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Time and Journey in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, *The Voyage Out*, and
To the Lighthouse

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I confirm that this thesis is my own work written using solely the sources and literature properly quoted and acknowledged as works cited.

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Anotace

Tato diplomová práce analyzuje romány Virginie Woolfové *Plavba*, *Paní Dallowayová* a *K majáku* a interpretuje opakující se téma času a cesty ve vztahu k filozofickému a uměleckému kontextu autorčiny doby. Také představuje teorie Henri Bergsona, Williama Jamese a Edmunda Husserla, a poté je aplikuje v části literární analýzy, poukazuje na subjektivnost díla Woolfové a snaží se najít hlavní myšlenky, které Woolfová svému čtenáři předkládá.

Klíčová slova: Virginia Woolfová, modernismus, čas, cesta, *Plavba*, *Paní Dallowayová*, *K majáku*

Annotation

The aim of this thesis is to analyse Virginia Woolf's novels *The Voyage Out*, *Mrs Dalloway*, and *To the Lighthouse*, and to interpret the reoccurring themes of time and journey in relation to the author's contemporary philosophical and artistic context. It also introduces the theories of Henri Bergson, William James, and Edmund Husserl, which are later applied in the literary analysis. The thesis shows the subjectivity of Woolf's work and attempts to find the main ideas presented to Woolf's reader.

Keywords: Virginia Woolf, modernism, time, journey, *The Voyage Out*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*

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Introduction

Following the Victorian era and attempting to make a radical break with it and its aesthetics, modernist writers inevitably found themselves in need of developing a new conception of time, and, perhaps more importantly, of the depiction and understanding of the immediately present moment and its relation to both the past and the future. Virginia Woolf in her novels introduces such a portrayal of time and gradually employs it in more complex ways. It is therefore the aim of this thesis to trace this development and to interpret it in relation to the philosophical and artistic context of Woolf's writing.

In order to understand how Woolf treats the phenomenon of time and the related themes of journey, death, and fleetingness, this thesis introduces the main influential philosophical theories in a separate chapter preceding the actual literary analysis. It focuses on Henri Bergson with the intention to later apply his theory of the duality of time as measurable clock time and psychological inner time, it presents the corresponding ideas of William James and explores his influence on modernism in general, and finally touches on Edmund Husserl's phenomenology of consciousness and human experience, which is crucial for the understanding of Woolf's treatment of her characters perceptions as highly subjective and thus being an altering force in the depiction of the outside world.

The ideas presented in the theoretical part of the thesis are then applied and related in the next chapters, in which the novels are introduced in the chronological order of their date of publication. This is not only for the reader's convenience, but also for the sake of examining how Woolf's conception changed, developed, or shifted. That is why these three specific novels have been chosen – they contain within themselves enough similarities and differences to be a sound basis for an in-depth interpretation and analysis of the mentioned topics.

It was a purposeful decision to focus the theoretical part of this thesis on the philosophy which influenced it rather than on introducing the author's biography in a quite transparent attempt to treat Woolf's writing as a series of imprints of her psychological state. To ascribe the meaning of Virginia Woolf's work strictly to contextual factuality or to limit it in terms of impressionist criticism would be to diminish the author's literary significance. To analyse Woolf's writing in a solitary and closed form, however, would paint a picture essentially untruthful to the overall value of her texts, to the pursuit of capturing impressions fragile and fleeting, and to the reoccurring

themes interwoven in her books, especially in the three novels examined in this thesis – *The Voyage Out*, *To The Lighthouse* and *Mrs Dalloway*, hence why it is important to situate them into their philosophical context and later analyse the meaning in relation to it. What role do these novels play in Woolf's work and what ties them together from the perspective of time and journey?

1. *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse and The Voyage Out* in the Context of Virginia Woolf's Work

Virginia Woolf was preoccupied with art and its significance in both life and death. Although we should not be tempted to misuse this fact as a symptomatic evidence of her own anxieties, it is impossible to disregard it without considering it as a sort of “translation or transformation of her experience” (Sage in Woolf, TL xxix). The idea of art as a mean of survival is almost typical for the author and has imprinted itself into her work in the form of her characters, who, in search for transcendence and permanence of the self, set off on a journey of creation – very often of creation of art and, in turn, themselves. Clarissa Dalloway's art lies in her fondness of the ornate and beautifying, as she prepares flowers for her party and thus fortifies her role in society as a uniting force.

In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf presents us with Lily Briscoe, a passionate painter who, just as the author herself, worries about the fate of her work and the haunting possibility of her eventual insignificance. Finally, *The Voyage Out* gives us Rachel Vinrace, a passionate piano player, a self-taught “fanatic about music” (Woolf, VO 32), who embarks on a voyage to South America, and in her youthful excitement explores not only the unknown land, but also her own self. These characters then, when faced with temporality and fleetingness reinforced by the increasingly advancing and accelerating way of life, try to seek out permanence and even transcendence above time itself. The solution that Woolf's works propose for the question of overcoming one's own insignificance in the grand scheme of things is creation – the creation of art. But in Woolf's own words, “art” is not meant as limited to fine arts, but rather

the arts that can be taught cheaply and practiced by poor people; such as medicine, mathematics, music, painting and literature... the arts of human intercourse; the art of understanding other people's lives and minds, the little arts of talk, of dress, of cookery that are allied with them. (Woolf in Detloff 19)

And the artist characters of Woolf's fiction do just that, as through their various acts of creation they come to understand the meaning of *being* and of *being happy* as a performative act (14) and as a result of said creation, rather than something one simply *is*.

Virginia Woolf's interest in art, music, literature and their reciprocity was by no means accidental, as she was always surrounded by artists. She admired her sister Vanessa for her paintings and later had her illustrate the covers of her books. Although at first unenthusiastic about fine arts, Woolf soon changed her view and joined her new-found admiration with envy for painters whose

work was done in the open... whereas a poor wretch of an author keeps all his thoughts in a dark attic in his own brain, and when they come out in print, they look so shivering and naked. (Woolf in Dowling 71)

Vanessa's husband and art critic Clive Bell joined Woolf's closest circle of friends as well as Roger Fry, who in 1910 organized a Post-Impressionist art exhibition, which for Woolf proved to be not just a source of inspiration, but also a source of her lifelong interest in the art of impression and the tendency for strong aestheticization in her literary works (72). Woolf's view of art and literature as inevitably intertwined was then symbolically exhibited in the biography she wrote as a sign of respect and admiration for Fry after his death.

As the art of the time turned the author's narrative more descriptive in the attempt to capture an impression with its colour, light, and reflections, so changed the contents. Woolf approached her fiction in a new modernist frame, one concerned with gender, sexuality, and subjectivity (Goldman 39). By putting the characters of women into the foreground, it enabled her to portray the hardships and obstacles they need to overcome, the prescriptive ideas and forces attempting to shape them (and the results of these attempts, too), and the prejudiced expectations of fulfilling certain societal roles.

These roles signified an ongoing tradition, the binding and restricting tradition which Woolf attempted to escape, embodied in the idea of stepping out of the grand notion of history, while at the same time remaining a part of it. *The Voyage Out*, *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* all contain characters inspired by people close to the author, yet with qualities quite beyond them. This attempt to address everything at once is almost typical for Woolf, as anything that escapes the immortalization through articulation possibly and threateningly yields to the anxiety of eventual insignificance. Woolf never wished for her characters to be mere reflections of real people. Although they possessed the same qualities and writing was a way of reaching peace in otherwise stormy relationships by holding them still and unchanging on a sheet of paper, they had

to embody more. While expressing grief over her dead parents in *To the Lighthouse*, which Woolf wanted to “call an elegy, rather than a novel” (Lee in Woolf, TL ix) , this theme of continuity and history extends beyond the merely personal, as it proved to be a means of leaving Victorianism behind with a radical break.

With the intent to begin anew then comes the pursuit of new ways of writing. Woolf’s attempts to employ her words to express everything at once present themselves in long passages describing a single, brief, fleeting moment, or simply in the use of brackets, signifying the interconnectedness of two people in a single moment in time, two moments in history or memory, or even the fluidity of the outside and inner world of a single character. These reflections happen both in form and content, and Hermione Lee points out these recurrences, as “number of things happen twice” (xxxix)– in *To the Lighthouse*, there are two dinner parties, two journeys to the lighthouse (the promised one and the actual one), two paintings, and the literal “reflected” return of the late Mrs Ramsay in the form of Lily’s picture at the very end of the book. In *Mrs Dalloway* we get to see the everyday reoccurring routines, the duality of Richard Dalloway’s character (of a perfect politician and a flawed husband), the post-war trauma relived and hallucinated by Septimus, as it interlaces into the real world, and the two radical decisions in the choice of life or death. *The Voyage Out* is, as Woolf’s first novel, a bit more mellow in its duality, here it more subtly takes shape of contrasts; the contrast, once again, of life and death, of freedom and restriction, of Rachel Vinrace’s innocence and purity faced with a whole new and unexplored world, but also in the title itself presents something “so optimistic in one sense, (...) also sinisterly suggestive of a journey that will take us away from the familiar and leave us stranded, unable to return” (Goldman 40).

This finality and irrevocability – as of embarking on a journey from which there is no going back (death included) - echoes through all three books analysed in this thesis, to the point where it seems they are all a continuation of each other. What begins with Rachel Vinrace as an enthusiastic character who questions this finality and one’s significance, who loves “the sea and music because they don’t die” (Lee in Woolf, TO xv), reappears within the character of Clarissa Dalloway (who, notably, had already appeared in *The Voyage Out* for a brief period of time alongside her husband Richard, who becomes one of the first people to ever try and impose his ideas onto Rachel and shape her in a certain way by recommending books, but ultimately also kissing her and by doing so, plucking her out of her innocent ignorance), an older woman who dares to

live and who continues Rachel's search for meaning in the new world. She also embarks on a journey to escape the fear of her own definiteness (although on a smaller scale in terms of geography, one contained within London), a journey with no return, beginning with "What a lark! What a plunge!" (Woolf, MD 1), finally to be reborn in *To the Lighthouse* with the characters of Mrs Ramsay and Lily Briscoe, who complete the journey, both literally and metaphorically, of achieving permanence and overcoming death by the means of art. When Lily finishes her painting with a last single stroke of the brush and captures the late Mrs Ramsay, the novel peacefully unites life and death as one consequent of the other, undeniable, and inseparable. This sense of ever-flowing permeation and interconnectedness brings us to the topic so crucial in Woolf's writing – time.

With the question of death comes the idea of time and how to capture it, a problem which Woolf kept on exploring not only in her novels, but also in her short stories. This focus brings us the many ways in which we can measure time, and the distinction of inner and outer time as well. This then inevitably transforms time from a mere concept into a real material part of the story, almost into a character (Hilský 178). It materializes into the everchanging sea, the progression of people coming in and out of Rachel Vinrace's room after she has died, the unconscious timelessness that follows, the slow knitting of old women, the Ramsays' uninhabited house slowly deteriorating, or more visibly by the fine lines showing up on people's faces as they age, or literally by the clocks hidden all throughout *Mrs Dalloway*, mainly by the majestic and imposing Big Ben, which connects all the characters of the novel (and once again creates the unity so typical for Woolf).

The Voyage Out mainly focuses on the general change and the break in history, and on the clash between generations. The character of Miss Allan points out:

When I see how the world has changed in my lifetime, (...) I can set no limit to what may happen in the next fifty years. (...) They're going to be much better people than we were. Surely everything goes to prove that. All round me I see women, young women, women with households cares of every sort, going out and doing things that we should not have thought it possible to do. (Woolf, VO 372)

All that, then, embodies Rachel Vinrace. To speak of time is to speak of change, and this once again proves to be a unifying theme in all three books within the context of Woolf's

work, as it extends from the grand historical context to the seemingly small development within a single character. All of these characters are stuck in time, they are the result of their contemporary ideas and ideals, they are a great deal predestined by their background, they are caught up in time both literally (as Septimus is trapped by his past) and figuratively (as Clarissa is bound by the ongoing march of time), but also in a way that does not necessarily signify restraint and captivity, but rather freedom and permanence in the face of the threatening fleetingness of time (with Mrs Ramsay living on in Lily's painting).

