ASPECTS OF THE TREATMENT OF TIME IN SOME MODERN ENGLISH NOVELISTS.

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CHAPTER ONE.

Introduction.

Painting and sculpture have spatial content: music and poetry express themselves through the medium of time. Painting and sculpture -- space arts -- cannot escape into time, but are restricted to the selection of a single moment in time. True enough, the poet often chooses a particularly significant moment on which to dwell, but he has led up to that moment by a process of movement. The sculptor cannot lead up to the single moment which he has selected; he cannot indicate the solution of an enigmatical moment. By the folds of a dress, by the attitude of a figure, the sculptor can suggest movement, but he cannot portray it. As James Joyce says[1]:

> It is false to say that sculpture, for instance, is an art of repose if by that be meant that sculpture is unassociated with movement, and sculpture is associated with movement in as much as it is rhythmic; for a work of sculptural art must be surveyed according to its rhythm and this survey is an imaginary movement in space. It is not false to say that sculpture is an art of repose in that it(,) a work of sculptural art(,) cannot be presented as itself moving in space and remain a work of sculptural art.

Lessing holds that the painter or sculptor should choose not the climax but the moment just preceding it; it is this latter moment which he considers the most "fruitful". And he continues[2]:

> Now that only is fruitful which allows free play to the imagination. The more we see the more we must be able to imagine; and the more we imagine, the more we must think we see. But no moment in the whole course of an action is so disadvantageous in this respect as that of its culmination. There is nothing beyond, and to present the uttermost to the eye is to bind the wings of Fancy, and compel her, since she cannot soar beyond the impression made on the senses, to employ herself with feebler images, shunning as her limit the visible fulness already expressed.

The painter or sculptor can incite the imagination, but he cannot go with it like the poet, urging it higher and wider in its flight. If a painter depicts a scene involving landscape and persons, he must choose the one second when the

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1. Gorman, James Joyce (New York, 1939), p. 98.
2. Laocoon, chapter III.

landscape appears precisely thus -- he must choose the second after the characters have reached a certain position and before they break again -- and he can have that one moment only.

The musician and the poet with their time arts have their limitations too. There is no medium without limitations. Oscar Wilde, in the preface to Dorian Grey, says that perfect art is the perfect use of an imperfect medium. In a musical composition, the full effect of the individual note, bar, phrase, or movement is not achieved until the whole work has been performed. Similarly the poet cannot in one flash of time cause his audience to grasp imaginatively the total impression which he wants to give -- he can attain this only by a succession of impressions. A poem exists in time and can only be comprehended in time. Some poets -- one immediately thinks of George Herbert -- have tried to arrange the pattern of their thought on the page so as to convey a spatial impression by the grouping and spacing of lines of various lengths. But fundamentally the poem exists not on the printed page but as spoken -- and Herbert's shapes cannot be apprehended by the ear. A picture can be taken in by one who looks at it in a single imaginative moment: not so a poem by one who listens to it. This is not to say that a picture does not gain by being studied: for some painting, indeed, a whole lifetime is too short for the full understanding of the significance of each detail; but it is possible to acquire an impression of the total idea in a flash of time -- it is impossible in a poem. We have pointed out that the painter must choose one moment of time; obviously, he must spend time painting the picture; in the same way, the audience may spend any amount of time looking at the picture; but the impression produced is a static one. The poet uses time to produce a sequence of impressions, to convey a sequence of moods or feelings, to describe a sequence of actions -- and it is the sequence which constitutes the totality of the work of art. A poet may wish to convey to his hearers a complete description of a landscape. If so, the only method open to him is to list the details in the order which seems to him most effective; he can never convey the whole impression at one moment, as the painter can. Similarly, a poet may wish to convey to his hearers a complete description of the

physical beauty of a heroine: in The Rape of Lucrece Shakespeare elaborates on each individual feature in turn, and it must be admitted that the reader cannot envisage the whole of the beauty of Lucrece as he contemplates each separate part: a painter would have been more successful than the poet is. Moreover, the listing of the individual features of a landscape or a face takes up time during which -- for example -- the action of a narrative poem has to be suspended. The poet is generally most successful in descriptions in which he does not attempt to emulate painting in a trait by trait portrait. For instance, a highly effective method of giving an impression of a deserted landscape is to be found in Gray's Elegy: here the poet withdraws each object of animated life, one by one, in order to convey an impression of utter desolation. Here he creates his picture by movement -- by using fluid time as his medium rather than the frozen moment of the actual painter.

We have been speaking of the distinction between space arts and time arts. Of course in the drama a marriage of the space and time arts is effected, and the artist avails himself of both space and time to convey his impressions of life. Drama is related to the space arts by virtue of such things as costume, scenic decoration, grouping of actors; it is related to the time arts by virtue of the physical movements the actors make[1] and the words they speak. Nevertheless, while drama shares the nature of both the space and the time arts, it is the time element which is manifestly the more important. It would be absurd to think of a drama with scenery and costume, but with no action and no words -- this would in fact not be drama but tableau; whereas one may read a play and, while one sacrifices important elements, the experience is of a nature approximating to the dramatic. Drama, then, is essentially a time art.

The art of the novelist is also a time art. And it is with the novel that we shall be concerned in this study -- and, moreover, with the twentieth

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1. These movements, of course, take place in space, but the actor requires time in which to make them. When we speak of space arts we mean those such as painting and sculpture which capture the frozen moment. Ballet is essentially a time art, in that it involves movement from moment to moment. Tableau is -- if an art -- a space art.

century novel.

It is probably true to say that up to comparatively recently most novelists have been consciously concerned simply with recording orderly chronological sequences of events, and orderly chronological developments of characters and character-relationships. And many novelists are still concerned simply with these. But some modern novelists have developed more complex attitudes to time. The development of these attitudes can be attributed to various causes, one of which is indubitably the nature of Bergson's views on time. According to him, there is a kind of time outside us: but within us time, or "duration", as he calls it, is a succession of our conscious states, it is the organisation of the past into a changing and moving present; it is, above all, the interpenetration and interdependence of the present and the past in one moment charged with intensive quality. It is this latter conception of time which influences Marcel Proust and which finds fictional expression in A La Recherche du Temps Perdu. In Proust this new conception of time is handled as an all-important factor in the portrayal of human life and the human mind.

Proust believes in the existence of two kinds of time -- the time which is apprehended by our conscious minds and which rules our daily routine, "external time", we might call it; and, on the other hand, "internal time", which holds sway in our subconscious minds. Rimbaud, in his Correspondances, had already pointed out the importance of this internal time, which we cannot touch or reach by conscious effort, which represents reality, much as Plato's Ideal represented reality. According to this conception of time, our lives as we lead them on the conscious level are but the echoes and shadows of this subconscious life which knows no past or future but only an eternal present. Shelley, in Prometheus Unbound, had expressed a conception of the artist's task as to reveal "forms more real than the living man". Something of the same belief pervades The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and Kubla Khan. Proust feels that his picture of man must be set within what we have called external time; that picture is revealed most penetratingly at certain periods of external time. He chronicles the events that create in his hero the feeling of touching this inner reality,

of having been there before. This sensation is experienced by Marcel, the autobiographical protagonist, at various points, at the touch of a napkin, at the sound of a violin. At such points we feel with Marcel the sense of the stoppage of external time -- the sense that we have escaped into the realm of internal time, that kind of time which is of fundamental significance to us.

It is in thisarea of the human subconscious that modern research on hypnosis and subjects allied to it is being pursued. The mystery of telepathy is more readily acceptable if the transmission can be believed to be achieved from one subconscious mind to another. Freud is interested in the dream as a revelation of the contents of the subconscious mind. And in J. W. Dunne we have the belief that a dream is a precognition of time, where the future is intermingled with the present in the mind which is asleep and in which, therefore, the subconscious is liberated.

Like Proust, Virginia Woolf believes that one moment of experience in the world of external time can, as it were, sink into the inmost recesses of the mind, where it takes its place with a whole host of impressions and feelings which are the results of past experiences, but which in those recesses are not past but are parts of the eternal present. This given experience in the world of external time thus projects the person concerned into the eternal "now" of his innermost mind. The given experience, as it were, liberates the contents of the subconscious so that the person concerned becomes intensely aware of them -- becomes intensely aware of that altogether present world within him. In each person his own internal world is his own. In Mrs. Dalloway the striking of Big Ben transports each of the characters who hears it into his own internal world. It has a profound significance for each, but in each case the nature of that significance varies with the different structure of his or her internal world -- a structure built up by his or her various individual past experiences.

Conrad also shows his belief in the importance of an individual moment. An attempt to recollect a novel of Conrad's will lead one to see a series of vivid pictures, much as Kipling's short stories do. We remember the moment of hush before the jungle storm strikes; we remember the moment when the waves reach their height during the storm at sea. Now Conrad uses such climactic

moments as a means of revealing the characters of persons who experience them. In actual human life a character frequently reveals its nature most positively in a single extraordinary moment of action or suspense: observing the character at such a moment, one may feel that one comprehends it more clearly than one could have done after even years of acquaintance with it under everyday circumstances. Conrad is aware of this, and his characteristic method is to stop his story at this significant moment and to turn his character round, as it were, in the light of it, inspecting it from different viewpoints.

In Ulysses, Joyce gives us the life of Bloom, the protagonist, during a single day. During this time the character passes through various experiences. Each of these experiences reaches down into his subconscious mind and makes contact with it. The contents of his subconscious mind have been determined by the tissue of his past life, and the events of the single day are sufficient, all together, to achieve contact with the entire tissue. Thus, the events of the single day may be said to re-create his whole previous life.

In the pages which follow, we shall study in greater detail the treatment of time in the works of these three writers -- Conrad, Virginia Woolf, and Joyce.

CHAPTER TWO.

Joseph Conrad.

Narration is one of the oldest established habits of human society. Before man could write, he listened to the story of his race and its exploits around the banquet table, as the bard chanted his tale; and to this day stories remain one of the chief interests of man -- telling stories, listening to stories, and reading stories. As the child listens to his bedtime story, inevitably will come his question: "What happens next?". The author of a mature work of fiction may be mainly interested not so much in an enthralling sequence of events as in other things, such as the propagation of a social message or the study of a soul. Joseph Conrad is mainly interested in the portrayal of human character; nevertheless -- and this is one of his conspicuous characteristics -- he writes stories which are, above all, what are known as "rattling good yarns", in which we are quite sure that something will "happen next".

