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THE POWER OF TIMELESSNESS AND THE CONTEMPORARY INFLUENCE OF  
MODERN THOUGHT

by

KATIE MOSS

Under the Direction of Dr. Randy Malamud

ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I examine a variety of modern and postmodern texts by applying the theories of French philosopher Henri Bergson. Specifically, I apply Bergson's theories of time, memory, and evolution to the texts in order to analyze the meaning of the poem and novels. I assert that all of the works disrupt conventional structure in order to question the linear nature of time. They do this because each must deal with the pressures of external chaos, and, as a result, they find timeless moments can create an internal resolution to the external chaos. I set out to create connections between British, Irish, and American literature, and I examine the influence each author has on others. The modern authors I examine include T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and William Faulkner. I then show the ways this application can elucidate the works of postmodern authors Toni Morrison and Michael Cunningham.

INDEX WORDS: Time, Henri Bergson, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, William Faulkner, Toni Morrison, Michael Cunningham, Memory, Duration

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MODERN THOUGHT

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KATIE MOSS

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in the College of Arts and Sciences  
Georgia State University

2008

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Katie Reece Moss  
2008

THE POWER OF TIMELESSNESS AND THE CONTEMPORARY INFLUENCE OF  
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## DEDICATION

*To Brannan and Will Moss for sharing me,  
to Charlie Moss, the best inspiration,  
to Cheryl, Mike, Mark and Greg Schellhase for their constant love and support,  
and also to Carl V. Bruce for always being so proud.*

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## Introduction

### Timeless Moments and Henri Bergson

I first read Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* ten years ago, and I knew at that moment that Virginia Woolf had always been and would always be with me. I wasn't sure at the time what that meant, and I would never really be able to put the impact into words. We were connected, and her moments were my moments, the moments of being and non-being, and I would somehow forever be changed. As I continued my graduate work and decided to pursue my PhD, I consistently felt myself drawn to the modernists. Although I found the work difficult and I often felt frustrated because I "couldn't understand" everything, I knew that I had to study the modern authors. As a teacher of high school English, I found myself seeing profound connections between the American and British modernists; we study the Americans and read only T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." As I taught the Americans and studied Woolf, James Joyce, and Eliot more specifically, I wanted to show the divided scholars, who focused on either one or the other, that we can bridge the gap. I slowly began to realize that the answer to those connections came through their common manipulation of time, a manipulation and an understanding of time that could have been influenced by philosopher Henri Bergson, whose philosophies were popular at the beginning of the twentieth century. I started to read and teach while applying my ideas about time and found that many texts can be better understood when considering the manipulation of time and the importance of timeless moments. With all of these ideas in mind, with the hope to show connections, continuity and the influence of modern thought, I began my study of Henri Bergson and the influence timelessness has on twentieth-century literature.

Most contemporary critics and scholars can agree that Modernism can be defined in one way -- ambiguous. The artists of the time period may have been reacting to cultural pressures and public life; they may have been trying to deny Victorianism and all of its rigidity; they may have been trying to “make it new” altogether. As we define and redefine the era and the culture, we can always rely on the ambiguities of the mindsets, the psychology, and the language. Michael Levenson explains the commonality of modern literature: “Within the emerging historical revision there can still be found certain common devices and general preoccupations: the recurrent act of fragmenting unities, the use of mythic paradigms, the refusal of norms of beauty, the willingness to make radical linguistic experiment, to startle and disturb the public” (3). In my research I am focusing on a strain in modernism that emphasizes this commonality of change and reflection. Although these terms are certainly broad, they help us understand that modern authors eternally affected the way we read and think, and modern literature forces contemporary readers to analyze the cultural change surrounding them. As Eliot changes his poetic structure away from traditional Victorian formats, Joyce and Woolf change the narrative structure of the novel by allowing their high-modern novels *Ulysses* and *Mrs. Dalloway* to take place in one day in the life of their characters. Eliot, Woolf, and Joyce make changes to the structure of their works and help define modern structure. In my work, I will argue that because of the change in structure that these three artists initiated, they make connections to personal, modern thought both in America and in Europe. Furthermore, because of their influence, contemporary audiences react personally to and reflect internally on the public world around us. Because of the modernists’ solipsism, we are able to become solipsistic. Peter Childs asserts, “Modernist writing ‘plunges’ the reader into a confusing and difficult mental landscape which cannot be immediately understood but which must be moved through and mapped by the reader in order to

understand its limits and meanings” (4). By synthesizing a variety of texts and examining them with Henri Bergson’s theories about time, I aim to elucidate modern texts and illustrate the influence those concepts of time have had on postmodern literature and contemporary thought. The authors, through their use of language, create change that continues to touch our cultural perceptions today, and the changes they made will continue to affect cultures that, years from now, will find it difficult to understand why the era was ever called “modern” in the first place.

Many critics have applied the theories of Bergson to modernist structure, aesthetics, and philosophy, and I hope to add to that body of work by connecting these disparate works with one idea about the importance of timeless moments to the survival of the self. Considering Bergson when analyzing the unprecedented structure of the modern novel may help uncover the meaning of the works. There can be no one answer to the confusion of modernism, but looking at Bergson’s ideas and applying them to the works may shed some light on the emotional present state of the characters and how the present moments of the characters can influence later authors, later works, and contemporary thought. Some critics, such as Mary Ann Gilles, have specially considered Bergson in terms of British Modernism while Tom Quirk and Paul Douglass look at Bergson specifically in relation to American Modernism. I will assert in my work that applying Bergson’s theories to all these works illuminates one idea – one moment in the present that is timeless – one moment that allows a glimmer of hope and resolution to the external chaos. This moment has no boundaries. This moment spans cultures and time periods.

No one definition will ever perfectly encompass all of the ambiguities and aspects of modernism; however, the culture of the era provides moments of intelligence, confusion, fragmentation, and reflection. I argue that the modern authors were seeking the most perfect way to express their individual fears and beliefs, and during that exploration they discovered new

ways of using language to create a personal reality in an unprecedented way. Yes, they were reacting to the past, to the war, to society and all of its pressures, to technological advances, to urbanization, and to one another; but mostly, they were reacting to their own internal conflicts. Because of the external chaos, they needed to turn to their own personal feelings; however, because those feelings were so fragmented, they could not rely on traditional structure to put those feelings into words. They had to change the structure in order to capture their fragmented personal reactions. They were seeking a resolution to their internal conflicts. They wanted realism, but realism that could somehow define the internal struggle to find one's *self*. The authors needed a change in structure in order to find a personal resolution to the change in the world around them. Through language, the modernists attempt "to render human subjectivity in ways more real than realism: to represent consciousness, perception, emotion, meaning and the individual's relation to society through interior monologue, stream of consciousness, tunneling, defamiliarization, rhythm, irresolution and other terms" (Childs 3).

Modernist authors reflected upon the bygone generation and anticipated the future, as bleak as that future may have seemed. Authors such as Ezra Pound, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and T. S. Eliot adapted narrative structures, fragmented narration, and disrupted syntactical order. April Fallon asserts, "[The modernists'] revolutions in form, subject, style, theme, and philosophy have transformed poetry from the strictly metered forms and styles of the previous centuries into the highly solipsistic, and as Randy Malamud termed it in *The Language of Modernism*, the 'difficult, confusing, obfuscatory' forms poetry often takes" (256). In their search for answers, the modernists experimented with new forms that questioned Victorian philosophies and challenged accepted language strategies. Feeling disillusioned with the state of the world around them, the authors began to turn inward, searching for self-consciousness,

spiritual fulfillment, and inner peace. In this search inward, Victorian logic, order, and sense could not fulfill their needs. Paul Douglass writes, “Modernist literature entertains the hope that through understanding the necessary laws of myth-making, or poetic consciousness, we may find a means to ‘make sense’ of the chaos of memory and history” (33). Through an understanding of their own consciousness, modernists hoped to find an answer to the disillusionment and chaos of the world around them. Furthermore, this exploration and revelation of the inner consciousness in modern works influences postmodern and contemporary authors to continue this psychological journey into the mind in order to resolve, or at least to contend with, external chaos.

Philosopher Henri Bergson, born in 1859, changed the way the world understands time. Although he was studying and writing in the Victorian age, an age dominated by science and reason, Bergson found the strength to break away from that tradition and critique the scientific conception of time. In a 1908 letter to William James, Bergson writes that “scientific time does not *endure*” (Douglass 7), and shortly thereafter he developed his idea of *durée*, which was a reaction against scientific time. Although I will discuss this theory in detail later, it is important to understand immediately that Bergson’s theory of duration considers all moments of time to coexist. At any given moment, the past, present, and future mingle within our consciousness, and this duration cannot be divided into individual moments along a traditional timeline. He first explains this theory in *Time and Free Will*, which he published in 1910. In his multiple philosophical texts, Bergson creates a variety of theories associated with memory, evolution, and creation. He became a leading voice in modern philosophy, and most critics agree that the authors in my study would have somehow been familiar with the works of Bergson. Although scholars have often applied Bergson’s theories to literature, I hope I will be able to provide a new

application that reveals continuity and change. We can see Bergson's influence on the modern world, and that influence continues to change the way we view time in our contemporary world.

Henri Bergson undoubtably influenced modernist thought, especially in the area of time. Although critics argue the extent of his influence and notice the evolution of Bergson's theories, most agree that "Bergson makes a number of important contributions to the staging of philosophical problems, problems concerning the nature of time, of consciousness, perception, representation, and memory, of life and evolution" (Pearson 1). By applying the theories of Bergson to modernist prose and poetry, we are able to consider the possibilities surrounding the changes in narrative structure and language and what those new strategies mean for modernist thought and the influences on postmodern thought. Pearson and Mullarkey write, "[Bergson] acknowledges that describing life in terms of an impetus is to offer little more than an image, an 'image of thought' as it were. The image, however, is intended to disclose something about the essential character of life, namely, that it is not of a mathematical or logical order but a psychological one" (1). In the midst of social conflict, authors turn inward looking for a way to define the inner turmoil amid the social chaos. T. E. Hulme, one of Bergson's contemporary philosophers and supporters, writes, "Bergson has provided in the dialect of the time the only possible way out of the nightmare" (Quirk 86). Bergson's philosophies cannot provide a complete answer to the turmoil, but by applying some of his influential theories, we may be able to make a connection between European and American modern texts and understand how those texts continue to influence the way that we read, write, and reflect upon social conflict today. I will look at the difference between the internal and the external, as "Bergson contrasts psychic time with clock time" (Pearson 5). Although these two concepts are different, I believe that they work together to become the fragmented narratives and the important changes modernists made

in the way they expressed their internal suffering. Rather than performing a biographical study of the authors, I will focus primarily on the characters' conflicts and how those characters' internal conflicts and suffering become a metaphor for the internal suffering of the era.

Most of the theories of Bergson that I plan to use come from his first text, *Time and Free Will*. Although Bergson does adjust his philosophies, he never redefines the concept of duration explicitly, nor does he negate his findings in *Time and Free Will*. Pearson and Mullarkey explain: "It is in *Matter and Memory* that Bergson will provide a very different account of matter and perception. He now seeks to show that the real is made up of both extensity and duration, but this 'extent' is not that of some infinite and infinitely divisible space, the space of a receptacle, that the intellect posits as the place in which and from which everything is built" (6). Bergson continues to posit the intellect as the central location and starting place for all perceptions, which will directly strengthen my readings of the texts and my argument regarding the importance of timelessness to the consciousness.

In his philosophy, Bergson argues that time, rather than functioning as a linear pattern (the past, the present, and the future), functions as one simultaneous concept. The past affects the present, and the present functions with the future in mind. For Bergson "[r]eal time, 'duree' (duration), is [. . .] a spherical dimension where past, present, and future coexist and continually interact, shaping each other" (Caporaletti 407). Duration resides in the present, which becomes a moment of transcendence where past, present, and future merge – a moment of awakening, a moment of epiphany, or a moment of self-realization and spiritual fulfillment. Fallon defines duration:

Real duration is the dynamic temporality of one's psychic experience that exists within the self in relation and in response to temporality in general. Time loses its



nature as a mathematical quantity and becomes a quality in which our experiences become inseparable from how we perceive them: our emotions, values, and past experiences color our present experiences. It is only in moments of real duration or immediate experience that the self experiences reality, yet this reality is not one of permanent or eternal forms, but one of immanent flow. (267)

By applying this concept of pure duration, which according to Bergson himself is “the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself *live*, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states” (*TFW* 60), we can analyze the modernists’ need to reflect inwardly and their need to present their emotional realities in a world of turmoil and chaos. The modernists’ representation of time and memory through a disruption of linear narrative reveals cultural and psychological collapse while also exploring a resolution and a personal preservation of the self amid the ruin. Bergson writes, “Outside of me, in space, there is never more than a single position of the hand and the pendulum, for nothing is left of the past positions. Within myself a process of organization or interpenetration of conscious states is going on, which constitutes true duration” (*TFW* 63). I will look at the difference between the external and the internal, but also at how the external construct of time and internal duration of time function mutually. Although the characters seek timeless moments, they are fully aware of the external ticking of the inexorable clock as well.

The modernists, through their use of language, attempted to communicate the internal feelings associated with moments of duration. Maybe the modernists were trying to define the collapse, or possibly trying to save themselves from personal collapse in the midst of cultural collapse. First, the modern era inspired change: they turned to solipsism and focused on themselves as individuals. By changing the narrative structure, they changed the focus of the

work. Events, order, time, and linear movement mattered less, and thought, feeling, introspection, and emotional states mattered more. Rather than focusing on the Victorian concepts of morality and rationalism, the modernists needed to focus on the survival of the self. Secondly, the modern era inspired reflection: psychological response may represent the conflicts of the whole culture, country, or larger group. Bergson's concept of duration may apply to modernist thought as communicated through language. As modernists began to consider time and space and all events as one, they began to concentrate on the self and how that idea of the self functions within the rest of the world. They asked, "How can I save the self among all of the rest of the collapse?" Through narrative structure, stream of consciousness, symbolism, and moments of duration, twentieth-century writers enter their holistic selves and the holistic selves of their characters in order to seek personal resolution from the diverse conflicts of the modern world.

### **European Modernism**

In the first section of my dissertation, I plan to focus on European Modernism, specifically T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, and James Joyce's "The Dead." Of course, we cannot point definitively to the beginning of modernism. Some place it in the 1890s while others believe it started after WWI. Most agree, however, that high modernism peaked in the year 1922 because of the three authors mentioned above – Eliot, Woolf, and Joyce. I plan to begin with European Modernism because I believe that is where the techniques and philosophies I plan to analyze began. Although the three authors and the works mentioned are diverse in their forms, structures, and meanings, all of them somehow seek internal resolution from an external world of chaos by disrupting time as a linear construct. In

their works, these authors explore the collapse of the world around them through literature, language and psychology. Applying Bergson's theory of duration, we can connect these works through resolution and personal reflection.

Although Eliot wrote *Four Quartets* much later than the other European modern texts I will use, I begin with Eliot because his discoveries in the poem work nicely with my major points. I look at *Four Quartets* as the resolution and the conclusion to my ideas. Eliot bridges all of the works within my study. Both American and European, Eliot studied Bergson and continually sought resolution in a world of chaos by writing poetry that defied the conventional traditions regarding time and structure. Eliot, according to biographer Lyndall Gordon, "always had a single aim: to recover the divine" (370). As a conclusion to his search, Eliot wrote *Four Quartets*, a poem with hope for resolution and a discovery of spiritual fulfillment. Throughout my dissertation, I will argue four major points. These four major points synthesize the European and American, modern and postmodern. Through this argument, I will make connections between disparate texts in order to look at them from the perspective of timelessness, hope, and resolution. First, all of the authors make some sort of major change or shift in narrative structure by questioning the linear nature of time. I will use Eliot's *Four Quartets* as a starting point to this idea. Eliot states, "Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future, / And time future contained in time past" (175). I will analyze all of the texts with this idea in mind and by using Bergson's theories to support that philosophy. Each author, in his or her own way, disrupts narrative structure and linear time. Second, each author seems to write his or her texts as a way to deal with the chaos of the era. Peter Childs asserts:

Modernist writing is most particularly noted for its experimentation, its complexity, its formalism, and for its attempt to create a 'tradition of the new.' Its

historical and social background includes the emergence of the New Woman, the peak and downturn of the British Empire, unprecedented technological change, the rise of the Labour party, the appearance of factory-line mass production, war in Africa, Europe and elsewhere. Modernism has therefore almost universally been considered a literature of not just change but crisis. (14)

The texts symbolize a struggle – usually a personal struggle in the midst of political or societal chaos. The authors disrupt the narrative structure in order to create characters that struggle internally and externally, with some sort of destruction in the world around them: war, familial destruction, slavery, and AIDS, to name a few of the forces that threaten them. Eliot's *Four Quartets* defines that chaos: "Garlic and sapphires in the mud / Clot the bedded axle-tree. / The trilling wire in the blood / Sings below inveterate scars / Appeasing long forgotten wars" (176-7). The third point will focus on the still points, moments, and epiphanies found within each text. The authors use different terms to define these moments, but each text has them, and each author presents these moments as spiritually fulfilling, albeit brief. This is the moment Bergson calls *durée*. Eliot writes, "At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless; / Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is, / But neither arrest nor movement" (177). This moment creates some hope, and the moment defies conventional thought about time as a linear construction. The final major point that will connect all of the texts argues that these still points of consciousness offer healing and resolution in a modern world. The immanent flow of Bergson's duration flourishes in Eliot's *Four Quartets*. When reading the entire poem in one sitting, the reader feels a sense of cohesion and spiritual harmony. Bergson himself uses harmony as a metaphor for his concept of duration as it "forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak,

into one another (*Time* 100). Eliot's *Four Quartets* speak to one another as they present a resolution to the disillusionment of the modern era between World War I and World War II. Eliot, a scholar and once-supporter of Bergson's theories, seems to return to Bergson's concept of duration in order to seek the divine resolution that he, and the rest of the modern world, needs as World War II looms and threatens.

For Eliot in *Four Quartets*, the moment of duration emerged in his "still point of the turning world"; for Joyce, those moments are epiphanies – moments of self-realization and spiritual fulfillment. In my examination of Joyce I plan to show his transition toward a Bergsonian approach. By the time he wrote *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce sought hope and resolution through moments of duration. I will focus on "The Dead" and *A Portrait* in order to show this transition. Moments of duration are indeed present in the first fourteen stories of *Dubliners*, but they are limited. However, in "The Dead," Gabriel experiences a profound moment of transcendence and spiritual awakening at the end of his story, leading to a moment of hope in which the living and the dead, the past and the present, come together. The structure of "The Dead" in comparison to the rest of *Dubliners* begins to reveal Joyce's transformation. "The Dead" acts as a point of transition between a fragmented, linear consciousness to the consciousness of duration and emergence that Joyce reveals clearly in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Joyce and other modernist writers sought change and spiritual enlightenment; consequently, Bergson became a major influence on the consciousness of these authors. Douglass writes, "Bergson's philosophy had a widening circle of effects in the work of many writers, including Yeats, Eliot, Woolf, and Joyce, who had become preoccupied with experiences of a quasi-religious nature, and whose art strove toward a liberation from the 'nightmare of materialism' and an embrace with 'the spiritual life to which art belongs,' as

Kandinsky wrote in 1912” (10). The fears and anxieties the modernists faced haunted them in their narratives, and they searched desperately for answers; Bergson provided a moment of resolution in this search. Tom Quirk agrees: “Because Bergson’s philosophy corresponds to a felt solution to those vague, inarticulate fears and enables one to oppose them, he may be considered a central and defining influence on the age” (86). Joyce reveals his need for a spiritual answer in “The Dead” as he transitions away from standard narrative structure and allows Gabriel to experience an epiphany unlike the epiphanies in the other stories of *Dubliners*. For Gabriel all moments merge into one moment of spiritual fulfillment. Although many stories in *Dubliners* reach an epiphany, Gabriel’s epiphany differs from the near-epiphanies in the other stories in a spiritual way. Gabriel reaches a transcendence that combines spiritual, emotional, and national duration and cohesion – a true moment of enlightenment. As modernist authors seek a solution to the pressing fears of the world, they seem to find resolution, albeit an ephemeral one, through enlightened moments of the present.

While Joyce structures *Dubliners* in a fragmented, chronological manner, he focuses on the consciousness in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and Bergson’s influence could contribute to this transition. Influenced by Victorian consciousness of structure, order, and sense, Joyce presents the stories of *Dubliners* linearly. Joyce writes of *Dubliners* in his letters, “I have tried to present [Dublin life] to the indifferent public under four of its aspects: childhood, adolescence, maturity, and public life” (Rice 406). When communicating Dublin experiences, Joyce separates the stories chronologically into sections of life. He presents fragments of the lives of various Dubliners in a chronological and thematic sequence, and these “fragments of reality break off as Joyce narrates from constantly changing points of attack” (Malamud 133). However, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* presents a very different structure, one that

transitions from fragmentation and order to duration. “The book’s pattern, as [Joyce] explained to Stanislaus, is that we are what we were; our maturity is an extension of our childhood” (Ellmann 295). Rather than organizing the novel chronologically, Joyce begins to think in “clusters of sensation” (Ellmann 297). Joyce presents two moments of Stephen’s memory in the first two pages of the novel, a memory of wetting the bed as a child and one of his sickness at Clongowes (*A Portrait* 3-4). The moments are no longer fragmented as they are in *Dubliners*; they are combined into a single consciousness, one similar to Bergson’s concept of duration. They are “chains of related moments, with the effect of three fleshings in time rather than of a linear succession of events” (Ellmann 297). The transition in structure from *Dubliners* to *A Portrait* moves from a linear recording of life to a focus on the “gestation of a soul” (Ellmann 297); Joyce moves away from Victorian structure and focuses on the inner spirit and the present as one moment of being in which “we are what we were.”

The third author who must be included in the discussion of timelessness in modern structure is Virginia Woolf. Many critics have researched, analyzed, and written about the controversy surrounding the influence of Bergson on Virginia Woolf’s writing and philosophy. Most agree that she likely did not read Bergson. Leonard Woolf says she did not, but many believe she may have been influenced through other members of Bloomsbury or T. S. Eliot. However, it is not my aim to prove the influence of Bergson on Woolf or the other authors. I plan to use Bergsonism as a tool in the study of Woolf’s art and of how her art has inspired contemporary authors to continue the search for the moment of *durée* in literature. Shiv Kumar, who does believe Bergson influenced Woolf, states, “Of all the stream of consciousness novelists, Virginia Woolf seems to have presented a consistent and comprehensive treatment of time. Time with her is almost a mode of perception, a filter which distils all phenomena before

they are apprehended in their true significance and relationship” (68). I will examine *Mrs. Dalloway* in terms of Bergson’s theory of duration. As I outlined above, I will look again at the four ideas inspired by Eliot’s *Four Quartets*. First, *Mrs. Dalloway* disrupts the linear narrative in order to question the conventional concept of time and its impact on the human mind. Next, the novel faces the external conflict of war – the end of the Great War and the looming second war. Because of the external conflict and the human need for self and personal resolution, the characters in the novel turn inward to what Woolf calls “moments of being” in order to seek personal resolution amid the world of chaos – so that the self can survive.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf changes the way in which we look at the novel by creating a day in the life of Clarissa Dalloway. By looking at *Mrs. Dalloway* in terms of Bergsonism, I plan to examine the way in which Clarissa survives at the end of the novel because of the timelessness she experiences. First, Woolf’s uncertainty about the uselessness of time emerges through her use of structure and symbolism. The novel takes place in one day with no chapter breaks or sections. The day flows as easily as Woolf’s use of stream of consciousness. The worlds of Clarissa Dalloway (her present and her past worlds) and Septimus Smith (his present and his past) merge through the style, aesthetic, and structure. Furthermore, time in the novel becomes a symbol of restriction, regularity – something to be cautious of. Big Ben looms as does the other clock: “Love – but here, the other clock, the clock which always struck two minutes after Big Ben, came shuffling in with its lap full of odds and ends, which it dumped down as if Big Ben were all very well with his majesty laying down the law, so solemn, so just, but she must remember all sorts of little things besides” (*MD* 128). Time remains throughout the novel, but I argue that through Woolf’s structure and stream of consciousness technique, she rejects time. I assert that Woolf rejects time in the novel in order to allow Clarissa to maintain



personal fortitude despite the chaos of the world around her. Specifically, Clarissa and Septimus (more clearly) must wrestle with the aftermath of the war and its destruction of the self. Michael Whitworth agrees, “Like her modernist contemporaries, Woolf believed that changes in the modern world had changed subjectivity itself” (Whitworth 160). At the start of the novel, Clarissa thinks, “The War was over, except [. . .]; but it was over; thank Heaven – over” (5). The war had indeed ended, but this introduction to the war explains that the war continued to disrupt lives. Clarissa has to remind herself that it is over. For Septimus, the war is still raging in his head, as “the world wavered and quivered and threatened to burst into flames” (15). Woolf examines the ability, or lack of it, amid the chaos of the external world. In order to seek survival of the self for her characters, Woolf creates moments of being in her writing. Woolf explains this moment of being, what it means, what it feels like, and why it is important, as Clarissa remembers such moments from her past:

Only for a moment; but it was enough. It was a sudden revelation, a tinge like a blush which one tried to check and then, as it spread, one yielded to its expansion, and rushed to the farthest verge and there quivered and felt the world come closer, swollen with some astonishing significance, some pressure of rapture, which split its thin skin and gushed and poured with an extraordinary alleviation over the cracks and sores! Then, for that moment, she had seen an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed. But the close withdrew; the hard softened. It was over – the moment. (32)

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, the moments of being (which I am asserting suggest Bergson’s *durée*) exist in order to have something to live for. In this novel, the resolution is simply survival. Clarissa survives despite the war, the death of Septimus, and the eternal beating of the clock. Some part

of her self survives. Peter sees it as he notices, “[f]or there she was” at the end of the novel. Clarissa must go on: “She felt somehow very like him – the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun. But she must go back. She must assemble. She must find Sally and Peter. And she came in from the little room” (Woolf 186). Clarissa survives; the self can endure as a symbol of hope, despite the turmoil of the external world. Virginia Woolf may not have studied or even read Bergson’s works, but the moments she creates for her characters give life and experience to Bergson’s ideas about timeless moments. Woolf, like Eliot and Joyce, looks to those moments of *durée* as a reason to endure.

### **American Modernism**

In this next section I will demonstrate the inspiration European modernists provided to American modern philosophy. Eliot helps bridge this gap because the Americans claim him as their own while he claimed to be British; he was both. Furthermore, Eliot sets one of the sections of *Four Quartets* in America, acknowledging his roots in his final resolution poem. Paul Douglass, of the connections between Bergson and American Modernism, writes:

As the gap between body and soul widened, that literature recorded the dissociations – the *dedoublement* of the self—but it also held out hope of a path back to wholeness. This, at its simplest level, is what Bergson personified to American artists like Faulkner, William Carlos Williams, Frost, Wolfe, Henry Miller, and Gertrude Stein. They responded equally or more strongly than the generation of British artists considering the same sorts of problems: Joyce, Woolf, the later Yeats. (166)

All of these authors seek resolution of the self, a return to wholeness: “Only through time time is conquered” (*FQ* 178). In my study of timelessness and its vital importance in the survival of the characters in these works, I will use Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* as my primary text. My four-point argument works well with this novel, and the work of Faulkner creates fluid connections between the works of the European modernists and the American postmodernists I will later examine.

As with Woolf, the debate continues among the critics of Faulkner. No one can decide how much Bergson Faulkner read or how influential the works of Bergson were for Faulkner. Faulkner’s biographer Joseph Blotner states that Faulkner said he agreed with “Bergson’s theory of the fluidity of time. There is only the present moment in which I include both the past and the future, and that is eternity” (563). Paul Douglass refutes, “But no available evidence supports or refutes Blotner’s and Adam’s claims about Faulkner’s reading. Virtually no philosophical works – classical or popular – were contained in Faulkner’s private library, which included over 1,200 volumes from more than two dozen countries at the time of Faulkner’s death, but no work of Bergson’s” (119). Once again, however, my aim is to show the ways in which Bergson’s ideas can enlighten the emotion of these works. Because words limit the expression of feeling and because these authors all created new ways of putting words together to try to better express internal turmoil, one more way of looking at these texts can only help illuminate our understanding. Because “any discussion of Bergson and American Literature must deal with Faulkner” (Douglass 118), I plan to examine his structure, aesthetic, and style in order to show how his novel works nicely with my assertions about time. Faulkner believed that “Like consciousness itself, a novel must have the fluidity of life” (Douglass 121). I will argue that this statement is true for Faulkner, as well as Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, and later, postmodern writers.

Specifically, *The Sound and the Fury* presents an internal look at one family's struggle for survival, and, like Eliot, Woolf, and Joyce, Faulkner allows the characters moments of duration that aid in that survival. The first part of my argument asserts that the authors disrupt conventional narrative structure and turn the linear clock into a timeless moment. *The Sound and the Fury* mingles the past and the present through stream of consciousness, and, Faulkner's novel does not occur in chronological order. Each part of the novel presents a different narrative voice, and they are dated "April Seventh, 1928," "June Second, 1910," "April Sixth, 1928", and finally, "April Eighth, 1928." The dates in April lead to Easter Sunday, which Faulkner uses as a symbol of renewal, rebirth, and survival. The moments of timelessness, those moments that exemplify Bergson's theory of duration, come in different ways for the characters in *The Sound and the Fury*. For Benjy these moments bring endurance, but for Quentin the external pressure of time defeats the moments of duration. As in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the connection between death and survival emerges. Quentin must perish so that the family can somehow survive with at least a glimmer of hope for peace and rebirth. Benjy remembers the moments his family felt as one and finds solace in those moments of remembrance: "Caddy smelled like trees and like when she says we're asleep" (6). Benjy returns to these moments for his own survival, and, in the end, he endures: "The broken flower drooped over Benjy's fist and his eyes were empty and blue and serene again as cornice and façade flowed smoothly once more from left to right, past the tree, window and doorway and signboard each in its ordered place" (321). Although the flower wilts and his eyes are empty, Benjy is calm and he survives. The ebb and flow of life continue with Faulkner's use of language and imagery. The "façade flowed smoothly once more," and Faulkner's use of polysyndeton gives the last sentence of the novel a feeling of continuity and movement. Furthermore, because Faulkner sets the final section of the novel on Easter Sunday,

he symbolically asserts that the Compsons and the South will endure, albeit both will be changed.

In my study Faulkner represents the modern American voice. Like Woolf, Joyce, and Eliot, Faulkner defies linearity in order to present moments in the characters' lives that represent Bergson's duration. By looking at an American author who deals with American turmoil from an American perspective, we can better understand the texts within one framework of timelessness. The external conflict changes, but the moments of duration endure. For some characters those moments lead to survival, but other characters cannot survive. In essence, the death of some characters gives life to others, as in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Conclusively, the moments of duration presented through the various techniques of these authors allow for the possibility of endurance. In his argument about the importance of Bergson in American literature, Paul Douglass writes: "That movement, as I see it, seeks to make readers conscious of a truth of experience beyond similitudes; it actively makes us aware of the problematic nature of the text. It escapes skepticism, however, by laying emphasis upon the process by which we read, penetrating to and reincarnating meaning – renewing ourselves" (177). The European and American modernists reexamined the way in which the human mind works. They used stream of consciousness, disrupted narrative linearity, and created moments of duration that helped change the way in which literature would be written and received in the postmodern era.

### **Modernism to Postmodernism**

In my dissertation I will synthesize these modern texts with postmodern literature and philosophy. Rather than focusing only on modernist works, or European or American works, I will analyze the way in which the modern artists redefine our understanding of time along with

the way they have influenced contemporary thought and postmodern literature. As the modern authors allowed a connection between personal and cultural collapse, they opened the window for contemporary authors to look at the world through a solipsistic lens. Although they may not have invented such self-involvement, they found a way to communicate that world view through their literature and allowed the concept to become intellectually respectable. I will use the theory of constructive postmodern philosophy to examine the ways in which postmodern authors construct a new worldview that was influenced by the modernists before them. As Woolf, Joyce, Eliot, and Faulkner changed structure and aesthetic and defied convention, the postmodernists adopt those new forms and construct an art that reaches outward toward contemporary understanding of the past, present, and future. David Ray Griffin explains that there are two types of postmodern philosophies, one that accents deconstruction and the other that accents construction. He writes, “The two types of postmodern philosophy differ not on the need to deconstruct various notions that were central to modern and in some cases postmodern worldviews, but on the necessity and possibility of constructing a new cosmology that might become the worldview of future generations” (1). I will closely examine two postmodern texts as my primary texts, Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and Michael Cunningham’s *The Hours*. The two texts not only work nicely with my argument about timelessness and endurance, but also they connect beautifully to their modern predecessors. With those texts I hope to prove that some postmodern texts, influenced by the timelessness of modern texts, continue the traditions set forth by Bergson and the modernists, and, moreover, however, that the postmodernists expand the understanding of this theory by spreading these ideas to future worldviews. Specifically, the postmodern texts assertively bring their honored pasts to the present moment in order to give Bergson’s theory relevance in our contemporary thought.

Because Henri Bergson's popularity was at its height before World War I, the first question that must be considered when approaching my study of the postmodern era is, "How can this application provide a better understanding of the texts?" Bergson suggests that optimism, survival, and endurance will prevail. Although he may not be wholly optimistic, he does assert that the internal human self can survive despite the external pressures of the daily world. Postmodern fiction can be defined in many ways; however, for my purposes, postmodern thought focuses on the future while at the same time acknowledging and honoring past experiences and traditions. In looking toward the future, many postmodern authors focus on hope – the idea that reconciliation with the past is indeed possible. The writers construct literature that then presents this philosophy as a contemporary worldview. Hope and survival are possible. This philosophy works nicely with Bergson's beliefs as presented in *Time and Free Will*. He writes, "The idea of the future, pregnant with an infinity of possibilities, is thus more fruitful than the future itself, and this is why we find more charm in hope than in possession, in dreams than in reality" (10). Bergson's theories can help us understand postmodern texts as well as modern. We hope for a future in order to survive. Although the external chaos and turmoil changes as technology, war, disease, and industrialization increase, authors such as Morrison and Cunningham continue to suggest that the survival of the internal self is possible despite all of this change. The postmodernists take the past, bring it into the present, and ask the characters to come to terms with all of this conflict. Through intertextuality, the postmodern authors invite the modern authors to the forefront in order to join together in reconciliation with the past and with hope for the future. The human self, through moments of duration, endures despite the presence of increased external conflicts. The postmodern authors continue the literary and philosophical traditions of the modern authors, but they also aggressively bring the past (slavery for Morrison;

Woolf's life and art for Cunningham) to the present. Readers of these postmodern works begin to realize that one must remember and reconcile with the past in order to hope for the future. Bergson's theories of optimism, hope, and survival of the self further illuminate the understanding of these works as representations of postmodern thought. The past, present, and future must work together for survival. As Eliot reminds us, "Only through time time is conquered" (Eliot 178).

Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison continues the modern tradition of defying linearity while also acknowledging the importance of the past. The next section of my work will focus on Morrison's *Beloved*, the ways in which the novel helps enlighten my argument, and the ways in which the postmodern tradition expands upon these ideas. Although Toni Morrison says, "I am not like Faulkner" (Kolmerton 3), I will show the ways in which Morrison's novel makes some of the same assertions about timelessness as Faulkner and the other artists. Carol Kolmerton writes, "The notion of intertextuality, with its emphasis on the infinite resonating signification of language, means that one can validly read not only Faulkner's influence on Morrison, but also Morrison's influence on Faulkner – how her fiction and literary criticism may cause one to rethink Faulkner in a fundamental way" (4). Morrison defies conventional narrative structure, questions the linearity of time, and provides hope through moments of duration, like the modernists. Additionally, by bringing slavery and its horrific realities out of the past and into the contemporary world, Morrison extends the effect to a broader audience. The internal experience of her characters resonates with her readers, and, in terms of Bergson, Morrison's novel provides a moment of duration for the characters and the readers at the same time. We all understand the connection between the past, present, and future within the internal self. The past



becomes real within the present lives of many in order to show that survival of the self heals past wounds.

I will then return to the four major points of my argument and apply those ideas to Morrison's *Beloved*. Furthermore, I will examine the ways in which Morrison extends this philosophy to construct a contemporary worldview that combines the collective consciousness of many. First, for Morrison, "Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future, / And time future contained in time past" (Eliot 175). Morrison's novel moves through the present at 124 Bluestone Road for the heroine Sethe, her daughter Denver, and her friend Paul D from the Sweet Home Plantation where they endured slavery. However, Morrison intertwines the past experiences of all these characters within the present narrative. Like the other texts examined, the narrative voice enters the consciousness of all the characters without indication of a shift. The narrative flows like a wave through the consciousness, feelings, and internal struggle of the various characters. Morrison also calls convention into question by bringing a supernatural element to the novel. The past literally comes to life to haunt the existence of the characters. The past steps into the present, demanding reconciliation. Second, with *Beloved* Toni Morrison exposes "the trilling wire in the blood" in order to "appease long forgotten wars" (Eliot 176-7). Morrison acknowledges many issues and hardships surrounding the experience of slavery and argues that the self must endure in order to achieve real freedom. She writes, "Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another" (95). By the end of Sethe's experience, Paul D tells her, "You your best thing" (273). Morrison asserts that survival of the self is the only way to survive the external world, in keeping with the philosophies of Bergson.

For Morrison, the still points – the moments of duration – those moments that allow the self to endure – come from what she calls “rememory.” She writes, “I was talking about time. It is so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay” (34). Sethe speaks of the past, “Because even though it’s all over – over and done with—it’s going to always be there waiting for you” (35). Sethe has a “rememory” of Baby Suggs:

She wished for Baby Suggs’ fingers molding her nape, reshaping it, saying, ‘Lay em down, Sethe. Sword and shield. Down. Down. Both of em down. Down by the riverside. Sword and shield. Don’t study war no more. Lay all that mess down. Sword and shield.’ And under the pressing fingers and the quiet instructive voice, she would. (86)

These moments of “rememory” allow the characters to survive. As Eliot writes, “Only through time time is conquered,” and Morrison uses time to conquer the past. Like in Bergson’s theory and in the other works discussed, hope somehow survives because of these moments. The family and the individuals in *Beloved* endure. Although the optimism cannot solve all of the past turmoil, the self survives because somehow it can hope for the future – even if that future reality is bleaker than the dream of possibilities. Morrison continues the modern tradition outlined in this paper, while she creates a new, current worldview. Contemporary audiences join in the fight for the self.

Postmodern intertextuality and modern influence also emerge through Michael Cunningham’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Hours*. Cunningham re-presents Virginia Woolf’s novel *Mrs. Dalloway* in a manner that has become a defining element of postmodern fiction. Like Woolf with *Mrs. Dalloway*, Cunningham disrupts conventional time structure by setting the novel in one day; however, he chooses three different days from three different time

periods. One day now expands into one day for three different women in three different eras, each with a narrative voice that is somehow touched by the past – Woolf’s 1925 novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*. Like the modernists before him, Cunningham uses a disruption in linear time to show that the self can endure despite external chaos, with the help of moments of duration. Like Morrison’s *Beloved*, *The Hours*, with a postmodern style, pulls the past directly into the present through intertextuality. Suddenly, everyone reading *The Hours* needed to read *Mrs. Dalloway*, and when *The Hours* became a major motion picture, the audience expanded even further. As Mary Joe Hughes asserts, “When Michael Cunningham takes up these same themes in *The Hours*, including the oceanic interconnectedness between people, the life of one human spirit animating that of another, the permeable boundaries between life and death, and the burst bounds of time, he allows them to ripple out in wider and wider circles” (353). Therefore, with a modern influence and a postmodern perspective, Cunningham uses the concept of time as a symbol. Linear time must be broken in order for the characters to understand one another and to survive as individuals in the midst of chaos. Hughes agrees, “Death, art, and love itself all function as portals to that mysterious realm that can burst the bonds of time, an apprehension of what is most precious in life” (356).

For the postmodernists the chaos changes, but the personal reactions to it does not. This survival of human reactions connects us all. In the contemporary world, the pressures have evolved. Cunningham relies on the same pressures from the modern era – marriage, parenting, loving one’s self, survival – and he also expands those pressures to contemporary terms – AIDS, homosexuality, bisexuality. As in *Mrs. Dalloway*, characters must die for the others to understand that the moments of being make life worth living. These moments in *The Hours* continue Woolf’s tradition. Cunningham allows Woolf herself to experience a moment of being

regarding her literary inspiration: “She leaves the parlor, crosses the foyer, and enters the darkened dining room. Long rectangles of moonlight mixed with street light fall through the window onto the tabletop, are swept away by windblown branches, reappear, and are swept away again. Virginia stands in the doorway, watching the shifting patterns as she would watch waves break on a beach” (210-11). These moments of being allow one to survive. Clarissa survives Richard in the end. Cunningham explains through Clarissa in the conclusion of the novel: “There’s just this for consolation: an hour here or there when our lives seem, against all odds and expectations, to burst open and give us everything we’ve ever imagined, though everyone but children (and perhaps even they) knows these hours will inevitably be followed by others, far darker and more difficult. Still, we cherish the city, the morning; we hope, more than anything for more” (225). The hope continues in *The Hours* in the same way it has survived in the other works. The hope comes from moments of timelessness – a moment that Bergson argues “forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole” (*TFW* 100). Virginia Woolf may explain it best in her diary entry from 1923. She writes:

I have no time to describe my plans. I should say a good deal about *The Hours*, & my discovery; how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters; I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humour depth. The idea is that the cave shall connect, & each comes to daylight at the present moment. (263)

Using Woolf’s metaphor, the modernists dug the caves, while the postmodernists expand those same caves into new areas, bringing new moments of the present to light.

