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Temporality and Intuitive Perception in Woolf's Fiction: A Bergsonian Reading

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Abstract

Time and perception are two major concerns of Woolf in many of her novels and short stories. Woolf as a modernist writer often tries in her fiction to find an epistemological solution to the problems of mortality and immortality, appearance and reality and diversity and unity and she succeeds, I think, by taking on a kind of perception that is intuitive and temporal. For her, true perception is time-bound, but like Bergson she divides time into mechanical and organic one. In her writing, she often associates symbolically the former with death and aridity and the latter with life and fertility, presenting them in the images, to name but a few of keyboard of a piano or alphabetical letters and tree or green shawl and dress, respectively. Evidently, in her views and the solution, she finds to the problems of time and perception Woolf is influenced by Bergson whose theory of time has also influenced so many other modernists. This paper elaborates on the relationship between time and perception in the works of Woolf, especially in her two major novels *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *Mrs Dalloway* (1924) and her short story "An Unwritten Novel" (1921).

Keywords: Woolf, Intuition, Perception, Temporality, Space, Bergson, Modernism, To the Lighthouse, Mrs Dalloway, "An Unwritten Novel".

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Thus, in renouncing the factitious unity which the understanding imposes on nature from outside, we shall perhaps find its true, inward and living unity. For the effort we make to transcend the pure understanding introduces us into that more vast something out of which our understanding is cut, and from which it has detached itself. And, as matter is determined by intelligence, as there is between them an evident agreement, we cannot make the genesis of the one without making the genesis of the other. An identical process must have cut out matter and the intellect, at the same time, from a stuff that contained both. Into this reality, we shall get back more and more completely, in proportion as we compel ourselves to transcend pure intelligence. (Bergson, 1954: 210)

Introduction

The loss of subjective self and concern with time and its role in directing and organizing man's experience are two major concerns of modernist philosophy and literature. The influence incidents from the past and anxiety about the future have on our present put into question the chronological time and give rise to a new definition of time. One of the philosophers who in his theories about time and self has influenced modern thinking and writing is Henri Bergson; he most categorically opposed the materialist philosophy of his time, and, as Solomon (1988) argues, "Like the later German idealists he had some sympathy with mysticism, and with the romantics, he distrusted rational thought and preferred to rely on *intuition*" (107).

Bergson's philosophy, especially his conception of time, had a great impact on the writers of his generation and those to follow. According to Michael Whitworth,"Bergson's idea of a personal, psychological time which was more real than publicly agreed clock time was attractive to many novelists" (2005:121) and many of his "ideas appealed to feminists and suffragists in the pre-war period" (Ibid. 122). In another essay, Whitworth writes that "the distinction between psychological time and clock time, the durée and temps of Bergson's philosophy, underlies the modernist experiments with time and narrative form" (2000: 146). Virginia Woolf is one of the writers who pursued in their writing these modernists experiments typical of their generation and age. In her essay "Modern Fiction", she reflects her modern conception of life and narrative form in the image of the "luminous halo" and writes: "Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; but a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelop surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end" (2000: 2150). William Troy argues that behind this very

sentence "lies all the resistance to the naturalistic formula, all that enthusiastic surrender to the world of flux and individual intuition, which has constituted the influence of Bergson on the art and literature of the past thirty years" (2002: 85). Maria Dibattista (2009) also writes of Woolf that "the philosopher in her had an equally intense interest in divining the 'real' nature of time, a problem she took up somewhat in the spirit, if not with the rigor of Henri Bergson, who had distinguished between the real time of duration (*la durée réelle*) and the time mechanically partitioned and ticked off by the hands of a clock" (366). Hafley, according to Snaith (2007), "linked Woolf's representation of interior time to Bergson's *durée réelle*" (22), and Snaith further traces back Woolf's "concern with subjective temporality – the epiphanic 'moment' – to the philosophy of Henri Bergson" (45). To discuss her experiment with time and the place of Bergsonian durée in Woolf's epistemology, however, it is important first to discuss the concept of time and perception in Bergson's philosophy.

Temporality and Perception in Bergson's Philosophy

The essential part of Bergson's philosophy is time and how it must be perceived. He divides time into two kinds: scientific time or time in natural science and time as we experience. Scientific time is made of homogenous units—moments, hours, days, etc.—that can be measured and calculated. This conception of time is mathematical and mechanical and for Bergson, it is paradoxically spatial. Movement accordingly is transitions from one state to another.