If we say that Conrad's stories are above all stories, we do not suggest that they are lacking in intention beyond the purely narrative, nor that they are artistically naive. On the contrary, the plots of his stories are carefully planned. Although the events in his tales seem just to happen, subtle artistic selection and skilful artistic arrangement have conditioned the form which the narrative takes. The story of The Nigger of the Narcissus is a slight one; Conrad makes it into a full-length novel. On the other hand, the whole rich story of the Costaguanian Republic, with a background of American and English politics, is compressed and intensified into Nostromo.

The first two parts of Nostromo furnish us with an excellent example of Conrad's art in handling time. From the morning of the rising, the full story of which we are told only in the third part, we are whisked back in time by having biographical studies of the various characters presented to us. We go with Gould to his childhood, in England -- to his growing

obsession with the silver mine -- to his courtship in Italy; we are told of the various exploits of Nostromo, and learn of his reactions to different past experiences and situations; then we follow a little life sketch of the American financier, which includes a reference to his European parentage. All this involves chronological jumps, some of which Conrad does not make clear, so that it is at times difficult for the reader to know whether he is in Sulaco now or in England twenty years before. For, of course, jumps in time may involve jumps in place too.

The same treatment of time is to be noticed in Chance, in Almayer's Folly, indeed in most of the stories in which Conrad is attempting realism. In Victory there is no single forward action in the first part. We survey Heyst through various eyes for thirty pages; only then, in Part Two, is the main thread of the action taken up, and, when it is, it starts at a point in the story before that which we had reached in our preliminary survey of the character. In other words, when the action proper commences, in Part Two, Conrad takes us back in time, in order to bring us, in ordinary narrative, told in ordinary temporal sequence, up to a point to which he had made us jump earlier, in Part One. In Part One, as we have said, we survey Heyst through various eyes. We survey him in turn as the kindly captain encounters him, as the hostile inn-keeper reacts to him, as his disciple meets him. The narrator takes up each man's tale from where each man personally met Heyst -- and this may be at a point earlier or later than that at which he was first encountered by the previous observer. With this succession of backward and forward movements, it is undeniable that in Part One we do not have orderly forward progression. At each retrogression in time we lose ground, as it were, in our forward progression, and the action of the novel is impeded. It is worth noting that this technique is used only at the beginnings of novels -- Conrad is too fine an artist not to realise the loss of momentum and driving force which it involves.

This shuttling backwards and forwards in Victory and Nostromo is a technique which Mr. Cooper in his interesting study, Some English Story Tellers, compares most happily with that of the spider:

> Did you ever watch a common garden spider preparing to spin its web? From some apparently irrelevant point, on a leaf or branch, it suddenly drops a number of inches to some other equally irrelevant point; then it proceeds at a tangent to a new point of departure, hesitates, retraces its steps, picks up some lost thread, crosses and recrosses its path, pausing to tie a knot here and there, -- and all of a sudden this apparently aimless zigzagging takes on a definite design, of perfect and marvellous symmetry.[1]

But the spider proceeds by instinct; Conrad performs his analogous feat by conscious artistic design. Just as in real life our opinion of a person is formed on the basis of a number of isolated impressions gathered at different times, each one perhaps illuminating with fresh significance those that have preceded it, so each of the observers of Heyst in Part One forms his opinion of him; and Conrad conveys the impressions of each of the observers in turn, omitting all matters irrelevant to this, all irrelevant incidents, for example -- incidents to which, however, he may later have to revert in other connections. Then our opinion of Heyst -- the readers' opinion -- is based on the impressions made on us by the reactions of each of the observers in turn: we gather tham up, and each illuminates the others. Now these reactions have not necessarily taken place in the actual sequence in which they are presented in Part One -- we fuse them into chronological sequence only after having imaginatively considered them one by one: Conrad does not himself present us with that chronological sequence in this Part.

Perhaps the most striking illustration we can give of this technique is Conrad's own autobiography, A Personal Record. The author begins his tale, which includes his childhood and entire life up to the point at which he writes Almayer's Folly, and ranges backwards and forwards as he sees fit. Mr. Cooper, indeed, notices that no two chapters, and scarcely two pages, are consecutive in point of time. This "recession of time" technique ensures that the reader shall have presented to him the real significance of a set of experiences -- the real relationship between one particular experience and another -- the two being separated in the full chronological sequence by a whole host of irrelevancies. Our lives are so overloaded with details of everyday routine that the real and ultimate

1. Frederic Taber Cooper, Some English Story Tellers, Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1912, p. 10.

significance of a particular experience may not affect us fully at the time. An event months later may call to one's mind some happening which one had forgotten; an incident years later may complete one's picture of a friend whose actions at the time puzzled one. Conrad is wise in suppressing the intervening events which would only destroy the unity of this particular sequence; he attains the intensity, the singleness of effect, of the short story as he concentrates on one particular person or angle, follows it out to its completion as an artistic whole, and then starts again on another. In the portrayal of character, the undisturbed momentary emphasis is more important than the mere narration of exterior facts.

Apart from these peculiarities of his treatment of time, Conrad uses the method of handling time which is the prerogative of any narrator. Some parts of a given story may be drawn out, emphasised, dwelt on in detail; other parts may be merely summarised. In order to gain the interest of the reader, Conrad will halt his story in the accepted manner to achieve suspense. It is not for nothing that one of his works is entitled Suspense; and in Youth there are two false starts before the real and fateful journey begins. But this is only part of the stock-in-trade of the novelist; we would rather emphasise his use of recession.

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Conrad profoundly realises the importance of time in human life. Can we suspect him of sarcasm, or is he simply being true to his artistic conscience, when he makes his American in Nostromo say of the silver mine which dominates the entire story:

> European capital has been flung into it with both hands for years. Not ours, though. We in this country know just about enough to keep indoor when it rains. We sit and watch. Of course, some day we shall step in. We are bound to. But there's no hurry. Time itself has got to wait on the greatest country in the whole of God's universe.[1]

But in the main, seriously, time is all-powerful and, in its hurry, is the enemy of man, ever hurrying him on to eventual destruction. Conrad is con-

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1. Nostromo, Harper & Brothers, London, 1905, p. 64.

cerned to discover what is (to use Heyst's words) "the best way of cheating the time which is allotted to us whether we want it or not"[1], i.e. how to get the maximum out of a temporary existence. Time works with chance to outwit man:

> The clock began to strike, and the deep-toned vibration filled the room as though with the sound of an enormous bell tolling far away. He counted the strokes. Twelve. Another day had begun. To-morrow had come; the mysterious and lying to-morrow that lures men, disdainful of love and faith, on and on through the poignant futilities of life to the fitting reward of a grave. He counted the strokes, and gazing at the grate seemed to wait for more. Then, as if called out, left the room, walking firmly.[2]

Perhaps the only insane man in Conrad's works is to be found in the tale entitled Tomorrow. Conrad's men, for all that they are obsessed, many of them, with one "idee fixe", are very sane. But Captain Hagberd has fixed his mind so constantly on the "lying" promise of tomorrow that when it comes today he cannot recognise it.

Time and chance conspire together to offer man fleeting opportunity, for better or for worse. Conrad tells himself of the importance in his own life of a chance incident. As he was about to give up his struggle for a sea career which his family and friends opposed, he witnessed the unflagging enthusiastic effort of a middle-aged Englishman to climb a mountain. And, reinspired, he fought on, and went to sea. Sometimes a man is cheated by opportunity. Thus it is emphasised that Nostromo was a good man until opportunity cheated him; so were Lord Jim and Falk. They would have gone through life as good men, had not time and chance plotted to create a set of circumstances which they could not resist. This fatalism of Conrad made him a popular author with the men who fought in the Great War.

Conrad is a fatalist in that he believes man predestined to failure in this fight against time and chance. The important thing is to show courage in fighting this battle which is already lost. Some authors show

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2. Tales of Unrest, Eveleigh, Nash, & Grayson, Ltd., London, p. 262.

1. Victory, Doubleday, Doran, & Co., Inc., New York, 1929, p. 54.

man overcome by man: Conrad shows him overcome by nature. In Greek tragedy we see man overcome by the gods, who were a combination of the two, men in appearance, in lust, in pettishness, but men with the elemental greatness and power of nature. Conrad's human beings are displayed in their struggle with nature, are conquered by nature; but it would be an error to assume therefore that nature is the hero.[1] It has been stated that the real hero of Typhoon is not Captain McWhirr but the typhoon itself.[2] On the contrary, the accent is placed on the captain. As the forces of nature grow more powerful, so does his struggle gain more weight. The more opposition man receives from nature, the more valuable is his courage in fighting on. And it is this courage that Conrad prizes and seeks to display.

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Conrad's halting of his narrative, in the manner and for the purpose which we have described, points forward to the work of certain contemporary writers, such as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, who refuse to concern themselves with a single straightforward chronological sequence. In all justice, however, we must admit that this particular device was not wholly new in English literature. Sterne stops his narrative to dissect the shades of feeling he is experiencing. Meredith halts his narrative to examine his characters. Conrad's habit of viewing a character through different eyes, as in Chance, in Victory, in Nostromo -- his habit of conveying a character by means of the impressions it makes on other characters, revealing it in a succession of different lights, is to be found in Browning's The Ring and the Book. But in spite of these distinguished predecessors, there is in Conrad's technique a realisation of the importance of the moment which can only make us think of Bergson and his disciples. It is the instant of time when all our past, all that passage of time which is now a part of our personality, which has gone to make that personality, is fused into a present moment

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1. There would perhaps be some interest in a comparison between Conrad's shrewd assessment of the genius of Galsworthy in the Last Essays and Galsworthy's misinterpretation of Conrad, as revealed in the following statement: "In the novels of Joseph Conrad, nature is first, man is second".
2. See, among others, Cooper, op. cit., p. 12.

of reality. And thus, in character portrayal, it is that one moment which will most clearly reveal the essence of personality. Dorothy Richardson will show Miriam at various moments of hyper-sensitivity in Pilgrimage. Mrs. Ramsay, in Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse, will suddenly become intensely aware of herself and of the characters around her at the moment of sitting at table. And in that one revealing moment, the character in Conrad is laid bare and scrutinised with the same devastating thoroughness that characterised Conrad in real life. His good friend, Ford Madox Hueffer, relates that when you had secured Conrad's attention, he would insert a monocle into his right eye and scrutinise your face from very near, as a watchmaker looks into the works of a watch.