\* \* \*

With this dissertation, I will examine and connect, using the four-part argument I have explained above. I will examine the various interpretations of Bergson within the study of each specific author. I will analyze each text thoroughly as it relates to my four-part argument. All of these works disrupt linear narration in order to grapple with the external chaos. Through that process, the characters find moments that I argue exemplify Bergson's theory of duration. These moments, therefore, allow for hope in the future and survival in the present. As Bergson writes, "What makes hope such an intense pleasure is the fact that the future, which we dispose of to our liking, appears to us at the same time under a multitude of forms, equally attractive and equally possible" (*TFW* 9-10). The thorough examination of each text, with the help of Bergson's theories, will add to the body of criticism dealing with time, Bergson, and structure. However, once I begin to synthesize the works, I hope to expand upon those criticisms and develop a fresh argument. The theories of Bergson, whether or not the authors are directly influenced by his work, can help us better understand the way in which these authors present the survival of hope for the future despite the horror of external chaos. By making these connections, I will show that the interlacing of these ideas illuminates contemporary thought and postmodern literature.

Hughes writes:

That model is one of 'enlacing,' whereby the postmodern work extends the depth of the tradition to unnamed and innumerable others. Far from claiming the triumph of the new (albeit doing so, temporarily but inevitably, at the same time), such a work continues the links begun in the original, links between characters or between characters and readers, some of the latter future writers or artists themselves. (360)

I aim to bring these works together organically, inspired by Bergson's ideas of interconnection. He writes, "We can thus conceive of succession without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnection and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought" (*TFW* 101).

While most literary criticism examines these works individually or by genre, I will connect them into one argument about the importance of timeless moments. By bringing American modern, European modern, and postmodern works together, I hope to add a new perspective to the theories of Bergson and the ways in which authors assert that "Only through time time is conquered" (Eliot 178).

### T. S. Eliot: Bergson Revisited In *Four Quartets*

Through the loneliness of “Prufrock” and beyond the fragmentation and anxiety of *The Waste Land*, Eliot finds hope for the future in *Four Quartets*, a hope that seems to revisit the philosophies of Bergson that Eliot once studied. The biographical connection happened early in his career: “[Eliot] attended seven of Bergson’s lectures at the College de France in January and February 1911, and according to his mother, Eliot was so affected by the man that he opted for graduate study at Harvard in philosophy instead of literature. Eliot’s philosophical enthusiasm soon turned from the neoromantic vitalism of Bergson to the skeptical idealism of F. H Bradley, however” (Gordon 83). Therefore, we must consider Eliot’s fascination with Bergson while remembering that he abandoned his optimistic mysticism, a belief in Bergson’s optimism and transcendental ideas, once he began his study of Bradley. Tom Quirk argues that “Eliot first became interested in Bergsonism because it provided a means for him to rationalize his own youthful mystical experiences, but when Eliot’s skepticism overruled his mysticism, he turned to Bradley” (Quirk 83). This transition makes sense when considering the evolution of Eliot’s poetry. From “Rhapsody on a Windy Night” to “Prufrock” to *The Waste Land*, Eliot seems to grow increasingly less romantic and more skeptical, especially in *Poems 1920*. In his essays analyzing Bergson’s theories, Eliot indeed questions some of his philosophies. However, “[one essay] is not a straight attack on Bergson, for it does not condemn the philosopher’s views, but strives to adjust them. Above all, Eliot seems to be assessing the significance and power of memory and intuition, two profoundly interrelated concepts in Bergson’s philosophy. He wishes to preserve these principles” (Douglass 62). Although Bergson most likely had a profound influence on Eliot, the critics disagree about the permanence of this influence. In speaking of Bergson’s influence on Eliot, Lyndall Gordon writes, “This was the only time that Eliot was ever

converted by the influence of any individual. As it turned out, his conversion was temporary; [. . .] but Eliot was to draw on Bergson's challenge to the technological artifice of clock-time which enforces the present and ignores the cumulative incursions of the past" (55). Quite possibly, Bergson's philosophies of time remained in Eliot's consciousness, as Paul Douglass suggests in his studies, leading to his time-related resolution in *Four Quartets*. In her study of Bergson and the British Modernists, Mary Ann Gillies agrees, "Although Eliot's subsequent turn away from Bergson's philosophy may have meant that he no longer ascribed to the theories articulated by Bergson, it does not mean that he forgot Bergson's teachings" (65). In fact, although Eliot's loyalty to Bergson's theories can be questioned, "critics have long recognized that Bergson left a powerful impression on Eliot's poetic mentality" (Habib 255).

M. A. R. Habib asserts that we must consider Eliot's manuscript on Bergson dated 1910-11. Although "Lyndall Gordon refers to the manuscript in a footnote, and Paul Douglass offers a brief summary of it" (Habib 256), Habib argues that a closer analysis must be done in order to understand the connection between Eliot and Bergson. He argues that "Eliot cites three cardinal points on which he will take issue with Bergson: the 'antithesis of extrinsic and intrinsic multiplicity . . . The inconsistencies of the *durée réelle* . . . The attempt to occupy a middle ground between idealism and realism'" (258). However, Habib also asserts that Eliot and Bergson present very similar arguments in the areas of language, aesthetics, and the view of the self (271-2).

Eliot seeks evolution and progress through his career as a poet, and that poetic voice falls silent with his completion of *Four Quartets*. This poem, although published later than the other texts I will examine, helps establish the connection to Bergson's theories that I hope to prove. When I began to develop this idea regarding Bergson's influence on a variety of authors, both



modern and postmodern, British and American, *Four Quartets* emerged as an influential starting point. In *Four Quartets*, Eliot addresses the major points of my discussion that I will weave throughout a variety of diverse works. He questions the linear nature of time in order to contend with the external chaos of his era. Through exploration and expression of moments of enlightenment or awakening, Eliot achieves hopefulness despite the world around him. Although Eliot's search for understanding and completion can be traced throughout his career, this process and resolution emerge specifically in *Four Quartets*. Also, because Eliot is considered by most as one of the (if not *the*) major modern poets, artists and critics consistently look to him for ideas and understanding of the world around them. Eliot's *Four Quartets* allowed me to begin the process; I use his poem to formulate the ideas I have concerning time and resolution for these authors. Then, I take those major ideas, apply Bergson's theories to them, and examine them with the other texts. Because Eliot was unquestionably inspired by Bergson in some ways at some point during his career, and the other authors (Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner, Morrison, and Cunningham) are all most likely inspired in some way by Eliot, if not by Bergson himself, *Four Quartets* lends itself nicely to the application of these ideas. My examination of Eliot's poem begins the narrative of Bergson's influence on modern and then postmodern work.

### **Poetic Structure Questions Linear Time**

Eliot questions the accepted linear construct of time in *Four Quartets*. Through his poetic structure, syntax, and form, Eliot calls into question the conventional ways of believing that time functions in one linear direction. Eliot shows that his philosophy of time contains similarities to Bergson's ideas about time. Mary Ann Gillies writes, "Eliot's study of time leads

to a series of contemplations about history, tradition, and art's role in the development of both" (68). Because Eliot was concerned with the nature of time, his poetry reflects these conflicts and concerns with the past, the future, and the present moments. He consistently considers the importance of history and its impact on the present and the future. Likewise, Eliot tries to achieve timeless moments that are similar to Bergson's concept of *durée*: "The Absolute that Eliot detects in *durée* is really the similarity of the nature of *durée* and the nature of God; both are built on a paradox which says that each simply is, and that we as human beings cannot understand the reality of either God or time unless we conceptualize them, thereby misrepresenting the true nature of each" (Gillies 69).

In *Four Quartets*, Eliot reveals his hope to achieve a moment in which all experiences occur at one time. Eliot terms this concept a "historical sense" in his works, and this "'historical sense' consists of an ability to experience all time at one instant; this is clearly similar to Bergson's view of *durée*" (Gillies 70). In order for human beings to evolve and progress, both Eliot and Bergson assert that duration must be achieved. Even critics such as F. O. Matthiessen, who claims that Bergson's influence was transitory at best in *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot*, agrees that in the opening of "Burnt Norton," "some of the passages on duration remind us that Eliot listened to Bergson's lectures at the Sorbonne" (Gillies 62). Therefore, even those who believe Bergson's influence on Eliot was minor find references to *durée* in *Four Quartets*. Bergson's influence becomes apparent at the beginning of the poem:

Time present and time past  
 Are both perhaps present in time future,  
 And time future contained in time past.  
 If all time is eternally present

All time is unredeemable.  
 What might have been an abstraction  
 Remaining a perpetual possibility  
 Only in a world of speculation  
 What might have been and what has been  
 Point to one end, which is always present. (175)

From the start of *Four Quartets*, Eliot positions all aspects of time in one plane, and all of the aspects of time reside in the present. Time as a construct cannot be interpreted or redeemed; all aspects of time blend together within the present moment. In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson writes, “We can thus conceive of succession without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnection and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought” (101). The abstract thought occurs when we try to fragment time into small sections: yesterday, today, tomorrow. For Bergson, and for Eliot, the thoughts of interconnections culminate to represent the consciousness. Each of the first sections of each poem in *Four Quartets* deals with the concept of time. In “East Coker” Eliot begins, repeats, and ends with “in my beginning is my end” (182, 190) to bring the entire quartet into one spatial plane. By stating in the beginning that the end is there, and then stating at the end that the beginning is there, Eliot challenges general conceptions of linear time. Like Bergson, he questions the function of time as a mathematical measurement and positions time as an eternal present.

Eliot later suggests to his readers, “You shall not think ‘the past is finished’ / Or ‘the future is before us’” (196). Structurally and thematically Eliot returns to the concept of duration throughout the poem. He seeks solace in dissolving linear time into one moment – the present.

Eliot “struggle[s] against the constraining forms of the past by brashly subverting formal expectations and conventions” (Malamud 84). His answer to the chaos of the world comes in this dissipation of time and attention to the present, the self-reflection and understanding of the moment within reach – *the now*. This moment of duration cannot include extremes and must look at both the past and the future: “While time is withdrawn, consider the future / And the past with an equal mind / At the moment which is not of action or inaction” (Eliot 196-7). Since real duration “cannot be pictured or measured by the intellect” (Bergsten 13), Eliot represents real duration through his structure, his syntax, and his diction. The poem itself acts as a harmonious song, returning again and again to the beginning and to the end, with each section melting into the next thematically.

One structural way in which Eliot defies convention is through his use of fragments. These fragments symbolically represent the fragmented world and the fragmented self. However fragmented, though, Eliot’s language blends together to create meaning and harmony. Randy Malamud writes, “fragments are uniformly better and truer representations of the contemporary sensibility than an unfragmented vessel would be” (88). For example, Eliot writes in “East Coker”:

In succession

Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,  
 Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place  
 Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass.  
 Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,  
 Old fires to ashes and ashes to earth  
 Which is already flesh, fur and faeces,

Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf. (182)

In this passage Eliot relates the fall of the houses (which could be in the open fields, or a factory, or a by-pass) to the flesh of humans with their fur and faeces. Finally, he connects the bone of man and beast back to nature with the cornstalk and leaf. This method of catapulting his reader from image to image in a fragmented way allows Eliot to exemplify many facets of the world around him and connect them in a way that shows the destruction or restoration.

Another way in which Eliot questions the linear nature of time is through the order of the four poems. The first poem, “Burnt Norton,” is named for a country house in Gloucestershire where Eliot visited with Emily Hale in the summer of 1934. In many ways it could represent Eliot’s present because Eliot experienced a significant moment there that I will later address in further detail. Unlike the other three poems, “Burnt Norton” holds no other major historical significance for Eliot’s purposes. East Coker, the setting for the second poem, is a village in Somerset England representing Eliot’s historical past. It was from this village that Eliot’s ancestors immigrated to America in 1649. Although Eliot visited East Coker in 1936, it holds most of its chronological significance in the distant past. The third poem not only represents the past, but it also bridges the gap for Eliot between his two cultures – American and English. At this coastal spot in Cape Ann, Massachusetts, Eliot vacationed with his family in America. However, unlike the second poem, Eliot looks at a more recent and personal past that is directly related to his individual progression. Finally, the fourth quartet holds significant cultural history as the village where Charles I hid in the 1600s, the night before his beheading. At the end, Eliot returns to the distant past once again, but with a major historical connection to the culture of England. Although these four quartets do not occur in any chronological order, they blend together in harmony and speak to one another. A. David Moody writes: “The formal structure is

designed to allow the instruments to remain distinct from each other while yet performing together, and so to treat different themes in different ways while weaving them into ‘a new whole’” (143). They connect the past and the present; they connect disparate cultures; they represent the four elements of air, earth, water, and fire; together they present a moment of resolution and hope. Therefore, even the form of the poem itself can be seen as a connection to Bergson’s theory of time – the past and the present must work together in harmony in order to hope for a resolution in the future. Eliot’s poetic structure demonstrates his need to question linear time and create a non-linear presentation of human consciousness. He does this, I argue, in order to move past the external pressures of the world toward an internal consciousness that has transcended those linear constructs.

### **External Chaos: The Wars**

My second major point focuses on the external chaos with which each author grapples. Eliot creates a lasting image of the external chaos of his era with the following lines:

Garlic and sapphires in the mud  
 Clot the bedded axle-tree.  
 The trilling wire in the blood  
 Sings below inveterate scars  
 Appeasing long forgotten wars. (177)

“Burnt Norton” was first published in 1936, “East Coker” in 1940, “The Dry Salvages” in 1941, and “Little Gidding” in 1942, but the poems were not collected as one volume and given one title (*Four Quartets*) until 1943. During this span of time, Eliot was still recovering from the effects of the Great War along with the rest of English society; he began writing *Four Quartets* as he

anticipated the fast-approaching World War II; and he completed “East Coker,” “Dry Salvages,” and “Little Gidding” during World War II. Both wars, therefore, emerge as significant to the composition of *Four Quartets*; the external chaos of the wars affected Eliot on many levels, and the impact of the wars emerges throughout the poem. Malamud notes:

After the Great War, Eliot addressed his poetry to the intellectual and cultural consequences of the devastation (which had hardly affected the soil of England). The aerial destructive potential of World War II threatened to enlarge the scope of battle; as an air raid warden in 1939, Eliot foresaw such an occurrence as the Battle of Britain, the blitzing of London, while he was writing ‘East Coker.’ (128)

In *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell discusses the lasting impact of the Great War and acknowledges that although many assumed they could leave the war behind them, they were wrong. He writes, “[n]or are we particularly surprised to see Eliot as late as 1940 recalling the terror associated with the term raid and exploiting that association in ‘East Coker’ to underline the supreme risk of poetic making” (325). He highlights the following lines from the poem:

And so each venture  
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate  
With shabby equipment always deteriorating  
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,  
Undisciplined squads of emotion. (189)

The war’s impact on Eliot, and Eliot’s apprehension of the world to come, deeply affected his work with *Four Quartets*. He understood the impact of war, and through his work with his final

poem, Eliot struggles to find hope and resolution both within himself and within the world around him.

Through his composition of *Four Quartets*, Eliot finds the voice to express the horrors associated with the anxiety of war while at the same time finding a way to move beyond the external chaos and toward self-progress. In “Little Gidding,” Eliot writes, “Ash on an old man’s sleeve / Is all the ash the burnt roses leave” (202). The roses become ash, but the ask remains, in the same way that the past remains within the present. Eliot must reconcile with the past, and with *Four Quartets* and his other work, gratefully finds a means to share those internal sufferings. Vincent Sherry in his study of the Great War and modern language writes, “As a function of the experience that [Pound and Eliot] underwent together in the war, however, they share an understanding of the extraordinary novel possibilities it opened for literature” (225). We must acknowledge the past. Eliot writes Yeats saying, “And last, the rending pain of re-enactment / Of all that you have done, and been; the shame / Of motives late revealed, and the awareness / Of things ill done and done to other’s harm / Which once you took for exercise of virtue” (204). In order to achieve Bergson’s duration, we must reconcile with the past because “We only live, only suspire / Consumed by either fire or fire” (207). As we will see with the various authors in my study, the outcome for each of us will be the same – consumed by fire or fire – so we must try to endure in order to make the best of the moments we do have.

In order to reconcile with the past, which I will discuss in detail later in the chapter, Eliot must acknowledge the devastation of the world around him. He must endure as an individual in spite of and within a world of turmoil. His view of the world was not optimistic: “Eliot was among the first to recognize that any hope of less localized gains had been illusory; that there was no integrity in Europe or in Britain and that in spite of the Treaty of Versailles the Empire



was still dying – and would continue to die – with a niggling penny-pinching patience” (Marshall 94). Despite his acknowledgement of and struggle with the wars, Eliot also hopes for something more. He writes, “We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time” (208). By dealing with the external chaos, Eliot can hope for the success of the future. By the conclusion of *Four Quartets* and Eliot’s poetic career, he presents hope for the future.

Bergson’s optimism about the future stems from his belief that humans experience moments of awakening as they progress through life. These moments encompass the past and the present in order to provide a vision for the future. Bergson has often been criticized for this optimistic outlook, and much evidence exists to prove that Eliot moved away from this Bergsonian optimism during his career. However, by looking at *Four Quartets* we can see that Eliot manages to come to terms with the external chaos of the era, specifically the wars, and looks to the future for a sense of hope. That hope stems from the still points he tries to achieve that closely resemble Bergson’s theory of duration.

### **The Still Point of the Turning World**

In order to progress spiritually and to find some sense of enlightenment, Eliot seeks a moment of stillness – a moment that we can look at in conjunction with Bergson’s *durée réelle* (real duration). This moment for Eliot must remain still. Critics debate what that moment means, exactly, for Eliot. Mary Ann Gillies asserts that Eliot hopes to combine the flux with eternity within this moment, while many agree that it must be a religious moment due to Eliot’s dedication to Christianity at the time he composed *Four Quartets*. Most agree, however, that Eliot claimed to have achieved such a moment of real duration with Emily Hale at Burnt Norton

and explains this moment in the poem. Eliot calls the moment the “still point of the turning world” in *Four Quartets*, and he intimates that the moment must be still within the chaos of the external world. The world may continue to turn, but the individual consciousness within that turning world must remain still. Eliot defines this still point:

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
 Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,  
 But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,  
 Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards  
 Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,  
 There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.  
 I can only say, *there* we have been: but I cannot say *where*.  
 And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time. (177)

At “the still point of the turning world” the subject is still, but the world turns. Movement exists in the still point, yet the point remains still. Bergson explains this dichotomy of movement and stillness: “Movement is reality itself, and what we call immobility is a certain state of things analogous to that produced when two trains move at the same speed, in the same direction, on parallel tracks: each of the two trains is then immovable to the travelers seated in the other” (*Key Writings* 257). The trains move at the same speed, so movement happens, but stillness occurs within the movement. The passengers can remain still within the movement, and the passengers in the next train appear still since they are moving at the same speed. If there is harmony in movement, there is stillness. As Eliot states, the dance is there in the still moment, but it is not arrest or movement. The still movement is not “fixity” and should not be placed in time, but the harmony in movement creates stillness, and the stillness creates grace. The still point provides

an ephemeral moment of hope and renewal and some understanding of the present, past, and future at once. Throughout *Four Quartets*, Eliot hopes to achieve this still point, but many obstacles prohibit the moment; conversely, many aspects of life also encourage the moment. With the close reading, I will show the ways in which Eliot hopes to avoid the negative forces in order to achieve the stillness he desires.

In *Four Quartets*, Eliot creates images and symbolic ideas that either endanger the moment or contribute to its fulfillment. The world around us continues to move no matter what we do as individuals; even after death the world will continue to move. Eliot and the other writers notice those entities and obstacles that prohibit growth and progress for the self. For Eliot, Joyce, Woolf, and Faulkner, the time that the clock measures comes to represent a prohibitive entity for internal consciousness. Generally, all measured or formulaic external forces (the clock, a measured rhythm or dance, language) create an obstacle for the internal mind. However, in the same way, these artists recognize the brilliance of those external factors that help us individually reach transcendence, those parts of life that encourage the moment, such as an open window, running water, nature, and love. Many of the symbols that endanger the moment connect to the mathematical, rhythmic nature of time and the progress of the world, while those that contribute positively are those related to emotions, sensations, and art.

Like Bergson's moment of duration, Eliot's still point culminates in one consciousness rather than fragmented moments; consequently, some aspects of life endanger Eliot's search for spiritual enlightenment, while others complement this moment. As Mary Ann Gillies asserts, "Here [in *Four Quartets*] *durée* and eternal time are the opposites Eliot desires to reconcile" (97). I argue that Eliot, in addition to reconciling those opposites, hopes to achieve duration in the midst of eternal time in order to move forward in the process of living. Eliot

hopes to find “The inner freedom from the practical desire, / The release from action and suffering, release from the inner / And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded / By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving” (177). Those aspects that Eliot considers dangerous to this moment of consciousness keep patterns and meters that are ineffective, misleading measurements. The extremes of life, the regularized, disjointed movement, the patterns, and language all prohibit the still point for Eliot.

In moments of duration, extremes do not exist; they must meld into one another. Eliot, like Bergson, warns against extremes such as light and dark, those that obstruct stillness. Nothing can remain still in absolute daylight or absolute darkness. The still point takes place “[i]n a dim light: neither daylight [. . .] suggesting permanence / Nor darkness [. . .] Cleansing affection from the temporal [. . .] [but] Only a flicker [. . .] That blows before and after time (178-9). Evolving out of his own darkness, Eliot reaches a new philosophy regarding the dark. Eliot seeks a place in which “the fire and the rose are one” (209). Steffan Bergsten argues, “The psychological pattern of Eliot’s creative activity during the nineteen-twenties forms a parallel to the dark night of the mystics: frustration, exhaustion, deprivation, followed by inspiration, illumination and perhaps grace (69). As Eliot transitions from the darkness of life into moments of grace, he uses the light and the dark to symbolize dangerous extremes. The hope cannot be too bright, but the despair should not be overwhelmingly dark. At the still point of the world, the moment of duration, neutrality exists.

In the same way that extremes prohibit the still point, patterns also disrupt the philosophies of Bergson. Regularized movement, conventional clock time, and structured language are all examples of these patterns that are frustrating for Eliot in his search for the moment he desires and the solace he seeks. Eliot writes:

Keeping time,  
 Keeping the rhythm in their dancing  
 As in their living in the seasons  
 The time of the seasons and the constellations  
 The time of milking and the time of harvest  
 The time of the coupling of man and woman  
 And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling.  
 Eating and drinking. Dung and death. (183)

These movements are linear, not durational – active, not still. We dance in patterns while keeping rhythm; we live in seasons, measuring the alignment of the constellations, and we make love when the time is right. All of these regularized, accepted, conventional movements lead to dung and death. We march to our deaths one movement at a time, beat by beat by beat. Bergson also argues against mechanical patterns: “The essence of mechanical explanation, in fact, is to regard the future and the past as calculable functions of the present” (*Key Writings* 187). Eliot criticizes those who move “in a formal pattern, / Along the empty alley, into the box circle, / To look down into the drained pool” (176). The moments of the present reveal that “the pattern is new in every moment / And every moment is a new and shocking / Valuation of all we have been” (Eliot 185). Pattern, symbolizing the linear construct of time, can exist only in abstract thought. Each moment of the present represents reality. Bergson would agree with Eliot that every moment in any pattern, like every movement, creates itself again. Each moment is different from the one before and the one after; however, each moment encompasses the moments of the past and the preoccupations and hopes for the future.

While natural, uninhibited, and unplanned movement encourages the moment, as I will discuss more completely, regularized, disjointed movement prohibits stillness. Because Eliot seeks stillness, awkward movement hinders his search. Movement, in Bergsonian terms, consists of a variety of individual moments, and these individual moments, when combined, create one movement. For example, when one moves from point A to point B, he has to go through a series of individual moments to arrive there. Bergson writes, “We need immobility, and the more we succeed in imagining movement as coinciding with immobilities of the points of space through which it passes, the better we think we understand it” (*Key Writings* 257). For Bergson, movement is a series of immobilities. Eliot criticizes accepted conventions of movement in order to find the moments of immobility that Bergson says we need. Eliot reserves ordered movement for those who are mistakenly trying to place time in a linear structure. He writes, “This is the one way, and the other / Is the same, not in movement / But abstention from movement; while the world moves / In appetency, on its metalled ways / Of time past and time future” (179). Eliot recognizes that the world continues to move with a linear construct in the mind, but the mystical experience for which he searches cannot be achieved through these types of movement, but only in stillness.

Regularized, rhythmic movement may create obstacles for the internal consciousness, but some movement can encourage the internal; sometimes natural movement can even save one’s internal consciousness from the unproductive external movement surrounding one. For example, Eliot writes:

The dance along the artery  
 The circulation of the lymph  
 Are figured in the drift of stars

Ascend to summer in the tree  
 We move above the moving tree  
 In light upon the figured leaf  
 And hear upon the sodden floor  
 Below, the boarhound and the boar  
 Pursue their pattern as before  
 But reconciled among the stars. (177)

In this excerpt regarding the Great War, Eliot asserts that the order of things will proceed to chaos. The dance along the artery, likely the trenches of the war, is a patterned, forced dance. This pattern leads to the blood or blood-like lymph running through the trenches. Furthermore, the boarhound and boar also pursue the same “pattern as before.” They repeat ineffective patterns over and over again which will lead to destruction. However, the “we” in this excerpt has ascended above the boarhound and the boar, above the pattern and the regularized movement, to a place where there is “summer” and “light” and movement above the “moving tree.” At this type of place, away from the patterned movement, positive moments can exist.

The movement that works for Eliot is uninhibited movement forward. He writes:

The hint half guessed, the gift understood, is Incarnation  
 Here the impossible union  
 Of spheres of existence is actual,  
 Here the past and future  
 Are conquered, and reconciled,  
 Where action were otherwise movement  
 Of that which is only moved

And has in it no source of movement –  
 Driven by daemonic, chthonic  
 Powers. And right action is freedom  
 From past and future also.  
 For most of us, this is the aim  
 Never here to be realised;  
 Who are only undefeated  
 Because we have gone on trying. (199)

The incarnation provides this moment for Eliot – that combination of man and God, or human and spiritual entities. Bergsonian in many ways, this passage honors the blending and reconciliation of the past, present, and future and the human with the spiritual. The right movement or the “right action is freedom,” and there is no better way of achieving this incarnation and this freedom than to move forward and to “have gone on trying.”

Eliot further degrades the regularized patterns of the external world through his portrayal of clocks and bells throughout *Four Quartets*. The representation of these patterns and movements emerges in symbols of clocks and bells, ticking and chiming; these symbols connect directly to Bergson’s theory of time. Like Bergson, “Eliot will not ‘keep time.’ He maintains a spectral distance that is not only distance in time but a refusal of the rounds of temporal life” (Gordon 348). The clock and the bell function to measure time and to keep time. The bell chimes to indicate the hour, and the clock measures each second of each minute of each hour of the day, eternally. Ultimately, “[t]ime and the bell have buried the day, [and] [t]he black cloud carries the sun away” (Eliot 179). Time, the bell, and the black cloud act as enemies of the timeless moment, but for Eliot “[t]he tolling bell / Measures time not our time” (192). Eliot



positions the sound of the clanging after the moment of stillness as a dissonant reminder that the clanging bell and the moment of timelessness cannot harmonize. When connecting Eliot and Bergson, Gordon states, “Duration, the lived experience of Time, is subjective and continuous, not measured out in ticks and tocks” (55). Since Eliot may have continued to support Bergson’s challenge of clock-time, he might have brought that symbol into *Four Quartets* in order to elucidate the ineffectuality of measuring time.

Lastly, the patterned nature of language frustrated Eliot despite his need to communicate using language. Language is another patterned concept of our world, our primary method of communication; however, it fails to explain the chaos or the still points. Because “[l]anguage is, for Eliot, the essential link between himself and the world – past and present – around him” (Malamud 74), he finds the limitations of the language stifling. He writes:

Words strain,  
 Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,  
 Under the tension, slip, slid, perish,  
 Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,  
 Will not stay still. (180)

Because words must fall in order and must move in order to function effectively, language fails to define the still point, nor can it reside in the still point. We need language; we need poetry, yet, “leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle / with words and meanings[,] / The poetry does not matter” (184) because it is incapable of explaining the moment of stillness.

In order to express the still point of the world through language, Eliot must arrange the words in a way that focuses on the consciousness rather than on logical or linear order. Randy Malamud writes, “Scholars should not consider the task of understanding Eliot’s language as an

intermediate step toward exegesis – the language is the poetry itself, the pattern in the carpet” (113). Although Eliot reveals the limitations of language in *Four Quartets*, he also relies on language to voice his sensations. Bergson would agree. He asserts, “This influence of language on sensation is deeper than is usually thought. Not only does language make us believe in the unchangeableness of our sensations, but it will sometimes deceive us as to the nature of the sensations thought” (*Key Writings* 73-4). Although language successfully communicates sensations, it can fail at times as well. Bergson uses the example of the word *nothing*. He asks us to consider the phrase ‘There could be nothing,’ and he writes, “You will see you are dealing with words, not at all with ideas, and that ‘nothing’ here has no meaning. ‘Nothing’ is a term in ordinary language which can only have meaning in the sphere, proper to man, of action and fabrication” (*Key Writings* 227). Bergson further discusses his theory on language in *Matter and Memory*: “Every language, whether elaborate or crude, leaves many more things to be understood than it is able to express. Essentially discontinuous, since it proceeds by juxtaposing words, speech can only indicate by a few guide-posts placed here and there the chief stages in the movement of thought” (159). However, despite the insolubility of language, poets and philosophers must use language to progress and to attempt successful communication of emotions and ideas: “Language, though it is a crude tool, is nonetheless the tool with which poet and philosopher must deal” (Gillies 77). Both Bergson and Eliot agree that language prohibits true expression although it also allows communication.

Eliot’s fragmented language may purposefully work to create one experience. For example, the fragments, the images, and the seemingly disconnected sensations and emotions blend together to create one poem and one feeling. Ultimately, the four sections of *Four Quartets* merge to represent one experience. The fragments are necessary in order to combine

the myriad experiences of life into one sensation. Malamud writes, “Eliot’s language strikes its audience as a collation of fragments. It is fragile, unstable, the language of a man on the edge of sanity that seems always about to crumble; and at the same time, it is a language that is sublimely confident, almost mockingly sedate in its perfection of arrangement, and in its underlying certainty that *it* will endure, however threateningly unstable it (and the world it describes) may seem” (73). Like Bergson’s theory of time, the use of fragmented language to create one sensation may be possible. There are multiple moments, like multiple fragments, but those moments (and fragments) find one another, combine, and create a moment of duration. For example, “Bergson contends that, to guide readers effectively, words must startle them by appearing in unusual contexts and by performing unusual syntactical or conceptual functions” (Gillies 77). Bergson and Eliot not only agree that language is difficult but necessary; they also agree that the way in which we must communicate in fragmented experiences most closely represents the true human experience – as closely as language can achieve such a feat.

Eliot expresses the “intractability of language to inner experience” (Douglass 34):

“Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt / Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure / Because one has only learnt to get the better of words / For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which / One is no longer disposed to say it” (Eliot 188-9). Modernist authors found in Bergson an understanding of their frustration and yet connection with language. They yearned to express their emotions and sensations but knew that “[w]ords are, in the modern age, exposed as being much more vulnerable than they ever could have been thought before; they are not absolute or impartial or objective. Any kind of experience that might have been seen as valid simply because it could be described in words is diminished by what modern artists reveal to be the fallacy of linguistic certainty” (Malamud 123). In *Four Quartets*, Eliot expresses this

“fallacy of linguistic certainty.” Language cannot resolve the chaos, nor can it reduce the anxiety; therefore, we must recognize its failures but continue to put the words together, if not in a linear pattern, in a spatial pattern that tries to represent the consciousness as best as it can. Therefore, at the still point of the turning world, the moment of temporal resolution, language cannot exist. Patterns, regularized movement, and language all come to represent obstacles for Eliot’s need to achieve the “still point of the turning world. However, some external forces can encourage the moment.

In the same way that Eliot notices concepts that endanger the moment or prohibit individual progress, he also recognizes opposing concepts that encourage the moment and increase the chances of achieving duration. All things natural and reconciliatory help the achievement of the internal moments of stillness and the expression of that moment. First, Eliot realizes that one must reconcile with the past (both an individual past and a historical past) in order to move forward. Despite his focus on the present, Eliot asserts that we should not ignore the past; Bergson also recognizes that the past is part of the present and that it cannot be ignored. The past remains in the now. Malamud agrees: “[Eliot’s] poetry becomes the vehicle through which the present may be confronted in all its chaos, its change, its wartime destruction and post-war shell-shock, while the role of the past is sustained by an intellectual homage” (75). Although the “past has another pattern” and we search for “a means of disowning the past,” “the past experience revived in the meaning / Is not the experience of one life only / But of many generations” (Eliot 194). Both Bergson and Eliot acknowledge the importance of the past because of its role in providing meaning in the present, and Bergson believes the past resides in the present.

Writers in modern era defied the conventions set forth by the Victorians; however, in their search for resolution, modernists understood that the past plays an integral part in the lives of the present. To abandon the past seems attractive, but is actually impossible. Understanding and honoring the past leads to future hope and enlightenment. Eliot suggests moving toward the past for understanding: “Into our first world, shall we follow / The deception of the thrush? Into our first world” (176). Bergson would support Eliot’s suggestion to immerse oneself in the past because “[t]he usefulness of memory can manifest itself [. . .] when we place ourselves directly in the past and contract elements of it to suit a present requirement” (Pearson 17). The way out of the nightmare of the modern world, according to Eliot and Bergson, is to travel to the past, as Eliot writes in “Tradition and the Individual Talent”:

[The historical sense] involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. The historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. (49)

Eliot believed that his art might live (which indeed it has done) because he pays attention to the past and creates a timeless nature of the world. If Bergson is right – if our concept of temporal order is false – then acknowledging the past as a living experience may allow a poem to connect more closely with a timeless audience in the world to come.

Reconciling with the past may allow Eliot to achieve the balance that he seeks in his life. Habib sees this balance as a balance between thought and feeling. He writes, “As late as 1934

Eliot is still using this vocabulary in relation to ‘tradition’: “‘Tradition is not a matter of feeling alone . . . . [A] tradition without intelligence is not worth having.’ But equally, tradition is ‘not to be aimed at directly. It is of the blood rather than the brain. In the co-operation of both is the reconciliation of thought and feeling’” (Habib 274 quoting Eliot’s *After Strange Gods* 19, 30). To revisit the past and the thoughts and feelings surrounding the chaos of his own personal past along with the chaos of the past of the world around him, Eliot had to seek the moment of real duration that allows balance, harmony, and stillness to co-exist. Habib continues, “Eliot uses a broadly Romantic analysis of experience (derived in part from Bradley and Bergson ) as something which integrates thought, feeling, and sensation, in order to posit a Classical Aristotelian ideal of a balance between these elements in the overall constitution of the human being” (274). One individual artist can set a cultural and historical tradition only if that artist seeks progress, balance, and meaning; however, the artist must not ignore the past sensations that still reside within himself and within the members of his audience. Of course, this accomplishment may be easier to recognize and analyze because we know that Eliot reaches his goal – his art is traditional. His poetry still speaks to a contemporary audience because of its timelessness.

The chance of achieving this reconciliation with the past and within one’s consciousness can be improved by a cognizance of the natural elements surrounding us. Natural elements are those that represent the opposite of the patterned elements. Natural movement, creation of art, communication without speaking, bodies of water, flowers growing wild, and love are all examples of positive natural elements that surround us and encourage individual progress. These natural elements allow moments to become still and fundamental. Eliot uses the symbol of nature throughout *Four Quartets* to represent the feeling of achieving stillness at the moment of

duration. Nature inspires the attainment of the still point because nature constantly resides in duration:

Will the sunflower turn to us, will the clematis  
 Stray down, bend to us; tendril and spray  
 Clutch and cling?  
 Chill  
 Fingers of yew be curled  
 Down on us? After the kingfisher's wing  
 Has answered light to light and is silent, the light is still  
 At the still point of the turning world. (179-80)

Nature comes to the speaker as a harbinger of hope in the passage, and leads him to a still point. With the help of the sunflower, the clematis, the yew, the kingfisher, and the right light, he achieves peace and hope. During his planning of *Four Quartets*, Eliot personally experienced a still point in the midst of nature. Gordon writes that Eliot was seeking “the ‘way up’” which is “a life directed by a visionary moment in which the mind perceives a timeless ‘reality’” (339). The timeless reality for which Eliot was searching analogizes Bergson’s concept of duration, and Eliot finds this reality during a moment in nature. Gordon writes, “Eliot begins with his own intuition of the way up in the garden on Burnt Norton. Walking with Emily Hale through the rose-garden at Burnt Norton, Eliot experienced a startling access of emotion that awakened him momentarily to ‘the heart of light’” (339). Through a moment with nature (and of course with love, a concept to be addressed later) Eliot achieves duration. Similarly to his explanation of movement, Bergson describes nature as an infinite creation of natural elements that somehow gets subdivided and itemized. Nature creates one sensation. He writes, “Nature’s simple act has

divided itself automatically into an infinity of elements which are then to be coordinated to one idea, just as the movement of my hand has dropped an infinity of points which are then found to satisfy one equation” (*Key Writings* 198). Nature, like harmonious movement, culminates in one equation – one moment of grace and beauty. Eliot returns to this concept in *Four Quartets*, positioning nature as an inspiration for duration.

Eliot positions natural bodies of water to represent Bergson’s duration. The river represents the harmony in movement that becomes stillness; it embodies duration because the past, present, and future all flow through the river’s movement. The river is a still point that is “still and still moving / Into another intensity” (Eliot 189-90). The river is “[u]nhonored, unpropitiated / By worshippers of the machine, but waiting, watching and waiting” (Eliot 191). The worshippers of the machine cling to patterns of life, while they should be paying homage to the stillness and the waiting of the river.

Although the sea’s movement differs from that of the river, the sea also represents duration because it encompasses generations of pain and storms. The sea brings many voices into one giant entity; therefore the sea, through its natural qualities and its massive presence, embodies duration. Eliot writes, “The shattered lobsterpot, the broken oar / And the gear of foreign dead men. The sea has many voices, [. . .] different voices / Often heard together” (192). Like the harmony of the *Four Quartets* itself, the voices in the sea harmonize as well, creating one moment of duration for all generations associated with the sea. The ocean symbolizes time because “[w]e cannot think of a time that is oceanless / Or of an ocean not littered with wastage / Or of a future that is not liable / Like the past, to have no destination” (193). Eliot juxtaposes the ocean with time, creating a symbol for duration, one that combines the past, the present, and the



future. Thinking in patterns is dangerous to duration, and Eliot communicates that danger with his symbolism of the sea.

When positioning Eliot's resolution to Bergson's duration, we must consider the concept of love. Critics often connect Eliot's conversion to Anglo-Catholicism to his graceful resolution in *Four Quartets*. Eliot's study of mysticism, vitalism, and pragmatism have all been applied to *Four Quartets*.<sup>1</sup> However, Paul Douglass connects some of these ideas by stating: "There is no possible contradiction between the Bergsonian stress on duration as a means to reach an awareness of existence and continuous becoming, and the Christian stress on the instant of grace and illumination as a means to reach Eternity" (84). Eliot realizes that "[I]ove is most nearly itself / When here and now cease to matter" (189). Love resides at the moment of duration: "This is the use of memory: / For liberation – not less of love but expanding / Of love beyond desire, and so liberation / From the future as well as the past" (205). As stated above, Eliot associated nature with the still point because of his moment with Emily Hale in the garden, but he also associates love with this moment. His emotion in the garden "seemed no less than a miracle that he should be allowed to experience once again illumination through human love, and that this should not be reserved for the innocence of youth" (Gordon 339). Love quite possibly could be the most important feeling that catapults one's consciousness into a moment of stillness. Eliot describes this moment with Emily Hale in "Burnt Norton" as one of duration:

Time past and time future

allow but a little consciousness.

To be conscious is not to be in time

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<sup>1</sup> Consider Donald J. Child's article "Risking Enchantment: The Middle Way Between Mysticism and Pragmatism" in *Words in Time: New Essays on Eliot's Four Quartets*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1993.

But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,  
 The moment in the harbour where the rain beat,  
 The moment in the draughty church at smokefall  
 Be remembered; involved with the past and future.  
 Only through time time is conquered. (178)

Bergson's description of love connects to Eliot's: "This overwhelming of the immediate consciousness is nowhere so striking as in the case of our feelings. A violent love [. . .] takes possession of our soul: here we feel a thousand different elements which dissolve into and permeate one another without any precise outlines" (*Key Writings* 74). In *Four Quartets*, Eliot returns to love, the overwhelming ability to love without definition and without structure – love that can conquer the anxiety of the turning world.

"The 'way up' is a life directed by a visionary moment in which the mind perceives a timeless 'reality.' Eliot begins with his own intuition of the way up in the garden of Burnt Norton" (Gordon 339). The moments of love in the poem end abruptly, but they are moments to cherish and to remember. Although the moment ends and Eliot decides that it amounts to nothing but 'dung and death,' the same type of moment full of love occurs "in the midsummer night when couples dance, holding each other by the hand, feet rising and falling in rhythmic concord. For a time, the poet lends an eye to this recurrent festival of coupling and earth's fertility" (Gordon 342). These moments, albeit ephemeral, produce sensations of pure duration, and, because of those moments, the individual can hope for more of these sensations in the future. The ending of the moment creates disappointment, but the possibility of achieving those feelings again inspires hope.