However, time as we experience, it is one continuous piece that is organic, dynamic and unitary. Bergson calls this kind of time *durée* or duration and compares time as such to a melody that must be heard as one piece. In other words, it is one continuous stream of experience: we experience the past and future in the immediate present. Duration, as Bergson states, "is the continuous progress of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances" (1954: 5), and the past of any organism "in its entirety is prolonged into its present, and abides there, actual and acting" (Ibid. 16). Accordingly, change would not represent different independent states separated by gaps and fissures, but accumulation. Nor would be movement transition from one state to another, but it is a "continuity which unfolds" (Ibid. 4), as the "state is nothing but change" (Ibid. 2). Bergson in fact speaks of two kinds of movement which result from our perception of time, downward or descending and upward or ascending movement, the former is transient and "only unwinds a roll ready prepared," and the latter, which "corresponds to an inner work

of ripening or creating, *endures* essentially, and imposes its rhythm on the first, which is inseparable from it" (Ibid. 12).

Time as a continuum is also essential to our understanding of reality. For Bergson, Russell (1996) explains, "Duration is the very stuff of reality," (718) or as Underhill comments, time is "the very stuff of reality" (29), for reality in essence, like time, is changing and growing and is never static, and the real, to put it in Underhill words, is "*becoming* rather than *being* perfect" (Ibid. 28-29). Moreover, time is necessary for a true understanding of life, for reality, which is time, for Bergson is equal to "pure creative life" (Ibid. 29). Life, in this sense, comes in contrast to matter and is opposite to inertia and rest; it is moving, growing and creative amounting even to God. Bergson says, "God, thus defined, has nothing of the already made; He is unceasing life, action, freedom" (1954: 262). And, finally through time life and perception or knowledge become equal and "*theory of knowledge* and *theory of life* seem to us inseparable" (Ibid. xiii), and "should join each other, and, by a circular process, push each other on unceasingly" (Ibid. xiv). But of what nature is this theory of knowledge or perception and how it differs from common perception?

Bergson holds that there are two kinds of perception, intellectual and intuitive. Intellect, he claims, is the agent of separation that divides what in reality is one continuous flux of becoming. We usually think in term of space and this is why we are more inclined to materialism and think intellectually, for intellect deals with the world of things and matter. The intellect, Bergson writes in the introduction to his book *Creative Evolution* "is intended to secure the perfect fitting of our body to its environment, to represent the relations of external things among themselves—in short, to think matter" (1954: ix). These functions the intellect performs through making concepts, which are formed, Bergson holds, "on the model of solids" (Ibid. ix), among which "the human intellect feels at home" (Ibid. ix). Pirandello influenced by Bergson writes in his essay "On Humour": "The forms in which we try to stop and fix the continuous flow are the concepts, the ideals within which we want to keep coherent all the fictions we create, the condition and status in which we try to establish ourselves" (quoted in Gilman 1990: 166). The concepts, it is true, are of much practical validity and, as Solomon (1988) explains, are "useful for the scientific study and description of the material, spatial world," but they are of no use "for understanding of human experience" (107). Conceptual perception, therefore, cannot lead to a true understanding of reality or life, and, Bergson (1954) writes, "our thought, in its purely logical form, is incapable of presenting the true nature of life, the full

meaning of the evolutionary movement" (x), and the "intellect is characterized by a natural inability to comprehend life" (Ibid. 174). Underhill elaborating on this point writes that the intellect is at home with solids, but "outside of them it becomes dazed, uncertain of itself; for it is no longer doing its natural work, which is to *help* life, not to *know* it" (1960: 30). The reason is that to know one must perceive the reality whole and intact, whereas the intellect divides the experience "into purely conventional 'moments', 'periods', or psychic 'states'" (Ibid.), or, according to Bergson, into bodies that are "cut out of the stuff of nature by our *perception*," (1954: 12). On the other hand, one must perceive reality as it is dynamic and organic, whereas "of immobility alone does the intellect form a clear idea" (Ibid. 164). So, intellectual perception cannot understand reality because it divides and is immobile.