It is indeed the moments that count in Conrad. It is the moment of the typhoon that brings out the best in Captain McWhirr. It is a split instant, before he realises what he is doing, that Lord Jim takes to jump overboard, doing what he had condemned others for doing, and thus revealing something significant about his character. Admittedly, Conrad uses dramatic suspense. There is the hush before the jungle storm strikes, the uneasy excitement in the pause before the typhoon; but it is the actual moment in which Conrad is primarily interested, since to him the climactic moment is the test of character. This moment is often that of death, when, perhaps, the vicissitudes of past experience crowd together in the consciousness that is about to fade. And the death of one character may constitute a climactic experience in the life of another. Lena's death shows Heyst her love for him -- the love which, could he have credited it before, might have saved him. Conrad shows his characters in the intensified moment of action, and this moment is always the climax of the story, because it is in this moment that a complete break-down of barriers is effected and we are brought face to face with the real personalities of the characters in the situation.

And as that one moment will serve to bring out the character fully, so does its intensity represent an experience, mental or physical, that can belong to that character only. The narrator of Youth tries to convey to his listeners the magic of the moment in which he had first seen the East:

> But for me all the East is contained in that vision of my youth. It was all in that moment when I opened my young eyes on it. I came upon it from a tussle with the sea -- and I was young -- and I saw it looking at me. And this is all that is left of it! Only a moment; a moment of strength, of romance, of glamour -- of youth!....A flick of sunshine upon a strange shore, the time to remember, the time for a sigh, and -- good-bye! -- Night -- Good-bye![1]

In this farewell, he realises the impossibility of communicating his experience. Falk is cut off from mankind by his experience of eating human flesh. Almayer is isolated. Man to Conrad is always alone. That is the moral of that little-known work in which he collaborated with Hueffer, The Inheritors.

> If you had not loved me you would not have betrayed your very self. At the first you stood alone; as much alone as I. All these people were nothing to you. I was nothing to you. But you must needs love them and me. You should have let them remain nothing to the end. But you did not. What were they to you? Shapes, shadows on a sheet. They looked real. But were they -- any one of them? You will never see any of them again; you will never see me again; we shall all be parts of a past of shadows.[2]

Man must always stand alone against nature.

In another sense each of Conrad's characters seems to stand alone as an isolated figure. Conrad surveys his characters from a certain distance. It has been emphasised by critics that Conrad is an aristocrat. But his lack of intimacy with the characters he draws stems not from ignorance of the "below-stairs" like Thackeray's, nor from a conscious horror of the masses, like Aldous Huxley's. It is simply that he views his characters with a certain detachment. He projects his men and women on a screen and stands back to see what will happen.

This effect of detachment is heightened by the fact that so much of his narration comes out of his characters' memories. The events of twenty years before do not seem real in the present to Conrad in quite the same way as they do to Joyce. We have said that Conrad is conscious of the climactic moment in which the character's whole past is compressed. Nevertheless it is true that at the same time we are conscious in Conrad of a slight flavour of nostalgia as the characters look back over the past -- a slight feeling of regret for the "good old time", as Marlow keeps calling his experience in Youth.

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1. Youth, ed. cit., p. 42.
2. Joseph Conrad and F. M. Hueffer, The Inheritors, Doubleday, Page, & Co., New York, 1923, p. 210.

Thus it is that there are so many beautiful pictures of old age in Conrad, for he captures that feeling of aloofness, of living in the past, of appreciating the past in the light of the intervening years, that is so typical of old age. We call to mind the powerful if unpleasant picture of the dying nigger of the "Narcissus". We call to mind the hero of Almayer's Folly -- and Don Jose Avellanos in Nostromo, always talking about the days of his prime at the court of St. James. We call to mind the picture of the death of Garabaldini Viola:[1]

> Very upright, white-haired, leonine, heroic in his absorbed quietness, he felt in the pocket of his red shirt for the spectacles given to him by Dona Emilia. He put them on. After a long period of immobility he opened the book, and from on high, looked through the glasses at the small print in double columns. A rigid stern expression settled upon his features with a slight frown, as if in response to some gloomy thought or unpleasant sensation. But he never detached his eyes from the book while he swayed forward gently, gradually, till his snow-white head rested upon the open pages. A wooden clock ticked methodically on the white-washed wall, and growing slowly cold, the Garabaldino lay alone, rugged, undecayed, like an old oak uprooted by a treacherous gust of wind.[2]

The viewing of events from a distance in time is very common when Conrad uses his favourite device of making a character relate a story. This gives past events a perspective and clarity in that they are all related to the personality of a single narrator.[3] It helps to bring about the singleness

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1. Nostromo, ed. cit., p. 479.

2. Of all Conrad's magnificent death scenes, perhaps the most effective is that of the death of a ship. We might allow ourselves to quote a few words: "Between the darkness of earth and heaven she was burning fiercely upon a disc of purple sea shot by the blood-red play of gleams; upon a disc of water glittering and sinister. A high, clear flame, an immense and lonely flame, ascended from the ocean, and from its summit the black smoke poured continuously at the sky. She burned furiously; mournful and imposing like a funeral pile kindled in the night, surrounded by the sea, watched over by the stars. A magnificent death had come like a grace, like a gift, like a reward to the old ship at the end of her laborious days....The unconsumed stern was the last to sink; but the paint had gone, had cracked, had peeled off, and there was no word, no stubborn device that was like her soul, to flash at the rising sun her creed and her name." (Youth, ed. cit., p. 35).

3. Lord Jim would be a particularly good example of this point.

of effect, the unity, to which we referred earlier. It lends the events greater emotional significance as we see the highlights of a man's youth in the twilight of his old age. This sometimes necessitates a "double time" treatment. In Victory this is not so. But in Youth there are two currents of time -- the time taken up by the events of the story twenty years ago, and the actual time it takes to tell the story, which latter is emphasised by the continual reminders of the narrator's presence as he calls for more drink.

And it is perhaps his persistent habit of viewing events from a distance that distinguishes Conrad most from his supposed companion in English literature, Kipling, who is right inside the events he describes. The similarities are obvious -- the ability to tell a story, the passion for the sea, for the elemental experiences in the life of man. Both writers abound in colourful pictures of the East. But if Conrad admits his fascination for "the surrounding vision of form and colour, of sunshine and shadows"[1], for him it is only a surrounding. It is the man in nature that counts. If he views man from a distance, it is as the pourer aims from a distance, that the flow may be more concentrated and strike deeper. And in his portrayal of the heart of man, to which he bends his unusual treatment of time, Conrad is essentially a modern.

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1. Preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus, J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., London, 1929, p. 12.

CHAPTER THREE.

Virginia Woolf.

"Virginia Woolf's modernism is in her bones."[1]

Mrs. Woolf is extremely interested in time. So are many contemporary writers. But if the interest is general, her particular handling of it is the most expert and the most perfect.

In Mrs. Woolf there lives again something not unlike the polished artistry of the Augustan age, allied to a sense of rightness in word selection and a unique subtlety of vision. But for all this surety of expression, it is not always easy to understand her, any more than it is easy to appreciate the impressionistic school of painting. For all her brilliance, it is impossible to gainsay a certain self-assertiveness in her modernity. She jumps from one impression to another: the reader must be the fittest or the most modern to survive.

But apart from being the most perfect stylist of the moderns, she is also in many ways the most healthy. Hers is a positive philosophy. There is a widespread feeling of pessimism in the world today. Politically, economically, socially, man is meeting failure. In these circumstances, it is hard for the writer in portraying life to maintain a feeling of hope, to give the reader courage to go on. Life to Virginia Woolf is not necessarily a pleasant thing, but it is always full of excitement, and always worth experiencing. It is essential to accept it. Mrs. Woolf makes the creature for whom we feel she has the most love, to whom she has the closest affiliation, Mrs. Ramsay, in To the Lighthouse, express her beliefs about this thing called life:

> For the most part, oddly enough, she must admit she felt this thing that she called life terrible, hostile, and quick to pounce on you if you gave it a chance. There were the eternal problems: suffering, death; the poor. There was always a woman dying of cancer even here. And yet she had said to all these children: You shall go through with it. To eight people she had said relentlessly that (and the bill for the greenhouse would be fifty pounds). For that reason, knowing what was before them -- love and ambition and being wretched alone in dreary

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1. Joseph Warren Beach, The Twentieth Century Novel, D. Appleton - Century Co. Inc., New York, 1932, p. 490.

> places -- she often had the feeling: Why must they grow up and lose it all? And then she said to herself, brandishing her sword at life, nonsense. They will be perfectly happy. And here she was, she reflected, feeling life rather sinister again, making Minta marry Paul Rayley; because whatever she might feel about her own transaction and she had had experiences which need not happen to everyone (she did not name them to herself); she was driven on, too quickly, she knew, almost as if it were an escape for her too, to say that people must marry; people must have children.[1]

And thus, recognising its horrors, its difficulties, its incomprehensibilities, she still believes in life, still says "Yes" to it, as Molly Bloom, who symbolises all womankind, gives the "Yes" of acceptance in the last word of Ulysses.

Virginia Woolf believes that the system of writing which provided the Victorians with their stories is out-dated; she moves away from the beginning, the middle, and the end of the traditional novel, which she uses herself in her early novels. Her particular genius, it must be admitted, is not that of a conspicuously great plot-constructor. But we must mark that she is in fact capable of compiling competent plots. The plots of the early works, The Voyage Out and Night and Day, are conventional in their treatment of time -- that is, the plots develop in ordinary chronological sequence. In her later works themselves, she is aware of the necessity for some kind of sequence, even if it is not to be a straightforward chronological one. In The Waves, Neville describes the art of story-telling:

> And now, let Bernard begin. Let him burble on, telling us stories, while we lie recumbent. Let him describe what we have all seen so that it becomes a sequence. Bernard says there is always a story. I am a story. Louis is a story. There is the story of the boot-boy, the story of the man with one eye, the story of the woman who sells winkles....
>
> But Bernard goes on talking. Up they bubble -- images. 'Like a camel',....'a vulture'. The camel is a vulture; the vulture a camel; for Bernard is a dangling wire, loose but seductive. Yes, for when he talks, when he makes his foolish comparisons, a lightness comes over one. One floats, too, as if one were that bubble; one is freed; I have escaped, one feels....
>
> Yes, the appalling moment has come when Bernard's power fails him and there is no longer any sequence and he sags and twiddles a bit of string and falls silent, gaping as if about to burst into tears. Among the tortures and devastations of life is this then -- our friends are not able to finish their stories.[2]

1. To the Lighthouse, J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., London, 1938, pp. 69-70.
2. The Waves, Hogarth Press, London, 1931, pp. 39-41.