In its most natural form, art provides moments of stillness, not only for the creator, but also for the audience because “art is one certain point of intersection with the timeless” (Gordon 343). Eliot’s anti-conventional poetic structure analyzed earlier personifies the natural expression of internal feelings and the art that Bergson hopes someone will achieve. Bergson speaks of the poet:

The poet and the novelist who express a mood certainly do not create it out of nothing; they would not be understood by us if we did not observe within ourselves, up to a certain point, what they say about others. As they speak, shades of emotion and thought appear to us which might long since have been brought out in us but which remained invisible: just like the photographic image which has not yet been plunged into the bath where it will be revealed. The poet is this revealing agent. (“The Perception” 251)

Eliot most certainly qualifies as the revealing agent defined above. Through his creation of images in his poetry, the “shades of emotion and thought appear” for the audience. Although Eliot felt prohibited by the necessary requirement of language to his art, he achieves this Bergsonian definition of art. Language may differ from art, but the art that Eliot creates with language becomes its own painting – a piece of art with words in which the words do not necessarily seem to matter. Habib writes, “The most basic premise of Bergson’s aesthetics is that art creates novelty. Whereas language is spatial, art is temporal, expressing duration, expressing the authentic flow of experience which is encrusted over by language [. . .] As such, a poetic construct will possess duration as well as unpredictability” (271). Eliot creates duration with his art; he focuses on those natural elements that help him achieve the “still point of the

turning world;” and he overcomes the external obstacles in order to find the individual expression of consciousness for which he searches in *Four Quartets*.

### **Resolution: Personal Renewal**

Eliot writes in *Four Quartets*, “Only through time time is conquered” (178). In the texts I will discuss, each author seeks some resolution from the chaos. For each, that resolution is different – for some it is simply survival, for others it is experiencing enlightenment or maintaining some optimism for the future; but for all, hope must remain. Eliot seeks personal renewal and progress in his poetry, and although he may not arrive at a conclusion in *Four Quartets* for himself, he does stop writing poetry, and therefore, in some way, has conquered. Because he ceases to write poetry, Eliot intimates that he has nothing more to say in that form. In her section titled “Perfect Life,” biographer Lyndall Gordon agrees: “The period of trial in Eliot’s life from 1934 to 1938 then came to epitomize the ordeal of a nation under fire from 1940 to 1942. Yet in the midst of danger, both personal and public, there is a promise of renewal in an idea of the perfect life” (Gordon 338). While Eliot most certainly grapples with the external chaos of his world – the devastating effects of the past and current war – he hopes for renewal and resolution. Of course, this optimism connects to Eliot’s return to Christianity, but it also connects to Bergson’s ideas of optimism. Eliot writes, “There is only the fight to recover what has been lost / And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions / That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss. / For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business” (189). Bergson explains his optimistic view of the future: “The idea of the future, pregnant with an infinity of possibilities, is thus more fruitful than the future itself, and this is why we find more charm in hope than in possession, in dreams than in reality” (10). By

experiencing moments of real duration, despite their temporality and infrequency, Eliot retains hope. When Eliot says, “For us, there is only the trying,” he highlights the importance of individual progress and expresses the determination with which one should approach movement forward. We cannot claim that Eliot is a complete optimist, but the idea that he expresses here proves a movement toward the future and a movement toward hope.

With the same desire for resolution, Eliot, like many of the modernists, hopes to understand and maintain a semblance of the self. The self must not only survive the chaos, but must try to hope. Eliot wants to understand himself within the world around him and in spite of the world around him. Understanding and maintaining the self allows at least a hope for resolution. Habib agrees:

[Another] Bergsonian concept found in Eliot’s work derives from Bergson’s view of the self. The temporal self is that which undergoes authentic and immediate experience of duration; the spatial self is the former self refracted through the conventional categories of perception embodied in language. As Eliot sees it, however, this is not a dualism of two entities; rather, the self is defined by the possible interchange between these two viewpoints. (272)

Duration and the past must reconcile in order to create harmony. Although Eliot might never have achieved a complete harmony of the self, he always knew that a progression toward that harmony and enlightenment was important. His writing allowed that progress to happen. Gillies writes, “In effect, the poem is a physical representation of the process of self-discovery” (106). The process toward resolution and hope may be all Eliot actually achieves, but he may also accomplish some discovery of self by the end of the poem. His self-awareness and his

awareness of the world around him have improved, at least, through the composition of *Four Quartets*.

As Eliot attempts to achieve duration in *Four Quartets*, he hopes to reach a goal: divine enlightenment. He possibly reaches this goal by creating a mood of communion between speaker and reader and between speaker, America, and England. By the end of the poem, Eliot has collected all participants in the palm of his hand through words, images, and sensations so that at the “moment in and out of time, [. . .] the past and future / Are conquered, and reconciled” (199). In “Little Gidding,” he uses this moment of stillness to bring the dead and the living together: “the communication / Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living. / Here, the intersection of the timeless moment / Is England and nowhere. Never and always” (201). Eliot beautifully and mystically connects the moment of the still world to the nation. Like Gabriel in James Joyce’s “The Dead,” Eliot finds a way to connect all in his moment of duration. Gabriel’s “soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like decent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead” (225). The people of the modern world were searching for solace, and they found that solace in moments of ephemeral spirituality. As Gabriel brings all of Ireland into his moment “of the living and the dead,” Eliot brings England into his moment by honoring Charles I and all of the dead in “Little Gidding.” In the last section of “Little Gidding,” Eliot combines the past and the present, connecting ephemeral moments of spirituality to the eternity of time. He writes:

The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree  
 Are of equal duration. A people without history  
 Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern  
 Of timeless moments. So, while the light fails

On a winter's afternoon, in a secluded chapel

History is now and England. (208)

Eliot achieves duration throughout *Four Quartets* and creates a moment for his reader and for the nation that ignores linear structure and brings all together in one evanescent moment of stillness in the now.

Therefore, in *Four Quartets*, Eliot ends with a hope for possibilities in the future and a need to continue to progress toward what might be. Gordon writes, "In his youth Eliot had dared to hope for heavenly bliss but in maturity had to content himself with reconciliation and relief" (390). Through the moments of duration, one can continue to progress, and "all shall be well and / All manner of thing shall be well" (Eliot 209).

\* \* \*

Eliot quite possibly returned to the theories of Bergson in order to resolve the fragmentation and skepticism of his own poetry and of the world around him. Through an application of Bergson's theories to Eliot's *Four Quartets*, scholars and critics are able to consider at least one answer to the dissolution. Donald Childs writes:

The search throughout Eliot's poetic career for the moment 'Quick now, here, not always' – expressed ultimately in terms of St. John of the Cross and the mysticism of Vedanta and Buddhism – is in the beginning (that becomes Eliot's end) a Bergsonian impulse. Although Bergsonism, to quote Eliot's mother, comes in his thought a 'diminishing quantity,' it nonetheless endures in its pseudo-mystical dimension as an important quality of Eliot's poetic and religious sensibility. (488)

Bergson's philosophies once influenced the consciousness of T. S. Eliot, and many agree that that influence continued and might have regenerated by the time Eliot searched for resolution in *Four Quartets*.

However, Bergson cannot be the only answer. Joyce's epiphanies, Woolf's moments of being, and Eliot's "still point of the turning world" all seem to somehow coincide and somehow resolve the pressures of the world around them, if only temporarily. Bergson is part of the answer, but there must be more to the moment of enlightenment for which the modernists searched. As Eliot finds the limits of language frustrating, we, too, find the explanation of this moment difficult. Eliot, for instance, goes beyond the idea of duration into further moments of transcendence. As he had wanted to do from the beginning, Eliot takes the theories of Bergson and adapts them to his own needs. Douglass asserts, "[Eliot] hoped to create a poetry that evolved, organically, and he based his theory on the Bergsonian idea that poetry furnishes 'consciousness with an immaterial body in which to incarnate itself' (95). Because Eliot hoped to create poetry that evolved, he not only considers Bergson's theories, but he also sees beyond the moment of duration. Eliot suggests a further evolution: "We must be still and still moving / Into another intensity / For a further union, a deeper communion" (189-90). He hopes for the future. The time between moments of stillness creates anxiety, agony, and despair; however, these ephemeral moments of stillness create such spiritual fulfillment that they are worth the wait. Eliot suggests, "We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time" (208). Eliot believes that we must wait, reach the moment of Bergson's duration, but yet continue toward greater transcendence. The moment is not enough. We must continue to move forward in our stillness.



### **James Joyce: “We Are What We Were:” Joyce’s Transition Toward Duration**

Most critics can agree that trying to place the elusive, complex, and mesmerizing work of James Joyce into one category, to limit the study of Joyce to one perspective, is not only futile, but also impossible. Joyce’s body of work is too large and too complex to be minimized. Shiv Kumar understood this concept in 1963 when he wrote, “Any attempt to analyse a prodigious creative mind like that of Joyce, with a view to finding a single clue to the understanding of his entire work, is not likely to yield any substantial results” (103). However, the application of one theory may elucidate Joyce’s work and allow us to understand his process, his meaning, and his art. To look at Joyce while considering Bergson allows us to understand his work with time and memory a little bit better than we did before, and we will find that it is “possible to interpret much of Joyce’s work in terms of Bergsonian *durée*, *memoire par excellence* and intuition” (Kumar 104). Margaret Church writes of Joyce’s variety of influences: “In a final evaluation of the influence on Joyce’s sense of time, one may see, as the titles imply, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as chiefly Bergsonian, *Ulysses* as chiefly Jungian, and *Finnegans Wake* as chiefly Victorian” (Gillies 134). The critical controversy continues with Joyce as it did with Eliot and as it will with Woolf and Faulkner: How much influence did Bergson have on these authors, really? Although we should consider that this controversy exists within the study of each author, the most important note to consider is that Joyce was most certainly familiar with Bergson and some of his works show a similarity to some of Bergson’s theoretical approaches. Kumar asserts, “James Joyce’s acquaintance with Bergson’s thought was neither incomplete nor indirect. He seems to have made an intensive study of the new time-philosophy and realized its importance to the literary artist” (104). Kumar’s assertion may be arguable, but he recognizes that no true proof actually exists to prove that Joyce’s ideas directly represent Bergson’s

philosophies. It is impossible to look at Joyce's body of work, specifically in regard to his focus on the temporal, without considering Bergson's theories of time and memory. Although "Joyce makes no reference to Bergson in his *Letters*, nor did he ever acknowledge any such affiliations with the French philosopher, [. . .] Bergson and Joyce, together with all other stream of consciousness novelists, were [. . .] manifestations of the same *Zeitgeist*" (Kumar 107).

In this chapter I hope to link the theories of Bergson to the work of Joyce in order to show that Joyce, like Bergson, contrasts psychic time with clock time. Clock time requires a sequential order, whereas psychic time involves the internal working of the mind in durational order. In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson concludes that "the interval of duration exists only for us and on account of the interpenetration of our conscious states" ("The Idea" 67). Joyce demonstrates his concern with the internal time in his works, and this focus on the internal aligns with Bergson's idea of duration. Bergson further explains, "Outside of me, in space, there is never more than a single position of the hand and the pendulum, for nothing is left of the past positions. Within myself a process of organization or interpenetration of conscious states is going on, which constitutes true duration" ("The Idea" 63). Joyce attempts to reveal the inner consciousness of his characters in order to identify some kind of truth, and his stream-of-consciousness style certainly helps him arrive at this goal. Although his work presents many complex issues, "Joyce's interest in time centres around the exploration of character and how to represent life's fluid inner world" (Gillies 134). Through his use of stream of consciousness and epiphanies, Joyce reveals his concern with timeless moments and the arbitrariness of clock-time, measured time, or conventional linear time. For my purposes, I will apply the theories of Bergson to Joyce's work, specifically "The Dead," with consideration of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*. In *Ulysses*, Joyce arrives at his goal as he effectively

communicates the inner world of Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus. However, my focus will primarily show Joyce's process of arriving at this moment because "The Dead" presents a transition for Joyce towards Bergson's theories. As Gillies asserts, "Two Bergsonian ideas are prominent here: the notion of *durée*, and the allied notion of self" (135). Applying Bergson's theories will clarify the methods Joyce employs in order to arrive at the inner flux, an unbroken record of thought, he achieves in *Ulysses*. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson explains his theory of the flux, to which critics often refer as the Bergsonian flux. He explains that when science speaks of time, it speaks of moments along a trajectory, beginning with that beginning and ending at the end of time. Time moves chronologically. However, Bergson argues the conscious reality does not work that way. The internal consciousness "may narrow the time as it will" and may "break up at will the interval between two consecutive divisions" (366-7). Science does not take feeling into consideration. The internal consciousness, or the internal flux, is independent of the flux of the universe: the internal flux can jump from moment to moment along the scientific timeline of the universe because feeling, emotion, memory, and other aspects of the internal self exist and play a role in reality for each individual.

Joyce arrives at this successful internal flux through his process of writing; he finds a way to express the internal consciousness of his characters by the time he writes *Ulysses*, and he must write the other texts in the way that he does in order to arrive at this true expression of his characters' reality. With *Dubliners*, *Stephen Hero*, and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce develops his strategies, and an application of Bergson's theory of duration and memory helps us to understand this transition. Gillies agrees that Joyce needs *Dubliners* and *Portrait* in order to find his voice in *Ulysses*: "Rather than simply discovering the answers to his aesthetic problems in the process of his writing, he uses his early works as preliminary sketches for

*Ulysses*; there he brings together the ideas and forms that he had refined and polished in *Dubliners*, *Stephen Hero*, and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*” (Gillies 136). Joyce begins with epiphanies in *Dubliners*, which I will connect to Bergson’s theory of *durée*. Later, he writes with those moments as the center of his work rather than writing in any kind of chronological or mathematical way; until finally, Joyce achieves inner flux in *Ulysses* by creating a world consisting entirely of moments and inner consciousness. Kumar discusses Joyce’s achievement of inner flux in *Ulysses*:

The present moment in *Ulysses* has the same fluid tendency of continuously fading into the past and future in complete defiance of any arbitrary divisions of time. The minds of Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus remain in a perpetual flux and cannot be said to coincide with any particular ‘mathematical instant.’

There is thus a significant resemblance between Joyce’s conception of the ‘continuous present’ [. . .] and Bergson’s ‘real, concrete, live present.’ (105)

Joyce arrives here by experimenting with some of these same ideas in his early work, and *Dubliners* provides the first true Bergsonian moment in Joyce’s work. The moments he presents in “The Dead” afford Joyce the ability to go further in *Portrait* within his process. In this chapter I will show how “The Dead” acts as a transition toward duration for Joyce by showing the transitional points within the story and the differences that he then presents in *A Portrait*. In “The Dead,” Joyce begins to disrupt the traditional narrative structure in order to question the authenticity and usefulness of clock-time. Like the other authors I analyze, Joyce deals with external chaos, specifically national pressures in “The Dead,” and feels the need to turn internally for answers. Furthermore, in “The Dead,” Joyce presents the first epiphany that truly achieves duration. Finally, Joyce hopes to find strength in the inner self in order to somehow

overcome the pressures of the external world. Gillies argues that “[w]hile reading Joyce, readers are “immersed in the main character’s *durée*” (141), and I will show how that immersion takes place by focusing on the ways in which “The Dead” allows Joyce to achieve that goal.

### **Disruption of Order Questions Linear Nature of Time**

Joyce transitions from a linear narrative structure in *Dubliners* to a Bergsonian internal flux in *Ulysses*. He makes this transition by changing his focus from an external world to an internal one, and that transitional moment reveals itself in “The Dead.” Joyce arranges the stories of *Dubliners* with attention to order, and although Joyce uses epiphanies throughout *Dubliners*, I will show how the epiphany in “The Dead” differs from the others in the collection. Gillies writes of Joyce’s epiphanies and the importance of those epiphanies to Joyce’s evolving form:

Epiphanies occupy the same role as Woolf’s moments of being because Joyce, like Woolf, centres his work around them. Starting with *Dubliners*, in which short stories present individual epiphanies, and culminating in *Ulysses*, in which the entire novel revolves around a few central epiphanies, Joyce challenges conventional prose forms by dispensing with the usual narrative structures and replacing them with an inner world. (136)

Through structure, point of view, and the use of time as a symbol for constraint, Joyce also challenges the concept of mathematical time and transitions toward duration in “The Dead.”

While Joyce structures *Dubliners* in a fragmented, chronological manner, he focuses on the consciousness in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and Bergson’s influence could contribute to this transition. Although Joyce arranges *Dubliners* chronologically, “[i]n *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce makes his first full-fledged attack on the conventional

novel” (Gillies 140). Influenced by Victorian consciousness of structure, order, and sense, Joyce presents the stories of *Dubliners* linearly. Joyce writes of *Dubliners* in his letters, “I have tried to present [Dublin life] to the indifferent public under four of its aspects: childhood, adolescence, maturity, and public life” (Rice 406). When communicating Dublin experiences, Joyce separates the stories chronologically into sections of life. He presents fragments of the lives of various *Dubliners* in a chronological and thematic sequence, and these “fragments of reality break off as Joyce narrates from constantly changing points of attack” (Malamud 133). However, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* presents a very different structure, one that transitions from fragmentation and order to duration. “The book’s pattern, as [Joyce] explained to Stanislaus, is that we are what we were; our maturity is an extension of our childhood” (Ellmann 295). Rather than organizing the novel chronologically, Joyce begins to think in “clusters of sensation” (Ellmann 297). Joyce presents two moments of Stephen’s memory in the first two pages of the novel, a memory of wetting the bed as a child and one of his sickness at Clongowes (*A Portrait* 3-4). The moments are no longer fragmented as they are in *Dubliners*; they are combined into a single consciousness, one similar to Bergson’s concept of duration. They are “chains of related moments, with the effect of three fleshings in time rather than of a linear succession of events” (Ellmann 297). Gillies agrees, “For example, no attempt is made in *Portrait* to provide the reader with a well-delineated, chronological account of Stephen’s growth. Instead, one is thrust into various moments of his life, viewing Stephen and his world from his perspective” (Gillies 141). Shiv Kumar comments on Joyce’s transition in style as well:

Urged by a prodigious creative impulse to revolt against all accepted literary conventions, he develops, with ‘the freedom and power of his soul,’ a view of experience which may be more appropriately described in terms of the

Bergsonian conception of life as a river rushing on unimpeded. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus affirms this view of experience:

‘How foolish his aim had been! He had tried to build a breakwater of order and elegance against the sordid tide of life without him and to dam up . . . the powerful recurrence of the tides within him. Unless. From without as from within the waters had flowed over his barriers: their tides began once more to jostle fiercely above the crumbled mole.’ (107)

The transition in structure from *Dubliners* to *A Portrait* moves from a linear recording of life to a focus on the “gestation of a soul” (Ellmann 297); Joyce moves away from Victorian structure and focuses on the inner spirit and the present as one moment of being in which “we are what we were.”

Utilizing the same change in perspective from the external to the internal and from linear to durational, Joyce tells the story of Stephen Dedalus very differently from the stories in *Dubliners*. Joyce writes the first three stories of *Dubliners*, the stories of childhood, from a first-person point of view and then transitions to a third-person point of view. Bernard Benstock asserts that this transition shocks the reader: “What every reader is soon aware of is the abrupt transition from the first three stories told in the first person by the central figure and the succeeding twelve composed in the third person” (551). Joyce seems unsure of the most effective narrative voice to communicate his inner voice in the compilation of stories; although the narrative voice of each story strongly communicates Joyce’s message, the change in perspective seems very unlike Joyce’s later works. Although *Dubliners* “took into consideration the intentions of all characters to determine events” (Benstock 542), *A Portrait*, told through a limited third-person perspective, gives an account of Stephen’s life through Joyce’s use of stream

of consciousness. Joyce finds his narrative voice in *A Portrait*, and this narrative voice brings focus to the character's soul, his present and his past all combined into one cohesive perspective. For example, in *Dubliners*, the narrator focalizes on Mr. Duffy in "A Painful Case," and at the end of the story, the narrator reveals his thoughts: "He waited for some minutes listening. He could hear nothing: the night was perfectly silent. He listened again: perfectly silent. He felt that he was alone" (114). Although the reader knows Mr. Duffy's thoughts, a distance in the point of view exists in *Dubliners* that does not exist in *A Portrait*. In *A Portrait*, the narrator intimately explains Stephen's innermost thoughts: "With a sudden moment she bowed his head and joined her lips to his and he read the meaning of her movements in her frank uplifted eyes. It was too much for him. He closed his eyes, surrendering himself to her, body and mind, conscious of nothing in the world but the dark pressure of their softly parting lips" (108). Joyce lifts the distance by the time he writes the novel. Benstock asserts, "Mr. Duffy's predicament is diagnostic of the frustrated, untold tales that the Joycean narrative tells in *Dubliners*, in sharp contradistinction to the constant packaging of personal narratives that are the property and hallmark of Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*" (559). While Joyce intimately reveals the consciousness of Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait*, "*Dubliners* is a reality without consciousness" (Malamud 135). Therefore, in a comparison of the structure and point of view of the two texts, Joyce's transition becomes apparent. He commits to the soul of his character by the time he writes *A Portrait* rather than maintaining a linear structure and distant perspective as he did in *Dubliners*.

Although the structural and narratological differences between these two texts prove a transition exists, there must be a point of awakening that leads to this alteration. The final story of *Dubliners*, "The Dead," does not fit the narrative structure and the chronology of the rest of



the compilation, nor does Joyce completely commit to Gabriel's soul in the same way he commits to Stephen's. Because "The Dead" stands alone within the structure of *Dubliners*, it emerges as a transition between the fragmented, linear style of Joyce to the Bergson-influenced style of Joyce's first novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. This style will continue to develop in *Ulysses* and further develop to an arguable compilation of confusion in *Finnegans Wake*. Joyce's arrangement of the stories in *Dubliners* into categories focusing on childhood, adolescence, maturity, and public life excludes "The Dead." Consequently, "The Dead," its narrative structure, and Gabriel's epiphany transition away from the linear pattern previously set forth to a new consciousness of duration. "The Dead" acts as the bridge that allows Joyce to make the transition between *Dubliners* and *A Portrait* and ultimately to find his narrative consciousness and voice. With "The Dead" Joyce shifts his consciousness by recognizing that time as a linear structure fails the people, and time as duration may allow people to grasp onto something permanent and lasting – moments of the present. Joyce finished "The Dead" in the same week that he mentioned his decision to change his narrative structure for *A Portrait*. He dictated the conclusion of "The Dead" to Stanislaus around the same time he mentioned the change (Ellmann 264). "He informed Stanislaus that as soon as he had completed the story ["The Dead"] (which he finished completely a few weeks later), he would rewrite *Stephen Hero* completely. 'He told me,' Stanislaus noted in his diary, 'he would omit all the first chapters and begin with Stephen [ . . . ] and that he would write the book in five chapters – long chapters'" (Ellmann 264). "The Dead," therefore, literally comes in the middle between the rest of *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and in some ways acts as a transition between the two.

“The Dead,” as a transition from fragmentation to duration, contains some qualities that are similar to the other stories in the compilation and some qualities that connect more specifically with *A Portrait*. First of all, the narrative episodes in the story seem to remain true to a Victorian structure and narratological order. C. C. Loomis mentions that “‘The Dead’ can be divided, not arbitrarily, into five sections: the *musicale*, the dinner, the farewells and the drive to the hotel, the scene between Gabriel and Gretta in their room, and, finally, the vision itself” (403). Because of its structure, “The Dead” seems narratologically organized and fragmented; however, the action speeds up throughout the story, until finally all of the events culminate in one vision that brings the story to a moment of duration. Time becomes less important as the story moves, and “[a]s the story progresses, more things happen in less time” (Loomis 404). Like the rest of *Dubliners*, the narrative structure of “The Dead” can be subdivided into chronological events, but like *A Portrait*, time begins to elapse more quickly by the end of the story and Joyce consciously increases the pace through the narrative to the final moment of duration.

In “The Dead,” Joyce also reveals his preoccupation with time, and he begins to show that the external pressures of time begin to prohibit internal self-awareness. Gabriel seems very frustrated with time and the scheduled routine of life, as he also seems to hope to break away from those pressures of time throughout the story. First, Gabriel is late to the party, much to the dismay of his hostesses: “And then it was long after ten o’clock and yet there was no sign of Gabriel” (176). Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia, representing a generation from which Gabriel hopes to escape, seem to respect and honor time. Aunt Kate says, “Thanks for your beautiful waltz, Miss Daly. It made lovely time” (182). Not only does Kate place the waltz in regular time, but Joyce also uses the name “Miss Daly” to further suggest a measured time that is “lovely” to Aunt

Kate, but possibly prohibitive to Gabriel and Joyce. Although “every year [Gabriel] go[es] for a cycling tour with some fellows” (189), throughout the events of the story, Gabriel becomes more and more motivated to escape those mathematical constructs of life. Bergson writes of the limitations of mathematical time: “We shall see that time, conceived under the form of an unbounded and homogeneous medium, is nothing but the ghost of space haunting the reflective consciousness” (“The Idea” 59). Mathematical, conventional time gets in the way of the internal consciousness. Because Joyce seems to indicate the restrictions of time in “The Dead,” he can then experiment more freely with time in *A Portrait* and then in *Ulysses*, both of which “treat time as *durée* réelle, as a process of interblending of the past, present, and future” (Kumar 118). By the time Stephen acknowledges that “the past is consumed in the present and the present is only living because it brings forth the future” (*A Portrait*), Joyce’s language reveals a Bergsonian influence.

Like the other Modernists, Joyce truly questions the usefulness of mathematical time, and he begins to communicate his issues with time in “The Dead.” Joyce, Eliot, Woolf, and the others question time by disrupting narratological order in their works. Rather than allowing the past to stay in the past in some sort of spatial arrangement, Joyce acknowledges that “[t]he past, in a typical Bergsonian sense, has no separate identity as such; it forms an organic part of the ever swelling *durée*” (Kumar 119). Because Joyce longs to expose the inner workings of the mind, he changes the way in which he approaches the concept of time in “The Dead,” and Bergson’s duration seems an appropriate place to turn since “*la durée* [. . .] represents spirit, inner reality and free will” (Kumar 133). Through his structure, point of view, and symbolism, Joyce begins to question spatial time in “The Dead” in order to find his stream-of-consciousness voice in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and possibly Joyce, “like other stream of

consciousness novelists, goes a step further in treating duration as the only determining factor in assessing human experience” (Kumar 134).

### **External Chaos: Pressures of Nationalism**

Joyce, like Eliot, grapples with external chaos while trying to express internal sensations. In order to allow the internal to succeed over the external pressures, Joyce makes difficult decisions in his works, expressing controversial ideas about the world around him, so that the internal flux can become the truth, despite the chaos in the world around him. As I will explain in the next two sections more completely, Joyce focuses on internal, epiphanic moments in his writing – moments that I will connect with Bergson’s theory of duration – in order to allow that internal voice to succeed as it does in *Ulysses*. Although there is no limit to the external pressures Joyce experiences, I will focus on the pressures of nationalism that Joyce presents in “The Dead” and attempted to escape from later in his life. Joyce reveals his anxiety surrounding the national, external pressures he feels when he really wants to focus on the expression of internal sufferings. Joyce yearns to feel less responsible for the nation and the culture of Ireland, and that yearning becomes apparent in “The Dead.” Gabriel finds temporary escape from the pressure during his moment of duration at the end of the story, and I assert that Joyce’s transition toward duration in his works also allowed reprieve from these external pressures.

Both Eliot and Joyce seem to feel the need to reconcile with the past in order to move forward. Moving forward for Joyce means expressing the internal consciousness, and although Gabriel says, “I will not linger on the past” (205), he understands that the past lives in the present. The past remains, but neither Joyce nor Gabriel wants to linger upon it. Although Gabriel understands that the past is inescapable, he hopes to reconcile those conflicts with the

past in order to move forward. We must accept the past as part of who we are, but we cannot be responsible for constantly remembering and acknowledging past generations. Joyce certainly grapples with this issue throughout his life and his work. Although he probably never quite resolves this issue, Joyce found some relief from the external pressures through moments of true epiphany and internal expression. Joyce reveals the pressure he feels concerning the past as when he writes that the past consists of the days ‘when there was something like singing to be heard in Dublin’ (“The Dead” 200), but he hopes to escape that pressure. The scenes that best exemplify Gabriel’s anxiety surrounding the past include his anticipation and then delivery of his speech. In his anticipation, Gabriel wonders about his prepared quote from Robert Browning. While “[t]he indelicate clacking of the men’s heels and the shuffling of their soles reminded him that their grade of culture differed from his,” he also fears that he will “fail with them just as he had failed with the girl in the pantry” and that his whole speech will be “an utter failure” (179). He believes his generation understands more – comes from a different, more informed culture – but he also does not want to offend or disappoint them. Gabriel prepares to compliment them as he imagines what he will say:

He would say, alluding to Aunt Kate and Aunt Julia: Ladies and Gentlemen, the generation which is now on the wane among us may have had its faults but for my part I think it had certain qualities of hospitality, of humour, of humanity, which the new and very serious and hypereducated generation that is growing up around us seems to me to lack. (193)

In “The Dead,” Joyce presents the past as important; Gabriel hopes to honor the past generations. However, at the same time, Joyce expresses the need for the characters, especially

Gabriel, to escape the pressures of the past in order to live in the present moment. Finding that moment of epiphany will allow personal freedom from the external pressures of the past.

In addition to feeling the need to escape the past, Gabriel must also escape the pressures of nationalism. Joyce clearly explores Gabriel's anxiety surrounding nationalism throughout the story, asserting that the pressures of one's culture (especially an Irish culture) are inevitable, yet inhibiting. One cannot be an individual and a nationalist at the same time, and the focus for Joyce must be on individualism. Gabriel understands the importance of "cherish[ing] in our hearts the memory of those dead and gone great ones whose fame the world will not willingly let die"; he understands that his generation is "sceptical" and "thought-tormented" (204). However, like his conflict with the past, Gabriel feels conflicted by his role within his culture. Despite his understanding that nationalism is important, he also wants to escape the pressure he feels. Joyce relishes the idea of being "thought-tormented" because he hopes to find a way to express those internal, tormented thoughts. Joyce presents this conflict clearly in the confrontation he creates between Miss Ivors and Gabriel. Miss Ivors calls Gabriel a West Briton and pressures him to visit his own land, while Gabriel responds, "I'm sick of my own country, sick of it!" (190). In his biography, Ellmann writes of this scene: "Though Gabriel thinks of defending the autonomy of art and its indifference to politics, he knows such a defense would be pretentious, and only musters up the remark that he is sick of his own country" (245). Gabriel wants to defend himself, but he feels pressured by the generation before him and the world around him, particularly in this social setting. These pressures "suggest the preoccupations that mastered [Joyce]" (Ellmann 245).

To try to limit the external chaos Joyce dealt with in his lifetime would be impossible; however, the pressures he felt with nationalism seemed to stay with him throughout his life and

work. He remembered and appreciated the past, his culture, and his history, but he needed to find an escape from those pressures. Of course, Joyce left Ireland and never returned, but he continued to write about Ireland for the rest of his life. One way of escaping such pressures is to find moments of duration in the present. Gabriel's moment at the end of "The Dead" combines the past, present, and future, and allows some respite from the external pressures of the world – through Joyce's internal expression.

### **The Epiphanic Moment**

In this section, I will explore the transition Joyce makes toward duration throughout "The Dead." As I have mentioned, by the time Joyce wrote *Ulysses*, he had mastered internal expression through stream of consciousness and his focus on internal moments. His works prior to *Ulysses* helped him arrive at this point. I see "The Dead" as an integral point in his career – one in which Joyce truly expresses a moment of duration similar to Bergson's. "The Dead," most importantly for this section, "contains many elements that Joyce was later to use in more extended works, as well as a very good example of a memory-based central moment" (Gillies 138). Gillies further describes the moments Joyce presents in his works in conjunction with Bergson's theory of duration: "Although it is a Proustian method of recollection – a recollection brought to present life prompts another that then alters future life – it is also Bergsonian, because it shows how memory impinges on present life and is, in turn, altered by this relationship. [. . .] Joyce uses this type of moment repeatedly throughout later works" (139). Joyce found a way to present this moment in "The Dead" and later perfected the expression of these similar moments in his later works.

Joyce presents moments of *durée* in the form of epiphanies. As his writing evolves, those epiphanies evolve as well. In correlation with the Bergsonian theory of memory, “Joyce uses memory to provide a narrative structure for his novels, a structure that relies on ‘epiphanies’ for its form” (Gillies 135). Shiv Kumar connects Joyce’s epiphanies to Bergson’s duration:

These epiphanies or flashes of intuition hold up, as it were, certain moments out of the flowing stream of experience for a more intense contemplation. These are moments of unexpected spiritual awakening, moments which enable the mind to transcend all reason and perceive phenomena in a new perspective. They embody the same principle of literary composition which, in Bergson’s words, enables a novelist to conceive a character ‘all at once, in its entirety,’ and present it ‘in its flowing through time.’ (134)

In “The Dead,” epiphanies appear in almost every story, and the nature and goal of these epiphanies will be explored in more detail later in the chapter. However, for my purposes in showing that “The Dead” acts as a transitional story for Joyce, I will show here how those epiphanies become moments of duration for Gabriel in a way in which they are not in the other stories. By the time that Joyce writes *A Portrait*, the epiphanic moments guide the novel, and by the time he writes *Ulysses*, the narrative itself seems to live in duration. In *Stephen Hero*, Stephen defines Joyce’s idea of an epiphany: “By an epiphany he meant a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether in the vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind itself. He believed that it was for the man of letters to record these epiphanies with extreme care, seeing that they themselves are the most delicate and evanescent of moments” (188). Joyce uses his descriptions of these epiphanies to attempt to communicate the inner consciousness of his characters, and the final epiphany in “The Dead” acts as a transition toward duration for Joyce.



Gabriel's consciousness transitions from fragmented to durational. Gabriel moves from looking to the past in order to honor and respect it to looking to the past in order to discover his own meaning. He understands the past, present, and future in a linear way at first and then combines them into one consciousness by the end of the story; however, this process requires steps away from linear consciousness toward durational consciousness. Gabriel's transition symbolizes Joyce's transition from fragmentation to duration. Both the past and the present exist in "The Dead." The present of the evening runs throughout the story; the Victorian past that Gabriel (and Joyce) must cope with hovers around all of the characters; and, finally, Gretta's past about which Gabriel and Gretta must come to terms lingers above the evening and above the narrative. Joyce must somehow bring all of these moments of time together for the reader and for the characters. Caporalletti asserts, "The external time of the story, a stagnant present hardly varying from that of the preceding stories in *Dubliners*, is the segmented course of daily routines and conventions, whereas the past, the time of memory, is the vital dimension of affections and emotions, where personal wholeness and authentic human communion are achieved" (414). Therefore, Joyce must somehow reject the linear narrative and combine the past, the present, and the future in order to resolve "The Dead," to resolve *Dubliners*, and to move forward with his own search for epiphanic duration.

During the transition from linear consciousness to durational consciousness in "The Dead," Joyce allows a few transitional moments that almost become moments of duration but fail in a way that the ending does not fail. These almost-moments of duration signify moments in which Gabriel somehow reaches an emotional or spiritual awakening where the past and the present mingle, but some event or thought interrupts the moment and catapults Gabriel's consciousness back into the linear pattern. Before the story begins, Gabriel's life consists of linear patterns. A

mathematical and measurable routine of life dominates in Gabriel's present. He writes "a literary column every Wednesday" (188); he goes for a cycling tour "every year" (189); he "carve[s] the goose as usual" (191). He respects the routine and the regularized structure of time, but he searches for more. Joyce, however, allows a brief escape for Gabriel from this routine in order to hint at the transition away from linear patterns and toward durational patterns. Early in the narrative, before dinner begins, Gabriel almost escapes: "[His] warm trembling fingers tapped the cold pane of the window. How cool it must be outside! How pleasant it would be to walk out alone, first along by the river and then through the park! The snow would be lying on the branches of the trees and forming a bright cap on the top of the Wellington Monument. How much more pleasant it would be there than at the supper-table!" (192). Gabriel briefly breaks away from the pattern and longs for escape; however, thoughts of "his speech: Irish hospitality, sad memories, the Three Graces, Paris, [and] the quotation from Browning" (192) interrupt this moment. He cannot yet escape the lingering thoughts of the past as a linear, structural, mathematical construct because the past somehow remains distant within Gabriel's consciousness. A much more personal connection with the past will act as the final bridge between linear consciousness and durational consciousness. Gabriel must learn to accept that the past is inescapable and must be reconciled as a living part of the present.

The past, present, and future mingle and surround Gabriel's speech. Although he tries to combine them in some way during the speech, he fails once again. He believes, in his preoccupation with the future, that "he would fail them just as he had failed with the girl in the pantry" (179). The past and present come together during his speech as he acknowledges the hospitality that his "fore-fathers have handed down" (204) and mentions the present as a "skeptical" and "thought-tormented age" (204). Gabriel acknowledges both the past and the

present while he claims that he “will not linger on the past” (205). Joyce alludes to the importance of the present, a “brief moment from the bustle and rush of our everyday routine” (205), yet Gabriel has not yet reached the moment of duration that he will later in the story. Joyce allows a moment of transition for Gabriel in order to foreshadow the epiphany that will come. Despite Gabriel’s failure in combining the past and the present, Joyce shows the reader that he hopes somehow to alter his consciousness. Gabriel begins to transition, just as “The Dead” transitions from moments of fragmented time to, later, a moment of duration.

“[Gabriel’s] speech serves as his *apologia pro vita sua* despite his original intentions, as he identifies with the reigning spirit of Irish hospitality, but it is also apparent that he has become the chronicler of the past [. . .]. Gabriel is unaware that a far more important narration is being presented upstairs” (Benstock 556). Gabriel attempts to combine the past and the present, but does not yet achieve duration. Benstock asserts that the narration occurring upstairs, Gretta’s moment of duration, will later affect Gabriel’s moment as well, leading to a far more important spiritual moment in his life than the speech can offer.

Through a combination of moments, and especially with Gretta’s influence, Gabriel successfully transitions away from linear consciousness in order to experience a moment of duration. He experiences near-moments with Gretta, however, before achieving his own epiphany. Gretta, unlike Gabriel, achieves duration at the party, away from the action and on her own. She escapes in a way that Gabriel cannot. “Gretta in ‘The Dead’ live[s] in ‘*durée*’ (duration) and [is] able to recapture an intense moment of [her] past, reliving it with the same emotion as before” (Caporalletti 410). Gabriel witnesses her moment of duration but does not quite understand it. Gretta “was leaning on the banisters, listening to something [and] Gabriel was surprised at her stillness” (211). He notices a “grace and mystery in her attitude as if she

were a symbol of something” (211); the grace and the mystery indicate a moment of stillness, a moment of epiphany, or a moment of duration. Gabriel recognizes Gretta’s moment as important since he wants to capture the moment in art, but he will not understand the moment entirely until he experiences it for himself. Later, after Gretta tells him about Michael Furey, Gabriel’s past and present merge again ephemerally, and he rejects his identity as chronicler of the past.

Caporaletti supports this claim: “Gretta’s painful recollection of her dead lover is the catalytic agent of Gabriel’s regenerating epiphany, a moment of insight that allows him a mysteriously synchronic vision of his own past and present (410). Gabriel realizes:

[w]hile he had been full of memories of their secret life together, full of tenderness and joy and desire, she had been comparing him in her mind with another. A shameful consciousness of his own person assailed him. He saw himself as a ludicrous figure, acting as a pennyboy for his aunts, a nervous well-meaning sentimentalist, orating to vulgarians and idealizing his own clownish lusts, the pitiable fatuous fellow he had caught a glimpse of in the mirror. (221)

In this moment of realization, Gabriel rejects the person that he was – the pennyboy and the sentimentalist. He understands that the past as he has known it and the memories that he has cherished have been tarnished by Gretta’s past, and he thinks of himself as pitiful. This moment for Gabriel holds significance because “when the passionate intensity of Gretta’s recollection forces Gabriel to recognize his own emotional limitations and shallowness, he also perceives the essential humanity that unites him to others” (Caporaletti 411). Although in this moment Gabriel grows closer to duration through this emotional awakening, he cannot completely experience a moment of stillness because of his frustration with Gretta. Again Joyce foreshadows the

revelation to come, but does not quite allow Gabriel to reach his moment of stillness until the consciousness truly is still.

Finally, Gabriel's epiphany at the end of the story completes the transition between linear consciousness and durational consciousness within "The Dead" and for the structure of *Dubliners* as a whole. After Joyce allows Gabriel to experience this moment of duration, he can also transition away from fragmented, linear narration to a Bergson-influenced style of narrative duration. Bergson defines "[p]ure duration [as] the form which the succession of our conscious states assume when our ego lets itself *live*, when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states [. . .] [Pure duration] forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak, into one another" (*TFW* 100). The past dissolves into the present, and the present melds into the past. Gabriel's "own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself which these dead had one time reared and lived in was dissolving and dwindling" (224-5). Throughout the narrative of "The Dead," Gabriel has slowly begun to look inward and to understand that all of the events of the past and the present exist within each other. Therefore, "[a]t the end of his descent into the secret space of his inner self, Gabriel's external and inner time coincide, and in his new present, charged with Gretta's and his own past, he can find an axiological center around which to reorganize his life" (Caporaletti 416) His final moment of duration comes with the last thought of the story: "His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like a descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead" (225). The snow covers all and unites all – the living and the dead, the past and the present, Gabriel and Gretta, and all of Ireland Gabriel's consciousness reaches its final culmination in one moment of stillness, one moment of spiritual fulfillment for which all of the characters in

*Dubliners* have been searching. With the closing image of snow “space and time dissolve and dilate into a cosmic vision that encompasses eternity” (Caporaletti 416-7). All of the moments of “The Dead,” as Bergson would suggest, melt into one another for one brief moment of complete understanding and connection.

