled. Past and present became jumbled together. (Woolf, *The Years* 187-188)

Although the passage describes Kitty’s real journey home, it also metaphorizes her ageing, liberation from the past and stepping into the unknown present. The rapidity of its coming is highlighted by the repetition of the word “now”. Therefore, time seems to accelerate in the present and the perceiving subject’s awareness of it is so intense that the concept of temporal categories dissolves. The latter is hinted at in the quoted passage by the “muddled and jumbled thoughts” but also at the very end of the chapter “1914” where Kitty arrives home, enjoys the view from her terrace and continues to walk through the adjacent landscape. Her perception of the moment is so intense that it reminds us of Woolf’s moment of being: “All passes, all changes, she thought, as she climbed up the little path between the trees. [. . .] The wind ceased; the country spread wide all around

her. Her body seemed to shrink; her eyes to widen. [. . .] She was happy, completely. Time had ceased” (192). Kitty experiences the awareness of pure being and does not have the need to distinguish the past and the present since they merge into one whole, which means that also the great history is completely diminished in her moment of intense perception. This moment is also very often connected with the dissolution of the self, thus even with the problem of individual identity that is mainly discussed in *The Waves*. The individual identity and its role is put in contrast to external reality dominated by the scientific time and significant historical events. However, the importance of individual identity is put into question by Martin [Eleanor’s brother] who thinks about this question while walking with Sara around Hyde Park’s Speaker’s Corner. There, poor activists try to promote justice and liberty and a man tries to express his opinion too vehemently to which Martin reacts followingly: “What would the world be, he said to himself – he was still thinking of the fat man brandishing his arm – without ‘I’ in it? [. . .] The sun dappling the leaves gave everything a curious look of insubstantiality as if it were broken into separate points of light. He too, himself, seemed dispersed” (168). The man whom Martin heard speaking emphasizes the role of the individuals and their needs but Martin’s thought about the world without one’s self intimates Woolf’s intention to disapprove of egotism (Lee 197-198). Although the author explores the rejection of the self in her novels, most apparently in *The Waves* where she creates a kind of “collective mind”, this dissolution is never actually completed and justified. As Lee points out, an individual would become feeble and unrooted if he or she merged with the identities of the others (198). Woolf thus aims to emphasize in her novels that the two extremes, the pure subjectivism sometimes leading to egotism and the entire loss of the individual identity, are not right and advisable approaches to life. In this regard, she chooses the middle way and combines the two approaches in her novels. On the one hand, her characters are often individuals who struggle to preserve their identity under the pressure of society without being self-centred. On the other hand, Woolf’s characters who lose their identity entirely, Septimus or Rhoda, cannot deal with external reality and tend to escape from it. It may be suggested that from this very reason the author mingles the two kinds of time and provides different perceptions of it in her novels. None of her novels is entirely dedicated only to the subjective experience of time but is always combined with the external, scientific and objective perception of reality. Woolf thus emphasizes how an individual’s perception and experience is bound with external reality and the sense of belonging to something higher, to a pattern where everything is interconnected.

The final chapter of the novel ends with the party where the whole family is reunited but the reader deals with the ambiguity of the family atmosphere. On the one hand, there is a sense of certain distance between the characters – they do not feel at ease being in the presence of each other and seem to prefer to be separate individuals. On the other hand, they share their memories and are well-aware of the bond that connects them, which is depicted in Eleanor’s moment of alienation from reality and coming back to it: “She half-opened her eyes. But where was she? In what room? In what of the innumerable rooms? Always there were rooms; always there were people. Always from the beginning of time. [. . .] Here she was; alive; in this room, with living people. She saw all the heads in a circle. At first they were without identity. Then she recognised them” (Woolf, *The Years* 292). At the same time, there are hints at Eleanor’s distinct identity and her distance from the other family members in the final passage and a strong sense of being bound with them, which may be inferred from their common memories that are recalled during the party. As far as time in the final section of the book is concerned, all the characters are at some point dragged into the past and recall past memories, which is contrasted with regular references to the present moment. These are provided either by clock-striking or by the description of changing light of the advancing dawn representing the natural time. However, the reference to the present moment is linked to its inseparability from the past and the future: “She [Eleanor] held her hands hollowed; she felt that she wanted to enclose the present moment; to make it stay; to fill it fuller and fuller, with the past, the present, the future, until it shone, whole, bright, deep with understanding” (293). The quoted passage intimates the already-mentioned non-existence of the present moment because it is always build upon the past and foreshadows the future. Similarly, if an individual could perceive only the present moment, he or she would have no vision of the past from which his or her identity is derived. From this very reason, Eleanor wants to saturate the present moment with the past in order to create one complete identity and achieve deep understanding of reality. It may thus seem that Woolf’s characters who struggle with external reality and whose perception of it and of time is purely subjective and very narrow as they are not able to reach the fullest temporal extension, cannot preserve their identity. This inability is caused by the fact that when an individual loses his perception of the external, his identity cannot be defined by the opposition to the external and it dissolves. To conclude, it is necessary to point out that the discussion devoted to the problem of identity may seem quite irrelevant to the theme of time in Woolf’s novels. However, it is very closely related to the conception of time since the author often

connects her characters' struggle with the perception of time and with the definition of their identity.