The intellect, however, is not the only cognitive faculty nor is it the highest one. According to Bergson (1954), we are not "pure intellects", but there resides in the mind other powers that are "complementary to the understanding, powers of which we have only an indistinct feeling when we remain shut up in ourselves, but which will become clear and distinct when they perceive themselves at work, so to speak, in the evolution of nature" (xiii). These powers make our intuition, which for Bergson is "instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, and capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely" (Ibid. 186). Unlike the intellect which works mechanically and inclines towards matter which is its object, instinct is organic and moves towards life, and although these two faculties are one in kind and stem from the same principle, yet the intellect "remains within itself," but intuition "steps out of itself and becomes absorbed in the utilization of inert matter" (Ibid. 177). This stepping out of the self is what Bergson calls "sympathy"; instinct, in fact, is sympathy, which would be the key to true knowledge if it "could extend its object and also reflect upon itself" (Ibid. 186).

In this dual function of sympathy, memory plays a vital role though memory for Bergson "is not a faculty of putting away recollections in a drawer or of inscribing them in a register" (Ibid. 5). Memory, Bergson writes, is "the intersection of mind and matter" (1911: xvi) or as Russell explains, it is where "the past survives in the present" (1996: 718), and it is so essential to perception that, Bergson contends, "perception ends by being merely an occasion for remembering" (1911: 71). Indeed perception without memory, which Bergson calls "pure perception", "is the lowest degree of mind,—mind without memory—is really part of matter" (Ibid. 297). It is memory that makes the act of perception, which was deemed to be a mechanical process, a matter of construction or

reconstruction, an organic process where reality is "touched, penetrated, lived" (Ibid. 75). Moreover, memory rejects the possibility of separate instantaneous perception of things and links and unites endless moments of perception. Bergson emphasises:

...there is for us nothing that is instantaneous. In all that goes by that name there is already some work of our memory, and consequently of our consciousness, which prolongs into each other, so as to grasp them in one relatively simple intuition, an endless number of moments of an endlessly divisible time. (Ibid.76)

It must be noted, however, that Bergson divides memory into two kinds: a sensory-motor mechanism that ensures the adaptation of the body of the organism to a present situation, and a pure memory, possessed by man alone, which records all the past events in the form of memory images and is totally spiritual (see, for example, 1911: 87). The former, according to Bergson, "repeats" and the latter "imagines", and although the first memory may dominate the second one or even be the only recognised memory, it is the second memory that shapes our personality and constitutes the props of our thought and action. It is the continuous "piling up of the past" or "accumulated experience" (1954: 6) that builds up our personality as we, as Bergson holds, "pass, by imperceptible stages, from recollections strung out along the course of time to the movements which indicate their nascent or possible action in space" (1911: 88; see also 1954: 5-6).

Memory, on the other hand, is essential to maintaining the unity of the self and identity. The self, no doubt, is growing and changing, and it is memory there, according to Bergson, "which conveys something of the past into the present" (1954: 2) and gives the self its unity and true identity. The self, for Bergson, is also spiritual and is often runs the risk of falling into materialism, especially that pure perception and the senses immerse the self more in matter and keep it away from spirituality. It is through memory or recollection that the self gains its identity and freedom, for memory, Bergson explains, by "allowing us to grasp in a single intuition multiple moments of duration" defies the laws of necessity and matter (1911: 303). He writes:

to touch the reality of spirit we must place ourselves at the point where an individual consciousness, continuing and retaining the past in a present enriched by it, thus escapes the law of necessity, the law which ordains that the past shall ever follow itself in a present which merely repeats it in another form, and that all things shall ever be flowing away. (Ibid. 313)

The self also maintains its temporality and duration, Bergson argues, by memory, for it is through the latter that "we are creating our selves continually" (1954: 7). He writes, "If our existence were composed of separate states with

an impassive ego to unite them, for us there would be no duration" (Ibid. 4). This duration is conferred on the self by memory for, according to Russell, "It is above all in *memory* that duration exhibits itself" (1996: 718).

Woolf's Conception of Temporality and Perception

Murray Roston (2000) holds that Bergson had suggested that "such a conception of inner time might form the basis for a new type of fiction, more true to human experience than traditional modes" (184). Bergson, she reports, is of the opinion that if some bold novelist, tearing aside the cleverly woven curtain of our conventional ego, shows us under this appearance of logic a fundamental absurdity, under this juxtaposition of simple states an infinite permeation of a thousand different impressions which have already ceased to exist the instant they are named, we commend him for having known us better than we knew ourselves. (Quoted in Roston 184)

The artist indeed knows human nature well; it is the artist who can relive the past and fix it eternally in the form of his art for, as Clare Hanson holds, "The *durée* is continuous present which is not known until it is past but to which the artist, like the child, has special access" (1985: 69).