2. The Philosophy of Time and Consciousness

To understand the shift in the perception of time in modernism, it is important to mention the philosophical theories that preceded it. The problem of time and how much or how little we as human beings play a part in its existence and meaning has been a topic for many philosophers. Aristotle put forth an idea of a kind of duality in relation to time – the world of the soul, mind and ideas, which exists independently of time, and then matter and real objects, which are subject to time and its influence, often destructive and ultimately proving to be the source of the fleeting nature of many things, corporeal bodies included. Similarly to Henri Bergson, Aristotle considers time and what allows it to pass, eventually ascribing this important role to the human consciousness and events in time, as time could not exist in stillness and nothingness. If something needs to be happening for there to be time, it entails the need for not only the human subject who would be able to measure it and thus acknowledge its existence, but also the fact that the passage of time is spatial in its nature, as it manifests itself as change. What is more, change is rarely abrupt, but rather slow and gradual, ever-progressing, which in its fluidity anticipates the theories of Bergson, Husserl and others.

The biggest philosophical problem, however, comes with the attempt to understand the present moment, the now in which we exist. Augustine of Hippo posits the question of whether it is possible to even call the past or the future “time” if one is no more and the other has not come yet. We understand that the present turns into the past, since otherwise the present would be eternal, but Augustin of Hippo asks further about the nature of the *now*: “If, then, time present -- if it be time -- only comes into existence because it passes into time past, how do we say that even this *is*, whose cause of being is that it shall not be?” (Augustine, ch. XIV 17) Moreover, in relation to fleetingness he makes the distinction between earthly time, where its influence affects creation and destruction and is then the source of all transience and the temporal nature of things, and divine time of eternity, where no change takes place. Even though Aristotle places the utmost importance on space, both he and Augustine realize the need for a soul, consciousness and memory.

2.1 Henri Bergson's Theory of Time and the Influence on Modernism

Modern life brought the need for a new view of time, particularly of an exact time, time that one could rely on for its practicality and undeniable objectivity. The newly expanding world called for this unity which is necessary for the idea of time zones or scheduled departures of trains. Bergson, however, presents the idea that although this "clock time" is a useful simplification inarguably convenient for our everyday lives, it is not "real time", because the measurement of it involves the treatment of time in terms of space rather than in its pure state spatially independent. It is only an illusion that we are dealing with time itself, precisely because of its connection to the space in which it exists.

The idea that a certain amount of time such as thirty minutes could be accurately measured by the movement of the hand of a clock or a single day by Earth's rotation around its axis (and thus inseparably tied to its spatiality), implies that time is made up of separate and separable units, and if it is made divisible, it becomes measurable (Scott 186). Precisely that is the point that Bergson's philosophy goes against, as he presents the idea of duration as a flow, a succession which inherently lacks this absolute distinction and uniqueness. Just like music, time is not a chain of discrete notes, but their melting into one another as they form a kind of pure heterogeneity (Taunton).

In that sense, there is no distinction of the past, present and future, because the past continues into the present and the present into the future (for it is the future-past of the future-present), and this interpenetration § unveils the many layers of the human experience of time and memory. In *Time and Free Will* Bergson puts forth an idea that this real time is not measurable, but it is instead lived. To be continuous, it needs to be perceived, which implies the need for consciousness (Scott 186). The new modernist narrative techniques reflect this idea in the view of time as a flux, the multiplied perspectives of different characters or even simultaneous events in time (Hilský 37). That is why, even in Woolf's work, there is a sense of a flow in the narrative, of a stream of consciousness, of something fluid and inseparable into discrete units. That is the influence of Bergson's *durée*, or "a succession of states each one of which announces what follows and contains what precedes." (Bergson in Wicks 31)

Bergson rejects the idea posited by Newtonian absolutism according to which time exists independently of matter, and instead points out the important role of human

consciousness, in which through the immediate awareness of ourselves we experience time. With the human mind being the base of his philosophy, there is a sense of subjectivity at play here and in the literary texts, which set out to explore the passage of time and temporality through the durational perspective of individual characters. Taunton points out that Woolf, for example, employs a narrative voice which is

constantly interrupting itself and changing direction to produce the sense that we are following the characters' thoughts. But in this novel, that exploration of personal time – where a rush of thoughts can occur in seconds, or hours may pass barely disturbing the surface – is always running up against the clock. (Taunton)

Although the use of the word “interrupting” carries a sense of disconnection instead of the fluidity argued for in this thesis, the quote still brings to light the important Bergsonian distinction of time.

The measurable clock time and psychological inner time then become the centre of attention, but also a source of creation, as we can observe the shift in these perspectives thanks to the slow uncovering of the intertwined experience of time so far and the way one's memories alter and modify the current perception of reality and time and “bring a fresh understanding of the present” (Gillies 115). Woolf comments on the technique of organically interlacing time: “It took me a year's groping to discover what I call my tunnelling process, by which I tell the past by instalments, as I have need of them” (Woolf in Gillies 115).

Bergson's theories and the idea of the immediate data of consciousness became the basis of many modernist writers' perspectives. It made the conventional temporal structure of the traditional narrative redundant (Taunton) and instead enabled the authors to set out on a deeper exploration of the human psyche and the way in which we experience real time. Many of them were preoccupied with time, namely T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Marcel Proust, but also Virginia Woolf, as she is the main subject of this thesis, who through these theories was able to not only experiment with the time of the narrative, but also permitted certain “tension and discrepancy between those objective markers of time and the speaker's experience of pure duration.” (Taunton)

Henri Bergson's influence on modernist writing is undeniable and fundamental, as he shifts the focus from the mechanical to the organic (Hilský 27), and even shapes the

language of the modernists through his metaphors of flowing, streams and shifting. In the attempt to overcome the Newtonian idea of separate units making up time, Bergson and William James contrast them with the aesthetics of a stream, of the stream of consciousness, and they both present the human mind and human experience as ever-changing, elusive and fleeting (28).

Virginia Woolf tries to capture just that, the brief and fading aspect of human existence. Although she encounters the limits of language and in her writing cannot ever completely achieve the purity of Bergson's *durée*, the illusion of passing time (and events in time co-existing, which she achieves with the use of brackets, memories and the fluctuating perspectives of different characters) still stands as she sets out to explore these "moments of being". As Gillies points out,

Her notion of "moments of being," those instants when the individual is forced outside the everyday world and into another that transcends usual limits, also provides a link. Some critics think of these moments as instances of frozen time, a notion contrary to Bergson's ideas about time's constant flow. However, it would be more accurate to think of these moments of being as examples of *durée* that become spatialized because they are written down. (Gillies 59)

What is more, she argues that in certain cases Woolf gets very close to the ideal "pure duration", when the past and present not only exist at the same time, but also when one is *aware* of it (109).

With the idea of fluidity then comes the individualism of Woolf's stories, because with no stable centre of a story, the universe can only be perceived in a relative sense, which then, in turn, means that reality itself is relative (111). Virginia Woolf captures these fleeting impressions of various individuals, who all relate to reality differently precisely because of their space in time (both in the historical sense and in their own personal time) and by doing so, she subscribes to Bergson's preoccupation with not only time, but also the temporal nature of existence itself. By achieving *durée* as best as language allows, she not only explores the present as smoothly intertwined with the past, but it also serves as a basis for the intricate processes of self-discovery and self-realizations which they undergo.

2.1.1 The Influence of William James on the Modernist Consciousness

Henri Bergson wasn't the only philosopher whose metaphors for the conception of time revolved around the image of a stream, a permeating flux and intense fluidity. William James, an American psychologist influenced by Bergson, went on to influence the modernist aesthetic. To describe the passage of time as perceived by human beings, it is necessary to dive deeper into the psychological inner workings of our minds and what it means to be and to perceive.

Just as Henri Bergson rejects the simplified view of past, present and future as separate and divisible into discrete units and instead points out the indivisibility of time, William James shifts his focus more closely onto the consciousness which is necessary for the experience of time. In *Principles of Psychology* he places man into time, into the flux that it is, by putting forth the idea that there is no stable centre for one's identity, but it is instead shaped by time, it is ever-changing, shifting and we are, in turn, "constantly *becoming* rather than *being*" (Johnson 285). This placing of self in time inspired a new wave of interest in modernist fiction in the way human beings experience time and are formed by it as well as the attempt to hold down the ungraspable present moment.

To further clarify how time may have such a huge grasp on man, James writes that "thought is impulsive" (in Johnson 285), meaning that one's behaviour and immediate reaction to one's surroundings are directly influenced by consciousness. He calls this volitional process a "stream" (285), once again returning to the ever-present metaphor of fluidity in connection to time:

Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as "chain" or "train" do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows. A "river" or a "stream" are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life. (James 118)

This focus on the subjective life and the attempt to focalize the story through the perceptions of different characters is evident in much modernist fiction, Virginia Woolf's novels undeniably included. In *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf tries to extend the narrative in all possible directions and shifts the focus of the "stream" from the outside of the character

inside, from the present to the past and back to the future, and eventually, however limited by the restraints of language, produces an illusion of this flux both Bergson and James describe in their theories. As Johnson points out regarding James, “we perceive in memory, imagination, and in the passing moment things in continuity and in relationship to each other.” (in Johnson 286)

This brings us to the main focus of the fiction inspired by these ideas – the subjective self and, inevitably, the subjective outside world when perceived. As Johnson writes, in the works of the modernists, all is “presented through the consciousness of characters so that the externalities, or reality, of a writer’s fictional world become data of characterization.” (291) Although James differentiates between sensations and perceptions (sensations being “pure” experiences coming from the self’s exterior), what unifies these two is the tint these sensations attain from the influence of the subjective remembered experience (286). James also points out that this attentive perception not only perceives, but also creates the perception through what he calls a “pre-perception”, which becomes not only the perception, but also transforms into our behaviour:

When watching for the distant clock to strike, our mind is so filled with its image that at every moment we think we hear the longed-for dreaded sound. So of an awaited footstep. Every stir in the wood is for the hunter his game; for the fugitive his pursuers. Every bonnet in the street is momentarily taken by the lover to enshroud the head of his idol. The image in the mind is the attention; the preperception (...) is half of the perception of the looked-for thing. (James 222)

2.2 Phenomenological View of Time

It has already been mentioned in this thesis that the measurement of time is essentially the perception of change, which inevitably points to the importance of the consciousness and the self. Through his theories of phenomenology, Martin Heidegger validates Henri Bergson's idea of time as inseparable from the perceiving consciousness, from it being "endured, lived through" (Scott 184). This in itself also goes against the idea of time as a sequence of definite moments that follow one another, an idea which Bergson rejected as well.

Edmund Husserl also saw the problem of time as the most important to phenomenology, and once again made the distinction between the measurable clock time and time as experienced by man. In his thinking, Husserl layered consciousness with intentionality, or the "directedness of every conscious experience toward something" (Brough and Blattner in Dreyfus 127). Shifting the focus from time to change and its manifestation in the world, Husserl points out the importance of a perceived object. These objects, then, are temporal because they "display themselves in temporal modes of appearance" (127). What is more, through these objects, we can consider and observe time - the past, present and future – not as sealed containers, but as how these temporal objects (and the time points they occupy) appear to the perceiver (127).

For the later analysis of Woolf's work and the passage of time she describes, it is also useful to mention Husserl's rejection of the notion of human beings only being conscious of the present. This, he argues, would close off the past and the future and our lives would be limited to the moment of the now and the rest of "time" would be made unavailable to the human consciousness. Just as Bergson and James, Husserl's theory uses the image of a flux, of something indivisible, as he also posits that the temporal objects appear to us as embodying the past, present and future unified (128). What is more, Brough and Blattner also note the special and privileged nature of the present:

It serves as the point of orientation for our conscious lives. What is past appears as past in relation to the now, and it is in relation to the now that what is future appears as future. The now is also privileged in the sense that it is open to the new. It is the "generative point", consciousness's

moment of hospitality in which new moments of an objects, or perhaps an altogether fresh object, present themselves. (in Dreyfus 128)

It is also necessary to consider the role of art in human life. If fine arts orient our lives spatially, music does so temporally. Once again similarly to Bergson and James, Husserl reaches for the metaphor of music and tone in his phenomenology, pointing out that if we “did not preserve a consciousness of the elapsed tones as they slip ever more deeply into the past, we would hear only a single note and never the whole melody or even an extended part of it” (Husserl in Dreyfus 128). By doing so, he re-affirms the role of one’s consciousness in the experience of time and in the perception of objects as enduring. Finally, Husserl talks about the “unity of the flow of consciousness”, where the events of our lives do not live separately, but merge and blend together, and that the “deepest level of my conscious being I am a flow, and in that sense my being is temporal being.” (130)

3. Analysis of the Novels – Subjective and Objective Time, Fleetingness, Death; Journey as a Metaphor for Life

3.1 Analysis of *The Voyage Out*

Virginia Woolf's first novel *The Voyage Out*, originally entitled *Melymbrosia*, was published in 1915 and although it offers an enlightening glimpse into the author's later writing, it is often dismissed as not yet sufficiently richly coloured by Woolf's distinctive aesthetics, playfulness of language, and Bergsonian understanding of time. The attempt behind this book, however, is noteworthy and perhaps best characterised by the utterance of one of the main characters, Terence Hewet, who as a writer wants "to write about the things people don't say." (Woolf, VO 249) It is particularly important to note that silence (and the eventual breaking of it) is such a central theme and topic of *The Voyage Out*, and it relates to both time and voyage.