4.2 *Between the Acts: The Past that Ensures The Future*

Woolf started to write her final novel *Between the Acts* at the dawn of the Second World War but it was published posthumously in 1941. The novel may be considered both traditional and experimental. As far as the content of the novel is concerned, Woolf unexpectedly focuses on the traditional topics of English novels of her time - rural life, village community and “Englishness”. This need of the traditional and the national most probably arises from the author’s awareness of the upcoming war and her compulsion to react to it. On the contrary, the form of the novel and its narrative structure are much closer to Woolf’s highly experimental novels than to the preceding novel *The Years*. Alongside *The Waves*, *Between the Acts* is the least apt to be referred to as a novel. It lacks the main characters, plot and moreover, the half of the text is a mere transcription of a play staged in Pointz Hall, the setting of the narrative. As it has already been pointed out in relation to *The Years*, Woolf’s last novel is concerned with time mainly in terms of how it puts emphasis on history and its role in the assurance of humanity’s continuation and future.

The novel’s title reveals the main structural and thematical features of the work. On the one hand, the title refers to the pageant – to the gathering of the members of the local village community who are to stage and watch a play depicting British history from prehistory to the present moment. Periods of English history are depicted mainly in the second half of the novel where the play is offered to the readers in an unabridged form. These historical periods create not only the frame of the play staged in Pointz Hall but they pervade the whole novel that deals with the importance of the past for the present and the future. Apart from the acts in the play, the title may refer to the main theme of the novel – to the danger of upcoming war which is, however, treated quite implicitly. The present moment [mid-June 1939] in the novel gives an impression of being an “interphase” between the glorious past and an uncertain future that may be completely thwarted by the upcoming war. Therefore, the narrative itself may be considered as the moment between two great acts of history. As Linden Peach mentions in her introduction to the novel, the audience awaiting the start of the play may be likened to the British nation awaiting nervously the upcoming war. Although the irrevocability of the war conflict is one of the main motifs of the book, it is not treated openly but only by hints, symbols and metaphors.

As far as the narrative and temporal structure of the novel is concerned, it is similar to *Mrs Dalloway* since it covers only the timespan of less than twenty-four hours. It

depicts a mid-June afternoon and an evening preceding the representation of the play the following morning. Contrary to *Mrs Dalloway*, the text is given en bloc and is not divided into chapters, which may be attributed to the relative brevity of the work in comparison to the other Woolf's novels.

4.2.1 The Pageant: Brief Sequence of the British Past Pleading for Its Continuation

Between the Acts is completely different from other Woolf's novels in its structure because the half of it is only the transcription of the pageant play staged in Pointz Hall, the house of Isa Giles, one of the main characters. The author thus masters the form of a play within a novel, which serves her both to experiment with the form of the novel and to intensify and double the main theme of the novel - the search of self-preservation as well as national preservation endangered by the upcoming war. Woolf inspires herself by medieval religious plays, mysteries, miracles and pageants that were most probably brought to England after the Norman Conquest (Bellinger 132-7). These plays mainly represented the story of the creation of the world and focused on the history of the world. Moreover, these plays were given by groups of nomadic actors or members of local communities who put on costumes of important religious and historical figures. Woolf borrows this idea and lets Miss La Trobe, the director of the play, engage local villagers in the play that she conceives very generously because she aims to depict British history from its very beginning till the present moment. Miss La Trobe's play focuses on the milestones and important periods in English history. First, she deals with prehistory, the time when England was not yet separated from the European mainland and the territory was inhabited by prehistoric animals and cave dwellers:

A child new born . . . Sprung from the sea . . . Cut off from France and Germany . . . The villagers were singing, but half their words were blown away. Cutting the roads . . . up the hilltop . . . we climbed. Down in the valley . . . sow, wild boar, bog, rhinoceros, reindeer . . . Dug ourselves into the hilltop . . . Ground roots between stones . . . Ground corn . . . till we too . . . lay underg-r-o-u-n-d . . . (Woolf, *Between the Acts* 343)