Woolf is such an artist. She evidently holds that life, or to use Bergson's words, *élan vital*, would finally defeat matter and overcome mortality. Her intuitive perception made her see into life and she reflected this inner experience in her art by choosing a kind of fiction that reflects the multi-faceted nature of human consciousness. In consequence, she rejected the conventions of her predecessors, calling them materialist mainly because, as she writes in "Modern Fiction", "they write of unimportant things," and "spend immense skill and immense industry making the trivial and the transitory appear the true and the enduring" (2006: 2088). She, as Sanders (1996) rightly observes, argued for "the potential freedom of the novel from commonly received understandings of plot, time, and identity" (514). For this purpose and as a result of this Copernican revolution, she deposed the character as the focal point of the conventional novel to give its place to experience, and attempted, Sanders writes, "both to 'dissipate' character and to reintegrate human experience within an aesthetic shape or 'form'" (Ibid. 515). Moreover, she left the chronological order and mechanical time which she found unsatisfactory for another time and order to reflect the continuity and diversity of the experience.

One of the techniques Woolf uses in her writing is to focus on one day or even a part of a day in the character's experience instead of tracing the external events or recording the history of his/ her development. To account for

this inventiveness, however, different reasons have been mentioned, such as the diversity of experience, its rapidity and continuity, and man's multiple consciousnesses. Auerbach (1953), for example, writes that modern novelists "hesitate to impose upon life, which is their subject, an order which it does not possess in itself" (548) and those who maintain a chronological order "must prune and isolate arbitrarily" (549) and so they would not show the whole reality. As another reason, he adds, the "tremendous tempo of the changes proved more confusing because they could not be surveyed as a whole" (Ibid. 549). Besides all of these, I think, however, Woolf had another, perhaps more important, reason which relates to her understanding of time and her theory of perception. Time for Woolf, as was for Bergson, is one continuum, and any part of it, if we can say it has parts, would contain the past and the present. It is not made of minutes or hours to be chronologically recorded and, therefore, for her one day or even a few hours in the life of the character would reflect his/her whole experience, and tracing the external events or history of the character would be superfluous and even false in that it would reflect another kind of time that is mechanical and scientific.

Time, immortality and perception are Woolf's major concerns in her writings, and her themes and symbolism mainly deal with these issues. Like Bergson, evidently she speaks of two kinds of perception, intellectual and intuitive, and thinks of time, in its two forms, mechanical and pure time, what I call time destructive and time preserver, mortality and immortality being corollaries of these two kinds of time, respectively. She holds that the former does centre on matter and, therefore, is false, whereas the latter is spiritual, true and redeeming. So, in most of her fiction, she structures the story around a character, usually, an interpreting and creative woman protagonist, who despite being a keen observer of external realities, confines herself neither to their essences nor order but rather struggles to find out a different reality, which she must perceive intuitively. In her short story "An Unwritten Novel", as an example, the narrator with the help of some clues taken from what is understood as real life builds up her own reality. Evidently, the account the narrator gives of Minnie Marsh, the character she is contemplating, does not correspond with the external reality and even when she understands that Minnie Marsh is not a lonely woman but is leaving the station with a young gentleman, apparently her son; she resumes her creativity, saying: "Where I go, mysterious figures, I see you... If I fall on my knees, if I go through the ritual, the ancient antics, it's you, unknown figures, you I adore... adorable world!" (28-29). On the other hand, this character is often

engaged in a kind of conflict or better to say transaction between endurance and impermanence or immortality and mortality. Time, seen from an intellectual point of view, is her main enemy as she, like Mrs Dalloway, "feared time itself... how year by year her share was sliced; how little the margin that remained was capable any longer of stretching, of absorbing, as in the youthful years, the colours, salts, tones of existence" (38). Time is a menacing threat that divides and separates, making the characters in Woolf's fiction, in *Mrs Dalloway* for example, feel invariantly how "shredding and slicing, dividing and subdividing, the clocks of Harley Street nibbled at the June day" (133). It makes itself felt and heard in the chiming and striking of the recurrent image of clocks, such as Big Ben, which is always heard striking hours and half hours, and clocks "which always struck two minutes after Big Ben" in the novel (167).

