

# **Henri Bergson, *Durée Réelle* and High Modernism**

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**Sarah McMahon**

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Supervisor: Dr. Jeni Williams, School of Cultural Studies

Student Number: 29000778

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## ABSTRACT

The cultural status and popular appeal of the philosopher Henri Bergson in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is said to have exceeded even that of his fellow Parisian, Jean-Paul Sartre in the 1950s. Bergson was an important influence on modernism, achieving a particular resonance with the 'high modernist' writers who were seeking new ways of giving expression to the 'inner-self' and exploring the nature of time during a period when modernity was felt to be both moving too fast, and encroaching on individual identity and freedoms.

This thesis aims to provide reinforcement, and also fresh evidence for the view that Bergson's influence was more powerful and more widespread than has been recognised or acknowledged in the post-war years. It starts by describing Bergson's philosophy of time, intuition and inner experience, with its central distinction between 'clock-time' (*l'étendu*), and 'inner-time' (*durée réelle*). It then goes on to contextualise this within the intellectual and cultural environment of the period. The rapid dissemination of his ideas across Europe and America is explained by an analysis of the ideas themselves, and the intricate networks of early 20<sup>th</sup> century modernism which acted as their vectors. The decline in his influence is located within the history of ideology and culture, rather than in any philosophical critique.

The main section of the thesis is based on a comparative exegesis of Bergson's texts, and those of the modernists whom he inspired, revealing the anatomy of their application of his philosophy of *durée*, and his aesthetics to their work. The goal has been to convey the sense of excitement which his ideas generated, and demonstrate the creative, experimental ways in which they were adopted by the leading figures of high modernism, who, along with Bergson himself, have helped shape our own understanding of ourselves, and time, today.

## Henri Bergson, *Durée Réelle* and High Modernism

*“La durée ... c’est le coïncidence de notre moi avec lui-même...”<sup>1</sup>*

### INTRODUCTION

The French philosopher Henri Bergson published his first work, and doctoral thesis, *Time and Free Will* in 1889. By 1914 he had become “the intellectual spokesman, *par excellence*, of the era.”<sup>2</sup> This thesis explores how this happened, and the unprecedented influence his philosophy and aesthetics of time had on ‘high modernist’ literature.

In his 1911 essay ‘Philosophical Intuition’, Bergson remarks that each great philosopher has only one important thing to say. Applying this to Bergson himself, Kolakowski states: “we may sum up his philosophy in a single idea: ‘time is real’.”<sup>3</sup> Time, for Bergson, is alive and constantly innovating, making it impossible to experience the same thing, in the same way twice.<sup>4</sup> Such a profound reality can only be grasped through intuition, during moments of inner-time or ‘*durée réelle*’, where the past and the present are fused to create an instance of perfect clarity.<sup>5</sup> Bergson’s genuinely original theory of time pervades his whole philosophy of mind, and his aesthetics. His ideas shaped or inspired much of literary and artistic modernism, and a view of the full corpus of works which he influenced reveals him as both ‘of his time’ and a shaper of those times.<sup>6</sup>

His fame reached its height between 1909 and 1914 by which time his books had been translated into many languages,<sup>7</sup> and he was giving public lectures across Europe, so popular that even *L’Opera* in Paris was not a big enough venue.<sup>8</sup> So well-attended were his lectures at the prestigious *Collège de France* that people started to call it the ‘House of Bergson’.<sup>9</sup> Scholars and statesmen sought his advice, and at its peak ‘*le culte Bergsonien*’ had touched everyone with a stake or interest in the wider intellectual culture of the day.<sup>10</sup> From his brother-in-law

Proust to the Russian Modernists and the Italian Futurists Bergson's work captured the artistic imagination. His influence in America was also considerable, helped by the accolades he received from his friend, the Harvard philosopher William James.<sup>11</sup> His Columbia University lecture of 1913 caused the first recorded traffic jam on Broadway,<sup>12</sup> and a cast of leading American writers use Bergsonian ideas in their works.<sup>13</sup> But our focus in this thesis is on the 'High Modernists' who were most active in Paris and England during Bergson's lifetime, and whose works carry the clearest marks of his inspiration.<sup>14</sup> Bergson believed that moments of *durée* are most accessible via the medium of art, and his particular appeal to the modernists lies in the connection he makes between time and aesthetics. Richard Lehan, the eminent scholar of literary modernism underlines the sheer scale of his significance as follows: "It was Bergson who created a systematic, rigorous philosophy that became the foundation for modernism".<sup>15</sup>

The period during which Bergson came to prominence held an uncertainty characteristic of any *fin de siècle*, but in Europe these times were unusually seismic in nature. Changing industrial and social conditions were affecting the privileged and intellectual classes. The insularity and sense of moral and cultural superiority of the late Victorian period was fading, and as Carey illustrates, some of the 'High Modernists', particularly the self-styled 'Men of 1914' felt threatened by the encroachment of what Eliot called "the unthinking herd".<sup>16</sup> Art with a capital 'A' was being asserted over what they saw as mass culture, and their work often reveals them as torn between Pound's desire to 'Make it New!' and their vested interest in preserving a past which had favoured them.<sup>17</sup> At the same time another set of modernists, not granted such 'glorious' pasts, were projecting their own experiences of society, through quite different lenses.<sup>18</sup> These included female, colonial and other groups of writers who fell outside the patriarchal establishment.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, it was these writers who were to prove the most notably and creatively 'Bergsonian', and were to create a lasting legacy for him. Bergson was a champion of novelty and change, and he attracted what Hynes calls the "Edwardian rebellious minds".<sup>20</sup> He gave their thoughts a logical

framework and vocabulary for expression, providing “fresh solutions to entrenched issues”<sup>21</sup>. As Lehan puts it: “Bergson creates the divide between the Enlightenment and the modern mentality... If the moderns did not have Bergson, they would have had to invent him”.<sup>22</sup>

### **Approach**

My goal in this thesis is to address the four main questions which emerge as soon as one starts to explore the Bergson phenomenon in any depth. The first is simply ‘*What?*’ What was the essence of Bergson’s philosophy and which of its ingredients managed to generate such an impact. The next question is ‘*Who?*’ Which artists make up the core intellectual genealogy of Bergsonian modernism, and how did these networks develop and intersect? After setting up the intellectual genealogy, we will explore the question ‘*Why?*’ What was it about the times themselves, and Bergson’s philosophical and ‘world’ views within that context, which enabled his thinking to achieve such cult status? Here we will look at the topic of time per se – showing how Bergson was both a participant in a period fascinated by time, and also one of the architects of this fascination.

The main part of the thesis will go into depth on the fourth question - ‘*How?*’ - How did the high modernists apply Bergson’s philosophy of time in their work, and with what ends in mind?<sup>23</sup> Here my focus will be to show how they both embraced and represented his thinking, and also used it as an enabling point or catalyst for their own departures, applying it to create new perceptions and narrative forms. We will explore how the modernists applied Bergsonian thinking under four main headings: as explorations of our everyday experience of time, as depictions of the far rarer moments of blissful extra-temporality or ‘being’, as a response to Bergson’s challenge to writers to convey ‘*le moi profond*’ through deep characterization, and closely related, how they take their characters on paths towards self-realisation through an understanding of *durée*, often actuated via existential ‘epiphanies’.

In the last section we look at Bergson's advice on how to negotiate the strengths and weaknesses of language to convey the unique sensation and dynamics of *durée*.

### **Bergson's Philosophy of Time**

Bergson's philosophy of time is, as has been said, part philosophy of mind, and part aesthetics. The way in which the mind understands time, intuitively, is of central concern, and reflects his worldview which was opposed to the mechanistic. Bergson sets up an important dualism between '*le dynamisme*' and '*le mécanique*', and this underpins his central distinction between time and space.<sup>24</sup> Time is dynamic and vital, whilst space is static and mechanical. He calls this mechanistic view 'clock-time' – '*l'étendu*', or spatial extension. In his view the philosophical and scientific tradition have confused time for space, and the Newtonian certainty of 'the clock in the sky' with its spatialised units, both misrepresents and suppresses the experience of 'real time', what he calls '*durée réelle*'.

Bergson uses the metaphor of a spool or ball to explain how 'real' time' works:

"This inner life may be compared to a continual rolling up, like that of a thread on a ball, for our past follows us, it swells incessantly with the present that it picks up on its way."<sup>25</sup>

As such, the past is always informing the present and we live in a constant state of 'becoming'. The key innovation here is that every moment is new and different because of this cumulative effect of new knowledge and perspective. Here Bergson's thinking is highly original. As Randall observes, breaking down the illusion that time is the 'same' was "the most important legacy Bergson has left cultural and literary studies".<sup>26</sup> This legacy is very apparent in the modernist texts, where the words used are often markedly similar. Proust writes: "remembrance of things past is not necessarily the remembrance of things as they were."<sup>27</sup> Joyce's alter ego, Stephen Dedalus reflects Bergsonian

thinking when he says that “the past is consumed in the present and the present is only living because it brings forth the future”.<sup>28</sup>

Bergson also links such understanding with freedom of thought, and this is where *durée* carries more controversial implications. As Kolakowski says: “To say that time is real is to say, first, that the future does not exist in any sense”.<sup>29</sup> Here at once Bergson puts himself in opposition both to the determinism of Darwin’s theory of evolution, and the predestination of the Christian faith.<sup>30</sup> This argument was at heart about human freedom: “Pure *durée* is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself live.”<sup>31</sup> Bergson felt strongly that we needed to “recover possession of our selves”, which in his view had been appropriated by religion, science and modernity.<sup>32</sup> Adorno observes that Bergson: “In a tour de force, ... established a cult of ... sovereign freedom in the midst of unfreedom”.<sup>33</sup> Another aspect to Bergson’s clash with science, and with the Church was his belief that all life was driven by *élan vital*, or a ‘vital force’, a term which was rapidly adopted by ‘*tout Paris*’ and beyond.<sup>34</sup> Its philosophical importance, as Gillies points out, is that it “permits the coexistence” of the material and the spiritual.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, one of the secrets of his appeal is the balance which he reached between two different mindsets – the intellectual and the intuitive.<sup>36</sup> Far from being a ‘mystic’ as his critics suggested, Čapek suggests that his philosophy of *durée* “lay in the direction which physics would move sooner or later”.<sup>37</sup>

Bergson’s thinking also ran counter to much of the western philosophical tradition, and in particular the Kantian principle that the ‘absolute’ or “reality itself”<sup>38</sup> belonged to the ‘noumenal’ world, and beyond human grasp. Bergson is clear that we can grasp it, but that “some faculty other than the intellect is necessary for the apprehension of reality”.<sup>39</sup> That faculty is intuition, a quality which the whole Kantian tradition, in Bergson’s view, confuses with abstraction.<sup>40</sup> ‘*L’intuition*’ is our means of transiting from our everyday or ‘superficial’ self, ‘*le moi social*’ to ‘*le moi profond*’. The latter is reached very rarely, and only “by deep introspection which leads us to grasp our inner states



as living things, constantly becoming”.<sup>41</sup> To explain this process he uses the metaphor of ‘the veil’,<sup>42</sup> which shields our everyday selves from a full consciousness of reality, so that we can select from memory only what we need for everyday survival.<sup>43</sup> For us, therefore, this veil is normally “dense and opaque... but it is thin, almost transparent, for the artist and poet”.<sup>44</sup> Through this metaphor Bergson at once sets up the role of the artist as someone who can create for us an “immediate communion with things and with ourselves”.<sup>45</sup> With their superior capacity for intuition and empathy artists can take us out of our everyday existences and into *durée*.<sup>46</sup>

The modernists felt a natural affinity for this philosophy which warned against ‘clock-time’, challenged rationalism, championed art, intuition, freedom and novelty, and defined a pathway to ‘*le moi profond*’ during a period of shifting identities and profound social change. Durant, writing in Bergson’s lifetime, sums up his appeal:

“Of all contemporary contributions to philosophy, Bergson’s is the most precious ... . Before him we were cogs and wheels in a vast and dead machine; now, if we wish it, we can help to write our own parts in the drama of creation”.<sup>47</sup>

### **Bergsonian Modernism – a Genealogy**

The challenge in creating a precise intellectual genealogy of Bergsonian modernism lies in first establishing what actually constitutes ‘influence’, and how imprecise this can be. Carl Becker expressed this well in 1932 when he observed that cultural historians have a tendency to view the transfer of ideas “as if it were no more than a matter of borrowed coins, from one writer to another”.<sup>48</sup> Kolakowski also cautions on the “notorious imprecision” of any attempt “to describe the leading trends in the mentality of an age.” But he goes on to say that such attempts “are not useless... and not necessarily arbitrary.”<sup>49</sup> An important touchstone for this thesis is that Bergson’s influence on modernism must be understood as both direct and indirect or ‘inflected’, one of a number of

liberating and enabling forces which shaped modernism, but one of the more powerful.

'Time', as will be shown, was a topic of great currency, but Bergsonian modernism should not be viewed simply as the product of a *zeitgeist*.<sup>50</sup> The 'intellectual genealogy' surrounding him is remarkably clear and reinforcing in its connections. It radiated outwards from the readers of his books and the audiences of his lectures. Beyond his immediate readership, which included his close relative, Proust, the first disseminators were those who heard him speak at the *Collège de France*.<sup>51</sup> These included well-networked figures like T.S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, John Middleton Murry and T.E. Hulme.<sup>52</sup>

In the next circle of the radius we find the intellectual 'salons' or gatherings, a model historically popular in France. Gertrude Stein ran her own, at 27, *Rue de Fleurus*, with guest lists famously ranging from Matisse and Picasso,<sup>53</sup> to Hemingway and Scott Fitzgerald.<sup>54</sup> Stein is significant as a 'thoroughbred' Bergsonian, who was taught by his *confrère* William James at Harvard, and then attended Bergson's lectures when she moved to Paris. Meanwhile, back in Stein's homeland, American writers and poets like Faulkner, Dos Passos, Frost and W.C. Williams had read Bergson, and were open about his influence on them.<sup>55</sup> Bergson's appeal to Americans endured, later extending to writers like Henry Miller and Jack Kerouac.<sup>56</sup>

In England, Lady Ottoline Morrell created her own 'salon', welcoming many 'Bergsonians' including Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence, John Middleton Murry, Katherine Mansfield and Aldous Huxley<sup>57</sup> to weekends at her country manor in Garsington.<sup>58</sup> Murry had founded a Bergsonian magazine, *Rhythm*, whilst at Cambridge, and can be seen as a major 'cross-pollinator' of Bergsonian thought, responsible in particular for extending Bergson to Katherine Mansfield and D.H. Lawrence.<sup>59</sup> Mansfield had met Murry in December 1911 and by Easter 1912 she was both his partner and deputy editor of *Rhythm*.

Beyond the written word, Bergson influenced what he called the 'plastic arts' – painting, sculpture and architecture. A range of movements incorporated his ideas into the way they tried to bring a sense of the dimension of time into their work.<sup>60</sup> As has been mentioned, he had a particular influence on Matisse, Duchamp and Léger,<sup>61</sup> as well as the Italian Futurists Marinetti, Boccioni, and Ungaretti.<sup>62</sup> In the most modern medium of the time, the philosopher Gilles Deleuze, who is credited with resurrecting Bergson's reputation in the 1950s, sees widespread examples of his influence in film,<sup>63</sup> and André Bazin, founder of *La Nouvelle Vague*, was an enthusiastic Bergsonian.<sup>64</sup>

But this thesis is focused on Bergson's literary influence, and the writers to be discussed have been chosen because they display the clearest Bergsonian tendencies and aesthetic sympathies. The aim has been to identify "the central points of intersection" between Bergson's thinking and its modernist application.<sup>65</sup> The writers selected for discussion are: James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield, Marcel Proust, Gertrude Stein and Virginia Woolf. Wherever possible a direct textual comparison has been made between Bergsonian and modernist works, because it is in the language of expression as well as the expression itself that his ideas will be shown to have had such a profound effect upon the literature of the period.

However, it is important to note that some Bergsonian modernists either denied or came to downplay his influence upon them. He started to fall out of favour during 1914, and the reasons surrounding this explain in large part why he still remains relatively unknown today. There were many factors at play. The experience of the war itself appeared to refute or at least render insensitive his optimistic belief in vitalism, but he was also "an unwitting scapegoat for many of the prejudices and obsessions of the time".<sup>66</sup> As we have seen, he had made enemies in the religious and scientific establishments. Ellmann sees the rise of far-right politics in France, espoused by the English 'Men of 1914's' as part of a further, politically motivated abandonment of Bergson.<sup>67</sup> To compound the situation, rationalist philosophers like Julien Benda in France and Bertrand

Russell in England, had by then started to publish actively hostile critiques of Bergson's thought.<sup>68</sup> This was not helped by the fact that, to Bergson's own aggravation and dismay, his popularity led to his ideas being mis-represented and appropriated by some, in ways which were completely remote from his intention. Gillies says that these 'rogue' interpretations came to be labelled 'Bergsonisms'.<sup>69</sup>

But one of the more insidious and underlying reasons for Bergson's fall from grace was the intellectual snobbery and conservatism of the intellectual elite, led in England by the highly influential T.S. Eliot and the notoriously dangerous Wyndham Lewis, whose attacks on Bergson undoubtedly influenced their circle. Eliot attacks Bergson with such vigour that Ellmann suggests that he felt him "a powerful threat".<sup>70</sup> Once a passionate supporter, as Kenner says, Eliot's "temporary conversion" to Bergson became "meretricious captivity",<sup>71</sup> then rejection within months.<sup>72</sup> In an age where the 'intellectuals' were busy distancing themselves from what they saw as 'popular' culture, Bergson had simply become too fashionable for many of those who had once been the most articulate proponents of his work.<sup>73</sup> Hulme, the original English translator of Bergson's *Introduction to Metaphysics* was alarmed at his extraordinary public appeal, complaining that "all sorts of people" were using phrases like *élan vital* and *durée réelle*. He also demonstrates some of the well known misogyny of his clique when he says: "Then suddenly, for no apparent reason, it seems the man's reputation spreads all over Europe.... he is welcomed and read by the ladies who have ambitions salon-wise".<sup>74</sup>

But although Bergson proved to be a "polarising figure in the era's culture wars",<sup>75</sup> his influence nevertheless persisted 'under the radar', in spite of this atmosphere of silence or rejection.<sup>76</sup> This is important to keep in mind, as we see some of the high modernists' most Bergsonian works emerging after 1914. Lawrence's most Bergsonian works are written from 1915 onwards, and Mansfield's from 1918.<sup>77</sup> James Joyce never denied his interest in Bergson, which stemmed from his Left-Bank Paris days, and it is evident in his books,

particularly *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Bergson's *Creative Evolution* was part of Joyce's personal library and he bought a copy in 1913, a year before he started *Ulysses*.<sup>78</sup> *Finnegan's Wake* contains a character called 'Elanio Vitale', and in the same book Joyce parodies Wyndham Lewis' obsession with Einstein, Bergson and the 'time-school' in *Time and Western Man*.<sup>79</sup>

But ironically it was perhaps the two most Bergsonian modernists of all, Proust and Woolf, who remained most reticent about Bergson's influence upon them. As Proust's leading chronographer, Gunter says: "Proust's entire project is impossible without Bergson",<sup>80</sup> and he has shown, definitively, that Bergson was an intellectual and personal constant in Proust's life. He describes the effect as "influence *qua* creativity, not influence via simple appropriation", which is true of many of the other modernist applications and inflections of Bergson, and, in the spirit of novelty, as Bergson would have wished it.<sup>81</sup> Shattuck, one of the world's most eminent Proustian scholars says: "Despite Proust's statements to the contrary... denials of Bergson's influence can only be termed disingenuous."<sup>82</sup>

The case of Woolf is perhaps even more significant, because whilst most scholars hold her up as one of the most tangibly Bergsonian of all modernists, unlike Proust she never even acknowledged Bergson.<sup>83</sup> This is all the more strange as it is on record that Woolf personally attended her sister-in-law, Karin Costelloe Stephen's lecture on Bergson on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1913. Stephen went on to publish a book about him, to which Bergson himself gladly contributed the foreword.<sup>84</sup> *Mrs Dalloway*, published in 1925 is what Paul Ricoeur described as "a masterpiece ... of the perception of time".<sup>85</sup> One possible explanation for Woolf's silence is her friendship with T.S. Eliot whose attacks may have made her reticent about any open acknowledgement of Bergson. Ironically, as has been suggested earlier, this silence allows her to carry on being Bergsonian 'undetected', after his decline in popularity. What some see as her most Bergsonian novel, *The Waves* did not appear until 1931.<sup>86</sup>

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## NOTES - INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup> Henri Bergson: *Creative Evolution* tr. Arthur Mitchell (London, Macmillan, 1911, Digireads 2011, p.201); hereafter 'CE'; translated: "Duration [real time] is the coincidence between our ego and its real self".

<sup>2</sup> Leszek Kolakowski: *Bergson* (South Bend, Indiana 2001 p. 1). *Italic emphasis is his*. Bergson was a public intellectual, in the French tradition, as Sartre was to be from the late 40s onwards.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*: 2. In a letter to his friend and fellow thinker, William James of 1905, says that "It was the analysis of the notion of time which overturned all my [previous] ideas". Bergson wrote in *Creative Evolution* (p.39) "If time does nothing, it is nothing".

<sup>4</sup> The pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus first mooted this idea in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, when he said "Everything is in flux, and no man ever steps in the same river twice" (as reported in Plato: Cratylus 402a: "πάντα χωρεῖ καὶ οὐδὲν μένει" καὶ "δις ἐς τὸν αὐτὸν ποταμὸν οὐκ ἂν ἐμβάιης"

<sup>5</sup> "Durée.. is real time, perceived and lived." Henri Bergson: *Duration and Simultaneity* (Climamen Press, 1999 p. 208); hereafter 'DS'. "The absolute can only be given in an intuition" Henri Bergson: *Introduction to Metaphysics in The Creative Mind* (Citadel, NY, 2002, p. 161) hereafter 'CM'.

<sup>6</sup> Maud Ellmann: *The Poetics of Impersonality: T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound* (Harvard UP, 1987, p. 11). As Ellmann says, Bergson's popularity was comparable to Sartre in the 50s, and exceeded Derrida's in the 70s and 80s.

<sup>7</sup> Bergson himself had an English mother, and was fluent in English. He was therefore able to help contemporary translators in their versions of his work, lending a particular integrity to his texts in the English.

<sup>8</sup> Anecdotally, his audiences were sitting on windowsills, and members of Parisian high society were sending servants ahead to hold their seats. (Douglass 1986, p.12)

<sup>9</sup> Bergson was Professor of Greek Philosophy there from 1900, and specialised in Heraclitus and the pre-Socratic philosophers (see note 4 above).

<sup>10</sup> Even the British PM, Arthur Balfour wrote an essay on Bergson. Between 1909 and 1911 "well over 200 articles about him appeared the British press alone" (Douglass 1986, p.12)

<sup>11</sup> In a letter of 4<sup>th</sup> October 1908 James gives his first impressions after meeting Bergson: "So modest and unpretending a man but such a genius intellectually!"

<sup>12</sup> During his reception at the *Académie française*, he received so many flowers and such applause that underneath the clamor he was heard to protest, "Mais . . . je ne suis pas une danseuse!" see Jimena Canales: *Einstein, Bergson, and the Experiment that Failed* (MLN, Volume 120, Number 5, December 2005, p.1170); Broadway anecdote: Tom Quirk: *Bergson and American Culture* (University of North Carolina Press, 1990, p.1)

<sup>13</sup> see page 11 for more detail on Bergson's American adherents

<sup>14</sup> This includes two 'adoptive' figures, the American *émigrée* Gertude Stein (Paris) and New Zealand *émigrée* Katherine Mansfield (London, Paris).