Virginia Woolf herself mentioned her interest in "the things one doesn't say" and in "what effect that has" (Raitt in Sellers 30). Bringing back the phenomenological idea of our view of the world as tinted by our subjective experience, it is only fitting to mention the character of Rachel Vinrace, who in her youthful innocence remains mostly silent, only listening and absorbing the world around her. She uses music to say "all there is to say at once" (VO 239), and eventually she and Terence have the difficulty of "how to reconcile the world of silence with the world of conversation, in which even between lovers voices seem to distort and falsify the inner world they represent" (Raitt in Sellers 31). However, on top of this issue, Woolf also creates a female character, and thus layers it with the experience of the (self-)censorship of women and the problem of finding a voice which would pierce through the dense silence (Sutton in Berman 41). Like the author, who attempts with her first book to establish a voice which people will listen to through her writing, so does Rachel try to communicate through her art. However, she remains somewhat inarticulate and unable to express her thoughts and emotions through words, which not only leads to misunderstandings, but also leads others to shape her in their own image.

Just as Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse*, who is told that women cannot paint and cannot write, Rachel finds very little support in her playing the piano, and instead

meets a lot of prejudice from her surroundings. She is told that practicing will make her “develop the muscles of the forearm – and then one won’t marry” (Woolf, VO 15), Terence interrupts her and does not appreciate her playing difficult music pieces, but instead wishes she would focus on the “nice simple tunes” (340), and others push her into the “adult” world of words and books, world ultimately foreign and intimidating to her. Rachel receives many recommendations for her reading, and through these invasions of others into her developing selfhood, her own voice gets drowned out.

As Rachel dives into literature, she “changes her view of life completely” (Woolf, VO 191) and begins to understand her experience in a new light, one shed by her sudden and fresh perception of the world through language and by the possibility (or impossibility) of even conveying it through her words. This means that the titular voyage which Rachel embarks upon is not only the actual physical voyage to South America, but also one of finding her own voice, a voyage into language. As she sets out on this journey, it proves to be a process of self-discovery and self-realization, but also one into the unknown – that of formulating her thoughts and wishes into words. In this change we can clearly note Husserl’s idea of temporal objects, as Rachel’s perception of her surroundings shifts with her gradual and growing interest in language. This realization opens a completely new window of possibilities of her, which is somewhat frightening, but also astonishing:

Never had any words been so vivid and so beautiful – Arabia Felix – Aethiopia. But those were not more noble than the others, hardy barbarians, forests, and morasses. They seemed to drive roads back to the very beginning of the world, on either side of which the populations of all times and countries stood in avenues, and by passing down them all knowledge would be hers, and the book of the world turned back to the very first page. Such was her excitement at the possibilities of knowledge (...). Her mind dwelt on them with a kind of physical pleasure such as is caused by the contemplation of bright things hanging in the sun. From them all life seemed to radiate; the very words of books were steeped in radiance. (...)

“What is it to be in love?” she demanded, after a long silence; each word as it came into being seemed to shove itself out into an unknown sea. (196-197)

With the issue of language also comes the issue of the inexpressible and, once again, of the silence. As Sutton points out, it “invites us to pay attention to what the characters, and the narrator, cannot articulate explicitly but which may be conveyed through the sonic environment and individuals’ responses to it” (in Berman 42), which once again posits the question of the human experience of both time and space as undividable and ever-flowing. This experience is also highly subjective, and Woolf focuses on this aspect in her narration, and despite *The Voyage Out* being her first novel, there are already traces of her typical understanding of time as deeply connected to one’s mind, which she later contrasts with the measurable clock time.

Virginia Woolf wrote to Clive Bell in 1908 about her idea for the book and expressed her interest in the momentary images and impressions, declaring her intent to re-form the form and contents of the novel as it was so far, and instead to “capture multitudes of things at present fugitive, enclose the whole and shape strange shapes” (Woolf in Bishop 344), as well as to attempt to paint an image as she would capture the elusive and fleeting reality. This fascination with things and humans “severed from the past and the future” (344) foreshadows Woolf’s interest in the experience of time as it comes in the later novels, brief glimpses of which we can already observe in *The Voyage Out*. After Rachel starts to read, she begins to question the nature of the world she finds herself in through language, and even the world itself:

The morning was hot, and the exercise of reading left her mind contracting and expanding like the mainspring of a clock. The sounds in the garden outside joined with the clock, and the small noises of midday, which one can ascribe to no definite cause, in a regular rhythm. It was all very real, very big, very impersonal, and after a moment or two she began to raise her first finger and to let it fall on the arm of her chair so as to bring back to herself some consciousness of her own existence. She was next overcome by the unspeakable queerness of the fact that she should be sitting in an armchair, in the morning, in the middle of the world. Who were the people moving in the house – moving things from one place to another? 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. (...) She was overcome with awe that things should exist at all... She forgot that she had any fingers to raise... The

things that existed were so immense and so desolate... 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. (VO 138-139)

By achieving and describing the experience of a consciousness (mostly Rachel's) in relation to time, space, and existence in general, the story also establishes that the overall view of reality it represents is never objective. Since there is always a point (a consciousness) of focalisation, it hints at the impossibility of an experience outside of said consciousness. Fry comments on this by writing that "from the novel's opening chapter, we are encouraged to recognize that no physical perception is reliable, no vision stable, no appraisal trustworthy" (411). Moreover, if Rachel's perception is tinted by her being a "flow" and a "temporal being" (as Husserl puts it), so is everyone else's. This is best recognized on the passages describing the way in which the English people who have travelled to South America relate to their suddenly unknown and foreign surroundings.

As they observe the landscape, it not only places them into space and into the flux of time and the ways their past interconnects to their past, but it also shows the way in which such experience is formed. As the tourists go off on their expedition and take in the overwhelming landscape which opens before them in the present (the future-past), they note that "the effect of so much space was at first rather chilling. They felt themselves very small, and for some time no one said anything" (Woolf, VO 146). This permeating interconnectedness of time, space, and language points once again to the importance of the human consciousness as an influence on the perception of reality. The unfamiliar landscape appears as confusing, vast, and the people in contrast tiny and insignificant.

Additionally, this space is connected to its sound, mainly the sounds of the natives' music, to which the English people react similarly as to the landscape. It is important to note the sound (and the silence) in the novel, because it is a part of Rachel's "voyage" and her development through the story. By providing the reader with a protagonist who is also a musician and a talented pianist, we are given someone who is "exceptionally alert and responsive to the sounds of the world around her" (Sutton in Berman 42). Not only Rachel, however, finds herself surrounded by unknown sounds, as she and others venture out onto an excursion to a native village, they suddenly focus more on the sounds ("the air was full of sound" and "they could hear all round them the rustling of leaves" (Woolf, VO 309)), but more importantly on the effects of their own voices in

such a setting. Hewet reads from his book of poetry and in response “a bird gave a wild laugh, a monkey chuckled a malicious question” (312).

The characters then advance in their journey in relation to the sounds which surround them, and which mark the time, and subsequently place them spatially. Sutton remarks that since *The Voyage Out* repeatedly alludes to “tourism and exploration, we should recall that the description of indigenous music and instrument was an integral part of late nineteenth-century travel literature” (in Berman 48). But the voyage in question is so much more than that. The main character, Rachel Vinrace, is also attempting to “voyage out of Europe and thereby of its patriarchal imperialist gender relations” (Levenson 187). To analyse this voyage, however, we need to first be reminded of how it started.

At the beginning of *The Voyage Out*, we are first met with the image of London as a chaotic and scary place, mainly with its streets so very “narrow, it is better not to walk down them arm-in-arm” (Woolf, VO 3). Woolf also goes on to note that “in the streets of London where beauty goes unregarded, eccentricity must pay the penalty, and it is better not to be very tall, to wear a long blue cloak, or to beat the air with your left hand” (3), which immediately opens with an atmosphere of not only a certain lack of freedom in a highly civilised world, but also with the question of the possibility for a unique selfhood. All this is then contrasted by the wildness and vastness of South America, where – ironically – Rachel Vinrace encounters both freedom and restriction. Frye also mentions that just as the characters embark upon the voyage, there is an instant “recognition of perceptions as dependent on point of view” (412), which is obvious throughout the entire story. At the beginning when Mr and Mrs Ambrose

with some hesitation trusted themselves to [the old man who proposed to row them out to their ship in the little boat], took their places, and were soon waving up and down upon the water, London having shrunk to two lines of buildings on either side of them, square buildings and oblong buildings placed in rows like a child’s avenue of bricks.

(Woolf, VO 7)

and later, as the ship sets sail, the people on board the *Euphrosyne* become the centre point for the story’s view of the shrinking land in the distance. Here, once again, the motif of freedom is mentioned as they observe the “shrinking island in which people were

imprisoned” (Woolf, VO 29), and as Helen Ambrose calls out “Oh look! We’re out at sea!” (23), it is noted that “they were free of roads, free of mankind, and the same exhilaration at their freedom ran through them all” (23-24).

When talking about *To the Lighthouse*, Frye suggests that it is a “traditional novel, in part a novel of manners and in part a Bildungsroman” (403). However, if we consider the ending which the main character progresses towards, it is both a Bildungsroman and an Antibildungsroman. After voyaging out and attempting to establish and explore her own identity as well as a voice in the deafening silence, Rachel Vinrace dies unexpectedly as a result of her passionate expedition into the unknown. As she tries to articulate the indescribable in both the world and herself – or as she puts it and reflects her linguistic inexperience, in response to Helen claiming that now Rachel “can go ahead and be a person on [her] own account,” she is learning to “be m-m-myself” (Woolf, VO 90), it becomes “synonymous with learning to die” (Raitt in Sellers 33).

If there is talk about time, there inevitably has to be a mention of the fleetingness one experiences and the subsequential death. Raitt quotes Christine Froula by mentioning that

in death scenes, Woolf advances the plot of the female artist-novel, representing not the death of the body but the symbolic death that her heroine undergoes when she finds no language in which to live.” Froula’s reading beautifully demonstrates the extent to which *The Voyage Out* reverses the usual trajectory of the Bildungsroman in tracing the increasing confusion and diminution of its heroine. (36)

However, before we can analyse the radical and unforeseen end of the character and with that (or as a result of that) the turn from the characteristic progressive structure of a Bildungsroman, we need to realise just what it is that Rachel is trying to achieve. As she gradually gains the ability to express her thoughts and wishes, she is simultaneously aware of the limitations and shortcomings that come with language. She has gained freedom and become more restricted at the same time, both physically and mentally, and in her voyage out into the world she began as a blank slate, one uncovered with writings (but increasingly growing with inscriptions), but at the height of her self-realization she is told by Terence that “Men and women are too different. [Rachel] can’t understand - [Rachel] doesn’t understand” and is suspected of “always wanting something else”

(Woolf, VO 352). After she stares at him in silence (again bringing to mind the voyage into language), she realizes it to be “perfectly true, and that she wanted many more things than the love of one human being – the sea, the sky” (352).

As she is in her youthful vigour and curiosity stood before the whole vast world, Rachel peeks through the blinds of limitations which she experienced in her life so far and finds that there is so much more that she wishes to discover. Rachel is always standing on the edge, be it physically on a cliff or mentally in her desire for the unspoken and unbound. She becomes painfully aware of time and its effect on everything, including the fleetingness it brings with itself. When they part ways with the Dalloways who stayed with them for a short time during the voyage, those who are left on the ship feel a

feeling of emptiness and melancholy come over them; they knew in their hearts that it was over; that they had parted for ever; and the knowledge filled them with far greater depression than the lengths of their acquaintance seemed to justify. Even as the boat pulled away, they could feel other sights and sounds beginning to take the place of the Dalloways, and the feeling was so unpleasant that they tried to resist it. For so, too, would they be forgotten. (Woolf, VO 84)

This realization gives Rachel a sense of urgency to find one’s place in the world and in time, too. The awareness of just how quick, ruthless, and oblivious the unstoppable march of time is, Rachel wishes to embrace all that there is in what could best be described as a flux of life. As she is still unable to “say all that there is to say” (239), be it because she still struggles with her words or because she is discouraged to use her music to do so, her character becomes elusive in that she does not obey language in her yearning. She always wishes to see further and to understand more, more beyond herself, even if to succeed means to cease completely: “To be flung into the sea, to be washed hither and thither, and driven about the roots of the world – the idea was incoherently delightful” (347). This quote perfectly encompasses where Rachel wants to end her voyage – synonymous with everything, part of all space and time, unending and undefinable.