The newspaper *The Times* is also one of the manifestations and a reminder of mechanical time in many of Woolf's short stories and novels. In "An Unwritten Novel", she shows, while the narrator is holding *The Times* she cannot exercise her creativity, not until she puts it down and folds it into a square and it is only then that she can have her "eye upon life". The same image appears in *To the Lighthouse*, suggesting Mr Ramsay's occupation with mathematical time and transience. Looking for fame and immortality through philosophy and a name in the *Dictionary of National Biography* he slips "into speculation suggested by an article in *The Times* about the number of Americans who visit Shakespeare's house every year" (59). *The Times* is also mentioned in *Mrs Dalloway* in connection with Hugh Whitbread, one of the paltry and petty characters connected with politics and aristocracy, himself neither a true politician nor an aristocrat, of whom Woolf sarcastically says his name appears "at the end of letters to *The Times*, asking for funds, appealing to the public to protect, to preserve, to clear up litter, to abate smoke, and stamp out immorality in parks" (134). Richard Dalloway, the prospering politician and diplomat, is seen "reading *The Times*" (242). In consequence of such perception of time, death is always looming and its presence is felt by characters. Mrs Dalloway can feel the presence of death even in the party she gives to be alive and going; Septimus always hears the voice of the dead, especially Evan's, his dead friend, calling him; and Mrs Ramsay is reminded of death by the lines of age on her face and the skull of the boar and the picture on the wall, even when she wraps it with her green shawl—"What was the use of flinging a green Cashmere shawl over the edge of a picture frame? In two weeks it would be the colour of pea soup" (39).

Not only Woolf divides time, as Bergson does, into mechanical and pure time, but she

also divides perception into intellectual and intuitive ones. The intellect naturally perceives mechanical or ordinary time and turns time into space and replaces intuitions with concepts, which for Bergson, as Solomon argues, "are dead intuitions" (109). For Woolf, the kind of knowledge which follows intellectual perception is futile and unsatisfactory. First, although it may enrich the mind yet it gives no life and is devoid of "sympathy", which for Bergson is the way intuition works. Mrs Ramsay, to give an example, notices this flaw in her husband and thinks although he may be a great metaphysician, "he must have more than that. He must have sympathy. He must be assured that he too lived in the heart of life" (52-53). But this would not happen, for intellectual knowledge is spatial and is essentially incompatible with life, which is temporal. Mr Ramsay is preoccupied, as Lily finds out, with the objective reality and space.

Whenever she 'thought of his work' she always saw clearly before her a large kitchen table. It was Andrews doing. She asked him what his father's books were about. 'Subject and object and the nature of reality', Andrew had said. And when she said Heavens, she had no notion what that meant. Think of a kitchen table then', he told her, 'when you're not there. (33)

On the other hand, the intellect divides to know and separates the one life into different pieces. Woolf explains that this knowledge is like "the keyboard of a piano, divided into so many notes, or like the alphabet is ranged in twenty-six letters all in order" (Ibid. 47). Second, intellectual knowledge, regardless of its undeniable practical validity, is of dubious epistemological value. Speaking of his knowledge of philosophy and philosophers which has made him a distinguished metaphysician, Mr Ramsay calls it mere "nonsense", a "disguise, "all had to be deprecated and concealed under the phrase 'talking nonsense'" (62). Moreover, there is much wisdom that is not accessible to the intellect. If we take "Q" for intellectual quest, "After Q," says Woolf, "there are a number of letters the last of which is scarcely visible to mortal eyes, but glimmers red in the distance" (Ibid. 47). Third, although such knowledge may bring fame to its owner, this fame, like its originating knowledge, would be unstable and impermanent. Mr Ramsay, the intellectual philosopher, reflects with disappointment that "His fame lasts perhaps two thousand years. And what are two thousand years?" (Ibid. 50). Fourth, intellectual knowledge is not elevating and has no bearing on the character of its possessor, which is evident in the character of Mr Ramsay, Charles Tansley, Peter Walsh, Richard Dalloway, Dr Holmes, Sir William Bradshaw and many other intellectuals whose knowledge adds but to their degradation and confusion. William Bankes and Lily Briscoe