Miss La Trobe's [or Woolf's] intention to start with prehistory emphasizes the antiquity of the English nation, thus even its importance. Moreover, already this passage from the very beginning of the play hints at "Englishness" that permeates not only the play but the whole novel. It is intimated in the passage by the reference to the villagers' words that were blown by the wind. Typical British weather is undoubtedly a part of the English

identity and for this reason, it is described throughout the novel. After prehistory, the play depicts Chaucer's England, The Elizabethan Age, the Restoration and the reign of Queen Anne, the Victorian Period and the present moment. It is important to point out that Woolf chooses quite an interesting way to describe these periods. The overall atmosphere and social state of a given era is characterized by an extract from the literary production typical for the period. For example, the Elizabethan Age is depicted by an eulogizing ode to the queen and her cultural and political contribution to the creation of the English identity or The Restoration is represented by a parody of the restoration drama. The final act of the play focuses on the present moment but there is no other representation of it than the actors holding mirrors in front of the audience who are reflected in it. The present moment in the play is identified with the actual present moment in which the narrative takes place. However, as it is analysed in the following chapter, it is not the only moment in which the play coincides temporally with the action of the novel.

Woolf's decision to represent English history only through fragments depicting scenes from given periods coincides with her image of history as something of fragmentary nature, which has been already discussed, for example, in relation to *Orlando* or *The Years*. In addition to the fragmentation of the play, there is a sense of hurriedness as the acts follow one another very quickly and they are counted out by constant crackling of the gramophone that provides the music for the play. Its repeating "tick, tick, tick" and "chuff, chuff, chuff" links the separate acts, thus even the historical periods, and provokes in the audience and readers the feeling of expectation, continuity, and unity: "Tick, tick, tick the machine continued. Time was passing. The audience was wandering, dispersing. Only the tick of the gramophone held them together" (379). On the contrary, the very end of the play suggests a disruption of the continuity and unity as the gramophone laments repeatedly: "*Dispersed are we; who have come together. But the gramophone asserted, let us retain whatever made that harmony. Oh let us, the audience echoed (stooping, peering, fumbling), keep together. For there is joy, sweet joy, in company. Dispersed are we, the gramophone repeated*" (399). As Lee points out, "if the play is to communicate a sense of history, it must also communicate a sense of duration, it fills the main part of the short novel, and like the history of England, it seems, until its abrupt closure, to be going on for ever" (Lee 211). The abrupt closure at the end may be intentional and may intimate the fact that there may exist no future and further evolution of the English nation due to the upcoming war. This idea is supported also by Miss La Trobe's sudden inspiration for her following play that is sketched at the end of the novel:

‘I should group them,’ she murmured, ‘here.’ It would be midnight; there would be two figures, half concealed by a rock. The curtain would rise. What would the first words be? The words escaped her. [. . .]

There was the high ground at midnight; there the rock; and two scarcely perceptible figures. Suddenly the tree was pelted with starlings. She set down her glass. She heard the first words. (Woolf, *Between the Acts* 405-406).

The imagined beginning of Miss La Trobe’s following play may be considered an appendix to the play depicting English history, which would mean that the following historical period is prehistory again as there are two cave dwellers awaiting the sunrise. Moreover, the same image comes to Isa’s mind at the very end of the novel it is analysed in the following chapter. As a result, it may be suggested that Woolf aims to warn against the danger of upcoming war that may cause the decay of the present civilisation. She hints at the fact how easily the succession of historical periods may be disrupted and may be considered as a mere construct, which is the focus of the following chapter.

4.2.2 The Representation of History and Time in the Novel

Woolf’s novels deal with history to a large extent, which is probably determined by the author’s life-long interest in it. Moreover, as Beer points out, Woolf uses history to “pluck her out of the deep waters of introspection” (7). This claim may be applied not only to *Between the Acts* where the introspection is attenuated but also to *To the Lighthouse*, where the introspection is excluded from the section “Time Passes”, or to *Orlando*, where the author focuses more on the experiment with time.

As it has been discussed in the preceding chapter, history is mostly represented in the play staged in the second half of the novel but it permeates the whole novel from its very beginning. Interestingly, the present narrative is very often interrupted with references to the past, which would not be unusual for Woolf’s novels if it were not references to distant prehistory. However, these references do not drag the reader from the main narrative in the present moment but rather complement the present since they are “seen not simply as a part of a remote past but as contiguous, continuous, a part of ordinary present-day life” (9). The two quoted passages below are examples of the implementation of history into the present narrative:

Forced to listen, she had stretched for her favourite reading - an *Outline of History* - and had spent the hours between three and five thinking of

rhododendron forests in Piccadilly; when the entire continent, not then, she understood, divided by a channel, was all one; populated, she understood, by elephant-bodied, seal-necked, heaving, surging, slowly writhing and, she supposed, barking monsters: the iguanodon, the mammoth and the mastodon; from whom presumably, she thought, jerking the window open, we descend. (Woolf, *Between the Acts* 309).