### **Resolution: True Internal Expression**

Each author in this study finally seeks some resolution from the chaos through these integral moments of duration. For each, the resolution differs somewhat, but all of them seek some true expression of the self as a resolution from the chaos and pain. I take this point a bit further to argue that all of them also provide some sense of hope for the characters despite the negative forces around them. For Joyce, this expression of the self comes from his use of epiphanies, stream of consciousness, and true internal expression. I define his true internal expression as the narrative voice Joyce seeks that will finally be able to explain the most private inner workings of the mind. He wants to communicate from within, and the success that he finds in *Ulysses* comes from the evolution of that expression in his other works. His voice evolves, and that evolution is part of the growth and part of the resolution. He hopes to explore and reveal the soul in that communication from within, and I argue that “The Dead” shows some moments of transition toward finding that resolve. For this section I will apply, not only Bergson’s concept of duration as presented in *Time and Free Will*, but also some of the theories about the self that Bergson reveals in *Creative Evolution*.

In his body of work, Joyce allows his characters to experience *durée* as a means of overcoming the external pressures of the world around them. If the ultimate goal is to live in a world in which the past and present mingle and the “ego allows itself to live” (*TFW* 100), then

Joyce most certainly succeeds. In “The Dead,” that process toward living in duration begins. While Eliot subtly communicates his goal to change and evolve personally, Joyce makes that goal quite clear in his work. His works actually grow as he does, culminating in probably the greatest novel of all time – *Ulysses* – a novel that lives in *durée*. Joyce’s goal is to communicate from the inner self in order to express those innermost fears and sensations through language. Bergson’s theories of the self align nicely with Joyce’s goal of expressing that inner self. Gillies writes, “Joyce’s fictional worlds are very much based in *durée*, because his primary focus is the inner world, and the main subject in his work is the self and its evolution and changes” (Gillies 135). In “The Dead,” the conflict between the external world (the social party and national pressures) and the internal world (the expression of the self in moments of duration) begins.

Gabriel’s moment of duration differs from the other epiphanies of *Dubliners*, while it anticipates Stephen Dedalus’s epiphany at the end of *A Portrait* because of its hopefulness. In *Dubliners*’s “A Painful Case,” Joyce allows Mr. Duffy to experience an epiphany regarding the loss he has suffered. Mr. Duffy maintains his dedication to a life of structure at all costs, and realizes at the end of the story that “he was alone” (114). His epiphany allows no true hope, but only regret for the character, and the regret comes from his inability to accept his past choices. For Gabriel “[t]here is a sense of opening out to others, an intimation, even though only a slight one, of moral regeneration and hope in the last story of *Dubliners*, which renders it anomalous in the general paralysis that characterizes the entire collection” (Caporaletti 411). Similarly, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen exclaims, “Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race” (275-6). Stephen, like Gabriel, combines the past and the present in his consciousness while he hopes for the future. With Gabriel’s final moment in “The

Dead,” Joyce transitions away from his earlier linear structure, one that allows epiphanies for the characters but also leaves residue of paralysis. In “The Dead,” Gabriel lifts the residue of paralysis and allows Joyce to focus on the consciousness of the soul in his later fiction, beginning with Stephen in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

Joyce’s use of epiphanies evolves throughout his work. He first decides that epiphanies must be used early in his prose career. Ellmann explains Joyce’s definition of the epiphany and its purpose: “The epiphany was the sudden ‘revelation of the whatness of a thing,’ the moment in which ‘the soul of the commonest object . . . seems to us radiant.’ The artist, he felt, was charged with such revelations, and must look for them not among gods but among men, in casual, unostentatious, even unpleasant moments” (83). In 1903, Joyce made his second trip to Paris, and Ellmann writes that Joyce hoped to “somehow manage to live abroad and so continue the ‘journey of the soul’” (127). Further, Ellmann clarifies, “[Joyce’s] epiphanies would have to give up their disembodied existence to become parts of a narrative, which in its turn would be affected by the prior existence of these ‘spots of time.’ Instead of being the author of short works, he must pour them into his long ones, without waste” (128). “The Dead” does not fit structurally with the other parts of *Dubliners*, and the story is significantly longer than the rest. “The Dead,” with its significant epiphanic moment for Gabriel, becomes the transition toward the longer works that present *durée* as a constant.

Therefore, Joyce uses the epiphanies in his works as a resolution – a way to escape the external pressures and to “convey precisely the flavor of unpalatable experiences” (Ellmann 84). As his work evolves, his epiphanies evolve as well. Ellmann writes, “His purposes were becoming more certain. The batch of fifteen new epiphanies made him see more clearly that he had been right, shortly before he left Dublin, in forming these isolated spasms of insight into a



linked chain of moments in which, as Stephen confides to Davin, ‘the soul is born’” (127). From the time he wrote *Dubliners* to the time he converted *Stephen Hero* into *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce began to master his expression of the internal mind. The epiphany at the end of *A Portrait* reveals Stephen’s soul in a way that allowed Joyce successfully to communicate the internal in *Ulysses*. The goal for Joyce was expression of the inner self, and the evolution of his use of epiphanic moments allowed him to achieve this goal.

Joyce does not only need the epiphanies to achieve a hopeful resolution; he also needs to fight the battle between the outer and inner selves. The inner self must be expressed truly, and the outer self prohibits that achievement. Acting as the transitional piece toward duration, “The Dead” first reveals this conflict between the two selves for Gabriel and the hopefulness that can happen when the inner self wins. Gillies summarizes Bergson’s concept of the self: “Bergson said that the *élan vital* pushes both body and mind together toward adaptations; that the self consists of many layers that all interpenetrate and are also the whole self at any one time; and that intuition allows us to know both ourselves and other things much more fully than intellect” (135). Joyce wants his characters to become vehicles for inner self-expression, and Shiv Kumar argues that “[n]o contemporary novelist has represented more successfully than James Joyce what may be termed Bergson’s ‘philosophy of change,’ or internal movement and perpetual becoming” (110). Bergson explains in *Creative Evolution* the conflict between the inner and outer selves:

It is then right to say that what we do depends on what we are; but it is necessary to add also that we are, to a certain extent, what we do, and that we are creating ourselves continually. This creation of self by self is the more complete, the more one reasons on what one does. For reason does not proceed in such matters as in

geometry, where impersonal premises are given once for all, and an impersonal conclusion must perforce be drawn. (“The Endurance” 174)

“We are what we were,” according to Joyce; Bergson would agree, but we are, also, what we do. Bergson argues that the self continually creates the self. Using geometry as an example, Bergson explains that the premises for geometry existed naturally before we applied reason to them. In the same way, the internal workings of the consciousness existed first. Trying to apply reason to the consciousness and the evolution of the human spirit is futile. Joyce hopes to abandon the external reasoning and analysis in order to allow the soul to live.

The internal and the external self consistently influence one another, and we often abandon the importance of the internal self because of the pressures of the external and the ease of living in the external. Gabriel, in “The Dead,” struggles with this conflict throughout the story. Because Joyce sets the action amid an important social scene full of external national and personal pressures, he is able to create a character in Gabriel who desperately feels the need to escape that pressure and turn to the internal. He consistently wants to be alone, to be outside, to escape to the snow and to the park. Gabriel seeks refuge from the party and from the pressure, and in his final moment of duration, the inner self dominates over all of the external pressures – including the generations who have gone before him. This moment in Joyce’s fiction was critical to his process. Because Gabriel experiences this success and this moment of hopefulness, Stephen can also move forward, and Joyce could write *Ulysses*. The hope remains, despite the consistent struggle and conflict for all of Joyce’s characters and Joyce himself.

For Joyce, evolution – of the self, of his work, and of his expression – reigned as one of the most important parts of a resolution. Joyce succeeded. “The Dead” encourages that success. To honestly express the internal and to completely reveal the soul, Joyce had to write “The

Dead.” Gabriel’s conflicts and successes inspire the movement away from the fragmented style of *Dubliners* to the stream of consciousness of the rest of Joyce’s prose. Gabriel also experiences a true moment of duration in which the inner self achieves success over the external self he hopes to leave behind. Finally, “The Dead” allows Joyce to move toward works that live in *durée* and completely express the internal, which for Joyce is the resolution.

### **Concepts that Endanger or Enhance the Moment**

For each author, various aspects of routine life externally prohibit the characters from achieving duration, internal expression, or internal fulfillment. These aspects are important to consider and compare because for each author, they differ, but yet for each author natural elements of the world seem to help the resolution, while unnatural, forced, or false elements of life seem to prevent the resolution. In Joyce’s story, Gabriel must overcome some of these external, unnatural aspects of the social scene in order to find a natural moment of transcendence. The unnatural patterns, prohibitive noise, and forced language get in Gabriel’s way of achieving peace.

The first unnatural element Gabriel finds annoying and prohibitive comes from the forced patterns at the party. We see Joyce grappling with movement in a similar way to Eliot. Both hope to avoid the regularized movement that is forced upon them, planned by others, and socially acceptable. Both Eliot and Joyce want to break free of the unnatural patterns of the external world. The waltz, in particular, frustrates Gabriel. Forced, obligated movements and those that are made with intention because one tries to fit into the party, the environment, and the lifestyle of the dead create problems for those trying to escape the rigidity of the moment. The waltz almost seems to come crushing down upon his head: “He looked up at the pantry ceiling,

which was shaking with the stamping and shuffling of feet on the floor above, listened for a moment to the piano and then glanced at the girl, who was folding his overcoat carefully at the end of the shelf” (177). Joyce’s choice of description here shows the stifling nature of the waltz. Although the waltz should be creating a lively, exhilarating mood, for Gabriel the waltz sounds like “stamping.” He does not want to witness the dancing: “He waited outside the drawing-room door until the waltz should finish, listening to the skirts that swept against it and to the shuffling of feet” (178). Natural movement and natural dancing might have a different impact on Gabriel, but the idea that one must move in the same direction, shuffling one’s feet in the same pattern as everyone else, seems prohibitive and unattractive to Gabriel because he seeks escape from the rigidity of social pressures. Noise must end the waltz, and at the sign of “a clapping of hands and a final flourish of the pianist,” Gabriel finds relief in the fact that “the waltz had ended” (181). People move their bodies in social scenes in order to fit into the crowd; they are cognizant of their movement and how that movement might appear to the rest of the scene. The entire party becomes a fixed, false dance, similar to the waltz itself. Gabriel notices that “the three young ladies laughed in musical echo to his pleasantry, swaying their bodies to and fro, with nervous jerks of their shoulders” (183). The word “echo” connotes a repetition of his pleasantry. They are not original, but reactive, and Joyce describes the movement as “nervous jerks” of the shoulders, which are rigid in comparison to the natural swaying that they try to achieve. Gabriel seems disturbed by the movement of the party – from the waltz to the purposeful movement of the guests.

As with the forced movement, the noise of the party bothers Gabriel. He hates noise, especially the noise created by false or forced laughter and talking, and he wishes he could escape the noise for a silent environment that might help him achieve inner fulfillment. Gabriel

notices a “peal of laughter,” and as someone “laughed heartily too,” “Gabriel laughed nervously” (180). The laughter peals heartily in the air and does not come naturally, which causes Gabriel to join in the forced nature of things with his nervous laughter. During the dinner scene, more noise causes frustration for Gabriel: “There was a great deal of confusion and laughter and noise, the noise of orders and counter-orders, of knives and forks, of corks and glass-stoppers” (198). Everything around him seems to clang and ring, so that inner reflection, duration, or epiphany could never be achieved in that environment. The noise will not allow peace. Most annoyingly, “[a] red-faced young woman, dressed in pansy, came into the room, excitedly clapping her hands and crying: ‘Quadrilles! Quadrilles!’” (183). The way that Joyce describes this woman creates a robust moment full of noise and annoying clapping and shouting. Gabriel must escape the noise, as he longs to do throughout the story, if he is to allow his inner self to possibly find a voice.

Like Eliot, Woolf, and Faulkner, Joyce found the limitations of language frustratingly necessary and beautiful. He understood the restrictions language places on expression of emotion and his ultimate goal to express the internal as realistically as possible. However, as an artist, he had to communicate with language. At some points, Joyce knew that language would kill the moment, as when Gabriel rides in the car with Gretta in “The Dead”: “He was glad of its rattling noise as it saved him from conversation” (215). The artist, however, relies on language to communicate reality. Kumar asserts, “Joyce feels constrained to forge in the smithy of his soul a new notation for rendering the fleeting nuances of human emotions” (116), and many would agree that Joyce uses language throughout his body of work in a way that no other has before or since.

Joyce further struggles with language because of the Irish/English culture clash and his need to represent Ireland as specifically and realistically as possible, albeit in the English language. This conflict of language returns again to the sense of nationalism that he both wants to maintain and withdraw. He struggles with this linguistic anxiety: “He could write the spiritual history of his own country, but only when he found that mode of English appropriate to Irish experience” because “the problem of being a writer was in a very specific sense a linguistic problem” (Deane 34-5). I argue that Joyce arrives at this reality through his use of stream of consciousness and through his ability to express the internal flux of his characters’ minds. In “The Dead,” Joyce first begins to capture linguistically the realism of the internal that can be considered Bergsonian in nature. As John Paul Riquelme asserts, “In ‘The Dead’ Joyce brings his early realistic style equally close to his later style when he employs a wide range of strategies for presenting thought in the third rather than the first person” (126). The language that Joyce chooses to use also evolves, with “The Dead” acting as an important transitional moment.

Once again, natural expression helps achieve duration in a way that forced expression does not, and Joyce develops this natural expression through true expression of the internal mind. The language is a process for Joyce and for his readers: the more we read each work, the more we understand and recognize his meanings. The language “penetrate[s] into the hard crust of the conventional word, seize[s] it in its embryonic form and then remould[s] it to embody nascent movements in his characters’ stream of consciousness” (Kumar 116). This transition toward the internal flux represents Bergson’s theories, at least in that Joyce’s use of language allows a new understanding of Bergson. Kumar writes, “Interpreted in terms of Bergson’s theories of *memoire par excellence*, language and *la durée*, the work of James Joyce acquires a new perspective and meaning not otherwise discernible” (138). The parallelism between the

Bergsonian flux and the stream of consciousness technique” (Kumar 138) helps reveal the importance of timeless moments – even in living within the internal consciousness rather than among the external chaos. Conventional language may prohibit duration, but Joyce finds a way to express his thoughts using restrictive language as a freeing agent. Joyce’s language, in the end, frees the internal thoughts of his characters.

Just as aspects exist that prohibit duration, many exist to enhance duration, and for Joyce, like many of the modernists, those aspects that enhance have something to do with the natural and unforced. The natural elements for Joyce are similar to those outlined in the Eliot chapter. From the natural elements in the environment to art, the two authors long for an escape from the patterns of the external world and long for the ability to express the natural internal workings of the mind. Particularly in “The Dead,” natural elements pervade Gabriel’s mind throughout the story and also contribute significantly to his final moment of duration at the end. Gabriel longs for the outdoors – the cold, the snow, the windows. He wants to remove himself from the pressures of the unnatural social scene and escape. This same sentiment reappears in my analysis of Clarissa in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Joyce hints that Gabriel carries some of the natural elements with him as he enters the party. The snow and the cool air symbolize Gabriel’s connection to the natural and disconnection from the social chaos. Joyce writes, “A light fringe of snow lay like a cape on the shoulders of his overcoat and like toecaps on the toes of his galoshes; and, as the buttons of his overcoat slipped with a squeaking noise through the snow-stiffened frieze, a cold fragrant air from out-of-doors escaped from the crevices and folds” (177). From the first moment readers meet Gabriel, he shows a natural quality that the others seem to lack in that he notices and longs for natural elements of the world around him while he tries to remove himself from the unnatural, forced patterns of the external world. Although the snow is

only covering small tips of Gabriel's shoulders and toes and the cool air only remains in the crevices and folds, Gabriel invites the natural with him into the party through these elements.

Later, during the dinner party, Gabriel experiences many instances in which he hopes to escape to the outdoors, which demonstrates his growing need for the natural as the story progresses. The conventional order of the party increasingly weighs on Gabriel:

Gabriel's warm trembling fingers tapped the cold pane of the window. How cool it must be outside! How pleasant it would be to walk out alone, first along by the river and then through the park! The snow would be lying on the branches of the trees and forming a bright cap on the top of the Wellington Monument. How much more pleasant it would be there than at the supper-table! (192)

Joyce's preoccupation with the natural, which is "suggested in pictorial or auditory images, is Bergsonian in character" (Kumar 108). Gabriel, like Joyce, seeks purity. Joyce increases the moments in which Gabriel feels the need to remove himself from the party and return to nature in order to show the desperation of the situation throughout the story. Gabriel thinks, "People perhaps were standing in the snow on the quay outside, gazing up at the lighted windows and listening to the waltz music. The air was pure there" (203).

Also natural and unforced at its best, art encourages duration for Joyce and for many of the other writers in my study. Bergson writes of painting, "Nowhere is the function of the artist shown as clearly as in that art which gives the most important place to imitation, I mean painting. The great painters are men who possess a certain vision of things which has or will become the vision for all men" ("The Perception" 251). Joyce creates a vision of things that become a vision for all men with his writing; furthermore, he presents this vision of art in "The Dead" when Gabriel imagines painting Gretta. Joyce would agree with Bergson: true art comes from an



internal vision, and that art becomes a vision for those who experience the art. In this scene, art encourages Gabriel to continue to move toward duration. Of course, Gretta, at the time Gabriel imagines painting her, experiences a moment of duration; this moment of duration encourages Gabriel to want to paint her and then to move toward his own moment later in the story. Joyce writes:

He asked himself what is a woman standing on the stairs in the shadow, listening to distant music, a symbol of. If he were a painter he would paint her in that attitude. Her blue felt hat would show off the bronze of her hair against the darkness and the dark panels of her skirt would show off the light ones. *Distant Music* he would call the picture if he were a painter. (211)

Gretta stands listening to the music, thinking of Michael Furey and experiencing a moment of duration. Gabriel witnesses this moment and feels inspired to paint her. In this case, Joyce directly connects art with duration.

Throughout his career, Joyce's concern with art helped him evolve into the artist that he became, and his art lives on timelessly as Bergson would argue must happen. Gillies comments on Joyce's connection between art and eternity: "W. Y. Tindall, in one of the more perceptive early analyses of Joyce and Bergson, writes: 'Like Bergson and Proust in this one respect, Joyce found the absolute in time and thereby reconciled it with eternity. He found eternity in the historical pattern, the family, and man. Above all these, he found eternity in art'" (133). Art is timeless for Joyce, and Bergson would agree. Not only does art remain timeless, but it becomes something important for each person who experiences that art throughout time. Bergson writes, "The painter has isolated it; he has fixed it so well on the canvas that henceforth we shall not be able to help seeing in reality what he himself saw" ("The Perception" 252). Both Joyce and

Bergson would agree that the composition of art and the experience of enjoying that art defy the conventional clock time.

To take that idea one step further, according to many critics, Joyce consistently battled with the subject-object split in art, which brings him even closer to the eternity and timelessness of his craft. Both Woolf and Joyce place art within their art in order to create timeless pieces of art within art. Lily's painting in *To the Lighthouse* becomes almost as timeless as the novel itself, and the anxieties that the artist feels when creating his or her art are timeless and eternal. Each time someone reads *To the Lighthouse* or analyzes the novel in a group, the painting must be evaluated. We imagine the art and what that art looks like, based on the limited information we are given in the novel. We try to piece it together, and eternally the painting will live in the minds of the readers in the same way that the novel continues onward. In *A Portrait*, Joyce removes the barrier between object and subject as “[a]rt is thus double-layered here, with Joyce becoming like his creation and Stephen becoming like his creator” (Gillies 142). Art, for Bergson, may act as the best medium for duration: “The most basic premise of Bergson’s aesthetics is that art creates novelty. Whereas language is spatial, art is temporal, expressing duration, expressing the authentic flow of experience which is encrusted over by language [. . .] As such, a poetic construct will possess duration as well as unpredictability” (Habib 271). Both Joyce and Bergson acknowledge art as temporal, natural, and lasting. Joyce’s goal, therefore, is to achieve that art, which he certainly accomplishes in his writing career. The art remains.

Joyce reveals in “The Dead” the many concepts that either endanger the moment or enhance it, and through his story he shows the importance of the natural. If the natural can periodically defeat the unnatural forces of routine life, individuals may have a chance to find that epiphanic moment that will allow them to preserve the internal consciousness – the self.

\* \* \*

The connections between Joyce and Bergson are less apparent than those between Eliot and Bergson; however, the application of Bergson's theories of *durée* and *élan vital* to the works of Joyce can help us understand the importance of a world in which memory lives in the present and the expression of the internal self must at least be attempted. Joyce's writing contains so many similarities to Bergson's theories that the connections cannot be ignored. Finding the voice that expressed this internal flux perfectly required a process for Joyce. He had to write the texts that he wrote in the way that he wrote them in order to accomplish that final goal, and "The Dead" shows, in many ways, Joyce's first true connections to Bergson's timeless world. Gillies agrees:

Like Virginia Woolf, Joyce's fundamental orientation was temporal and, like Woolf, Joyce's central interest was to devise a narrative that would reflect the primacy of time over space. Although Joyce's variation on stream-of-consciousness fiction achieves this goal, it was, as with Woolf, his early experiments that laid the foundation for *Ulysses* – so aptly described by Lewis as a 'time-book' (134).

The analysis of Joyce's work through the lens of Bergson elucidates the complications Joyce had with conventional time. Joyce longed to escape the external pressures of society in order to realistically express the internal pressures caused by the external chaos, and he uses Bergson's theory of duration to accurately communicate the internal workings of the mind. Furthermore, this expression of the internal can help one remain hopeful for a life among the chaos – like the moment of hope that Gabriel finds at the end of the "The Dead" and that Stephen finds at the end of *A Portrait*. The hopefulness I speak of does not resolve all problems or even begin to

dominate the pressures and anxieties of the external world, nor can the moments of duration truly defeat conventional time. But the moments of hope that do appear in this timeless fashion make life worth living and make art worth expressing. The eternal can be found, and it is found in art.

Bergson writes, “We can thus conceive of succession without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnection and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought” (*TFW* 101). Joyce and other modernist authors were searching for spiritual fulfillment in an age of darkness, fear, and anxiety. Although Joyce escaped the city limits of Dublin, he was haunted by his memories and felt compelled to write about Dublin for the rest of his life. As Joyce states in *A Portrait*, “We are what we were.” Human experience includes not only present fears but also past experiences and preoccupations about the future. The hope remains that within human existence we can find moments of peace, stillness, and spiritual fulfillment. Joyce finds such a moment through Gabriel at the conclusion of “The Dead,” one that inspires the search for the fulfillment of the soul through the discovery of the true self.

### **Virginia Woolf: The Symbiosis of the Self in *Mrs. Dalloway***

The controversy of Bergson's influence continues with the study of Virginia Woolf, another of the most important modernist voices. Many critics believe that Woolf's work significantly represents the theories of Henri Bergson; however, Leonard Woolf claims that she never read any of his works. Some critics argue that even if she did not read his work, she had to have been influenced by his theories through the company she kept. Others stringently argue that Woolf was simply not influenced by Bergson whatsoever because there is no proof. Once again, however, I argue that the importance of Bergson lies in understanding a knowledge of his thought adds to Woolf's work. It is difficult to read Bergson's theories of duration, time, and memory and not think of Woolf. Applying those theories to her work helps clarify the meaning and emotion behind Woolf's novels. When Shiv Kumar completed his work with Bergson and the modernist writers in 1963, he agreed that determining Bergson's direct influence on Woolf would be impossible. He asserts that "[t]he truth seems to be that her work provides yet another example of parallelism between the stream of consciousness technique and the Bergsonian flux" (64) and that "[t]he true explanation of the Bergsonian character of her novels lies in her being a manifestation, like many other contemporary novelists, of the *Zeitgeist*" (68). Then, in 1996 when Mary Ann Gillies published *Henri Bergson and British Modernism*, she acknowledged that Kumar, despite his publication date of 1963, still provides one of the most comprehensive applications of Bergson and British literature. She agrees that the controversy will always be present because there exists no definitive proof for one side or the other, but she believes that Woolf "also seems to have incorporated three of Bergson's major ideas: time, intuition, and memory" (108). Bryony Randall recently published *Modernism, Daily Time, and Everyday Life* in which she explores the concept of "dailiness" and applies that concept to the works of Dorothy

Richardson, Gertrude Stein, H. D., and Virginia Woolf. Although she uses Bergson's theory of duration to support her thesis about daily time, she does not address the controversy surrounding Bergson's influence on Woolf. Although the direct relation between Bergson and Woolf may never be clear, the ways in which Bergson's theories illuminate Woolf's texts are undeniable and compelling.

In this section, I will be analyzing in detail the difference between the external and the internal portions of the self as presented by Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway*. The external self consists of one's relationships and interactions with others – the reality of everyday life; the internal consists of the psychological and emotional feelings, words, and beliefs that exist inside our minds. Bergson's theories of time, duration, memory, and the self work nicely with Woolf's work. Bergson helps us understand the complexity of the internal and helps emphasize Woolf's belief that the internal must persist within the external world. However, Woolf also acknowledges the importance and the necessity of the external world in a distinctive way. I argue that Woolf needs this symbiosis of the external and internal aspects of the self. Although the internal is probably more important to her than the external, she also believes that they must work together and coexist within each of us in order to achieve the cohesive, complete self Woolf desires. Susan Dick explores this dichotomy in Woolf's works: "Although they existed in a hierarchy for Woolf, the two realities of 'fact' and 'vision,' as she sometimes called them, were clearly interdependent" (52). What she calls 'fact,' I am calling 'external.' The 'vision' is the expression of internal reality through moments of being, and that equates to Bergson's *durée réelle*. The internal does reign higher than the external, but I argue that Woolf needs her characters to merge the two in order to find the whole self for which they search. Woolf believes that the external world and the internal psyche must merge in order to find the hopefulness,

solace, peace, or fulfillment that human beings seek. She does not necessarily try to leave the external behind, as I argue that Joyce does. She hopes that the two will merge, that some kind of balance can be achieved, and that through that balance the whole being finds a reason to live and thrive within a world of chaos.

Henri Bergson writes a great deal about this dichotomy of the self, and although he would also agree that the internal must be given more importance than the external, he admits that the external must still linger with the internal for complete fulfillment. Bergson explains his theory of the self in *Time and Free Will*:

Below homogeneous duration, which is the extensive symbol of true duration, a close psychological analysis distinguishes a duration whose heterogeneous moments permeate one another; below the numerical multiplicity of conscious states, a qualitative multiplicity; below the self with well-defined states, a self in which *succeeding each other* means *melting into one another* and forming an organic whole. [. . .] As the self thus refracted, and thereby broken to pieces, is much better adapted to the requirements of social life in general and language in particular, consciousness prefers it, and gradually loses sight of the fundamental self. (128)

Woolf would agree that the refracted self is “much better adapted to the requirements of social life in general.” However, that refracted self must be formed into an organic whole in order to find the fundamental self. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf writes Clarissa Dalloway as an example of a self merging together to find some kind of fundamental self, a self that transcends and is enlightened. I look at the idea of the fundamental self as an internal understanding of who we are, however, the concept of the self is a social construction. We cannot understand ourselves

without understanding the world around us and positioning that self within that external world. I see the fundamental self as a merging of all that we are – truthfulness within ourselves. I am not sure that achieving this fundamental self is really possible, but I do argue that the characters in these texts consistently try to achieve a greater understanding of the self. The fundamental self truthfully merges the external and internal self. Although the external self sometimes dominates *Mrs. Dalloway*, by the end of the novel, we know that Clarissa’s internal self will continue to live and thrive. We know that the external self must remain, but if the two selves can merge, hope exists for the self.

The similarities between Woolf and Bergson concerning the two sides of the self are evident in their writing. During her composition of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf writes, “I should say a good deal about *The Hours* and my discovery; how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters: I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humour, depth. The idea is that the caves shall connect and each comes to daylight at the present moment” (*A Writer’s Diary* 59). In *Time and Free Will*, Bergson writes that when we are “digging below the surface of contact between the self and external objects, we penetrate into the depths. Of the organized and living intelligence, we shall witness the joining together or rather the blending of many ideas which, when once dissociated, seem to exclude one another as logically contradictory terms” (*TFW* 136). Both novelist and philosopher hope to dig below the surface in order to find the internal self, but, most important, both hope to connect the dissociated parts in order to blend and create a cohesive self.

The modernist voice Virginia Woolf presents in much of her work, especially in *Mrs. Dalloway*, speaks to her readers in a way unlike any other voice; the voice is fragmented, aware, and exploratory. Analyzing the modernist self, Dennis Brown writes, “Modernism in literature



was a movement that radically probed the nature of selfhood and problematised the means whereby ‘self’ could be expressed” (1). The modernist focus on self emerges from the disillusionment and fragmentation British society felt because of the Great War. According to Brown, “*Ulysses* (‘Lord the cracked things come into my head’), *The Waste Land* (‘These fragments I have shored’), and *Mrs. Dalloway* exemplify the new discourse of self-fragmentation” (81). Virginia Woolf creates a representation of the fragmented self with her character Clarissa Dalloway; one part of her self is represented by the title, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and the other part of the dichotomy is represented by her first name, Clarissa.<sup>2</sup> Virginia Woolf divides her protagonist into two selves: a social self (Mrs. Dalloway), one that communicates and interacts with society, and an inner self (Clarissa), one that is primarily internal, each self causing both conflict and solace for her. She is Mrs. Dalloway when she tends to the external business of the day, the planning of the party, and the social expectations. She is Clarissa when she pays attention to her internal consciousness and when those who know her best (Peter especially) think of her as an individual without external expectations.

Imagining those caves Woolf mentions as portions of the selves, both Clarissa Dalloway, the protagonist, and Septimus Smith, a representation of Clarissa’s psyche, experience a dichotomy of the self. If Woolf’s goal is that “the caves shall connect,” Woolf succeeds in connecting Clarissa and Septimus by the end of the novel. However, both characters do not necessarily “come to daylight at the present moment” by the end of the novel. Septimus, of course, has plunged to his death, while Clarissa comes to a hopeful sense of daylight in the last

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<sup>2</sup> Another example of the dichotomy of the self in Virginia Woolf’s works appears in *To the Lighthouse*. Mrs. Ramsay has accepted the two sides of her self, and therefore only needs one name, Mrs. Ramsay; the readers never know her first name. However, Woolf labels a more independent, unmarried self like Lily Briscoe by her first name. Readers of *To the Lighthouse* refer to Mrs. Ramsay and then to Lily, using one married name and one first name. Woolf shows this conflict by calling her character Mrs. Dalloway and also Clarissa.

moment of the novel. Although many could argue that that hope is ephemeral, I argue in this chapter that Woolf makes a case for the moments of duration that allow one to search for the hope that those moments provide – the moments in the present in which external and internal, past and present, connect. This dichotomy of the self – the conflict between the external and internal selves -- also emerges through the character of Septimus, who is often read by critics as Clarissa’s alter ego. The novel suggests that a merging of the two selves may lead to a sense of totality for Clarissa, and that totality comes through moments of being that are quite similar to Bergson’s concept of duration. The states of the self must blend, and as Bergson states, “the duration which they thus create is a duration whose moments do not constitute a numerical multiplicity” (*TFW* 137). Like Eliot and Joyce, Woolf also disrupts conventional narrative structure in order to question that linear nature of time. She grapples with external chaos in many ways, and in *Mrs. Dalloway*, she shows that a merging of these two selves through moments of duration can lead to a cohesive self. Woolf attempts to achieve her goal by finding that cohesive self and, most important, finding the voice with which to express that cohesive self in her novel.

### **The External and Internal Expressed Through Structure**

In finding the voice to express both the external and internal, Woolf writes *Mrs. Dalloway* in an anti-conventional way in order to question the nature of linear time. Unlike the Victorians before her, Woolf creates timeless moments in the novel; however, time consistently remains an important aspect within her novels. The present day in *Mrs. Dalloway* moves forward chronologically; however, the past emerges through the internal consciousness of the characters, and the narrative voice floats from one consciousness to another like a feather

blowing in the wind. Unlike the Victorians before her, Woolf seamlessly presents both the clear present day and the internal consciousness of her characters in *Mrs. Dalloway*. This choice of structure shows the importance of the symbiosis between external and internal. The external remains, but the internal shows the most important aspects of each character. Consequently, the two must work together in order to achieve the true reality of selfhood.

Bergson writes about the external and the internal and the possibility of communicating the two of them in writing: “Our perception, sensations, emotions and ideas occur under two aspects: the one clear and precise, but impersonal; the other confused, ever changing, and inexpressible, because language cannot get hold of it without arresting its mobility or fit it into its common-place forms without making it into public property” (*TFW* 129). The clear, precise, but impersonal aspect is similar to Woolf’s external existence, while the confused, ever-changing aspect represents the internal. Of course, Bergson wrote this phrase before Joyce and Woolf wrote their novels. Had he read *Ulysses*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, or *To the Lighthouse*, he would have seen that the inner self is expressible, since they both found a way to present the internal self magnificently. However, both Joyce and Woolf would agree that even in their attempts to express the internal, the limitations Bergson mentions still exist. They are then making their internal voices public property, and they also arrest the mobility of that internal self by putting it into language. However, they achieve the goal Bergson believed could not happen in writing because language can be so limiting.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf presents the external and the internal through her structure and style. She acknowledges that the external and the internal must coexist through the way in which she presents the life of Clarissa Dalloway in one day. I take issue with the following statement from Mary Ann Gillies: “Woolf’s major concern is to capture not the external qualities of the

series of moments that constitute a life, but to capture the invisible inner moments” (109). In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf certainly hopes to capture the invisible moments, but as I will show, she does this by creating a frame of the external day. In some ways the moments of non-being, as Woolf calls them, prohibit the internal from emerging; however, through her creation of Septimus Smith, Woolf shows that a person who exists only within the internal consciousness cannot survive. The external, despite its pressures and frustrations, must remain. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf focuses a good deal of energy on the presentation and creation of the external; external time does constitute a life, but it is not a life of fulfillment by itself. The internal moments must exist for one to feel fulfilled. The moments of being must be there within the moments of non-being. Woolf must create a symbiosis between the two, and this symbiosis can be seen in the way Woolf structures *Mrs. Dalloway*.

With the structure of *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf broke with convention in many ways, and those diversions are probably the most important aspect in analyzing her structure. However, there is something to be said for the ways in which her structure also notices the external. Specifically, although formatting the novel in one day represents anti-convention, the day itself moves chronologically with a clear goal in mind – the party – and preparation for that social event is a major part of Clarissa’s existence within that one day. Also, despite the way in which Woolf questions clock time, clocks remain an important part of Woolf’s structure and seem inescapable for Clarissa. In those two ways, Woolf shows through the structure of the novel that, although the internal is more important, the external must tick along. Woolf may agree with Bergson that the practical part of our lives is an annoyingly important part of our existence. Bergson writes, “The reason [we tend to ignore the internal self] is that our outer and, so to speak, social life is more practically important to us than our inner and individual existence”

(*TFW* 130). The timeline within the novel clearly exists: Woolf sets a specific date, and Big Ben specifically measures the events. Woolf may demonstrate that “the individual’s development cannot be separated from apparently inconsequential details of the materiality of domestic life” (Rosner 86). Although Clarissa seeks the experience of internal awareness, and Woolf seeks to express the internal, “[t]ime broods over the entire narrative and lends it a significance and purpose not always fully understood by all readers” (Kumar 75).

Clocks permeate the novel. Big Ben looms and attempts to “regulate life’s endless stream” (Kumar 76). Woolf does not enjoy Big Ben’s efforts, but she notices them and realizes that she cannot escape this external measurement of life. She does have her own clock, but she call it “the other clock, the clock which always struck two minutes after Big Ben” (MD 128). Although she can, in her own way, escape momentarily from the external, her clock is still “the other.” Big Ben remains as the predominant clock in the novel, in London, and in her life. Of course, Big Ben represents the external world while Clarissa’s other clock symbolizes her internal independence. The internal is more personal and more important, but Big Ben does measure the day in the novel for all of the characters, which shows Woolf’s attention to the external: “the operations of Big Ben in slicing the day into regular bits are limited only to external phenomena” (Kumar 75).

This motif of the clocks in the novel may also symbolize the difficulty for the two selves to merge. The first sounding of Big Ben, representative of societal pressures, abruptly disturbs Clarissa in a moment of pause: “Clarissa was positive, a particular hush, or solemnity; and indescribably pause; a suspense [. . .] before Big Ben strikes. There! Out it boomed” (4). Big Ben (social self or social pressure) destroys Clarissa’s moment of pause (inner self), but there is almost a sense of relief in Clarissa at this moment as if the clock, the consistency of its presence,

like the consistency and indestructibility of societal pressure, comforts her in some way. The clock “booms” in the same way that the motor car creates an explosive sound, which for Septimus “burst[s] into flames” (15). Although the booming of the clock, representing Clarissa’s social pressures, seems less frightening or severe than the booming of the motor car and war, symbolizing Septimus’s social pressures, they are parallel, nonetheless. Next, Clarissa finds solace in her inner self, represented by her personal clock that “always [strikes] two minutes after Big Ben” (128). Big Ben can have all of his “majesty” in being “so solemn” and “so just,” (128), but Clarissa has her own clock which will not merge and cannot merge with the official, social one. Finally, Big Ben strikes again while Clarissa is away from the party thinking of Septimus, possibly as a reminder that the two selves must remain separate: “She felt glad he had done it; thrown it away. The clock was striking” (186). Septimus throws it away (social pressure), but the clock strikes to remind Clarissa that she should not and will not, at least not today, because today she must triumph.

Despite the existence of the external within the novel, Woolf hopes to find and express the internal voice – that Bergsonian internal flux that Eliot and Joyce also find so important to the fulfillment of the soul. She seeks to express the inner voice in order to show that “[a]n inner life with well distinguished moments and with clearly characterized states will answer better the requirements of social life” (*TFW* 139). Woolf achieves this expression of the internal, what Woolf calls “the flight of the mind” in *The Early Journals*, in *Mrs. Dalloway* and in *To the Lighthouse* through her mastery of stream of consciousness. Dick asserts, “Woolf needed to shift the focus from the mind of the narrator to the minds of the characters. While she had long recognized the fragmented structure of ‘the flight of the mind,’ it was only during the writing of *Mrs. Dalloway* that she found a way to use that as the basis for the creation of character” (51).

Her use of stream of consciousness to express the internal workings of her characters' minds closely resembles Bergson's idea of duration.

Mary Ann Gillies, in her extensive application of Bergson to British literature, writes of Woolf's connections to Bergson: "But Woolf transforms the convention [of internal expression] through the inclusion of the novel's second level, its *durée*, which contributes not only to the development of the various characters but also to Clarissa's complex process of self-discovery" (115). Gillies continues: "She set out to develop new narrative strategies to show the conflation of time into one time-filled instant, and to show that this moment is a profound inner experience that is every bit as important as the more public events of the external world" (110). The narrative strategies Woolf uses in *Mrs. Dalloway* reveal the internal timeless moments that exist regularly within the external moments of non-being. Furthermore, "by immersing herself in her characters' streams of consciousness, Virginia Woolf experiences under the frozen surface of their conventional ego, a state of perpetual flux of which her novels are the most faithful representations. Like Bergson, she conceives thinking as a 'continual and continuous change of inward direction'" (Kumar 98). In *Mind Energy*, Bergson speaks of this continual and continuous change of inward direction, and Woolf achieves such a movement in *Mrs. Dalloway*. The movement disrupts clock time and revives the past in order to express the internal.

Woolf represents external clock time because it is inescapable; however, external clock time exists so that the internal can disrupt it. "By joining the two modes of existence, to fashion a rich and complex reality" (Gillies 116), Woolf eloquently develops a symbiosis between external and internal in order to create the truest reality possible for her characters. In order to do this, the external clocks must be interrupted and the past must emerge with the present. Between the time that "Big Ben [strikes] the half-hour" and the other clock "[comes] shuffling in

with its lap full of odds and ends” (MD 127, 128), Clarissa experiences a moment of internal awareness. As she watches the old lady across the way, she considers the connections between human beings and the mystery that surrounds those connections. Woolf interrupts clock time in order to allow internal moments to blossom. Septimus Smith defies clock time in a much more extreme manner. If Bradshaw represents the external, Septimus rejects this external through his suicide. Kumar asserts that “[e]ven his ultimate suicide seems to symbolize his complete defiance of the tyranny of clock time as represented by Sir William Bradshaw” (76). By writing a novel that takes place entirely in one day and positioning the symbol of the clock throughout the novel, Woolf questions mathematical time through her structure. She defies it. She wants to smash the clocks to pieces but realizes that would be a futile attempt. Therefore, she creates another time world – a world of internal consciousness – a world of *durée réelle* because she may recognize “*la durée* as the true essence of all aesthetic experience” (Kumar 75).