wonder "why so brave a man in thought should be so timid in life; how strangely he was venerable and laughable at one and at the same time" (Ibid. 62-63). Lily further reflects with amazement that Mr Ramsay is "the most sincere of men, the truest (here he was), the best; but, looking down, she thought, he is absorbed in himself, he is tyrannical, he is unjust" (Ibid. 64). Evidently, his tremendous intellect has made him the more selfish—"thinking that if his little finger ached the whole world must come to an end" (Ibid)—and despised for "his narrowness, his blindness" (Ibid). Finally, such knowledge makes its owner impervious to beauty and aesthetic appreciation. Mr Ramsay, for example, is too much occupied by facts and abstractions to notice beauty or sympathise with others. He "never tampered with a fact" (Ibid. 8) and is always, to use Mrs Ramsay's words, looking to find out merely "the influence of something upon somebody" (Ibid. 19). Despite or because of his knowledge, he has no sense for beauty; in fact, he "never looked at things" (97), and therefore, to Mrs Ramsay's surprise, he seemed "made differently from other people, born blind, deaf, and dumb, to the ordinary things, but to the extraordinary things, with an eye like an eagle's" (96). Such an intellectual character, as Mr Ramsay is, even appears to be callous and cruel, indifferent to other's joy or pain and whose knowledge "of all sorts of horrors, seemed not to depress him, but to cheer him" (95-96). In *Mrs Dalloway* also of Peter, the man of theories and ideas, Mrs Dalloway says, "however beautiful the day might be, and the trees and the grass, and the little girl in pink—Peter never saw a thing of all that" (8).

However, Woolf's protagonists are not ruled by mere intellectual knowledge. For Mrs Ramsay, "the atmosphere of lecture-rooms was stuffy and depressing to her beyond endurance almost" (*To the Lighthouse* 96). The woman protagonist in "The Mark on the Wall" also speaks deprecatingly of intellectual knowledge and contends "what is knowledge? What are our learned men save the descendants of witches and hermits who crouched in caves and in woods brewing herbs, interrogating shrew-mice and writing down the language of the stars?" (8). For Lily in *To the Light House* also, "it was not knowledge but unity that she desired, not inscription on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge" (70). All these characters try to see into the reality of life intuitively, life as a continual reality neither terminated by death nor circumscribed by external events. They escape the limitations put by the intellect and overcome death and mortality by redeeming the time, perceiving that time is not a sequence of minutes or hours but a gradual accumulation and a continuum, every point of which denotes the past and the

present of its subject, paradoxically moving and unmoving, changing and remaining static. These characteristics of time, especially its continuity and gradual accumulation, are reflected aptly in *To the Lighthouse* in the image of weaving; when at the end of the first part of the novel Mr Ramsay asks his wife whether she would finish the stockings that night, she answers, "No," and "flattening the stocking out upon her knee," she adds, "I shan't finish it" (166). The apparent immobility of inner time is also appropriately compared in Woolf's short story "Kew Gardens" to a snail in its movement or lack of movement, and in *To the Lighthouse* the whole action of the major part of the novel takes place in the space of one afternoon and evening, a phenomenon that makes Mrs Ramsay reflect, "there is a coherence in things, a stability; something, she meant, is immune from change, and shines out... in the face of the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral" (142).

Looking intuitively into the unity and continuity of reality whose essence is time would make Woolf's protagonists to eschew any reductionism and to take reality whole and undivided. For Woolf time is life, both one and continuous—"Only she thought of life—and a little strip of time presented itself to her eyes" (*To the Lighthouse* 81)—and for her protagonists both inner and external sides of reality, life of the soul and the sense, are important, and it is Woolf's contention, as is shown in her novels and short stories, that any reductionism would lead to a false perception and mortality. Woolf's heroines are usually accomplished in looking at both aspects; while they contemplate the most difficult and abstruse philosophical issues and try, as the woman protagonist in "The Mark on the Wall" does, "to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard separate facts" (5) to find that "When life sank down for a moment, the range of experience seemed limitless" (*To the Lighthouse* 85), they also enjoy buying flowers, giving parties, caring for the society and having children all the same. It is Mrs Ramsay's belief that "one helped oneself out of solitude reluctantly by laying hold of some little odd or end, some sound, some light" (Ibid. 88). Mrs Dalloway also enjoys buying the flowers, giving parties, mending her own dress and is proud of introducing her daughter to Peter Walsh.