‘Once there was no sea,’ said Mrs Swithin. ‘No sea at all between us and the continent. I was reading that in a book this morning. There were rhododendrons in the Strand; and mammoths in Piccadilly.’

‘When we were savages,’ said Isa. (320)

The above-quoted primeval references connect the present with the remote past quite naturally and create a sense of the awareness of our roots that appears not only in relation to prehistory but also in relation to less remote history or family history:

The old man in the armchair – Mr Oliver, of the Indian Civil Service, retired – said that the site they had chosen for the cesspool was, if he heard aright, on the Roman road. From an aeroplane, he said, you could still see, plainly marked, the scars made by the Britons; by the Romans; by the Elizabethan manor house; and by the plough, when they ploughed the hill to grow wheat in the Napoleonic wars. (307)

Her family, she told the old man in the armchair, had lived near Liskeard for many centuries. There were graves in the churchyard to prove it. (307)

Woolf intentionally puts the importance on antiquity, whether it is a family’s genealogy dating back many centuries or a country’s history, to point out the risk of possible loss and decay caused by the upcoming war. Beer suggests that the search for the past and emphasis on history metaphorizes Woolf’s need for assurance of the future and continuity (Beer 26).

The penetration of the past into the present moment and frequent juxtaposition of the two results in the conception of the novel not as a linear sequence but as a spatial landscape with no sense of development (20). The separate historical periods are layered one on another whilst these layers merge. In this regard, the novel could be considered a temporal palimpsest because there is always one temporal layer that infiltrates the other ones at a time. The prevalent layer that frequently penetrates the present narrative is prehistory. As Beer points out, the term “prehistory” may have several connotations. It

may refer to the condition of production of a literary text, to the part of a story of a text that is not written or to the prehistoric narrative [“pre-narrative”] that has no plot similarly as Woolf’s novel (9). In this regard, it is important to mention Freud who introduced an idea that the unconscious contains no story. According to him, the unconscious stores strong experiences and also traumas that are suppressed and may be revived later in an individual’s life by something that reminds the individual of a given trauma or experience [it is often referred to as the concept of “the uncanny”]. Therefore, the ideas and images are not stored orderly in the unconscious, they exist only as fragments without any links between them, which means that they create no story. Moreover, Beer hints at the 20th century’s tendency to associate the unconscious and the primeval in a way that the unconscious is often metaphorized by primeval images (9). Prehistory “lies, as it were, *beneath* history in that same spatial-geological metaphor that Freud used to describe the relation of consciousness and the unconscious which lies beneath” (12). This may be quite aptly applied to *Between the Acts* because prehistory represents the remote past of which people usually have no knowledge and it suddenly becomes an inseparable part of the present moment as its description often stands out from the novel’s text. Beer also highlights another important idea of Freud’s. This idea relates to the unconscious and its latter manifestation in an individual’s life. He suggests that the earliest memories, experiences and traumas, including those acquired during prenatal development, have the most powerful impact on an individual when they are revived. As it has already been mentioned, prehistory is the period that is the most represented throughout the novel, therefore, a parallel may be drawn between the intense impact of the early perceptions on our memory and the influence of the remote past on the present. As Beer points out “the matter of the past is more fully *there* the more remote it is” (23), which may be related to prehistory that is remote but very strongly contained in the present moment.

It has already been intimated in the preceding subchapter that the representation of historical periods in the novel often coincides with their representation in the play, for example at the beginning of the novel where prehistory is mentioned and at the beginning of the play starting with England still connected to the European mainland or at the end of the play where the representation of the present moment coincides with the moment the actors hold mirrors in front of the audience in order to reflect the actual present state. However, the representation of time in the novel and in the play coincides also in other aspects. In the above-quoted passage related to the choice of the location for a new cesspool, there are various historical periods mentioned and they as if overlapped each

other and left equal impact on the present image of landscape. This may also be considered a palimpsest of landscape that is shaped through centuries and different periods that are distinguishable. The same notion of overlapping appears in the play in the second half of the novel. For example, the theme of the play - English history, is introduced by the metaphor of England as a new-born child and it becomes a grown girl in latter acts, which implies that this girl bears in mind also the previous experience and events. Although the play presents only fragments of English history, the historical periods overlap in its actual staging. The act depicting Chaucer's England ends with pilgrims hidden behind trees, the place from which Queen Elisabeth comes on the stage.

Another coincidence of the time represented in the novel and in the play is related to the already-mentioned sense of hastened changing of the historical periods that is marked by the gramophone's crackling. This has direct effect on the audience who start expressing the fear of the future:

Tick, tick, tick, the machine continued.

'Marking time,' said old Oliver beneath his breath.

'Which don't exist for us,' Lucy murmured. we've only the present.'

'Isn't that enough?' William asked himself. Beauty - isn't that enough?

But here Isa fidgeted. Her bare brown arms went nervously to her head.