<sup>15</sup> Lehan, Richard: *Literary Modernism and Beyond: The Extended Vision and the Realms of the Text* (Louisiana State University 2009 p. 47)

<sup>16</sup> The 'Men of 1914' included T.S. Eliot, T.E. Hulme, Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound, all ardent conservatives. "Herd..." quote from: T.S. Eliot: *Criterion* (1938). The open expression of such sentiments is shocking to us today. John Carey: *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (Faber 1992) reveals that such thinking was widespread, and included Lewis, Wells, Yeats, Pound, Woolf, Lawrence, Huxley and Shaw. Many of them were actively interested in the idea of eugenics propounded by men like Canetti. Eliot and Lawrence both regret the spread of education (Carey 1992 p.15). Carey identifies the root influence as Nietzsche, whom he says encouraged the Modernist intellectuals to think of themselves as 'natural aristocrats' (*ibid* pp 71 ff).

<sup>17</sup> Ezra Pound: *Make it New!* (1934)

<sup>18</sup> The dominance of the white, male and patriarchal view, which had been in place for many centuries, saw its first signs of erosion during the Edwardian era.

<sup>19</sup> Jean Rhys and Katherine Mansfield were both 'colonial' and female. Lawrence was working class, and Woolf, Dorothy Richardson and Djuna Barnes amongst others were upper class females but in a very male-dominated society. Kafka, a Bergsonian writer, was Jewish – as was Bergson himself, a factor in his rejection by the anti-semitic 'Men of 1914' (qv).

- <sup>20</sup> Samuel Hynes: *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (Pimlico, 1992 pp. 9, 348)
- <sup>21</sup> Mary Ann Gillies: *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* (McGill-Queen's UP, 1996, p.37)
- <sup>22</sup> Lehan 2009: 311
- <sup>23</sup> This thesis is neither designed nor intended as a philosophical critique of Bergson. My focus is on the modernists' *application* of Bergson's thinking rather than a treatise on the merits and demerits of his philosophy per se.
- <sup>24</sup> Levenson notes that Bergson shared "the modernist urge towards dualistic opposition and radical polarities". Michael Levenson: *A Genealogy of Modernism* (CUP, 1984 p. ix)
- <sup>25</sup> CM: 164
- <sup>26</sup> Bryony Randall: *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (CUP 2007, p.29)
- <sup>27</sup> Bergson married Proust's cousin, and Proust was best man at Bergson's wedding.
- <sup>28</sup> James Joyce: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Wordsworth Editions, 1992, p.194)
- <sup>29</sup> Kolakowski 1985: 2
- <sup>30</sup> The French Catholic Church banned his works in 1914
- <sup>31</sup> Henri Bergson: (1889) *Time and Free Will* tr. F. L. Pogson (London, Sonnenschein, 1910 p. 100); hereafter 'TFW'.
- <sup>32</sup> TFW: 232
- <sup>33</sup> Theodor W. Adorno: *Negative Dialectics* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2003 p 8).
- <sup>34</sup> Jimena Canales: *Einstein, Bergson, and the Experiment that Failed: Intellectual Cooperation at the League of Nations* (MLN, Volume 120, Number 5, December 2005 p.1170)
- <sup>35</sup> Gillies 1996: 13-14
- <sup>36</sup> This important and subtle point is picked up on in particular by Katherine Mansfield (see later)
- <sup>37</sup> Milič Čapek: *Bergson and Modern Physics* (Nijhoff, 1971 p. xi) Bergson, a polymath, was also a mathematician.
- <sup>38</sup> "Bergson tells of reality itself": William James: *The Stream of Consciousness* (1892)
- <sup>39</sup> TFW: 14
- <sup>40</sup> TFW: 232-3
- <sup>41</sup> TFW: 231
- <sup>42</sup> This metaphor may have been inspired by Shelley's sonnet of 1818: *Lift not the Painted Veil*.
- <sup>43</sup> This is one of the few points on which Bergson and Freud agree.
- <sup>44</sup> Henri Bergson: (1900) *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, tr. C. Brereton & F. Rothwell (Arc Manor, Maryland, 2008 p. 73); hereafter 'Laughter'.
- <sup>45</sup> *Laughter*: 157-8
- <sup>46</sup> In the only known recording of Bergson's voice, he asks "Quel est l'objet de l'art?" and goes on to say that it is to act as mediators, providing "le communication immédiate avec les choses et avec nous-mêmes". <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgnuZccKKJw>
- <sup>47</sup> Will Durant: *The Story of Philosophy* (1926)
- <sup>48</sup> Carl Becker: (1932) *The Heavenly City of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Philosophers* (Yale UP 2003 pp 72-3)
- <sup>49</sup> Kolakowski 1985: 10
- <sup>50</sup> On this point Bergsonian scholars are united, esp. Gillies, Douglass, Schwartz and Quirk (qv)
- <sup>51</sup> Bergson sent Proust advanced copies of each of his publications as they were produced.
- <sup>52</sup> Eliot was a house guest of the young writer Henri Alain-Fournier (*Le Grand Meaulnes*) in Paris in 1910-11, and accompanied him to Bergson's lectures.
- <sup>53</sup> Cronan traces the Bergsonian influence on Matisse in detail. Cronan, Todd: *Matisse, Bergson, Modernism* (Minnesota UP – forthcoming July 2013). There is a considerable body of work on Bergson's influence on art. Mark Antliff: *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant-Garde*, (Princeton University Press, 1993) discusses Bergson's influence on Cubists, Orphists, Rhythmists and other artistic movements of the period.
- <sup>54</sup> Quirk (1990) sees strong Bergsonian traits in Fitzgerald and Hemingway. Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) was a title inspired by Bergson adherent Alain-Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes* (1913).
- <sup>55</sup> Willa Cather, Wallace Stevens and Vladimir Nabokov are also 'established' as Bergsonians.
- <sup>56</sup> Bergson influenced Miller's 'spiral form' of writing. Both he and Jack Kerouac gave their protagonists a copy of Bergson's *Creative Evolution* in *Tropic of Capricorn* (1938) and *On the Road*

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(1957). Bergson is mentioned as good tea-time conversation for Princeton undergraduates in Scott Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and the Damned* (1922)

<sup>57</sup> Aldous Huxley worked for Murry on the Athenaeum magazine, and Church sees his 1928 novel *Point Counter Point* as highly Bergsonian. Margaret Church: *Time and Reality* (Univ N. Carolina 1963, pp.103ff)

<sup>58</sup> Huxley worked on the Garsington farm after leaving Oxford. His first book *Crome Yellow* (1921) is based on the Garsington 'set'.

<sup>59</sup> *Rhythm, The Blue Review, and Signature*. Signature was a venture which Lawrence did with Murry and Mansfield in 1915. It included his essays 'The Crown' and *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine*.

<sup>60</sup> These included Rhythmists, Fauvists, Orphists, Simultanists and 'Puteaux Cubists'. Architects influenced by Bergson included Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright

<sup>61</sup> Matisse, who also openly acknowledged Bergson's influence, demonstrates a sense of *durée* this in the Baudelairean painting *Luxe, Calme et Volupté* (1904) and in *Le Bonheur de Vie* (1905).

<sup>62</sup> The Futurists were interested in Bergson's idea of dynamism and flux, and the indivisibility of movement. Boccioni's 1913 sculpture *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space* is a notable example of his influence. Ungaretti, the futurist poet attended Bergson's lectures, and his collection of poetry from 1919-33 is called *Feeling for Time*. In other regards they went against Bergsonian ideas, with their embrace of the modern and the industrial.

<sup>63</sup> Deleuze, Gilles: *Bergsonism* (1966) (Zone Books, New York, 1991); *Cinema 2 – The Time Image* (Continuum, 2005)

<sup>64</sup> André Bazin: Magazine 'Cahiers du Cinéma'. (1951 ff) Deleuze sees Bergson's influence in Jean Renoir, Andrei Tarkovsky, Alain Resnais, Jean-Luc Godard, Max Ophuls, Federico Fellini et al.

<sup>65</sup> Gillies 1996: 6

<sup>66</sup> "Bergson helped to fire a new mode of Western thought - one which required sacrificial figures. Bergson became the scapegoat." Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglass: *Bergson and the Vitalist Controversy* (CUP 1992 p.2)

<sup>67</sup> Ellmann 1987: 192

<sup>68</sup> Julien Benda: *Une Philosophie Pathétique* (Paris 1913). Bertrand Russell: *The Philosophy of Bergson* (1914)

<sup>69</sup> Gillies 1996: 25-7. Not to be confused with the title of Gilles Deleuze 1966 book, *Bergsonism* which does not use the word derogatively.

<sup>70</sup> Ellmann 1987: 28. But forty years later Eliot yearns for "the appearance of a philosopher who will arouse the imagination, like Bergson did". Quoted in Josef Pieper: *Leisure: the Basis of Culture* (Pantheon NY 1964, p xi)

<sup>71</sup> Eliot's poems contain repeated references to the tyranny of clocks, as he looks for "the still point of the turning world" and harks back to an age "older than the time of chronometers". Eliot, T.S.: *Burnt Norton* (Faber 1963 p.191); Eliot, T.S.: *Dry Salvages* (Faber 1963 p.206)

<sup>72</sup> Hugh Kenner: *The Invisible Poet* (Methuen 1965 pp 40,59). Eliot's criticisms start with his lecture notes on return to Harvard in 1911. He openly breaks with Bergsonian thinking in 1915, praising Pound for refusing to "hitch up" Vorticism to Bergsonism. (T.S. Eliot: *Unpublished Letter* - Merton MS Pound Archive)

<sup>73</sup> John Carey: *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (Faber 1992)

<sup>74</sup> T.E. Hulme: *New Age* 39. Eliot criticises Bergson's "voluptuosities". (Ellmann 1987: 28) For Lewis, an arch-misogynist, time was feminine, space was masculine. He associates "mind rotting femininity" with Bergsonian "softness, flabbiness ... and fluidity" (Wyndham Lewis: *Time and Western Man*, 1927)

<sup>75</sup> Paul Douglass in Ardoin, Paul (ed): *Understanding Bergson, Understanding Modernism* (Bloomsbury 2013 p.113)

<sup>76</sup> It is important to note that Bergson was not universally rejected, indeed he was elected to the prestigious *L'Académie Française* in 1914, and won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1927.

<sup>77</sup> *The Rainbow* (1915); *Women in Love* (1920); *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) is full of references to time and features Mellors, the embodiment of *élan vital*. Holbrook says that Gerald and Gudrun in *Women in Love* are based on the Bergson-imbued Murry and Mansfield. David Holbrook, *Where D.H. Lawrence was Wrong about Woman* (Bucknell UP, 1992, p. 221).



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<sup>78</sup> Ardoin 2013: 178, 194. Bought from the bookseller F.H. Schimpff. (Richard Ellmann: *James Joyce* (OUP 1982, p.40)

<sup>79</sup> Wyndham Lewis: *Time and Western Man* (Black Sparrow Press, 1993 p.89). See later, pp 20-21

<sup>80</sup> Peter Gunter in Ardoin 2013: 157

<sup>81</sup> Ardoin 2013: 163, 165

<sup>82</sup> Shattuck, Roger: *Proust's Way* (W.W. Norton & Co, NY, 2000 p.115)

<sup>83</sup> Leonard Woolf reiterated these denials after her death, in conversation with Bergson academic and author Shiv K. Kumar (ops cit. 1961,1963). Scholars of Bergson and Modernism generally concur that Woolf must have been exposed to Bergson, as it is so manifest in her work. They draw from contemporaries like W.Y. Tindall (cited by Gillies) and Floris Delattre (cited by Church) for affirmation that she had read Bergson. Delattre says Woolf definitely read Bergson during the period 1908-14. He is an important contemporary source: *La durée bergsonienne dans le roman de Virginia Woolf* (*Revue Anglo-Américain IX* (Dec 1931). Other contemporaries concur: Ruth Gruber: *Virginia Woolf: A Study* (Leipzig 1935) sees Bergson as core to Woolf: "The poetic concept of reality peculiar to Bergson is the kernel of her writing". William Troy finds in her "the exact voice of Bergson". William Troy: *Virginia Woolf: The Novel of Sensibility in Literary Opinion in America* ed M.D. Zabel (NY 1937)

<sup>84</sup> Karin Stephen: *The Misuse of Mind, a Study of Bergson's Attack on Intellectualism* (NY, Harcourt Brace, 1922) Foreword by Henri Bergson; cited by Gillies 1996: 195.

<sup>85</sup> Ardoin 2013: 115-6

<sup>86</sup> Gillies 1996: 126

## CHAPTER 1: THE TOPIC OF TIME

### Time and the 'Problem' of Modernity

'Time' had become a topic of great salience and resonance at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Several major scientific and intellectual developments had affected the way people felt about time and the implications had created a sense of both fascination and insecurity. Firstly, Darwin's theory of evolution of 1859,<sup>1</sup> "had stretched conceptions of time to lengths previously unimaginable".<sup>2</sup> In *Creative Evolution* Bergson critiques the determinism it implies: "Its future overflows its present, and cannot be sketched out therein in an idea".<sup>3</sup> In addition, the aeons of time involved in evolution were in themselves unsettling to the popular mind. A few decades after Darwin's discoveries, England became the centre of the world in the most literal sense, with the establishment of Greenwich Mean Time in 1884. The 'prime meridian' laid out on the ground at the Royal Observatory embodies Bergson's notion of spatial *extension*, a physical manifestation of the triumph of 'clock-time' or '*l'étendu*'.

But the main scientific event of the period was Einstein's theory of relativity. Developed in two stages (1905 and 1916) it overturned 200 years of Newtonian physics.<sup>4</sup> Einstein's theory ran counter to Bergson's philosophy of time in some very fundamental ways. For Einstein time was both physical, and potentially reversible. It coexisted and importantly, correlated with space, and even implied that the future might already have taken place. Inspiring for writers like H.G. Wells, it was an anathema to Bergson.<sup>5</sup> On April 6, 1922, Bergson and Einstein met at the *Société française de philosophie* in Paris to discuss the meaning of time and relativity. As Canales says: "At stake in their debate was the status of philosophy *vis à vis* physics".<sup>6</sup> Einstein explicitly stated that philosophy should not play any role with respect to time, insisting that: "the time of the philosophers does not exist, there remains only a psychological time that differs from the physicist's."<sup>7</sup> Bergson subsequently felt the "duty to proceed to confrontation" with Einstein for trying to "transform this physics, *telle quelle*, into philosophy".<sup>8</sup> Because for Bergson the future is all about novelty and

potential, and is therefore unformed, no physical equations could, in his view, accurately predict what time might do. In direct riposte to Einstein, he insisted instead that the time of physics is 'not real'.

This was also the period of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories. Bergson was again sceptical, seeing psychology as just another manifestation of the scientific rationalism which dominated the period. For him "Psychology... proceeds like all the other sciences, by analysis".<sup>9</sup> Bergson regarded Freud's attempts to quantify psychological facts, which he saw as essentially qualitative, as starting from a flawed premise.<sup>10</sup> Another fundamental difference between the two men was that Freud saw the unconscious as tissue-based, and physically stored in the brain, whilst Bergson saw the deeper consciousness as our 'involuntary memory', both non-material, and separate from the brain. For him the unconscious is the essence of our individual selves and our *élan vital*, beyond the reach of science. However, as Kern points out, Freud's work "affirmed the reality of private time" and Church says it encouraged the exploration of the personal past, thereby supporting the spread of Bergson's ideas.<sup>11</sup>

Time had by now also taken on political connotations. There were two basic ways of thinking about it. The first was the cyclical theory of time or the 'eternal return', espoused by Giambattista Vico in the 17th century and later by Nietzsche.<sup>12</sup> Bergson's idea of continuous novelty and 'becoming' did not entirely conform, in that it was not cyclical, but it could be seen to have the character of what Vico saw as the intermittent bursts of intensive flourishing in the cycle or '*ricorso*'. The second position was of a linear track – one of either progress or decline. The conservatives saw the world in a state of perpetual decline from a glorious past, whilst the liberals championed the idea of an improving, progressive world. Hulme and the other 'Men of 1914' saw the idea of progress as subversive: "the begetter of all the Utopias. It is the source of all the idealist support of Revolution".<sup>13</sup> Most vocal amongst them was Wyndham Lewis. In his *Time and Western Man* of 1928 he coins the phrase the 'time-school' in which he includes "Bergson-Einstein-Stein-Proust" and also Joyce.<sup>14</sup>

He accuses this time-school of “the hypostatisation and glorification of the concept of Time”,<sup>15</sup> and sees Bergson’s belief in *élan vital* and continuing novelty as part of a liberal conspiracy to champion progress and subvert the past.<sup>16</sup>

### **From Agriculture to Industry: Time and Mechanisation**

Bergson’s simple but powerful championship of ‘real time’ over ‘clock-time’ appealed strongly to the modernists in the age of industrialization, with its corresponding ‘commodification’ of time. He, like them, saw modernity as having left “Mankind lying groaning, half crushed.”<sup>17</sup> They respond enthusiastically to his idea that “in the future, humanity will require a bigger soul”.<sup>18</sup> As Douglass says: “Bergson offered a rationale for artistic intuition ... ameliorating the malaise of modern existence.”<sup>19</sup> Habib summarises his contemporary appeal succinctly: “Bergson’s ideas found rich soil in an early 20<sup>th</sup> century intellectual climate somewhat exhausted by the tyranny of technology, science, industrial growth, and reason.”<sup>20</sup>

‘Clock-time’ is inherent to most of the developments which characterize a which made the individual accountable to the clock. The processes and timetables of railways, business and commerce were being methodically quantified, as they were in factories. This was the dawn of ‘clocking in’ and ‘clocking out’. One of the architects of this, Frederick Winslow Taylor in his *Principles of Scientific Management* of 1911, says: “In the past the man has been the first; in the future the system must be first”.<sup>21</sup> For modernist artists inspired by Walter Pater’s slogan “Art for art’s sake”, Taylorism was in effect, “Money for God’s sake”, a mindset to be opposed at all costs.<sup>22</sup>

Bergson reminds us of his antipathy towards ‘*le mécanique*’, in *Time and Free Will* where he says: “Mechanism... never gets out of the narrow circle of necessity within which it first shut itself up”.<sup>23</sup> Through a convenient irony clocks are themselves both circular, and mechanical. Bergson’s views of the mechanical therefore acts as a synecdoche for his more expanded view of time as it

affected modern life.<sup>24</sup> This sentiment is encapsulated perfectly in Chaplin's famous film parody of mechanisation, *Modern Times*,<sup>25</sup> and Bergson's description of how modernity has "exactly fitted [man] to the machine, just as wheels in a clockwork mechanism" may have influenced the scene in the film where the worker literally gets caught up and trapped in the machine.<sup>26</sup>

In Joyce's *Ulysses*, the protagonist Leopold Bloom shares such anxieties: "Machines. Smash a man to act as if they got caught. Rule the world today".<sup>27</sup> But it is D.H. Lawrence who is the most vociferously anti-industrial modernist. Deeply uncomfortable with the passing of the agricultural age he travelled the world with his wife Frieda to find alternatives to industrial England. *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* follow several generations of the Brangwen family through this shift in eras. In *The Rainbow* the farmer, Tom Brangwen lives "unconditioned by time", and struggles to keep ontological pace with the modern world. In a moment of detachment or *durée* in his barn, he realizes, wistfully, that "there was the infinite world, eternal, unchanging, as well as the world of life."<sup>28</sup> Industrial time is repeatedly contrasted with the recurring cycles of the seasons, festivals and traditions in Lawrence's novels, also a characteristic of Thomas Hardy's works, an author whom he much admired.<sup>29</sup>

Lawrence often makes his anti-industrial points through dualised character types. In *Women in Love* Gerald, the mine-owner, is "a Napoleon of industry" whilst Birkin is soulful and reflective, searching for meaning and self-realisation.<sup>30</sup> Their approach to time is also bound up in this, as when Lawrence contrasts Gerald's inclination towards the "pure mechanical repetition" of "tick-tack time" with the "creative mystery" whose "pulse" beats constantly in Birkin.<sup>31</sup> In his foreword to the original edition of *Women in Love* Lawrence says "Better die than live mechanically a life that is a repetition of repetitions." Gudrun comes to hate Gerald for his "mechanical monotony and meaninglessness".<sup>32</sup> Later she pities him for being "more intricate than a chronometer watch."<sup>33</sup> Lawrence is not afraid to keep repeating such metaphors, very often expressed in Bergsonian language. Bergson saw the world as suffering from the idea that nobody could

do anything which was not “mathematically calculable”,<sup>34</sup> and in Lawrence, Gerald has created “a new world order, strict, terrible inhuman...that subjected life to pure mathematical principles”.<sup>35</sup> As Niven says, Lawrence uses the word ‘mechanical’ as a signpost throughout both novels “for all that is spiritless and uncreative”, a strongly Bergsonian position.<sup>36</sup> In *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* Clifford is the crippled industrialist, polar opposite to the vitalistic Mellors, who is constantly railing against the advent of industry: “The industrial England blots out the agricultural England... The continuity is not organic it is mechanical.”<sup>37</sup> Lawrence gives him Bergsonian language as he warns that machines are “killing off... the last bit of intuition...in algebraical progression”.<sup>38</sup>

Randall Stevenson encapsulates this shift from the agricultural to the industrial period with a vignette from the railways, which had gone through their main advance during the 1840s. Unsure of how to accommodate the transition, the clock at Bristol railway station had two sets of hands, one for local time, which reflected the time of the local sunrise and sunset, and one for the railway timetable, which had to be synchronised with the railway system nationwide. As he says, Victorian life came to be ruled by the railway’s needs, and “this era of the clock’s final triumph” occurred “during the formative years of the modernist authors”.<sup>39</sup>

In Lawrence’s *Women in Love*, Gudrun is sitting at a railway station “placed before the clock face of life” when she complains to herself about Gerald’s mechanical nature.<sup>40</sup> In *The Rainbow* “the shrill whistle of the trains re-echoed through the heart, with fearsome pleasure.”<sup>41</sup> Proust likes trains because they take him to the seaside at Balbec where he went as a child, but he is also aware of their disadvantages: “Since railways came into existence, the necessity of not missing trains has taught us to take account of minutes”, and he goes on to contrast modernity with Ancient Rome, when clock-time “barely existed.”<sup>42</sup> In *The Waves* Virginia Woolf describes Bernard’s first journey to boarding school. He sits on the railway station full of apprehension at going into such a scheduled and restricted environment: “The moon-faced clock regards me ... the stare of

clocks, staring faces.” Another character, Susan sees her days at school as “crippled days, like moths with shrivelled wings... here bells ring, feet shuffle perpetually.”<sup>43</sup> Instead, Susan yearns for the carefree nature of the summer holidays. For her, at the end of term: “My freedom will unfurl, and all these restrictions ... hours and order and discipline ... will crack asunder.”<sup>44</sup>

### **Time, Patriarchy and Technocracy**

But it was not just children who felt this way. The advance of industrial capitalism had commoditised adult time and there was no longer any space for existential reflection.<sup>45</sup> Now ‘time was money’. Electric light had extended working hours and eaten into leisure time, which was starting to be positioned as a ‘waste of time’, and almost sinful. Meyerhoff summarises this relentless focus on productivity: “The temporal perspective in human lives shrank, because the past was essentially stupid and useless.”<sup>46</sup>

The female modernists under discussion take an interesting position in associating ‘clock-time’ with the male, and with the rush and haste of the world of business. Those who rush and act hastily are characterised as having somehow lost their way in life, and failed to understand the importance of self-realisation. They either do not ‘have the time’ for reflection, or critically, they lack the intuitive apparatus required for the task. Katherine Mansfield wrote that life could often be “very swift and breathless” and it was important therefore “If we are to be truly alive” to “creep away into our caves of contemplation”.<sup>47</sup>

As Hanson and Gurr observe: “The men of Katherine Mansfield’s stories are all clock watchers” whilst the women “live in real time”.<sup>48</sup> In ‘Daughters of the Late Colonel’ the women are tragic figures whom time and life have passed by, whilst they were looking after their tyrannical father. When he eventually dies Mansfield holds us in dramatic suspense as to whether or not they will make up for lost time and embrace life. This would involve a defiance of ‘clock-time’ and by extension, the male. They ponder for much of the story on who should

receive their father's gold watch. Their nephew Cyril is chosen, as they recall his haste when visiting some years ago. He had told his aunts then that their time "was a bit slow" and that he had to rush and meet a man at Paddington "just after five." When Josephine decides the watch is for him, her sister Constantia agrees - "I seem to remember last time he came there was some little trouble about the time."<sup>49</sup>

In 'At the Bay', another of Mansfield's more Bergsonian stories, she introduces us to the impatient, highly-strung character of Stanley Burnell who takes everyday life as a challenge to be conquered and pinned down by action. In Bergsonian terms, he lives entirely in the 'external world', always dressed in a business suit, living to clock-time, and driven by goals. He is forever rushing: "I'm in rather a hurry... There's no time to lose...I've just got twenty-five minutes". Indeed, the wives in Mansfield's stories are constantly asking themselves why their husbands are always in a rush. In 'Bliss' Bertha sees Harry bolt upstairs and wonders "What after all did an extra five minutes matter?" In 'Six Years After' the wife marvels that after twenty-eight years of marriage her husband still finds it "an effort to adapt his pace to hers."<sup>50</sup>

In her novels Virginia Woolf often links masculinity, machinery, and the power of the state. Moreover, she shows them as deeply inimical to women and to the individual.<sup>51</sup> In *Mrs Dalloway* clock time epitomises the intrusive power of the state as Big Ben, the clock of government at Westminster, acts as a constant interruption, ringing out in "irrevocable leaden circles".<sup>52</sup> Later she describes Big Ben as like "a young man, strong, indifferent, inconsiderate".<sup>53</sup> In another part of the book she describes the authority figure of Dr Holmes as having "blood red nostrils", and the clocks of Harley Street as tyrannical, "Shredding and slicing, dividing and subdividing, the clocks of Harley Street nibbled at the June day, counselled submission, upheld authority".<sup>54</sup>

Fortunate enough to be privately wealthy, Gertrude Stein saw the world of work "as something that I cannot do" and believed that too much of a focus on it was



disempowering and life-denying.<sup>55</sup> But she was in a good position to see that work must be balanced by recreation. Such is the life of the 'Gentle Lena' in *Three Lives*, who works, but without the pressure of time.<sup>56</sup> Inherent in this observation is the idea that if one is not careful 'time flies', and life is soon over. Work time is ultimately external, and moves the years of one's life by faster than time spent on leisure and spiritual development.