This comprehensive and many-sided outlook gives Woolf's characters a new experience in life making them see its permanence and beauty and look at it with love and sympathy. Mortality thus is counterbalanced or even abolished by the possibility of permanent existence, expressed symbolically, in *Mrs Dalloway*, for example, in the form of a repeated couple of Shakespeare's verses, "Fear no more the heat o' the sun/ Nor the furious

winter's rage", the flowers bought by the protagonist's and her mending and wearing her green dress, and in *To the Lighthouse*, in the images of Mrs Ramsay's eight children, her green shawl, and her role as a matchmaker and a social benefactor. The characters are also enamoured by the beauty they discern in nature. Mrs Ramsay, we repeatedly read, "looking up she saw above the thin trees the first pulse of the full-throbbing star...the sight gave her such keen pleasure" (97). Sympathy and love are also the marks of the new attitude, which distinguish Woolf's characters from each other, such as Mrs Ramsay and Lily and Mrs Dalloway and Septimus. Lily, though as an artist is creative and imaginative, is crippled by her indifference—reflected symbolically in her marital status—and cannot see things as Mrs Ramsay does, admitting, therefore, "knowledge and wisdom were stored in Mrs Ramsay's heart" (Ibid. 71). This difference is perhaps more evident in the characters of Mrs Dalloway and Septimus Smith, who unlike Peter Walsh who keeps repeating "the death of the soul" (*Mrs Dalloway* 76) or Richard Dalloway, the loveless diplomat, has the mind of a poet and is "so gentle; so serious; so clever" (Ibid. 116). Woolf, however, writes in her diary entry for 19 June 1923, "Mrs D. is seeing the truth. Septimus seeing the insane truth" (quoted in Tomalin xx). Although he makes the revelation that "there is no death," and cries out, "he knew the truth! He knew everything!" (Ibid. 183), he has no sympathy and pessimistically, therefore, thinks one "cannot perpetrate suffering, or increase the breed of these lustful animals, who have no lasting emotions, but only whims and vanities, eddying them now this way, now that" (Ibid. 116). He becomes suicidal, feeling betrayed and deserted and hearing "The whole world was clamouring: Kill yourself, kill yourself, for our sake" (Ibid. 120).

When Mrs Dalloway hears of his suicide, how he "had flung it away", she is reminded sardonically that she "had once thrown a shilling into the Serpentine, never anything more" (Ibid. 241), a reminiscence made also at the beginning of the novel (Ibid. 10) giving it unity and emphasising the worth value Mrs Dalloway is ready to depart with. Indeed the thing they throw away indicates their difference, he his soul and she a shilling. Although Mrs Dalloway like Mrs Ramsay has penetrated life to see that "Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep" (*To the Lighthouse* 85) it is "this, here, now, in front of her" that she loves (*Mrs Dalloway* 10)—which she is not ready to sacrifice for that deep dark reality she has known intuitively, and this is the secret why she goes on with her life but he flings it away. (It is interesting to note that Gillian Beer (1996: 79-80) writes: "While she was writing *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf copied a passage from Book VII of Wordsworth's *The*

Prelude and added a comment:

The matter that detains us now may seem,To many, neither dignified enough Nor arduous, yet will not be scorned by them, Who, looking inward, have observed the ties That binds the perishable hours of life Each to the other, & the curious props By which the world of memory and thought Exists & is sustained.)

So, when both Septimus and Mrs Dalloway open the window in a critical moment, Septimus to take his own life and Mrs Dalloway perhaps with such intention, and they see an old man "coming down the staircase opposite" (195) and an old lady "in the room opposite" (243) respectively. Septimus ignores the old man but she shows much love and sympathy, thinking "it was fascinating to watch her, moving about, the old lady, crossing the room, coming to the window... quite quietly, going to bed alone" (244).