In addition to interrupting clock time, Woolf purposely brings the past into the present throughout the novel through her use of stream of consciousness and her attention to memory. The characters live, move, and function in the present while the past constantly lingers in their internal consciousnesses. Bergson discusses pure memory:

[Pure memory] records, in the form of memory-images, all the events of our daily life as they occur in time; it neglects no detail; it leaves to each fact to each gesture, its place and date. Regardless of utility or of practical application, it stores up the past by the mere necessity of its own nature [. . .] in it we take refuge every time that, in the search for a particular image, we remount the slope of our past. (MM 92)



Woolf would agree that pure memory neglects no detail. The memories come in flashes and waves and are associated with particular images we encounter in the present. One of the best examples of this memory in *Mrs. Dalloway* is Peter's recollection of the fountain. He can remember not only the events and the words but also the spout of the fountain and the moss. He thinks, "How sights fix themselves upon the mind!" (*MD* 64). Both important and seemingly unimportant details find a way into the present, and Woolf presents all of these aspects of the mind in one timeless moment for her characters.

In their studies of Bergson and the British Modernists, both Shiv Kumar and Mary Ann Gillies agree that the past and memory play an important role in *Mrs. Dalloway*, and further, they argue that this merging of the past and the presents directly represents Bergson's theory of duration. The past lives within the present moment. Kumar writes, "Like Bergson, [Woolf] believes in the indestructibility of the past and its power to re-emerge into consciousness with all its infinite details, in the inseparableness of perception from recollection, and the power of memory to project all human experience in true perspective" (93). The two are inseparable, and they must coexist for an individual to find his or her true fundamental self. Gillies takes this idea one step further by also arguing that the memories of the past influence present moments. She asserts, "An incident sparks off a memory of the past which, in turn, brings about a fresh understanding of the present. This continual missing of different times results in the novel's sense of timelessness, as if all of Clarissa's life existed simultaneously" (115). Once again, Woolf blends the two together – the past and the present – the external and the internal – in order to find self-awareness and self-expression. Woolf's emphasis on memory also appears throughout the novel as she forces her characters to deal with the external pressures around them.

### The Pressures of the External Chaos

Woolf most certainly battles with the external chaos surrounding her, and that chaos reveals itself in two facets in *Mrs. Dalloway*. First, the external pressures come from the Great War, and secondly, the chaos stems from the social pressures surrounding the two central figures in the novel, Clarissa and Septimus Warren Smith. Woolf makes two major decisions regarding these two aspects as she sets the novel. First, the war is over, technically; therefore, the novel occurs on a day in which peace exists. Also, the external events of the day focus on the preparation for Clarissa's important party – a party the prime minister will attend. Woolf shows, however, by making these decisions regarding setting, that the memory of the past and the chaos created by external pressures for these two individuals overwhelms and inhibits them. In “Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*: A Well of Tears,” George Panichas addresses the importance of war as an external force in the novel. He writes, “Clearly, whatever peacetime happenings and ambitions and hopes constitute the novel’s soul, as it were, the resonances of war cannot be entirely erased, or forgotten even years later, for somehow the war revisits human consciousness and relationships in the visible forms of remembrance of things past” (237). Memory, once again, plays an important role in the characters’ individual development. The war cannot be forgotten, and the pressures of the social world around Clarissa and Septimus consistently linger.

Most critics would agree that “[t]his novel tells us much about the war and the postwar years, about human feelings and relationships, and about the malaise that would afflict individual and collective life in the era between the two world wars” (Panichas 234). The novel addresses the modernist perspective on war by showing the ways in which the war lingers in the consciousness of the characters. The feelings of vulnerability, sadness, and madness permeate each day in the life of these Londoners, no matter how they may try to convince themselves that

the war is indeed over and behind them. The horrific historical past still remains in the present. The modernists, in reaction to this continued anxiety about the war turn inward to find some kind of solace, but what they find mostly is more despair and anxiety. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, “[h]uman destiny, it seems, is arrested as men and women now confront their own souls – and their innermost *angst*” (Panichas 235). In the same way that beautiful memories linger in the present, memories of pain and suffering linger as well. The authors allow their audiences “to re-experience the full violence of war inflicted on body and soul and mind, to comprehend the ravages of cruel history; and, above all, to rediscover how disenchantment swept over the human personality and the state of humanity in a time of unrelenting tragedy” (Panichas 236). When the wartime memories continued to pervade the minds of the modern authors, they searched for a way to come to terms with those horrific memories in their writing. With *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf achieves all of the above feats.

Woolf positions Septimus Warren Smith as a central figure, possibly an alter-ego for Clarissa, who has been greatly affected by his experiences in the Great War. He “is seen struggling frantically to come to terms with and then to overcome his experience of war and death, and then of disenchantment and madness” (Panichas 237). Many argue that Septimus represents many aspects of Woolf herself, in her struggles with madness and suicide attempts. Arnold Weinstein in *Recovering Your Past* states, “Woolf stages, in the tragic figure of Septimus Smith, a war survivor who kills himself, an unforgettable rendition of the two greatest terrors Woolf herself faced: incomprehension by others and outright madness itself” (195). Both of these ideas appear as Clarissa and Septimus grapple with the idea of being misunderstood (or not understood at all) by others and by outright madness. The pressure of the war on these characters, especially Septimus, shows the eternal effects of the event itself and the historical

past of England. According to Gillies's summary of Bergson's ideas about memory, "It is imperative, then, to have a memory faculty that is capable not only of storing experiences but also for relating them to current life. By having Septimus die because he lacks this ability, Woolf powerfully suggests the centrality of memory to the aesthetic process and to life itself" (120). As Bergson would argue, the past remains in the present and we must reconcile that past in order to survive, literally. We have seen this concept emerge with the works of Eliot and Joyce, and Faulkner, Morrison, and Cunningham will emphasize the importance of the past within the present as well. We must allow the past to function in the present and help us better understand the present sensations and emotions. Septimus, of course, does not survive. Because he cannot reconcile with the past, he cannot survive, which reveals Woolf's message that one must achieve a balance when allowing the internal to survive within the external world.

The social pressures for both Clarissa and Septimus individually cause the external chaos to become cruel and fatal during the novel. Clarissa finds a way to balance the two, whereas Septimus, of course, does not. Clarissa must prepare for her party and Septimus must battle his doctors, especially the oppressive Sir William Bradshaw, who, in turn, also causes social pressures for Clarissa at her party by speaking of Septimus' suicide. Both Clarissa and Septimus grapple with the social pressures of this day in June as well as the pressures of a past filled with turmoil, chaos, and pain.

During the day, as Mrs. Dalloway prepares for her party, she expresses a heavy sense of pressure to maintain social expectations. She begins her day, of course, by venturing through London to buy flowers for her party, and as she turns to walk back toward Bond Street, she thinks of "how much she wanted it – that people should look pleased as she came in" (*Mrs. Dalloway* 10). The pressure that has concerned the "perfect hostess" for years causes her to

remember what Peter said to her years ago, that “she would marry a Prime Minister and stand at the top of a stair case [. . .] (she had cried over it in her bedroom)” (*MD* 7). The pressure that weighs on her causes her to feel a sense of insecurity and leads her to self-denigration. At the party that evening she degrades her hosting talent: “She was not enjoying it. It was too much like being – just anybody, standing there; anybody could do it” (*MD* 171). She further degrades herself by consistently comparing herself to the admirable socialite Lady Bexborough. While Lady Bexborough is “very dignified, very sincere,” Mrs. Dalloway believes herself to be “nothing – nothing at all” (*MD* 10-11).

The anxiety associated with social pressures for Mrs. Dalloway reveals itself clearly during the conflict over lunch that day. While Lady Bruton, “whose lunch parties were said to be extraordinarily amusing” (*MD* 30), invites Richard Dalloway to lunch, she does not invite Mrs. Dalloway. Once again the pressure to maintain social appearances envelops her. Louise Poresky writes of the pressures associated with minor characters in the novel, “With Millicent, Clarissa faces another object of her own projections, which possesses the same powers over her as Hugh Whitbread and Doris Kilman: Millicent appears to Clarissa as hard and insensitive, and also makes her feel inadequate” (109). Mrs. Dalloway, full of melancholy, shares a moment with Lucy, “rock[s],” “shiver[s],” and “go[es] slowly upstairs, [. . .] feeling herself suddenly shriveled, aged, breastless, the grinding, blowing, flowering of the day, out of doors, out of the window, out of her body and brain which now failed” (*MD* 30-1). The pressure overwhelms her. Throughout the novel, Woolf shares the pressures that Mrs. Dalloway’s social self experiences through her nervous thoughts and her self-degradation.

The anxiety, however, is not the only emotion connected to the social self of Mrs. Dalloway. She also gains a tremendous sense of pride in “her gift” (*MD* 122) to London society,

and the pride that she takes in her social self further illustrates Woolf's assertion that the fulfilled self must consist of a merging of the external and the internal. The idea that humans may be able to communicate with one another in a way that is productive and fulfilling provides hope for Clarissa. Human beings must function in the world together: "Woolf offers us a more generous view of the human dance, of the ways in which others are present within us; hence, the crucial happening in *Mrs. Dalloway* is Clarissa's grand party, which she calls her "offering," as if to show that bringing isolated human beings together were the most essential (and over-looked) requirement of our species" (Weinstein 195). The famous opening sentence of the novel reveals Clarissa's pride in her gift of bringing people together successfully: "Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself" (3). Although she says she will buy them because Lucy has too much to do that morning, Mrs. Dalloway revels in her journey through London on that beautiful day in June while she chooses the flowers herself because "she did think it mattered, her party" (*MD* 168). Mrs. Dalloway needs this social self because her success makes her feel important, because she believes that "her only gift was knowing people almost by instinct" (9), and because that talent or art affords her pride and security. She sees this social side of her self as one that she sincerely hopes will make a difference among people. She thanks her servants time and time again "for helping her to be like this, to be what she wanted, gentle, generous-hearted" (*MD* 39). And although Peter Walsh believes that "she trusts her charm too much [and] overdoes it" (*MD* 56), she shouts to him in her frail, thin voice, "Remember my party to-night!" (*MD* 48), full of hope for its success.

However, relying solely on the social side of the self, the "Mrs. Dalloway" part of her being, Clarissa experiences an undeniable sense of emptiness. Clarissa, fearing the social self as her only self, realizes the false nature of society. As she thinks about the party early in the novel,

Clarissa fears, “They would come; they would stand; they would talk in the mincing tones which she could imitate, ladies and gentlemen” (38). Using the word “imitate,” Woolf reveals Clarissa’s internal opinion of the social scene. Although Clarissa hopes to be genuine, she knows she must imitate the ladies and gentlemen in order to communicate properly, according to the rules of upper-class English society. Clarissa also realizes that her social self is one of conformity and convention and that “her voice, being the voice of the hostess, is reluctant to inflict its individuality” (*MD* 49). Then finally, despite the day’s preparation and the pride she feels in the social side of her self, the party provides her with a feeling of emptiness. Although she knows she has experienced success, Clarissa is not fulfilled: “Walking down the room with [the Prime Minister], with Sally there and Peter there and Richard very pleased, with all those people rather inclined, perhaps to envy, she had felt that intoxication of the moment [. . .] but after all it was what other people felt, that; for, though she loved it and felt it tingle and sting, still these semblances, these triumphs, had a hollowness” (174). Therefore, the social side of the dichotomy (Mrs. Dalloway), the pressure and the pride, finally leave Clarissa hollow and empty, searching for something more, something fulfilling, something leading her to a sense of totality.

Septimus Smith, as Clarissa’s alter-ego, also possesses a social self that is separate from his inner self; however, because of Septimus’ intense situation, the pressures he experiences from society are overwhelming for him, sending him out of the social realm and solely into his inner realm. Woolf positions Septimus as connected to Clarissa, but different. Septimus’s inability to merge the two selves shows Woolf’s belief in that symbiosis. Because he represents what Woolf fears the most, Septimus must die, and he must lack the ability to merge the two sides of the self. The external world provides too much pressure for the fragile mind of Septimus: “For Septimus, as indeed for a neurasthenic like Virginia Woolf herself, Sir William’s

is the voice of thanatos, the voice of the world, unrelenting in its authority, cold and matter-of-fact, dogmatic in conviction, the last word in disenchantment” (Panichas 240). Paralleling the pressure Mrs. Dalloway feels from London society, Septimus, the war veteran and poet, experiences the same pressure, but on a level of increased intensity. The social pressures Septimus experiences throughout the day of the novel contribute to Mrs. Dalloway’s social pressures because Smith is “a portent resonant with twenties’ society as a whole” (Brown 46). For Septimus, the external world or the social world “wavered and quivered and threatened to burst into flames” (*MD* 15). The metaphor of this blast, of Septimus’ world bursting into flames, directly relates to the war and his experiences there:

Smith, who is represented in terms of the poet-combatant, expresses “the horror” of losing firm self-definition. [. . .] The shock of battle, and in particular the death of his friend Evans, sets him “jabbering among the trees” [and] Smith’s reality is rendered as typically fragmentary and frequently on the brink of terror. (Brown 105)

Throughout the novel, Septimus anxiously imagines seeing his dead friend Evans: “There was his hand; there the dead. White things were assembling behind the railings opposite. But he dared not look. Evans was behind the railings!” (*MD* 25) Although Septimus’s external pressure outweighs that of Clarissa’s, the anxiety he feels represents her feelings of overwhelming dread. Woolf allows readers to see this social pressure Mrs. Dalloway experiences, not only through her own interior monologues, but also through her alter-ego, Septimus, who possesses a profoundly exaggerated consciousness.

Septimus, unlike Mrs. Dalloway, can find no advantages to the external, social world or his social self. His disillusionment and pressure from external forces cause him to turn away



from Dr. Holmes, Dr. Bradshaw, the people in Regents Park, and even his wife Rezia. For Septimus, Sir William Bradshaw “is the epitome of a world in which Septimus can find no meaning and in which he has become its helpless victim” (Panichas 241). He ignores those around him in the park while talking aloud and embarrassing his wife; he fears that “Holmes and Bradshaw [are] on to him!” (147); and finally, he even disregards Rezia because “she was always interrupting” (25). Like Clarissa, Septimus feels an emptiness from the social world, so he decides to ignore those who represent and cause the hollow feelings: “Suffering for ever, the scapegoat, the eternal sufferer, but [Septimus] did not want it, he moaned, putting from him with a wave of his hand that eternal suffering, that eternal loneliness” (*MD* 25). Septimus no longer wants or needs the “eternal loneliness” that society has to offer, the same loneliness Clarissa receives from society.

Through her presentation of the external chaos in *Mrs. Dalloway*, especially as seen through the characters of Clarissa and Septimus, Woolf fights for both sides of the self. The external must be present in order to avoid complete madness and potential suicide, but the internal cannot be ignored. The way in which Clarissa finally achieves that symbiosis is through what Woolf calls “moments of being,” and what Bergson, of course, calls moments of *durée réelle*. Through these timeless moments, Woolf shows that the human self can evolve into a complete self.

### **Resolution: Moments of Symbiosis**

For Woolf, finding and expressing that complete self becomes the goal and the resolution for *Mrs. Dalloway*. Clarissa must not only survive, she must also reach a point of symbiosis; the external and the internal must coincide in moments of the present in order to provide hope for

survival and fulfillment in the future. For the ultimate resolution and the evolution of the self to the most fulfilled moments, Woolf must be able to find and express the internal, balance the internal with the external, and allow the entire self to live. Although Bergson spends a good deal of time arguing that intuition reigns over intellect, “intuition is not enough for Woolf; it must be counterbalanced by intellect; and this counterbalancing, or indeed oscillation, finds expression specifically in the practices of reading, writing, ‘putting it into words’” (Randall 358). Woolf shows that “the choices novelists make should evolve from a shift of focus so that ‘life’ is conveyed not only in its external aspect, but as it is experienced” (Dick 50). In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf positions the conflicts between the external and the internal but finally resolves those conflicts through moments of being, those she describes as “instances of exceptional moments” that “come to the surface unexpectedly” (“A Sketch” 71). I argue that during these moments the external and the internal mingle and help one another evolve into a complete self, one that can identify and express the inner most thoughts and feelings while still surviving in a world of external forces.

The dichotomy of the self exists for both Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith, as both characters experience a division between the social self and the inner self, the external and the internal. The inner self represents internal thoughts, a self that is primarily inside of one’s own mind, full of genuine truths and sincerity. Clarissa, although fully aware of her inner self, has repressed the desires and needs that accompany the inner self over the years leading up to this day of her life. She has especially repressed her need to communicate her inner self and to be genuinely understood by others in exquisite moments; finally, Clarissa reaches a point during her day when she experiences some regret over repressing her inner needs. Brown writes, “Although she aspires to be a successful hostess, and her day is full of social encounters culminating in her

party, it is in her solitary self-life that we meet her most directly and here that she is most characteristically fragmentary, fluid and contradictory” (101).

Despite her fear, Clarissa is capable of genuine love and of expressing this self. Clarissa remembers her moment with Sally: “Then came the most exquisite moment of her whole life passing a stone urn with flowers in it. Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips. The whole world might have turned upside down!” (*MD* 35). With Sally she is able to express this self, and with Peter as well, although she does not need to since “they had always had this queer power of communicating without words . . . he always saw through Clarissa” (*MD* 60). Clarissa misses being understood as she thinks about Peter: “He’s enchanting! Perfectly enchanting! Now I remember how impossible it was to ever make up my mind – and why did I make up my mind – not to marry him?” (*MD* 41). Clarissa, at times, regrets this repression and her decision to live her life as Mrs. Dalloway and as “the perfect hostess.” Throughout the novel she expresses the need to listen and to express her inner-most thoughts and emotions. She wants to evolve, as Bergson would encourage: “It is the progress of a thought which is changing in the degree and measure that is taking form. It is a vital process, something like the ripening of an idea” (*CE* 370). Clarissa progresses throughout the entire novel (and before the novel begins) toward a self that has ripened and will move forward with both the external and the internal functioning productively.

Because of the human need to cling to what is familiar and simple, Clarissa had decided before the novel begins that her fears of expressing this inner self outweigh her desire to be understood, because if there were too much expression or too much understanding, “[she] would have been destroyed” (*MD* 8). For Clarissa “it was intolerable” that “with Peter everything had to be shared; everything gone into” (*MD* 8). Because of this fear of intimacy, Clarissa marries

Richard, “for in marriage a little licence, a little independence there must be [. . .] which Richard gave her, and she him” (*MD* 8). Louise Poresky agrees, “This fear leads her to choose Richard for a husband, to whom she can relate from an emotional distance and thus protect herself against any extremes in passion” (104). According to Peter, there was always something “cold,” “timid,” and “conventional” about Clarissa that would not allow a breakdown between the inner self and the social self (*MD* 49). Sally thinks, “They had been friends, not acquaintances, friends, and she still saw Clarissa all in white going about the house with her hands full of flowers” (*MD* 188). Clarissa, fearing intimacy, clings to the social world and her image within that social world, even maintaining an image with Peter and Sally. Woolf argues that although existing in the external may be safer, it is not fulfilling.

Furthermore, Woolf shows that turning completely to the internal voice will not allow for complete fulfillment either. Unlike Joyce, Woolf argues that the external acts as an important part of the complete self. She expresses the danger in turning completely toward the internal with Septimus. When Septimus turns completely toward his inner self, his move results in madness and death. Septimus represents the worst of Clarissa’s fears – committing to the inner self and expressing the inner self to a point in which the inner self is no longer private and therefore kills itself. The balance for Septimus is past recovery, and Clarissa fears that if she commits to expressing her inner self and fulfilling its needs, she will go mad or die. Woolf illustrates Septimus’s madness in the novel, caused by an imbalance between the social and the inner selves, through his exceptional ability to communicate with himself and his inability to communicate with others. When the airplane creates letters over London, the crowd tries desperately to make meaning of the language, which is futile for them as the plane leaves and no intelligible message appears. However, Septimus, looking up thinks, “They are signalling to me.

Not indeed in actual words: that is he could not read the language yet; but it was plain enough, this beauty, this exquisite beauty, and tears filled his eyes as he looked at the smoke words languishing and melting in the sky . . . with beauty, more beauty! Tears ran down his cheeks” (*MD* 22). Malamud connects Septimus’s communication to his struggle with the social world: “Septimus Smith needs a new way to orient himself within the modern age – a new medium of communication and expression – because he has been literally shell-shocked (in the Great War) by the world of the past. He has no terms, no language, for understanding what has happened to him or to the world around him” (24). Septimus must reject his social pressures and turn to depend upon his inner self, symbolized by his maddening inability to communicate productively. Unlike the rest of the characters, including Clarissa, Septimus finds meaning in the illegible airplane message, and he is comforted by this meaning.

Bergson consistently reminds us of the limitations of language: “The word with well-defined outlines, the rough and ready word, which stores up the stable, common, and consequently impersonal element in the impressions of mankind, overwhelms or at least covers over the delicate and fugitive impressions of our individual consciousness” (“The Idea” 74). Language can be dangerous, according to Bergson, and Woolf would show her support of this idea with her novel. Bergson reminds us, “Not only does language make us believe in the unchangeableness of our sensations, but it will sometimes deceive us as to the nature of the sensation felt” (*TFW* 131). Woolf creates a language barrier for both Clarissa and Septimus. They each find external communication extremely difficult and limiting.

True communication in the novel may represent the merging of the two selves. Successful, productive communication or communication without words represents a successful merging, which rarely happens in the novel, except possibly between Sally and Clarissa during

their kiss and again at the party, and in moments shared nonverbally between Peter and Clarissa.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, a void of expression caused by unproductive communication may represent a fear or inability to merge the two selves; subsequently, a communication that is sporadic and unintelligible (like Septimus's) may represent the madness that accompanies a heavy dose of the inner self. For example, no one in the audience can read the message from the plane, nor can anyone in the crowd determine which famous Londoner is in the motor car, both of which show a lack of communication and an inability to connect. This inability to connect through communication rings true for Clarissa many times throughout the novel as she and Richard are unable to say, "I love you," and she was unable to tell Peter the truth when she ended their relationship by the fountain years earlier. Septimus, however, represents this madness perfectly as he speaks aloud, shouts out names, and fearfully cries without warning. Furthermore, Woolf differentiates his stream of consciousness from the rest of the characters as Septimus speaks aloud and others reveal their thoughts only through internal monologues. Communication, lack of communication, communicating without words, and nonproductive communication represent the various selves, the hope of merging those selves, and the inability to do so throughout most of the novel.

Because he has rejected the social world and relies only on his inner world for meaning, Septimus moves into a realm of insanity before the novel begins; this is a concept that would frighten Clarissa. Septimus sees this movement as a progression towards freedom and individuality: "The rope was cut; he mounted; he was free, as it was decreed that he, Septimus, the lord of men, should be free; alone (since his wife had thrown away her wedding ring; since

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<sup>3</sup> At the party, for example, Clarissa begins to feel nervous about the success of the party when she looks at Peter who is "criticizing her" from across the room, communicating with her only through their eyes (167).

she had left him), he, Septimus, was alone” (*MD* 67). Poresky also connects Clarissa and Septimus through their conflicting selves:

Septimus struggles against the insensitive world, represented by war and by his doctors, while Clarissa fights against the callousness she projects onto others and with which she defensively surrounds herself. The visions that both [Clarissa and Septimus] have, furthermore, provide that they break through to true feeling.

These visions constitute the tie between Clarissa and Septimus. (109)

Therefore, Woolf sets up a dichotomy through Clarissa and Septimus, who experience a social self and an inner self during the novel’s time frame. Each self provides some solace and some conflict for Clarissa, while Septimus has moved away from his social self and toward his inner self and madness.

Through moments of being, Woolf’s characters are able to arrest the movement of time and combine the external world with the internal world. In these moments, the past and the present merge, and the self merges to become a whole. The soul lives. In contrast to the “still point of the turning world” for Eliot and the “epiphany” for Joyce, Woolf’s moments of being must include the external. They are a way in which to merge the two sides of the self rather than focusing primarily on internal expression. The external remains, as the past remains, albeit the internal acts as the predominant force for the instant of enlightenment. Gillies writes of Woolf’s moments of being: “These brief moments appear to arrest the flow of time, but they also bring about a conflation of times as each individual moment is related to previous moments that are resurrected almost instantaneously” (109). These instances for Woolf are “exceptional moments,” ones that contrast with the “moments of non-being,” those that are “embedded with many more moments of non-being” (“A Sketch” 70). These instances connect directly with

Bergson's theory of duration, and they somehow resolve the conflicts mentioned above – those conflicts that prohibit duration. Gillies agrees that these “moments of being are instances of pure duration, moments during which past and present time not only literally coexist, but during which one is aware of their coexistence,” and that “[e]ach is a brief, sharp representation of a clear, extraordinary experience” (109). In these limited, brief, ephemeral moments, hope for the fundamental self lives.

In order for Clarissa to find this fundamental self in *Mrs. Dalloway*, she must find a way to merge the external and the internal despite the conflicts, the chaos, and the moments of non-being that prohibit her. As she progresses through her day and invites the reader along on her private journey, she shows extreme regret over her decision to bury her private self, as mentioned above, thus she experiments with the idea of combining these selves for a sense of totality. Some of her happiest moments in the novel occur when she considers merging the social and the inner self. Clarissa admits her regret as she remembers that she once believed “it was unsatisfactory [. . .] how little one knew people” (152), and then she presently thinks, “If I had married [Peter], this gaiety would have been mine all day!” (47). The novel culminates in the party, and a culmination can also be seen between Clarissa's two selves. One critic argues, “The connection between party and self remains crucial, for in Woolf one's authentic being can only be discovered in a social context; authenticity emerges only when the accumulated experiences of solitude are engaged by the vibrant life of the community” (Ames 83). Woolf's nephew and biographer Quentin Bell also agrees that Woolf tries to merge the two selves in the novel:

Living in and for society such a person would no doubt be at some points limited but the limitations would be so nearly transcended that, to a shy, intelligent girl,



they would hardly be apparent; such a person might act as an evangelist of good society and be able, almost to make one believe that it is possible to be at once worldly and unworldly. Virginia attempted to draw such a woman when she wrote *The Voyage Out*; she made a deeper, a more extensive examination in *Mrs. Dalloway*" (80).

At the party Clarissa's social self is able to merge with her inner self in two prominent moments, the moment when Sally enters and the moment in which she returns to the party.

When Sally enters the party, Clarissa and Mrs. Dalloway become one: "They kissed each other, first this cheek and then that, by the drawing-room door, and Clarissa turned, with Sally's hand in hers, and saw her rooms full, heard the roar of voices, saw the candlesticks, the blowing curtains, and the roses which Richard had given her" (*MD* 171). The various elements of this sentence represent the two selves combining. First, of course, Sally, one who knows Clarissa intimately and who shares Clarissa's "happiest moment" of the past, shares a kiss with Clarissa, and then they keep their hands entwined. Another symbol from her inner self is the blowing curtains, representing the common symbol in modernist literature of the open window negating the stuffy conventionality of the Victorian era; the modernists felt the need to open windows. However, many elements in this sentence represent the social world, such as the rooms full of people, the voices ringing through the house, the decorative candlesticks, and the roses Richard gave her when he could not tell her he loved her. This combination provides a moment of totality for Clarissa. She is one self here, and she is happy.

The most important moment of duration in the novel occurs when Clarissa returns to the party at the end of the novel, and once again her two selves combine to create a sense of totality. Poresky writes, "Clarissa's entire story, for that matter, builds toward her party, held at the end

of the novel's single day, where she experiences a vision of wholeness that psychologically transforms her" (99). Gillies connects these moment with Bergson's theory of duration: "Clarissa's distant past combines her present and her possible future in one single, prolonged moment of insight into herself. In effect, the novel's close becomes its supreme moment of being, by virtue of its conflation of Clarissa's life into one time-filled moment" (116). The novel ends with a moment of hope for Clarissa and her two selves. Before reentering the party she thinks:

The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him; with the clock striking the hour, one, two, three, she did not pity him, with all this going on. There! the old lady had put out her light! the whole house was dark now with this going on, she repeated, and the words came to her, Fear no more the heat of the sun.<sup>4</sup> She must go back to them. But what an extraordinary night! She felt somehow very like him – the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it all away. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun. But she must go back. She must assemble. She must find Sally and Peter. And she came in from the little room. (*MD* 186)

Again, during this moment, Clarissa's two selves are merged for a sense of totality.

As she watches the lady in the house across the street, the external and the internal meld together. Representative of the world outside of Clarissa's window, the lady connects Clarissa and her party to that world, and Big Ben appears again as a symbol of the time that society keeps – the external, official, cold time of London. Simultaneously, she allows portions of her inner

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<sup>4</sup> This quote is from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. Clarissa often tells herself to "Fear no more the heat of the sun" as a defense mechanism against the pressures of the social world.

world to combine with the social world. She tells herself to “fear no more the heat of the sun” (or the social world) as she does throughout the novel, and then remembers that it is an “extraordinary night.” As the clock strikes, the “leaden circles,” representing the darkness of the external world, dissolve, which causes her to “feel the beauty,” and finally, remembering that she must find Peter and Sally, the two who know her inner world the best, she gains the strength to move toward the crowd. Once again, Clarissa and Mrs. Dalloway have merged, and she is happy. Peter recognizes her coalescence as she reenters, and he thinks, “It is Clarissa [. . .] For there she was” (194). Poresky writes, “Clarissa wants people to recognize her distinct identity, and thus to relate to her as a totality unto herself. At the end of the novel, once she returns to the party guests after her transformative vision, Clarissa appears purely and fully as herself” (105). Because of Clarissa’s regret over losing part of her inner self over the years, as she misses Peter and Sally and expresses her genuine love for both of them, a convergence of the two selves seems preferable, not only for Clarissa, but for her readers.

Septimus Smith only experiences one moment in which his two selves merge during the course of the day, but this moment is temporary, representing the lack of balance he has maintained between the two selves. A merging of the two selves is impossible for him at this point. Rezia is making a hat for Mrs. Peters when Septimus begins to help and they were once again “poking fun privately like married people” (*MD* 143). Septimus realizes, “It was wonderful. Never had he done anything which made him feel so proud. It was so real, it was so substantial, Mrs. Peters’ hat . . . He had become himself then, he had laughed then. They had been alone together” (*MD* 144). Then he remembers, “But this hat now. And then (it was getting late) Sir William Bradshaw [. . .] So he was in their power! Holmes and Bradshaw were on him!” (*MD* 146-7). Septimus’s temporary merging of the two selves must be interrupted by

thoughts of Evans, Bradshaw, and Holmes, until finally Septimus loses his battle to balance the selves and throws himself out the window to his death. Through Clarissa, whose stream of consciousness seems full of regret and of sorrow for the sacrifices she has made over the years, Woolf seems to suggest that a merging of those two selves would be preferable. Septimus also supports this possibility because his fragmentation suggests that a merging, or at least a lack of fragmentation, is one way to be emotionally healthy and to survive the pressures caused by society. However, maybe an actual convergence of the two selves is not possible, because of the dichotomy and because the two selves need their separate place within the consciousness.

As represented by Septimus' death, the difficulty of merging the two selves creates problems for Clarissa. She desperately fears death, contemplates death, and rejects a communion between her two selves. This continued fragmentation for Clarissa is represented by her inability to communicate effectively whenever a merging of the two selves is upon her. Because of Clarissa's fear of losing her inner self, she must continue to maintain the dichotomy. The fear begins in her youth when she decides not to marry Peter but cannot communicate her thoughts and feelings. Although Peter continues to plead with her to "tell [him] the truth," Clarissa replies, "It is no use. It is no use. This is the end" (*MD* 64). She cannot speak the truth, and the relationship ends without closure and with twenty-five years of questions, regret, and jealousy, revealed many times throughout the novel through additional examples of failed communication.<sup>5</sup> In the present, a moment arrives in which Peter might save Clarissa's inner self from destruction, as she wants to say, "Take me with you," but then "as if the five acts of a play that had been very exciting and moving were now over and she had lived a lifetime in them

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<sup>5</sup> Clarissa looks at Peter and seems to want to tell him something, but does not, when he is visiting her house the morning of the party (43). She internally expresses jealousy over his marriage to the woman from India (8) and his pending love ("He was in love! Not with her. With some younger woman, of course") during the course of the day (45).

and had run away, had lived with Peter, and it was now over” (*MD* 47). The impenetrability of her inner self defeats her desire to express her feelings.

Woolf juxtaposes the mental anguish of Septimus and the mental thoughtfulness, verging on anguish, of Clarissa in order to communicate her goal. Septimus’s own division of the self, his madness, and his suicide allow Clarissa to continue her life as two selves. He lets go of the social self and the inner self by committing suicide and, thus, preserves for Clarissa her inner self. Clarissa must then protect her inner self from society because revealing this part of her self will lead to madness or death; the balance must be maintained. Brown argues, “It is the ability to harmonize, to draw together, to accept heterogeneity positively, which prevents Clarissa from disintegrating and succumbing to the terror of nothingness” (102). Rather than Clarissa experiencing a merging of the two selves, as the novel may suggest, the merging is in reality a harmony – two selves continuing in their own separate worlds, working in conjunction, but remaining separate. Because Septimus lets go of both selves, Clarissa is able to keep her balance between the two without giving up her inner world entirely.

A merging of the selves may be impossible simply because Clarissa fears death. She reveals an opinion regarding the two selves in her own thoughts:

It ended in a transcendental theory which, with her horror of death, allowed her to believe, or say that she believed (for all her skepticism), 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 covered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places after death . . . perhaps – perhaps. (*MD* 153)

In this passage she describes the social self as “apparitions,” or “the part of us [externally] which appears” only “momentar[ily].” The social self is necessary, but ephemeral, and will cease to exist with the death of our bodies; however, the inner self or “the unseen part of us,” Clarissa feels “might survive.” Naremore responds, “The self, in this view, is not simply an ego bound by space and time, but the total context of the physical world that the self creates and/or embraces in its movement through life, a context that helps define the self and remains after the individual ‘appearance’ has gone (103). Although that reading is contextually correct, Naremore ignores the inferential meaning. The quote becomes ambiguous as Clarissa says, “her horror of death allowed her to believe, *or to say that she believed* [ . . . ]” (my italics) and “perhaps – perhaps,” because the quote implies that Clarissa may not believe that the inner self might survive, but rather, that Clarissa forces herself to believe the inner self could survive so that she is less fearful of death. Most likely, Clarissa fears death more than she believes in the survival of the inner self.

Because of Clarissa’s lack of faith in the survival of her inner self, she needs some sort of proof that she can survive. Septimus preserves Clarissa’s inner self by committing suicide. He escapes the external world that encompasses him, and his death makes her realize that she can live. She must live with the purpose of exploring and revealing her internal self. If she candidly reveals her inner self, she risks losing that private world and inner self that she needs, so she must also embrace the social self to keep them balanced. Clarissa needs Septimus; he “represents aspects of Clarissa’s character that she denies but that are necessary for her to recognize if she is to achieve self-knowledge” (Gillies 115). The connection between Septimus and Clarissa becomes clear when upon hearing of his suicide from the Bradshaws, she thinks of his death in the small room during the party:

She had once thrown a shilling into the Serpentine, never anything more. But he had flung it away. They went on living (she would have to go back; the rooms were still crowded; people kept on coming). They (all day she had been thinking of Bourton, of Peter, of Sally), they would grow old. A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was 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. (184)

She remembers in the first sentence of this extract that she has considered suicide, symbolized by her “once throw[ing] a shilling into the Serpentine, nothing more,” but now Septimus has “flung it [the contemplation of suicide] away.” The first “they” of “[t]hey went on living” refers to those who represent and live in her social world because in this sentence she remembers the people of her party and that her social self must return to act as their “perfect hostess.” Then, the second “they” of “[t]hey would grow old” represents those who know her best, Peter and Sally, those who have entered her inner world, but she has rejected them. In this moment of enlightenment, Clarissa considers both those who represent her social self and those who represent her inner self, while Woolf juxtaposes the two selves and two worlds through parallel structure, creating a balance between the two selves rather than a conversion, a merging, or a defeat of one self.

Following the two parallel sentences discussing the future of “they,” Clarissa thinks, “A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life,” and this “thing” is her private, inner self. With the death of Septimus, she can continue to

live this inner self, but she will do so privately. A commitment to the inner self could lead to madness, or “were Mrs. Dalloway to experience such intense emotions for long she would have to die just as Septimus does, or at least sacrifice her social identity” (Naremore 110). The two selves do not have to merge for her sense of totality; she does not need to marry Peter to be happy; she can go forward with the dichotomy and live a full life within her own mind. “This he had preserved.” Septimus defies the social world, as she notes that “death was defiance.” He rejects the social world, the war, Evans, Rezia, Bradshaw, and Holmes and commits to his inner self. In his last words he expresses his realization that he must give up his inner self as well, as he shouts to Bradshaw and Rezia, “I’ll give it to you!” (149). Since Septimus cannot continue to keep his worlds balanced, he must die. He has already sacrificed his outer world and retreated into his inner world, symbolized by his surrendering of productive communication with the outer world and his attempt to live only as his inner self. The inner self alone is madness, and Clarissa is aware of this truth for herself. When Clarissa notes that “death is an attempt to communicate,” she speaks of Septimus. He is finally communicating his innermost feelings with those in the social world, and Rezia understands. Because “people feel the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them,” those people cannot expect a convergence of the selves.

Septimus knows the selves will not converge and helps Clarissa achieve this epiphany as well. Deborah Guth agrees, “Although she does go back to her party, her identification with the old woman opposite closing the blinds denies the symbolism of return [. . .] while she does experience a sense of renewal, this feeling is not connected to the world she returns to, nor does it imply acceptance of it; on the contrary, her joy derives from her visionary alienation from it” (3). As modernist characters try to merge the two selves and “closeness” is upon them, they immediately “dr[a]w apart” while the “rapture fade[s] and “one is alone.” One is alone with his



or her inner self, and that is the “embrace in death.” The enlightenment Clarissa experiences in this moment is freeing; she does not need to merge her two selves because that undertaking is impossible. Although Naremore argues that “in dying Septimus of course ‘lives on’ through his alter-ego, Clarissa” (107), Septimus may not actually ‘live on,’ but rather he may teach Clarissa a lesson by which he could not live. He needed to reject the social self completely because of the pressures accompanying that life; therefore, he teaches her that she must hold on to some semblance and balance in order to survive. Clarissa becomes enlightened because she realizes that she must keep the two selves separate, and Septimus, by sacrificing his inner self to the “embrace” of death, allows Clarissa to live on and “embrace” life.

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Woolf writes of her composition of *Mrs. Dalloway* in her diary: “I’m working at *The Hours*, and think it is a very interesting attempt; I may have found my mine this time I think. I may get all my gold out” (292). With this novel, she found her voice to communicate the internal – her gold. Despite all of the controversy surrounding Woolf’s relationship to the theories of Bergson and the influence of his theories on her writing, *Mrs. Dalloway* exposes the true moments of duration Woolf found to be so important for the survival and the fulfillment of an individual. In her connections between Woolf and Bergson, Mary Ann Gillies asserts that Woolf writes in order “to insist that real living occurred in extraordinary moments of being in which time was conflated and all moments existed simultaneously. Such agreement in principle on these fundamental issues surely forges a strong intellectual link between [Woolf and Bergson]” (Gillies 131). The moments, according to Bergson, are moments of pure quality:

Considered in themselves, the deep-seated conscious states have no relation to quantity, they are pure quality; they intermingle in such a way that we cannot tell whether they are one or several, nor even examine them from this point of view without at once altering their nature. The duration which they thus create is a duration whose moments do not constitute a numerical multiplicity: to characterize these moments by saying that they encroach on one another would still be to distinguish them. (*TFW* 137)

These moments, for Woolf and Bergson, act as part of the evolution for the individual. It may be impossible to live entirely in duration. The moments are brief and temporary, but, in their timelessness, they are the only way to find the fundamental self. They may not provide a substantive answer to the chaos, but they allow a hope for the evolution of the individual to continue.

The moment of being Clarissa experiences while she is alone at her party becomes the most important durational moment for Woolf's character. This epiphanic moment of duration at the end of the novel inspires a hopeful reading. Clarissa survives her day and Virginia Woolf saw this novel as a triumph for Clarissa. She does not abandon her inner self, nor does she abandon her social self. The two sides of the self will continue to exist separately with the hope that there are moments of duration – moment of being – that will allow the two to merge for an extraordinary experience of life. If the party can come to symbolize communication, there is also a sense of success; however, the convergence is only temporary: “the party comes to an end; the warmth fades; people return to their normal selves” (Miller 184). Rather than the hopefulness coming from a potential merging of people and of selves, the hopefulness comes from Clarissa's living. Since Woolf writes that “the idea is that the caves shall connect” (*A*

*Writer's Diary* 59), she succeeds in that Clarissa and Septimus do connect, while Clarissa comes away in the end with a new, hopeful outlook on life as her external and internal selves connect. That "daylight at the present moment" (*AWD* 59) represents Clarissa's ability to live her life, despite her continued fragmentation. Clarissa reveals:

They thought, or Peter at any rate thought, that she enjoyed imposing herself; liked to have famous people about her; great names; was simply a snob in short. Well, Peter might think so. Richard merely thought it foolish of her to like excitement when she knew it was bad for her heart. It was childish, he thought. And both were quite wrong. What she liked was simply life. (121)

Abandoning her inner self, as she has done for all of these years, is not life. Abandoning her social self, as she considers on this day in June, is not life. Each self creates an integral part of Clarissa's whole being, each remains separate, and each belongs to her, uniquely and individually, and no one, not Peter, not Sally, not Richard, no one can understand. To lose one or the other is too risky to the self, to the mind, and to life itself. Celebrating that dichotomy defines life, and "what she liked was simply life."