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## NOTES - CHAPTER 1: THE TOPIC OF TIME

<sup>1</sup> Charles Darwin: *On the Origin of Species* (1859).

<sup>2</sup> Rosemary Sumner: *A Route to Modernism* (Macmillan, 2000 p. 84)

<sup>3</sup> CE: 58. Bergson also sought to refute the idea of determinism in *Time and Free Will*. He was particularly opposed to Herbert Spencer's theories of social Darwinism and 'survival of the fittest'.

<sup>4</sup> Albert Einstein: 'Theory of Special Relativity' - 1905; 'Theory of General Relativity' - 1916

<sup>5</sup> H.G. Wells: *The Time Machine* (1906)

<sup>6</sup> Canales 2005: 1169

<sup>7</sup> Einstein quoted in Canales 2005: 1175

<sup>8</sup> Bergson quoted in Canales 2005: 1176

<sup>9</sup> Bergson *Introduction to Metaphysics* (1903 p. 169) hereafter 'ItoM'

<sup>10</sup> However, whilst the Woolfs' Hogarth Press published Freud's early works, Virginia Woolf distanced herself from him. D.H. Lawrence was vocal in his opposition to Freud's theories.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen Kern: *The Culture of Time and Space* (Harvard UP, 2003 p.8) Church 1963: 5

<sup>12</sup> Giambattista Vico was read by Joyce 'avidly' from 1913 onwards. For Nietzsche's eternal return see *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883)

<sup>13</sup> Hulme: *New Age 130* – thinking also of Rousseau and the French Revolution. T.E. Hulme was by now heavily influenced by Pierre Lasserre, the academic and French monarchist who founded '*L'Action française*' and became the Director of the renowned *École pratique des hautes études*.

<sup>14</sup> Wyndham Lewis: *Time and Western Man* (Black Sparrow Press, 1993 p.89). Lewis is particularly critical of Joyce, who gets his own back with a parody of Lewis as 'Professor Jones' in Finnegans Wake.

<sup>15</sup> Lewis quoted in Lehan 2009: 37

<sup>16</sup> Lewis in Ellmann's view is unreliable and contradictory but he is important because he "takes the culture's mental temperature" Ellmann 1987:10. T.S. Eliot held similar views to Lewis, embracing Spengler's *Decline of the West* as well as Hesse's *Blick in Chaos*. But in his essay of 1921, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' he does allow for the idea that the past can be preserved in the present in a kind of simultaneous process of continuity and stewardship.

<sup>17</sup> Bergson, Henri: (1935) *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, tr. R. Audra and C. Brereton (Notre Dame, 1977, p. 298); hereafter 'TSMR'.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid*

<sup>19</sup> Paul Douglass in Ardoin 2013: 107

<sup>20</sup> M.A.R. Habib: *Bergson Resartus and TS Eliot's Manuscript* (Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. 54, No. 2, April 1993, p 257)

<sup>21</sup> Frederick Winslow Taylor: *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911; 22.8). Cf 'Fordism' in the US, as parodied by Aldous Huxley in *Brave New World*.

<sup>22</sup> Walter Pater and the Aesthetic Movement are associated with this saying, which they borrowed from Theophile Gautier's '*L'art pour l'art*'. The phrase "Money for God's Sake" was annexed to it in 'Art for Art's Sake', the 1975 song by rock group 10CC, which questioned the greed and capitalism of the music industry at the time.

<sup>23</sup> TFW: 140

<sup>24</sup> Bergson opposed the prevailing trend towards mechanisation and automation of everything. He saw the ideas of Ernest Mach, who in *The Science of Mechanics* (1883) argued that the mind had a fundamental structure, analogous to a machine, as part of the dehumanising forces of modernity.

<sup>25</sup> Although Chaplin's famous film *Modern Times* did not appear until 1936, its graphic dramatisation of mechanization and 'clock-time' should be seen as an summation of many of the factors which disturbed and provoked the modernists. Andrew Stott in his book *Comedy – the New Critical Idiom* (Routledge, 2005 p.91) calls *Modern Times* an "extremely Bergsonian" film, both in its subject matter, and in employing Bergson's theory of comedy as mechanical repetition in a human being, (Bergson: *Laughter*: 21) as Chaplin's co-worker gets suck in the vast cogs of a machine, which is at the same time "a dark comment on the reification of labour" (*ibid*)

- <sup>26</sup> Bergson, Henri: (1919) *Mind-Energy* (Selected Essays and Lectures) tr., H. Wildon Carr (Henry Holt, NY, 1920 p. 49) ; hereafter 'ME'
- <sup>27</sup> James Joyce: *Ulysses* (OUP 1993, p.114); hereafter '*Ulysses*'
- <sup>28</sup> Lawrence, D.H.: *The Rainbow* (Collector's Library 2005 p.105); hereafter '*Rainbow*'
- <sup>29</sup> Lawrence wrote a eulogistic essay on Hardy in 1936. Examples of idyllic agricultural scenes include the May Day celebrations in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and Hardy passim. The archetypal narrative of the last decades of agrarian life is Flora Thompson's reminiscences on the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in her trilogy *Lark Rise to Candelford* (1945)
- <sup>30</sup> Lawrence, D.H.: *Women in Love* (Collector's Library 2005 p.84); hereafter '*WiL*'
- <sup>31</sup> Lawrence: *WiL*: 629. Birkin is seen as a proxy for Lawrence himself.
- <sup>32</sup> Lawrence: *WiL*: 258
- <sup>33</sup> Lawrence: *WiL*: 629
- <sup>34</sup> ME: 49
- <sup>35</sup> Lawrence: *WiL*: 311
- <sup>36</sup> Niven, Alastair: *DH Lawrence: The Novels* (CUP 1978 p.69)
- <sup>37</sup> D.H. Lawrence: *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (Collector's Library 2005, p.220) hereafter '*LCL*'
- <sup>38</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>39</sup> Stevenson, Randall: *Modernist Fiction* (Kentucky UP, 1992 p.119)
- <sup>40</sup> Lawrence: *WiL*: 630
- <sup>41</sup> Lawrence: *Rainbow*: 15
- <sup>42</sup> Marcel Proust: *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* tr C.K. Scott Moncrieff, T. Kilmartin (The Modern Library Classics, 2003, Vol II p.853); hereafter 'Proust'.
- <sup>43</sup> Virginia Woolf: *The Waves* (Penguin 1992 pp 21, 38); hereafter '*Waves*'
- <sup>44</sup> Woolf: *Waves*: 38
- <sup>45</sup> Modernists also felt like Pater and Bergson. Eliot's City workers in *The Waste Land* (1922) had become "the dead in life"; cf W.B. Yeats: "greasy fingers in the till" of *September 1914*; "a terrible beauty is born *Easter 1916*"; "the widening gyre" *The Second Coming*
- <sup>46</sup> Hans Meyerhoff : *Time in Literature* (UC Berkeley 1955 p.108)
- <sup>47</sup> Katherine Mansfield: *Notebooks* Vol. VI.
- <sup>48</sup> Hanson, Clare & Andrew Gurr: *Katherine Mansfield* (Macmillan 1981 p. 102)
- <sup>49</sup> Katherine Mansfield: *Selected Stories* (Oxford World Classics 2008, p244); hereafter 'KMSS'.
- <sup>50</sup> Mansfield: KMSS: 281, 180
- <sup>51</sup> This is made clear from her first novel *The Voyage Out* (1915)
- <sup>52</sup> Virginia Woolf : *Mrs Dalloway* (Penguin 2000, p.6); hereafter '*Mrs D.*'
- <sup>53</sup> Woolf: *Mrs D*: 52
- <sup>54</sup> Woolf: *Mrs D*: 112. Her antipathy towards male doctors reflects of her own bad experiences of them. See Lee, Hermione: *Virginia Woolf* (Vintage 1997 pp. 333-336)
- <sup>55</sup> Randall, Bryony: *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life* (CUP 2007 p. 92)
- <sup>56</sup> Gertrude Stein: *Three Lives* (Penguin, 1990)

## CHAPTER 2: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF TIME

### Time and the Structure of the Novel

We move now to the way in which the modernists' preoccupation with time informed the actual structure and chronological devices which they used in their novels. They became interested in expressing the complex nature of time and how we experience and understand it, by subverting the normal chronological plot sequence and playing with the conventional architecture of the novel.

Amongst the well-known innovations was the expression of a whole life through extrapolation from a single day within it. Such were the structures of Joyce's *Ulysses* and Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. Both these days were set in June, the month of the solstice and the longest day. In Proust's *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* Mme Verdurin looks towards midsummer's day when: "Time, like the sun, stands still".<sup>1</sup> The 'one-day' structure also appealed because, as Heidegger observed, the day is a unique temporal category, which no man-made intervention can change.<sup>2</sup>

In *Mrs Dalloway* each event has a specific time of day attached to it, often punctuated by the strident 'clock-time' of Big Ben, and indeed, Woolf had originally planned to call this novel *The Hours*. Clarissa pauses at mid-day to consider her life in a novel which focuses heavily on the sequence of female life-stages, each one expressed through differently aged female characters. Woolf produces a variation on this later in *The Waves*, where the plot is structured around a series of sunrises and sunsets, and the passage of the natural day is described in great detail, as if to assert its overall intactness and inviolability. Nine progressive phases of the sun map the progression of the characters' lives and this natural flow of time is echoed in Woolf's extended use of metaphor with the rhythm and flux of water - the 'Waves'.

The characters' thoughts take them back to childhood, to the calm of pastoral life before the war, to the summer when Clarissa and her friends were together at Bourton. Peter's long walk through Regent's Park is one long series of

reminiscences and reflections which Woolf re-anchors to the present through her unifying techniques – the skywriting aeroplane, the public clocks, and the broader fact that we know from the start that the characters are all to meet later in the day for Clarissa's party. This is part of what Woolf calls "my tunneling process" used for the first time in *Mrs Dalloway*: "I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters... the caves shall connect, and each comes to daylight at the present moment."<sup>3</sup> The tunnels allow Woolf to tell the past "by installments, as I have need of it", integrating the past into the narrative, as if it coexists with the present, as Bergson believed it did.<sup>4</sup>

Joyce had first thought of using times of the day as his chapter headings in *Ulysses*, but settled on the Homeric model instead, an archaism which evokes the timeless recurrence of life's lessons. Joyce had an almost academic interest in time. He had studied Vico, Einstein and Bergson in depth. Frank notes that in *Ulysses* Joyce created "the impression of simultaneity for the whole life of the whole teeming city".<sup>5</sup> Time is depicted as a flowing stream, and in equating water with time Joyce pursues the Bergsonian idea of flux, a notion originally expounded by the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus.<sup>6</sup> In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* Stephen has his main epiphany on the beach, watching a girl walking in the sea.<sup>7</sup> In *Ulysses* Bloom walks towards "the mosque of the baths" and meditates on "the stream of life". Later, walking over O'Connell Bridge he says: "How can you own water really? It's always flowing... Because life is a stream."<sup>8</sup>

For Proust it is churches, rather than water, which represent time. They are places where the past and the present intermingle. The church at his home Combray occupies "a four dimensional space – the name of the fourth being Time".<sup>9</sup> The eminent Proustian scholar, Malcolm Bowie, is clear that "from first word to last Proust's novel is about time",<sup>10</sup> and as Proust himself reminds us, it is within "the mighty dimension of Time" that our lives are lived.<sup>11</sup> He starts his novel with the word '*Longtemps*' and resolves it 1.2 million words later with the last word '*temps*'.<sup>12</sup> The emphasis throughout the novel is on using time

profoundly, rather than frittering it away, and when, in *Time Regained*, Marcel finally reaches full self-awareness “an apocalyptic arrest of time becomes possible”.<sup>13</sup>

Proust’s long and complex sentences are in the sinuous, rhythmic style Bergson described as ‘*continuité mélodique*’, analogous to *durée*.<sup>14</sup> They allow for movement back and fore in time through tenses and recollections. In this way, as Bowie says, he extends his time-map to include “the backwash of the present into the past.”<sup>15</sup> Through Marcel he reminds us that: “Our memory does not as a rule present things to us in their chronological sequence...”.<sup>16</sup> At other times he adopts a layered approach as when he turns Elstir’s paintings into ‘*tableaux vivants*’, describing in one dimension of time, another, as if it were also ‘live’.<sup>17</sup>

Proust’s novel can therefore be seen as “an array of riddles” posed to the reader, and constructed with the collusion of time.<sup>18</sup> This device is also characteristic of Mansfield who often sets the reader a ‘riddle of time’ to unravel, for example making us enter most of her stories *in medias res* and ‘work backwards’ in order to make sense of the plot. In ‘The Garden Party’ young Laura is going through an intensive existential process of learning about life. Mansfield wrote to William Gerhardt<sup>19</sup> about Laura’s belief that everything should happen in sequence:

“Laura says, ‘But all these things must not happen at once.’ And Life answers, ‘Why not? How are they divided from each other.’ And they do all happen, it is inevitable. And it seems to me there is beauty in that inevitability.”<sup>20</sup>

Bergson’s concept of *durée* explicates Mansfield here, and may have acted as a starting point from which Mansfield experimented with the complex relationships between past and present, and the nature of, and even necessity for simultaneity in the condensed text of a short story.

## Memory and the Everyday

Whilst giving the Huxley Lecture at Birmingham University in 1911, Bergson said: "All consciousness then, is memory -- conservation and accumulation of the past in the present."<sup>21</sup> For him, the workings of the memory are the central and guiding component in our experience of time. He also believes that the whole of our past is preserved within memory "even to the minutest details" and that "all we have perceived, thought, willed, from the first awakening of our consciousness, persists indefinitely."<sup>22</sup>

Bergson and Proust agree that in remembering, we do not simply 'recollect', but actually place ourselves directly in the 'real' past itself. Evoking his analogy of memory as a cone Bergson says: "Our memories, at any given moment, form a solid whole, a pyramid, so to speak, whose point is inserted precisely into our present action."<sup>23</sup> Proust reflects this exactly when he speaks of states induced by the memory as: "Real without being present, ideal without being abstract",<sup>24</sup> believing, like Bergson that it has the "capacity to save the past, intact and perfect, as it is in itself".<sup>25</sup>

When, in *Women in Love*, D.H. Lawrence describes the workings of Gudrun's memory, he uses the metaphor of a rope, also used by Bergson and Proust:

"Conscious of everything -- her childhood, her girlhood, all the forgotten incidents ... it was as if she drew a glittering rope of knowledge out of the sea of darkness ... out of the fabulous depths of the past."<sup>26</sup>

This kind of memory is what Bergson grandly named '*memoire par excellence*'. This is our 'real' or 'involuntary' memory, but we can only access it if we have the requisite levels of intuition, and a genuine interest in going beyond the everyday. The other type of memory is 'voluntary' -- "the creature of logic and reason", driven purely by habit and utility, ensuring that we retrieve only what we need for the task in hand.<sup>27</sup> Indeed our involuntary memory would quickly shred non-relevant experiences if it had complete control of our minds. Bergson attributes

this to evolution, acknowledging that “the brain’s part in the work of memory is... primarily to mask it”.<sup>28</sup> As such voluntary memory is really “habit interpreted by memory, rather than memory itself.”<sup>29</sup>

Proust also sees habit, “that skilful but slow-moving arranger”<sup>30</sup> as both blandly necessary on the one hand and also the potential enemy of human freedom: “Habit is our second nature, it prevents us from knowing our first, whose cruelty is it lacks as well as its enchantments”.<sup>31</sup> Samuel Beckett encapsulates this perfectly when he says that for Proust: “Habit is a compromise effected between the individual and his environment”, but it is also essential to our everyday equilibrium. Through habit “the creation of the world takes place every day”.<sup>32</sup> As Proust himself observes, time expands and contracts but “habit fills up what remains”.<sup>33</sup> Extreme adherence to habit such as that indulged in by Aunt Léonie is tantamount to anaesthetising oneself to real life, but at the same time Marcel can revel in the most protracted descriptions of everyday detail.

Beyond Proust, it is the female modernists who are most interested in the concept of ‘dailiness’, perhaps a reflection of women’s traditionally domestic roles and routines up to and during the period.<sup>34</sup> Bryony Randall in her book *Modernism, Daily Time and Everyday Life*, calls *Mrs Dalloway* “the novel of the daily”.<sup>35</sup> She observes that throughout Woolf there is an oscillation between the depiction of dailiness as banal, and also the idea that what is mundane or unremarkable is “fundamental in making up our lives”.<sup>36</sup> Many of Clarissa Dalloway’s ‘moments of being’ or bliss come when she is doing everyday things, like sewing, or walking through the hallway during the bustle of the morning’s household activity. On such an occasion it suddenly occurs to her that: “One must pay back from this secret deposit of exquisite moments”.<sup>37</sup> Woolf herself says in ‘Sketches of the Past’: “A great part of every day is not lived consciously”,<sup>38</sup> and like Bergson she presents the idea of habit as protective when she says that “the ordinary eye ... takes care that the body does not fall down coal-holes...”. Habit thus behaves “like a competent nursemaid.”<sup>39</sup> In *The Waves* Bernard on the one hand recognizes the need to see through “the thick



leaves of habit.”<sup>40</sup> But he also finds solace in it: “Tuesday follows Monday; Wednesday Tuesday. Each spreads the same ripple of well-being, repeats the same curve of rhythm”.<sup>41</sup> Later in *The Waves* Bernard says “Let me sit here for ever with bare things, this coffee cup, this knife, this fork, things in themselves, myself being myself.”<sup>42</sup>

From her earliest work Gertrude Stein’s characters are located and defined in relation to habit, repetition and routine. The linguistic repetitions of ‘Melanctha’ (1909) give the characters continuity through a time which seems otherwise without stability. The three sets of objects in the 1914 volume, ‘Tender Buttons’, ‘Objects’, ‘Rooms’ and ‘Food’ are, like Bernard’s cutlery, quintessentially and almost assertively everyday, as is the style of her attention to them, and the way in which she gives them a role which speaks to everyday-meaning making. Indeed, for Stein the ‘moment’ of daily life is a synecdoche for “all there is of life”, and all there is of life is daily experience. She is constantly isolating this moment in her writing, separating it from past and future and emphasising the continuous flow of one moment into another. As she is keen to emphasise, her work is not teleological, but rather reflects Bergson’s idea of ‘constant becoming’: “Always beginning and ending is as destructive to existing as never beginning and ending”.<sup>43</sup> With similar whimsy she states: “And anyway except in daily life nobody is anybody”.<sup>44</sup> Stein also applied this thinking to her own life, well-known herself as a creature of habit. She even called all her dogs the same name: ‘Basket’. “Habit creates an existence suspended in time...” she says, in an interview in the last year of her life.<sup>45</sup> This attitude has also been seen as a weakness in her. Olsen suggests that this inability to extricate herself from habit “marks the limits of her modernism”.<sup>46</sup>

But in Stein’s defence, the impending war, and the experience of war when it arrived ‘fractured’ time, and brought a craving for a return to normalcy, qua habit, as it did for Woolf. Indeed, Paul Fussell suggests that 1914 may have been virtually the last moment when events could be “conceived as taking place with a

seamless, purposeful history involving the appearance of a stream of time running from past to present to future".<sup>47</sup> The dailiness and relative safety of women's tasks became a comforting notion, in contrast with the randomness and danger of the soldier's life. Stein had an exaggerated reliance on what she called 'daily island life' during the wars, and ironically, had to break her 'clock-free' habit and buy a wristwatch in order to time the 6 o'clock curfews in Paris.