Death, however symbolic or literal, plays a huge part in all this. Woolf wrote about her intentions for *The Voyage Out* as follows: “What I wanted to do was to give the feeling of a vast tumult of life, as various and disorderly as possible, which should be cut short for a moment by the death, and go on again” (Woolf in Sellers 37), and Raitt on the topic

of death and its meaning in the overall scheme of things and of time argues that “Rachel’s death barely makes any difference in her world” (37). Although that is true, it also proves to be an ideal scenario for the exploration of the philosophical approach to time.

Since Woolf uses a character who becomes bound to her deathbed and cannot move, *The Voyage Out* shifts our focus on the contrast, or rather the fluid and open duality of the inner and the outer world. The character of Rachel Vinrace had always been sensitive to these permeations, namely to reality seeping into and saturating her dreams. She is haunted by several of them throughout the book, and she usually gets these nightmares when faced with something unknown, as when Richard Dalloway kisses her on board the Euphrosyne or when she is met with the violence of women killing chickens. For the first, she sees in her dreams a long damp tunnel with “a little deformed man who squatted on the floor gibbering, with long nails” (Woolf, VO 81), and for the other “an old woman slicing a man’s head off with a knife” (395). What this means is that Rachel remains naively open to all her experiences and absorbs it in her inexperience. This – what Raitt calls the “emphasised incipient hysteria of Rachel’s responses” (in Sellers 36) – not only works to unify the flow of time (of the past and the present, most importantly) through her consciousness, but also survives in the way Rachel reacts to her future situations.

In the character’s near-death confusion and disorientation, we can once again observe the way in which one’s consciousness influences the perception of the outside world. When Rachel manages to wake up from her feverish unconsciousness, she “vaguely recognises people and objects, but everything is distorted” (Frye 407). Here we get a description of strange shapes and shadows as they reveal themselves to Rachel all around her, on the walls and on the ceiling, and the line between dream and reality becomes blurred, almost non-existent. This vagueness and elusiveness are an interesting part of Rachel’s character, as to define her is not only almost impossible, but also unsuitable to her own nature. She balances on the edge of reason and sentiment, creation and destruction, certainty and bewilderment, and even in her death blends into the hazy and distorted lines.

At the end, it is perfectly fitting for Rachel to die at the end of her journey as a result of her curiosity, and to become an uncertain and untouchable part of the time passed, a memory and a possibility. She succeeds in her aspirations and seeps into everything, into everyone, time, space, consciousnesses, she is undeniable yet never

concrete. That in its essence is Rachel's voyage – from the raw and hostile reality into the vastness of everything, she succeeds in achieving her vision of blending into the world.

Finally, the character's death is followed by a shift in focalisation, which validates the point of the reader relating to the book's fictional world through the eyes and perception of a certain individual, mostly Rachel. Terence is by her side when she passes away, and although at first he does not believe that she is dead, he remains silent for a moment and then erupts in screams. Here, once again, we are met with the limitations of language and its incapability of conveying the message in its fullness, as in the singular word that Terence cries, everything inexpressible is contained within:

“Rachel! Rachel!” he shrieked, trying to rush back to her. But they prevented him and pushed him down the passage and into a bedroom far from her room. Downstairs they could hear the thud of his feet on the floor, as he struggled to break free; and twice they heard him shout, “Rachel! Rachel!” (Woolf, VO 413)

Bishop comments on this that as “we slide out of his consciousness, we seem almost to hear his cries receding down the corridor” (356), meaning the way in which the story shifts its vision from Rachel to Terence and eventually to the others who are present, which always changes the way these events are presented to us. Most importantly, Rachel's death also gives us the final ironic duality, which she has pondered throughout her entire journey into adulthood, because as she was trying to establish her self-hood in the unknown and somewhat confusing world, she was aware of not only the freedoms which come with it, but also the limitations. Here we are eventually given language in its inadequacy and in its vague ability to contain everything at once, as Terence, who originally talked about his aspirations for writing a novel about silence in the end finds an extreme difficulty in finding the right words to convey his anguish and his loss, which results in the word that unifies all he wishes to express, time unified in the dissolving memory and the impossibility of the future, a space which is at the same time filled and empty of his lover, and her journey during which he both aided and restrained her – in her name, in shrieking “Rachel”.

Frye goes on to analyse the change of tone after Rachel dies, and notes that “the shift of focus is evident immediately; directly following Terence's anguished cry, Chapter

XXVI opens with one of those generalized descriptions of nature” (417) which goes as follows:

For two or three hours longer the moon poured its light through the empty air. Unbroken by clouds it fell straightly, and lay almost like a chill white frost over the sea and the earth. During these hours the silence was not broken, and the only movement was caused by the movement of trees and branches which stirred slightly, and then the shadows that lay across the white spaces of the land moved too. In this profound silence one sound only was audible, the sound of a slight but continuous breathing which never ceased, although it never rose and never fell. It continued after the birds had begun to flutter from branch to branch, and could be heard behind the first thin notes of their voices. It continued all through the hours when the east whitened, and grew red, and a faint blue tinged the sky, but when the sun rose it ceased, and gave place to other sounds. (Woolf, VO 414)

Fry continues that “the description expands the image of Terence’s view from the window at Rachel’s deathbed, and it re-establishes a kind of stillness (though combined with underlying restlessness) after his shriek has broken the silence of his own calm” (417).

3.2 Analysis of *Mrs Dalloway*

Mrs Dalloway, arguably Woolf's most well-known novel, was published in 1925 and it is the only one of her long fictions which spun out of two short stories, "Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street" and "The Prime Minister" (Saint-Amour in Berman 79). The novel was originally intended to carry the title of *The Hours*, a title undeniably fitting to the main issue presented, but one which would favour the insistence of the ever-present threat of the march of time over one's significance in it.

Virginia Woolf set *Mrs Dalloway* into London, a city which allowed her to constantly point towards the tower of Big Ben and its inescapable clock which not only ties all the characters together, but also serves a purpose of being the unavoidable reminder of time in all its precision and persistence. To contrast this measurable clock time, the narrative also allows us to experience the inner time of the characters, as we through various associations and memories come to understand them, their behaviour, and motivations. This is crucial because it thematises the

problem of representing in words a time within which a moment cannot be isolated (or indeed, not even separated from place), but is a part of a continuity in which present, past, and future are inseparable and interpenetrated, thus rendering inadequate the measuring of time by the clock (Benjamin 216)

In *Mrs Dalloway*, the characters are undoubtedly temporal in nature, as they are made up in relation to time, created by the fusion of the past (and of memory, often unreliable), the present (in all its anxiety of impermanence), and the future (seen as tinted by the aforementioned and inevitably influenced by it). At the very beginning we are given the character of Clarissa Dalloway in the present time in London but are immediately transported back into the past to her youthful days in Bourton. Not in the simplified and isolated form of a flashback, however, but in a permeating undividable blend of time and of the associations, remembrance, and sentimentality. By doing so, Woolf rejects the linear form, since it

divides people and events into a single moment and a single place, it cannot convey the organic reality. To arrange the plot in linear form places the emphasis wrongly upon action and physical events which are, in the

organic world, only the superficial expression of a profounder reality.
(215)

As the narrative continues, there are many more characters through whose eyes the story focalises itself and thus changes the perception of time accordingly. The narrator speaks through their voices and perceives reality with the experience of their consciousness. Benjamin comments on this when she notes that “the moment apart from the event and person and place is not really time; further, each place and person and event has a past which bears upon, even creates, the present and the future” (217). Not only does this echo Husserl’s ideas, but it also entails the significance of a character through which to tell the story.

It is important to note just how this shift in consciousness happens - it is time once again, the raw and precise reminder of time common to all the characters present, the one standing outside their selves. It happens through the various clocks in the novel, mainly Big Ben, which unites them all in its sober austerity, but more specifically (and more importantly) through the sound it produces. This sound, then, becomes spatial as it blends into the surroundings, the “leaden circles dissolve” (Woolf, MD 4) and the striking of Big Ben “floods Clarissa’s drawing room” (116). On top of that, it also plays a role in switching between the characters, as the noise of a passing car, the whirring of a plane, the florist’s singing, and the tolling of Big Ben are “among the novel’s points of transition between different consciousnesses” (Goldman 54). Not only does the mechanical sound allow the narrative to shift its perspective, become tinted by another character’s inner world and eventually reveal more of the story, but it also works as a link in time. Benjamin argues that

when the time is stated exactly by Woolf, (...) it is 1) to indicate the simultaneity of certain acts; 2) to provide a transition from one character to another (...); 3) to provide a transition from the present to past (...); 4) to suggest the fact that characters are bound together by time (217),

implying that the narrative of *Mrs Dalloway* slowly reveals itself through the gradual additions of different points of view in a non-chronological order, eventually forming the reality of the present, thus representing the idea of the Bergsonian time.

Here the connection of time and space becomes apparent and meaningful to the human experience, as the simple squeak of the door hinges rushes Clarissa’s memories to

intertwine with her present perception in a sentimental melancholy. Similarly, Peter is reminded of Clarissa both in the past and the present just by hearing the tolling of the bell coming from a nearby church:

Ah, said St. Margaret's, like a hostess who comes into her drawing-room on the very stroke of the hour and finds her guests there already. I am not late. No, it is precisely half-past eleven, she says. (...) The sound of St. Margaret glides into the recesses of the heart and buries itself in ring after ring of sound, like something alive which wants to confide itself, to disperse itself, to be, with a tremor of delight, at rest – like Clarissa herself.
(49)

Similarly, the character of Septimus Smith is inherently tied to both time and space, as he, a shell-shocked soldier of the WWI, reacts to his surroundings in a unique way and is often frightened by not only the passage of time and the impossibility of reliving the past, but also by the physical manifestation of time. The sound of the clock startles him, and Septimus is the only one completely unable to free himself from the restraints of time. Since he is haunted by his nightmares and hallucination, which the sounds around him provoke in his mind, the sounds themselves become a way of him existing in a curious flux of past and present.

To describe the sound the various clocks of the novel produce, Woolf chooses words such as a “warning” or “irrevocable”, and thus characterizes the constant anxiety of time. Although this novel employs many different ways of showing the change in time, such as the movement of the clouds or the sun in the sky, the people and the vehicles in the city, the tower of Big Ben stands as a monumental reminder of the fact that everything exists in connection and under the mercy of time. As it strikes the hours one by one, it also forces the characters to think about how much they are subject to it and how little or how much time they have left. Clarissa Dalloway, being a woman of an upper class and having a set place in the society, has her life oriented by the clocks around her, as when she is distracted in her reminiscing and is suddenly torn out of it into the soberness of reality, and exclaims “Three, good Heavens! Three already!” (Woolf, MD 116). While the clocks serve as a reminder of the unstoppable time and eventual and inevitable death, they also imply the importance of keeping on living while there is time and even finding a way of overcoming one’s own impermanence.

However, Clarissa is not the only one whose everyday life depends on the incessant ticking of the clock, for Lucrezia, Septimus's wife, has to be constantly and agonizingly aware of the time for the purpose of keeping up with her husband's doctor appointments and as a way of trying to distract him from his deteriorating mental state. Rezia keeps reminding him that "it is time", she asks "what is the time?", she consciously disrupts his stillness, and attempts to impose upon him the order it might bring into his chaotic and unsteady world. Here the duality of time is contrasted, when through the eyes of Rezia and Septimus, we experience time as an oppressive force:

Shredding and slicing, dividing and subdividing, the clocks of Harley Street nibbled at the June day, counselled submission, upheld authority, and pointed out in chorus the supreme advantages of a sense of proportion (Woolf, MD 101),

but on the other hand, the narrator gives us a hint of the different experience of a certain moment, as when "twelve o'clock struck as Clarissa Dalloway laid her green dress on her bed, and the Warren Smiths walked down Harley Street" (93). Although all characters are faced with an uncertainty of their future and are concerned about the social interactions they are about to be a part of, there is a clear difference between what they are feeling – Clarissa prepares to be a charming hostess for her evening party and playing her role of a loving wife of a successful politician, and Lucrezia is bringing her husband Septimus to another psychologist after so many failed attempts, almost disillusioned of the possibility of getting help, yet still upkeeping their schedule and living in the rhythm of the clocks. Rezia's relationship to time is notable, although she might appear as a secondary character to Septimus. She is the time-keeper, she is expected to live precisely and consciously in the present (and thus prove herself to be useful), but she embodies within herself a curious mixture of the future, one which seems bleak and uneventful given the state of her husband, and of the past in Italy, which becomes a form of her escapism and the object of her desire.