She half turned in her seat. 'No, not for us, who've the future,' she seemed

to say. The future disturbing our present. (Woolf, *Between the Acts* 345)

The quoted passage expresses the uncertain and fearful atmosphere of the late 1930s and the idea that there might be no future, no other historical period. For that reason, Woolf insisted so much on history. The very same idea is expressed also near the end of the play when Isa has a chance to speak with William [the farmer to whom she is secretly attracted] and they are both surprised why they can speak so naturally to each other:

'The doom of sudden death hanging over us,' he said. 'There's no retreating or advancing' – he was thinking of the old lady showing him the house - 'for us as for them.'

The future shadowed their present, like the sun coming through many-veined transparent vine leaf; a criss-cross of lines making no pattern. (361)

The reference to death in the quotation only intensifies Woolf's expressed fear of the war and her awareness of the inevitability of this conflict. Moreover, the future is "disturbing" and "shadowing" the present moment, which means that the characters lose hold of the present because they lose the pattern intimated at the end of the passage. Woolf seeks this

pattern behind reality as she emphasizes it in “A Sketch of the Past”. The loss of the pattern is also evident from the audience’s response to being exposed to mirrors in which they are reflected in order to represent the present moment. The audience dislike their reflections since their images are distorted and only random parts of their bodies are visible as the actors constantly move the mirrors: “But that’s cruel. To snap us as we are, before we’ve had time to assume...And only, too, in parts...That’s what’s so distorting and upsetting and utterly unfair” (393). There are two possible interpretations of the passage. First, it may refer to war violence that causes not only the distortion and disfigurement of human bodies but also derangement of minds. Second, it may refer to the human illusion of history as something coherent and continuous, which Woolf constantly disproves in her novels. At the end of the play, there is a voice speaking loud out of the bush: “*Look at ourselves, ladies and gentlemen! Then at the wall; and ask how’s this wall, the great wall, which we call, perhaps miscall, civilisation, to be built by (here the mirrors flicked and flashed) orts, scraps and fragments like ourselves?*” (394). Similar conception of civilisation being only a fragile cluster of fragments appears in Eliot’s *The Waste Land* which, in addition, ends with the line “These fragments I have shored against my ruins”.

Similarly to Eliot, Woolf tries to save something from the uncertainty and chaos of the future. For that reason, she ends her novel with the same image that Miss la Trobe describes as an idea for her next play – prehistory:

Before they slept, they must fight; after they have fought, they would embrace. From that embrace another life might be born. But first they must fight, as the dog fox fights with the vixen, in the heart of darkness, in the fields of night.

Isa let her sewing drop. The great hooded chairs had become enormous. And Giles too. And Isa too against the window. The window was all sky without colour. The house had lost its shelter. It was night before roads were made, or houses. It was night that dwellers in caves had watched from some high place among rocks.

Then the curtain rose. They spoke. (409)

This final passage introduces prehistory by the reference to the necessity to fight for survival, which is characteristic not only of prehistory but also of the present moment on the brink of the war. In the second half of the quotation, Woolf returns from the present to prehistory as she describes the deletion of modern civilisation and mentions two cave

dwellers who also appear in Miss La Trobe's idea about her next play. Woolf decides to abandon continuity and start from the very scratch, which is also supported by the image of a rising curtain. In addition, this image refers to the title of the novel, and as it has already been mentioned, the acts do not refer only to theatrical acts of the play that is staged in Pointz Hall but also to acts or stages of human history. If we accept the idea that Woolf introduces another stage of human history while describing prehistory, there are two possible interpretations. First, she may intimate a possible destruction of the present state of civilization by the upcoming war, which would lead to a complete re-birth and re-establishment of the civilization. Second, she may deliberately and out of fear erase the next stage of history, the war, and let history repeat from its very beginning. In this regard, she reaches the circularity the narrative that is characteristic of her novels.

5 Conclusion

As it has been stated in the introduction of this diploma thesis, the main aim of this work is to analyse Woolf's conception of time in relation to the narrative techniques used by the author. However, the focus of this thesis exceeds this relation. The decision to discuss the novels chronologically sets also another task for this diploma thesis and that is to depict the development of Woolf's conception of time and narrative techniques from her early novels to the latest ones.