### **'Psychological Time' and Tricks of the Mind**

In everyday life we only tend to stand back and think about time if it has played a surprising enough trick with our minds to consciously puzzle us. This kind of experience often relates to our perception of how long an experience has lasted.<sup>48</sup> Time can 'fly' or 'drag', depending on our mindset. As Bluestone says: "Psychological time presents itself in a continuous flux [whose] immeasurability ... makes time an elusive phenomenon in psychology and philosophy, and ... a challenge for literature."<sup>49</sup>

Woolf is particularly interested in this phenomenon. In *Orlando*, her novel of 'time-travel', the protagonist remarks that "This extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind is less known than it should be." In an echo of Proust's observation that "time is elastic" Orlando goes on to observe that: "An hour, once it lodges in the ... human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or one hundred times its clock length".<sup>50</sup> In *The Waves* Woolf evokes Bergson's spooling of time as Bernard arrives in London by train. Thrown out of 'inner time' by the sudden bustle of the city he asks himself: "And what is this moment of time? .... Time has whizzed back an inch or two on its reel..."<sup>51</sup>

In her unfinished short story of a boat trip, 'Six Years After' Mansfield speaks of the opposite sensation – the return to inner time "once the bustle of leaving port is over". She describes the way in which time can seem to stand still when you are at sea: "In a quarter of an hour one might have been at sea for days. ... People go to bed in the early afternoon, they shut their eyes and [pretend] 'it's

night' like little children...."<sup>52</sup> Similarly, in *The Rainbow*, Lawrence depicts Will and Anna shut inside in the snow: "He was glad, for then they were immune in a shadowy silence, there was no world, no time."<sup>53</sup> In another example, Proust's Marcel, whilst eagerly "counting the seconds" until his rendezvous with Mme de Stermaria three days hence, reminds us of how slowly time seems to go when you really want it to pass. He sums up the tricks of psychological time when he says: "The subjective chronometers allotted to men are not all regulated to keep the same time..."<sup>54</sup>

### **Sleep and Dreams**

The next mode in which we experience time as a lived phenomenon is the activity which takes up to half of our lives - sleeping and dreaming. Sleep, according to Bergson has a calming, restorative effect, like 'dailiness'. Proust understands the pleasure of actually falling asleep as a release from time: "At the moment of falling asleep we receive the caress of an unreal enchantment".<sup>55</sup> This beautiful moment of drifting into sleep is for him as enchanting as the composer Vinteuil's exquisite musical phrase which acts as a proxy for the sublime throughout his novel.<sup>56</sup> Once asleep, the resting mind is taken towards a diffused light "as in the opaline depths of the sea".<sup>57</sup> Joyce tries to express this same sensation in *Portrait* as Stephen falls asleep:

"He closed his eyes in the languor of sleep. ... it spread in endless succession to itself, ... wave of light by wave of light, flooding all the heavens with its soft flushes."<sup>58</sup>

Bergson is particularly interested in sleep for what it tells us about memory. The process of falling asleep involves moving into a state of 'désintéret'.<sup>59</sup> This 'disinterest' allows you "to let yourself go"<sup>60</sup> from the everyday actions required for normal functioning as '*le moi social*', enabling us to access '*le moi profond*' in our dreams. In his *Essay on Dreams*, he says that during sleep the 'non-useful' memories, repressed during the day by our conscious minds, reappear in "a wild phantasmagoric dance".<sup>61</sup> In a deeply insightful passage he also observes that

dreams can happen at different paces and to a seemingly random chronology:<sup>62</sup>

“Memories... reappear with striking completeness; we live over again, in all their detail, forgotten scenes of childhood; we speak languages which we no longer even remember to have learnt.”<sup>63</sup>

And so sleep for Bergson is as a kind of re-ordering and re-assertion of ‘real-time’ over clock-time. He suggests that this process of attending to discarded memories makes sleep an agent of mental as well as physical recuperation. Ever mindful towards sources of recuperation, Proust is known to have spent much of his adult life in his bedroom, and this is where he wrote most of his novel whose opening words are: “For a long time, I went to bed early”.<sup>64</sup> This famous opening sequence explores the nature of sleep in minute detail, and Proust’s alter ego, Marcel comes back to the topic several times. Marcel evokes Bergson when he says that dreams fascinate him “because of the extraordinary effects which they achieve with Time”.<sup>65</sup> He marvels at “These reprises, these ‘da capos’ of one’s dreams, which turn back ... several leaves of the calendar at once...”<sup>66</sup> and ultimately, he hopes that the time travel which occurs within dreams proves that one can indeed “rediscover Lost Time”.<sup>67</sup>

Proust returns to the question of ‘mind’ when he explores what happens at the moment of waking. In the opening section of the novel he wakes at midnight and is momentarily bewildered: “Not knowing where I was, I could not be sure at first who I was”.<sup>68</sup> Here Proust shows how our waking selves materialise or ‘take shape’ through re-identification with the world around us. Later he ponders how we actually remember who we are when we wake up, and how our personality survives sleep: “How does one recover one’s own self, rather than any other?”<sup>69</sup> Sleep becomes like a brief death: “The resurrection at our awakening” is a hopeful sign that when we die “the resurrection of the soul... is a phenomenon of memory”.<sup>70</sup> Bergson’s view is that it his ‘social self’ who wakes him with “the idea of my rising up and attending to my usual occupations”.<sup>71</sup> Proust echoes this when he says that even when we have slept deeply “the goddess *Mnemotechnia* leans down and holds out to us in a formula the habit of ... coffee... the hope of resurrection.”<sup>72</sup>

## Entropy and Eternity – Fear of Time

Perhaps the most intractable aspect of the everyday human experience of time is our consciousness of ageing, and the ever-present knowledge that one day time will, for us, 'run out'.<sup>73</sup> As Bergson reminds us: "there is no living being who does not feel himself coming little by little to the end of his span".<sup>74</sup> In this view, as Meyerhoff observes, time, like other forces of nature, can be both "the great begetter and friend of man" and also "the great devourer and tyrant".<sup>75</sup> Bergson offsets entropy with what he calls the *élan vital*, the principle of constant generation or 'becoming'. Meyerhoff, again, points out that in the philosophical space between Heraclitus and Bergson, attempts to position transitoriness or time as "becoming" are optimistic and rare.<sup>76</sup> Unfortunately, this vitalistic optimism or "creative negentropy" was one reason for Bergson's decline in popularity, as people tried to cope with the overwhelming entropy of the first world war, a time of such destruction that it even tested popular belief in God.<sup>77</sup> However, it is important to understand that Bergson's philosophy was designed to help us wrestle with the human condition. Bergson's solution, as Tindall notes was "to find the absolute in time and therefore reconcile it with eternity".<sup>78</sup> Indeed, in the *Tractatus* of 1921, Wittgenstein, in what appears to be a nod to Bergson, writes: "If by eternity is understood not endless temporal duration but timelessness, then he lives eternally who lives in the present."<sup>79</sup>

The Bergsonian modernists explore entropy and eternity in two ways – as attempts to come to terms with death, and as a catalyst to posit art as an alternative from of immortality. With the exception of Joyce and Stein, all the modernists under discussion were ill, in differing ways, some terminally. This makes their observations on time even more poignant and significant. Woolf's well documented bouts of serious depression led eventually to her suicide, and as Lehan points out: "Death tends to be the end product of time in her novels".<sup>80</sup> The repeated use of moths<sup>81</sup> in her texts is, for Hagglund, part of her attempt "to render the radical temporality of life."<sup>82</sup> In his book *Dying for Time* Hagglund says that Woolf oscillates between 'chronolibido' and 'chronophobia'.<sup>83</sup> She reveals the latter in the way she tends to personify clocks in her novels, giving

them faces which are nevertheless featureless and threatening. In writing 'Time Passes', the central section of *To the Lighthouse* she says in her diary that she struggled with "the passage of time, all eyeless and featureless with nothing to cling to".<sup>84</sup> In *The Waves* the sensitive Bernard is upset by "the stare of clocks"<sup>85</sup> Clocks in Woolf are fundamentally intrusive – interrupting our inner life or *durée réelle*. In *Orlando* they cause both surprise and anxiety: "The clock ticking on the mantelpiece beat like a hammer ... 'Confound it all!' she cried, for it is a great shock to the nervous system, hearing a clock strike."<sup>86</sup>

As has been said, Woolf also explores the inescapability of clock time in *Mrs Dalloway*. Big Ben is almost anthropomorphised as one of the protagonists, punctuating and interrupting the various reflective perambulations of the main characters through London: "Big Ben strikes. There! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable. The leaden circles dissolved in the air."<sup>87</sup> Clarissa Dalloway is preoccupied with her middle age, and with growing old. Walking towards Bond Street she asks herself: "Did it matter then... that she must inevitably cease completely? All this must go on without her...?"<sup>88</sup> Later, Septimus' evident moribundity is underlined when he says that the clock has just chimed 'quarter to twelve'.<sup>89</sup>

Proust adopts an interesting position on ageing and entropy by pursuing its opposite process – rejuvenation. We find him profoundly affected at the end of the novel by the agedness of the characters at the Guermites' Party: "Their old age...froze my blood by announcing to me the approach of my own."<sup>90</sup> For Proust, extra-temporal moments of perfect *durée* can offset the ageing process, for example Vinteuil's sonata offers him "the possibility of a sort of rejuvenation".<sup>91</sup> In the last volume of the novel he says that any man who has spent "Even a minute freed from the order of time" should not fear the future.<sup>92</sup> Walter Benjamin sums this up when he says that for Proust *durée* acts as "the rejuvenating force which is a match for the inexorable process of ageing".<sup>93</sup>

Although of all the modernists Mansfield and Lawrence come closest to possessing a real Bergsonian vitalism or *élan vital*, they both died young from tuberculosis. Lawrence's novels have been seen as depictions of the eternal struggle between creativity and destruction, notoriously without resolution.<sup>94</sup> Mansfield, however, appears to have developed a resilient and 'philosophical' attitude towards life and death, aware as she was since 1918 of the terminal nature of her condition.<sup>95</sup> She explores time with an especial poignance from this point on. In 'At the Bay' the reflective Jonathan Trout evokes Woolf when he says: "I'm thinking like that moth... The shortness of life! I've only one night or one day...". He is vital and happy swimming in the sea, but he stays in too long and his hands go an entropic blue. This is an example of Mansfield's tendency to emphasise the coexistence of life and death shown again in 'Daughters of the Late Colonel', also written towards the end of her life. As described earlier, Josephine and Constantia have been living a 'death in life'. Mansfield herself reflects in a letter that even when they verge tantalisingly on recovery they still have "a ghostly glee" about them.<sup>96</sup> Josephine is the sun, a stock symbol of life in Mansfield, and Constantia the moon, or death. A shaft of sunlight acts as the backdrop to Josephine moment of clarity, when she considers re-embracing life, but in the end their collectivised nerve fails them. As Mansfield writes to Gerhardt: "After that it seemed to me they died as truly as Father was dead".<sup>97</sup>

James Joyce is more interested in eternity than death.<sup>98</sup> In *Portrait* Joyce makes Stephen turn away from the religious conception of eternity towards the realisation of a kind of immortality through art. The priest's sermon frightens Stephen by separating time from eternity: "Time is, time was, but time shall be no more."<sup>99</sup> Bergson describes the idea of eternity as an "abyss", causing "dizziness",<sup>100</sup> and Stephen's response to the hell-fire sermon is to see eternity as a "dread and dire word, which makes his "very brain reel dizzily."<sup>101</sup> Instead art becomes his form of redemption. Proust's Marcel has a similar epiphany, inspired by Beethoven's late quartets to say that "what is called posterity is the posterity of the work of art".<sup>102</sup> Here again Bergson provides the modernist

writer with a time-based construct for them to expand upon, creating a double-layer within the novel, which reflects back upon the authors themselves.



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## NOTES - CHAPTER 2: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF TIME

- <sup>1</sup> Proust: II.886. Bloomsday = 16 June, 'Dalloway day' = 13 June.
- <sup>2</sup> Heidegger saw the day as the most 'natural' measure of time (*Being and Time* p. 466)
- <sup>3</sup> Virginia Woolf: Diaries, vol. 1, August 30, 1923, p 263
- <sup>4</sup> Virginia Woolf: Diaries, vol. 2, October 15, 1923, p 272
- <sup>5</sup> Joseph Frank: *Spatial Form in the Modern Novel* in John Aldridge: *Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction 1920-1951* (NY Ronald Press 1952 p45)
- <sup>6</sup> for Heraclitus - see note 4 page 15
- <sup>7</sup> Joyce: *Portrait*: 131
- <sup>8</sup> Joyce: *Ulysses*: 83,148,146
- <sup>9</sup> Proust: I.83
- <sup>10</sup> Bowie, Malcolm: *Proust Among the Stars* (Harper Collins, 1998 p.30)
- <sup>11</sup> Proust: VI.506
- <sup>12</sup> Bowie 1998: p. 31. Bowie says that these words act as indicators that in due course, in the novel time will be redeemed and a *long* past will be recovered.
- <sup>13</sup> Bowie 1998: 62
- <sup>14</sup> A quality Bergson also saw in Debussy's music
- <sup>15</sup> Bowie 1998: 55
- <sup>16</sup> Proust: I.622
- <sup>17</sup> Proust: II 2-3-20; 493-514
- <sup>18</sup> Bowie 1998: 4-5
- <sup>19</sup> Her friend, the novelist William Gerhardt
- <sup>20</sup> Katherine Mansfield: *Letters* 196
- <sup>21</sup> ME:8
- <sup>22</sup> Henri Bergson: *Essay on Dreams* (The Project Gutenberg E-Book of Dreams p 33)
- <sup>23</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>24</sup> Proust: II. 873.
- <sup>25</sup> Proust sets forth this Bergsonian thesis indirectly, as an anecdote from 'the Norwegian philosopher'. Proust II. 983-5.
- <sup>26</sup> Lawrence: *WIL*: 470. Woolf also uses a similar analogy "I see it -- the past -- as an avenue lying behind; a long ribbon of scenes, emotions". Virginia Woolf: 'Sketches of the Past' (in *Moments of Being* ed Jeanne Shulkind. Pimlico 2002 p.81) hereafter 'SKP'
- <sup>27</sup> MM: 92
- <sup>28</sup> ME: 71
- <sup>29</sup> MM: 95
- <sup>30</sup> Proust: I.8
- <sup>31</sup> Proust: IV.208
- <sup>32</sup> Samuel Beckett: *Proust* (NY, Grove 1957 pp.7-8)
- <sup>33</sup> Proust: II.257
- <sup>34</sup> This started to change during the war when women had to occupy more traditionally male roles whilst the men fought at the front. The roles of 'Land Girls' and female ambulance drivers, for example, are seen as significant moments of advancement in the history of feminism.
- <sup>35</sup> Randall 2007: 158
- <sup>36</sup> *ibid*. Woolf also has a recurring interest in snails, monotonous and 'everyday' creatures. As Gillian Beer, quoted by Randall, says, "Woolf did not set thinking apart from everyday experience". (Randall 2007: 169)
- <sup>37</sup> Woolf: *Mrs. D*: 32 In *Orlando*, the sewing vector reappears as the protagonist reflects that "Memory is the seamstress, and a capricious one at that..." Virginia Woolf: *Orlando* (Oxford World Classics p.55); hereafter '*Orlando*'.
- <sup>38</sup> Woolf: SKP: 83
- <sup>39</sup> Woolf: Essay – 'The Cinema' (1926 p.12)
- <sup>40</sup> Woolf: *Waves*: 217
- <sup>41</sup> Woolf: *Waves*: 201

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- <sup>42</sup> Woolf: *Waves*: 295
- <sup>43</sup> Gertrude Stein: 'Narration' - Four Lectures (1935 p.44)
- <sup>44</sup> Gertrude Stein: *Everybody's Autobiography* (1937)
- <sup>45</sup> Gertrude Stein: 'Transatlantic Interview' p.103
- <sup>46</sup> Olson, Liesl: *Modernism and the Ordinary* (OUP 2009, p.89)
- <sup>47</sup> Paul Fussell: *The Great War and Modern Memory* (OUP 1975 p.21)
- <sup>48</sup> "The philosophical problem of time... originates in the peculiar dilemma between what seems psychologically most certain and significant, on the one side, and what is logically clear and meaningful, on the other." Leo Tolstoy: cited by Isaiah Berlin in *The Hedgehog and the Fox* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1953 p20)
- <sup>49</sup> George Bluestone: *Novels into Film* (University of California, 1968, pp 48-9)
- <sup>50</sup> Woolf: *Orlando*: 94,95. Proust: II.257
- <sup>51</sup> Woolf: *Waves*: 85
- <sup>52</sup> Mansfield: 'Six Years After' (1923) Unfinished, she died whilst writing it.
- <sup>53</sup> Lawrence: *Rainbow*: 203
- <sup>54</sup> Proust III. 524. Cf III. 478 "When the hours are wrapped in conversation one ceases to measure, or indeed to notice them"
- <sup>55</sup> Proust: V.504
- <sup>56</sup> Proust: V.427, 504
- <sup>57</sup> Proust: III.457
- <sup>58</sup> Joyce: *Portrait*: 133
- <sup>59</sup> ME: 99. Bergson is credited with inventing this French word.
- <sup>60</sup> ME:126
- <sup>61</sup> ME: 116
- <sup>62</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>63</sup> MM: 200
- <sup>64</sup> Proust: I.1
- <sup>65</sup> Proust: VI.322
- <sup>66</sup> Proust: V. 725
- <sup>67</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>68</sup> Proust: I.2
- <sup>69</sup> Proust: III.110
- <sup>70</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>71</sup> TFW: 168
- <sup>72</sup> Proust: V. 156 *Mnemotechnia* is a coined deity fusing memory and 'device'
- <sup>73</sup> Carnot's 'second law of thermodynamics' (1824) had set up the principle of entropy, that everything tends towards decline.
- <sup>74</sup> CM: 164
- <sup>75</sup> Meyerhoff 1968: 94-5
- <sup>76</sup> Meyerhoff 1968: 68
- <sup>77</sup> Ardoin 2013: 165
- <sup>78</sup> Bergson's philosophy of *durée* has several Buddhist aspects, including the conquest of time and death within life, and moments of pure bliss.
- <sup>79</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (6.4311)
- <sup>80</sup> Lehan 2009: 57
- <sup>81</sup> Woolf was going to call *The Waves* *The Moths* at one stage.
- <sup>82</sup> Martin Hagglund: *Dying for Time: Proust, Woolf, Nabokov* (Harvard UP, 2012 p.14)
- <sup>83</sup> Plato: *Symposium* (200b-d)
- <sup>84</sup> Woolf: *Diaries* 3. 76 re *To The Lighthouse*. Gillies 1996: 58, argues that Woolf is both terrified and fascinated by *durée* and her writing about it is a form of cathartic therapy.
- <sup>85</sup> Woolf: *Waves*: 25
- <sup>86</sup> Woolf: *Orlando*: 284-5
- <sup>87</sup> These 'leaden circles' reappear several times during the novel: Woolf: *Mrs D*: 4, 52, 204
- <sup>88</sup> Woolf: *Mrs D*: 9
- <sup>89</sup> Woolf: *Mrs D*:77
- <sup>90</sup> Proust: VI.346

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<sup>91</sup> Proust: I.291-3. Vinteuil's sonata is based on Saint-Saëns's Violin Sonata No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 75 (1885) (Proust: Letter to Jacques de Lacretelle)

<sup>92</sup> Proust: VI.264

<sup>93</sup> Walter Benjamin: *The Image of Proust* (1929) in *Illuminations*, Hannah Arendt (ed.) (London: Pimlico, 1999 p.206)

<sup>94</sup> Manifested in particular through Rupert Birkin. Lawrence: *Wil*: passim. cf Mellors' perpetual *ennui* in *LCL*

<sup>95</sup> Mansfield died in January 1923

<sup>96</sup> Katherine Mansfield: *Collected Letters* iv 230, May 1921

<sup>97</sup> *ibid* iv 249, 23 Jun 1921. Hanson and Gurr encapsulate this very poignantly: "They are the Colonel's 'too-late' daughters". Hanson and Gurr, 1981: 94

<sup>98</sup> Joyce 'oscillates' between fascination and derision when it comes to Christian faith and doctrine. This is reflected in Stephen who is asked by Cranly "why is your mind so supersaturated with the religion in which you say you disbelieve?" Joyce: *Portrait*: 185

<sup>99</sup> Joyce: *Portrait*: 86

<sup>100</sup> CM: 72

<sup>101</sup> Joyce: *Portrait*: 101

<sup>102</sup> Proust: II. 121, 143

## CHAPTER 3: EXTRA-TEMPORAL BLISS, 'SUPRA-TEMPORALITY'

### 'Moments of Being' as a Concept

The relentless aspects of everyday life may be offset or temporarily 'escaped' through moments of pure joy or happiness - what Woolf calls 'moments of being' and Proust '*moments bienheureux*'. Here we move from the exploration of time per se, and the lived experience of it, to the ways in which an intuitive propensity towards *durée* can provide immediate escape through the sensation of bliss.

These are our purest, simplest moments of intense '*jouissance*', quintessential manifestations of what Bergson called 'qualitative multiplicity'.<sup>1</sup> They include happy childhood memories, the 'ec-static' feeling of love, sexual bliss, and the experience of the sublime in art or nature. These 'moments' often derive from natural or physical sources, but their effect is so intense as to take us 'outside' ourselves, and suspend our sense of time.<sup>2</sup> During such moments past, present and future feel perfectly converged – the sensation of *durée*.

### Childhood Ec-stasis

We will start by looking at memory and the experience of bliss in childhood. Bergson and the modernists echoed Wordsworth's view that our capacity to access reality, beauty and truth fades as we age, as the world encroaches upon our original innocence and the clear perceptions of our childhood.<sup>3</sup> In *Matter and Memory* Bergson asks why the surging novelty which we feel in childhood becomes suppressed.<sup>4</sup> His answer is simply that attending to our inner lives, as perhaps children do, is in the Darwinian sense, non-adaptive. In the name of survival, as we grow older, intellect draws a veil between us and life. He expresses this clearly and sensitively in his *Essay on Laughter*:

"Indeed it seems possible that after a certain age we become impervious to all fresh or novel forms of joy, and the sweetest pleasures of the middle-aged are perhaps nothing more than a revival of the sensations of childhood, a balmy zephyr wafted in fainter and fainter breaths by a past that is ever receding."<sup>5</sup>

The modernists demonstrate strong sympathies with these ideas, always in search of what Gosetti-Ferencei calls the “ecstatic latencies” of childhood memory.<sup>6</sup> Joyce’s depiction of the young Stephen trying to recall his childhood conveys this sense of lost clarity and freshness: “The memory of his childhood suddenly grew dim. He tried to call forth some of its vivid moments but could not”.<sup>7</sup> At the end of *The Rainbow* Lawrence observes of Ursula: “She was isolated now from the life of her childhood, a foreigner in a new life, of work and mechanical consideration”.<sup>8</sup> Katherine Mansfield’s emigration from New Zealand adds an intensity to the memories of childhood depicted in her stories of happier times, associated with beaches, the sun and her own close relationship with her grandmother. Mansfield also wants to show us that childhood memories are often strengthened by their ‘everydayness’. In ‘At the Bay’, as the day unfolds, a dichotomy develops. The very young and the very old live exclusively in the present. In an evocation of Mansfield’s own experience, when Kezia and her grandmother hug, they “forget what ‘never’ is about”.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, the adults are always looking towards the future, trapped in the quest for achievement and fulfilment, which is always deferred.

But it is Proust and Woolf who are perhaps the most articulate on the subject of childhood memory. The famous cascade of memories triggered by the *Madeleine* biscuit involves Marcel’s return to the sensation of security, and unconditional love. Proust uses the verb ‘*cimenter*’ to describe the ‘grounding’ effect of such experiences. When he is feeling insecure, the adult Marcel retrieves the memory of his mother’s kiss, and hugs his pillows, which feel like the cheeks “*de notre enfance*”.<sup>10</sup> As Bachelard says, what we are really looking for in recalling childhood memories is rather “to re-envision a state of being in which our belief in the world is first constituted”.<sup>11</sup> For Proust time regained is really childhood regained. At the end of the novel Marcel wants to go to the Guermantes party because he thinks it will bring him “nearer to my childhood and to the depth of my memory where my childhood dwelt”.<sup>12</sup>

For Bergson, childhood experiences “resound with an indescribable note of originality”.<sup>13</sup> Woolf echoes Bergson in her memoir, ‘Sketches of the Past’, when she reflects that childhood memories remain the strongest, because: “Later we add to feelings much that makes them more complex; and therefore less strong ... less isolated, less complete.”<sup>14</sup> She then recalls her first blissful memory:

“If life has a base that it stands upon, if it is a bowl that one fills, and fills, and fills -- then my bowl without a doubt stands upon this memory. It is of lying half asleep, half awake, in bed at the nursery at St Ives. ...of hearing the waves breaking... of feeling the purest ecstasy I can conceive.”<sup>15</sup>

Another such memory is of her childhood walk to the beach which she describes as “rapture rather than ecstasy”, a distinction which reveals the subtle intensity of her nature.<sup>16</sup> She appears to draw from this experience in the opening to *Mrs Dalloway*: “What a morning – fresh as if issued to children on a beach.”<sup>17</sup>

### **Extra-temporal Moments of Joy in Adulthood**

In Bergson’s view, the perfect and intact nature of our most blissful childhood memories provides some explanation for why we feel such joy when, later in life, we feel ourselves to be standing ‘outside time’. This usually happens when we switch off and lapse into a state of ‘flux’, often whilst doing very mundane things, as if on ‘auto-pilot’. It often happens on holiday, or by the sea, when everyday concerns are suspended and we literally “see the world in a grain of sand”.<sup>18</sup> Being ‘extra-temporal’ we can relax and be like children again.