Unlike Rachel Vinrace in *The Voyage Out* who was on her quest to establish her selfhood in the world, Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith need to deal with their position in time, both immediate and general, and their relation to their personal history (mostly Clarissa) and history on a grander scheme (Septimus). As Benjamin notes, "the difference in generation between Septimus and Clarissa is important. His life is ruined by the war; Clarissa's generation, too old to fight (their children had fought), had

“died” for other reasons” (222). The wish to overcome the aftermath of the war is palpable in all characters, in their attempts to find a reason and a way to survive and to go on into the future with courage. Clarissa is also aware of the post-war misery, she pities a woman whose son died in the war, she rejoices in the fact that the war is over, but her empathy translates into her personal life, where she is doubting her own significance. Since she is an older woman and she realizes that her duties to the world and the society have been fulfilled, she questions where to go from there, where her “voyage” should continue.

When contrasted to Rachel, Clarissa’s voyage is on a much smaller scale, as the story is contained within London (but expanded by the means of memories both temporally and spatially). However, this is fitting for Clarissa and reflects her appreciation for the simple things of the everyday – the flowers, the people in the park, the party she is about to host. She romanticizes her city and thus creates it, and in turn, she is created by it. With her family, she has “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” (Woolf, MD 4). As she walks through the city, she is reminded of the past, of Bourton, of Sally, and of rejecting Peter’s marriage proposal. With her movement comes the movement through time and a progression in her character as she searches for a reason to keep on living. Peter Walsh experiences the same thing, when he as a solitary traveller returns to London to tell Clarissa of his engagement and while walking through Regent’s Park, he realizes how impermanent he himself is and how fleeting his youth – and Clarissa’s youth, too, as he notes to himself how noticeably she has grown old and how her wrinkles became visible. Peter observes how much Clarissa’s daughter Elizabeth has grown up, he watches nannies and the children they are nursing in the park, he tries to keep up with the young boys marching through London, and he also remembers that

as a child he had walked in Regent’s park – odd, he thought, how the thought of childhood keeps coming back to me – the result of seeing Clarissa, perhaps; for women live much more in the past than we do, he thought. They attach themselves to places (Woolf, MD 55).

Despite the implications that youth prospers in the blissfully ignorant and not yet time-conscious bubble, something that the older characters would knowingly lose with their advancing age, would prove to be an over-simplification and an essentially untruthful understanding of the novel. For the uncompromising march of time brings a

much more complex relationship among the people of various ages. Clarissa Dalloway is an older woman who, although being shaped and formed by the past, directs her attention into the future while pondering the question of what will be of her once she is gone. Here the anxiety of time lies in the uncertainty and unpredictability of the future. Clarissa's mirroring character, Septimus Smith, is a man permanently and inescapably frozen in the past. To him the past has no value, no purpose, and no significance, as everything he wishes for remained in the past and in the permeating flux of time comes back to him again and again in the form of nightmares, paranoia, and hallucinations. Despite being much younger than Clarissa, his youth is not a picture of the exemplary lustrous vigour and unending progress (which Peter in his naïve nostalgia associates it with), but instead is an example of the futureless, powerless, and ultimately sterile youth. If Clarissa faces the future, Septimus faces the past, both in their own distinctive and particular way.

But there are more characters which could be seen as a mirrored image of Clarissa and Septimus, and as they come to life and disappear again in a span of only two pages in the entire novel, they not only offer an interesting view in the changing perspective as the result of shifting the narrating consciousness, but they also perfectly suitably represent one's brief and fading existence in the grand picture. As we follow Septimus and Lucrezia on the park, a young girl named Maisie Johnson walks past and notices Septimus's unsteady and erratic behaviour, which terrifies her:

(...), and now walking through Regent's Park in the morning, this couple on the chairs gave her quite a turn; the young woman seeming foreign, the man looking queer; so that should she be very old she would still remember and make it jangle again among her memories how she had walked through Regent's Park on a fine summer's morning fifty years ago. For she was only nineteen and had got her way at last, to come to London; (...) something was up, she knew. (Woolf, MD 26)

Here this young character contrasts Septimus, because her anxiety is concerned with her future in this unknown and seemingly unfriendly city. During this scene, Maisie ends up standing among the flowers and observing them as she imagines and realizes how the present moment will translate into her future in fifty years. In this scene of impermanence and transient beauty (of both Maisie and the flowers in the park), she is being watched by an old woman, Mrs Dempster, through which we see a completely different view of time and how it can affect us. In the opposition to Clarissa, Mrs Dempster has a bleak outlook

and carries a dread of the past in all her regret, bitterness, and disappointment. She does not think about the future in Clarissa's hopeful belief, instead she delves into the past and contemplates what could have been. The motif of flowers comes up again, for what a better metaphor for the briefness of life and beauty than roses:

But whether I'd have chosen quite like that if I could have known, thought Mrs Dempster, and could not help wishing to whisper a word to Maisie Johnson; to feel on the creased pouch of her worn old face the kiss of pity. For it's been a hard life, thought Mrs Dempster. What hadn't she given to it? Roses; figure; her feet too. (She drew the knobbed lumps beneath her skirt...) Roses, she thought sardonically. All trash, m'dear. For really, what with eating, drinking, and mating, the bad days and good, life had been no mere matter of roses. (...) Pity she asked of Maisie Johnson, standing by the hyacinth beds. (Woolf, MD 27)

In this scene of these two characters, they not only imitate Clarissa and Septimus in reverse, but together they also create the unity of the young, the old, the past, and the future.

Peter and the others are intensely aware of the time, of the unequivocal passing of the hours, and subsequently of how they will also cease. The uneasiness of time is perhaps most noticeable at Clarissa, in whose descriptions of memory, and more specifically on her memory of her romantic experience with Sally Seton and Peter Walsh back in Bourton, there is a hint of unreliability. Clarissa repeatedly doubts her own recollection of the past events, demonstrating the idea of the impossibility of an objective past (in its retrospection), and ultimately of the central notion that without a consciousness there is no past, there is no time and thus there is no unbiased perception of reality. As Benjamin notes, "the events are related as they apply to the present and are embellished by or couched in the language of image not only pertinent to the present action, but also appropriate to the past and foreshadowing the future" (215). Furthermore, Clarissa watches as her daughter Elizabeth grows up, she notices how she strays further away from her husband Richard, and she feels a strange fusion of uneasiness and comfort as she watches "the old woman in the window opposite hers make her way to her room and turn out her light" (Benjamin 223).

What Clarissa Dalloway dreads when faced with the march of time is her own insignificance that she fears will come with her death. She has finished her voyage, she has succeeded in what was expected of her, she got married and she had children, and in the stillness that followed and that she finds herself in presently, she questions the value of her going on. The idea of her death haunts Peter, too, as a result of hearing the tolling of Big Ben during his walk in the park:

It is Clarissa herself, he thought, with a deep emotion, and an extraordinarily clear, yet puzzling, recollection of her, as if this bell had come into the room years ago, where they sat at some moment of great intimacy, and had gone from one to the other and had left, like a bee with honey, laden with the moment. But what room? What moment? And why had he been so profoundly happy when the clock was striking? Then, as the sound of St. Margaret's languished, he thought, she has been ill, and the sound expressed languor and suffering. It was her heart, he remembered; and the sudden loudness of the final stroke tolled for death that surprised in the midst of life, Clarissa falling where she stood, in her drawing-room. No! No! he cried. She is not dead! I am not old, he cried, and marched up Whitehall, as if there rolled down to him, vigorous, unending, his future. (Woolf, MD 49)

Although it is Clarissa who doubts the significance of her life as well as of her death, it is ultimately Septimus who does not prevail in his battle with time and submits to it by committing suicide. When Rezia notes a few hours prior about Septimus sitting on a bench in the park that "there he was" (24), and the novel ends with Peter looking at Clarissa and thinking "there she was" (191), it is a matter of existing and *being*, of death and life, of defeat and victory. When Clarissa hears of Septimus's suicide at her party, she is at first appalled that such talk, talk about death and misery, should even be discussed at her party, but eventually she realizes her admiration for Septimus for being able to step out of the constraints of time, to blend into it and become immune to it and its threat. She, however, does not wish to be free of time, but instead to conquer it and live through her own death. Despite all that, Septimus's death establishes a connection between them which "happens at a distance, between two strangers separated by age, gender, social class, and wartime experience – and further separated by the gulf between the dead and the living" (Saint-Amour in Berman 90).

Septimus's death also demonstrates just how little one's existence can come to mean when compared to the ever-ticking clock that does not stop for anyone. After he leaps to his death out of the window, his wife Lucrezia is left behind in the room and through the stillness and fright comes rushing in the impartial and indifferent tolling of Big Ben: "The clock was striking one, two, three; how sensible the sound was; compared with all this thumping and whispering; like Septimus himself. She was falling asleep. But the clock went on striking, four, five, six." (Woolf, MD 148)

As Clarissa walks to the flower shop in the morning, her thoughts bring up the fear of death, she becomes conscious of the fact that everything exists at once and questions her own worth in such vastness. She does not, however, seek pity, nor does she wish to be spared the unknown horror of her own finality. Instead, she looks for a way of persevering a triumphing over death. Although she doubts there is any significance in hosting her parties, she eventually realizes that is what her gift is – she is what binds the people around her together. Her value is being the one behind such events and such happenings which would forever be reminders of her; in the middle of all that she experiences Septimus's death emphatically, but finds her joy in her still vibrant and cheerful life: "The clock began striking. The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him; with the clock striking the hour, one, two, three, she did not pity him, with all this going on." (Woolf, MD 183)

Even if not much more is expected of her, given her age, she remains active and goes on to create more, imprint herself into time and space and the minds of others, thus granting herself immortality. She creates her world, she creates herself, essentially, she resists being defined by time, she resists reaching a permanent state of the self and instead is always *becoming*:

But everyone remembered; what she loved was this, here, now, in front of her. Did it matter then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? But that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there (...); part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as

she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself.
(Woolf, MD 9)

Such creating of the self is of course not unique to Clarissa; all the characters are being made up of their spot in time, in space; Peter searches for himself on his solitary travels into India, Richard Dalloway in his work and his success, and Rezia, just like Clarissa, in the act of creation, as she works as a hat-maker, which keeps her rooted in her home in Milan before she was brought to London by Septimus, and in her past identity which she wishes to go back to and to find her happiness in. At the same time, she leaves her creations behind, she physically becomes a part of the people around her by sewing their attire, because “it is the hat that matters most” (Woolf, MD 86).

It is interesting to note the difference between the American and British edition, as the first contains one extra sentence in the description of Clarissa reacting to Septimus’s death: “He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the sun.” (Woolf in Berman 91) Saint-Amour comments on this that “in both versions, Clarissa feels “glad he had done it”, admiring a fellow sufferer who committed, in suicide, an act of defiance, preservation, or communication” (91). And communication is precisely what distinguishes Clarissa and Septimus in both life and death, since he as a young poet with a successful job in an office wanted to relay his feelings through his words, but was instead rushed into war, where his words became undesirable. After the loss of his best friend, who later appears to him in his hallucinations, he marries Lucrezia out of paranoia and fear of isolation in the hostile world. He chooses a woman who speaks a different language, and in that deepens his inability to express himself fully. Lucrezia also mentions that “it was she who suffered – but she had nobody to tell” and that “there was nobody. Her words faded” (23). As Septimus watches the sky-writing plane, he attempts to decode the message: “They are signalling to me. Not indeed in actual words; that is, he could not read the language yet; but it was plain enough, this beauty, this exquisite beauty” (Woolf, MD 21). Finally, then, Septimus’s suicide becomes a way of communicating and of resisting the world which attempts to isolate him. When his psychiatrist, Dr. Bradshaw, appears at the Dalloways’s party, it “occasions the moment of insight in which Clarissa realizes why the poet has committed suicide and finds her reason for living” (Benjamin 222).