As she brushes aside the old tools, in their inadequacy and in her modernity, she casts about for new ones. These were to be found in the philosophy of William James and the novels of Henry James. In 1890, William James had explained his theory of subjective life.

> The first and foremost concrete fact which everyone will affirm to belong to his inner experience is that consciousness of some sort goes on. 'States of mind' succeed each other in him.[1]

William James further maintained that these states of mind, one springing out of another, form a continuous flow.

> Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as 'chain' or 'train' do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed: it flows. A 'river' or a 'stream' are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life.[2]

Virginia Woolf attempts to record the movement or flux of impressions released from the subconscious into the conscious mind as a result of certain external stimuli. Sights, sounds, etc., experienced at a particular moment, bring into the conscious, from the subconscious, a flow of continuously connected ideas, feelings, etc., which, generated at various times in the past, and retained in the subconscious, are now released into the motion of continuous experience in the conscious present.

Winifred Holtby, in an excellent criticism, describes Mrs. Woolf's use of the stream of consciousness technique:

> This is more than cinematograph technique. It is like an orchestra. Senses, thoughts, emotions, will, memory, fancies, the impact of the outside world, action and conversation each play a different instrument. Mrs. Woolf is now a conductor. She raises her arms, beckoning now to fancy, now to power, now to a noise of traffic from the street, now to a polite inquiry about sugar. It is immensely complicated, immensely suggestive. The whole orchestra gets going at once, responsive to her beat. She must keep control. She must make some kind of harmony, of melody, some intelligible rhythm, some sequence that the listener can follow or the music will dissolve into a confused cacophony of sound.[3]

This then is the task she sets herself, to convey reality through the stream of consciousness, to record the "myriad impressions" of the mind as they come, "as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday",[4]

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1. Psychology (Briefer Course), Henry Holt & Co., 1892, p. 152.
2. Ibid., p. 159. 3. Virginia Woolf, Wishart & Co., London, 1932, p. 114. 4. Virginia Woolf, The Common Reader, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1925, essay on Modern Fiction, p. 212.

to show that these are the impressions that build personality as we encounter it. It is part of her thesis to assume that, since one person impresses different people in various different ways, so there must be various different people inherent in one person. The plot of The Waves concerns the interrelated influences which each of the characters exerts over the others. There is no character in To the Lighthouse who is not affected by Mrs. Ramsay; and she continues to affect them after her death. This is one person impressing different people in various different ways. As for the various different persons inherent in one person, here is Rhoda of The Waves speaking at a party:

> Alone, I rock my basins; I am mistress of my fleet of ships. But here, twisting the tassels of this brocaded curtain in my hostess's window, I am broken into separate pieces; I am no longer one... There is, then, a world immune from change. But I am not composed enough, standing on tiptoe on the verge of fire, still scorched by the hot breath, afraid of the door opening and the leap of the tiger, to make even one sentence. Every time the door opens I am interrupted. I am not yet twenty-one. I am to be broken... Like a ribbon of weed I am flung far every time the door opens. I am the foam that sweeps and fills the uttermost rims of the rocks with whiteness; I am also a girl here in this room.[1]

Many of Mrs. Woolf's characters are aware of this separation of the personality into its many components.

This breaking up of the personality, which is continually occurring in her books, admittedly tends to make it difficult for the reader to grasp the singleness of the character. M. Cazamian has put this most forcibly in his admirable History:

> The peril of the manner lies in what is indeed its greatest attractiveness -- in that absolute sincerity of immediate impressions through which the outline of each figure runs some risk of disappearing; our intelligence loses its hold upon too fragmentary centres of consciousness, and the relative permanence without which there are no characters worthy of the name shows a tendency to disappear.[2]

In Orlando the idea that a character consists of a number of different personalities is pushed to a fantastic extreme. The book is de-

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1. The Waves, ed. cit., p. 114.

2. A History of English Literature, Legouis and Cazamian, London, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1940, p. 1365.

scribed as a biography. Ostensibly, the life of the protagonist, Orlando, extends over three centuries -- from the Elizabethan period to modern times. Orlando changes into a woman in the course of the narrative. In this hero-heroine, the author portrays her friend and fellow-writer Miss V. Sackville-West. Mrs. Woolf is trying to convey that an individual writer absorbs into his or her own personality the influence of the writings of past ages. And just as Miss Sackville-West, in her poem The Land, is indebted to writers before her, so is her present personality the hereditary outcome of a succession of ancestors. In the fantasy, the history of the succession of her ancestors is turned into a history of herself; she herself actually exists in each century. Orlando embodies in himself/herself a number of distinct personalities, each related to a particular period in Miss Sackville-West's ancestry. These distinct personalities all go to make up her own single personality. But the reader is admittedly more conscious of the distinct personalities than of the single personality.

In Mrs. Woolf's thought, the past is all preserved in the present. The old have still the spirit of the young, and they have gained something besides. Peter, who loved Clarissa many years before, looks at the new Clarissa, the Clarissa grown old:

> ...with the stateliness of her grey hair. She wore ear-rings and a silver green mermaid's dress. Lolloping on the waves and braiding her tresses she seemed, having that gift still; to be; to exist; to sum it all up in the moment as she passed; turned, caught her scarf in some other woman's dress, unhitched it, laughed, all with the perfect ease and air of a creature floating in its element. But age had brushed her; even as a mermaid might behold in her glass the setting sun on some very clear evening over the waves. There was a breath of tenderness; her severity, her prudery, her woodenness were all warmed through her now, and she had about her...an inexpressible dignity; an exquisite cordiality; as if she wished the whole world well, and must now, being on the very verge and rim of things, take her leave.[1]

In To the Lighthouse, Lydia realises the true significance of past manifestations of characters as she looks back on them after a considerable interval; through the passage of time she has gained a sympathetic insight

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1. Mrs. Dalloway, New York, Modern Library, Inc., 1928, pp. 264-5.

into human nature. Peter feels that the compensation for growing old is that the

> passions remain as strong as ever, but one has gained at last the power which adds the supreme flavour to existence, -- the power of taking hold of experience, of turning it around, slowly, in the light.[1]

Virginia Woolf is acutely aware of the relentlessness and inevitability of the passage of time. Bernard in The Waves realises it:

> Time lets fall its drop. The drop that has formed on the roof of the soul falls. On the roof of my mind time, forming, lets fall its drop. Last week, as I stood shaving, the drop fell. I, standing with my razor in my hand, became suddenly aware of this merely habitual nature of my action (this is the drop forming) and congratulated my hands, ironically, for keeping at it. Shave, shave, shave, I said. Go on shaving. The drop fell. All through the day's work, at intervals, my mind went to an empty place, saying, "What is lost? What is over?" And "over and done with", I muttered, "over and done with", solacing myself with words. People noticed the vacuity and the aimlessness of my conversation. The last words of my sentence trailed away. As I buttoned on my coat to go home I said dramatically, "I have lost my youth".
>
> It is curious how at every crisis, some phrase which does not fit insists upon coming to the rescue -- the penalty of living in an old civilisation with a note-book. This drop falling has nothing to do with losing my youth. This drop falling is time tapering to a point. Time, [redacted] which is a sunny pasture covered with a dancing light, time, which is widespread as a field at midday, becomes pendant. Time tapers to a point. As a drop falls, from a glass heavy with some sediment, time falls. These are the true cycles, these are the true events.[2]

The power of time is felt by all the characters. A very compelling passage occurs in Mrs. Dalloway. The story of Septimus, the young man who is suffering from war nerves, forms, as it were, a sub-plot to the main one of the activity and interplay of Clarissa and Peter. The lives of Septimus and his wife Rezia cross those of Clarissa and Peter, and affect them at various points. Peter sees Septimus and Rezia sitting in the park at a moment of the greatest importance in their lives.

> "It is time," said Rezia.
>
> The word "time" split its husk; poured its riches over him; and from his lips fell like shells, like shavings from a plane, without his making them, hard, white, imperishable words and flew to attach

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1. Mrs. Dalloway, ed. cit., p. 119.
2. The Waves, ed. cit., pp. 200-1.

> themselves to their places in an ode to Time; an immortal ode to Time. He sang. Evans answered from behind the tree. The dead were in Thessaly, Evans sang, among the orchids. There they waited till war was over, and now the dead, now Evans himself --
>
> "For God's sake, don't come!" Septimus cried out. For he could not look upon the dead.[1]

This flow is released by the simple sentence "It is time". For Rezia, it means that they should proceed to the doctor. To Peter, who passes by and overhears it, it is a trivial and very ordinary remark. But to Septimus it means this whole cascade of words, "this revelation", the release of the whole world of the unhinged imagination, represented by the imagined approach of his dead friend Evans: it involves the whole break-up of a man's mind and the life of the woman who is bound up in it. The actual sound of the clock might to a given person mean no more than that a quarter of an hour has passed -- simply that: but its sound chimes the end of reality for Septimus.

In Mrs. Woolf we notice also a contrast between the ordinary flow of time and the isolated moment of spiritual experience in which the subject feels a sense of a moment that is eternal and not temporal. Mrs. Ramsay feels this suddenly in the middle of dinner. For no particular reason, she feels a solemnity, as we have all felt sometime, a sense of having risen above ordinary time, of having reached what Rimbaud called the essence of time.