### **Darkness before the Duration in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury***

When considering Bergson's influence on the modernist writers, we must also consider the influence he had in America. Bergson's theories can illuminate the way in which American authors manipulate time and why they may do so. Paul Douglass writes extensively on Bergson and his influence on American literature. In *Bergson, Eliot, and American Literature*, Douglass primarily focuses on two American authors, Eliot and Faulkner. He writes of the importance of Bergson: "Bergson, whose career began with the attempt to defend the possibility of freedom and the reality of intuition, provides the tags – the aesthetic and poetic. To understand American literature of the period, one must understand him and the non-historical mode of knowing he balanced against 'clock-time.'" (175). Understanding Bergson can elucidate the writing of American authors as well as European authors because they were all taking some of the same risks with their writing. Like Eliot, Joyce, and Woolf, Faulkner was redefining the ways in which we understand the consciousness.

Most of the criticism that applies Bergson to modern literature focuses specifically on either the work of the Europeans or the work of the Americans. As I began this process, I knew I wanted to connect European authors to American ones and the Modern to the Postmodern. The problems associated with those connections are vast. One problem is the debate over Eliot. Paul Douglass includes him in his study of Bergson and American Literature. Mary Ann Gillies also includes Eliot in her study of Bergson and British Modernism. Eliot fits in both sections. I include him as a British writer because Eliot identified himself as a British writer, became a British citizen, lived most of his life in England, and grappled with chaos that happened on that side of the ocean. However, he was born in America, and he does help bridge the gap between the two continents. When expanding the examination of the Americans, Faulkner, wholly

American and mostly Southern, seems a logical place to turn because many argue that “*The Sound and the Fury* is the quintessential American high modernist text” (Polk, “Introduction” 1). If there is such a thing as “high modernism” in America, Faulkner was most certainly in the lead.

Although the debate continues regarding Bergson’s influence on Faulkner, most critics agree that Bergson and Faulkner were connected in one way or another. Faulkner read Bergson and most likely found his readings helpful and influential. However, some critics still assert that, because there were no Bergsonian texts in Faulkner’s extensive library, Faulkner may not have read him. Because Faulkner was so well-read, and because some evidence exists to the contrary, I find that assertion unbelievable. There are at least three documented moments in which Faulkner mentions Bergson’s works and their influence. He says in an interview with Loic Bouvard: “I was influenced by Flaubert and by Balzac, whose way of writing everything bluntly with the stump of his pen I admire very much. And by Bergson, obviously” (McHaney 87). When a young woman friend of Faulkner’s told him that she had purchased Bergson’s *Creative Evolution*, Faulkner responded “Read it. It helped me” (Blotner 511). And finally, Faulkner “agreed, he said, with ‘Bergson’s theory of the fluidity of time. There is only the present moment, in which I include both the past and the future, and that is eternity’” (Blotner 563). I believe that Bergson had some influence on Faulkner, and I hope to analyze one of Faulkner’s texts by closely reading his use of language and themes in order to show that Bergson’s theories, once again, allow the reader a deeper understanding of the obfuscatory material of modern literature. Furthermore, because Faulkner, like Eliot, Joyce, and Woolf, influences almost all later American authors, to further understand his works can only help us better understand the works of our own time, especially in America.

Faulkner published his fourth novel, *The Sound and the Fury*, in 1929. Because of some of the difficulties Faulkner had had with publishers and success, he decided to write *The Sound and the Fury* for himself, to put the ideas of publishing aside and focus on writing for himself once again. Faulkner wrote this novel with a feeling of personal, individual freedom. He closed the doors to the publishers and said, “Now I can write. Now I can just write” (Kartiganer 75). This freedom of expression emerges in the novel, and the ways in which he creates timelessness and divided characters fit very well with the theories of Bergson because “it helps to think of Faulkner’s characters and themes – of divided selves, of determinism and freedom – in Bergsonian terms” (Douglass 3). The novel’s structure, themes, and characters all contribute to the final goal for Faulkner – freedom of self-expression, or, in Bergsonian terms, freedom of expression of the internal flux.

Faulkner, however, is very different in some ways from the other authors I have discussed. He is the dark horse of the group. Eliot allows the speaker of *Four Quartets* to find hope; Joyce allows Gabriel his moment of duration at the end of “The Dead”; Clarissa will survive with a new understanding of the importance of her internal self. However, the characters in Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* do not succeed in finding these important moments of duration. In this novel, “Faulkner writes of damaged creativity. He conceives the world in profoundly Bergsonian terms. For him, there are two very different sorts of memory and two very different patterns into which they organize our lives. Those patterns determine our possibilities, for one is open, the other fatefully closed” (Douglass 143-4). The three Compson brothers narrate the first three sections of the novel, and while Faulkner brilliantly expresses the internal flux of each brother, none of them succeeds in accepting his internal consciousness as important or real. To succeed, Bergson asserts that the internal flux must be accepted,

understood, and celebrated. Each brother fails in some way. The Compsons “are part of that world on which Faulkner had ‘clapped’ the door, as if seeking to rid his verbal creation of everything that threatened to limit the freedom of what he might say” (Kartiganer 94). While the characters fail to find the freedom of the self, Faulkner achieves his freedom of the self through expression. While the other authors give their characters the awakening that accompanies the discovery of the self, Faulkner himself is the one who experiences enlightenment by the end of his novel. He shows his truth about the South, about family, and about the destruction of both. He will not conform to the retelling of the romantic South that no longer exists. The image of the South is defined by the external pressures of society, and Faulkner hopes to break away from that impersonation and show the reality behind the closed doors. In writing for himself, Faulkner was able to find the power of timelessness for himself:

Faulkner laid a groundwork for a reading of *The Sound and the Fury* as a leap toward autonomy: a shaking off of that whole world of literary history that exists prior to writing and of publishers and readers who wait to judge its outcome, that world already fixed with meaning and value, whose languages he had read and reread, and which now, having brought him to the brink of original speech, threatened to bind him to reiteration. (Kartiganer 75)

Like the other authors examined, Faulkner disrupts conventional narrative clock time in order to find this freedom of self-expression; he creates a Southern family that is imploding in order to show the destruction of the South and the pressures of that culture on the family and on the individual. He forces the characters to live in duration in order to see how they will react. None of them succeeds at finding self-fulfillment, enlightenment, or the fundamental self. The hope and resolution for Faulkner is truth. The enlightenment comes at the end of the novel, when

Faulkner narrates the final section himself, explains his truth, and leaves his reader with the harsh reality of destruction. This destruction tragically brings illumination because Faulkner has been able to reveal his truth and to find his fundamental self as a writer.

### **Structure Defies Linear Time**

Faulkner's use of language allows readers to explore the internal consciousness of his characters. When specifically examining the structure and use of language in *The Sound and the Fury*, the theories of Bergson can illuminate our understanding of his techniques and their purposes. Faulkner manipulates time structurally and through his use of stream of consciousness, while, at the same time, he uses the concept of clock-time as an important symbol of the external pressures prohibiting the Compson brothers from achieving self-fulfillment, or even survival in one case. Like Bergson and Eliot, Faulkner sees language as the means of communicating the internal, yet he realizes the limitations and frustrations associated with language. As we consider the nature of language, "Bergson can be of real help, if we are willing to admit the nature of language into the discussion, and to see that Faulkner, like Eliot, looks on final form as the goal as well as potentially the 'enemy'" (Douglass 124). In *The Sound and the Fury*, however, Faulkner seems to achieve his goal of internal expression. He delves deeply into the consciousness of each brother, Benjy, Quentin, and Jason, and then uses a third person narration in the final section in order to clarify the confusion he has created in the novel. He asserts his own voice and need for explanation in that section and therefore achieves the goal of truth – he explains the reality of the destruction happening in the 1920s in the South. Polk agrees, "Faulkner uses the mechanics of the English language – grammar, syntax, punctuation, spelling – as a direct objective correlative to the states of each of the narrators' minds" ("Trying" 43).



Through his use of section order, syntax, symbolism, and stream of consciousness, Faulkner not only questions the linear nature of time, he also defies it. He turns clock-time inside out in order to show the ways in which time can destroy the internal workings of the mind.

The language of the first three sections of the novel, the sections told by Benjy, Quentin and Jason, demonstrate Faulkner's goal: he hopes to show that time impedes the search for the fundamental, enlightened self. Faulkner purposely disrupts the order of the sections themselves and creates a lack of order within each section to show the timelessness that occurs within our minds. He gives each brother a voice and the chance to express his innermost thoughts, fears, and paranoia. Also, Faulkner allows us to "have access to their pain largely through what they *don't* say, and also through the visual forms of the language in which Faulkner has inscribed their thoughts and feelings on paper" (Polk, "Trying" 143). Faulkner uses the order of the sections and the visual images within each section to time travel, which supports Bergson's idea that "time is nothing but the ghost of space haunting the reflective consciousness" ("The Idea" 59).

The disrupted timeline of the narrative shows the importance of the past within the present, as it also questions the importance of chronological order. The present tense of the novel takes place on Easter weekend of 1928. The first section occurs on April 7, the third section on April 6, and the fourth section on April 8. Quentin Compson's section, the second section of the novel, takes place eighteen years earlier on June 2, 1910, the day of his suicide. Although the novel moves toward Easter Sunday, it does so in a convoluted way. Faulkner rearranges chronology to show that, although the goal is forward movement, the past haunts and affects the minds along the way. The plot becomes confusing because of this disrupted order. Douglass quotes Hugh Kenner's *Faulkner, Modernism, and Film* regarding the confusing plot

line and Faulkner's purpose: "[o]ne must take notes, keep track of the clock and the calendar, and yet simultaneously 'pretend that we need do none of this, need only to listen to a voice we ourselves supply'" (140). The novel must be read and comprehended as a whole; one section needs the next, much in the way that one moment encompasses many images of past and present for Bergson. Faulkner's novel itself exemplifies Bergson's theory of duration in some ways, which will be examined closely later in this chapter. The order of the sections and the lack of order of the scenes within the sections shows the intermingling of time, timeless moments, and the movement of consciousness without the constraints of clock-time.

The structural montage of duration throughout the novel continues with the disrupted order of episodes within each section. In this way, Faulkner shows the importance the past has in the present. Douglass asserts that Faulkner's style exists in a structural montage. As he quotes Conrad Aiken, he writes, "Faulkner works on the reader by a 'process of immersion.' Second, his formal aesthetic requires that the sentence, and even the novel, stay psychologically 'unfinished, still in motion, as it were, until the dropping into place of the very last syllable'" (122). In many ways for these characters, the past permeates the present and overcomes internal consciousness. Throughout each of the brother's sections, Faulkner "juxtaposes telling episodes in the Compson family history by alternating between episodes. [. . .] Through these juxtapositions, these comparisons and contrasts of scenes, Faulkner creates meanings, hierarchies of emotions and significances" (Polk, "Trying" 148). For each brother, however, Faulkner uses language to create the presence of the past in different ways. Faulkner understands that the past exists within the present, but he does not allow any of the three brothers to achieve Bergson's duration, in which the soul "lets itself live." Faulkner shows, through language, that the brothers cannot achieve duration, which is part of their problem. The characters' inability to achieve the

balance between external and internal, and important moments of enlightenment leads to an understanding of the fundamental self. However, failing to achieve duration leads to hopelessness and destruction.

Faulkner expresses the voice of each brother with language and structure. The three sections become, for the reader, a true understanding of the voices within Benjy, Quentin, and Jason. All three brothers mourn the loss of their sister Caddy, who has been banished from the family for her promiscuity. Benjy is the brother commonly called an idiot; he cannot speak. Quentin is the intellectual brother who attends Harvard for one year and commits suicide there because the destruction of Caddy and the rest of the Compson family haunts him. Jason is the brother left to run the family. He tries to control each member of the family with his conniving, manipulative behavior. Through Faulkner's creation of the internal consciousnesses of each brother, he shows their different ways of failing to achieve duration. Benjy lives in duration, but he cannot make sense of it. Quentin tries to deny the past, which Bergson and Faulkner would argue is impossible, and Jason tries to control the past, the present, and the future, which is another futile attempt according to both Faulkner and Bergson. In this section I will specifically examine the syntax, italics, symbolism, and stream of consciousness of the three sections. Later, I will examine the concept of memory and how the memory of each brother affects his inability to achieve duration, and, therefore, resolution.

The language and structure of the Benjy section demonstrates his inability to make sense of the past. Benjy's language has been analyzed and examined extensively, and many argue that it is "*Faulkner's language*" (Polk, "Trying" 144). Faulkner's syntax, use of italics, and stream of consciousness technique in the Benjy section immerse readers in Benjy's durational consciousness; however, Faulkner equally shows the ways in which Benjy must fail at achieving

pure duration. Because of his disabilities, he cannot process the moments, which Faulkner communicates with his use of language. The simple syntax Faulkner chooses in the first section allows the reader to experience Benjy's internal consciousness. Benjy remembers a moment of significance from the past when he delivers a letter to his uncle Maury's mistress revealing their adulterous affair:

*Mr Patterson was chopping in the green flowers. He stopped chopping and looked at me. Mrs Patterson came across the garden, running. When I saw her eyes I began to cry. You idiot, Mrs Patterson said, I told him never to send you alone again. Give it to me. Quick. Mr Patterson came fast with the hoe. Mrs Patterson leaned across the fence, reaching her hand. She was trying to climb the fence. Give it to me, she said, Give it to me. Mr Patterson climbed the fence. He took the letter. Mrs Patterson's dress was caught on the fence. I saw her eyes again and I ran down the hill. (14)*

This passage reveals Benjy's consciousness through its simple syntax and lack of quotations. Almost every sentence is a simple sentence, and some complete sentences are divided with commas rather than end punctuation. He remembers each moment in the sequence and each word spoken to him, and he reveals those moments simply, accurately, and with a steady pace. What Benjy does not reveal is the emotion experienced, the anxiety and anger of the Pattersons, or the fear he experiences in the moment. However, Faulkner somehow reveals all of these sensations with his syntax, leaving much of the emotion buried between the words written.

Italicized text plays an important role in Benjy's section. It often signifies a change in time and place for Benjy, sometimes to the past, sometimes from one past event to another, and sometimes back to the present, revealing that he does not quite understand the difference

between past and present. These signifiers, which I will analyze more specifically in my discussion of memory, often cause the italics to occur. The italics help the reader understand the shifts, while at the same time showing Benjy's inability to reconcile the past within his own present. Polk explains that the italics "represent images buried in Benjy's unconscious which work their way into the front of his conscious life, his narrative present, elbowing April 7 out of the way, until it, too, pushes its way back into what registers, also in italics" ("Trying" 147). For example, at one moment Benjy remembers the events of Caddy's wedding which took place in 1910, until he remembers that he "went on with them, up the bright hill" (22). The memory of the hill catapults his mind back to the day in 1898 when Caddy gets her pants dirty and climbs up the tree to see her grandmother's funeral: "*At the top of the hill Versh put me down*" (22). Faulkner's use of italics in this section allows the reader to follow Benjy's mind as much as possible in order to see the ways in which he has no control over his mind and the durational patterns it takes. Unlike Joyce's and Woolf's characters, Benjy cannot make sense of the past, which Faulkner communicates through his structure and language in each section.

Quentin's section contains some similarities to Benjy's: he is also haunted by the past, which Faulkner reveals in his language. However, Quentin's intelligence, rather than his disabilities, prohibits him from experiencing pure duration. Quentin wants to escape the past – to stop time – which is impossible. Faulkner exposes the weakness of Quentin's mind through his syntax, italics, and use of time as an important symbol of Quentin's demise. Faulkner relies on language to reveal that Quentin "is trying to shape his memory into an acceptable version of his life that will both explain his present misery and justify his decision to commit suicide, and language is the only tool he has to effect the shape he wants" (Polk, "Trying" 150). Paul Douglass examines Faulkner's syntax specifically, calling Faulkner's technique the

“uninterrupted sentence” and connecting it to Bergson’s idea of internal flux. The uninterrupted sentence “emulates the flux of consciousness, and at the same time never lets us forget the inexorable ticking of the clock” (140). As Quentin’s section progresses, his syntax begins to represent the internal workings of his mind. The sentences become more and more erratic and obfuscatory. Quentin speaks to Caddy in his mind as he remembers threatening Caddy that he will confess incest that never happened:

*and Ill tell you how it was Ill tell Father then itll have to be because you love  
Father then well have to go away amid the pointing and the horror the clean  
flame Ill make you say we did Im stronger than you Ill make you know we did you  
thought it was them but it was me listen I fooled you all the time it was me you  
thought I was in the house where that damn honeysuckle trying not to think the  
swing the cedars the secret surges the breathing locked drinking the wild breath  
the yes Yes Yes yes. (148-9)*

Despite Quentin’s longing to bury the past, these moments continue to haunt him, as signified by the syntax and the italics. This passage shows the distance of Quentin’s mind from reality. The punctuation is gone, and the mind flows from thought to thought without control or chronology. The passage reveals a complete, chaotic image, but not individual thoughts. Furthermore, the italics in Quentin’s section represent the inescapable past and Quentin’s “farthest remove from language” (Polk, “Trying” 155). The more Quentin tries to escape the past, the stronger the sensations become for him, and Faulkner specifically reveals this problem for him through the use of the uninterrupted sentence and purposeful italics.

In addition to the syntax and italics, Faulkner relies on the integral symbol of time in the Quentin section. The clock-time emerges within the section as the enemy – the monster from

which Quentin runs but cannot escape. In the same way that Big Ben plays an important symbolic role in *Mrs. Dalloway*, the clocks in *The Sound and the Fury* represent the inexorable, frustrating external world. However, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa understands the clock-time of Big Ben and defies that time with her “other clock.” Quentin, on the other hand, cannot make sense of the external clock. Even after he has “twisted the hands off” of his father’s watch, time still haunts him as the “watch tick[s] on” (80). More like Septimus Smith than Clarissa, Quentin cannot find the means to create a balance between the external and the internal in order to achieve moments of duration that combine the past and the present in a healthy, hopeful way. As Quentin walks past the jeweler’s window he notices: “There were about a dozen watches in the window, a dozen different hours and each with the same assertive and contradictory assurance that mine had, without any hands at all. Contradicting one another. I could hear mine, ticking away inside my pocket, even though nobody could see it, even though it could tell nothing if anyone could” (85). None of the clocks or watches is set, but they all tick, contradicting one another. Time is hauntingly incessant, yet it has no value. Even though, as Douglass argues, Quentin and the other characters “clearly lived their lives and underwent their passions in Bergson’s *temps duré*e, [. . .] this fact does not absolve them from living through a time that could be ticked off by the clock and measured by the calendar” (127). As Douglass explains, Bergson recognizes the existence and importance of clock-time: “The confusion [about Bergson’s assertions of clock time and its reality] comes from the assumption that Bergson rejects clock-time as ‘unreal’ and therefore unimportant. Bergson does not, as these critics suppose, believe only in an amorphous Present and reject all possibilities for the mind to know – that is, to give form to – that Present” (127). Clock-time is real and important, to both Bergson and Faulkner; however, clock-time exists externally and should not control or prevent the

internal consciousness from functioning in its natural way – one that is durational rather than chronological.

The italics disappear in Jason's section, while his voice becomes louder than his internal consciousness. While Benjy does not possess the ability to control his consciousness, Jason tries desperately to do so, and cannot. He cannot control time, the past, or his family, despite his hopeless efforts. Faulkner shows Jason's desperation and loud efforts to control through his language. As Polk asserts, Jason "keeps himself talking loudly so that he won't have to listen to the voices that threaten him: he drowns out one horrendous noise with an even more horrendous one" ("Trying" 156). Even his internal voice follows his external rules. He does not allow his internal voice to live in the way that Bergson would argue must be done. He fights that internal voice and only allows the filtered, external voice a place within his consciousness. Once again Faulkner creates the internal voice of Jason through his language; however, what Faulkner does not have Jason say reveals more than his actual words. For example, Jason thinks:

I never said anything more. It doesn't do any good. I've found that when a man gets into a rut the best thing you can do is let him stay there. And when a man gets it in his head that he's got to tell something on you for your own good, goodnight. I'm glad I haven't got the sort of conscience I've got to nurse like a sick puppy all the time. (228)

Jason never keeps his mouth shut, and even in this scene, he does say many more things. He claims that if there is one thing that "gets under [his] skin, it is a dam hypocrite" (229), yet he is a hypocrite. More important, Jason indeed has the sort of conscience that needs to be nursed like a sick puppy all the time. By having Jason show his frustration with weakness and hypocrisy, Faulkner covertly explains Jason's biggest flaws. Because Jason "is too driven by irrational



forces buried deep in his unconscious that are battering at the boundaries of articulation” (Polk, “Trying” 155), Faulkner creates a character who tries to control language and the internal consciousness. Of course, Jason fails because he must. He represents the person who tries to live in the external because it is easier; however, never listening to the internal flux of the mind prohibits progress and self-fulfillment.

### **The Demise of the Family Structure and of the Old South**

When he published *The Sound and the Fury* in 1929, Faulkner was facing a multitude of societal and external pressures. He addresses many common themes of the era in *The Sound and the Fury* such as “materialism and its consequences, spiritual disillusionment, the cultural impact of World War I and of the automobile, the negative effect of small-town narrow-mindedness on the healthy development of individuals and society itself, and the impact of new ideas in psychology” (McHaney 93). He addresses these themes through character development and character interactions rather than facing them overtly. By creating the Compson family turmoil and the chaos they face as a family struggling with the fall of the Old South, Faulkner shows the ways in which individuals and family systems struggle internally with external chaos.

The brothers fight to keep the Compson name intact, which is a futile effort. Quentin’s concern with the family’s name leads him to self-destruct, and Jason, although he lives to run the family at the end of the novel, shows no hope for any future success of the Compsons. Quentin and Jason “are Compsons, before any other considerations” (Wagner 259). A variety of theories and ideas have been applied to the reading of *The Sound and the Fury*, but when considering the external chaos that the individuals must fight in this novel, closely analyzing the family structure helps illuminate the destruction. Specifically, family systems theory offers an important way of

looking at the Compsons. Gary Storhoff summarizes the family systems theory that was developed by the Gregory Bateson Group in the late 1950s. He writes, “The model of the family systems theory provides an illuminating explanation of the family’s interactive bonds within the family. Systems theory conceives of the family as a complex, organic whole, in which an individual member’s aberrant behavior is seen as a consequence of an interplay of emotional forces operating to maintain that family’s system” (236). In *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner shows the demise of the Compson family and the effects each member’s decisions have on the other members. Bergson writes about obligation:

It is society that draws up for the individual the programme of his daily routine. It is impossible to live a family life, follow a profession, attend to the thousand and one cares of the day, do one’s shopping, go for a stroll, or even stay at home, without obeying rules and submitting to obligations. [. . .] How comes it, then, that on the contrary this obedience appears as a state of strain, and duty itself as something harsh and unbending? Obviously because there occur cases where obedience implies an overcoming of self. (“Morality” 301).

Faulkner shows many cases when this obedience to obligation overcomes the self. He reveals the enduring conflict between the external and the internal through the internal consciousnesses of Benjy, Quentin, and Jason. The destruction of the family symbolically shows the destruction of the Old South and the historical chaos facing the Compson-like families of the South and in America at the time. The Compsons, in a way, come to symbolize the American family of the 1920s and 1930s that faces a variety of significant cultural and historical changes. This family cannot survive these changes and remain the same family, or the same individuals. Because “Faulkner exposes the conservative myths that cluster about the family as ideological

constructions” (Storhoff 235), we the readers can see the ways in which this external conflict threatens the individuals’ inability to achieve self-fulfillment, enlightenment, or duration.

Faulkner cannot allow any of the three brothers to achieve Bergson’s duration because they must fight two losing battles: the demise of the Compson family and the demise of the Old South. The hope in this case cannot come from these three brothers. They must fail because the failure of the family and the South is Faulkner’s truth. If Faulkner is to reach his own duration and his own truth with his art, these characters must fail.

The external problems continue for the Compsons; Faulkner uses the novel to symbolize the demise of the family in addition to the demise of the Southern culture Faulkner knew well. Many scholars have specifically analyzed *The Sound and the Fury* as a symbol of the destruction of that culture, and most agree that “*The Sound and the Fury* was thus about the decline of a Southern family and, by extension, about the simultaneous decline of the Old South” (Polk, “Introduction” 14). I argue that the destruction of the Compson family certainly symbolizes a bleak future for the South, and the characters in the novel struggle to maintain an Old South that simply no longer exists. It is important to note that “[t]he South where Faulkner came of age was already a haunted place, since whatever grandeur it once possessed was definitely a thing of the past, destroyed forever in the Civil War” (Weinstein 303). By examining an American text and juxtaposing that analysis with those of Eliot, Joyce and Woolf, we can see that, although the chaos differs, all of these modern authors struggle with cultural and historical forces that can seem difficult to defeat. The only way to conquer the external forces is through duration – through internal truth and internal expression. If, as Bergson argues, our egos can allow themselves to *live*, then we can succeed. I agree with Storhoff when he asserts that “[s]ystems theory does not dismiss, of course, the cultural and the historical influences that also tend to

shape an individual's character; nevertheless, the systems theorist would discover in the individual's first social unit, his/her family circle, the primary triggers of a character's behavior patterns" (237). In this section, I will examine the ways in which each member of the family contributes to the demise of the family and how that individual's behavior symbolizes the downfall of the Old South.

Faulkner centers the novel on the sister of the family, Caddy Compson, but by not affording her a voice, he presents her familial and societal issues only through the consciousnesses of her brothers. Benjy adores her because she loves and takes care of him; Quentin also adores her and wants to protect her from the cruel nature of the world (from which Caddy does not want to be protected); and Jason threatens her as a child, uses his power over her daughter, and seeks revenge on Caddy for destroying the family. Caddy's promiscuity and eventual banishment from the family lead to the downfall of the Compsons because of the pride and tradition they hold deeply. Faulkner has Benjy repeat, "Caddy smelled like trees" in order to show that he longs for the memories of Caddy when she was pure. Quentin desperately tries to defend her loss of virginity with his virginity. He bravely tries to convince his father that they had committed incest in order to preserve her innocence; he would then be at fault and she would be forgiven. The embarrassment that the Compsons experience because of Caddy's behavior symbolizes the loss of purity in the South. By producing a daughter, the girl Quentin, who mimics her mother's behavior in many ways, the legacy of Caddy's promiscuity and family destruction threatens to continue as the future of the Compson name. Although by the end of the novel Caddy has been banished and Quentin has run away, the Compsons cannot escape the image and the lasting effect these two have had.

The idiot son Benjy further damages the pride within the family and the pride and tradition associated with families in the Old South of the era. The most glaring embarrassment for the family is Benjy's disability itself. Originally named Maury after his uncle, once the disability is obvious, at the age of five, Benjy is renamed in order to preserve the family image. Caddy has to remind him, "*Your name is Benjy [ . . . ] Do you hear. Benjy. Benjy*" (61). When Jason is an adult, he consistently threatens to remove Benjy from the home and send him to Jackson to a mental institution. He speaks of Benjy's burden, commenting on his behavior: "He's going to keep on running up and down that fence and bellowing every time they come in sight until first thing I know they're going to begin charging me golf dues" (187). The matriarch of the family, Caroline, considers Benjy her burden, but she does very little to mother him or to love him. Caddy and Dilsey act much more like mother figures for Benjy than Caroline does. The Compson family is humiliated by Benjy, and their actions and attitudes toward him show that the imperfections within a family cannot be overcome or avoided. The perfect image of the southern family is dead.

Quentin acts as the hope of the family, the intellectual with promise and sensitivity, but he commits suicide, escaping permanently from his position within the family while also removing the hope for the future of the Compson family, the symbolic family of the Old South. Both Quentin and Jason experience pressure to maintain the family's image, and this pressure defeats each of them in different ways. Quentin feels the need to protect the chastity of Caddy, an impossible goal. Wagner asserts, "Honor to Quentin is symbolized in Caddy's virginity – the fresh, the pure – undefiled as he himself tires to remain" (259). He longs for the family to remain stable, and his "basic problems are less intrapsychic than interpersonal, less a consequence of his unconscious sexual drives than of his family's need for stability and

consistency” (Storhoff 248). Because Quentin cannot save Caddy’s image, he cannot save the family; therefore, he cannot save himself. With his creation of Quentin, Faulkner further shows the demise of the South. Quentin cannot balance the external chaos that burdens him and the internal pressure he places on himself: “Faulkner would probably have blinked or yawned if someone had pronounced the word ‘ideology’ in front of him, yet the portrait of Quentin Compson is unmistakably that of a tragic misfit between societal expectations and being who you are” (Weinstein 321).

Jason acts as the leader of the family at the end of the novel, providing little hope for the success of the Compsons. The former hope of the family is dead, and unfortunately for the Compsons, “Jason is the frightening exemplar of what it means to grow up, in this story” (Weinstein 336). Through his need for control, suffocation, and manipulation, Jason provides little room for optimism in the battle between the external forces and the internal psyche. Jason’s internal psyche has been so manipulated and overcome by the external tension that he becomes almost a humorous, ridiculous excuse for a human being. We can see his turmoil and understand the pressure he faces, but Faulkner creates such a brilliantly flawed character that we know he will never be able to save the name “Compson” or the family ideals of the Old South. Like Quentin, Jason works to preserve the honor of the family, but he does so in a ruthless way. Quentin wants to send Benjy to Jackson, ignore his sister Caddy altogether, and control her daughter Quentin so that she cannot further ruin the reputation of the Compsons. He fails in every way. Faulkner establishes Jason’s position within the family from the beginning. The only control he maintains comes from threatening his sisters and brothers. The day of Damuddy’s funeral, Jason consistently threatens to tell on Quentin and Caddy for throwing water on one another. After he later tells their father without consequence, Jason is defeated. Wagner agrees,

“From the beginning, Jason has no recourse but power – blackmail through tattling or through physical destruction. From the beginning, however, Faulkner shows that that power is ineffectual” (255). The future of the South also lies in the hands of people like Jason. Will the South become conniving, manipulative and malicious rather than respectable, reasonable, and gracious? While Faulkner shows that “[e]verything Jason does stems from his desperate need to put up a front, to keep the Compson name – such as it is now – intact” (Wagner 261), he also shows his failure. The three Compson brothers cannot provide hope for the Compson family or for the South because Faulkner wants to show the decline of those two entities. The hope that emerges from *The Sound and the Fury* does not come from these three Compson brothers.

In contrast to Woolf’s creation of Clarissa and Joyce’s creation of Gabriel, Faulkner creates a darker, less effective group of characters in *The Sound and the Fury*. While Clarissa and Gabriel grapple with external forces and find a way to manage them, the Compson brothers do not. By exhibiting the darker side of human beings, Faulkner further emphasizes the hopelessness of the South; however, later in the chapter I will show how Bergson’s optimism can still emerge in Faulkner’s work. In the same way that Eliot, Woolf, and Joyce grapple with external chaos, Faulkner does as well. The Americans also try to recover from war, and they must try to maintain social and familial expectations. Although the conflicts are different, they somehow connect through a global understanding of war and society. Warren Susman asserts, “William Faulkner in his novels of the South self-consciously strove to use our history, and even our technology, mythically and symbolically. The most persistent symbol to emerge from the bulk of the literature of the period, however, was ‘the people’” (178). Faulkner uses his creation of the Compsons to represent the struggle of “the people” of the era, and while that battle may result in the demise of the familial structure in the South, he will also show, through his use of

memory and stream of consciousness, that Bergson's theories of duration and evolution can provide some hope for the self, for the internal consciousness to move forward beyond the destruction and demise, in order to provide some hope for a fundamental self.

### **Memory and Duration**

In *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner does not reveal moments of duration in the same way that Eliot, Joyce, and Woolf reveal them. There is no "still point," no "epiphany," and no "moment of being" for the characters. Those moments cannot exist for Benjy, Quentin, or Jason because each brother must fail at finding those moments. Memory cannot save the brothers from destruction: "Precisely because they live divided against themselves, many of Faulkner's characters are vulnerable to disorders of consciousness – that is to say, of remembering" (Douglass 143). Faulkner knows that moments of duration exist, and he understands that those moments hold great importance in the evolution of the self; however, he creates three characters who fail in order to show what some human beings cannot do; he wants to reveal his own truth through the failure of the Compson boys. Faulkner gives all three brothers an understanding of memory and importance of the past in the present, but none of them is able to make a viable connection between the past and the present. They cannot make sense of the past, and, therefore, they will not achieve duration or find balance within. They do not make duration out of memory. Memory exists but does not make sense for any of them. Although Faulkner understands and agrees with the theories of Bergson, he forces these characters to be conquered by clock-time and allows them only irrational memories. In this section, I will analyze the ways in which Faulkner presents memory as "almost duration." The past indeed lives within the present for these characters, as seen through Faulkner's presentation of memory. However,



memory does not translate to duration because each brother fails to use memory in a productive way for self-fulfillment. By examining Faulkner's use of memory and the past in the novel in conjunction with Bergson's theories of memory and duration, we can begin to understand that Faulkner's hope for the continuation of life and the self does not come from the Compson brothers but from communication and connections, which I will explore in more detail in the next section.

Bergson explains the difference between memory and duration: "To tell the truth, it is impossible to distinguish between the duration, however short it may be, that separates two instances and a memory that connects them, because duration is essentially a continuation of what no longer exists into what does exist" ("Concerning" 208). Because "duration is a continuation of what no longer exists into what does exist," an individual must allow the memories of the past to coexist in the present in order to achieve duration. Benjy does not possess the mental capacity to do so, Quentin refuses to accept the past, and Jason tries to control each part of his consciousness. All of these different methods fail at achieving duration. Bergson uses the example of listening to a song to explain the danger of trying to conquer or divide duration. If one listens to a tune, which symbolizes our pure internal duration, and imagines only one part, such as the keyboard notes, for a moment, the individual can attempt to separate the keyboard from the rest of the song; however, the song needs all of the parts to exist as it is ("Concerning" 208). We cannot cut the tune into parts in the same way that we cannot cut our own individual consciousness into parts. Each of the brothers tries to divide the moment within duration, which is impossible, and Faulkner shows the ways in which their attempts to cut duration lead to failure. Faulkner, conversely, shows through his use of stream of consciousness,

his portrayal of memory through stimuli, and his creation of the haunting nature of memory that duration cannot be divided.

Faulkner achieves duration with his text and in the final chapter of the novel, which I will discuss more specifically in the next section; however, before he shows the ways in which duration must be achieved, he first shows the ways in which duration cannot be achieved through his flawed characters. Benjy cannot achieve duration because he cannot determine the difference between the past and the present. Benjy “does not know time, he cannot separate past from present, it all flows together for him” (Weinstein 309); therefore, he cannot reconcile the past within the present. The past must exist within the present, but an individual must understand the difference between the two in order to comprehend the importance of the past within the present. Bergson writes of the stimulus within the mind of a child, like Benjy’s mind:

To live only in the present, to respond to a stimulus by the immediate reaction which prolongs it, it is the mark of the lower animals: the man who proceeds in this way is a man of *impulse*. [. . .] The extraordinary development of spontaneous memory in most children is due to the fact that they have not yet persuaded their memory to remain bound up with their conduct. [. . .] Indeed we observe this same exaggeration of spontaneous memory in men whose intellectual development hardly goes beyond that of childhood. (“The Persistence” 133)

For Benjy, “[o]ne time level replaces another through stimuli producing a shifting stream of consciousness like the normal association of ideas in reverie or nearing sleep, as with Stephen Dedalus and Leopold and Molly Bloom in *Ulysses*” (Blotner 209). This technique is one that Faulkner frequently uses: “Remembered events may lie dormant for years and then emerge suddenly and vividly in response to a particular sensory impression or chain of associations. It is

also this interaction with present experience that makes memory such a powerful, intrusive, and insistent force in the lives of many of Faulkner's characters" (Fennell 30-1). The problem is not the stimuli, because Morrison will also show the importance of stimuli to memory and the ways in which we must come to terms with those memories; the problem is that "Benjy can record, like a camera eye, but he cannot interpret" (Blotner 209). The lack of interpretation prohibits him from making sense of the past. For example, in the present, Luster, who has been charged to care for Benjy, tells him, "Now, git in that water and play and see can you stop that slobbering and moaning" (17), and the water acts as a stimuli to catapult Benjy's consciousness to 1898, to the life-altering day of Damuddy's funeral when the boys see Caddy's pants soiled with mud as she climbs a tree to look in the window. Benjy thinks, "I hushed and got in the water *and Roskus came and said to come to supper and Caddy said, It's not supper time yet. I'm not going*" (17). At the start of the italics, Benjy is in the past, and he stays there for a few pages until he hears Luster say for a brief moment, "*What is the matter with you. Cant you get done with that moaning and play in the branch like folks*" (19). While Benjy experiences this memory, he stops playing and moans, gaining no understanding of the durational moment that could be happening to him.

Woolf shows us the danger that exists when a balance between the internal and the external is not maintained by an individual with her creation of Septimus Smith, and, in many ways, Quentin falls into this trap as well. Faulkner equips Quentin with the ability to rationalize and internalize important past moments within the present, but Quentin lacks the emotional desire to allow that symbiosis to happen. By the time we see him in his chapter in 1910, he has already decided to kill himself, and his consciousness tries to remain in the present, but it is haunted by the ghosts of his past, especially that of Caddy. In Bergsonian terms, Quentin

rejects the internal flux, and therefore he will not achieve duration and will not survive in order to evolve. Douglass agrees, “Quentin correctly identifies the source of flux and carnality as his own consciousness, and eliminates it” (151). He cannot balance his consciousness with the events that surround him.

The external forces in his mind overcome his internal consciousness; the clocks and the memories of Caddy put too much pressure on Quentin. He “is inescapably caught in memory’s stranglehold” (Fennell 39), and he “cannot control the chaos of his amoebalike memory and he finally succumbs to it” (Polk, “Trying” 149). Faulkner shows Quentin’s growing anxiety during his chapter, leading to his suicide. Throughout Quentin’s section the past events emerge more and more frequently through stimulus until the point at which the past seems to take over within Quentin’s consciousness. For Quentin “the balancing act between inner voices and social reality can no longer be maintained” (Weinstein 329). The stimulus of gasoline brings Quentin into his final monologue. Faulkner writes, “I found the gasoline in Shreve’s room and spread the vest on the table where it would be flat, and opened the gasoline,” and then he brings us into Quentin’s past memories: *“the first car in town a girl Girl that’s what Jason couldn’t bear smell of gasoline making him sick then he got madder than ever because a girl Girl had no sister but Benjamin Benjamin the child of my sorrowful if I’d just had a mother so I could say Mother Mother”* (172). Quentin cannot control the stimulus, nor can he control the memories that come to his mind after the stimuli bring him into the past. As Douglass argues, Faulkner gives Quentin the ability to manage the memories, but not the emotional capacity. He writes, “Quentin can do something with these memories, as Benjy could not. He amalgamates them with other memories and impressions. But his creative powers have been turned against the very stream of his own life” (150). Quentin cannot escape the past; he cannot balance the past and the present; and in

the end, he must die in the same way that Septimus Smith must. In order for the internal consciousness to thrive, it must come to terms with the past and with the external, social world. Both Quentin and Septimus choose suicide because “suicide obliterates both memory and pain; it is the ultimate act of forgetting. As an act of negation, it has no creative power,” and both men suffer from the “agony of constantly remembering” (Fennell 39-40).

Despite the fact that Jason Compson survives in the end as the leader of the family, the final of the three Compson boys experiences no more success than the other two brothers. Jason’s inability to achieve duration comes from his stubborn need to control the past, the present, and the future: “Jason is out of control precisely because he obsessively seeks it” (Douglass 153). He attempts to divide durational moments, and he tries to control his own internal consciousness from becoming too real or too honest. When Jason’s memories of the past begin to emerge they often begin to “feel sort of funny” (202). He cannot allow those memories to pervade his consciousness because he would have to deal with them emotionally. He is not ready to do that because “[l]ike Quentin, Jason wants control. He turns his repression away from himself, however, and onto Caddy and her daughter, Quentin” (Douglass 151). Faulkner creates a very different character with Jason because Jason has the abilities Benjy does not have, and his selfishness excludes him from the self-torture that Quentin places himself under. Blotner writes, “With a mind shallower than Quentin’s, he is far closer to objective reality than either of his brothers. Thus the stream of present-time events stands in the forefront, with relevant prior information provided where necessary from his sardonic and sometimes humorous ruminations” (216). The experience of duration is impossible for Jason because he has no desire to become more self-aware or self-fulfilled. More than anything, he would like to control his internal

consciousness and keep it at a distance. Faulkner creates Jason to show that such shallowness and selfishness are ridiculous and unproductive.

Although Faulkner shows the ways in which the Compson brothers fail to achieve duration, he also reveals his belief in Bergson's theories of duration and memory through his use of stream of consciousness and by asserting the importance of remembering and reconciling with the past. Bergson writes, "inner duration, perceived by consciousness, is nothing else but the melting of states of consciousness into one another, and the gradual growth of the ego" ("The Idea" 63). The Compson brothers do not allow (or cannot allow in Benjy's case) the ego to grow, but Faulkner's novel itself shows the ways in which duration must be achieved. McHaney writes of the Compson brothers' failure to achieve duration:

Time is not chronology but duration, a great stream of endless being and becoming of which all living is an enduring part. In Bergson's view, it is clear, Benjy, Quentin, and Jason suffer from this error: none of them understands the creative evolution of being nor possesses the intuitive attention one needs to devote to the shifting flux of the life that endures in order to understand self and then manifest a truly free self. (85)

What Faulkner does reveal in his novel is that memory plays a crucial role in the lives of individuals, and, by having the brothers fail, he shows his reader what *not* to do. By focusing on the importance of memory and the past, Faulkner supports Bergson's theories and the idea that one must achieve duration in order to find self-fulfillment.