Woolf's early novels *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day* mostly follow the traditional narrative form of the novel and themes preferred at the beginning of the 20th century. She does not abandon the omniscient narration or traditional third person narration but she gradually inserts more insights into the characters' minds and restricts pure objectivity in favour of a more subjective point of view. Therefore, Woolf introduces the very germ of her highly subjective means of narration such as the stream of consciousness or moments of being. The hesitation and progressive transition between the objective and the subjective may be likened to the contrast between the individual and the conventional or the internal and the external in the novel *Night and Day*. The author explores in this novel how an individual with his or her unique subjective, thus even internal, perception of life struggles within the limits of the external and objective, which is one of the most important themes that appear in Woolf's novels. In relation to the struggle between the internal and the external, the author begins to apply the same tension to the perception of time. On the one hand, Woolf refers to time as to some divinity, she often writes the word "time" with the initial capital letter "T", which hints at its importance and power to affect all human beings equally. On the other hand, this external phenomenon often expressed by the means of fatality, constant reminder of clock-striking, inevitability of approaching death is put into contrast with subjective and internal perception of time. The latter is manifested by the reluctance to accept chronological succession of events and impossibility to separate the present moment from the past experience, which results from Bergson's conception of the present moment that contains the past and foreshadows the future. It means that according to Bergson, the present moment is nearly non-existent since it cannot be captured. As the past experience is also individual, the perception of the present moment differs accordingly. Woolf attempts to describe these different perspectives by a more subjective and fragmented narration that enables her to provide different views on the same thing at the same time. For this reason, she employs the polyphony of voices in *Jacob's Room* where the character of Jacob is

absent and is described only from the perspectives of women and friends appearing in his life. These various perspectives overlap temporally, which is the tool the author uses again in *Mrs Dalloway* where a day of June is depicted through various perspectives of Clarissa Dalloway, Peter Walsh or Septimus Smith. As it has already been highlighted in this thesis, the polyphony of voices is perfected in *The Waves*, novel that consists mainly of thoughts, views and internal monologues of the novel's six characters. The narration from various perspectives is also directly connected with the fragmentary nature of narration Woolf explores in *Jacob's Room* and then in the most of her following novels. Generally, the fragmentary narration used in the modernist fiction hints not only at the disintegration of the traditional form of narration but it may be also suggested that the fragmentary narrative captures more accurately the functioning of consciousness. The latter represents one of the main focuses of modernist authors who were influenced by new findings in psychoanalysis and philosophy and tried to implement them in their works. This diploma thesis discusses the philosophy of Henri Bergson who describes the functioning of memory, namely the process of perception and recollection. The philosopher describes that perception of an image in the present is simultaneous to storing of the image in memory, which also hints at the simultaneity of the present and the past events. A present stimulus may recall any past image immediately because the two are supposed to be interconnected. Therefore, temporal linearity from the very past to the present is excluded and gives way to simultaneity and juxtaposition of events. If this theory is applied to the fragmentary narration used by Woolf, it may be deduced that Woolf's preference to narrate her novels through fragments coincides with her decision to abandon the chronology and linearity in fiction. It leads to the depiction of simultaneity of events, both the present and the past ones, through fragments or "instalments" as it is pointed out in relation to the tunnelling process narrative technique.

In *Jacob's Room*, Woolf lets the main character Jacob die in his early twenties and condenses his life into the fragments of narrative mentioned in the previous paragraph. In her following novel *Mrs Dalloway*, she decides to work with the timespan of less than twenty-four hours but she manages to depict the characters' present situation as well as their past within the strict temporal limit. The same timespan is set for *The Waves* where the characters' lives are described within twenty-four hours. Interestingly, the very opposite happens in Woolf's sixth novel *Orlando* where the timespan is extended into several centuries, however, the main character does not age. The condensation of the characters' lives is facilitated by the narrative techniques that enable the author to extend

the present moment and plunge into the past, for example by the stream of consciousness method, the tunnelling process and moments of being. The stream of consciousness technique appears mainly in Woolf's collection of short stories *Monday or Tuesday*, then extensively in *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse* or in *The Waves* but it may be occasionally found also in other novels. As it has been mentioned in relation to the early novels, the germ of this technique may be found there as well as in Woolf's early short stories. By the means of this method, Woolf lets the reader take a look inside a character's mind and reveals also the character's past which is simultaneous and interconnected with the present moment. Moreover, this narrative technique is an integral part of the tunnelling process technique which is based on the fragmentation of a character's life story into "instalments" that are provided either in the form of stream of consciousness or a character's account of the past. Woolf thus forces the reader to be an active co-creator of the story, to restore the chronology of events mentioned in the instalments and complete the mosaic of the whole story. As it has already been foreshadowed, the tunnelling process enables the author to dig tunnels through the past but also to let these tunnels meet in the present moment. This narrative technique appears mainly in *Mrs Dalloway* and in *The Waves*. Moments of being, that we discuss in relation to *To the Lighthouse*, provide similar temporal extension as the tunnelling process. However, moments of being are usually caused by an external stimulus or shock and they result in a kind of revelation that usually helps the character who experiences them to settle the past in his mind and reconcile with it. The problem of the past that disturbs the present is one of the recurrent themes in Woolf's novels. This diploma thesis mainly discusses the theme in relation to the novel *To the Lighthouse* where this theme is derived from the autobiographical aspect of the novel. The idea of disturbing brings in Freud who studied past traumas that affect the individuals experiencing them in their childhood or early life as well as in their later life. Freud's famous case of the Wolf Man is mentioned to analyse this problem. The patient's past trauma was finally resolved by the re-definition of the past and re-shaping of the traumatic image, which coincides with Lily Briscoe's effort to re-collect the past and re-paint it. Thanks to several moments of being resulting in understanding of the past, realisation of the trip to the lighthouse and reconciliation with the death of Mrs Ramsay, the painter is finally able to complete her painting in an unexpected way that re-shapes the past when she decides to draw distinct vertical line in the middle of her painting. Similar problem appears in *Orlando* where Woolf focuses on the problem of memory and re-definition of the past as well. In comparison to Lily