> Just now she had reached security; she hovered like a hawk suspended; like a flag floated in an element of joy...It partook, she felt,... of eternity...There is a coherence in things, a stability; something, she meant, is immune from change, and shines out (she glanced at the window with its ripple of reflected lights) in the face of the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral, like a ruby; so that again tonight she had the feeling she had had once today already, of peace, of rest. Of such moments, she thought, the thing that is made remains for ever after. This would remain.[2]

The paradox of time is that much can happen or be conveyed in a second, whereas an hour can pass in barrenness. Every single moment can mean so much -- centuries of ancestral background, a whole tradition of upbring-

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1. Mrs. Dalloway, ed. cit., p. 105.
2. To the Lighthouse, ed. cit., pp. 122-3.

ing and a life's experience have gone to make that moment what it is. Mrs. Woolf's work throbs with feeling for the moment, for the value of something that the passing of time is for ever and irrevocably taking away. You can feel the vigour in a passage such as this:

> Life, itself, every moment of it, every drop of it, here, this instant, now, in the sun, in Regent's Park, was enough. Too much indeed. A whole lifetime was too short to bring out, now that one had acquired the power, the full flavour; to extract every ounce of pleasure, every shade of meaning.[1]

Her writing brims over with feeling for the passing moment; and Mrs. Ramsay, as she leaves the room after dinner

> with her foot on the threshold, waited a moment longer in a scene which was vanishing even as she looked, and then as she moved... and left the room, it changed, it shaped itself differently; it had become, she knew, giving it one last look over her shoulder, already the past.[2]

Virginia Woolf in her stories deals with significant and intensely felt moments. The Waves is almost wholly composed of such moments -- moments the importance of which the characters feel acutely. If the moment is at the end of a luncheon meeting, the characters sit on -- even awkwardly, fidgetting -- so as to prolong the occasion -- so as not to destroy the moment of intensity. But, just as there are other lunches, there are other and many moments. Like Proust, Virginia Woolf shows that it is a succession of intense, significant moments that makes up life, that there is a steady flow joining these moments in our subconscious stream. Like her creature Hewet, the author in The Voyage Out, she wants to combine the moments that come like lights.

Small incidents are of importance, details apparently insignificant but really vitally significant -- for instance Peter's impression of Clarissa as she simply came down the stairs, or Clarissa's recollection of "how the blinds used to flap at Bourton".[3] Such trivial incidents may be be forgotten, but they may have played an important part in helping to make

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1. Mrs. Dalloway, ed. cit., pp. 119-20.
2. To the Lighthouse, ed. cit., p. 130.
3. Mrs. Dalloway, ed. cit., p. 62.

us what we are. Some sensation brings back a wave of recollection, and the memory is so strong that it makes today seem as yesterday or yesterday as real and present as today. When Neville hears of the death of Percival in The Waves, his nervous tension is acute, and the strain of the moment brings back a recollection of events which had impressed him as a child and which we have had related earlier in the book:

> I will not lift my foot to climb the stair. I will stand for one moment beneath the immitigable tree, alone with the man whose throat is cut, while downstairs the cook shoves in and out the dampers. I will not climb the stair.[1]

This treatment is exactly similar to that of Proust. Marcel stands still as Neville stands, unable, unwilling to move, savouring to the full the moment that has brought the past to present life.

Mrs. Dalloway, showing the importance of the moment, emphasises that it is a succession of isolated moments that makes up life: Peter had forgotten many things about Clarissa, details that had gone to make him love her, and to build that love into a firm tissue. But these moments at which he had observed these seemingly insignificant details had contributed to the construction of something that could defy time itself -- love. Now further, a particular moment of significant experience may recall a previous moment of significant experience, so that all irrelevant intervening experiences are annihilated. Peter's love had come into existence sixteen years before the period of the action of the story, and now, sixteen years later, he becomes aware that heloves Clarissa and has loved her all that time -- and the new awareness fills him with terror, with ecstasy, exactly as it had done sixteen years before when he was sitting opposite to her at dinner. Thus love has reduced sixteen years to nought.

Time, then, has no hold over love; nor indeed over happiness, the sudden unreasoning happiness that floods the moment with the peace of

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1. The Waves, ed. cit., p. 164.

eternity -- the moment of happiness in which the passage of time is forgotten: the moment itself is enough.

> Eternal, odd, incredible...she had never been so happy. Nothing could be slow enough; nothing last too long. No pleasure could equal...this having done with the triumphs of youth, lost herself in the process of living, to find it with a shock of delight, as the sun rose, as the day sank.[1]

Death vanquishes time, for death brings a possibility of immortality. Clarissa expounds a theory which

> allowed her to believe...that since our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary compared with the other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive, be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places after death. Perhaps...[2]

With death, time stops; and yet, obscurely, it goes on. It goes on for those who live on:

> They went on living...they...would grow old. A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was a defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death.[3]

And it goes on too for the soul which reaches eternity, which sees and understands the root of time.

The Waves is perhaps Mrs. Woolf's most interesting work from the point of view of technique. We have already noted that the strictly temporal sequence has been replaced by a recording of events as they are assimilated by the stream of thought of the character. There is no external action in The Waves, no action proper. This is the story of the lives of six people as they affect one another and as they are affected by one another and by a central figure, Percival, whom we see only through their eyes and know only from their impressions. But there is a sequence; the inner pattern is conveyed by the recurring of a collection of haunting refrains, of repetition of

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1. Mrs. Dalloway, ed. cit., p. 282.
2. Ibid., pp. 231-2.
3. Ibid., p. 280.

words and associations, and by a rhythmic rise and fall in stress that recalls the movement of waves; the outer pattern is imposed by the introduction of formalised prose poems acting as chapter links in which the chronological sequence of a day is described. This temporal movement of a day symbolises the development of the characters' lives. They are children at dawn. As the sun reaches its height, they are in their prime. We foresee their end as the sun sinks.

> The hard stone of the day was cracked and light poured through its splinters. Red and gold shot through the waves, in rapid running arrows, feathered with darkness. Erratically, rays of light flashed and wandered, like signals from sunken islands, or darts shot through laurel groves by shameless, laughing boys. But the waves, as they neared the shore, were robbed of light and fell in one long concussion, like a wall falling, a wall of grey stone, unpierced by any chink of light.[1]

So we find in Ulysses that the passage of one day symbolises the whole passage of a life.

In the same way the chronological sequence is discarded in Orlando. It is possible to regard this work as having been undertaken in a purely fantastic lighthearted mood rather than as a conscious experiment in time treatment. But the central theme of Orlando, the suggestion that all past ages exist in the present personality, is to be found also in a passage in Mrs. Dalloway, where Mrs. Woolf's seriousness of purpose is beyond doubt. Peter stands listening to an old woman singing of love, an emotion which, we have seen, is greater than time; through all ages --

> Through all ages -- when the pavement was grass, when it was swamp, through the age of tusk and mammoth, through the age of silent sunrise, the battered woman -- for she wore a skirt -- with her right hand exposed, her left clutching at her side, stood singing of love -- love which has lasted a million years, she sang, love which prevails, and millions of years ago, her lover, who had been dead these centuries, had walked, she crooned, with her in May; but in the course of ages, long as summer days, and flaming, she remembered, with nothing but red asters, he had gone; death's enormous sickle had swept those tremendous hills, and when at last she laid her hoary and immensely aged head on the earth, now become a mere cinder of ice...then the pageant of the universe would be over.[2]

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1. The Waves, ed. cit., p. 226.
2. Mrs. Dalloway, ed. cit., pp. 122-3.

But if about forty years' experience is spread over three centuries in Orlando, the opposite is the case in Mrs. Dalloway, taken as a whole. Mrs. Dalloway buys flowers for her party; she meets her old lover, Peter, who comes to the party that evening. But the inter-relation of personalities is carried further than in The Waves; in Mrs. Dalloway the characters are affected by other characters whom they do not know, to whom they do not talk, but whom they observe or about whom they hear -- whose lives touch theirs at one point and then brush off again, like ships meeting in the night. Each moment in that day is recorded, is dwelt on, in its relation to the experience of the fifty years leading up to the day itself.

Mrs. Dalloway begins and ends with the clock striking the same refrain. "The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air."[1] All the characters stand and listen to the sound fading away. Indeed, these circles seem to encompass the book. The clock striking reaches everyone, affects everyone. Time is the supreme master.

> Big Ben struck the half-hour.
> How extraordinary it was...to see the old lady...move away from the window, as if she were attached to that sound, that string. Gigantic as it was, it had something to do with her. Down, down, into the midst of ordinary things the finger fell making the moment solemn. She was forced...by that sound, to move, to go.[2]

And it is not only Big Ben that is thus masterful.

> But here the other clock, the clock which always struck two minutes after Big Ben, came shuffling in with its lap full of odds and ends, which it dumped down as if Big Ben were all very well with his majesty laying down the law, so solemn, so just, but she must remember all sorts of little things besides.[3]

The various stories, Septimus Smith's, Clarissa's, and Peter's, are connected by this clock striking, as it conveys a different but equally compelling message to all the characters. We hear the same hour striking the ears of different characters. Sometimes the characters are not together and the author mentions the striking of the particular hour in connection with each of them. Sometimes the characters are together; they hear the chime

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1. Mrs. Dalloway, ed. cit., pp. 283-4.
2. Ibid., p. 192.
3. Ibid., p. 193.

together; but we follow their separate reactions. All the characters are affected by the striking of the clock, which sounds to the reader like the clanging of fate. The stroke is as much the central and unifying motif of the novel as any hero of the Picaresque ever was. A clock striking was always important to Mrs. Woolf. In The Years, the Abbey clock strikes.

> The sound of the hour filled the room; softly, tumultuously, as if it were a flurry of soft sighs hurrying one on top of the other, yet concealing something hard.[1]

But in Mrs. Dalloway, the full power of the clock's striking is expressed.