Faulkner uses memory in *The Sound and the Fury* as a constant part of the present. In his own words he states, "No man is himself, he is the sum of his past. There is no such thing really as was because the past is. It is part of every man, every woman, and every moment. All of his

or her ancestry, background is all a part of himself and herself at any moment. And so a man, a character in a story at any moment of action is not just himself as he is then, he is all that made him” (*FU* 84). Recognizing and understanding this theory, one with which Bergson would most certainly agree, becomes the key to self-fulfillment and truth. If Faulkner can find this duration in his narrative voice, then he will be able to disregard chronological time and “pull pieces of the past into the present, resurrect the dead, and remake family history” (Fennell 29). In finding one’s self, memory plays an important role as “both the source of selfhood and the means through which an individual might understand the self through intuitive attention to the flux of being in the flow of time” (McHaney 85). While the Compsons do not understand this fact, Faulkner does.

Eliot, Joyce, and Woolf show the moment of duration for each character as an enlightening place to be, but Faulkner does something different with his novel. He shows through the failure of the Compson brothers that the memory and the reconciliation that we need in order to find our fundamental self must be a priority. The dark ghosts of the past can haunt rather than heal, and an individual must turn the past into some kind of productive moment within the consciousness. Weinstein writes, “One you’ve been there, inside these Compsons’ heads, you’ll know that consciousness is not the leisurely or adventurous or rhapsodic space we may have seen it to be in Proust, Joyce, and Woolf: It is a prisonhouse, it is sound and fury” (299). The narrative itself reads like a durational narrative, and, in the case of Benjy, the reader seems to be stuck in his durational mind; however, Faulkner creates no enlightenment for his characters, only darkness, so that the fulfillment that comes from the novel is the truth. As I will show in the following section, Faulkner does leave his readers with a sense of durational experience. The reader will know that there are hopeful moments that stem from recognizing

and expressing the internal flux of the mind. For Faulkner, “[e]ach narrative voice pursues an autonomous tale that risks being neither more nor less than unlikeness: telling what it has never quite known, yet recreating undeniable, if unverifiable, truth” (Kartiganer 79). The truth must be revealed, according to Faulkner, and although the three Compson brothers cannot find the truth in their internal consciousnesses, some hope for reconciliation remains in the novel.

### **Seeking Resolution: Communication and Connections**

I have asserted throughout this dissertation that each author seeks resolution through Bergson’s moments of duration, and Faulkner also seeks to come to terms with the self. He hopes for greater self-knowledge and self-assurance. However, for Faulkner, the resolution provides less hope for the future than it did for the previous three authors. Most read *The Sound and the Fury* as a novel that provides little hope: the Compsons have failed and the Old South is fading. What I will show in this section is that Faulkner does provide some hope for the future in his presentation of the natural process of evolution. Life and art continue forward, which both Bergson and Faulkner would agree are necessary for self-fulfillment. Part of the resolution for Faulkner is his ability to express his reality, the truth of the South – his truth – through art. The South and the self evolve, and Faulkner presents some hope of that evolution of life in the final chapter of the novel. With communication and connections, we can evolve and hope for some kind of self-fulfillment in the future.

One of Faulkner’s greatest achievements in *The Sound and the Fury* comes from the expression of his own truth. He needed to tell the story of the Compson family and the destruction of the South for himself. Bergson explains truth: “Reality flows; we flow with it; and we call true any affirmation which, in guiding us through moving reality, gives us a grip



upon it and places us under more favourable conditions for acting” (“On the Pragmatism” 271). Although the Compson brothers cannot recognize the ways in which reality flows, Faulkner does. Faulkner, through the flow of the narrative, reveals his reality, and the recognition of this movement allows Faulkner to act – to express his truth completely. If “[t]he intention of *The Sound and the Fury* is to exercise, to as great a degree as possible, a will and prose shorn of context, to be the text accountable to itself” (Kartiganer 95), Faulkner achieves that goal. He wants the text to speak the truth, even if the truth reveals dark, hidden secrets of the internal consciousness of the South. The text is accountable to itself, and Faulkner is accountable for the revelation of his truth.

In addition to expressing his truth, Faulkner spends a great deal of energy in the novel focusing on evolution – the evolution of the South and the evolution of the self. Faulkner has been quoted earlier as saying that Bergson’s *Creative Evolution* helped him, and in the text Bergson explains evolution:

But that which has never been perceived, and which is at the same time simple, is necessarily unforeseeable. Now such is the case with each of our states, regarded as a moment in a history that is gradually unfolding: it is simple, and it cannot have been already perceived, since it concentrates in its indivisibility all that has been perceived and what the present is adding to it besides. It is an original moment of a no less original history. (“The Endurance” 175)

In short, Bergson shows the movement forward that is inevitable and unforeseeable. Each of us has a future that gradually unfolds continuously, and the present adds to that evolution at each moment. Faulkner criticizes the characters in the novel because when they are “[c]onfronted with the unpredictability and the shock of creative life, most characters decide they would rather

stop growing” (Douglass 143). This decision to stop growing causes the family, and, therefore, the symbol of the Old South, to disintegrate. However, the South will continue to move forward, as he shows with his final chapter. Dilsey, her family, “her labor and her voicelessness cry out the racist sins of the South, of Faulkner’s South” (Weinstein 346). The South will not continue in the same way that the Compsons remember, but the South will evolve into something different, something unforeseeable. The history, as Bergson states, is original, and the moment in the present is original. Both history and the present play a part in the future of the South – the South that will evolve beyond the novel.

Like with Eliot, Joyce, and Woolf, Faulkner believes that the self must evolve. The difference comes from Faulkner’s creation of negations. The darkness must exist for Faulkner so that he can show the light that should be the goal. That light is self-knowledge, self-fulfillment, and self-endurance. “Faulkner, like Bergson, ‘is primarily interested in motion.’ It is only that the stream is never truly perceived until ‘some object, or better, some person, can be made to stand still against its flow’” (Douglass 125 quoting Richard Adams *Faulkner: Myth and Motion*). According to Faulkner, the reality of the problems and the obstacles must be known and examined in order to fully see the forward progress. Douglass agrees that Faulkner expresses the importance of evolution in the novel: “Faulkner populates his books with characters reacting against change, refusing to accept history, as many have noted. It has been less noted, however, that this rejection of change is tantamount to a rejection of self – that Faulkner, like Bergson, relates freedom directly to self-knowledge and self-acceptance” (142).

Although his characters would not have agreed, “Faulkner would have agreed with Bergson that the truly enriching consciousness incorporates an ordered past in a developing present that proceeds in a ‘reasonable evolution’” (Douglass 128).

Now that Faulkner's goals have been established and connected with the theories of Bergson, it is important to analyze specifically the ways in which Faulkner achieves these goals in *The Sound and the Fury*. Faulkner seeks to express truth and evolution, but those two seemingly hopeful ideals are buried behind so much darkness in the novel that they can be difficult to find. Faulkner shows the ways in which he finds self-fulfillment in the expression of the truth through communication, while he also shows in the last section that connections between people make evolution possible. Faulkner feels the need to explain the situation and make connections between the characters and between the characters and the readers in the final chapter. He takes the divided consciousnesses of the brothers and brings them into one third-person narrative to explain the ways in which we are all connected. With a postmodern hint, Faulkner begins to insert himself into the text as a sort of mediator, and he shows the ways in which the ripples of the wave extend beyond the Compsons too the reader. The final chapter, narrated in third person, focuses on Dilsey Gibson, the servant who acts as a replacement mother figure in the novel, and her perspective on the Compson family. He sets the chapter on Easter Sunday, an obvious connection to renewal and rebirth. About adding the Dilsey chapter to the novel Faulkner said, "By that time it was completely confusing. I knew that it was not anywhere near finished and then I had to write another section from the outside with an outsider, which was the writer, to tell what happened on that particular day" (Blotner 218). Faulkner felt the need to include that chapter for the reader – to make a lasting impact on them. Eliot, Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner, and possibly all writers hope that their art will endure. Weinstein writes, "Such is arguably the unstated goal of all writers: to move you – the congregation, the reader – so completely that your heart speaks in chanting measures. The great damning knowledge of the twentieth century, when it comes to literature, is the terrible knowledge that language is forever

systemic, a sign system irreparably separated from the things it is trying to denote” (350). These writers are connected in their goal to communicate their individual, internal truth, and all of them understand, like Bergson does, the limitations of language in their communication. However, they all manage to create durational texts – texts that connect the characters to the readers for an unforeseeable number of years. Through their brilliant communication, their art will endure.

Not only does Faulkner bring the characters and the reader together in the final chapter of the novel, but he also provides some sense of hope for the future through the character of Dilsey by showing that human beings can connect with one another. Faulkner says of Dilsey, “There was Dilsey to be the future, to stand above the fallen ruins of the family like a ruined chimney, gaunt, patient and indomitable” (Blotner 213, quoting Faulkner in *Mississippi Quarterly*). The final section of the novel focuses on the Easter service at the Gibson family church. The Gibsons, with Dilsey in the lead, take Benjy with them to church, and the symbol of hope emerges. I do not believe Faulkner necessarily makes a statement about society, community, or even religion. Those three words denote obligation and restriction, which both Faulkner and Bergson would abhor. Rather, Faulkner allows the characters to connect with one another through faith, love, and endurance. Those entities can lead one to self-fulfillment and self-assurance. Dilsey, despite the fact that she realizes her family “got jes es much Compson devilment in [them] es any of em” (276), provides a love and a consistency that the Compsons cannot provide for one another. Blotner writes of Dilsey’s role in the final chapter:

Standing as a foil to Jason was Dilsey Gibson, sustaining the household from her central place in its kitchen, comforting Benjy as she took him to her church for Easter services, much as she had earlier tried to interpose her own body to protect Miss Quentin from Jason’s attack. [. . .] While Jason Compson provided most of

the action of the last section, Dilsey provided its moral center, embodying the Christian virtues – above all, the ability to give love as well as labor. (218)

Because Dilsey cares for Benjy, protects Quentin, and endures the treatment of Jason and Caroline Compson, all while taking her family and Benjy to church for Easter, Faulkner most certainly shows some kind of hope for the future. The traditional southern family will not act as the future for the South, but maybe that is fine. Maybe genuine love, commitment beyond oneself, and undying dedication remain as the hopeful center of evolution.

The connections that Faulkner presents in the final chapter emerge in the Easter service. The congregation becomes durational in that all of the members, open to the consciousnesses of those around them, become one voice encompassing everyone's emotional state. The congregation then has the power to pull the readers in. Faulkner creates a moment that includes the past and present of all involved – even the Compsons who have failed. Furthermore, the scene shows that through the darkness, hope and connection can happen. The connection that happens here is what Bergson calls “open” rather than “closed.” Closed connections include “social obligation, social conscience, and the closed societies they sustain” (Pearson 41), whereas openness connects human beings with love, morality, and humanity. Bergson writes, “The other attitude is that of the open soul. What, in that case, is allowed in? Suppose we say that it embraces all humanity: we should not be going too far, we should hardly be going far enough since its love may extend to animals, to plants, to all nature” (Pearson 41). In this difference between open and closed connections, the importance of instinct emerges. Faulkner does not express a sense of obligation, one that sometimes accompanies religious ceremonies, in the moment of connection at the church as he does throughout the Compson brothers' chapters. Rather, he shows the ways in which the congregation is connected through instinct. Bergson

explains, “We should make a great mistake if we tried to ascribe any particular obligation, whatever it might be, to instinct. What we must perpetually recall is that, no one obligation being instinctive, obligation as a whole *would have been* instinct if human societies were not, so to speak, ballasted with variability and intelligence” (“Morality” 307). Although it is a religious, communal moment, Faulkner creates a durational, connected moment full of instinct rather than obligation, connections rather than divisions.

The preacher calls them all together by saying, “Brethern and sistern” (294), and “[w]ith this, he enfolds not only his congregation but also the piecedapart Compsons – and indeed us, the individuated readers with our private stories – into his vision” (Weinstein 349). Faulkner pulls everyone together: “With his body he seemed to feed the voice that, succubus like, had fleshed its teeth in him, until he was nothing and they were nothing and there was not even a voice but instead their hearts were speaking to one another in chanting measures beyond the need for words” (294). While Faulkner does not allow durational moments for any of the Compson brothers, he brings everyone together in this connected durational moment in the final chapter, offering some hope for humanity. Weinstein argues that in the final chapter “Faulkner shows us a different kind of love – communal and spiritual, keyed to grace rather than possession – so as to take the final measure of his fierce story” (296). Throughout most of the novel the consciousnesses have been disconnected from one another. Each brother’s narrative communicates an individual perspective, unlike Woolf’s narrative that seems to float from mind to mind. However, in the final chapter of *The Sound and the Fury*, “[t]he Easter sermon shows us what a collective vision might be. Every other chapter in the novel shows us what private vision is like” (Weinstein 352). This collective vision provides whatever hope may remain for the characters of the novel. Through his creation of enduring art, lasting communication, and

internal connections, Faulkner achieves his goals of resolution in *The Sound and the Fury*. He speaks his own internal truth and shows that a creative evolution is possible for some.

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Faulkner represents the modern American voice for my purposes, and he pulls the theories of Bergson into the American consciousness. Furthermore, through his structure and style, he also creates a connection to the postmodern voice in American literature, which I will explore closely in the next chapter. In *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner shows the truth through darkness and through failure to achieve duration. He focuses on evolution throughout the novel by showing that one moment in life affects the next. Especially in the final chapter, Faulkner gives us hope for evolution, but he does so in a way that forces the reader to search very closely for a sense of enlightenment. Weinstein writes, “Faulkner starts out dark, ends up luminous. And this can only happen because of what we his readers do in route. His would be a body of work that initially approximates the inchoateness of real experience, but that gradually delivers its pattern, its figure in the carpet. But you have to work for your bread” (Weinstein 313). The journey that he creates for the readers of this novel becomes a durational journey into the internal consciousnesses of many. By the end of the novel, the journey is complete, and one chapter cannot stand alone without the experience of the others. We are thus connected in Faulkner’s journey toward truth and evolution. The journey into the minds of the Compson brothers individually cannot lead to pure duration, but by presenting the three of them together with the final chapter in the third person, Faulkner creates duration. All of the moments exist at one time, without the constrictions of chronological clock-time. Likewise, “that trip into the consciousness of another is itself a strange form of love, an entry into another’s life and vision, a

bittersweet triumph of art” (Weinstein 353). The journey into the consciousness of the characters allows Faulkner to achieve his truth and to express his internal consciousness and his beliefs about the South.

Bergson’s theories help illuminate Faulkner’s text. By applying his theories of duration, memory, and evolution, we can see Faulkner’s intentions more clearly. Douglass asserts, “Faulkner’s implicit theory of self and memory parallels Bergson’s with remarkable exactness. Like Bergson, he sees life as endless creation. And like Bergson he seems convinced that, when we have healthy psyches, there is ‘one reality, at least, that we all seize from within, by intuition . . . It is our own personality in its flowing through time – our self which endures’” (142 quoting Bergson’s *Introduction to Metaphysics*). In the last sentence of the novel, Faulkner leaves us with an image of Benjy and little hope for him and the Compsons. He writes, “The broken flower drooped over Ben’s fist and his eyes were empty and blue and serene again as cornice and façade flowed smoothly once more from left to right, post and tree, window and doorway and signboard each in its ordered place” (321). In this final sentence Faulkner continues to show the evolution along with the hopeless darkness. For Benjy, the flower has drooped once again and everything must be in its ordered place for him to be happy, yet Faulkner also shows movement forward. The horse Queenie moves forward, and the cornice and façade flow smoothly, floating from one item to the next. With his continuous use of the word “and” throughout the sentence, Faulkner leaves his readers with a sense of movement and continuation. Despite the hopeless nature of the Compson family, the South and the self will endure. Through his communication, art, and creation of connections, Faulkner shows that the future will remain with some hope for enlightenment for those with healthy minds and undying determination.



### **Morrison and Cunningham: Postmodern Authors and the Evolution of Timelessness**

Eliot, Joyce, Woolf, and Faulkner redefined the way we look at time and narrative structure. They disrupted chronological order, forcing their readers to reconsider the importance of clock-time and order. Their influence, however, does not stop there. The “elastic, psychological sense of time, derived from Bergson and Freud” (Galef 83) that those authors employed further influences contemporary authors. In the same sense that Bergson hoped to explain durational consciousness, I hope to show the ways in which the modernist disruption of chronological time lives on in the present, in a durational sense. We must ask ourselves how all of these ideas translate to our current world. We, the contemporary readers of the modern texts, along with the contemporary authors who are creating the new classics that will be read for generations to come, must consider how the ideas of timelessness, healing, and resolution translate into our world. As his idea of duration connects the past to the present, Bergson’s theories continue to stretch into contemporary literature, and that idea of “elastic” that stretches connects not only European to American authors, but also proves a lasting connection that stretches throughout decades. David Galef writes of Bergson’s importance to postmodernism: “Both modernism and postmodernism emphasize the life of the mind over time, but while modernism hopes for greater disclosures, postmodernism realizes the grand irrelevance of such knowledge. Bergson’s theory of time as a psychometric flow also exhibits this duality, i.e., it fits a modernist perspective that, stretched, becomes postmodernism” (88). The words that I hope to emphasize in this chapter are words like “flow,” “elastic,” “stretch,” and “connect.” By applying the theories of Bergson to two postmodern texts, I will show the ways in which my argument connects and binds literature throughout time, and, with that assertion, I hope to infer that the influence of Bergson will continue durationally and inevitably.

First, of course, I must try to explain the concept of postmodernism for my purposes. To define modernism and postmodernism specifically or *accurately*, or to compare the definitions of the two, is not only difficult, but nearly impossible. Galef explains the debate about defining each:

Postmodernism's placement is similarly succinct and confused. The term seems to have been first used by Federico De Onis, circa 1934, to note a reaction within modernism. A more generally known derivation is its use as a socioeconomic label by Arnold Toynbee in his monumental series *The Study of History*: modernism was the slow, historical rise of the middle class, and postmodernism was what came after. In *Exploring Postmodernism*, Calinescu notes the difficulty of pinning down the term, given that 'postmodern' is to some a historical category, to others a system, and to still others only an ideal. (84)

Many argue that postmodernism is a continuation of modernism, while some argue that it is a reaction against modernism. Maybe it can be a little bit of both. Postmodern texts react to modern texts and then go further in order to connect more intimately with the past and with their audiences. I do not mean to suggest that the modernists do not create these connections, but the solipsism of modern literature seems to fade as the postmodern authors try to reach a broader audience. I will examine more specifically ways in which the postmodern texts go further throughout the chapter. In his attempt to define postmodernism, M. H. Abrams writes, "Postmodernism involves not only a continuation, sometimes carried to an extreme, of the countertraditional experiments of modernism, but also diverse attempts to break away from modernist forms which had, inevitably, become in their turn conventional, as well as to overthrow the elitism of modernist 'high art' by recourse for models to the 'mass culture' in film,

television, newspaper cartoons, and popular music” (176). The postmodern texts I will analyze are Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and Michael Cunningham’s *The Hours*. Both show that modernism had a lasting impact on their style and themes, while, simultaneously, each author breaks away from the modern tradition by using intertextuality to make new connections and by widening the ripple of the wave to touch more people.

David Ray Griffin, describing his idea of constructive postmodernism, writes that “postmodernism refers to a diffuse sentiment rather than to any common set of doctrines – the sentiment that humanity can and must go beyond the modern” (“Introduction” xvi). Postmodern critics can deconstruct both quite effectively, but I hope to show the ways in which these two texts help initialize a new way of understanding our contemporary world. Griffin defines constructive postmodernism: “It seeks to overcome the modern worldview not by eliminating the possibility of worldviews as such, but by constructing a postmodern worldview through a revision of modern premises and traditional concepts” (“Introduction” xvi). While Griffin hopes to help us see the world with a new perspective, he “does not seek to create a movement so much as to help shape and support an already existing movement convinced that modernity can and must be transcended” (“Introduction” xvii). I assert that Morrison and Cunningham respect and honor the modern traditions created before them, while simultaneously extending the connections between the time periods, emphasizing the connections between characters and the reader, and by creating a new worldview that emphasizes those connections and communal understanding. Because Morrison and Cunningham are both inspired by the modern authors, an application of Bergson’s theory can be useful to show how both *Beloved* and *The Hours* disrupt chronological time in the face of chaos in order to search for healing and resolution through

moments of duration. Each author stretches the elasticity of Bergson, modernism, and the concept of time to a broader, more cohesive postmodern audience.

### **“Anything Dead Coming Back to Life Hurts”: *Beloved*, Memory, and Resolution**

Toni Morrison’s 1987 Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *Beloved*, is considered by many to be her most important work to date. The impact *Beloved* has had on its readers and on our literary canon cannot be measured, and the lasting effects of this novel will continue for many generations. The novel, set in 1800s America, focuses on the impacts of slavery, the most horrific experience of our American past. Although Morrison’s text stands on its own as a unique example of story-telling and remembrance of the past, the notion of intertextuality emerges throughout much of the criticism. Many compare her novel to slave narratives of the past, and much work has been done comparing the novels of Morrison and Faulkner.<sup>6</sup> Because Morrison examined Faulkner’s novels in her master’s thesis, “[t]hat she has read Faulkner closely and carefully is undeniable” (Duvall 5). Her dark story-telling, her use of stream of consciousness, and her natural ability to disrupt linear time seem similar to the techniques Faulkner employs. However, this comparison can be problematic because some take offense at the notion that Morrison, an African-American female, somehow needs the work of Faulkner, a white male. I assert that one text influences our understanding of the next, and the comparisons that I will make honor both authors, their individual techniques, and their ability to work well together. Duvall explains this intertextuality nicely:

The point of examining the relation between Morrison and Faulkner certainly should not be to measure Morrison on the yardstick of a Faulkner but rather to

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<sup>6</sup> For numerous essays comparing Morrison and Faulkner, consider *Unflinching Gaze: Morrison and Faulkner Re-Envisioned*, edited by Kolmerten, Ross, and Wittenberg.

understand how her texts reclaim those of the modernists. The notion of intertextuality, with its emphasis on the infinitely resonating signification of language, means that one can validly read not only Faulkner's influence on Morrison, but also Morrison's influence on Faulkner – how her fiction and literary criticism may cause one to rethink Faulkner in a fundamental way. (3-4)

In this chapter, I will closely examine Morrison's *Beloved* in terms of Bergson's theories of time and memory in order to make connections between her postmodern work of 1987 and the modern works from which she found inspiration. Morrison shows the importance of timelessness by disrupting the linear nature of time in order to show the possibility of overcoming the effects of slavery and finding self-fulfillment and enlightenment with truth, community, memory, and understanding.

### **Beloved's Consciousness Defies Linear Time**

The structure of Morrison's *Beloved* defies linear time in many ways. By writing about slavery from a slave woman's perspective in 1987, Morrison first defies the concept of time. America's dark past comes back to life within the novel as she dedicates the book to "Sixty Million and more," a reference to the number of slaves who perished in the Middle Passage. She shows, through her use of narrative voice, stream of consciousness, point of view, and intertextuality that the past constantly lives within the present. As Bergson argues, pure duration need not "forget its former states: it is enough that, in recalling these states, it does not set them alongside its actual state as one point alongside another, but forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole" ("The Idea" 60). Morrison creates that organic whole with her

structural techniques in *Beloved*, leaving readers with a sense of connectedness and purpose. We become part of the past, a role that can become quite uncomfortable.

Morrison's most obvious structural manipulation is a disruption in the time sequence of events. The third-person narrator careens from one moment to the next without transition or warning. While Faulkner includes italics, Morrison naturally allows her characters to remember a moment and propels them into the past for pages at a time. The memories come like Faulkner's stimuli, but seem to haunt the characters. For example, in the present, 1873, Sethe and Denver speak of the power of the ghost that haunts their home: "'No more powerful than the way I loved her,' Sethe answered and there it was again. The welcoming cool of unchiseled headstones; the one she selected to lean against on tiptoe, her knees wide open as any grave. Pink as a fingernail it was, and sprinkled with glittering chips. Ten minutes, he said. You got ten minutes I'll do it for free" (4-5). Sethe has traveled to the burial of her daughter twenty years prior, and a few lines later has a conversation with Baby Suggs, Sethe's mother-in-law, who has been dead since 1865. The reader can become puzzled and desperate to position the events in some kind of chronological time until realizing that, for Morrison, time does not matter. Her characters are meant to live in duration because the past lives. Brian Finney agrees, "Part of her narrative strategy, then, is to position the reader within the text in such a way as to invite participation in the (re)construction of the story, one which is usually complicated by an achronological ordering of events" (105).

Another structural technique Morrison utilizes to defy conventional time is stream of consciousness, as she shifts from one perspective to another in a similar fashion as Virginia Woolf. The third-person narrator floats from one consciousness to the next, from one time period to another, with ease. Carolyn Denard, in her comparison of Faulkner and Morrison, calls

the technique a “mythical consciousness,” which is a useful perspective on not only Faulkner and Morrison, but also Joyce and Woolf. She writes:

Mythical consciousness creates an awareness in these writers of the role that imaginative narratives may serve in providing a cognitive, unbroken connection of the present with the past and with the future, an awareness that it is the writer’s obligation to tell an essential, unchanging truth, to make life make sense to his or her readers. The mythical consciousness creates a particular angle of vision. It is as if Faulkner and Morrison sit perched above our present reality with an expansive, aerial view able to see the points at which the present situates itself in the procession of time, complete with a knowledge of its repetitions and its intersections with the past and the future. (19-20)

The idea that these authors perch themselves above the present action, looking down on the present while also able to see the past, the future, and inside the minds of each character, evokes Bergson’s theory of duration. Each moment, each individual consciousness, and each emotion lives in the present, and these authors have a way of communicating that consciousness with words. In *Beloved*, Morrison revisits important moments from the past through a variety of perspectives. For example, the scene of Denver’s birth can be read from the perspective of Denver, who often remembers a slightly romanticized story her mother told her, and from the perspective of Sethe, whose consciousness gives the audience a darker, more painful image. Additionally, both Paul D and Sethe (on numerous occasions) remember the moment in which they were escaping Sweet Home. Sethe’s perspective shows the sexual abuse she experienced and the feeling of abandonment she felt when her husband never appeared; Paul D remembers feeling helpless because of the bit they placed in his mouth as he saw Halle witness the sexual

abuse of his wife from the loft. By creating these past moments over and over again, Morrison leaves no horrific moments to the imagination. She brings the past to the forefront in a variety of ways in order to show that the past, with each of its gruesome realities, cannot be forgotten.

Both of these techniques, the disruption of the timeline and the use of stream of consciousness, directly resemble and honor the past tradition of the modern writers. But postmodern authors must move beyond that. Morrison moves beyond the structural techniques of the modernists by using her words to blend internal voices and by using intertextuality to bring the past into the present. Toward the end of the novel, Morrison gives a first-person voice to each woman, Sethe, Denver, and Beloved. The first chapter begins, “Beloved, she my daughter. She mine” (200) and proceeds to give her audience exactly what they have been waiting for – the truth of Sethe’s internal emotions, especially those feelings about the murder of her daughter. Sethe says, “When I put that headstone up I wanted to lay in there with you, put your head on my shoulder and keep you warm, and I would have if Buglar and Howard and Denver didn’t need me, because my mind was homeless then” (200). Denver speaks in the next chapter: “Beloved is my sister. I swallowed the blood right along with my mother’s milk” (205). Beloved speaks in her internal voice with simple syntax, and Morrison removes the punctuation and the capitalization; in some moments she speaks from the grave, one that seems like a scene from a slave ship. Beloved says, “We are crouching now we are standing but my legs are like my dead man’s eyes I cannot fall because there is no room to the men without skin are making loud noises I am not dead” (211). As the modernists did before her, Morrison captures the internal consciousness of each of her characters, but in a new, unique way. In the next chapter, she combines the internal consciousnesses of the characters and allows them to speak to one another. Morrison writes in verse:



You are my face; I am you. Why did you leave me who am you?

I will never leave you again

Don't ever leave me again

You will never leave me again

You went in the water

I drank your blood

I brought your milk

You forgot to smile

I loved you

You hurt me

You came back to me

You left me

I waited for you

You are mine

You are mine

You are mine. (216-7)

In this final passage from what has been called the “chorus chapter,” the three women speak through their internal consciousness, revealing their innermost feelings to one another. They remind one another of the pain each has caused, and, by the end of the chapter, each of them says, “You are mine.” They speak the same words, but each claims ownership of the other. Beloved belongs to Sethe; Beloved belongs to Denver; Sethe belongs to Beloved. With her use of the internal voices, Morrison creates a sense of duration; the “voices of Sethe, Denver and

Beloved blend to suggest not only that it is always now, but to suggest that the past, present and future are all one and the same” (Mobley 24). By writing this chorus of internal voices, Morrison indeed moves beyond modernist technique and into a world where internal thoughts can be heard by others, revealing a new way of communicating that is not logical, but that reveals a different element within stream of consciousness.

Although Morrison does not utilize intertextuality as specifically and obviously as Cunningham, the postmodern penchant for rewriting texts is evident in Morrison’s *Beloved*. The slave narratives of Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, and others come to life again in 1987 with Morrison’s novel. However, the novel is not a conventional slave narrative. The novel is based on the true story of a slave named Margaret Gardner who attempted to kill her children so that they would not have to return to slavery, but the novel is fiction. Both the traditional slave narrative and Morrison’s novel reveal the abysmal events of slavery from a personal perspective; however, somehow the events become more dreadful with the fictional retelling of the Sweet Home slaves, which I will discuss more specifically in the next section. Additionally, Morrison moves away from the structure of the typical slave narrative by disrupting the timeline and revealing her characters’ internal consciousnesses. Mobley writes, “[W]hile the slave narrative characteristically moves in a chronological, linear narrative fashion, *Beloved* meanders through time, sometimes circling back, other times moving vertically, spirally out of time and down into space. Indeed, Morrison’s text challenges the Western notion of linear time that informs American history and the slave narratives” (20). Through her use of intertextuality, Morrison brings the slave narrative of the past into the present consciousness of her audience while also revealing a more personal, gruesome, internal remembrance of that past.

Morrison, through her structural techniques, both honors past traditions and moves beyond those traditions by creating new ways of addressing the past. She borrows the traditions of manipulating chronological time and presenting her characters' thoughts through stream of consciousness. However, she moves beyond those traditions with her use of poetic communication among the internal voices and her use of intertextuality. The past continues to live in her contemporary text, but the techniques she employs show a transcendence of narration.

### **The *Real* Horrors of Slavery**

Arguably, Morrison's characters grapple with the most extreme external chaos of any author in my study. They face recovery from slavery, and the gruesome experiences Morrison reveals in her text prove to be some of the most difficult from which to recover. Sethe's family, like the Compsons, represents each family who had to try to recover from slavery and "Reconstruction." Although many texts before *Beloved* address the same external chaos, Morrison changes the way her readers understand the horrors of slavery. Arnold Weinstein explains, "[T]his heinous regime of owning other people – a regime the reader probably assumes he or she knows all about – is used by Morrison in some sense as a catalyst or springboard, changing all our notions of what is normal and what is not, what is tellable and what is not, what a life is and what it is not" (421). With her dedication to "Sixty Million and more," Morrison creates qualities within *Beloved* that resemble the slaves who lost their lives in the Middle Passage; therefore, Morrison's text addresses more than one woman's experience with slavery. Morrison adopts a huge task: "The millions of dead, casualties of slavery, whom *Beloved* represents, ought to be remembered and accounted for, but as Sethe's story proves, remembering takes its toll" (Furman 270). The novel reveals the abuse from the beginning of the passage, to

the destruction of families, removal of manhood, and the seemingly impossible task of surviving beyond the abuse. Finney writes, “Ultimately the novel is about the haunting of the entire Black race by the inhuman experience of slavery, about the damage it did to their collective psyche and the need to summon all the skills of their community (including that of oral narrative) to exorcise this ghost that will otherwise turn destructive” (115). Despite the extreme nature of the external chaos for Morrison’s characters, they also find a sense of hope by the end of the novel. Each character is somehow affected by slavery, and “the point of Morrison’s work here is to take overlapping personal histories and weave them together into a complete tapestry of a people’s endurance” (Furman 264). They must overcome this external chaos by finding strength in their internal consciousness through connections with others. By finding Bergson’s durational experiences, the characters can move beyond the chaos, but first Morrison must show the real horrors of slavery through her fictional, realistic, gruesome retelling of the past.

One of the most powerful effects of slavery is the way it alters an individual’s psyche, and Morrison forces all of her characters to struggle with the internal demons that slavery produced. Morrison goes inside the minds of the characters, like the other authors in my study, in order to reveal the impact of external forces. Morrison not only invites her readers into the chaos; she forces them in. Mobley writes, “Morrison’s novel exposes the unsaid of the narratives, the psychic subtexts that lie within and beneath the historical facts. In the author’s words, she attempts to leave ‘spaces so the reader can come into it.’” (20). Within the first two to three pages, Morrison forces her readers into one of the most disturbing and significant scenes, the one in which Sethe pays for the engraving on her daughter’s headstone with sex. However, looking back on the event, Sethe is most concerned with the idea that she could have gotten the entire phrase, “Dearly Beloved,” if she had agreed to twenty or thirty minutes instead of ten.

Sethe thinks, “But what she got, settled for, was the one word that mattered. She thought it would be enough, rutting among the headstones with the engraver, his young son looking on, the anger in his face so old; the appetite in it quite new. That should certainly be enough. Enough to answer one more preacher, one more abolitionist and a town full of disgust” (5). Margaret Atwood comments on this scene: “This act, which is recounted early in the novel is a keynote for the whole book: in the world of slavery and poverty, where human beings are merchandise, everything has its price and price is tyrannical” (6). The subtext reveals the horror of the act itself. Sethe must sell her body degradingly in order to receive one word etched on a gravestone, and, while she avoids the real pain, Morrison brings her readers directly into it. We see the bigger picture, the degradation, the sorrow, and the emotional price she has to pay, even though Sethe keeps those emotions buried deep within her. The psychological effects of slavery cause the characters to sink to a place from which recovery will prove to be extremely difficult.

Morrison, in her attempt to show the pressure of the external issues, presents slavery’s effects on the family unit in a way that reveals the inhumane, unnatural treatment of people. All of the slave narratives of the past focus in some way on the effects of slavery on the family, but by introducing Baby Suggs, her family, and her opinions of love, Morrison shows the dangers of love, which invites the reader into the turmoil. Most traumatically, Sethe attempts to murder her four children to ensure that they will not return to slavery. This colossal event forces readers to ask, “What could be so horrible to allow a mother to kill her own children?” Morrison answers that question with so much evidence that by the time we know that Sethe has killed one child and tried to kill all four, we understand how she could do such a thing to her own family. Morrison starts by showing the pain the external forces cause for Baby Suggs. By the time her fourth child was born “by a man who promised not to and did,” after her first three had been sold or traded,

Baby Suggs remembers, “[t]hat child she could not love and the rest she would not” (23). The problem was that “[a]nybody Baby Suggs knew, let alone loved, who hadn’t run off or been hanged, got rented out, loaned out, bought up, brought back, stored up, mortgaged, won, stolen or seized” (23). Atwood agrees that “[a]bove all [slavery] is seen as one of the most viciously antifamily institutions human beings have ever devised. The slaves are motherless, fatherless, deprived of their mates, their children, their kin. It is a world in which people suddenly vanish and are never seen again, not through accident or covert operation or terrorism, but as a matter of everyday legal policy” (7). Because of the ways in which the institution of slavery forced such unnatural practices, the characters had to block their internal emotions and internal consciousness.

Another of the most significant horrors of slavery Morrison presents in *Beloved* stems from Paul D’s experiences as a man. Slavery strips away every possibility of manhood, even when “good, fair” slave owners such as Mr. Garner own the men. Although Mr. Garner claimed that “[his] niggers is men every one of them” (10), his slaves never felt like real men, and Paul D struggles to regain his manhood throughout the novel. Morrison brings the reader into the horror by telling Paul D’s story with such specificity and emotion. When Schoolteacher, Mr. Garner’s nephew and grueling replacement at Sweet Home, and his nephews put Paul D in a bit, he looks at Mister the rooster and thinks, “Mister, he looked so . . . free. Better than me. Stronger, tougher” (72). He explains the effect of this moment: “But I wasn’t no way I’d ever be Paul D again, living or dead. Schoolteacher changed me. I was something else and that something was less than a chicken sitting in the sun on a tub” (72). While the slave narrative reveals the horrors of slavery, Morrison expresses the effects uniquely in her novel. She pulls her readers into the madness by revealing the internal consciousness of each character and the ways in which the

internal consciousness has been beaten, abused, and repressed. Bergson's theory of the external and internal consciousness appear in Morrison's novel, and the external chaos weighs so heavily on the characters that they try (and fail) to repress the internal workings of the mind. They try not to love, not to feel, and not to trust their own internal consciousness, but by the end they know that they must feel, love, and trust in order to find their internal selves, to survive, and to move past the horror of the external circumstances.

### **The Need for Rememory**

Morrison, like Faulkner, does not create the same kind of moments of duration as Eliot, Joyce, and Woolf. Morrison's characters find it difficult to allow those moments to happen because of the ways in which they must protect the internal consciousness from the external chaos. While Eliot's speaker, Gabriel, and Clarissa yearn for the moments, Faulkner's and Morrison's characters try to avoid the moments. However, memory, along with the blending of the past with the present, is a predominant theme in Morrison's novel, quite possibly the most important message Morrison shares. She forces her characters, against their wills, to experience these durational moments and to live in duration, despite their efforts to remain eternally within the safety of the external consciousness. Eusebio Rodrigues compares Morrison's use of memory to music. Because Bergson claims that duration "forms both the past and the present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak, into one another" ("The Idea" 60), I found this article interesting and applicable to my thesis.

Rodrigues explains:

Toni Morrison's narrator will stage an extended blues performance, controlling the release of these memories, syncopating the accompanying stories of Sixo,

Stamp Paid, and Grandmother Suggs, making rhythms clash, turning beats into offbeats and crossbeats, introducing blue notes of loneliness and injustice and despair, generating, at the end, meanings that hit her listeners in the heart, that region below the intellect where knowledge deepens into understanding. (149)

Morrison reveals these memories in a durational way because the novel reads as one long memory that continues to appear and reappear the more the characters try to push it back. Through her creation of the concept of “rememory,” her emphasis on the importance of reconciliation with the past, and her presentation of the human form of memory, *Beloved*, Morrison forces her characters to listen to their past experiences in order to move forward.

Morrison’s concept of rememory has been analyzed and defined in many different ways. Morrison has Sethe explain rememory. She writes, “I was talking about time. It’s so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it’s not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it’s gone, but the place – the picture of it – stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world” (35-6). Denver asks Sethe if other people can see her rememory, and Sethe replies, “Oh yes. Oh, yes, yes, yes. Someday you be walking down the road and you hear something or see something going on. So clear. And you think it’s you thinking it up. A thought picture. But no. It’s when you bump into a rememory that belongs to someone else” (36). Later Sethe warns, “So, Denver, you can never go there. Never. Because even though it’s all over – over and done with – it’s going to always be there waiting for you” (36). Sethe’s concept of rememory challenges the chronological sense of time and works nicely with Bergson’s theory of memory. While “a conventional view of memory [acts] as a bridge from the present to the past, Sethe’s re-memory reverses the maneuver



by bringing the past forward into the present” (Furman 262). Bergson explains that one is unable to remove memories from inner life. He writes, “However much we may reduce the intensity of our memory, we risk leaving in it some degree of the variety and richness of our inner life; we are then preserving the personal, at all events, human character of memory” (“Concerning” 207). Virginia Woolf, in her essay “A Sketch of the Past,” in which she defines her moments of being, describes these moments, which seem quite similar to Morrison’s rememory. Woolf writes, “In certain favourable moods, memories – what one has forgotten – come to the top. Now if this is so, is it not possible – I often wonder – that things we have felt with great intensity have an existence independent of our minds; are in fact still in existence?” (67). The memories live in Sethe’s inner life no matter how much she tries to reduce the intensity of these memories. She runs into the “thought pictures” in the present because they live with her in her internal consciousness.

Some moments of rememory for Sethe create peace, while others create pain, and Morrison shows through her development of peaceful rememories that Sethe may be able to recover from the difficult ones. Sethe’s rememory of Baby Suggs helps her continue forward. Morrison writes:

She wished for Baby Suggs’ fingers molding her nape, reshaping it, saying, ‘Lay em down, Sethe. Sword and shield. Down. Down. Both of em down. Down by the riverside. Sword and shield Don’t study war no more. Lay all that mess down. Sword and shield.’ And under the pressing fingers and the quiet instructive voice, she would. Her heavy knives of defense against misery, regret, gall and hurt, she place done by one on a bank where clear water rushed on below.

(86)

Sethe longs for memories like this one, and those moments of acceptance, acceptance of love, for Sethe provide hope for her future and recovery. Despite the words Morrison creates for her, Sethe somehow knows that she needs the memories in order to move forward. Like Clarissa Dalloway, Sethe must find a way to merge the external and the internal in order to survive.

Morrison, unlike Sethe, understands that we cannot divide duration into individual moments or expect some moments to shrink into the past. The past must be understood and come to terms with, and Morrison allows Sethe to realize this important lesson by the end of the novel. Sethe lives her life believing that there is “[n]othing better than [working dough] to start the day’s serious work of beating back the past” (73); however, “[o]nly by returning to the past can the present lead on to the future. [. . .] The behavior and reactions of the major characters make sense only when contextualized by their past” (Finney 107). Morrison and Bergson would agree that these characters, even with their extreme external sufferings, must face the past that lives in the present, reconcile that past with the present, understand the internal consciousness, find strength in the self, and move forward. Sethe tries to fight Morrison’s insistence upon this reconciliation, but, like Faulkner, Morrison wins.