The French word for ‘happiness’, *bon-heur*, and its relative *bien-heureux* translate literally as ‘a good hour’, and so ‘a good experience of time’. Both Bergson and Proust are careful to distinguish between this word and ‘*jouissance*’ or ‘joy’, which is nearer to what Woolf means by ‘rapture’. Woolf understands extremes of emotion, but she is also able to find bliss in moments of absolute

calm. Such is the passage in *Mrs Dalloway* where Clarissa sits and sews, losing herself in a typically everyday occupation:

“Quiet descended on her, calm, content .... So on a summer’s day waves collect, overbalance, and fall; collect and fall; and the whole world seems to be saying ‘That is all. Fear no more’ ....”<sup>19</sup>

Strongly influenced by Walter Pater who wrote: “Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end”, Woolf’s major concern is to capture the invisible inner moments in which the most important living occurs.<sup>20</sup> To do this she contrasts what she called ‘moments of being’ and ‘moments of non-being’. According to Woolf the latter constitute the vast majority of our life and are like being in ‘cotton wool’, which muffles the senses.<sup>21</sup> Woolf’s moments of being are moments during which past or present time not only literally coexist but during which one is *aware of* their coexistence.<sup>22</sup> In a Bergsonian sense, these are moments of pure *durée*.

Proust has several terms for these ‘moments of being’ and we can sense him searching intently for the right vocabulary to express the sensation: ‘*moments bienheureux*’, ‘*moments privilégiés*’, ‘*jouissance extraordinaire*’. He, like Bergson sees them as providing an escape from time: ‘*moments extra-temporaire*’ or ‘*un être extra-temporel*’.<sup>23</sup> The taste of the *Madeleine* biscuit is “*un plaisir délicieux*” and “*une puissante joie*,”<sup>24</sup> but in the end he resorts to a wonderful simile to describe the bursting out of the flavours of the biscuit and the associated memories: “like the Japanese paper creations which expand to form beautiful shapes in water”.<sup>25</sup>

Everything about the way in which Proust quests for the words and metaphors to convey joy reinforces Jean Cocteau’s observation that Proust was on a “blind, senseless, frenzied quest for happiness”.<sup>26</sup> Shattuck makes the point that “from friends accounts we know that Proust’s own reminiscences were so acute as to constitute a kind of *hyperaesthesia*”, such that he comments on artists like Elstir and Vinteuil: “With men like these we do really fly from star to star”.<sup>27</sup>

Later, returning once again to Vinteuil's music, he says it gives him "*un joie ineffable... vers un joie supraterrrestre*".<sup>28</sup> Proust has clearly transposed this condition onto Marcel, for whom the sensation of time can literally shimmer (*miroiter*) and become iridescent.<sup>29</sup> There is also a strong element of *synaesthesia* in Marcel: "An hour is not merely an hour, it is a vase full of scents and sounds and projects and climates...".<sup>30</sup> In Venice and again at the end of the novel, when Marcel is experiencing a crescendo of epiphanies, he lapses into the language of colour, repeating the highly onomatopoeic French word '*azure*' to denote the sensation.<sup>31</sup>

Ardoin calls this characteristic 'perception sickness' and suggests that "one character after another" suffers from it in modernist literature.<sup>32</sup> And indeed, a level of *hyperaesthesia* can also be attributed to Bergson himself. In *The Creative Mind* he describes inner consciousness as "like a current of feeling running through a spectrum of a thousand shades".<sup>33</sup> His appeal is therefore, after all, to the like-minded – the modernist artists whom he himself defines as having almost preternatural levels of intuition, empathy and perception.<sup>34</sup> The main clue to his *hyperaesthesia* lies in his theory of 'qualitative multiplicity'. This is notoriously difficult, even for him, to explain, but he describes it as similar to the feeling of being in love, not something quantitative but rather a '*coup de foudre*'.<sup>35</sup> Love brings joy, and Bergson is keen to distinguish between this and basic pleasure. "Nature warns us by a clear sign that our destination is attained. That sign is joy. I mean joy, not pleasure."<sup>36</sup>

### **Physical 'Moments of Being'**

A good example of where the modernists use Bergson as a platform for tangible departure is in their description of physical bliss. Whilst he champions life and '*la generatrice*' Bergson also insists that "pleasure is only a contrivance devised by nature to obtain for the creature the preservation of its life".<sup>37</sup> As such Bergson implies that sex is the response to a procreative, evolutionary urge, incentivised by the pleasure involved, and should not be confused with real,



profound joy. But for the modernists, in spite of this position, Bergson represented an escape both from time and 'the times', and in their eagerness to elevate the physical and underline the transition from an era they considered repressed, they freely conflate the language and sensations of *durée* into their depictions of physical love.

In Woolf's *The Waves*, Neville implies this extra-temporality when he says to Susan as he prepares to kiss her: "Why look ... at the clock ticking on the mantelpiece? Time passes, yes. And we grow old. But ... let's abolish the ticking of time's clock ... Come closer...."<sup>38</sup> In *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf is self-reflexive when she describes Clarissa Dalloway's brief epiphany early in the story about "this falling in love with women", using the same language as she does for moments of childhood bliss: "It was a sudden revelation... some pressure of rapture ... an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed – the moment."<sup>39</sup> The kiss she experiences with her friend Sally Seton is "the most exquisite moment of my whole life... the radiance burnt through, the revelation...!"<sup>40</sup> In addition to the physical, Woolf also emphasizes the intuitive reciprocity between women, which Bergson describes as a "kind of intellectual sympathy", central to the process of achieving *durée*.<sup>41</sup>

Mansfield's dedicates her 1918 short story 'Bliss' to this subject.<sup>42</sup> She wrote it during the height of her friendship with the Woolfs, after visiting their house in Sussex.<sup>43</sup> In this story Mansfield coalesces many sources of happiness into the one feeling, and one eponymous word – 'bliss'. With heavy irony she depicts the central character, Bertha, as having the 'perfect life' – wealth, a loving husband, a new baby, affluence and an influential circle of friends – "a brimming cup of bliss." Bertha likens the lovely pear tree "with its wide open blossoms" to her own life: "Really–really–she had everything." For her this bliss is like swallowing "a bright piece of that late afternoon sun". When she is with her baby "all her feeling of bliss came back again, and again she didn't know how to express it – what to do with it."

She then uses almost identical language to express her attraction to one of the dinner guests, Pearl Fulton: “What was there in the touch of that cool arm that could fan-fan-start blazing-blazing the fire of bliss that Bertha did not know what to do with?” At this point Mansfield makes capricious use of the idea of Bergsonian *durée* when Bertha asks herself: “How long did they stand there...with all that blissful treasure that burned in their bosoms? For ever – for a moment?” But by now the reader has sensed that all this ‘bliss’ is an illusion. When she observes her husband and Pearl as lovers in the hallway she is let down precipitously, realising in the same instant that she is more attracted to Pearl than to her husband, but that both have let her down.

Famously, however, it is Lawrence who is the most ardent in his attempts to elevate sexual ecstasy and bestow upon it an existential quality. Lehan argues that his descriptions of sex are based specifically on Bergsonian *durée* and *élan vital*,<sup>44</sup> and there do appear to be three Bergsonian factors at work here. First, the sexual act itself is experienced as something ‘outside time’ - a suspension of clock time, and of the material world. Anna and Will Brangwen’s lovemaking creates “a poised, unflawed stillness that was beyond time”.<sup>45</sup> Through it, they find themselves “in the timeless universe of free, perfect limbs and immortal breast”.<sup>46</sup>

Secondly, the vitalism inherent in sexual expression acts as a counterweight to what Lawrence sees as the mechanical, deadening repression of modern society. Mellors in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* is the vitalistic archetype, constantly championing free natural expression. Lawrence, like Bergson, also celebrates “the living desire for positive creation”.<sup>47</sup> In *The Rainbow* he describes Anna’s feelings about being married to Will: “how gorgeous it was... the passion of love and begetting... this peace of golden radiance when she was with child...”,<sup>48</sup> and similarly, in *Women in Love* Birkin reflects on “the timeless creative mystery [to] bring forth some other being”.<sup>49</sup>

And thirdly, for Lawrence sex is a major pathway to existential self-realisation. Lehan says that Lawrence pursues and extends the Bergsonian idea that during the evolutionary process “the mind and the senses became disconnected...” and Lawrence is intent on reconnecting them.<sup>50</sup> Sex therefore becomes the physical counterpart of the existential clarity of mind gained through moments of what Bergson calls ‘pure perception’. Ursula’s self-realisation forms the central thread of *The Rainbow* and she utilises Skrebensky as part of this process: “After all, what could either of them get from such a passion but a sense of his or of her own maximum self...?”<sup>51</sup> Lawrence also borrows from Bergson’s notion of constant ‘becoming’ when he positions sexual self-realisation as a conscious learning process, as Birkin observes in *Women in Love*: “You've got to lapse out before you can know what sensual reality is ... You've got to learn not-to-be, before you can come into being.”<sup>52</sup>

This brings us to the second half of this thesis, which takes us from the modernists’ exploration of the nature and experience of time per se, to their response to what can be summarised as Bergson’s spiritual, existential and aesthetic toolkit for self-realisation.

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### NOTES - CHAPTER 3: EXTRA-TEMPORAL BLISS, 'SUPRA-TEMPORALITY'

<sup>1</sup> TFW: 11

<sup>2</sup> This sensation is very similar in both cause and effect to those moments of blissful clarity which Buddhism calls *satori*. cf. *sukha* (bliss) and *piti* (rapture).

<sup>3</sup> "But trailing clouds of glory do we come....". William Wordsworth: 'Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood' 65. cf Wordsworth's Prelude 12.208-20

<sup>4</sup> MM: 199

<sup>5</sup> *Laughter*: 37

<sup>6</sup> Gosetti-Ferencei, Jennifer Anna: *The Ecstatic Quotidian: Phenomenological Sightings in Modern Art and Literature* (Penn State UP 2007, p.84)

<sup>7</sup> Joyce: *Portrait*: 70

<sup>8</sup> Lawrence: *Rainbow*: 531

<sup>9</sup> Mansfield: KMSS: 299-300

<sup>10</sup> Gosetti-Ferencei: 2007: 76

<sup>11</sup> Gaston Bachelard: *The Poetics of Reverie* tr Daniel Russell (Boston, Beacon 1969, p100)

<sup>12</sup> Proust: VI.241

<sup>13</sup> TFW: 8

<sup>14</sup> Woolf: SKP: 81

<sup>15</sup> Woolf: SKP: 78

<sup>16</sup> *ibid*

<sup>17</sup> Woolf: *Mrs.D*: 3

<sup>18</sup> William Blake: *Auguries of Innocence* (1803, pub 1863): "To see a world in a grain of sand / And a heaven in a wild flower/ Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,/ And eternity in an hour."

<sup>19</sup> Woolf: *Mrs.D*: 43

<sup>20</sup> Pater: *The Renaissance* (1873) (OUP 1998, p152)

<sup>21</sup> Woolf: SKP: 84

<sup>22</sup> Gillies 1996: 109

<sup>23</sup> Proust: I.51

<sup>24</sup> Proust: I.51; I.160

<sup>25</sup> Proust: I.64

<sup>26</sup> Jean Cocteau, who knew Proust, as reported by Walter Benjamin 1999: 199. Marcel says in Proust: I. 504 "People don't know when they are happy. One is never as unhappy as one thinks."

<sup>27</sup> Roger Shattuck: *Proust's Way: A Field Guide to In Search of Lost Time* (New York: W. W.Norton, 2001 p. 111). Proust: V.343

<sup>28</sup> Proust: V.294

<sup>29</sup> Proust: VI.264

<sup>30</sup> Proust: VI.289

<sup>31</sup> Proust: III. 865-86; VI. 253-86. The French language is normally noted for its emotional expressibility, but even it falls short of Bergson's and Proust's requirements.

<sup>32</sup> Ardoin 2013: 128.

<sup>33</sup> CM: 164

<sup>34</sup> He once observed that "Fiction, when it has the power to move us, resembles an incipient hallucination". Henri Bergson: (1935) *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, tr. R. Audra and C. Brereton (Notre Dame, 1977, p.99); hereafter 'TSMR'

<sup>35</sup> Ardoin 2013: 223

<sup>36</sup> ME29

<sup>37</sup> *ibid*

<sup>38</sup> Woolf: *Waves*: 135-8

<sup>39</sup> Woolf: *Mrs.D*: 34-35

<sup>40</sup> Woolf: *Mrs.D*: 37-8. In her short story 'Slater's Pins Have No Points' almost identical language ("bliss", "happiness", "moment of ecstasy") is used to describe a kiss between two women in a draper's shop.

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<sup>41</sup> CM: 161

<sup>42</sup> Mansfield: KMSS: pp 174ff

<sup>43</sup> As with Woolf the emotion expressed is towards another woman, and Mansfield had experienced such affairs in the past.

<sup>44</sup> Lehan 2009: 52-4

<sup>45</sup> Lawrence: *Rainbow*: 188

<sup>46</sup> Lawrence: *Rainbow*: 195

<sup>47</sup> Lawrence *WiL*: 519

<sup>48</sup> Lawrence: *Rainbow*: 178

<sup>49</sup> Lawrence *WiL*: 648-9

<sup>50</sup> Lehan 2009: 54

<sup>51</sup> Lawrence: *Rainbow*: 301

<sup>52</sup> Lawrence *WiL*: 58

## CHAPTER 4: DURÉE AND EXISTENTIAL SELF-REALISATION IN LITERATURE

### **Durée as an Existential Path**

Bergson had a didactic purpose in mind with his philosophy of *durée*, and this section looks at how he positions it as a path to self-realisation. It is only in a state of *durée* that the authentic personality - '*le moi profond*' - is to be found. Above all, we need to want, and be able to see beneath the surface of our 'social selves'. Only then will we hear the "uninterrupted humming of life's depths ... where real *durée* lies."<sup>1</sup> And here Bergson means a melodic not a mechanical hum:

*"Il y a simplement la mélodie continue de notre vie intérieure, — mélodie qui se poursuit, et se poursuivra, indivisible, .... Notre personnalité est cela même."*<sup>2</sup>

In Proust's novel we are shown that time can in fact be 'regained' by taking a trip inside oneself. In such moments, he says, "our true self... is awakened and reanimated..."<sup>3</sup> In the final pages of the novel, Marcel recalls the sound of a bell, arch-representative of time:

"For me still to hear that peal there must have been no break in continuity... that single moment from long ago still adhered to me and I could find it again... by descending to a greater depth within myself."<sup>4</sup>

### **Intuition and the Artist's Role**

Deep existential understanding - "the direct vision of the mind by the mind" can, according to Bergson, only be reached by an effort of intuition.<sup>5</sup> Intuition is for him "an original and unique emotion" and, he adds, "to think intuitively is to think in *durée*".<sup>6</sup> Here again the role of the artist is central. As Szthamary notes, "Bergson conceives of art... as the finest rendition of experience itself."<sup>7</sup> Henry James, who knew Bergson, said that conveying the sense of *durée* in a novel was the hardest and also the noblest task in literature.<sup>8</sup> D.H. Lawrence echoes this when he says of writers: "one great mystery of time is terra incognita to us: the instant."<sup>9</sup>

An important caveat in this challenge to convey *durée* is that artists must act by suggestion only, and remain 'detached' in order to fulfil their purpose.<sup>10</sup> They must aim to achieve a point of perfect reciprocity or identification with their audience, which Bergson likens to "the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak, into one another"<sup>11</sup>, yet once this alchemy is set up it is we, the audience, who must do the work of intuition and recognition. Such reciprocity or 'identification' is also at work between modernist authors and their own protagonists. We can see a conscious self-reflexivity in Proust's Marcel and to a lesser extent in Joyce's Stephen, and Lawrence's Birkin, each of these characters often seen as their author's *alter egos*. In *Portrait* Joyce blurs the difference between art as subject and art as object. In a manner similar to Marcel, Stephen is a would-be writer and the book about him reflects the aesthetic principles he discusses, and the book he himself may write himself one day. Novelist and character are therefore neatly conflated. In *Ulysses* Joyce has Stephen observe: "Art has to reveal... The supreme question about a work of art is out of how deep a life does it spring", incidentally revealing Joyce's well-known high opinion of himself.<sup>12</sup>

In Stephen's exposition of his aesthetics in *Portrait*, Gillies observes that "the Bergsonian echoes are resounding".<sup>13</sup> Stephen uses many of Bergson's points, including the idea that "the *quidditas*, the whatness" of a thing is discovered by intuitive interaction with that object,<sup>14</sup> and that the ultimate achievement is to hand the artwork over to the audience for them to share in its resonance.<sup>15</sup> In such cases, as Stephen says: "the personality of the artist passes into the narration itself, going round and round ... like a vital sea."<sup>16</sup>

Proust is perhaps the most thoughtful proponent of Bergson's belief in the primacy of art, and the role of artist as mediator of reality. In describing this dynamic he makes repeated use of the French word '*rapport*' because he sees that "the duty and the tasks of a writer are those of a translator".<sup>17</sup> In the novel three artists appear at regular intervals to educate and 'mediate' – the writer Bergotte, the painter Elstir and the musician Vinteuil. Elstir's paintings are "like

luminous images of magic, which in this instance was the brain of the artist”.<sup>18</sup> When he reads Bergotte’s work he feels “a joy that I felt I was experiencing in a deeper, vaster, more integral part of myself”.<sup>19</sup> In the end it is Marcel who can fly solo and create a work of art on his own a work which will reveal “*La vraie vie, la vie enfin découverte et éclaircie ... c’est la littérature*”.<sup>20</sup> As Bersani points out, from childhood Marcel has been searching in nature, love and society for “extraordinary revelations about ‘truth’ and ‘reality’... Only art, he discovers, is able to fulfil these expectations.”<sup>21</sup>

Although Lawrence placed vitalism above art as the ultimate path to self-realisation, he does see the novel as pre-eminent in its capacity to reveal the depths of the human condition. In his 1925 essay ‘The Morality of the Novel’ he remarks that: “The novel is a perfect medium for revealing to us the changing rainbow of our living relationships.” He appears to be echoing Bergson’s notion of artistic empathy when he gives these words to Constance Chatterley: “It is the way our sympathy flows and recoils that really determines our lives. And here lies the vast importance of the novel, properly handled.”<sup>22</sup>

With characteristic insight, Katherine Mansfield reinforces the Bergsonian idea of the artist as ‘suggestor’, in a letter to Woolf in 1919: “What the writer does is not so much to solve the question but to put the question.” Intuition for her, and for Murry “is a purely aristocratic quality... the power of divining individuality”.<sup>23</sup> Woolf, in her turn speaks of “this intuition of mind -- it is so distinctive that it seems given to me, not made by me”.<sup>24</sup> Intuition occurs to her in a single burst – like a “shock”.<sup>25</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that Kumar believes that “Bergson’s emphasis on ‘*l’intuition esthétique*’ is one of the main impulses behind the entire work of Woolf.”<sup>26</sup>

### **Deep Characterisation**

For Bergson artists are effectively “painters of mental scenery”,<sup>27</sup> and deep characterisation is the locus around which Bergson focuses the modernists in the next stage of their aesthetic challenge: “We estimate the talent of a novelist ...



by the power with which... he restores feelings and ideas... to their original and living individuality.”<sup>28</sup> Here Bergson plays to what was to become one of the most distinguishing features of modernist literature. As Quinones observes: “The creation of these complex central consciousnesses constitutes one of the major achievements of modernism.”<sup>29</sup> Woolf’s essay ‘Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown’ is her famous assertion of the importance of characterisation. In it she distinguishes between two schools. The ‘Edwardians’, who include Wells, Galsworthy and Bennett “fail to depict a single man or woman whom we know”, leaving one “feeling incomplete and dissatisfied”.<sup>30</sup> The more modern ‘Georgians’, like herself, are instead “concerned at all costs to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame”, and she attributes this quality to Joyce in particular.<sup>31</sup>

Joyce merits this because he uses a whole range of linguistic techniques to convey personality and achieve what Bergson calls “a direct quotation of the mind”.<sup>32</sup> The foremost is the ‘stream of consciousness’ technique first described by William James in 1884.<sup>33</sup> A famous example comes at the end of *Ulysses* where Molly Bloom speaks for the last sixty pages in a complete and totally unpunctuated stream of words, which appear to be gushing out in no real order from her memory. But her words are both seemingly incoherent, and profoundly meaningful at the same time, and through them we reach what Bergson described as “coincidence with the person [her]self”.<sup>34</sup> Joyce is also skilful in adapting each ‘stream’ to the character. As Tindall writes: Stephen’s stream is “clear and well-banked”, Bloom’s is “wider, muddier but still well-banked” and Molly’s is “less stream than flood”.<sup>35</sup> Joyce once boasted “I’ve discovered that I can do anything I want with language”, and he uses other innovative, ‘personalising’ techniques such as *idiolexis*.<sup>36</sup> With his ‘real-time’ characterisation of Stephen, we start in ‘baby-speak’ with “baby tuckoo’s” encounter with the “moocow”. The toddler calls his auntie ‘Dante’, because this is how it sounds in the Cork accent.<sup>37</sup> Stephen’s language gets syntactically and lexically more complex, and even ‘precious’ as the book and his age progresses. In contrast Bloom is far more straightforward. Both literally and metaphorically

'pedestrian' as he wanders around Dublin, his words are expressed in *staccato* prose, in contrast to Stephen's elaborate, 'Proustian' sentences.