It is through this sympathy that the bulwarks of egotism fall down making Woolf's protagonist selfless and disinterested, feeling "there was scarcely a shell of herself left for her to know herself by; all was so lavished and spent" (*To the Lighthouse* 53). Woolf at least here very much like a Romantic poet thinks the self is the cause of division between subject and object and the apparent plurality and diversity. Once the self is shadowed by sympathy, Woolf argues, the subject will experience a sense of community with other people and other things, understanding "it was all one stream" (Ibid. 153). Mrs Ramsay indeed mystically often finds "herself sitting and looking, sitting and looking, with her work in her hands until she became the thing she looked at" (Ibid. 86) and looking at the trees, the streams, and the flowers, she imagines "they knew one, in a sense were one" (Ibid. 87)—which reminds one of Lily's contention that knowledge is unity. In a rear moment Clarissa in *Mrs Dalloway* also experiences this sense of community and the permanence which it confers on her, feeling 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, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; 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. (11)

Time, I think, is redeemed in such moments of revelation and it would be no longer the common mechanical destructive time, nor would be the ticking of the clock a menace sounding death, but preserving and life sustaining. (It is interesting to note that Mrs Dalloway knew that Septimus "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" (Ibid. 244)). In

consequence, there comes the "triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity" (*To the Lighthouse* 86), when man becomes a creative power to unite and bring together. No wonder that Mrs Ramsay feels at such moments "the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her" (Ibid. 113) and Mrs Ramsay following such an experience feels "There was freedom, there was peace, there was, most welcome of all, a summoning together, a resting on a platform of stability" (Ibid. 85-86). It has to be added, however, this cannot be intellectually perceived, nor does language encompass such an experience, words, as Woolf observes in "Kew Gardens" "with short wings for their heavy body of meaning, inadequate to carry them far and thus alighting awkwardly upon the very common objects that surrounded them and were to their inexperienced touch so massive" (16).

Conclusion

Woolf is one of the few modern writers who tried, thus, most sincerely to face the problem of the modern age and to think of a solution for its many ontological and epistemological problems, its meaninglessness, absurdity and human loneliness. Unlike others who fell into philosophical despair or indifference, I think, she struggled tirelessly and bravely with the philosophical void and emptiness of the age and came out somehow successful with good answers to those shocking and disappointing questions. Her achievements were mainly due, as she shows in her fiction, to a change of perception, namely replacing intellectual perception with intuitive perception. At the heart of this new perception was her new understanding of time—time which she knew to be mechanical and marked by fragmentation, change and mortality gives place to pure time and a new world which is unified and permanent. In this though she was much benefited by the views of Bergson and especially his theories on time and intuitive perception of existence, yet she reflected in every place of her writing her genuine and individual talent and deep vision.

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بررسی زمان و ادراک شهودی ازدیدگاه برگسون و تاثیر آن بر آثار ویرجینیا ولف

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زمان و ادراک دو مسأله مهم ویرجنیا ولف در بسیاری از داستان های بلند و کوتاه او هستند. ولف به عنوان یک نویسندهٔ مدرنیست، همواره تلاش می کند در نوشته هایش تا راه حلی برای مرگ و جاودانگی، ظاهر و واقعیت و کثرت و وحدت پیدا کند. به نظر نویسندهٔ این مقاله، او با برگزیدن شیوهٔ ادراک شهودی و زمانمند در این کار موفق می شود. از دیدگاه او ادراک درست زمانمند است، اما او مانند برگسون زمان را به زمان بیرونی یا مکانیکی و زمان پویا یا درونی تقسیم می کند، و اولی را با مرگ و دومی را با زندگی قرین می داند و آن ها را با صور نمادینی مانند حروف الفبا یا میز چوبی و درخت یا شال و لباس سبز به ترتیب نشان می دهد. بدون شک ولف در دیدگاه ها و راه حل هایی که برای مسألهٔ زمان و ادراک ارائه می دهد از برگسون تأثیر پذیرفته است، فیلسوفی که در نظریاتش درباره زمان و ادراک بسیاری از دیگر نویسندگان مدرنیست را تحت تأثیر قرار داده است. نویسندهٔ این مقاله تلاش می کند تا ارتباط میان زمان و ادراک را در آثار ولف و خصوصاً در دو داستان بلند و مهم او، به سوی *فانوس دریایی* و *خانم دالاوی* مورد بررسی قرار دهد.

کلیدواژگان: ولف، ادراک، شهود، زمان، مکان، برگسون، مدرنیسم، به سوی *فانوس دریایی*، *خانم دالاوی*، "رمان نوشته نشده"

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