In terms of facing the memories of the past, Morrison takes her postmodern novel beyond the modern tradition that she reveres. Morrison reincarnates the memory of Sethe’s dead daughter in human form. Not only is Beloved a ghost, but she also becomes a human being that can be seen and heard by all of the characters in the book. Beloved literally becomes a living representation of the past. Beloved comes to represent the past that should not be forgotten for Sethe, the other characters, and all of those who have survived slavery. The past will not die, and “[t]he enormity of the wrongs wreaked upon the ’60 million and more’ has produced her, obsessed with revenge, desperately needy for love, but incapable of giving it. Beloved is the

tangible presence of the painful past” (Bowers 36). The supernatural element that Morrison employs amplifies the importance of the past for these characters and for her readers. We cannot escape the past, divide the moments of duration, or shrink the unpleasant memories into nonexistence. If we try to do any of those things, the strength of the memories and the past will consume our present state until we suffocate. We must reconcile with the past.

### **Real Freedom: The Self, the Connections, and the Sharing**

As with Eliot, Joyce, Woolf, and even Faulkner, Morrison writes her text in order to find resolution for her characters from the external chaos. The resolution must come from within, and I argue that this final enlightenment resembles the theories of Bergson. In the end, hope remains, and that hope comes from giving in to the moments of duration – those moments that combine the past and the present, the external and the internal. They are the moments in which the ego allows itself to live. Although the external suffering these characters face may be the most extreme of any characters in my study, the resolution Morrison gives to her characters in the end provides hope for transcendence and healing. Morrison defines real freedom and then allows her characters to find that real freedom by claiming ownership of the self and making connections with others.

Morrison first asserts that finding and loving the self leads to real freedom. Freedom does not come when one is free from a slave owner; freedom can only come from inside the self.

Baby Suggs speaks at the clearing of real freedom:

And O my people, out yonder, hear me, they do not love your neck unnoosed and straight. So love your neck; put a hand on it, grace it, stroke it and hold it up.  
And all your inside parts that they'd just as soon slop for hogs, you got to love

them. The dark, dark liver – love it, love it, and the beat and beating heart, love that too. More than eyes or feet. More than lungs that have yet to draw free air. More than your life-holding womb and your life-giving private parts, hear me now, love your heart. For this is the prize. (88-9)

By the end of the novel, Denver has discovered this real freedom. She steps out of the house on her own to save her mother from starvation and destruction. Denver finds the strength to love her own heart and her own self, and “she was the first one [to] wrestle her mother down” (266). Morrison asserts that “[t]he only moral agency is human, represented in *Beloved* by Denver. Born in a boat filling with the ‘river of freedom,’ she represents the generation born outside slavery – the future” (Bowers 37). Denver becomes the future for the family, and Morrison also suggests that Sethe will follow this lead by the end of the novel. Paul D tells her that they have “more yesterday than anybody. [They] need some kind of tomorrow” (273). He then reminds her, “You your best thing, Sethe” (273). Although Sethe questions, “Me? Me?,” Morrison gives a sense of hope for the future of Sethe. Maybe she will find her self to be her own best thing and move forward toward some kind of tomorrow.

Much like the Easter service at the end of *The Sound and the Fury*, the women of Cincinnati come together for a moment of healing and renewal at the end of *Beloved* in order to save Sethe. The thirty women of the community “grouped, murmuring and whispering” (258) on Sethe’s front lawn, and “[i]nstantly the kneelers and the standers joined [Ella]. They stopped praying and took a step back to the beginning. In the beginning there were no words. In the beginning was the sound, and they all knew what that sound sounded like” (259). The women join as one to show the connections that can save Sethe to ensure “she is running into the faces of the people out there, joining them and leaving Beloved behind” (262). Morrison creates what

Bergson calls an open connection. Bergson writes, “The other attitude is that of the open soul. What, in that case, is allowed in? Suppose we say that it embraces all humanity: we should not be going too far, we should hardly be going far enough since its love may extend to animals, to plants, to all nature” (Pearson 41). Through true openness, the women save Sethe through their connection to her. The only way out of the suffering is through remembering, connecting, and learning to love, and “[b]y speaking the horror, Morrison assumes and helps to create the community that can hear it and transform it” (Bowers 43). Allowing the soul to open up and discover the strength of the self and the strength of human connections can lead to transcendence.

Morrison’s resolution, her duration, comes from the communication of her characters’ reality and the connections she makes with her readers. Morrison reveals her thoughts on communication and connection in the final two pages of the novel. She presents another chorus-like declaration at the end that repeats, “This is not a story to pass on” (274-5). The narrator speaks of remembering and forgetting over and over again, claiming that *Beloved* was forgotten while also mentioning that she lingers in the community and in the minds of the people. Morrison, however, does not believe that this is not a story to pass on. She reminds us, through her repetition and remembrance, that the story will be remembered, told, and continued. By dedicating her novel to “Sixty Million and more” and writing a novel that will be read indefinitely, Morrison understands that this *really is* a story to pass on. By telling us over and over again not to remember, we will remember, and that is her point. Mobley asserts,

If we understand Morrison’s ironic and subversive vision at all, we know that our response to the text’s apparent final call for silence and forgetting is not that at all. Instead, it is an ironic reminder that the process of consciously remembering not

only empowers us to tell the difficult stories that must be passed on, but it also empowers us to make meaning of our individual and collective lives as well. (25)

Morrison leaves us with the word, “Beloved.” She believes in the remembrance of the past, the acceptance of the horror, and the understanding that the self can move beyond the hardships the external world creates. Despite the dreadful nature of life, with love, understanding, and renewal, we can move forward in search of a new kind of self-awareness and understanding. Maybe remembering is not quite enough. *Beloved* does not have to be *remembered* because she is here. As Bergson would agree, the past lives within each of us during each moment.

#### **“We Hope, More Than Anything, for More”: The Timeless Connections in *The Hours***

Another Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Hours*, both honors the modern traditions and creates a new perspective on the contemporary world. Michael Cunningham, in his 1998 novel, revisits Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, bringing the past into the present for his contemporary audience. I chose these two postmodern texts, *Beloved* and *The Hours*, because of the ways in which they both resemble those of the modernist authors before them and the impact they have both made on our contemporary worldview. Both texts go beyond the modernist works by further developing the interconnections between characters and including intertextuality as a way to keep the past alive in the present. In keeping with the tradition of Bergson’s theories, both Morrison and Cunningham disrupt linear time in order to recover from the external chaos of the world around them. Furthermore, in *The Hours*, “we find the recycled fragments of the postmodern novel and the opening to new voices” (Hughes 350). Michael Cunningham manipulates time in order to show the ways in which three women struggle to balance external

chaos and internal consciousness. All three rely on timelessness and connections to move forward beyond their present day.

### **Timeless Present**

Cunningham's structure fits nicely with the assertions I have made so far regarding the methods authors use to question chronological time and emphasize the importance of timeless moments. Richard, the suicidal author in the novel, describes the feeling Cunningham portrays with his structure: "Sorry. I seem to keep thinking things have already happened. When you asked if I remembered about the party and the ceremony, I thought you meant, did I remember having gone to them. And I did remember. I seem to have fallen out of time" (62). Even in choosing the title of the book, which was Woolf's working title for *Mrs. Dalloway*, Cunningham immediately proclaims his attention to time and the hours that create our existence as human beings. With the modern tradition in mind, especially the traditions created by Virginia Woolf, Cunningham sets his novel on one day while disrupting the traditional chronological timeline. Structurally Cunningham moves beyond the modern traditions by including a variety of perspectives from disparate time periods and settings while also using *Mrs. Dalloway* as a springboard for his own novel. In a postmodern fashion, Cunningham creates connections – the connections that Virginia Woolf would have hoped that her novel would create. Each structural and thematic decision he makes forges connections between the three women and between the women and the audience.

Cunningham sets his novel on one day in each of the lives of three women, honoring the modern tradition that was so radical when James Joyce published *Ulysses* and when Virginia Woolf published *Mrs. Dalloway*. By choosing to set the novel on one day for each character,

Cunningham shows, as Woolf did, the ways in which one day can symbolize the entire life of an individual. The hours pass and shape the day, a day in which all parts of the self are combined. One day encompasses the past, the present, and the future. However, in extending beyond Woolf's structure, Cunningham includes three women who each have one day. These three days become quite important as they connect to one another. The one day for Virginia Woolf begins *Mrs. Dalloway*, the work that will save Laura Brown and define Clarissa Vaughn. The one day for Laura Brown explains the psyche and background of Richard Brown, who plays a major role in the one day of Clarissa Vaughn. The one day for Clarissa Vaughn includes not only Virginia Woolf, but also Laura Brown, as Laura must enter Clarissa's day because of the death of Richard. The one day in *Mrs. Dalloway* becomes three days in *The Hours*, and these three days intermingle. Cunningham questions traditional time by setting the novel in one day, while he also plays with time by allowing those three days to intermingle, crossing generations and ignoring the standard rules of time.

The time line for the novel also reveals Cunningham's disruption of linear time and his need to create connections between these three women despite the different time periods from which they come. Cunningham includes four different time periods, 1923, 1941, 1949 and the late 1990s. The prologue, set in 1941, presents the eventual suicide of Virginia Woolf, but the day that he expands for his character Virginia Woolf takes place in 1923 as she begins to write *Mrs. Dalloway*. He does not position the women in order; the chapters move from character to character and time period to time period as Cunningham chooses. Furthermore, he uses present tense throughout the novel in order to emphasize the ways in which each day, no matter the generation, still exists in the present. This "consistent present tense also forms a linkage, as though the divisions separating 1923, 1941, 1949, and the late 1990s – and indeed pre-World



War II England, post-World War II America, and the ‘now’ of New York City – were merely superficial” (Alley 402). While Richard sits on the ledge of the window about to jump to his death, Cunningham positions us inside the internal consciousness of Clarissa who watches him, in the present tense. She thinks, “Something within her, something like a voice but not a voice, an inner knowledge all but indistinguishable from the pump of her heart, says, Once I found Richard sitting on a window ledge five stories above the ground” (197). Although she imagines speaking of the event in the future, as if it has already happened, Clarissa is stuck in the present. She cannot move forward or backward in time, and the present tense allows this moment to become real for her and for the readers. She wants to escape the stronghold of time, but she cannot. As Hughes asserts, Cunningham’s decisions regarding the timeline and present tense allow *The Hours* to connect to its readers in a fundamental way. She writes, “Perhaps the idea of rippling outward might also illuminate the way many postmodern works of literature (and film) defy a linear or chronological structure with a beginning, middle, and end. Instead they spin off like ripples in all directions, points of contact and connection as the circle widens” (357). The circle widens because Cunningham reveals each decade equally in the present tense, allowing each woman a voice in the reader’s world.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf’s narrator floats from one character’s consciousness to the next. There are no chapter breaks, and she presents her characters’ thoughts in one continuous procession through the day. Cunningham, like Woolf, presents the perspectives of various characters; however, he clarifies the shift in perspective with chapter breaks. Therefore, as he does with his other techniques, Cunningham honors Woolf’s example while breaking away from it as well for his own purposes. Although Cunningham separates the various perspectives, he connects them with his content. For example, at the end of one chapter, the character Virginia

Woolf writes the first line of her book, “*Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself*” (35). Starting the next chapter, Laura Brown reads, “*Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself*” (37). Even though he separates the voices by titling each chapter “Mrs. Woolf,” “Mrs. Brown,” and “Mrs. Dalloway,” Cunningham creates connections throughout the chapters that hint at a seamless narration of the consciousnesses.

Because I assert that the definition of postmodern literature requires the authors to go beyond the techniques of the modernist authors, I hope to show how Cunningham uses structural technique to expand his ideas about timelessness. He accomplishes this goal by including intertextuality and creating a setting that bridges the ocean. *The Hours* becomes not only timeless but also placeless. *The Hours*, unlike *Beloved*, would not exist on its own; it needs *Mrs. Dalloway* in order to accomplish its purpose. Much of Clarissa Vaughn’s day resembles that of Clarissa Dalloway. Just as Clarissa Dalloway goes to buy the flowers, so does Clarissa Vaughn. Cunningham describes her morning walk in a very similar way, but the setting is New York, in contemporary America. “New York in its racket and stern brown decrepitude, its bottomless decline, always produces a few summer mornings like this; mornings invaded everywhere by an assertion of new life so determined it is almost comic, like a cartoon character that endures endless, hideous punishments and always emerges unburnt, unscarred, ready for more” (9-10). However, he has not simply rewritten *Mrs. Dalloway* from a contemporary perspective. He brings Woolf’s text of the past back to life and imagines the effects the work has had on Americans. The place and the time do not matter because it is the effect that matters. Because Clarissa’s day takes place in New York City and Laura Brown’s day takes place in suburban Los Angeles, Cunningham widens the circle of those experiencing Clarissa Dalloway’s story. These women are therefore connected by the intertextuality of Cunningham’s work even though they

live in different time periods and in different places. Cunningham successfully disobeys the rules of conventional clock-time in the modern tradition while also taking postmodern risks. By creating this disruption in time, Cunningham proves that connections that offer understanding and self-enlightenment can be made across time lines and distances.

### **Unending External Chaos**

While Morrison addresses one of the most horrific external moments of our society, Cunningham spans various generations to show that some of the same external conflicts can continue year after year. Primarily, each character grapples with three external issues: aging, societal expectations, and death. These three issues shadow some of the chaos Clarissa Dalloway experiences in *Mrs. Dalloway*. However, because of the setting, the external chaos spans three generations and touches on some ideas in the contemporary generation that Virginia Woolf could not have covered in the 1920s. By bringing the past external problems into the present, Cunningham shows that many pressures are unending. They will always live within us, and we cannot escape those basic external problems that Clarissa Dalloway faces; however, as time passes, pressures change, and these women also experience individual pressures of the era. In the same way as Clarissa Dalloway, all three characters struggle to balance the external and the internal. They know the internal deserves a place, but they must spend the day figuring out how to allow the internal and the external to coexist in order to create self-assurance.

Virginia Woolf the character fights the external pressures she faces living in Richmond rather than in London; she experiences conflicts with the servants and the pressures of societal expectations while also trying desperately to stay focused enough to work, to create art. She thinks at one point that “[s]he will return to London. Better to die raving mad in London than

evaporate in Richmond” (71). She feels contaminated by the country setting and longs for the noise and the comforting chaos of the city. The quiet creates internal chaos for the character Virginia Woolf. She admits, as she struggles with the concept of death that “[s]he would like to lie down in [the dead bird’s] place. No denying it, she would like that. Vanessa and Julian can go on about their business, their tea and travels, while she, Virginia, a bird-sized Virginia, lets herself metamorphose from an angular, difficult woman into an ornament on a hat; a foolish, uncaring thing” (121). She struggles with her creation of art despite the fact that she actually has a good writing day. She thinks about the anxiety her art creates for her as she begins her day:

She washes her face and does not look, certainly not this morning, not when the work is waiting for her and she is anxious to join it the way she might join a party that had already started downstairs, a party full of wit and beauty certainly but full, too, of something finer than wit or beauty; something mysterious and golden; a spark of profound celebration, of life itself, as silks rustle across polished floors and secrets are whispered under the music. (31)

She recovers from much of the external chaos through the creation of her novel. Mrs. Woolf struggles with her servant Nelly all day, until finally she decides that “[s]he will give Clarissa Dalloway great skill with servants, a manner that is intricately kind and commanding. Her servants will love her. They will do more than she asks” (87). We know from the prologue (and from history) that Virginia Woolf committed suicide in 1941, so any day like the one she experiences in 1923 must be better than that inevitable day. However, because we see the external chaos she experiences, we understand the consistent pressure she felt from the external forces and the difficulty she faces as she tries to merge the external and internal portions of the self, as Bergson suggests. Although the prospect for her future seems quite bleak, Virginia

Woolf does survive the day in the 1923, and Cunningham suggests that the creation of her art helps her move forward, even though that movement forward can only last for so long. The character of Virginia Woolf evolves by the end of the day in 1923, and much of that progress relates directly to the success of Clarissa Dalloway within Virginia's mind.

Laura Brown, the housewife and mother in suburban Los Angeles in 1949, struggles the most with the external chaos and the difficulty she has merging the two aspects of the self. Although she survives the day without committing suicide, we feel little hope for Mrs. Brown until we learn later that she has to abandon her family in order to find a symbiosis of the self. Laura fights the external pressures of World War II and post-war societal expectations along with her own suffocating marriage and opinions about her purpose in life. Constantly throughout the novel, Laura fights the pressures of postwar society. Cunningham writes, "In another world, she might have spent her whole life reading. But this is the new world, the rescued world – there's not much room for idleness" (39). Because the men who fought in the war have rescued people like Laura and her son, she feels an obligation to become something that she is not. She feels the pressure of the war on her shoulders:

Because the war is over, the world has survived, and we are here, all of us, making homes, having and raising children, creating not just books or paintings but a whole world – a world of order and harmony where children are safe (if not happy), where men who have seen horrors beyond imagining, who have acted bravely and well, come home to lighted windows, to perfume, to plates and napkins. (42)

This world of harmony that she feels the pressure to create does not come naturally for Laura, and, unlike Clarissa Dalloway who finds a sense of accomplishment in her social abilities, Laura

finds failure because she cannot create art out of her life. Cunningham symbolizes this social failure with the cake that Laura makes for her husband's birthday. Although she makes the cake twice, Laura still feels her lack of accomplishment and mourns the art she cannot create. Laura remembers the fate of the artist: "Virginia Woolf put a stone into the pocket of her coat, walked into a river, and drowned. Laura will not let herself go morbid. She'll make the beds, vacuum, cook the birthday dinner. She will not mind, about anything" (101). Woolf is an artist, and Laura Brown is not. This is the difference in Laura's mind, and because she cannot become an artist, she must try to make the best of the duties she has, even though she fails at these as well.

Laura feels the pressures of 1949 America weigh on her in many ways. She lives a life constantly reminding herself what she *should be* doing. She thinks, "She should be out of bed, showered and dressed, fixing breakfast for Dan and Richie. She can hear them downstairs, her husband making his own breakfast, ministering to Richie. She should be there, shouldn't she? She should be standing before the stove in her new robe, full of simple, encouraging talk" (38). Because the veterans of war are "up at sunrise, uncomplaining" (45), Laura should be too. She should be different, but she is not, and this external pressure causes her to seek some kind of resolution through self-fulfillment, and although she will not find that self-fulfillment on this day in 1949, she will find the strength to continue forward, and Cunningham suggests that she has found strength in her life by the end of the novel.

In addition to the external pressures of the era, Laura Brown also suffers common external forces that can appear in any generation at any time. She finds herself in a suffocating marriage, likely suffering from depression, and she cannot find any self-fulfillment from motherhood. When Dan, the war hero, asked for her hand in marriage, "[w]hat could she say but yes? How could she deny a handsome, good-hearted boy, practically a member of the family,

who had come back from the dead? So now she is Laura Brown. Laura Zielski, the solitary girl, the incessant reader, is gone, and here in her place is Laura Brown” (40). Mirroring Clarissa Dalloway, Laura Brown becomes a different person from her former self through marriage. The only solution, as Woolf shows with Clarissa Dalloway, will come from a symbiosis of the self – a blending of the external and the internal consciousnesses. Although she continues to remind herself that “[s]he does not dislike her child, does not dislike her husband” (41), she will not move forward, find the enlightened moment, or transcend unless she follows her individual desires.

Clarissa Vaughn, the Mrs. Dalloway of *The Hours*, struggles with external pressures that are very similar to those of Clarissa Dalloway in Woolf’s novel; however, Cunningham also pulls her into a contemporary world in order to show the ways in which a character struggles with contemporary issues at the same time that she struggles with the same issues that have lasted for generations. Richard creates the name “Mrs. Dalloway” for Clarissa Vaughn. He calls her “Mrs. Dalloway,” not only because of “her existing first name, a sign too obvious to ignore,” but also because “she was destined to charm, to prosper” (10-11). Clarissa Vaughn spends her day preparing for a party for Richard, and, like Clarissa Dalloway, she finds herself consistently measuring her actions and her choices against society’s expectations. She thrives in her societal role: “She, Clarissa, was clearly not destined to make a disastrous marriage or fall under the wheels of a train. She was destined to charm, to prosper. So Mrs. Dalloway it was and would be” (11).

However, Clarissa Vaughn faces contemporary issues that Virginia Woolf could not have addressed directly in her novel. Although Clarissa Dalloway and Sally Seton share a kiss in the novel, Woolf could not explicitly explore homosexual love and the pressures that gay men and

women face in our contemporary world. Cunningham creates two homosexual couples, Clarissa with Sally and Richard with Lewis, and, most important, Cunningham addresses the terrible disease AIDS in his novel. Clarissa reveals the anguish experienced when a loved one suffers from AIDS:

How can she help resenting Evan and all the others who got the new drugs in time; all the fortunate ('fortunate' being, of course, a relative term) men and women whose minds had not yet been eaten into lace by the virus. How can she help feeling angry on behalf of Richard, whose muscles and organs have been revived by the new discoveries but whose mind seems to have passed beyond any sort of repair other than the conferring of good days among the bad. (55-6)

Cunningham allows Clarissa Vaughn to connect specifically with Clarissa Dalloway through the external demons they both share; however, he positions his novel in a contemporary world by addressing the additional pressures of today's society.

These three women connect to one another through their suffering and their shared external chaos. They also, however, each experience a unique, personal battle with the external. Cunningham reveals the ways in which suffering continues. Suffering does not listen to a clock or read a map; suffering follows us everywhere. Even if the chaos changes from generation to generation in some ways, we all experience the pressures of societal expectations, and each of us must find a way out of the nightmare through moments of renewal.

### **Moments of Being Across the Generations**

Inspired by Woolf's moments of being, Michael Cunningham continues the tradition in *The Hours*. The characters experience moments of being throughout the novel, and these



moments resemble Bergson's explanation of duration. The past, present, and future merge, and, for an ephemeral moment, the consciousness feels a sense of enlightenment and peace. For the characters in *The Hours*, these moments allow a convergence of the external and internal, the past and the present. With his creation of moments of beings, Cunningham also continues to form connections between the characters in a postmodern manner. The characters experience these moments near the same part of the day, and each character experiences a moment of being inspired by a kiss. The moments for the characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* are private, internal, and off-limits to the other characters, whereas the moments for the characters in *The Hours* create connections and openness so that the readers of *The Hours* feel connected to them and are able to imagine those moments within their own lives. Richard seems to summarize these moments in a phrase very similar to those that Bergson uses. Richard says, "We're middle-aged and we're young lovers standing beside a pond. We're everything, all at once. Isn't it remarkable?" (67). The characters become everything all at once through these moments of being and through their connections to one another despite the separation in time periods.

The moments of being Virginia Woolf experiences during her day in 1923 usually connect with her art. Because she has a good writing day as she begins to compose *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia's positive moments surround this brilliance that comes to her throughout the day. She experiences a moment of being as she thinks about Clarissa Dalloway, and the moment resembles Clarissa's moment of being from *Mrs. Dalloway* when she is upstairs, alone during her party. Virginia thinks:

She leaves the parlor, crosses the foyer, and enters the darkened dining room.

Long rectangles of moonlight mixed with street light fall through the window onto the tabletop, are swept away by windblown branches, reappear, and are

swept away again. Virginia stands in the doorway, watching the shifting patterns as she would watch waves break on a beach. Yes, Clarissa will have loved a woman. Clarissa will have kissed a woman, only once. Clarissa will be bereaved, deeply lonely, but she will not die. (210-11).

Virginia, like her character Clarissa Dalloway, finds these moments in private. The art inspires the moments, and when she experiences them, her internal consciousness lives. Furthermore, she has this moment of being at the same time that she imagines Clarissa's kiss with Sally Seton, a kiss that will inspire Cunningham to connect his three characters. Her private moment of being becomes something that connects women across the generations. The three of them become one because of that experience.

For Laura Brown, the moments do not lend as much hope or connection, but by the end of the day, this moment has allowed her to live. Although Laura Brown planned to commit suicide on this day, we later discover that she never commits suicide, except in Richard's novel, and that somehow, possibly through her moments of duration, she finds solace and the ability to continue forward. In this moment, Laura realizes that "[i]t is possible to die" (151), and that realization allows her to survive the day. She has just read the allusion to Shakespeare in *Mrs. Dalloway*, "Fear no more the heat o' the sun, Nor the furious winter's rages." Cunningham writes, "She could decide to die. It is an abstract, shimmering notion, not particularly morbid. Hotel rooms are where people do things like that, aren't they? It's possible – perhaps even likely – that someone has ended his or her life right here, in this room, on this bed. Someone said, Enough, no more; someone looked for the last time at these white walls, this smooth white ceiling" (151). The solace she finds in this moment of connection reminds us of the solace Clarissa Dalloway experiences when she thinks of Septimus Smith's suicide. Laura must

experience this private moment in order to then decide that she “would never” (152), and she feels comfort knowing that death is possible. This moment saves her from self-destruction, and Laura lives.

Unlike Laura Brown, Clarissa Vaughn’s moments of being come a little more easily and with a little more love for life. She also needs these moments in order to progress forward, and the moments come for her in waves to remind her that she does love her life, as much, maybe, as anyone does. Clarissa remembers her past with Richard and the one moment that will eternally live in her present:

What lives undimmed in Clarissa’s mind more than three decades later is a kiss at dusk on a patch of dead grass, and a walk around a pond as mosquitoes droned in the darkening air. There is still that singular perfection, and it’s perfect in part because it seemed, at the time, so clearly to promise more. Now she knows: That was the moment, right then. There had been no other. (98)

Clarissa’s individual moments often look to the past because she must reconcile herself with the past in order to move forward. Cunningham creates a character much like Clarissa Dalloway, one who does enjoy life, entertaining, and the other external aspects of life, but she must find a way to allow her internal consciousness to thrive within that external world. One way that Clarissa does this is through her moments of being and her reconciliation with memories from her past, especially those related to Richard.

In keeping with Virginia Woolf’s precedent, Cunningham allows each character to experience her own private moment of being, a moment that will carry her forward, as I explain in detail above. Additionally, however, he also creates moments of being for the three women who connect in order to show the lasting impression of *Mrs. Dalloway*’s themes and Virginia

Woolf's continuous impact. The three connect in many ways, but the most important connection comes from the moments of being each woman experiences before or after she shares a kiss with another woman. Virginia Woolf shares a kiss with her sister Vanessa; Laura Brown shares a kiss with her neighbor Kitty; and Clarissa Vaughn shares a kiss with Barbara at the flower shop.

Each kiss inspires a moment of being.

Clarissa Vaughn experiences quite a few kisses with her partner Sally, and her moment of being I analyzed above involves a past kiss with Richard that certainly remains in her present. However, neither kiss with Sally, the one in the hallway when "they are always so generous with kisses" (89) nor the kiss on the forehead that "reminds Clarissa of putting a stamp on a letter" (224) provides a moment of being for Clarissa because the relationship is strained. The kiss from her past with Richard represents a past moment that must be accepted and overcome, not a moment from the present that brings enlightenment and hope. However, a brief kiss she shares with Barbara in the flower shop provides a beautiful moment of being for Clarissa. Cunningham writes:

Her lips touch Barbara's skin and the moment is suddenly, unexpectedly perfect. She stands in the dim, deliciously cool little shop that is like a temple, solemn in its abundance, its bunches of dried flowers hanging from the ceiling and its rack of ribbons trailing against the back wall. There was that branch tapping the windowpane and there was another, though she'd been older, five or six, in her own bedroom, this branch covered with red leaves, and she can remember thinking back reverently, even then, to that earlier branch, the one that had seemed to excite the music downstairs; she remembers loving the autumn branch for reminding her of the earlier branch, tapping against the window of a house to

which she would never return, which she could not otherwise remember in any of its particulars. Now she is here, in the flower shop, where poppies drift white and apricot on long, hairy stems. (24-5)

This small kiss jolts Clarissa powerfully into some of the brightest moments of her past. The kiss reminds her of the moment from her past in which “she began to inhabit the world; to understand the promises implied by an order larger than human happiness” (22-3). In this moment, Clarissa regains the hopefulness that comes from a kiss; she starts the connection that will allow each of the three characters to love at least some part of her life at the end of her day.

The kiss Laura experiences with Kitty reshapes her life and seems to be the only authentic action Laura makes in her constrained day. This authenticity inspires Laura to reconsider her position in life. Cunningham writes:

Kitty nods against Laura’s breasts. The question has been silently asked and silently answered, it seems. They are both afflicted and blessed, full of shared secrets, striving every moment. They are each impersonating someone. They are weary and beleaguered; they have taken on such enormous work.

Kitty lifts her face, and their lips touch. They both know what they are doing. They rest their mouths, each on the other. They touch their lips together, but do not quite kiss. (110)

In the lives they have accepted, lives that are restricted and suffocating, the two women are “impersonating” other people. They need this moment of authenticity to remind them that the true self has needs that must be met. If the internal self is ignored for too long, it will not survive, and this kiss for Laura brings her to this realization.

The final kiss that connects the three characters brings Virginia to a new level of happiness in which she defies the external pressures and succumbs to internal pleasure, happiness, and comfort with herself. Cunningham writes:

Here is Nelly with the tea and ginger and here, forever, is Virginia, unaccountably happy, better than happy, alive, sitting with Vanessa in the kitchen on an ordinary spring day as Nelly, the subjugated Amazon queen, Nelly the ever indignant, displays what she's been compelled to bring.

Nelly turns away and, although it is not at all their custom, Virginia leans forward and kisses Vanessa on the mouth. It is an innocent kiss, innocent enough, but just now, in this kitchen, behind Nelly's back, it feels like the most delicious and forbidden of pleasures. (154)

Nelly represents the pressures of the external that Virginia battles throughout her day, and in this moment Virginia wins because she is “better than happy”; she is “alive.” In all of these moments, the private moments of being and the moments that connect the three characters, Cunningham creates an experience that resembles Bergson's concept of duration. They are moments that will *endure*, moments that “form both the past and present states into an organic whole” (“The Idea” 60). These moments, as I will explain in detail in the final section, allow these women to achieve the resolution that each of them must. The moments of being, moments of duration, allow them to live, each in her own way, at the end of the day.

### **Resolution Through Individuality and Interconnections**

The resolution Michael Cunningham seeks in *The Hours* directly relates to those resolutions of *Mrs. Dalloway*; however, he, like Toni Morrison, also hopes to connect the

characters more closely and to widen the ripple of the wave to an open, involved, contemporary audience. The women experience their individual moments of resolution, like they experience their individual moments of being, because they each struggle with different chaos and seek personal recovery. Cunningham does not stop there, however. The three women must also come to a common resolution, one that connects the three of them and helps them endure, even posthumously for Virginia Woolf. He goes beyond the thematic connections of *Mrs. Dalloway*; “[f]or [Cunningham], the analogies were extended to what are ultimately issues of human interconnection, as viewed from a late-twentieth century perspective” (Alley 401). Virginia Woolf links the three of them through her composition of *Mrs. Dalloway*, and they all three hope to allow the internal self to survive and endure beyond this one day. Each of them must endure the past, allow the past and the present to coexist, and listen to her internal consciousness. Postmodern literature with its intertextuality brings the future and the past together. The literature itself becomes the moment; it creates connections between the artists of the past and the wave of the future.

Cunningham’s character Virginia Woolf individually seeks survival of the self in order to write her novel. She hopes to return to London to preserve her vulnerable sanity. She not only wants to continue living, but she also wants to listen to her internal consciousness and allow that consciousness to live through her art, at least. Although we know that the hope for Virginia Woolf does not last forever, in this novel, she does find hope in 1923, albeit the 1923 of the novel she does find hope, however ephemeral. Indeed, Virginia Woolf lived another eighteen years, and, as we know, the novel she begins on that successful day in 1923 becomes the eternal *Mrs. Dalloway*. As Virginia awakens on the morning of her one day, the narrator reveals her hope for resolution:

This is one of the most singular experiences, waking on what feels like a good day, preparing to work but not yet actually embarked. At this moment there are infinite possibilities, whole hours ahead. Her mind hums. This morning she may penetrate the obfuscation, the clogged pipes, to reach the gold. She can feel it inside her, an all but indescribable second self, or rather a parallel, purer self. If she were religious, she would call it the soul. (34)

Cunningham presents this hope for Virginia as she embarks on the day, paying attention to what resembles Bergson's description of the internal flux. She will find this endurance and potential for creative evolution through her art, and Cunningham "may also be suggesting that a work of art is an offering, an effort at making the caves connect" (Hughes 357). Cunningham's Virginia does not choose to die as she might wish she could on that day in 1923. She chooses to live, partially because of the moments of being she has experienced that remind her that her art matters. Through her art, she can connect.

For Laura Brown in 1949, Cunningham buries the hope for the survival of the internal self deeply. Laura Brown, the darkest of the three characters, barely survives the novel. She contemplates suicide, and, in her son's book, she does commit suicide. She spends most of her day on the edge, like Richard, but in the end she does not jump. Hughes writes, "This faculty, the soul of Virginia Woolf, 'made of the same substance as the animating mysteries of the world,' sustains Laura Brown, however precariously, in one of the darkest periods of her life" (354). Her survival becomes her resolution, and then we learn in Clarissa's present day that Laura Brown does endure, that she likely finds her internal self, but she must abandon her family to do so. Laura decides not to kill herself, and "reading *Mrs. Dalloway* helps her to overcome despair" (Hughes 354). She survives this dark day and moves forward as "the woman who tried



to die and failed at it, the woman who fled her family” (222). She “wish[es] [she] could have done better” (222) for Richard, but she knows that she “did the best [she] could” (222). She *could not* have done better for Richard and allowed herself to endure.

Clarissa Vaughn also experiences individual resolution at the end of the day; she grapples with the external pressures and regrets from her life in order to continue forward as “Clarissa.” Like Clarissa Dalloway’s re-entrance to the party, Clarissa Vaughn knows “[a]nd here she is, herself, Clarissa, not Mrs. Dalloway any more; there is no one now to call her that. Here she is with another hour before her” (226). Ultimately, Clarissa, like her predecessor, loves life. She thinks, “Why else do we struggle to go on living, no matter how compromised, no matter how harmed? Even if we’re further gone than Richard; even if we’re fleshless, blazing with lesions, shitting in the sheets; still, we want desperately to live” (15). The hope for the future lies primarily with Clarissa Vaughn at the end of the novel, since we know very little about Laura Brown’s life between 1949 and the late 1990s and we know that Virginia Woolf ended her life in 1941, not only from history but also from Cunningham’s prologue. Clarissa Vaughn may be able to allow her true internal self, without the pressures of Mrs. Dalloway, to live as Bergson recommends.

As he does with his structure, his development of the external chaos, and his recreation of moments of being, Cunningham goes beyond the modernist tradition as he creates resolution for his characters. Each individual finds a personal resolution or enlightenment from his or her moments of duration, but also, the characters in this novel must connect. They connect to one another, they connect to readers, and readers connect to one another with the help of the novel. These postmodern techniques allow Cunningham to extend beyond *Mrs. Dalloway* to create a novel that will also endure generations and connect all readers by emphasizing the importance of

interconnections and relationships. Both Morrison and Cunningham rely on the connections between human beings, in addition to the power of the individual self, in order to evolve.

Although the party that Clarissa plans does not happen because of Richard's suicide, another party takes place, one that connects Clarissa and Laura, and the two are conjoined by the importance of *Mrs. Dalloway* in their lives. The novel saved Laura and defined Clarissa.

Clarissa thinks about her revised party, "Here, then, is the party, still laid; here are the flowers, still fresh; everything ready for the guests, who have turned out to be only four. Forgive us, Richard. It is, in fact, a party, after all. It is a party for the not-yet-dead; for the relatively undamaged; for those who for mysterious reasons have the fortune to be alive" (226).

Cunningham allows the characters to connect in order to show their common "fortune to be alive."

Virginia Woolf certainly creates connections between her characters and her readers with *Mrs. Dalloway*, as Cunningham shows us with his novel, so when I assert that Cunningham takes those connections further, I do not mean to suggest that he achieves while *Mrs. Dalloway* fails. He does something different. The solipsism of the modernists is no longer the goal. The goal for the postmodernist is to reach as many readers as possible through interconnections.

By revisiting the themes of *Mrs. Dalloway*, "including the oceanic interconnections between people, the life of one human spirit animating that of another, the permeable boundaries between life and death, and the burst bounds of time, he allows them to ripple out in wider and wider circles" (Hughes 353). Cunningham connects his readers by creating duration with his text.

Time has no value; the themes and the issues remain no matter how much time has passed.

Hughes agrees, "That model is one of 'enlacing,' whereby the postmodern work extends the depth of the tradition to unnamed and innumerable others. Far from claiming the triumph of the

new (albeit doing so, temporarily but inevitably, at the same time), such a work continues the links begun in the original, links between characters or between characters and readers, some of the latter future writers or artists themselves” (360). By bringing Woolf’s past and Woolf’s novel into the present, combining the traditions of modern literature with his postmodern vision, and setting the novel in three different eras and locations in America and England, Cunningham creates a durational text that endures.

\* \* \*

Near the end of the novel, Clarissa Vaughn thinks about time:

We live our lives, do whatever we do, and then we sleep – it’s as simple and ordinary as that. A few jump out of windows or drown themselves or take pills; more die by accident; and most of us, the vast majority, are slowly devoured by some disease or, if we’re very fortunate, by time itself. There’s just this for consolation: an hour here or there when our lives seem, against all odds and expectations, to burst open and give us everything we’ve ever imagined, though everyone but children (and perhaps even they) knows these hours will inevitably be followed by others, far darker and more difficult. Still, we cherish the city, the morning; we hope, more than anything, for more. (225)

In this passage, Cunningham offers much fodder for my argument. The use of “we” connects Clarissa to the other characters in the novel and to the readers. She focuses on just about every way someone might die, and reminds us that we are fortunate to live our lives and die without pain. Most important, Cunningham emphasizes the moments in life worth living – those

moments that most resemble Bergson's duration. Those moments are the hours that "give us everything we've ever imagined."

Both *Beloved* and *The Hours* honor the traditions of the modern authors while enduring as postmodern texts representing a contemporary world. This contemporary world must honor and accept the past as part of the present; it must move forward and endure. We may not find real freedom or hours of perfection at every point in life, but those moments that do offer hope and resolution are worth the struggle. Both *The Hours* and *Beloved* were made into feature films. *The Hours* was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Picture, and although the film *Beloved* was not quite as successful, producer and star Oprah Winfrey brought the novel to the forefront. The success of *The Hours* made "the original masterpiece a bestseller for the first time in seventy-five years, as well as developing Virginia Woolf as a 'part' that would win an Oscar for Best Actress" (Alley 415). These two postmodern works create connections by honoring the past and looking toward the future. The timeless moments, the timeless novels, and the timeless themes will endure.

### **Conclusion: “Only Through Time Time is Conquered”**

To conclude I return to Eliot. I hope that I have shown in my work that time remains an incessant part of each day. We measure the day in hours, and the hours in minutes, and the clocks will never cease. We will continue to wear our watches and show up to appointments “on time,” because society needs time as a consistent measurement. We must understand time and its constraints in order to conquer it. Each of these authors focuses on time in order to conquer it, and Bergson, in his life work to defy scientific time, would have been proud. He might have been amazed that these brilliant authors could find a way to communicate the internal flux of the mind with language. I have shown how each author defies linear time in order to find the moments of duration that allow the soul to live.

In this dissertation I wanted to show continuity and change. In keeping with Bergson’s tradition, I wanted to emphasize that the past lives within the present, but the present doesn’t merely repeat the past. Each author changes the way we read literature in his or her unique way, while, at the same time, each text lives within the next and informs the prior. Bergson writes that “in the human soul there are only *processes*” (*TFW* 131). These authors each evolve through their creation of the works I have analyzed, and the works blend together, as well, to show that human beings and art journey through a process. Each author inspires the next to create brilliant literature that will conquer time.

Virginia Woolf writes, “Life is not a series of gig lamps, symmetrically arranged: life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope that surrounds us from the beginning of consciousness to the end” (*Common Reader* 212). Life is not a series of moments that are chronologically arranged. Woolf’s halo of life that surrounds us from the beginning to the end resembles Bergson’s theory of duration. We live within duration, and the internal consciousness

will remain with us from the beginning to the end. We must acknowledge that internal consciousness, and some of us must try to share that consciousness so that the rest of us can connect.

Finally, I must end with Bergson. He writes:

Now, if some bold novelist, tearing aside the cleverly woven curtain of our conventional ego, shows us under this appearance of logic a fundamental absurdity, under this juxtaposition of simple states an infinite permeation of a thousand different impressions which have already ceased to exist the instant they are named, we commend him for having known us better than we knew ourselves.

*(TFW 133)*

Each of these authors, Eliot, Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner, Morrison, and Cunningham, seems to know us better than we know ourselves, and each of them reveals the “infinite permeation of a thousand different impressions” in their works. By expressing the internal consciousness of their characters and ignoring the conventional limitations of time, each invites us inside the human psyche so that we can better understand and celebrate our own internal flux. The reason that I knew ten years ago that Virginia Woolf had always and would always be with me was because Woolf knew how to guide me inside my durational existence. These bold writers take us inside our own minds to allow us to conquer the suffocating time that tries to control our lives, but cannot.

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