Beyond Joyce's use of linguistic techniques to convey personality, he uses the narrative technique of 'complete identification' in his characterisations of both Stephen and Bloom, capturing what Bergson called "the emotion, the original mood. . . in its undefiled essence".<sup>38</sup> We are thrust into various moments of Stephen's life, *in medias res* and have to piece together what is happening by joining Stephen inside his mind. We share in the development of his consciousness and see the outer world entirely from his perspective. His character develops as a series of cumulative learnings, a process which extends into *Ulysses*, where he has matured enough to be able to mock his earlier pretensions: "Books you were going to write ... deeply deep, copies to be sent if you died to all the great libraries of the world."<sup>39</sup> In contrast, Joyce intended Bloom to be a more immediately accessible character. He said that he had intended *Ulysses* as a depiction of "complete all round character", and of Bloom he says "I see him from all sides and therefore he is all-round".<sup>40</sup>

Proust is perhaps thinking similarly when he says that "to tell the story of a life" one needs to use "a quite different sort of three-dimensional psychology."<sup>41</sup> But he also talks of the fourth dimension, describing Combray Church as "an edifice occupying, so to speak, a four dimensional space -- the name of the fourth being Time."<sup>42</sup> He goes on to evoke the four-dimensional nature of art in his description of Elstir's studio which "appeared to me like a ... new creation of the world ... various rectangles of canvas that were placed at all angles".<sup>43</sup>

Here then, both Joyce and Proust appear to be reflecting contemporary developments in art, which aimed to depict the subject in a way which conveyed both perspective, and the flow of time. The artistic movement was 'Cubism', pioneered by Georges Braque in France from 1908.<sup>44</sup> In their seminal text *Du "Cubisme"* (1912) Gleizes and Metzinger explicitly relate the concept of 'multiple perspective' to the Bergsonian sense of time.<sup>45</sup>

But it is Woolf, in particular, who excels in and embraces this new technique of depicting character through what became known as 'literary cubism'. She had a special interest and involvement in art,<sup>46</sup> and as Marder, observes she "breaks up the narrative plane as the Cubists broke up the visual plane".<sup>47</sup> A contemporary reviewer said of her short story 'Monday or Tuesday' "it is an example of the 'un-representational' art which is creeping across from painting to see what it can make of words".<sup>48</sup> Bazin describes Woolf's approach clearly:

"Woolf's vision of the complex, ambiguous... nature of man was similar to the Cubist's concept of the total reality of an object... Like the Cubist painter she wanted to increase the number of possible perspectives and thus, in that sense, make her characters more lifelike".<sup>49</sup>

Perhaps her boldest experiment in 'cubism' is her novel *Orlando*, where the alternative perspectives on character are represented by completely different eras, through which the eponymous protagonist lives in different guises and even genders, over a period of 300 years.<sup>50</sup> Church sees *Orlando* as the projection of Woolf's own inner time into history.<sup>51</sup> The message is that time is subjective and we are constantly changing: "There are at any one time seventy-six different times all ticking in the mind at once..."<sup>52</sup>

Woolf also adopts a similarly 'multi-dimensional' approach to characterisation in *The Waves*. One of her most interesting innovations in this novel is to create a character, Percival, whom we neither meet nor hear from, but of whose personality we gain a rich understanding through the other six characters. When Percival dies, Bernard recalls an earlier meeting at a restaurant where there was a seven-sided carnation on the table. When the friends meet after his death the flower on the table now has six petals: "made of six lives".<sup>53</sup> These six characters are presented elliptically, revealing their natures through a series of soliloquies and recollections. This allows us to see the workings of their inner minds, and the comparative structure highlights the differences between the temperaments, in each case revealing their "innumerable fleeting shades of

meaning and deep resounding echoes".<sup>54</sup> Gillies says that in this novel "Woolf creates a prolonged moment of being that captures the character's lives, the life of their era and all history and in so doing this she is Bergsonian."<sup>55</sup> The characters also differ dramatically in their attitudes towards time and their use of language and communication. Neville is of clock time. Louis is more intellectual, and Bernard intuitive. Some, like Jinny live entirely in the external world, some, like Bernard, permanently within their inner world. Although Bernard is introverted, or what Woolf describes as "abnormally aware of circumstances"<sup>56</sup> he is also a master in the use of language and of self-knowledge. As Bernard says of himself, he is "complex and many... my true self breaks off from my assumed".<sup>57</sup> He is "more selves than Neville thinks", but even Neville admits: "I do not know myself sometimes, or how to measure and name and count out the grains that make me what I am."<sup>58</sup> The characters fluctuate between sameness, selfhood and otherness, and personality is shown as evolving dynamically.<sup>59</sup> Although Percival appears to be the bedrock, grounding the group, we can never be sure, as we only 'receive' his personality through they eyes of others.

When we turn to Lawrence's approach to characterisation he appears to conform to Bergson's mantra that "the whole art of writing is to express... the comings and goings of mind".<sup>60</sup> In *The Rainbow*, and *Women in Love* Birkin and Ursula are constantly exploring what they can and cannot know of themselves through conscious introspection. More than most modernist characters, they seek what Bergson describes as "two minds which, without intermediary, seem to vibrate directly in unison with each other."<sup>61</sup> In a letter to Edward Garnett Lawrence says that he is not interested in "the old stable ego of the character" but rather "the profound intuitions of life."<sup>62</sup> He believes that in the course of life all individuals pass through what he calls "allotropic" states, and to manage this they need to ground themselves in "a oneness with the infinite".<sup>63</sup>

But perhaps Lawrence's boldest and most controversial idea on characterisation is his claim to understood the female mind. The controversy is exacerbated

when he places sexual fulfilment at the epicentre of female self-realisation. And so Ursula has to go through many stages of sexual learning – adolescent love affair, relationship with her schoolmistress, broken engagement and miscarriage, before her complex but fulfilling encounter with Rupert Birkin. Before she reaches this point Lawrence uses a metaphor from the earth, symbol of fertility, to describe her progress: “Her life was like a shoot that is growing steadily, but which has not yet come above ground”.<sup>64</sup> This is highly evocative of a phrase from Bergson: “Our personality shoots, grows, and ripens without ceasing.”<sup>65</sup>

Criticisms of this aspect of Lawrence’s characterisation of Ursula are partly offset by his attempts to show her becoming individual and self responsible.<sup>66</sup> She, more than many modernist characters, embodies Bergson’s mantra that “to exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly”.<sup>67</sup> She has ‘worked’ at this throughout her youth, intent on pulling herself “out of nothingness and the undifferentiated mass, to make something of herself!”<sup>68</sup> Later in the novel she recognises that “Self was a oneness with the infinite. To be oneself was a supreme, gleaming triumph of infinity”.<sup>69</sup> At the end of *Women in Love* she reflects, Orlando-like, that “in one life-time one travelled through aeons”.<sup>70</sup>

Lawrence shares a metaphor with Proust and Bergson in depicting people who lack depth of character or personality as being like ‘puppets’ - mechanical, and lacking in self-determinism. Such people, for Bergson are “humble marionettes, the wires of which are pulled by Fate”.<sup>71</sup> At the end of *The Rainbow* Lawrence uses the puppet metaphor when Skrebensky contrasts Ursula’s depth with the everyday people he sees around him: “The puppet shapes of people, their wood-mechanical voices, he was remote from them. For there were always his meetings with Ursula.”<sup>72</sup> Proust pictures the guests at the Guermantes parties as in “an artfully contrived puppet theatre” which once set in motion becomes a “vast, ingenious, obedient and sumptuous human clockwork”.<sup>73</sup> Such people are ‘social butterflies’, the full embodiment of ‘*le moi social*.’ Mme de Cambremer betrays such an absence of independent thought and will it is as if she is

'mounted on wires'.<sup>74</sup> At the end of the novel, he likens the last of such parties to a "peepshow of time past... puppets bathed in the immaterial colours of the years".<sup>75</sup> The implication here is that they have wasted or frittered away time, preoccupied with the superficial and the 'social', and never achieved real self-understanding or independence of thought.

### **Epiphany**

One of the most immediate and powerful expeditors of existential learning and self-realisation is the epiphany -- a moment of the purest apperception, a perfect blending of the past and present and the most existentially profound of our 'moments of being'. As Butler says, this kind of revelation is achieved not by discursive or intellectual thinking but "by close subjective apprehension".<sup>76</sup> The use of this device in modernist literature is seen by many as the culmination of Bergsonian ideas in one narrative synthesis.<sup>77</sup> As Lehan says, epiphany places time and memory at the centre of the "unfolding of personal meaning".<sup>78</sup> But such moments are fragile and vanish fast. As Bergson says: "This spontaneous recollection... may flash out at intervals; but it disappears at the least movement of the voluntary memory."<sup>79</sup> They must also be recognised by those who experience them for what they are – as what Søren Kierkegaard called the '*Øieblik*' – 'the moment of vision', which happens literally 'in the blink of an eye', and which must be acted upon.<sup>80</sup>

As a literary device, epiphanies have the advantage of freeing authors from the conventional barriers of chronology. Time and characterisation can be condensed into one brief passage, and the inherent dramatic potency of the technique allows the author to say something important on his own behalf, through the character. Joyce, once again, is one of the masters of the epiphanic device. His interest in it stems ultimately from his preoccupation with religion. As McLuhan suggests, for Joyce "all art is a shadow of the Incarnation".<sup>81</sup> Intellectually fascinated by Christian doctrine, Joyce secularises this 'revelatory' and essentially spiritual experience, going as far as to suggest that the artist is a

'priest' who converts "the daily bread of experience" into "the radiant body of ever-living life."<sup>82</sup> Morris Beja, in his definitive study *Epiphanies in the Modern Novel*, points out that Joyce himself had epiphanies, as evidenced in his notebooks.<sup>83</sup> In *Stephen Hero* and *Portrait* he moves the development of Stephen's character forward via a series of epiphanies, which Stephen describes to his friend Cranly as "the most delicate and evanescent of moments".<sup>84</sup> In *Stephen Hero* Stephen tells Cranly that an epiphany can even arise from the apprehension of a concrete object, such as the clock of the Ballast Office in Dublin.<sup>85</sup> His description of the dynamics of the sensation are highly 'consonant' with Bergsonian ideas:

"In this epiphany I find... the supreme quality of beauty. That is ... *claritas*, the moment in which after perceiving an object (*integritas*) and apprehending it (*consonantia*), we recognize the thing in itself – its soul, its whatness."<sup>86</sup>

He comes back to this in *Portrait* where he elaborates on "that supreme quality of beauty... apprehended luminously by the mind" saying that it is "a spiritual state very like ... the enchantment of the heart."<sup>87</sup> Stephen's most important epiphanies are also moments of catharsis and they prompt significant decisions: His guilt-driven sexual confessions to the priest act as a clearing away of his past sins and worries: "The past was past" such that "till that moment he had not known how peaceful life could be."<sup>88</sup> At that point it looks as if he will then re-embrace the religious way, until in the next chapter he is reawakened to life, and women, through the 'bird-girl' wading through water on the beach. In this especially vivid epiphany, in Stephen's mind she turns into a beautiful sea-bird.<sup>89</sup> This occurs when he is "near to the wild heart of life" walking along a rivulet on the strand. It marks the moment where he realizes the importance of his creative capabilities, and experiences the re-awakening of his sexual energy. During this epiphany the outside world ceases to exist and everything is focused on the revelatory *gestalt* of the moment. "Heavenly God! Cried Stephen's soul, in an outburst of profane joy."<sup>90</sup> The 'extra-temporal' nature of the experience becomes clear as he walks back: "He halted suddenly and heard his heart in the silence. How far had he walked? What was the hour?"<sup>91</sup>

The other modernist master of the use of epiphany is Proust. In his descriptions of this experience he, like Joyce, blurs the 'revelatory' or religious associations of the word with his own interest in rejuvenation, by calling them '*résurrections*'. At other times he applies a more existential overlay, calling them '*moments privilégiés*'.<sup>92</sup> In the first part of the novel he sets up a series of epiphanies, each with a 'hyperaesthetic' quality. The most famous one occurs after Marcel tastes the Madeleine biscuit: "The whole of Combray and its surroundings ... sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea." This moment makes him "an extra-temporal being" and one who "had the power to make me rediscover days that were long past, the Time that was Lost."<sup>93</sup> At the end of the novel the most powerful of his epiphanies all reoccur to him at once, in a crescendo of intensity. Their reoccurrence has in turn been triggered by three new epiphanies, all associated with everyday objects, which he experiences whilst he waits to join the afternoon party at the Guermantes' mansion.<sup>94</sup>

En route to this party he steps on uneven cobblestones and is immediately taken back in time to the baptistry of St Marks in Venice, reviving intact the whole atmosphere of the place, in all its sensations.<sup>95</sup> As he remarks after first visiting Venice: "Time reconstructs itself so effectively that one can spend it again in one town after one has already spent it in another".<sup>96</sup> Importantly, in this episode Marcel feels a huge sense of reassurance and security from the past, and a regaining of its happiness, something which he seems to crave throughout the novel.<sup>97</sup> He summarises this eloquently a few pages later: "The true paradises are the paradises that we have lost."<sup>98</sup>

Marcel's epiphanies can also be seen as manifestations of Bergsonian 'real time'. In Marcel's words, they add the "concept of 'existence' " to the "dreams of the imagination". This makes it possible, "for a moment brief as a flash of lightning", to isolate "a fragment of time in the pure state".<sup>99</sup> The end result of these epiphanies is Marcel's final realisation that he is indeed an artist, that time can actually be 'regained', that the soul is rejuvenated through art, and that, ergo, he must now write his book.



Existential learning in Woolf tends more towards a mixture of intuitive and intellectual reflection, which takes place over a period of time rather than in a Bergsonian 'instant'.<sup>100</sup> In *Mrs Dalloway* Peter Walsh reflects on the compensations of growing old as "the power of taking hold of experience, of turning it round slowly, in the light".<sup>101</sup> Woolf's attempts at epiphany therefore tend just to be more thoughtful versions of her 'moments of being', as when, at the start of *Mrs Dalloway*, Clarissa is out in the city and the elated thought suddenly occurs to her that "she loved life, London, this moment in June."<sup>102</sup>

However, as Beja notes, in the same novel Woolf does work towards an essentially epiphanic moment for Clarissa, when "things come together", and moreover, this is an epiphany precisely to do with the nature of time.<sup>103</sup> One of the central issues she struggles with during the novel is growing old, and her fear of death – "she feared time itself".<sup>104</sup> Clocks often interrupt or cut short her moments of inner thought. At intervals throughout the book she has watched an old lady in the window of the house opposite, moving slowly around her flat, but nevertheless still coping with life. Clarissa's epiphany at the end of the novel is a subtle one, and it occurs at the moment when, once again, she looks out of her window at the old lady, who has pulled down the blind on the hot June evening. Woolf uses heat and the sun as a sexual metaphor in her novels and Clarissa's comment to herself at this point, is very significant: "Fear no more the heat of the sun."<sup>105</sup> This phrase, from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* speaks to the cycles of nature, fertility, life and death, and appears five times in the novel. It acts as a structural metaphor which both links and differentiates the fates of the characters. In her case it is a positive signpost and the epiphany of the old lady causes her to go back to the party, "to go back... assemble", having, in her mind finally said goodbye to her youth and embraced the second half of her life.

## Self-Realisation

Bergson reinforces his didactic purpose when he states that: “Human life has its goal in the creation ... of self by self, the growing of the personality”.<sup>106</sup> The purpose then, of this knowledge of inner time is ultimately self-realisation, which as Bergson has shown us, comes from the cumulative learning from the past inherent in *durée*, and from the epiphanies that can be one of its manifestations.

Meyerhoff reminds us that “time is inseparable from the concept of self”.<sup>107</sup> Proust’s novel of time and self-realisation embodies this notion, and Marcel’s is perhaps the most successful self-realisation in the works we are discussing. We have already opened up this idea in our discussion of his epiphanies, which are signposts in Proust’s careful construction of the whole novel, part of a highly subtle and intricate narrative process which builds up to Marcel’s moment of self-realisation. As Shattuck says “the much touted *moments bienheureux* are in the end just guideposts” to take Marcel in the direction which the more existential ‘resurrections’ of time past will finally take him.<sup>108</sup>

In Proust, as Meyerhoff says: “memory becomes a symbol for the active, creative, regulative functions of the self.”<sup>109</sup> The word ‘moi’ appears, on average, 1.2 times per page in the novel.<sup>110</sup> Marcel, by consistently applying the learning he gains from his epiphanies, and constantly enriching his understanding of the beauty of art, achieves what Bowie describes as “a supremely accommodating selfhood”.<sup>111</sup> The satisfaction felt by the reader is multi-layered, as Marcel in turn offers them self-realisation through his book which will provide them with “a magnifying glass, like the ones sold by the Combray optician” and thereby “furnish them with the means of reading what lies inside themselves”.<sup>112</sup> Shattuck puts this beautifully: “In a closed loop or *arabesque*, literature departs from life in order to lead us back to it with new understanding.”<sup>113</sup>

In contrast to Marcel, Stephen Dedalus's epiphanies take him a long way, but when we leave him at the end of *Portrait* he is still missing a basic humanity which Joyce underlines further in *Ulysses* by contrasting him with the very human Bloom. Stephen's self-realisation is hampered by his failure to recognize Bergson's exhortation to balance intellect with intuition and empathy. In *Portrait*, his vision of Daedalus is "a prophecy of the end he had been born to serve", and he believes that he has discovered eternity within time, through art.<sup>114</sup> But he seems frozen between recognising his epiphanies, and then being unable to apply this learning to his own self-development. On the last page of the novel Stephen believes that he has learned "to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience", but Joyce has him also admit that his mother is convinced that he still has not learned "what the heart is and what it feels".<sup>115</sup>

Bloom's openness to intuition throws Stephen's intellectualism into stark relief. Although Bloom himself has a series of lesser epiphanies during his June day, we are left feeling as though he did not really need them, as he already has his own very straightforward philosophy of existence. The irony of Bloom is that he is self-realised, but he does not realise it:

"Every life is in many days, day after day. We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love. But always meeting ourselves."<sup>116</sup>

Bergson believed that each individual consists of multiple selves underlying our superficial self: "Beneath these sharply cut crystals and this frozen surface [there lies] a continuous flux".<sup>117</sup> All the more important, therefore, to arrive at '*le moi profond*' or '*le moi-même*' and gain a sense of self, in the fragmenting environment of modernity, or what Joyce called the "chaosmos".<sup>118</sup> Because Bergson's philosophy of *durée* is a form of existentialism, as Butler says it informed the modernists' own quest for meaning and "the subjective self-reliance of modernist literature".<sup>119</sup> We have seen how Woolf defines Clarissa Dalloway's path to self-realisation as in part, a coming to terms with ageing. But we are left with the feeling that this is not a definitive 'triumph', and perhaps, as

with Woolf herself, none of her characters do reach that point of complete clarity and certainty in themselves – what Bergson calls '*le moi qui dure*'. In *The Waves* Woolf's characters all have different capacities for self-realisation. Bernard is the most intuitive and tends to live in "the unlimited time of the mind". Rhoda, however is at the other end of the spectrum, and cannot think in *durée*: "One moment does not lead to another. ... I cannot make one moment merge in the next. To me they're all violent, all separate", a picture we also receive of Woolf during her worst bouts of depression.<sup>120</sup>

Woolf wrote of Lawrence: "He and I have too much in common".<sup>121</sup> Lawrence also sees writing partly as a means of holding on to the self. He writes in his essay 'Why the Novel Matters': "In all this change, I maintain a certain integrity. But woe betide me if I try to put my finger on it. ... I shall never know wherein lies my integrity, my individuality, my me."<sup>122</sup> This may explain why he has so much to say on the subject of self-realisation in his novels: "The final aim of every living creature, or being is the full achievement of itself".<sup>123</sup> But it is Ursula who, as we have seen, ends up more self-realised than Lawrence's alter ego, Rupert Birkin. Lawrence's own life reveals him as a similarly restless, dislocated character.<sup>124</sup> Through Birkin he also plays out his own fascination with how it can be possible to retain a sense of 'self' in traditional marriage, and how it might become more of a metaphysical partnership.<sup>125</sup> Ultimately, like Lawrence, Birkin seeks security: "I want the finality of love".<sup>126</sup> He also craves the "consummation of my being and of her being in a new 'One', a new, paradisal unit...".<sup>127</sup> But beyond the sexual dynamics, Birkin is a character constantly struggling with which 'self' he really is. His deepest need is not psychological or sexual, but ontological – he is forever trying to establish the whole nature and purpose of our existence on earth.

It is the question of self-definition rather than self-realisation which both fascinates and preoccupies Katherine Mansfield. She achieves rich, luminous and brilliantly concise characterisations in her short stories, but perhaps not unrelatedly, appears to be far more uncertain of her own identity. She writes in her

notebook: "True to oneself! Which self? Which of my many... hundreds of selves?"<sup>128</sup> In 1927, four years after Mansfield's death Woolf, who knew her well, published an essay on her entitled 'A Terribly Sensitive Mind' in the New York Herald Tribune. In this she draws particular attention to the fact that Mansfield's mind "divides into two and talks to itself - Katherine Mansfield about Katherine Mansfield".<sup>129</sup> Mansfield was never afraid of expressing herself freely in her personal life, indeed C.P. Snow once said that she was "Living a 1960's life in 1910".<sup>130</sup> However, her self-imposed exile from New Zealand and her life as a 'bohemian' female in Edwardian London may have created identity (and health) issues for her. Lee, however, like Woolf, locates the problem in her personality: "She had a mask... [a] gap between her false self and her secret self".<sup>131</sup>

In the last four years of her life, once she knew she was dying, she appears to have intensified her quest for existential understanding, focusing on finding a form for her fiction that would "speak to the secret self we all have – to acknowledge that."<sup>132</sup> In 'Daughters of the Late Colonel' their 'secret selves' are eclipsed, repressed. Laura in 'The Garden Party' is also unable to articulate what she partly knows, and as with the 'Daughters' this is also because of dominant, crushing parents: "Isn't life" she stammered, "isn't life...". One of her most acclaimed stories 'At the Bay' was written at the end of the summer of 1921 in Menton, where she was trying to preserve her health. It is full of different representations and understandings of 'self', but gives the reader a greater sense of resolution on the subject than her other stories. As with *Mrs Dalloway* and *Ulysses* the 'secret selves' of the characters are revealed over the space of one ordinary day, through the constant interplay of past and present. Linda and her mother have organic memories through which they plunge vividly into their past, capturing it in a way reminiscent of Bergsonian *durée*. They are able to judge and process their past and apply it to the present. As Mansfield herself observed of them: "They can become free of their past and make it their servant rather than their master".<sup>133</sup> This leads to an assured sense of 'self' particularly in Linda's mother Mrs Fairfield: "Did it make her sad? To look back, back. To stare down the years... No, life was like that."<sup>134</sup>

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## NOTES - CHAPTER 4: DURÉE AND EXISTENTIAL SELF-REALISATION IN LITERATURE

<sup>1</sup> CM: 150

<sup>2</sup> “There is simply the melody of our inner life – a melody which is going on and will go on, indivisible... our personality is precisely that”. CM: 149

<sup>3</sup> Proust: II 995; VI 224

<sup>4</sup> Proust: III. 1105-6

<sup>5</sup> CM: 32; cf Gifford Lectures, Edinburgh 1914

<sup>6</sup> CM: 34

<sup>7</sup> Arthur Szthamary: *The Aesthetic Theory of Bergson* (Harvard Phi Beta Kappa Prize, 1937 p.50)

<sup>8</sup> Henry James: *‘London Notes’, Notes on Novelists* (London, 1941, p. 349). Bergson was a friend of philosopher and psychologist William James, Henry’s brother. Tindall argues that Woolf made this her central challenge. Tindall, W. Y.: *James Joyce: His Way of Interpreting the Modern World* (Scribners, NY 1950 p 202)

<sup>9</sup> D.H. Lawrence: Essay: ‘Poetry of the Present’ (1919) in D.H. Lawrence: *Selected Poems* (Penguin 2008, pp. 173-7). In a later essay ‘Why the Novel Matters’ (1925) he remarks that “My yea! of today is oddly different from my yea! of yesterday.”

<sup>10</sup> Quite literally “absent-minded” CM: 136

<sup>11</sup> TFW: 100, 13

<sup>12</sup> Joyce: *Ulysses*: 177. Richard Ellmann in his acclaimed 1959 biography of Joyce endorses Yeats’ observation that Joyce had “colossal self-conceit”. Stephen Spender writes: “His judgements ... on his contemporaries are characteristic of Joyce’s idea of his own absolute merit.” Irritated by comparisons between him and Proust (!) he writes in 1920: ‘I have read some pages of his. I cannot see any special talent.’ ” Stephen Spender: ‘The Daytime World of James Joyce’. (NY Times Review of Books, May 26, 1957).