> It is half past eleven, she says, and the sound of St. Margaret's glides into the recesses of the heart and buries itself in ring after ring of sound, like something alive which wants to confide itself, to disperse itself, to be, with a tremour of delight, at rest, -- like Clarissa, herself, thought Peter, coming down the stairs on the stroke of the hour in white. It is Clarissa herself, he thought, with a deep emotion, and an extraordinarily clear, yet puzzling, recollection of her, as if this bell had come into the room years ago, where they sat at some moment of great intimacy, and had gone from one to the other and had left, like a bee with honey, laden with the moment. But what room? What moment? And why had he been so profoundly happy when the clock was striking? Then, as the sound of St. Margaret's languished, he thought, She has been ill, and the sound expressed langour and suffering. It was her heart, he remembered; and the sudden loudness of the final stroke tolled for death that surprised in the midst of life, Clarissa falling where she stood, in her drawing-room. No! No! he cried. She is not dead! I am not old, he cried, and marched up Whitehall, as if there rolled down to him, vigorous, unending, his future.[2]

This passage also illustrates Virginia Woolf's device of joining the past to the present through memory, which outwits time. This technique is especially marked in To the Lighthouse, in the last part, where Lydia's view of the boat and her recollections of the people in it and the events connected with them are skilfully interwoven with their actual present activities. As the characters of Mrs. Dalloway come together, their talk and emotional reactions are coloured by what they remember saying and feeling sixteen years ago. They also tell us about it, using the flash-back method. Peter, sitting in the Park, plunges us suddenly back into the events of his youth. This technique, now popularised by the film, has a a distinguished ancestry, being prescribed by Horace for use in the epic

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1. The Years, New York, Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1937, p. 143.
2. Mrs. Dalloway, ed. cit., pp. 74-5

poetry ("in medias res").

If Mrs. Woolf can thus subtly convey the passage of time, she can also describe it powerfully and straightforwardly:

> Nothing, it seemed, could break that image, corrupt that innocence, or disturb the swaying mantle of silence, which, week after week, in the empty room, wove into itself the falling cries of birds, ships hooting, the drone and hum of the fields, a dog's bark, a man's shout, and folded them round the house in silence... Peace descended; and the shadow wavered; light bent to its own image in adoration on the bedroom wall...
>
> Night after night, summer and winter, the torment of the storms, the arrow-like stillness of fine weather, held their court without interruption...for night and day, month and year ran shapelessly together.[1]

Time goes on relentlessly; but it can also seem on occasion to stop.

> As a cloud crosses the sun, silence falls on London; and falls on the mind. Effort ceases. Time flaps on the mast. There we stop; there we stand. Rigid, the skeleton of habit alone upholds the human frame. Where there is nothing, Peter Walsh said to himself; feeling hollowed out, utterly empty within.[2]

Time stands still for Rachel of The Voyage Out, when she is ill, or when she is happy. It stops for Mrs. Ramsay at her dinner-party, as she realises that all of life is contained in this moment, stolen out of time, to exist eternally.

A great deal of Virginia Woolf's imagery is drawn from the tides. The movement of the tides creates the rhythm of the story in The Waves. And in Mrs. Dalloway we have this:

> But there are tides in the body. Morning meets afternoon. Borne like a frail shallop on deep, deep floods, [the morning's events] were [redacted]whelmed and sunk.[3]

So one experience gives way to the next and life flows on, with its crests and depressions, with its ebb and flow, life that is contained in time, and yet whose fundamentals, love, happiness, death, seem miraculously to outwit time. When Mrs. Ramsay sees life clearly, she says that she sees it as having the transparency of water. Virginia Woolf's last comment on life is in Between the Acts. Lucy is gazing into the water:

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1. To the Lighthouse, ed. cit., p.150-6.
2. Mrs. Dalloway, ed. cit., pp. 73-4.
3. Ibid., pp. 171-2.

> The lilies were shutting; the red lily, the white lily, each on its plate of leaf. Above, the air rushed: beneath was water. She stood between the two fluidities, caressing her cross.
>
> Then something moved in the water; her favourite fantail. The golden orfe followed. Then she had a glimpse of silver -- the great carp himself, who came to the surface so very seldom. They slid on, in and out between the stalks, of silver, pink, gold, splashed, streaked, pied.
>
> "Ourselves," she murmured.[1]

Virginia Woolf emphasises the importance of seeing life as a continuous stream, with the moments of significance breaking surface to our consciousness, joined below the surface and carried on by the flow.

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1. Between the Acts, London, Hogarth Press, 1941, p. 239.

CHAPTER FOUR.

James Joyce.

We have it on the word of a United States judge[1] that James Joyce, in portraying life and character, concerns himself with time, not in the ordinary sense, but as it applies to the life of the subconscious mind. And Mr. Wyndham Lewis declares:

> The powerful impressionism of Ulysses constructed on the most approved "time" basis -- that is, a basis of the fluid material gushing of undisciplined life -- I have chosen as in some way the most important creation so far issued from the "time" mint. The approved "mental" method -- dating from the publication of Matiere et Memoire or of the earliest psycho-analytic tracts -- leads, as it is intended to lead, to a physical disintegration and a formal confusion. A highly personal day-dream, culminating in a phantasmagoria of the pure dream-order, is the result in Ulysses. It is a masterpiece of romantic art: and its romance is of the sort imposed by the "time" philosophy.[2]

Let us then examine the writings of Joyce, and acquire, if possible, an insight into his attitude to, and treatment of, time. In Dubliners, an early collection of short stories, the accent is in each case laid on one incident, on one moment. This results in an extraordinarily effective impression of compactness, a singleness of effect which would have satisfied Edgar Allan Poe's precepts for narrative composition. Our recollections of Eveline, in the story bearing her name, are of a white strained face, as her emotions urge her to escape, and her familial sense of duty restrains her and keeps her to the routine which is choking her. The Sisters is built around the one moment when the boy looks at the face of the dead priest. Araby is interesting because of the fascination the word has for the boy -- and Joyce will later show himself fascinated by the music of words or concatenations of sounds, by the melody of words which would have ensured the "Aȝenbite of Inwit" a recurring place in

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1. In his opinion rendered at New York, December 6th, 1933, lifting the ban on Ulysses, the Hon. John M. Woolsley says: "Joyce has attempted -- it seems to me, with astonishing success -- to show how the screen of consciousness with its ever-shifting kaleidoscopic impressions carries as it were, on a plastic palimpsest, not only what is in the focus of each man's observation of the actual things about him, but also in the penumbral zone residua of past impressions, some recent and some drawn up by association from the domain of the subconscious".
2. Wyndham Lewis, Time and Western Man, London, Chatto and Windus, 1927, p. 132.

Ulysses even if it had not been for the haunting quality of its meaning. The boy who whispers softly to himself the wonderful word of Araby reveals an obsession with words that makes Flaubert's "mot juste" but a pale presage. So much for Joyce, the craftsman, who polished his words as Morris perfected his wallpaper. But the most interesting stories in Dubliners -- stories pointing forward to the future Joyce in whom we are primarily interested -- are The Encounter (where for one frightened moment the frightened boy touches the unmentionable and unmentioned subconscious), and The Dead.

The Dead is marked by a skilful handling of time, in which the slow passage of time affects psychological development. The story is the simple one of a man who endures a middle-class party in Dublin by waiting for the moment when he and his wife will be alone and he will wholly possess her. The party flags. Joyce describes and dwells on every insignificant detail, to make the time seem more long drawn out, so that the slowness of the passage of time emphasises the hungry longing and suspense felt by Gabriel. But when they reach their room, she turns from him in tears at the thought of a former lover who had died for her sake. Gabriel, in bewildered disappointment, lies and meditates on death:

> Other forms were near. His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead. He was conscious of, but could not apprehend, their wayward and flickering existence. His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself, which these dead had at one time reared and lived in, was dissolving and dwindling...His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.[1]

All through his work, Joyce shows an interest in death. In Ulysses Bloom goes to Martin Dignam's funeral. Again, Bloom's son has died, and, each time Bloom thinks of that, his fatherly feeling for Stephen is intensified. But death is only one of his interests -- we simply have it included in one chapter, just as another contains the birth of Minnie Purefoy's child. Death and birth both have their place in this thing which Joyce is painting, which

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1. Dubliners, New York, B. W. Huebsch, Inc., 1916, pp. 287-8.

is life. For death Joyce feels no fear. There is no barrier of time between the living and the dead. Stephen's dead mother appears to him in the Nighttown sequence. Bloom stands in the graveyard and reflects that "the dead themselves the men anyhow would like to hear an odd joke or the women to know what's in fashion".[1] Stephen, in ~~The~~ A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, fears many things, "dogs, horses, firearms, the sea, thunderstorms, machinery, the country roads at night"[2], but not death. There is nothing to fear in death since it does not halt time. Joyce feels with the Anglo-Saxon poets[3] that everything goes on, that time heals everything. Actually, Joyce's view of death is essentially the Roman Catholic one. The Roman Catholic feels no fear of death as it is a liberation into eternity; life and time as we know them are but the preparation for eternal time and eternal life. It is interesting in this connection to note how very much the author is influenced by the faith in which he was educated in Dublin at Belvedere and University College, and which he later renounced. Time and again one senses the note of Catholic liturgy. There are many allusions to Jesuitical dogma; Bloom goes to Mass; Buck Mulligan holds a shaving-bowl aloft in the first few lines of Ulysses and intones -- "Introibo ad altare Dei"[4]; the mourners of Finnegan consume not only his belongings but his very body as a Eucharist.

Joyce's next publication after Dubliners, ~~The~~ A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, is a straightforward picture of Stephen -- the boy who but for the ashplant is easily recognisable as the Joyce of twenty years before. In his great autobiographical novel, Proust goes back in recollection twenty years. His present sensations transplant him back there, just as in Mrs. Woolf Peter Walsh's love takes him back sixteen years. But in his recollections Proust is slightly romantic, as much a "praiser of his own past"[5] as

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1. Ulysses, New York, Random House, Inc., Modern Library edition, 1934, p. 107.
2. A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, New York, Random House, Inc., Modern Library edition, 1928, p. 284.
3. See, in particular, Deor.
4. Ulysses,
5. A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, ed. cit., p. 284.

Stephen's father was in Ulysses. Joyce is completely a realist in portraying his past, for he never really left it. Indeed, many charges have been levelled against him for not being truly contemporaneous: he keeps his eyes focussed on himself rather than on the world about him, and his past is part of his present self. There is no allusion in his work to the economic upheaval of the war which he must have felt even in Zurich. The detail of his work and the comparative narrowness of his social contacts stand comparison with that of Jane Austen. His novel Ulysses takes place in 1904, but there is little in the setting of the stage to indicate this. His memory is so alive to Joyce as to be reality itself, and he feels no need of proving the reality of his novel by ostentatiously including historical facts in it.