Even though Clarissa is fully able to communicate with those around her, she herself seems to have issues finding the right words. She cannot bring herself to proclaim

her feelings out loud, in her conversation with Peter Walsh there seems to be something suspended in the air, something unsaid; they think of each other fondly but can never bring themselves to say it out loud. The same applies for Clarissa's marriage – Richard is aware of ineptitude in language, and instead communicates with Clarissa by bringing her flowers, uniting the brief with the everlasting:

But the door handle slipped round and in came Richard! What a surprise!
In came Richard, holding out flowers. (...) He was holding out flowers – roses, red and white roses. (But he could not bring himself to say he loved her; not in so many words.) But how lovely, she said, taking his flowers. She understood; she understood without his speaking; his Clarissa. (Woolf, MD 117)

All this characterizes Clarissa perfectly – it draws on her appreciation for simplicity and for real, material, touchable things. She communicates through her parties, they are “an offering; to combine, to create; but to whom?” (121) and in her connection to others finds her chance to delve deeper into “this thing she called life” (120).

3.3 Analysis of *To the Lighthouse*

“Yes, of course, if it’s fine tomorrow” (Woolf, TL 7), begins *To the Lighthouse* through the character of Mrs Ramsay in hopeful agreement, promising to her young son James a much anticipated trip, only to be immediately negated by her husband’s words, “it won’t be fine” (8). And yet the prospect inspires that which is to come, and it remains suspended in the air throughout the entire first part of the novel, “The Window”. It not only immediately asserts the duality of certainty and doubt, of life and death, and of male and female, something so typical for Woolf (as Briggs notes, Woolf “vividly depicts the Victorian family roles she has observed as a child” (In Sellers 197)), but also points towards these notions being encoded in the characters’ language. We get in a simple sentence a promise of a future, waiting for which will be thematised during the first part of the novel, but ultimately and eventually also what will become the past when the voyage to the lighthouse is finished.

James, who wishes to see the lighthouse the most, has a “secret language” (7) in which he realizes the connection of “the wheelbarrow, the lawnmower, the sound of poplar trees, leaves whitening before rain, rooks cawing, brooms knocking, dresses rustling” (7), of nature and humans in a curious unity, but also of his own father’s authoritative voice which was “incapable of untruth, never tampered with a fact; never altered a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure or convenience of any mortal being, least of all of his own children” (8) and which stands in opposition to his mother’s. James’s dislike towards his father comes from this awareness that Mr Ramsay’s is a “language of laws and exclusions” (Doyle 51). Similarly to the other novels, there is a sense of the inability to find one’s voice in the world, and here, even more notably, in one’s family, as we begin with a scene of James as a little boy, who at the beginning of his voyage through life comes to understand it by watching his parents in linguistic disagreement. This novel, however, focuses even more closely on the relation of language and movement, on the “body as language” (51) in its sublimity of gestures, which are again conflicting.

To the Lighthouse is in its essence a novel about unity and about the desperate and arduous quest one has to undergo to achieve it. This encapsulates various desires for various characters, but for Mr Ramsay it comes as a union of marriage and the need (arguably never fulfilled) to speak the same language as his wife, for her to say what he

wishes to hear. However, “he could say things – she never could” (Woolf, TL 133). Doyle mentions that Mr Ramsay

longs for a romantic declaration of love from her, but Mrs Ramsay resists naming their love in his terms – that is, by simply saying “I love you”. Instead, she expresses her love in a way that includes the physical world as the mediating term of their connection to each other. (60)

This can be observed on a scene in which the married couple sits together in silence:

Will you not tell me just for once that you love me? He was thinking that (...). But she could not do it; she could not say it. Then, knowing that he was watching her, instead of saying anything she turned, holding her stocking, and looked at him. And as she looked at him she began to smile, for though she had not said a word, he knew, of course he knew, that she loved him. He could not deny it. (Woolf, TL 132)

The silence and the limitations of language also thematise another issue which preoccupied Woolf, that of describing the indescribable and capturing the fleeting – not only the present moment (as the “now” always slips by and rushes to become a “then”), the fickle human life (as we get to see from the deaths which haunt the family and are eerily mentioned in a detached and impartial side note), but also time itself. Sheehan encapsulates this idea by stating that

modernism established itself as an art of failure. This was not a measure of its weakness, however, but of its ambition: the urge to overreach, to give voice to the unspeakable, to convey intuitions and processes that seem to lie beyond language (in Pease 47).

To the Lighthouse differs from the other two novels in its depiction of time, as it spans over a much longer period – more than a decade – and in its distinctive form allows for the exploration of time and its effect on humans (and vice versa) more thoroughly. It has been noted how Woolf shifts the narrative’s consciousness through a point in the material world, such as Big Ben in *Mrs Dalloway* and its consequential sound as it fills the space, but here it evolves further in connection with language. Language “extends and multiplies the intersections of corporeality” (Doyle 59), meaning the characters’ exclamations interrupt someone’s consciousness deep in thought or memory, and pulls them back into the present moment, thus marking language as another point for the shift

of consciousness as well as a shift in time. To go back to the idea of the desired unity – in this case Mrs Ramsay’s – it “draws them each out of their musings into the physical consciousness of one another” (59), for it is Mrs Ramsay who wishes to unite her family in perfect harmony. Through these material associations and vocal reminders Woolf orients her narrative and raises “the issue of how the interactions of time and space, solidity and flux, order our existences” (59).

In such a treatment of time the characters become inevitably temporal, and their being is never fixed, yet “often fragmented, yet full and buoyant, because it was caught up in the phenomenological flux of time” (44). It is through these vibrant characters who in themselves merge the past, the present, and the future, that the narrator observes the fictional world and thus thematises the issue of the experience of time, yet there is another side of this problem that *To the Lighthouse* sets out to explore, ironically in its shortest part describing the longest period of time. Bearing the title of “Time Passes” and being the middle part of what Woolf defined as “two blocks joined by a corridor” (in Goldman 58), this section of the novel removes the consciousness inescapably bound by time, and instead presents the Ramsays’ summer house free of people, empty and silent. Where once were their voices, now echo the sounds of the surrounding nature; where we once shared the characters’ experience tinted by their perceptions and pre-perceptions and in that were able to understand the nature of the present, “the present itself vanishes. There is no “now” in “Time Passes” because other time scales have taken over” (Sheehan in Pease 53).

The middle passage – or, more precisely, the *corridor* which connects the two remaining parts of the novel in the shape of the letter H – begin with the notion that “we must wait for the future to show” (Woolf, TL 137). This teasing and expectant hopefulness has carried itself over from the first part, in which the trip to the lighthouse was never realized, and now the time in the house must pass without its inhabitants. Koppen notes in her essay that “wherever there is language there will be personality somewhere” (388), however, the issue of “Time Passes” is that there is no personal, subjective language, there is no personified narrator, only a narrative voice. It is also significant that the description of this long passage of time (a decade) spans over the First World War, which “lies across the centre of the book, as the great divide between past and present” (Briggs in Sellers 79). More importantly, however, “Time Passes” posits an alternative account of history, one free of people and their actions, as well as of the

violence, but in the slow decay and decrepitude of the house it bears with it the sense of the end of civilization so inherent to the war (Heine 128).

The Ramsays have left and their voices have been replaced by the sounds of nature, their movement by stillness. The silence of the abandoned summer house is little affected, it calmly merges into the natural sounds, “the empty rooms seemed to murmur with the echoes of the fields and the hum of flies” (Woolf, TL 145). With the impossibility to cling onto human perception in the description of time, there must be visible spatial change instead, and it comes, as nature invades the house and “results in overgrowth and proliferation and slowly makes the building corrode and decompose” (Heine 125). Here nature joins time in Woolf’s observation in the indifference to human life. But ultimately time also submits itself to human indifference, as the passage despite its title proves to be “atemporal, a world of perpetuity where nothing happens barring atmospheric disturbances. It is as if weather were busy murdering time” (Sadrin 99). With no one present to observe the changes to the house as they gradually occur, there is also no one to experience it as time.

The essential need for an actual human being is reinforced by the novel’s inseparable ties of time to space, and more specifically to the material world. Objects, and especially those which hold a sentimental value of once belonging to a person or being somehow connected to them (such was the consoling wish of Clarissa Dalloway when faced with her mortality), prove to not only encompass in themselves the intertwined current of the past, the present, and the future, but they also serve as a connection of the ever-present blurry distinction between the dead and the living. After the ten years which have been described in the “Time Passes”, “The Lighthouse” begins with the return of the family into their summer home. It is after many losses and with still a very real and raw grief that they come back, having lost Mrs Ramsay, Andrew, and Prue to the insatiable greed of time, the house becomes a place for remembrance and reflection. What was once filled with the personality of Mrs Ramsay has now become “extraordinarily empty” (Woolf, TL 194) to Lily Briscoe, who seeks Mrs Ramsay everywhere, and finds only the emptiness left behind, the absence which not only denies her any possible future connection to Mrs Ramsay, but also ripens into a hinderance in Lily’s artistic attempts.

What is important, however, is that the connection of the consciousness and time is indisputably spatial in nature:

Woolf's narrator uses the objects on which the characters focus in common – such as the urn of geraniums or the break in the hedge – as vehicles for demarcating and connecting, for moving across the separateness between one consciousness and another and from one time frame to another. Objects in the world literally serve as the points of intersection carrying the narrator between character and character and past, present, and future. (Doyle 55)

That is how the characters are related to the narrative through the material world, yet in their own essence their understanding of their surroundings differs. Mr and Mrs Ramsay ironically represent the most considerable contrast, as Mr Ramsay comments on the flowers in the garden as merely “decorat[ing] the processes of thought” (Woolf, TL 48), similarly noting that “the arts are merely a decoration imposed on the top of human life; they do not express it” (49). Mrs Ramsay's connection to the real and material world is much more profound and closely linked, for her it is “the observable trace of a physical past, with which one has a relationship that constitutes oneself and the future” (Doyle 52): “It was odd, she thought, how if one was alone, one leant to inanimate things; trees, streams, flowers; felt they expressed one” (Woolf, TL 70). There is an obvious consolation to be experienced by the material world when faced with someone else's absence, almost a substitution, as Mrs Ramsay “faces not the void but another intimacy; she feels tenderness” (Doyle 52).

Mrs Ramsay inherently sees a connection between space and time and realizes that the material world carries an imprint of one's life. As was the case for Clarissa Dalloway, so does she find solace and relief in the belief that no one is never truly gone, we remain, be it as a remembrance in items we leave behind, she negates her husband's repeated proclamations that “we perish, each alone” (Woolf, TL 185), but instead blurs the line between life and death in the constant awareness that one does not cease to exist, yet simply melts into the flux of time. Incessantly receptive to our place in time, Mrs Ramsay thinks that her family and her guests will “come back to this night; this moon; this wind; this house: and to her, too” (123), anticipating the future which is to be while re-perceiving the present as the past, all in connection to space, to their holiday house. Sadrin writes that “we cannot speak for long of the future or of the past without making some reference to visual perception” (97). This connection of time and space returns again and again, as searching in space becomes a way of searching for answers:

The sea tosses itself and breaks itself, and should any sleeper fancying that he might find on the beach an answer to his doubts, a sharer of his solitude, throw off his bedclothes and go down by himself to walk on the sand, no image with semblance of serving and divine promptitude comes readily to hand bringing the night to order and making the world reflect the compass of the soul. (...) Mr Ramsay, stumbling along a passage one dark morning, stretched his arms out, but Mrs Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, his arms though stretched out, remained empty (140).

Such is Mrs Ramsay's "idealized philosophy of a temporal continuity afforded by intercorporeal materiality" (Doyle 57), and she experiences this very feeling herself, as she looks at the furniture in the nursery and thinks of her parents, she imagines that so will she remain here, the others will "carry it on" (123) in the comforting unity and harmony: "it was all one stream, and chairs, tables, maps, were hers, were theirs, it did not matter whose, and Paul and Minta would carry it on when she was dead" (123). Doyle writes in her essay that Mrs Ramsay reflects a "knowledge of a future she sees as arising from the past and present carried forward by the materiality of that world. At the same time, the narrator moves within the spatial-temporal currents of that material world, recapitulating Mrs Ramsay's phenomenological mode of being". (58)

A constant reminder of time permeates the novel, although less explicitly than in *Mrs Dalloway*, for there are no specific clocks which would disturb the characters, but rather there are many spatial changes which occur. The events, the people, and the beauty and calmness of the house perish, while that which stands outside and isolated of humans endures. The fleeting moments are juxtaposed by the mentions of the durable world, of the dunes in the distance which "seem to outlast by a million years the gazer" (Woolf, TL 25), or the "very stone one kicks with one's boot will outlast Shakespeare" (41). The novel's solution to the issue of one's impermanence is creation. Woolf herself felt the need to write her way out of the grief after her parents died, and so does Lily Briscoe, her artist character, attempt to overcome Mrs Ramsay's death.