<sup>13</sup> Gillies 1996: 142 ff

<sup>14</sup> Joyce: *Portrait*: 230

<sup>15</sup> Joyce: *Portrait*: 229-232

<sup>16</sup> Joyce: *Portrait*: 233

<sup>17</sup> Proust: VI. 291

<sup>18</sup> Proust: III.574

<sup>19</sup> Proust: I. 111/130

<sup>20</sup> Proust: VI. 298 : translated in full “Real life, life at last laid bare and illuminated -- the only life in consequence which can be said to be really lived -- is literature”

<sup>21</sup> Bersani, Leo: *Marcel Proust: The Fictions of Life and Art* (OUP 1965 p.199)

<sup>22</sup> Lawrence: *LCL*: 144

<sup>23</sup> *Rhythm* Vol II, No V June 1912

<sup>24</sup> Woolf: SKP: 85

<sup>25</sup> Virginia Woolf: *Moments of Being* (Pimlico, 2002 p.72)

<sup>26</sup> Kumar, Shiv K.: *Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel* (NYUP, 1963, p. 93). Woolf was in turn, heavily influenced by Walter Pater’s aesthetics.

<sup>27</sup> MM: 270ff

<sup>28</sup> TFW: 164

<sup>29</sup> Ricardo Quinones: *Mapping Literary Modernism* (Princeton UP 1985 pp 92,95)

<sup>30</sup> Woolf: Essay: ‘Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown’ (1923). Woolf is exacting on character. She is never completely happy with her characterisation of Mrs Dalloway, as he writes in her diary: “The doubtful point is, I think, the character of Mrs. Dalloway. It may be too stiff, too glittering and tinselly. But then I can bring innumerable other characters to her support.” (Diary, vol. 2, October 15, 1923, p 272)

<sup>31</sup> Woolf: Essay: ‘The Common Reader’ (1948) Walter Pater, whom Woolf so admired, ends his book *The Renaissance* (1873) with similar words: “To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life.” Edward VII died in 1910 and was succeeded by George V, so the term refers to the ‘later’ Georgian period.

<sup>32</sup> CM: 160

<sup>33</sup> William James: Article: ‘On Some Omissions of Introspective Psychology’ (1884)

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- <sup>34</sup> CM: 160
- <sup>35</sup> William York Tindall: *James Joyce: His Way of Interpreting the Modern World* (Grove Press NY 1950 p.42) He also observes that for all Woolf's characters 'the stream is the same'. Other modernists also attempt 'SoC', including Mansfield in her trilogy of short stories entitled 'Epilogues' of 1913 (the period she was writing for *Rhythm*)
- <sup>36</sup> In the Nausikaa chapter of *Ulysses* Joyce says he used the "namby-pamby, jammy marmalady-drawersy style" to mimic the cheap romantic idiom of women's magazines. Joyce: *Ulysses*: Chapter 13: 287,291; Joyce: Letter of 3 Jan 1920
- <sup>37</sup> Joyce: *Portrait*: 3,6
- <sup>38</sup> *Laughter*: 75
- <sup>39</sup> Proust: 3.38
- <sup>40</sup> Joyce quoted in F. Budgen: *James Joyce and the Making of Ulysses* (Grayson, London 1934 pp. 15,17)
- <sup>41</sup> Proust: VI. 505
- <sup>42</sup> Proust: I. 83 "As there is a geometry in space so there is a psychology in time" Proust: III.568
- <sup>43</sup> Proust: II. 565
- <sup>44</sup> Georges Braque's oil painting *Houses at L'Estaque* of 1908 is seen by many as the first significant 'cubist' or proto-cubist painting. In 1912 Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger developed the first major text on the subject: 'Du Cubisme'.
- <sup>45</sup> Albert Gleizes & Jean Metzinger: *Du "Cubisme"* (Paris, Eugène Figuière & C<sup>ie</sup>, Éditeurs, 1912)
- <sup>46</sup> Her sister and brother-in-law were the artists Vanessa and Clive Bell. Roger Fry, the art scholar and curator was a close friend, and Bloomsbury Group member.
- <sup>47</sup> Herbert Marder: Split Perspectives: Types of Incongruity in Mrs Dalloway (Papers in Lang and Literature 22, Winter 1986 p.59). This is especially true in *The Waves*. Katherine Mansfield also sought to apply a 'Fauvist' aesthetic to her writing.
- <sup>48</sup> Harold Child: Review of 'Monday or Tuesday' in the TLS, 7 April 1921
- <sup>49</sup> Nancy Bazin: *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision* (Rutgers University Press, 1973, 143.6)
- <sup>50</sup> Orlando is the quintessential 'time-traveller' in Woolf, although we see a 'slighter' version of in Louis in *The Waves*, who thinks he was a Pharaoh
- <sup>51</sup> In writing *Orlando*, Woolf was thinking of her friend and lover Vita Sackville West, whose ancestral home, Knole represented a family lineage stretching back to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. Vita, as a woman, did not inherit the house because of the law of primogeniture, unfair in Woolf's eyes.
- <sup>52</sup> Woolf: *Orlando* 277; Church 1963: 79. In Proust's view The 'Self' is "the persevering and unalterable servant of our successive personalities". Proust: V. 804-5
- <sup>53</sup> Woolf: *Waves*: 129; six sides = the hexagonal dimension of nature. Woolf told her husband Leonard that the *dramatis personae* were meant to represent several aspects of the same person.
- <sup>54</sup> *Laughter*: 75
- <sup>55</sup> Gillies 1996: 126
- <sup>56</sup> Woolf: *Waves*: 56-7
- <sup>57</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>58</sup> Woolf: *Waves*: 66, 61
- <sup>59</sup> Woolf: *Waves*: 56-7
- <sup>60</sup> ME: 46/849
- <sup>61</sup> ME: 56
- <sup>62</sup> Lawrence: Letters II: 182-3
- <sup>63</sup> Lawrence: Letters II: 182-3
- <sup>64</sup> Lawrence: *Wil*: 69
- <sup>65</sup> CE: 8
- <sup>66</sup> She is strong enough to embrace 'male domains', and opt out of the norms and roles which have been dictated for women by patriarchal society.
- <sup>67</sup> CE: 7
- <sup>68</sup> Lawrence: *Rainbow*: 369-70
- <sup>69</sup> Lawrence: *Rainbow*: 283, 441. Ursula reads Shelley in the novel, who also pursued 'the infinite'.
- <sup>70</sup> Lawrence: *Wil*: 527

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- <sup>71</sup> *Laughter*: 60
- <sup>72</sup> Lawrence: *Rainbow*: 588
- <sup>73</sup> Proust: VI.342-4
- <sup>74</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>75</sup> Proust: III.432; III.52; VI 342-4
- <sup>76</sup> Butler, C.: *Early Modernism* (Clarendon, 1994 p.55)
- <sup>77</sup> Beja, Church, Lehan, Gillies ops cit, passim
- <sup>78</sup> Lehan 2009: 119
- <sup>79</sup> MM: 101
- <sup>80</sup> Søren Kierkegaard: *Øieblikket, Issues 1-9* (C.A. Reitzels Forlag, 1877). Literally = ‘the blink’ – in German ‘*augenblick*’.
- <sup>81</sup> McLuhan, Marshall: ‘Joyce, Aquinas, and the Poetic Process’ in Connolly, Thomas ed. *Joyce’s Portrait Criticism and Critiques*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962 p. 251)
- <sup>82</sup> Joyce: *Portrait*: 170. Joyce saw himself in this way as we learn from one of his Letters to Stanislaus.
- <sup>83</sup> Beja, Morris: *Epiphanies in the Modern Novel* (London, Owen, 1971 p. 83)
- <sup>84</sup> Joyce: *Stephen Hero*: (Southern Illinois Press, 1955 p. 188) hereafter ‘*Hero*’ It is in Joyce’s early works, *Dubliners* and *Stephen Hero* that the nature of epiphany is most clearly spelt out. Joyce’s earliest work *Dubliners* is a set of stories all structured around epiphanies which guide, warn, encourage or chasten each of the protagonists. The device is used to point to a lesson to be learned from one’s past, and Gillies and Church see *Dubliners* as very Bergsonian for that reason. (Gillies 1996: 137-9, Church 1963: 28-9)
- <sup>85</sup> Joyce: *Hero*: 211-4 “all at once I see it and I know at once what it is: epiphany.”
- <sup>86</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>87</sup> Joyce: *Portrait*: 229-232
- <sup>88</sup> Joyce: *Portrait*: 111 ff
- <sup>89</sup> Joyce: *Portrait*: 131ff
- <sup>90</sup> Joyce: *Portrait*: 132
- <sup>91</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>92</sup> Morris Beja (1971) calls them epiphanies, but most Proustian scholars follow Proust himself, and call them “privileged moments”.
- <sup>93</sup> Proust: I.64; VI.262. Proust often capitalised the word ‘Time’.
- <sup>94</sup> A starched napkin; the sound of a spoon against a plate; the noise from a waterpipe. Proust: VI. 257,258,266
- <sup>95</sup> Proust: VI.256
- <sup>96</sup> Proust: I.558
- <sup>97</sup> Proust VI.255 “All my discouragement vanished and in its place was that same happiness which enduring epochs of my life had given to me”
- <sup>98</sup> Proust: VI. 261
- <sup>99</sup> Proust: VI 263-4
- <sup>100</sup> Both authors are more interested in capturing the instant as moments of ‘joy’ ‘rapture’ or sexual ‘ecstasy’ as shown in the previous section.
- <sup>101</sup> Woolf: *Mrs D*: 86
- <sup>102</sup> Woolf: *Mrs D*: 4, 31
- <sup>103</sup> Beja 1971: 116
- <sup>104</sup> Woolf: *Mrs D*: 32
- <sup>105</sup> William Shakespeare: *Cymbeline* Act IV Scene II. Woolf: *Mrs D*: 204. In other cases, such as Septimus’ life, the lines prove ominous. (The subject of growing old and the menopause is known to have preoccupied Woolf herself - see Hermione Lee: *Virginia Woolf* (Vintage 1997 p.581)
- <sup>106</sup> ME: 30
- <sup>107</sup> Meyerhoff, 1968: 1
- <sup>108</sup> Shattuck 2000: 135
- <sup>109</sup> Meyerhoff, 1968: 44
- <sup>110</sup> Bowie, 1998: 1
- <sup>111</sup> Bowie 1998: 2
- <sup>112</sup> Proust: VI.432; 508



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- <sup>113</sup> Shattuck: *Proust's Binoculars* (Chatto & Windus 1964 p.160)
- <sup>114</sup> Joyce: *Portrait*: 130
- <sup>115</sup> Joyce: *Portrait*: 195-6
- <sup>116</sup> Joyce: *Ulysses*: 204
- <sup>117</sup> CM: 163
- <sup>118</sup> Joyce: *Finnegan's Wake* (OUP 2012, p. 118) hereafter '*Finnegan's*'
- <sup>119</sup> Christopher Butler: *Modernism* (OUP 2010 p. 55)
- <sup>120</sup> Woolf: *Waves*: 273, 97; Lee, 1997: 438, 454-5
- <sup>121</sup> Woolf: 'A Writer's Diary'. Entry 2.10.32
- <sup>122</sup> Lawrence: 'Why the Novel Matters' (1925) in *Selected Critical Writings* (OWC 1998 pp 204-10)
- <sup>123</sup> Lawrence: 'The Study of Thomas Hardy' (1915)
- <sup>124</sup> Lawrence became a self-styled exile from Britain, travelling all around the world in order to find a place effectively not touched by modernity. Some see in Ursula the views of his strong wife, Frieda.
- <sup>125</sup> This quest is further complicated by Birkin's bisexuality. After his death Frieda Lawrence confirmed that she believed D.H. Lawrence to have had homosexual encounters.
- <sup>126</sup> Lawrence: *WIL*: 76
- <sup>127</sup> Lawrence: *WIL*: 501. He critiques the nature and dynamics of marriage extensively in *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, depicting it as something requiring 'hard work' as Tom and Lydia successfully demonstrate. (*Rainbow*: 70)
- <sup>128</sup> Katherine Mansfield: Notebooks: II, 204
- <sup>129</sup> Virginia Woolf: 'A Terribly Sensitive Mind' (NY Herald Tribune, Granite and Rainbow 1958: 74)
- <sup>130</sup> C. P. Snow: *Last Things* (Penguin 1974): Mansfield was "Living a 1960's life in 1910 - in an age before the pill and antibiotics". She, like Lawrence died of tuberculosis. In her case it was a complication deriving from a sexual disease, the product of a very sexually active first few years in Europe after leaving New Zealand. Mansfield and Lawrence were good friends for a while as part of his friendship with her husband Murry; but they are said to have been too similar, and their dramatic clashes (eg DHL to KM "I hope you die") are revealed in their correspondence.
- <sup>131</sup> Lee, 1997: 387
- <sup>132</sup> Angela Smith: *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf, A Public of Two* (Clarendon, 1999 p. 158). Katherine Mansfield: Letters: iv 278, Sep 1921
- <sup>133</sup> Mansfield quoted in Hanson and Gurr, 1981: 104
- <sup>134</sup> Mrs Fairfield is also the child Kezia's grandmother, and we know that Mansfield had a very close relationship to her own grandmother whilst a child in New Zealand. Claire Tomalin: *Katherine Mansfield – A Secret Life* Penguin 1988, p.31)

## CHAPTER 5: LANGUAGE AND *DURÉE*

Mercanton insists that: “*la philosophie bergsonienne est une philosophie esthétique*” and the last part of this thesis looks at the more technical aspects of Bergson’s advice to artists on the linguistic expression of *durée*.<sup>1</sup> Bergson, as Meyerhoff observes, was the archetypical ‘Literary Philosopher’.<sup>2</sup> The Nobel Prize committee confirmed this reputation when they gave him the prize for literature in 1927: “in recognition of his rich and vitalizing ideas and the brilliant skill with which they have been presented”.<sup>3</sup> They described him as “a stylist and a poet”,<sup>4</sup> a judgement borne out by some famous admirers who describe his writing as “silken”, “exhilarating” and “intoxicating”.<sup>5</sup> William James remarked on his prose: “It is like the breath of the morning and the song of birds.... It is a miracle, and he is a real magician”.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Limitations of Language**

Bergson, therefore, through the lens of his own capabilities, had a keen understanding of the challenges inherent in the artist’s role, particularly the limitations of language. His philosophy of time deals with our alienation from a deeper, purer reality, and as Posman says, “the alienating factor *par excellence*, is language.”<sup>7</sup> He was trying to help the artist to return people to the immediacy and authenticity of experience as against the linguistic reduction of such experience to conventional categories. Language is “ill suited to rendering the subtleties of psychological analysis”.<sup>8</sup> Because language is “*toujours sociale*”,<sup>9</sup> expression of the inner self is beyond the reach of “the rough and ready word”.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Bergson equates language with everything to which he is opposed. It is inherently spatial, with its adjacency of letters and words, and therefore immobilizing, so that “The most living thought becomes *frigid* in the formula which expresses it.”<sup>11</sup> Bergson also saw language as an instrument of rationalism and utilitarianism - developed primarily as calls to action, or “human work to be done.”<sup>12</sup> Words commodify and ‘package’ everything, and like money, they are “a currency through which experience must pass”.<sup>13</sup>

The modernists discussed the limitations of language frequently in their essays and novels. Joyce echoes Bergson's view of the utilitarian nature of language when in *Portrait* Stephen's soul 'shrivels up' as he walks down a street full of 'mean shop legends' and he suddenly finds himself "among heaps of dead language."<sup>14</sup> But Joyce also felt himself to be a true master of words, able to make them do what he liked, and therefore overcome such limitations. Indeed he seems to be responding directly to Bergson's suggested approach where: "completely new words would be required ... The writer would attempt to realise the unrealisable ... he will be driven to strain the word, to do violence to speech".<sup>15</sup> Joyce stretches language to perform extraordinary feats, often 'straining' it through neologisms. In *Finnegan's Wake*, he seems deliberately to take language beyond its capacity to make sense. Indeed he confesses to such: "in the Nichtian glossery which purveys aprioric roots for aposteriorious tongues this is nat language in any sinse of the world".<sup>16</sup> Responding to criticism of his "deliberately entangled language system"<sup>17</sup> from his patroness, Harriet Shaw Weaver, he makes a Bergsonian defence: "One great part of every human existence is passed in a state which cannot be rendered sensible by the use of wideawake language, cutanddry grammar and goahead plot."<sup>18</sup>

Other modernists, notably Lawrence and Woolf "look less benignly on the autonomy of language than does Joyce".<sup>19</sup> The renowned Lawrencian scholar Ann Fernihough says: "No writer was more aware of the problems of linguistic reification than Lawrence". This, she says involves him in a kind of "endless semantic deferral" which leaves the reader feeling that they will "never get to the bottom of meaning".<sup>20</sup> Lawrence saw words as deadening and mechanical, associating them, as Bergson did, with intellect not intuition: "The Word ... is the *end* of life... the mind is the dead end of life."<sup>21</sup> Above all, as he says: "We have no language for the feelings".<sup>22</sup> In *Women in Love*, Birkin and Ursula try to go beyond words to communicate their deepest thoughts to each other: "She knew, as well as he knew, that words themselves do not convey meaning, that they are but a gesture we make."<sup>23</sup> Bergson also said that "Language cannot grasp

[anything] without immobilising its mobility”,<sup>24</sup> or its *élan vital*, and in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* Connie hates her mechanical, immobile husband’s predilection for words. “How she hated words, always coming between her and life ... sucking all the life sap out of living things.”<sup>25</sup>

Virginia Woolf is eloquent in her rendition of the problem of language. She sees one of the central issues as that it comes laden with history and cluttered with pre-conceived meanings. Bergson speaks of this notion in *The Creative Mind*: “Words have a definite meaning, a conventional value relatively fixed: they can express *the new only as a rearrangement of the old*”.<sup>26</sup> In 1937 Woolf delivered a talk on ‘Craftsmanship’ for a BBC radio series entitled ‘Words Fail Me’, which is hard not to locate in Bergsonian thought:<sup>27</sup>

“Words, English words, are full of echoes, of memories, of associations. They have been out and about... for so many centuries. And that is one of the chief difficulties in writing today... *How can we combine the old words in new orders* so that they survive, so that they create beauty, so that they tell the truth?”<sup>28</sup>

### **Using Rhythm to Express *Durée***

In spite of their antipathy towards language, Bergson and the modernist writers, had to work *within* it. The novel is hindered by its reliance on language, but Bergson says that there are opportunities to represent *durée* through linguistic innovation. He can be very precise in his advice on such techniques:

“Words ... will not convey the whole of what we wish to make them say if we do not succeed by the rhythm, by the punctuation, by the relative lengths of the sentences and parts of the sentences, by a particular dancing of the sentence, in making the reader's mind... describe a curve of thought and feeling analogous to that we ourselves describe. In this consists the whole art of writing.”<sup>29</sup>

Here we see Bergson extend his archetype from poetry to music, likening the best writing to “the art of the musician”.<sup>30</sup> Poets are “revelatory agents”,<sup>31</sup> but they do best “whilst obeying the laws of rhythm.”<sup>32</sup> Indeed, as it is free from the

constraints of language, he sees music as he sees as the most powerful medium for expressing *durée*. “The composer”, he says “accesses an indivisible emotion ... something more than music and more than intelligence”.<sup>33</sup> He once said “I have an intuitive predilection for Debussy” who produces “a music of *durée*”.<sup>34</sup> Pasler says that this appeal is to do with conveying mobility, and is most apparent in his compositions *La Mer* and *Jeux*.<sup>35</sup> In a letter of 1907 Debussy responds by saying that music “is rhythmic time”.<sup>36</sup> ‘Rhythm’ is therefore central to Bergson’s advice on language and it becomes a proxy for the workings of intuition. For him, empathy is the point of access to intuition and *durée*. It is a key component of rhythm, as he describes in a beautiful passage on the nature of grace:

“The regularity of the rhythm is established as a kind of communication between [the dancer] and us. Thus a kind of physical sympathy enters into the feeling of grace”.<sup>37</sup>

In looking at the modernists’ response to Bergson’s notion of ‘rhythm’, it is appropriate to start with Katherine Mansfield. Her earliest collaboration with Murry, as has been said, involved her contributions to his Bergsonian magazine, ‘Rhythm’. Murry’s editorial for the first issue in 1911 declared that the journal would promote “art that strikes deeper, that touches a profounder reality... which shall be the rhythmical echo of the life with which it is in touch.”<sup>38</sup> Mansfield once wished to be a professional cellist and musicality in her writing is a significant factor. She responds to Bergson’s exhortation that “the rhythm of speech has ... no other object than that of reproducing the rhythm of the thought...”<sup>39</sup> In a letter to her brother-in-law she says:

“In ‘Miss Brill’ I chose not only the length of every sentence, but even the sound of every sentence - I chose the rise and fall of every paragraph to fit her - and to fit her on that day at that very moment.”<sup>40</sup>

In ‘At the Bay’, rhythm operates as both a formal and a conceptual element, as it does in Woolf’s *The Waves*. Both stories are structured around the motif of the sea. The repetitive breaking of waves on the shore at the bay evokes the rhythmic and cyclical nature of existence, as part of Mansfield’s continuous

pursuit of ontological exploration. Hence the sea is a reassuring backdrop to the twilight conversation between the friends Linda and Jonathan: "If you listened you could just hear the soft swish of the sea at full tide sweeping the pebbles."<sup>41</sup>

Bergson's championship of poetry and rhythm come together in Woolf's novel *The Waves*, of which she says: "I am writing to a rhythm and not to a plot".<sup>42</sup> She creates an impression of timelessness by bracketing her prose passages with poetic ones, which describe the daily rhythms of nature.<sup>43</sup> In the novel Bernard remarks that "the rhythm is the main thing in writing".<sup>44</sup> The language of the novel has a lilting, 'wave-like' feeling, an effect she sought deliberately. As Jinny says "All is rippling, all is dancing."<sup>45</sup> Later Woolf experiments further with the metaphor of dance and rhythm in describing the bustle of a restaurant:

"The rhythm of the eating house. It is like a waltz tune... The waitresses, balancing trays, swing in and out, round and round ... the average men including her rhythm in their rhythm."<sup>46</sup>

In variations on the same Bergsonian metaphor of rhythm and dance we find Lawrence describing beautiful poetry as "perfect symmetry, the rhythm which returns upon itself like a dance where the hands link and loosen and link".<sup>47</sup> And in *Portrait* Stephen observes that "the phrase and the day and the scene harmonized in a chord".<sup>48</sup> Later, he says that "language, in its lyrical form is ... an instant emotion, a rhythmical cry."<sup>49</sup> As Stevenson observes, the 'Sirens' chapter in *Ulysses* opens with a kind of "urban word-jazz".<sup>50</sup> Here Joyce's neologisms extend to such rhythmic experiments as: "Imperththn thnthnthn"; but just when all sense has seemed to disappear an ever adaptive and playful form of rhythm takes over: "Clapclap. Clippyclap. Clappyclap."<sup>51</sup> Significantly, in this section Joyce repeats the words "*Sonnez! ... La cloche*" several times, the French perhaps being a Bergsonian marker, and he repeats the phrase: "Big Benaben. Big Benben" several times, making the words sound like the chimes themselves.<sup>52</sup>

### Language and 'Literary Cubism'

Beyond music, several modernists experimented with art to convey the sense of mobility and time within *durée*. Cubism was the artistic movement which was experimenting with bringing a fourth dimension to a flat plane, and we have talked earlier about the use of 'literary cubism' to portray depth of character, through the creation of multiple narrative perspectives.<sup>53</sup> But we are going to finish this thesis by looking at how one Bergsonian modernist in particular tried to apply 'literary cubism' to language itself, taking the application of his thought to some of its furthest extremes.