There is, then, no question of Ulysses representing a conscious attempt by the author to recreate the past. The Stephen of Ulysses is as real as the Stephen of the Portrait. Both are the Joyce of the present. His past is part of his present -- it has not only conditioned his present -- it exists in his present, as part of the man himself. It is as real to him as the actual present. It is worth noting that Joyce emphasises the identity of the two Stephens, not only by giving them the same name, but by including passages, one in each of the books, in which the name is commented on in a similar spirit. As we are introduced to the Stephen of Ulysses in the Martello Tower, he is immediately teased good-naturedly for his absurd name and called an ancient Greek.[1] This reminds us of a striking passage in the Portrait:

> Stephanos Dedalos! Bous Stephanoumenos! Bous Stephaneforos!
> Their banter was not new to him...Now, as never before, his strange name seemed to him a prophecy. So timeless seemed the grey warm air, so fluid and impersonal his own mood, that all ages were as one to him.[2]

With Stephen we begin the famous seventeen hours of Dublin middle-class existence in Ulysses, and with Stephen and Bloom and their acquaintances we go, into their various occupations, glancing with them occasionally at their

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1. Ulysses, ed. cit., p. 5.
2. A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, ed. cit., p. 196.

wrist-watches, spending the time we would ordinarily spend at everyday occupations, including talking and drinking and going to the privy. This novel of Ulysses contains a sequence of everyday events and experiences, and these are related in ordinary chronological succession -- they are represented as taking up just the amount of time that they would take up in actual fact. And we have a complete account of the sequence of events and experiences -- nothing is omitted, even if it is apparently insignificant.

M. Edmond Jaloux, one of the most powerful of French critics, sees in Joyce "une horreur de dissimulation"[1], which he compares most happily to that quality in Montaigne and Rabelais. There is, indeed, something in Joyce's writing that sends us to the French for comparison rather than to the English -- the fascinated preoccupation with the sounds of words that we have in Flaubert; the clarity of analysis that we have in Maupassant; and the interest in time of Rimbaud and Proust. As Joyce turns his clear light on everyday routine in Dublin, he misses no detail, however short a time it takes, however insignificant it seems to be. For every second helps to build the completeness of documentation that is needed for so complete and fully rounded a picture of the time sequence of a day. Joyce would not be faithful to his purpose if he did not include everything -- he has that "horreur de dissimulation".

And in the selection of the particular sequence of events and experiences which he gives in full, he conspicuously refrains from choosing only those of a certain kind. He has no predilection for sex, or for sexual perversion, as Proust has: he sees the importance of sex in everyday life, so he must portray it. He is not obsessed by abnormality. Nor, on the other hand, is abnormality distasteful to him: abnormality, however, as the term itself indicates, is not general -- it is not something exemplified by most men -- and it is the general facts of humanity with which Joyce is primarily concerned. With Proust you follow the recollections of Marcel; with Joyce you follow the recollections of all humanity, and of that part of humanity which you should know most intimately, yourself. It is with the realities of human-

1. Cited by H. Gorman in his James Joyce, p. 303.

ity in general that Joyce is principally preoccupied.

Many readers have observed the exactness of the parallel between the Odyssey and Ulysses. To illustrate the similarity, we cite the parallelism between Telemachus and Odysseus on the one hand, and Stephen and Bloom on the other; we note Gerty MacDowell throwing a ball on the shore as Nausicaa does; we point to the Citizen flinging a biscuit tin at Bloom as Polyphemus hurls a rock at Bloom's illustrious original. But the most striking parallel is the Greek consciousness of the passage of time which permeates Ulysses also. There is in the Greek unfolding of fate the same implication of the inevitability of time passing, of the impossibility of halting it or the developments it brings, as there is in the atmosphere of Joyce's work. He has captured the inexorability which is so marked in Greek drama as the humans work out the fate ordained by the gods.

In Ulysses, in the wandering rocks episode, the events of a ~~sunnt~~ sunny afternoon follow each other at exactly the speed which they take in everyday life. But this is not always so; where it suits his purpose, Joyce can give a confused mass of impressions in which there is no straightforward temporal sequence at all -- he can, as it were, jumble up time. Thus, in the nighttown scene the time is all time and no time. I suppose one might say it took place at mid night, that vague and witching hour. But in this phantasmagoria, where recollections of people Bloom has met, that day or other days, pop in and out of doors -- where the scene is sometimes in a brothel, sometimes in a street without -- where sometimes the movement takes place in Bloom's imagination, in places that he pictures, such as a court room, or below Nelson's Pillar -- in this phantasmagoria, the time element is as confused as the place. Indeed, Bella and Bloom change sexes at one point; in this episode of shifting values even sex is not safe. The whole scene deals with the troubled land of man's spirit, the innermost depths where it is agitated by every kind of passion. Bloom is swayed by paternal anxiety, anger, lust, shame, and many other emotions intermingled in this extraordinarily fine fusion of impressionism and naturalism.

Joyce neither loves nor hates man: he is an artist before he is an emotionalist. He paints man in detail because in his belief that is the only way of giving a wholly rounded, three-dimensional figure. And that is what he has done in Bloom. We breathe the air around Bloom as well as seeing into his mind. He is a real person; and the exterior temporal sequence, and the circumstantial details set in it, have gone to build up a complete figure. Yet in the seventeen hours during which we see this figure doing the things every man does, and in the close routine of those hours, we have his whole life unfolded. In that day, the events of which are related at clock speed, we understand his past and we foresee his future. It is again M. Jaloux who says in the Revue de Paris: "Son oeuvre...ouvre...brusquement quelques-unes des portes de l'avenir".[1] We have so complete a picture of Bloom, of how he acts and has acted and thought in the past, that there is only one way for him to think and act in the future. We know his reactions to so many different environments; we feel his disapproval while the medical students are jesting; we experience his discomfort at the pub when in his embarrassment he combines so many shades of emotion; we sympathise with the curious mixture of possessiveness which makes him want to keep his wife for himself, and pride in her which makes him want all men to admire her and some men to know her; why, we even know that he likes kidney for breakfast! We see him reacting thus differently to different environments at different times, and we realise that the essential personality of the man has been built up by a series of incidents and milieux, that the present Bloom is the result of the past out of which he came. By painting a detailed picture of the time sequence of one day in the life of a man, Joyce has succeeded in painting the whole of that life.

In the frame of this close temporal sequence, Bloom's thought and mind range freely. The action of the narrative is never suspended in order that we may enter his thoughts, as it is with Conrad. We are reading his

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1. Cited by Herbert Gorman in James Joyce, p. 303.

mind constantly whenever we see him, and as Bloom walks in the limited space of Dublin, in the limited time sequence of seventeen hours, his mind roams freely through time and space.[1] While Bloom exists in time, his mind has escaped from time.

In Finnegan's Wake, the work which Joyce considered the peak of his accomplishment, it is more than a character's mind that is liberated from time; it is all humanity. There is no fixed place; there is no fixed time. A background of confusion is suddenly illuminated by a placename, then, sooner or later, by another, and so on, and we know all space is meant. The River Liffey runs through the book, but it is as much the Amazon or the Ganges as it is the river of the heart of Dublin. The time of the action is the time of Creation, or it is now, or it is both at once. The present is cheek by jowl with the past. As Mr. Frank Budgen rather finely puts it: "That which lay nacheinander in time, [Joyce] translates, in the manner of a weaver in tapestries, into the nebeneinander before our eyes".[2]

Since in actual life people sometimes mention the time of day, the characters mention it in Finnegan's Wake. It may be "ten O'Connel", or "half-past quick in the morning", or "kicksolock in the morm". Again, "no one appeared to have the same time of beard, some saying by their Oorlog it was Sygstryggs to nine, more holding with the Ryan wacht it was Dane to pfife". Mostly it is simply "zero hour". But there is no temporal sequence in the ~~this~~ book, and apart from such stray references, the time of day is ~~as~~ as unimportant as it is in a dream.

But behind this seeming chaos of timelessness, there lies a very definite purpose. The whole book indeed is based on a time theory, the pre-

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1. It may be noted that Joyce was influenced by an early French stream of consciousness writer, Eduard Dujardin, whose work Les Lauriers Sont Coupés Joyce rediscovered and published. See Gorman, op. cit., p. 226.

2. Frank Budgen, James Joyce and the Making of "Ulysses", p. 320.

cepts of which are expounded in Vico's Scienza Nuova. Human societies originate, develop, and reach their end according to fixed laws of rotation, moving in similar cycles. Time is, then, a wholly circular force. There is progress, then retrogression, then progress again. There is passage of time in Finnegan's Wake; "tempus fidgets" but it comes back to the point from which it started. This is one of the main themes of the work, as is indicated by the fact that the first phrase of the book is a continuation of the final phrase of the book, the two combining to form a complete sentence. In this complete sentence, Joyce emphasises the word "recirculation".

This theory of circular time in recurring ages does not result from any review of chronological historical facts, leading to the familiar adage that history repeats itself. Joyce's theory is a result of his view that the lives of the actual and legendary heroes of the race form a series of repetitions, the various heroes each symbolising the heroic spirit of the whole race. Thus Finnegan's Wake abounds in the ~~mm~~ names of the great: Charlemagne and Napoleon are intermingled with the mythical kings of Ireland and the names above the shop windows in Grafton Street -- and all these names become one mystic hero: Here Comes Everyman. Chronological history is discarded, the times of Caesar are now, since Caesar the hero is incorporated in some modern man. History is not a stream running on and on; it is a vast ocean, its only movement being the ebb and flow of the tide of each hero. Thus we look at Shem and Shaun in their cradles, and they become grown men and heroes of their race before our eyes. Human experience has become racial experience.

Joyce believes that our mind is part of the mind of our race.[1] In Finnegan's Wake, Joyce is attempting to show the mind of the Celtic race.[2] In this book there are many recollections of the heroes and events of the ages that have come together in the modern Irishman, whether he wills it or no.

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1. An interesting analogy could be drawn with Thornton Wilder's Skin of our Teeth.
2. Compare Denis Johnson's play The Old Lady Says No, where the soul of Ireland is shown acting through the ages in a pot-pourri of Irish history, represented simultaneously on the stage.