Sheehan in his essay about time writes that

between recollection and invention lies the creative agency of memory. (...) Woolf makes it the key to Lily's acts of remembrance. In communing with the dead, as she has been doing with Mrs Ramsay, Lily struggles against the tyranny of the past; it is only when she discovers her own

powers of creativity that she can be released from it. Lost time can be recovered, ideally, through creative recollection, and this is akin to a kind of artistic vision (in Pease 57).

What this means for Lily is that it gives a profound sense of usefulness to her art. In the issue of reality and representation, it is Lily's aim to reach a unity of the two, to create what would be equal to reality, to the real sense of Mrs Ramsay. She realizes that imagined stories are the main means of knowing someone, although she doubts the truthfulness of such romanticised views, as she thinks that such creation is: "what we call "knowing" people, "thinking" of them, "being fond" of them! Not a word of it was true; she had made it up; but it was what she knew them by all the same." (Woolf, TL 188) However, it is significant that this creation is in no way subordinate to reality. Roger Fry theorises that art "does not seek to imitate form, but to create form; not to imitate life, but to find an equivalent for life" (in Koppen 376), so Lily Briscoe through her art does not strive to re-create reality, but rather to create something equal. She creates a new, although inspired, Mrs Ramsay, one which approves of Lily's alternative path as an artist than that of a housewife (Goldman 61).

Lily's voyage is that of a desire for intimacy with Mrs Ramsay, and if time and death deny her that fulfilment, she sets out to create an image of her through which she overcomes not only the deep separation between the dead and the living, but which also allows her to unify the past and the present. Her aim is to get as "close as she could get" (Woolf, TL 57), and with the frustrating awareness that words are inherently fleeting, she resorts to painting on a canvas, putting a material object out into the world which ties in itself everything Lily wishes to unite. The slow and tedious progression towards the completion of the art piece proves to be difficult and challenging to Lily, she fears the danger that "the unity of the whole might be broken" (60). Roger Fry comments on the need for unity as such:

One chief aspect of a work of art is unity; unity of some kind is necessary for our restful contemplation of the work of art as a whole, since if it lacks unity we cannot contemplate it in its entirety, but we shall pass outside it to other things necessary to complete its unity (In Matro 22).

Lily Briscoe perceives her art similarly, there is always something missing as she paints, she abandons the painting and only returns to finish it after Mrs Ramsay, the object of her

art, has died. So “as she dipped into the blue paint, she dipped into the past there” (Woolf, TL 187), which not only establishes a connection of art and time, but also reminds us of what Lily is trying to achieve and what the significance of unity is to her, for it is not only the physical completion of her painting, but also the profound understanding and intimacy with the newly-created Mrs Ramsay, “for it was not knowledge but unity that she desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge” (57).

Despite Lily’s initial anxiety of the fate of her work, the worry that it will end up tossed somewhere in the attic, “it would be destroyed. But what did that matter?” (225-226), she is sustained in the belief that she has reached the much-desired harmony and that her creation is touchable, it is real. Lily succeeds as she is “able at last to seize the fluidity of life and strike it into the steady realm of art” (Leaska in Matro 213). If art is what defies death in *To the Lighthouse*, it is movement that defies the stillness death inflicts, and it points to the importance of a body as “central to Woolf’s conceptions both of art and of life” (Koppen 379). In this sense, the metaphor of a voyage becomes relevant again, as in “Virginia Woolf (...) phenomenology found its novelist. The ways the body is “lived”, is active in creating, and participating in, a world of meanings, is her theme throughout her fictional career” (Poole in Koppen 376). Movement itself as a means of progression and of experiencing, of living, being, and endlessly becoming, is integral to Woolf’s thinking and understanding of selfhood, self-expression, and art.

The simple and seemingly insignificant trip to the lighthouse, a childish whim of James when he was a little boy, is transformed through the many deaths, losses, and disillusionments into a profound and intimate voyage, which is “meant to recapture something of the family’s unity (...), in addition to rekindling the distant thrill of a passage” (Elkins 12). A sense of suspense establishes itself at the beginning of the book with the promise of the trip, and then James’s dream is put on hold, delayed due to the war, only to be finally fulfilled ten years later. When their little boat reaches the lighthouse, James hardly feels satisfied, but rather bitterly disappointed, yet in that moment the lighthouse itself becomes a beacon of unity, of the past, the present, and the future, of the living and the dead, of childhood and adulthood. So does the vision Lily has for her painting change throughout the novel, as after the painful loss of Mrs Ramsay it assumes the role of intermediary in her understanding of life and the world. As she watches the travellers

approaching the lighthouse, she stands before her canvas and paints, does not travel physically, but through her art and creative force, she

records an alternative way of travelling and recording that understands shared experience as central to human perception. (...) For Lily, the space of artistic contemplation, nostalgia, and photographic recording encompass the world, rather than the actual journey in the boat.

(Elkins 13)

Lily always “feels two opposite things at the same time” (Woolf, TL 111), and recognizes in this conflict not the notion of the impossibility of wholeness, but rather the inspiration and encouragement for her efforts of achieving unity, something so inherent to both her and Mrs Ramsay. “Lily explicitly acknowledges a relation between the permanence she would like to achieve in art and with Mrs Ramsay and the permanence she believes Mrs Ramsay could achieve” (Matro 219) – it is significant that it is Mrs Ramsay who preoccupies Lily’s artistic ideas, as she in her life was the social adhesive of her own family. It is not unknowingly, but rather purposely and deliberately, she demands everyone to come together at dinner, despite their disagreements, and is at first met with a rejection of her attempts to find meaning and order in the chaos. “Nothing seemed to have merged. They all sat separate,” (Woolf, TL 91), notes Mrs Ramsay, yet remains unyielding in her efforts, for to her unity is not only harmony, but also profound understanding of others:

It could not last, she knew, but at the moment her eyes were so clear that they seemed to go round the table unveiling each of these people, and their thoughts and their feelings, without effort like a light stealing under water so that its ripples and the reeds in it and the minnows balancing themselves, and the sudden silent trout are all lit up hanging, trembling. So she saw them; she heard them; but whatever they said had also this quality; (...) something to the right, something to the left, and the whole is held together (116).

Yet Mrs Ramsay’s attempts were cut short by her sudden death, and simultaneously was her desired unity shaken up by her absence. It is Lily, then, who takes it upon herself to substitute this uniting force through her artistic creation, as she with one last stroke of the brush finishes her painting and ties up all loose ends when she has “had [her] vision” (226). The painting and the novel reach completion at the same time, the painting of Mrs Ramsay reflects her life and death, her memory and remembrance, and

with the final “line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished” (226) the painting mirrors the structure of the novel as two separate passages united by time; so is reached the unity of what has been lost and what has been gained, and Mrs Ramsay, re-created in art, memory and association, emerges out of the stream of time to embrace it.

3.4 The Reoccurring Topics of Woolf's Novels

Virginia Woolf had throughout her writing career explored various characters in various social and personal roles, yet there can be traced certain unifying reoccurring themes and topics. When limiting this analysis to *The Voyage Out*, *Mrs Dalloway*, and *To the Lighthouse*, it becomes obvious that Woolf purposefully situated her central consciousnesses to which the fictional world unfolded into women, thus enabling herself the possibility of exploring what in her own life proved to be of interest – the role of women in society, and the quest of the female artist in pursuit of finding her own voice in the male-dominated world. Yet there is a clear and striking distinction in her female characters, as Rachel Vinrace represents a naïve, inexperienced, and impressionable young woman, Clarissa Dalloway an older married woman, a mother, and a charming hostess, and Lily Briscoe a painter attempting to uncover meaning through art, while remaining vigorous and opinionated when her aspirations are challenged. Not only does this fact allow for an interesting social commentary, but when considered from the point of view of Woolf's narrative and mainly the preoccupation with time which intertwines it, these women occupy different “areas” of the complex flux of time. However, it is too much of an over-simplification to ascribe the value of Woolf's work to its feminist notions. Although those are important and significant in their own right, the author explores profoundly the human experience in general.

Virginia Woolf through her time-oriented narrative reflects on how time shapes us and how our experience in life is inseparable from the person one becomes. Consequently, what this means is that the produced narrative differs in its treatment of the experience of time with each character depending on their life experience, personal memory, and their future aspirations. If Rachel in her young years undertakes a voyage into the unknown land of South America, the much older Clarissa's journey stands in contrast to its grandness, as she only travels through the city of London, or through a few of its streets; if Clarissa spends a considerable portion of the novel's described day in musings about her marriage and her daughter, Lily lacks this experience and perceives the world through the eyes of a woman unmarried, one opposed to marriage and maternity, who despite her love for Mrs Ramsay attempts to overcome and rebel against the “aged” idealistic notions of what a woman should be.

The voyage that all of these characters embark upon must then inevitably differ in its particular details, yet the treatment of time remains in its usual Woolfian manner. Its gradual progression and development can also be tracked throughout Woolf's work, as it begins rather subtly in *The Voyage Out*, blooms into a full and rich concept in *Mrs Dalloway*, and finally evolves even further in *To the Lighthouse*, as it sets out to explore time disconnected from human consciousness. One could argue here that precisely because of this lack of a subjective focal point of the story in "Time Passes" Woolf abandons her treatment of time as one so inherently personal and deeply influenced by the characters' perceptions, yet a closer look on what substitutes it sheds light on another characteristic trait of Woolf's fiction.

When describing the abstract and language-elusive human experience of time (and subsequently of the progression through it, the voyage), Woolf orients her characters in relation to the world around them, meaning in addition to them being temporal beings, they also inevitably become spatial¹. In the treatment of the indefinite, Woolf constantly points towards the material, which proves to be fundamental in her works. The yearning for something transcendental is embodied in the yearning for the sky, the sea; the way of survival comes in the form of real palpable things, one's physical possessions; the act of creation results in paintings, evening dresses, and books of transcribed musical notes. It's creation that holds the fundamental key to meaning, since "Woolf uses memory to draw lines that make sense of experience, but the artist goes one step further and embodies experience with artistic form" (Schwarz 262). Similarly does the disembodied treatment of time in "Time Passes" take shape – always in relation to human beings and to parts of the material world tied to them.

Such an outlook of ascribing fundamental importance to materiality is the basis for Woolf's conception of time, change, fleetingness, progression, and death, and similarly does the unity of these notions reside in it:

¹ Let us here briefly note the actual geographical settings of each of these novels: The destination in *The Voyage Out* is purely fictional, the summer house of *To the Lighthouse* is based on one from Woolf's childhood, and *Mrs Dalloway* is set in London. Why, then, is there such discrepancy between the novel's measured time and the actual time it would most likely take to imitate Clarissa's walk? Goldman ascribes it to the influence of Post-Impressionist art (44), and indeed it seems to be Woolf's deliberate choice, one pointing towards the prevalence and individual importance of inner-time over clock time, and consequently of this idealized city rooted in Clarissa's unreliable memory.

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 (Woolf, TL 219).

The answer to where consolation is to be found in the face of the threat of death is not purely abstract, transcendental, and unreachable, but instead Woolf positions it into the everyday, the simple, into art, literature, and people. Yet this understanding of the meaning of life presupposes something else, that is one's ability to command their own language, to express themselves freely without restrictions or limitations. The voyage common to the three novels analysed in this novel is then a voyage into language, one striving towards the development of self-articulation in a world of mixed and confusing signals, where one "felt the gap between word and world" (Schwarz 258).

In reflection to the different kinds of characters who find themselves at different parts in their lives, so does the actual manner of achieving the voyage's destination change. It is no coincidence that Woolf's novels include so many artist characters, as it is precisely through the act of creation that one is able to reach understanding, as well as comfort and consolation. At the same time it is a way of connecting people in a highly idealised wholeness, at Clarissa's parties, in the Ramsays' summer house, or at a ball where Rachel literally bonds dancers through her music, and they for a second of heightened illumination reach a higher understanding, they glimpse something beyond themselves:

Instantly a gigantic circle was formed, the dancers holding hands and shouting out, "D'you ken John Peel," as they swung faster and faster and faster, until the strain was too great, and one link of the chain – Mrs Thornbury – gave way, and the rest went flying across the room in all directions, to land upon the floor or the chairs or in each other's arms as seemed most convenient. (...) They began to see themselves and their lives, and the whole of human life advancing very nobly under the direction of the music (Woolf, VO 186-187)

It is ultimately "the quest of her characters to create meaning within a world in which time and mortality are the first principles and where order – divine or otherwise – is absent" (Schwarz 258). Time as it is portrayed in the novels is no mere backdrop for the narrative, rather it spins around and out of time as the central unifying motif, there are

“moment of apparent unity, temporary states of feeling which inevitably must pass” (258). Time is always present, be it as a reminder of the necessity to live or the obligation to cease to be; it is there, unchanging and impartial, almost personified in the imposing buildings which loom over the characters, in Big Ben or in the far away (in both space and time) and seemingly unreachable lighthouse.