Briscoe, Orlando undergoes several trances that result in a temporary loss of his memory and consequent re-definition and settling of the past. Moreover, Woolf lets his memory's span stretch through several centuries and juxtaposes the past with the present moment scene at the end of the novel.

All the narrative techniques briefly mentioned in the previous paragraph are connected to the subjective perception of time and represent so-called "consciousness time". This kind of time is usually put into contrast with "scientific time" or "external, chronological time" in Woolf's novels. Plunges into a character's mind or into his or her past are usually interrupted by reminders of so-called scientific time that worships linearity. This kind of time is expressed in Woolf's novels by clock-striking or by any other reminder of constant non-stopping sound or movement, for example by moving beam of light of the lighthouse in *To the Lighthouse*. However, Ricœur points out that this scientific time is only a mere fraction of so-called monumental time that is related to authoritative institutions such as the parliament, succession of kings or psychoanalysts worshipping the sense of proportion. This monumental time appears not only in *Mrs Dalloway* but also in *Orlando* or *Between the Acts*. This kind of time is supposed to drag the characters back from their plunge into the past back into external reality. However, not all Woolf's characters are able to switch between the subjective perception of time, reality and objective reality. As it has been pointed out in the chapter focused on *Mrs Dalloway*, Clarissa Dalloway plunges quite often into her mind by the means of consciousness and although she struggles with reminders of external time, she always succeeds in re-connecting to her daily routine and obligations. On the other hand, shell-shocked Septimus is permanently plunged into his past experience and trauma, subjects to subjective perception of time and is threatened by every reminder of the external. He is not able to accept the chronologically ordered reality and authorities and decides to escape by committing a suicide. Rhoda in *The Waves* faces the same problem, she loses her self in the abyss of subjectivity, cannot distinguish herself from her friends and entirely loses hold of her identity. As the chapter devoted to *The Waves* explored the link between the loss of the sense of proportion and loss of their identity, it was concluded that the characters perceive only subjectively, are constantly plunged to their minds and cannot perceive the external and derive their identity from the opposition to the external and identities of the others. However, Rhoda is not the only character who loses identity in *The Waves*. Woolf conceives the narrative as soliloquies of six characters and these monologues provide various perspectives on the same life story but it is often very

difficult to distinguish which character is speaking because they take turns at speaking without announcing the change. In this regard, Woolf lets merge the six characters' identities, as Bernard for example expresses his inability to separate his self from the others, and creates a kind of "collective" narrative revealing collective consciousness experiencing time in the same way. The problem of identity is tackled also in *Orlando* where it is connected with the loss of individual memory and the change of sex.

Apart from the scientific time and subjectively perceived "consciousness time", Woolf implements so-called natural time into her novels. This kind of time is expressed by natural phenomena, for example by the incessant movement of waves, movement of the sun in the sky during a day and its changing light or a description of an empty house affected by the passage of time. This natural time appears mainly in *To the Lighthouse* in the form of the descriptive passage "Time Passes" in which Woolf demonstrates the passage of time on the empty house that slowly falls into ruins. This kind of time appears also in *The Waves* in the form of natural interludes describing the changing appearance of the sea and light during a day and different seasons but also later in *The Years* in the form of weather descriptions at the beginning of the chapters. Woolf uses the natural time to point out the natural life cycle that is prior to the scientific time invented by people and she contrasts these two kinds of time. The passages introducing natural time are usually lyrical descriptions that do not involve any characters in order to point out that the natural rhythm is always superior to temporally limited human life. By this means, the author attempts to overcome the horror of death and accept it as a natural result of human life, which is one of the main themes of all Woolf's novels. It is also worthy to point out that these natural passages are characterized by the linear temporal conception since there is no human consciousness present in them.