All day long, Bloom in Ulysses feels impressions which are the result of his Jewish ancestry -- experiences which he himself has not actually had in his conscious life, but which affect him now because some ancestor has had them. His subconscious mind includes his whole race, past and present. His sympathy for his dead father -- and the memory of him is very dear to him -- is only a small part of the identification of his subconscious mind with his whole race; for that sympathy is really for the sorrows and the race burdens of his father's ancestry. And Joyce's modern Irishman is the Irishman who actually lives in the city of Dublin today. This city lives on in Joyce, even though Joyce no longer lives in it. In fact, it is more present in him as he is removed from it in body. "The shortest way to Tara [is] via Holyhead"[1] -- that is to say, as the Irishman leaves his country. Like Blake, who also creates a mythology to represent the forces of the universe and the evolution of things, Joyce uses his native town to enact a universal legend.

These events in the history of our race are contained in our subconscious make-up. In our subconscious, we are aware of this background. De Quincey says that a dream may light up a fact to the consciousness which is darkened as soon as the dream is over. Finnegan's Wake is a dream in the sense that a myth of all time is contained in a fleeting instant. In the same way the nightmare of the nighttown sequence in Ulysses is supposed to take place in the suspended seconds of a dream, as contrasted with the strictly clock time of the rest of the action.

Finnegan's Wake, then, is a dream, and it is in many places as unintelligible as a dream to the man who has not the same background and does not make the same associations of ideas as the author. For in this unification of time, in this unification of history, Joyce has striven to unify language -- he brings together words from various languages and various periods.

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1. A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, ed. cit., p. 296.

And in the particular resources of language which he uses at a given point he may have a symbolic purpose. In the lying-in episode in Ulysses he uses plain words of Anglo-Saxon descent. The words he uses are, as it were, words belonging to the period of the birth of our language, and this is symbolically akin to the birth of the child in the episode. In Finnegan's Wake, he virtually invents a new language of his own, in order to convey his meaning with greater pregnancy and force than outworn phraseological formulae are capable of.

"Signatures of all things I am here to read,"[1] says Stephen Dedalus on the Sandymount shore — shades of Longfellow's footsteps on the sands of time! All things in our personal past and in that of our race are implicit in the present movement of our bodies, in the action of our minds and our "mememorree's"; all things and all time are in the one moment of Finnegan's Wake.

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1. Ulysses, ed. cit., p. 38.

CHAPTER FIVE.

Conclusion.

We have been considering the treatment of time in certain contemporary or near-contemporary authors. Time has, however, been an important theme in literature from an early period. It exerted a fascination on the poets of the Anglo-Saxon age, at the very birth of the language in which our modern writers express themselves.

Þæs ofereode Þisses swa mæg.

To the chanter of this line, Deor, the passage of time brings consolation. Just as it has healed other woes, which he cites, so it may heal the present one. This sentiment, which belongs normally to the lament in literature, can be traced in elegaic poetry throughout the course of English literature, from Spenser to Shelley, finding perhaps its most famous expression in Tennyson's In Memoriam, where the consolation of time healing all woes for the living is skilfully interwoven with the suggestion that the dead Arthur Hallam has reached eternity, where the passage of time need concern him no longer.

But to the Anglo-Saxon poets in general the importance of time is rather its power when reckoned with as an enemy. Time is essentially the antagonist of man, sweeping on mercilessly in the short span of life which is allotted to him. This conception of transience is as old as time itself; it must have occurred to Adam and Eve, when, banished from the eternal Garden of Eden, they first tasted the knowledge of their mortality. Certainly, it is the Heracleitean "panta rei", the philosophic acceptance that everything is in a state of flux, that forms the basis of the Platonic belief, which the words of the old French song express most economically: "Tout passe, tout casse, tout lasse". This feeling may give rise to a certain desperation -- if everything is changing as you look at it, as you experience it, then you must make the most of every moment of it.

As we survey the perspective of English literature, we notice that

the feeling that time is an enemy is particularly in evidence at those periods when the national genius is at its height. In that richest and most colourful of ages, the age of Elizabeth, life seemed too short to encompass the physical limits of the widening world, the mental realms of "knowledge infinite". We think of Shakespeare's "brief candle"; and, in the next generation, of Herrick's "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may". It occurs spasmodically in the Restoration age, and later appears -- even to excess -- during the Yellow Book period. With John Davidson, the soul condemned to hell, already consigned to hell, is saved because of the intensity of her feeling, because she has the courage to face hell, rather than not live to the full:

> She gathered up in one fierce prayer,
> Took root in hell's midst all alone,
> And waited for him there.[1]

If you live every moment fully, you are cheating time. And this is a sentiment which is very characteristic of our modern writers. We have already studied it in Virginia Woolf: let us listen to Henry James --

> Live all you can; it's a mistake not to. It doesn't much matter what you do in particular, so long as you have your life. If you haven't had that, what have you had?...The right time is any time that one is still so lucky as to have. Don't at any rate miss things out of stupidity...Live![2]

Thus we see the two conflicting views taken of time, time as the healing power, time as the enemy, both coming up in literature. Now let us examine briefly the technique. Here, too, we see that there is nothing fundamentally new about the modern attitude. Shakespeare uses vivid detail to give the impression of stage setting, to confer reality. The exact realism, the attention to the circumstantial detail, of Defoe is re-echoed in Ulysses. Farquhar shows the evolution of man's personality in time as effectively as J. B. Priestley,[3] who is consciously popularising the theories of the metaphysician Dunne. The painting of shades of feeling, which seems so new in Henry James and in Dorothy Richardson, the artistic belief that aesthetic

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1. John Davidson, A Ballad of Hell. Victorian and Later Poets, ed. Stephens, Beck, and Snow, p. 888.
2. Henry James, The Ambassadors, Macmillan Edition, vol. 1, pp. 190-1.
3. Priestley's play Dangerous Corner presents one of the most interesting and ingenious treatments of time that have appeared in our day.

recreation is to be attained not only by going far enough out but also by coming near enough home, is paralleled by the introspective inquiry pursued by Laurence Sterne. If D. H. Lawrence turns to more primitive civilisation for inspiration, so did Aphra Behn in Oroonoko. If Edgar Allan Poe consciously studies the effect of horror on the soul, so had Horace Walpole unwittingly shown its effect on character. There is nothing new under the sun.

But the attitude of contemporary literature to the past is rather different -- to the modern, the past is not an escape from the present but is a part of it. The past is not conceived as a picturesque pageant; but, existing in our mental world as a part of the present reality of which we are conscious, it is a vitally significant part of the present.

In our age it is not only Aldous Huxley or T. S. Eliot but every man who is thinking about time. As the barriers of space go down, as science and the intelligence of man conquer space, so man is turning his attention to conquering time, and he is finding it an indomitable opponent. With modern scientific communication, distance can be reduced to nought. Modern ships cannot be delayed to the extent they used to be by weather conditions; the aeroplane can span the world. But man cannot vanquish time; he cannot halt time at any point and go back and start again, as he can with his modern gramophone; he cannot stop its passage; he cannot circumvent the knowledge that he has only a limited amount of time at his disposal. He can cram as much as possible into the hours, but the moment will come when the time that seemed his is his no longer. Hardy is rated as a pessimist, when he shows time playing with Tess, but in real life too it is time that has the last word. Everything is subservient to time. Even that comforting doctrine of the eternity of beauty propounded by Shelley and Keats must be balanced by such a statement as --

> Beauty is timeless; but as soon as it is actualised in time, it becomes subject to time.[1]

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1. M. F. Cleugh, Time and its Importance in Modern Thought, 1937, p. 292.

In spite of his being a social animal, a man is in the last resort a solitary creature. With Conrad, man is alone against nature, and he is set apart from other men by the peculiarities of his particular struggle against nature. With Henry James, man is alone in that he studies himself. Marcel Proust was so aware of this need for the solitary study of the self that he shut himself up in his Paris house and became a recluse in order the more completely to feel and think and live his own thoughts. Only you can experience one particular emotion in one particular way. Sinclair Lewis, in his brilliant satires on American life, is trying to show that one little American town is very much like any other little American town. But we must feel that the whole emphasis in life on the North American continent is laid on the individual. American progressive education treats each child as an individual, as opposed to the formalised pattern of English education; there is repeated negation of predetermined social hierarchy, in that a man may rise, through the individual qualities of his ability, to the supreme position of President of the United States. In society, man is more than ever alone. The large rambling country house with relatives and friends has given way to the apartment house, where each little family unit lives alone. Even his amusement man takes alone. Where before, men met around the banquet table, celebrated the common joys, discussed the sorrows of life, at the village inn; now, he goes individually to the cinema, to see the reflection of life on the silver screen. Admittedly, the London populace went to the Globe; Restoration society flocked to the theatre: but here there was social intercourse, conversation, community spirit. And man is most alone in his religious life. Feudal Catholicism was a universal thing; religion has become more individualised with every sect since Luther nailed his thesis to the church door. As man stops going to celebrate his joys and sorrows in common, so does he stop worshipping in common, until in this twentieth century, there are many men who are so alone that they have not even the hand of God to guide them in their loneliness. As they lose hope in eternal life, their mortality becomes increasingly obvious. And so is emphasised the rush to get as much as possibleout of life, the rush to outwit time. We rush to get up in the morning, we dash from one place to another

just to be in time; and the most acceptable twentieth century excuse for not doing something is "I'm so sorry -- I just didn't have time".

So H. G. Wells and Jules Verne and the modern American comic strip treat of the world many thousand years from now, cheating time by guessing and divulging its secrets; so best sellers are written about the fountain of eternal youth in Tibet, and millions of women buy the cosmetics that promise to endow them with perpetual girlhood; every line that is composed reflects the modern obsession; every desk carries a ticking clock that prompts the regulation of each half hour; one of the most significant authors of our day, Jean Giraudoux, writes of actions only after he has himself gone through them to see exactly how long they take.

Joseph Conrad looks back nostalgically to the past: Virginia Woolf comprehends the past in the all-important present: James Joyce in addition shows that in the moment of time of Finnegan's Wake is contained not only all the past but the future also. The history of our race has gone to make us, individually, what we are; in our turn, in our time, we add that individuality to the flow of our race. It is in our children, in the race of which we form part and which our entity helps to continue, that we are to outwit time. This is the note of reconciliation with this enemy that has become so puzzlingly important in our daily lives, with this one factor that man cannot harness. Our children are our immortality.

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