Gertrude Stein perhaps had the most claim of all on 'Cubism' as she regularly welcomed the leading artists of the day, including Picasso, to her salon-home at 27, *Rue de Fleurus*. She bought many of their masterpieces and then applied the compositional theory behind them to her own highly idiosyncratic form of composition.<sup>54</sup> She, even more than Joyce, "strained the word" along with the logic and grammar of the sentence, and most radically pursued Bergson's challenge to "realise the unrealisable" through linguistic innovation.<sup>55</sup> One of the phrases most associated with her, and which she used as a letterhead is "A rose is a rose is a rose".<sup>56</sup> Kern calls it "a slogan for the continuous present".<sup>57</sup> When asked by a student what she meant by it she gave a Bergsonian reply: "the poet has to work in the excitingness of pure being; he has to get back that intensity into the language".<sup>58</sup>

Stein's pursuit of the 'continuous present' is part of her attempt to keep things open and always 'possible'. She rejected "the inevitable narrative of anything, of everything succeeding something... in anything having beginning middle and ending."<sup>59</sup> In her essay 'Portraits and Repetition' she moves from the Bergsonian idea of continuous novelty to being more specific about *durée*: "It is never the same moment it is never the same emphasis at any successive moment of existing."<sup>60</sup>

In 'The Good Anna', the first novella of her 1909 book *Three Lives*, she uses blocks of description and the dense repetition of words and phrases instead of chronological narrative.<sup>61</sup> This device became more radical in the second novella 'Melanctha' where she produces a style designed to mirror inner thought and its often haphazard sequencing and associations.<sup>62</sup> Stein's constant use of parataxis is somewhat relieved by adjusting repetition and syntax in very subtle ways. She does this because, as Ruddick says "'to allow exact repetitions would be to falsify the small mutations of consciousness",<sup>63</sup> and this would be un-Bergsonian.<sup>64</sup> But whilst Douglass argues that "no one's work so consistently and radically enacts a Bergsonian programme as Stein's", she fails to respond Bergson's ideal of language being poetic and rhythmic.<sup>65</sup> After *Three Lives* her lack of interest in making 'sense' per se to the reader became more apparent. 'Tender Buttons', her 1911 'portrait of objects', has incurred criticism from many notable scholars of literature. David Lodge's verdict is that she "violates... and brutally dislocates" language "defeating the system's inherently communicative function."<sup>66</sup> Allegra Stewart sees *Tender Buttons* as belonging more to the 'phenomenology of mind' than literature.<sup>67</sup>

Douglass is more sympathetic, pointing out that Stein understands Bergson's paradox that language cannot ultimately take us to inner time, and even poetry remains part of the static world of the intellect.<sup>68</sup> As she says: "Poetry may be time but if it is that it is remembered time and that makes it be what is seen."<sup>69</sup> Unperturbed, she still makes it her quest to try to release the 'vital energy' within words "by subjecting them to enormous pressures", akin to splitting the atom.<sup>70</sup> And indeed, Bergson himself argued that the use of repetition and constant re-contextualisation, as exhibited by Stein, was a way of defamiliarising language, thereby jolting us out of the superficial environment of '*le moi social*' and "back into our own presence".<sup>71</sup>

Stein is more successful, perhaps when she actually applies her 'cubist language' to character. She confides to her friend in New York that she knows she will never write 'the great American novel' because she cannot 'do' character



complexity and plot.<sup>72</sup> Departing, by necessity, therefore from the Bergsonian quest to convey '*le moi profond*', she focuses instead on repeating one character trait, in an attempt to convey a person's 'essence': "I found this very exciting. And I began to make portraits."<sup>73</sup> Nowhere is this method displayed more clearly than in her portraits of Matisse and Picasso, which Schoenbach describes as "verbal cubism".<sup>74</sup> In 'Matisse' she repeats three words – 'expression, certainty, struggling' many times and in a variety of syntactical experiments. They are finally united by a (cubist) fourth – 'greatness', to encapsulate his essence. She uses exactly the same formula for 'Picasso' where 'working, following, meaning' are united by 'completely charming'.<sup>75</sup> And so, by using language in a riddling, quasi-mathematical way, Stein in fact surprises us with a real and immediate sense of what Matisse and Picasso were actually like. In doing so, however, she demands high levels of intuition from the reader in order to grasp her meaning, thereby completing the Bergsonian circle.

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## NOTES - CHAPTER 5: LANGUAGE AND DURÉE

<sup>1</sup> Jacques Mercanton: 'Le Probleme de L'Art', *Henri Bergson, ed. Beguin et Thevenaz* (Neuchatel, 1943, p. 151)

<sup>2</sup> Meyerhoff 1955:10, 136ff; Canales (op cit) calls him a 'Poet-Philosopher'

<sup>3</sup> 'Presentation Speech' (December 10, 1928), in *Nobel Lectures, Literature 1901–1967*

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

<sup>5</sup> William James *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909 p. 227); T.E. Hulme: *A Personal Impression of Bergson* (1911), Simone de Beauvoir quoted in *The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir* ed. Claudia Card (CUP 2003 pp 107-129)

<sup>6</sup> William James *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909 p. 227)

<sup>7</sup> Sarah Posman in Ardoin 2013: 213

<sup>8</sup> TFW: 13. cf "Each of us has his own way of loving and hating. Language however denotes these states by the same words in every case" TFW: 131

<sup>9</sup> CM: 80. "The function [of language] is industrial, commercial, military ..."

<sup>10</sup> TFW: 74

<sup>11</sup> CE: 13 (italics my emphasis)

<sup>12</sup> CM: 80

<sup>13</sup> CM: 80 Bergson was one of the first philosophers to call attention to the issues of language, along with Nietzsche – to be followed by Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida, Foucault et al.

<sup>14</sup> Joyce: *Portrait*: 137

<sup>15</sup> TSMR: 253-4

<sup>16</sup> Joyce: *Finnegan's* : 83.10-12

<sup>17</sup> Harriet Shaw Weaver, Letter to James Joyce, 1926. Joyce took 17 years to write *Finnegan's Wake*

<sup>18</sup> Joyce: Letter to Harriet Weaver 1927

<sup>19</sup> Stevenson 1992: 176

<sup>20</sup> Anne Fernihough: *D.H. Lawrence: Aesthetics and Ideology* (Clarendon Press, 1993 pp 48, 50). Fernihough is also editor of *The Cambridge Companion to D.H. Lawrence* (2001)

<sup>21</sup> DH Lawrence: Essay: 'Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious' p.246 cf Bergson "The word turns against the idea. The letter kills the spirit." CE: 13

<sup>22</sup> DH Lawrence: *The Novel and the Feelings* (Essays CUP 1985 p. 203)

<sup>23</sup> Lawrence: *WIL*: 209

<sup>24</sup> Kolakowski 1985: 18

<sup>25</sup> Lawrence: *LCL*: 96

<sup>26</sup> CM: 82 (Italics my emphasis)

<sup>27</sup> 'Words, English Words' – Woolf voice file from text of 'SKP'. Only known recording of Woolf's actual voice: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8czs8v6Pul> . (Italics my emphasis)

<sup>28</sup> 'Craftsmanship' in: Virginia Woolf: *Selected Essays* (OWC, 2009 pp 88-9). Joyce also plays upon the historical nature of language when he dedicates a whole chapter of *Ulysses* to the history of the English language *Ulysses*: Chapter 14: Oxen of the Sun.

<sup>29</sup> ME: 56-57

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*

<sup>31</sup> *Laughter*: 76, CM: 135

<sup>32</sup> TFW: 15

<sup>33</sup> TSMR: 252-3

<sup>34</sup> Bergson interviewed in 1910. Quoted in Jann Pasler: *Writing through Music : Essays on Music, Culture, and Politics* OUP, 2008 pp 89ff). Vladimir Jankélévitch, Bergson's philosophical 'successor' saw Fauré as the great Bergsonian composer esp. his 'Sanctus' from *Requiem* and 'Berceuse' from the *Dolly* suite. Bergson did also admire Fauré and Ravel.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid* p. 90. He also notes that in 1914, when Bergson was "the philosopher of our time" and Debussy "the musician", Debussy's friend Laloy said that their works could not have existed without each other.

- <sup>36</sup> Claude Debussy: *Lettres a son Editeur* (1907) (Paris, Durand, 1927)
- <sup>37</sup> TFW: 13
- <sup>38</sup> John Middleton Murry: 'Aims and Ideals' *Rhythm*, vol. 1 no. 1, 1911, p.36.
- <sup>39</sup> ME: 56
- <sup>40</sup> Mansfield: CLKM IV 165, Mansfield's Emphasis. Letter to Richard Murry on 17 January 1921)
- <sup>41</sup> Mansfield: KMSS: 281ff
- <sup>42</sup> Woolf: Diaries: 316
- <sup>43</sup> She had previously done a similar thing in the 'Time Passes' section in *To The Lighthouse* where the rhythm of nature during each day both concertinas and connects two different decades.
- <sup>44</sup> Woolf: *Waves* 58
- <sup>45</sup> Woolf: *Waves* 33
- <sup>46</sup> Woolf: *Waves* 69
- <sup>47</sup> D.H. Lawrence: 'The Poetry of the Present' (Essay, 1919). This is also the image used by Matisse in *La Danse* (1909/10) and in an earlier painting, *La Joie de Vivre* (1905/6). Bergson's influence on Matisse has been mentioned earlier.
- <sup>48</sup> Joyce: *Portrait*: 128
- <sup>49</sup> Joyce: *Portrait*: 165 Whilst Stephen walks on the beach in *Ulysses* he experiences a "fourworded wavespeech" Joyce: *Ulysses*: 49
- <sup>50</sup> Stevenson 1992: 194. Joyce now switches to music, via the chapter title 'Sirens', the enchanting singers who lure Odysseus to their island (Homer: *The Odyssey* Book XII)
- <sup>51</sup> Joyce: *Ulysses*: 245, 247
- <sup>52</sup> Joyce: *Ulysses* : 265, 246. *Ulysses* was published in 1922, *Mrs Dalloway* in 1925. Woolf had read *Ulysses*, and perhaps here Joyce gives her an idea for *Mrs Dalloway* (Big Ben)
- <sup>53</sup> see Ch. 4: *Durée* and Existential Self-Realisation in Literature - Deep Characterisation pp. 59ff
- <sup>54</sup> Among many masterpieces bought by Leo and Gertrude were the portraits of the wives of Cézanne and Matisse, and she hung these above where she sat in the living room.
- <sup>55</sup> TSMR 253-4
- <sup>56</sup> From Stein's poem *Secret Emily*, 1913
- <sup>57</sup> Stephen Kern: *The Modernist Novel* p.118. Stein's book *The Making of Americans* is a series of moments – what she calls "a thousand pages of the continuous present". Gertrude Stein: 'Composition as Explanation' in *Look at Me Now and Here I Am* (Penguin 1971 p.25)
- <sup>58</sup> Gertrude Stein: Lecture, University of Chicago, 1935
- <sup>59</sup> *ibid*
- <sup>60</sup> Gertrude Stein: 'Portraits and Repetition' in *Look at Me*: 117
- <sup>61</sup> Ann Charters: Introduction to Gertrude Stein: *Three Lives* (Penguin 1990 p. vii) This book was written, according to Stein, under the influence of Bergson and also Cézanne and Matisse.
- <sup>62</sup> 'Melanctha' in Gertrude Stein: *Three Lives* (Penguin 1990 p. 133) As things deteriorate in the relationship between Melanctha and Jeff the continuous present still prevails: "Now things were always getting worse between them. Now...Now... Now"
- <sup>63</sup> Lisa Ruddick: *Reading Gertrude Stein* (Cornell UP, 1990 p.38)
- <sup>64</sup> Stein's artful use of repetition with variation is most notably taken up and made more comprehensible, by Hemingway
- <sup>65</sup> Paul Douglass in Ardoin 2013: 120
- <sup>66</sup> David Lodge: *The Modes of Modern Writing* (Hodder Arnold, 1977, p.154). He also believes that she verges on "displaying symptoms of Jakobson's two types of aphasia" (*ibid*: 144)
- <sup>67</sup> Allegra Stewart quoted by Charters in the introduction to Gertrude Stein: *Three Lives* (Penguin 1990 p. xxi)
- <sup>68</sup> Paul Douglass in Ardoin 2013: 118-9
- <sup>69</sup> Gertrude Stein: *The Geographical History of America* (Vintage 1973, p.210)
- <sup>70</sup> Paul Douglass in Ardoin 2013: 118-9
- <sup>71</sup> Frederick Burwick and Paul Douglass: *The Crisis in Modernism - Bergson and the Vitalist Controversy* (CUP, 1992, p.330); TFW 133-4
- <sup>72</sup> Gertrude Stein: Letter to Mabel Weeks in New York, 1910. She reveals her own extraordinary self-belief (and gives a questionable categorization to Proust and Joyce's works when she sets her novel *The Making of Americans* alongside *A la Recherche* and *Ulysses* as "the three important

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things written in this generation – there is in none of them a story”. (Gertrude Stein: ‘Portraits and Repetition’ in *Look at Me*: 110)

<sup>73</sup> Stein, *Look at Me*: 108-9

<sup>74</sup> Lisi Schoenbach: *Pragmatic Modernism* (OUP, 2012, p.50)

<sup>75</sup> Gertrude Stein: ‘Matisse’ and ‘Picasso’ in *Look at Me*: 209-212; 213-216

## CONCLUSION

This thesis has been constructed as a series of answers to four simple questions - *what* was Bergson's philosophical position, *to whom* did it appeal, and *why*, and the main question, *how* did they apply his thought to their own works. The answers have been provided in a way which attempts to mirror Bergsonian principles of clear flow and rhythm, moving from the 'macro' through to the 'micro' level. Therefore, the thesis started with an explanation for the strong compatibility of worldviews between Bergson the modernists, and for the attractiveness of his philosophy, with its potent combination of contemporary salience, accessibility and originality. The complex and inexact nature of influence and the importance of acknowledging and identifying secondary 'inflections' and creative divergence was set up as an important caveat.

We then went on to show how the high modernists used Bergson's ideas as a springboard for their own creative innovations and literary experiments. We began, again, at the broader level, with the ways in which they explored the nature of time per se, and the lived experience of it. Then we looked at how they described our more *recherché*, momentary experiences of 'supra-temporal' bliss. Moving into deeper layers of ontological subtlety we saw how the writers responded to Bergson's engaging idea of using *durée* as a path to existential self-realisation, and in so doing revealing "the temporal architecture of the self."<sup>1</sup> Finally we looked at Stein's microscopically detailed use of language in producing her own, idiosyncratic expression of *durée* and individual essence.

The answers revealed consistent patterns of resonance between Bergson and the modernists, clustered around various ideas, tropes and categories. These ranged widely from such ideas as 'the everyday' and 'bliss' to 'epiphany' and 'literary cubism', but in each case the intention was to underwrite and substantiate the essentially qualitative suggestion of influence.

The scope of this thesis has necessarily been restricted to literary modernism, but, as has been mentioned, Bergson's pervasive appeal also stretches across art, sculpture, architecture, music and film. Based on the idea that a powerful way to establish influence and interpret a complex concept like *durée* is to approach it through its cross-textual development, there are opportunities to look at it also from a 'cross-media' perspective, identifying the lateral commonalities, and the relative and intrinsic suitability of different media to Bergsonian expression. In addition there is scope for some potentially fascinating work analogous with Bergson's cone metaphor of memory,<sup>2</sup> looking at how the application of his philosophy of time has changed *over time*, and *as a function of time*, akin to an 'archaeological' study of his thought.<sup>3</sup>

Bergson always maintained that nobody could truly understand *durée* unless they had experienced it themselves. He often left his readers and audiences with a sense of "sudden expansion... a kind of mental explosion", and these moments of revelation or intellectual epiphany can be seen as him trying, didactically, to bestow upon them the exact experience and sensation of *durée* which he was describing, a reinforcing reflexivity which, as we have seen, both Joyce and Proust emulate.<sup>4</sup>

In a further 'closed loop', his subtle but profound influence continues, through a slow but steady revival of interest in him as a philosopher, combined with the ongoing influence of the modernists who reflect or inflect him.<sup>5</sup> As such, his influence represents in itself an extended 'Bergsonian moment', "like a continuous sentence, interspersed with commas, but never broken by full stops",<sup>6</sup> stretching from his time to the current day, and constantly informed and inspired by what has gone before.<sup>7</sup> In this spirit we are able to say that it is Bergson himself whose "personality flows through time" and his own self "which endures".<sup>8</sup>

## NOTES - CONCLUSION

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<sup>1</sup> Bowie 1998: 4-5

<sup>2</sup> The apex of the cone is our present moment, and at various levels stretching outwards we find “reductions of our past life” MM: 169

<sup>3</sup> cf Michel Foucault: *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969, Routledge 2002), which looks at systems of thought and the boundaries of knowledge as part of a ‘discourse of time’. As with Foucault, much of Bergson’s philosophy is a critique of the world’s unreality. This follows Bergson’s view that his philosophy of mind should work hand in hand with his philosophy of time.

<sup>4</sup> T.E. Hulme: ‘On First Reading Bergson’ (New Age, 126). William James said of him: “Originality in men dates from nothing previous, other things date from it rather. Old fashioned professors... speak of his talent almost with bated breath, while the youngsters flock to him as a master.” William James, *Hibbert Journal* April 1909 pp 59-60

<sup>5</sup> Gilles Deleuze is credited with his main ‘resurrection’ in the 1950s. Some leading contemporary philosophers like Jean-Luc Nancy, et al. are also contributing to Bergson’s gradual restoration.

<sup>6</sup> ME: 70

<sup>7</sup> For example, Bergson is seen to have touched, directly or through others, many of the most significant writers from later modernist genres including John Fowles, Thomas Pynchon, Italo Calvino and others. He is also linked by some to the ‘memory plays’ of Harold Pinter, and Tom Stoppard’s play about time, *Arcadia*. (Ardoin 2013: 121-2)

<sup>8</sup> CM:162

## CHRONOLOGY

Henri Bergson: Life and Works (a summary)	Year
- Henri-Louis Bergson born, Paris	<b>1859</b>
- Bergson graduates from the <i>École Normale</i>	<b>1881</b>
- Bergson's doctoral thesis <i>Time and Free Will</i> published (English translation 1910)	<b>1889</b>
- Bergson marries Louise Neuberger, Marcel Proust's second cousin. Proust is his best man	<b>1891</b>
- Bergson: <i>Matter and Memory</i> published (English translation 1911)	<b>1896</b>
- Awarded the Professorship of Greek Philosophy at the <i>Collège de France</i> . His public lectures at the <i>Collège</i> start	<b>1898</b>
- Bergson: <i>Essay on Laughter</i> published (English translation 1911)	<b>1900</b>
- Bergson: Essay 'An Introduction to Metaphysics' published (English translation 1912)	<b>1903</b>
- Bergson: <i>Creative Evolution</i> published (English translation 1911)	<b>1907</b>
- Bergson meets William James in London	<b>1908</b>
- A series of writers attend Bergson's lectures at the <i>Collège de France</i> , including T.S. Eliot, Henri Alain-Fournier, T.E. Hulme, Gertrude Stein, John Middleton Murry	<b>1910-11</b>
- Bergson lectures in Oxford, Birmingham	<b>1911</b>
- Bergson lectures in New York	<b>1913</b>
- Hostile criticism of Bergson from rationalist philosophers gathers pace (Julien Benda 1913, Bertrand Russell 1914)	
- Bergson's books prohibited by the Holy Office (as Bergson strongly appealed to Catholic Modernists)	<b>1914</b>
- Bergson elected to the highly prestigious <i>Académie Française</i>	
- <i>World War 1 starts, June 28th 1914</i>	
- Bergson, now a diplomat, travels to America to persuade the Administration to join the war	<b>1917</b>
- <i>World War 1 ends, November 11<sup>th</sup> 1918</i>	<b>1918</b>
- Bergson: <i>Mind Energy</i> published (English translation 1920)	<b>1919</b>
- Bergson awarded a Doctorate of Letters by Cambridge University	<b>1920</b>
- Bergson: <i>Duration and Simultaneity</i> published	<b>1922</b>
- Bergson and Einstein debate 'time' in public at the <i>Société française de philosophie</i>	
- Bergson awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature	<b>1927</b>
- Bergson: <i>Two Sources of Morality and Religion</i> published (English translation 1935)	<b>1932</b>
- Bergson: <i>The Creative Mind</i> published (English translation 1946)	<b>1934</b>
- Bergson dies, Paris	<b>1941</b>



<b>Literary High Modernism – Bergsonian Works (timeline of works discussed in this thesis, and Bergson-significant interactions)</b>	<b>Year</b>
- Gertrude Stein writing <i>The Making of Americans</i>	<b>1903-11</b>
- Marcel Proust writing <i>À La Recherche du Temps Perdu</i>	<b>1907-19</b>
- <i>À La Recherche du Temps Perdu</i> publication (rolling)	<b>1913-27</b>
- Gertrude Stein: <i>Three Lives</i>	<b>1909</b>
- Katherine Mansfield becomes co-editor of John Middleton Murry's Bergsonian magazine, <i>Rhythm</i>	<b>1912</b>
- Mansfield and Murry meet and befriend D.H. Lawrence and Frieda - Virginia Woolf attends a lecture given by her sister-in-law, Karin Stephen, on Bergson	<b>1913</b>
- D.H. Lawrence marries Frieda, who in turn gives Mansfield a ring which she wears for the rest of her life - Gertrude Stein: <i>Tender Buttons</i> - James Joyce: <i>Dubliners</i>	<b>1914</b>
- Murry and Lawrence begin the journal <i>Signature</i> - D.H. Lawrence: <i>The Rainbow</i>	<b>1915</b>
- James Joyce: <i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i> - The Murrays and Lawrences fall out, in Cornwall - Mansfield starts to visit Garsington, meets Virginia Woolf	<b>1916</b>
- Mansfield visits the Woolfs in Sussex	<b>1917</b>
- Katherine Mansfield: <i>Bliss</i> - The Murrays and Lawrences are reconciled - Mansfield's underlying illness intensifies, she now knows that she is dying	<b>1918</b>
- Mansfield and Woolf's friendship is at its height	<b>1919</b>
- D.H. Lawrence: <i>Women in Love</i> - Katherine Mansfield: <i>Daughters of the Late Colonel</i>	<b>1920</b>
- Katherine Mansfield: <i>At the Bay; The Garden Party; The Voyage; The Doll's House</i>	<b>1921</b>
- James Joyce: <i>Ulysses</i> - James Joyce meets Marcel Proust (for the only time) at a supper party in Paris. Stravinsky and Picasso were also guests. - Murry and Mansfield have tea with James Joyce in Paris - Karin Stephen, Woolf's sister-in-law, publishes a paper on Bergson	<b>1922</b>
- Katherine Mansfield dies, 9 <sup>th</sup> January	<b>1923</b>
- Virginia Woolf: <i>Mrs Dalloway</i>	<b>1925</b>
- Virginia Woolf: <i>To the Lighthouse</i>	<b>1927</b>
- Wyndham Lewis: <i>Time and Western Man</i>	
- Virginia Woolf: <i>Orlando</i> - D.H. Lawrence: <i>Lady Chatterley's Lover</i>	<b>1928</b>
- Virginia Woolf: <i>The Waves</i>	<b>1931</b>
- James Joyce: <i>Finnegan's Wake</i>	<b>1939</b>

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- Life and Consciousness
- The Soul and the Body - nb B expounds his literary theories here
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## Modernist Texts

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