Although Woolf shows her reluctance to subject to the objective scientific clock-time and monumental time both related to authority in her novels from the 1920s and 1930s, she attenuates subjective perception of time and introspection in her late novels and turns her interest to history. As both novels *The Years* and *Between the Acts* are written shortly before or during the Second World War, Woolf moderates her experimental inclination and focuses on the themes that are pressing not only for her but for the whole society awaiting the war conflict. In the two late novels, Woolf turns her attention to family and national history in order to point out what is put in danger by the upcoming war. Moreover, history, similarly as natural time mentioned in the previous paragraph, surpasses life of a human being and implies continuity. The novel *The Years*

represents a family history as well as depicts the historical period not in a continuous manner but through fragmentary episodes. Therefore, the author thus disrupts the traditional form of family saga and presents only incomplete fragments of the family history. Woolf presents fragmentary nature of history also in *Between the Acts* where she experiments with a play within a novel. This play is a pageant depicting the history of England from prehistory into the present moment. It is worth highlighting that even though Woolf eases up her inclination to experiment, she does not return to the traditional form of narration or novelistic genre. As it has been mentioned, Woolf probably turned to the theme of history in her late novels because she was afraid of the upcoming war, “wanted to save the fragments of history” and wanted to point out what may be lost as a result of the conflict. Consequently, Woolf rushes through different historical periods in *The Years* as well as in the pageant in *Between the Acts* and she intensifies the awareness of coming of something historical by the means of accelerated changing of periods in the pageant, by ticking and crackling of gramophone reminding the audience and the readers of the passage of time or by hints at an uncertain future. It seems as if Woolf tried to avoid the future in *Between the Acts* by putting emphasis on history. Moreover, it is interesting how she treats history not only in this novel but also in *The Years*. In these two novels, she does not conceive history as linear but as spatial. In fact, she creates a kind of palimpsest of historical periods that are layered one upon another whilst there is always one that stands out. These layers are mentioned in Woolf’s descriptions of English landscape that bears traces of different historical periods at the same time. Therefore, these periods may be considered as simultaneous from Woolf’s perspectives. It is interesting that the predominantly mentioned period is prehistory. It seems that Woolf felt the necessity to return to the very beginning and start from the scratch. However, as it has been pointed out, prehistory is often meant to represent the unconscious at the beginning of the 20th century, which results from Freud’s psychoanalytic theories. For him, the traumas and events that marked an individual at the pre-natal or a very early stage of his life, are usually suppressed and may be awakened by similar situations later in the adult life. If this idea is applied to Woolf’s novel, it may be suggested that the upcoming war conflict and the fear of the loss of everything people acquired in the course of history may seem so threatening that the author evokes the image of prehistory in order to hint at a possible destruction of it all in a short time and at a possible return to the state of prehistory. Moreover, Woolf hints at the repeating nature of history and closes the novel with the same image appearing at the very beginning, which is characteristic of her novels.

Circular narration appears in the most of Woolf's novels. Instead of providing a surprising ending, the author usually returns to the initial scene or an image from the beginning of a given novel. However, the circle closes not only thematically but also temporally. In *Mrs Dalloway*, the reader is introduced to a present day and the party is described already on the first page on the novel. Throughout the novel, the reader is dragged into the past by the means of the stream of consciousness technique and the novel ends with the party scene mentioned at the very beginning. The same circular narration may be applied to *To the Lighthouse* or *The Waves*. The very beginning of *To the Lighthouse* introduces the wish of Mrs Ramsay's son to go on a trip to the lighthouse and this quest is fulfilled at the end of the novel. As it has been described, the second part of the novel shifts the narrative forward in time, aims to settle the injustices from the first part of the novel and provides the surviving characters with the reconciliation with the past. This process is not finished until the fulfilment of the trip to the lighthouse. The novel *The Waves* is framed with natural interludes that introduce linearity absent from the soliloquies of the six characters. In fact, it is the only reminder of the external time that helps the reader orientate in the extended space-time of the soliloquies. The first interlude introduces the beginning of the day, the sunrise, and the last one the end of the day and the dusk. However, the beginning of the following day is foreshadowed at the very end of the novel. Similarly, the beginning of the novel introduces the childhood of the six characters and the end of the novel deals with death challenged by Bernard. However, Woolf lets the novel end with the sentence "The waves broke on the shore", which supports her recurrent idea that human death is not the ultimate death but that it is surpassed by something higher because there is always a new beginning.

In relation to the above-summarised temporal and narrative aspects of Woolf's novels, this diploma thesis may be concluded by highlighting how carefully the author "constructs" her novels in order to let everything click into place. As it has already been discussed, Woolf focusses not only on the implementation of her unique conception of time into her novels by mere means of various narrative techniques described in this diploma thesis, but also on the application of her conception of time on the novels' overall structure and narrative frame. It is apt to conclude this diploma thesis with emphasizing the fact that all Woolf's novels seem to be organic unities in which the narrative aspects and the temporal aspects are so closely and intentionally related that it is impossible to separate them.

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