What comes out of this dread of one’s inescapable fate is the hopeful realization that there must be meaning in life. Although the characters in these novels are at different stages in their lives and thus have various perceptions of it, they are all captured in the moment of such a realization and in the subsequent search for what is valuable and imperishable. That is what leads them to their journeys and essentially also how the actual motif of journey and time merge in a way where one is inseparable of the other, creating a unity – just as the unity which is the result of the characters’ voyages. Clarissa Dalloway literally and physically brings people together at her parties, she works as a unifying force in society; the Ramsays and Lily Briscoe return together to their summer house and bond over their grief, as well as over the symbolic journey to the lighthouse which some of them undertake; Septimus Smith dies, as he is not able to blend into the society and thus is incapable of achieving such a unity, and although Rachel Vinrace’s voyage ends in her death too, hers is one of a contrasting importance to Septimus’s and rather similar to that of Mrs Ramsay, as she in death becomes the unifier of everyone she leaves behind.

What kind of meaning does death, another of the most important topics in Woolf’s writing, then hold? Although at first it serves as the much-dreaded antagonist to the character’s desperate craving for permanence, it eventually proves to be the main force of enlightenment in the search for meaning. What this means is that Woolf intricately complicates the relationship between life and death, and even goes as far as to blur the lines which divide them, for death does not always come to mean a definitive end. Instead it posits a chance for rebirth, for another form of life. Nothing is ever fully lost in the flux of time, rather it merges into it and becomes permanent. When in *To the Lighthouse* the Ramsays’ house succumbs to decay and deterioration, it seems as if all hope is lost, the material as well as the spiritual world is nearing its end, several people from the family die (Andrew Ramsay instantly in the battlefield, Mrs Ramsay unexpectedly in the middle of the night, and Prue Ramsay of postnatal complications in the middle of summer, literally and metaphorically embodying the crisis of life and signifying the seemingly upper hand of death at all times), the voyage to the lighthouse had not yet been fulfilled,

instead the war ravages the society. Yet there is salvation, again in creation and human activity, when people once again step foot into the house, the servants, and they prepare it for the Ramsays' arrival. If Virginia Woolf speaks of the simple as what gives life meaning, what simpler can there be than such work, cleaning and renewing, as when

mopping, scouring, Mrs McNab, Mrs Bast, stayed the corruption and the rot; rescued from the pool of Time that was fast closing over them now a basin, now a cupboard; fetched up from oblivion all the Waverly novels and tea-set one morning; in the afternoon restored to sun and air a brass fender and a set of steel fire-irons. George, Mrs Bast's son, caught the rats, and cut the grass. They had the builders.

(Woolf, TL 151-152)

It is also necessary to trace where such creation leads and what its goal is. To extend upon the idea of the voyage as one connected to the characters' language, let us consider what the basis of such a journey is. *The Voyage Out* begins in the streets of London, which are described as unfriendly, narrow, and confusing, the Ambroses are rushing through the city to get to the ship to meet Mr Vinrace and also Rachel, for the very first time, and to eventually set sail with them towards South America. When we first meet Rachel, she is already on board the ship and prepares the dining room for the dinner they are about to have, surrounded by servants going back and forth. *Mrs Dalloway's* protagonist literally plunges into her world and her reminiscences, she rushes onto the street and in her enthusiastic eagerness ventures out to buy flowers, walking through the busy and bustling city. *To the Lighthouse's* initial scene seems a bit more static, yet its restlessness comes through heavily in its dialogue. Mrs Ramsay promises her son a trip to the lighthouse, only to be immediately negated by her husband. The voices of the family members intertwine in passionate discussion about the trip. If we contrast all three of these scenes with the very last ones, we notice the very opposite, a final stillness, harmony, serenity, achieved only after an overwhelming outburst of emotions:

It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision. (Woolf, TL 226)

What is this terror? What is this ecstasy? He thought to himself. What is it that fills me with extraordinary excitement?

It is Clarissa, he said.

For there she was. (Woolf, MD 191)

All these voices sounded gratefully in St John's ears as he lay half-asleep, and yet vividly conscious of everything around him. Across his eyes passed a procession of objects, black and indistinct, the figures of people picking up their books, their cards, their balls of wool, their work-baskets, and passing him one after another on their way to bed. (Woolf, VO 437)

What we can note here is the very apparent and important progression from chaos to eventual order, to the single brief and transient moment of illumination achieved in momentary peace. Such was the ideal of the protagonists all along, in its bare form, as their dreams could be interpreted as those aiming for calmness, searching for these moments of looking and seeing beyond. It seems to be Woolf's intention to "reveal order beneath the flux of experience or to get at the reality beneath appearance" (Matro 213). What the final scenes of these three novels have in common is how they come to unite the many opposites represented throughout the story and they eventually blend the lines which separate them. In these moments of heightened individuality, the singular character comes into the spotlight, Rachel, Clarissa, and St. John respectively, yet at the same time they stand surrounded by people; they become hyperaware of how the past, the present, and the future merges in them and therefore shapes them, as well as of the general and fundamental necessity of separateness for the creation of a unity, echoing Husserl's idea of humans being a flux, ever-changing.

Such a "reality beneath appearance" is sought by many of Woolf's characters, and in this search she frequently alludes to the image of water, of the sea, and eventually the flood. Clarissa Dalloway has a striking memory of Sally cutting off flowerheads and

placing them in a big bowl of water to the great displeasure of Aunt Helena, she “had a perpetual sense (...) of being out, out, far out to sea and alone” (Woolf, MD 8), Septimus’s thoughts revolve around “miracles, revelations, agonies, loneliness, falling through the sea, down, down into the flames” (141), Rachel Vinrace literally advances in her life journey surrounded by water, where the most profound moments take place, as when Richard Dalloway kisses her, or later when she gets engaged to Terence after a boat ride into the wilderness, and the Ramsays’ house is similarly stood encircled by water, the overcoming of which on their way to the lighthouse becomes a way of a deeper understanding. It is in *To the Lighthouse* where Woolf endows water with force and transforms it into a flood, noting that “nothing, it seemed, could survive the flood” (Woolf, TL 137). Yet there is very little violence behind such a flood, rather it proves to be cathartic, a way of rebirth and fresh beginnings where an end loses its sense of finality, which in itself echoes the most crucial message of Woolf’s writing – the journey towards death ends gently in living.

4. Conclusion

The main aim of this thesis has been to analyse the way Virginia Woolf employs the concepts of time and journey, as well as to interpret the related reoccurring themes and topics of the author's work. In order to fully understand the viewpoint behind Woolf's treatment of time, it was necessary to first introduce the philosophical and theoretical approaches which influenced it, mainly the conception of time as proposed by Henri Bergson, which best reflects that of Woolf. Bergson differentiates between the inner psychological time and the outer clock-time and considers human consciousness as one inevitably determined by the flux of time, in which all elements that make up our understanding of time are indivisible. William James then echoes Bergson's metaphors of stream and of flow, and further defines the impulsivity of human consciousness and thought. Finally, the relevant phenomenological theories have been introduced, mainly Edmund Husserl's idea of humans as temporal beings, as one being a flow, forever changing and becoming in time. All these theories help us understand how Woolf works with such notions, and subsequently how to interpret them.

Although Virginia Woolf's novels have such topics as time, journey, and death in common amongst all of them, in this thesis I have decided to not interpret them generally in the context of her work, but rather to introduce them gradually and individually as they come up in the three novels. This approach and method of reading allowed for tracing these notions as they developed and broadened in Woolf's writing, and for pointing out both the similarities and differences in this conceptual progression. The choice of the three specific novels for analysis reflects this methodology as well, as *The Voyage Out* proves to be the somewhat mellow, yet promising first tread into the waters of literature, thematising in itself just that – the first step, the reaching, the putting-forth, the slow and tedious finding of one's voice. The story also naturally lends itself to such an interpretation which seeks to study the topic of time and journey, the latter being titular to the novel; it promises movement, exploration, and development. In the attempt to contrast Woolf's first novel and show the substantial and significant progression in the author's understanding of time, *Mrs Dalloway* fulfils such a role perfectly. The ten-year interval between the publications of these two novels inevitably shows how much more of an important role time comes to play in Woolf's writing.

Woolf's conception of time progressed and developed over the course of her literary career, beginning subtly in *The Voyage Out*, reaching its full potential in *Mrs Dalloway*, and advancing even further in *To the Lighthouse*. Yet it has been shown how in every one of these three novels Woolf employs time not as a mere background to her narrative, but rather as an important and even fundamental force in the forming and shaping of her characters. They exemplify Husserl's ideas of temporal beings, experience James's theoretical notions of impulsive thinking, and by seamlessly transitioning between the characters' immediate consciousness, remembrances, and the continuous awareness of the passage of time and the consequent fleetingness, the Woolf's work ties all these theories into those of Henri Bergson and the experience of "durée" he proposes. Woolf's characters' present is made up of their past and their future, of their memories and their aspirations; the way in which they react to their immediate surroundings is heavily influenced by their experiences, they exist in the flux of time and are constantly and acutely aware of it.

Simultaneously to defining the characters as inherently temporal, they in their search for meaning set out on journeys of various durations, destinations, and kinds, and thus they also become determined spatially. All of these journeys then represent metaphorically the growth and development one undergoes in life. By analysing the aims and aspirations, and eventually the actual outcomes of these journeys, they have been interpreted as those striving for finding one's voice in the vastness of the world, commanding one's language in the imposing silence, and reaching unity in harmonious simultaneity with individuality.

The influence of Henri Bergson and William James has also been traced in the novels, and well as the ways in which Woolf works with these notions. The duality of time is palpable in Woolf's writing, most strongly in *Mrs Dalloway*, the novel which stands above the rest of them in its literal characterisation of time and placing the meaning clock time symbolises into the towering Big Ben. Although both *The Voyage Out* and *To the Lighthouse* subscribe to the same Woolfian ideas (and fears and anxieties) of time, *Mrs Dalloway* offers this majestic and unforgiving building which governs harshly (and yet fairly) all of the characters she positions under its power into London. What this means is that it is the ideal novel for the Bergsonian analysis of time, as it encompasses in itself both the measurable clock-time and the inner subjective time of the individual characters.

Yet I would argue that Woolf's mastery of this conception of time does not lie merely in this distinction, but rather in the way the two are interconnected. With regards to the limitations of language, the aspirations of describing such a complex and interconnected flow of time and its understanding from the perspective of a human consciousness seem to be almost unreachable. Yet Woolf achieves such a transition without ever cutting the story off for the sake of changing a scene abruptly, and rather does so in a way which brings to mind the aforementioned theories of William James. I have shown how Woolf follows the flow of consciousness of each of her characters, focalises the outer world through their gaze, and focuses on the reminiscences and memories – on the impulsive thoughts. This flow of consciousness understandably reflects the individual characters, but it is precisely also what Woolf uses in reverse – for the creation of said characters. This allows for characters which are not set in stone, they are not solid, flawless archetypes who reach perfection, rather she captures them in movement, progression, and in no one particular state, but changing, ever-becoming.

Finally, the reoccurring topics of the three analysed novels have been introduced. They reflect Woolf's own anxieties, but ultimately (and more importantly) delve into the general human experience of uncertainty, fear of change, and eventually death. Yet Woolf's work is no mere agonized and hopeless cry over such bleak fate. Rather she engages her characters in a quest where death might be waiting at the end, but along the way there is meaning and the possibility for a glimpse of something beyond their own selves. It is also very important to note that Woolf's work negates the finality of death and pushes her characters to seek comfort in that realization. She stands them into the ever-flowing flux of time, sets them out on a journey and slowly teaches them to turn to art to aid them in self-preservation. This art, Woolf seems to gently suggest, is not limited by one's artistic abilities, but rather it lies in creation, in language, in one's company, in one's possessions, in books, in dresses, and ultimately in learning to *be*.

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