THE USE OF TIME IN GRAHAM SWIFT'S AND VIRGINIA WOOLF'S NOVELS

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to compare the use of time in Graham Swift's and Virginia Woolf's novels. The analysis focuses on the issue of time in relation to the lyrical novels both authors write. Traditional, Modernist, and Postmodernist ideas about time are discussed. As theorical approaches, Ricoeur's and narratological theories will be considered. The paper deals with non-linear chronology, aspects of memory and the influence on the structure of the novel and on reader's perceptions. Different uses of time in Swift may be classified as follows: linear-nonlinear, memories-present, cyclical time (since history repeats itself), real time and fictional time, as well as personal and public time.

Keywords: plot, lyrical novel, cyclical time, history, memory.

"The lyric novel is one where the author expresses their state of mind"[1], we are told. Stuart Dybek (2005) shows us that this has an effect on the way time is seen in the lyrical novel, namely as subjective. The author can move time faster or slower.

Looking at Woolf's use of time will help to understand Swift better. Time in Virginia Woolf's novels is not the same as in traditional novels. Modernism brings a new view on time. According to Ronald Walker, in *The Problem of Plot in the Modernist Text: The Example of Faulkner* (1997), Modernist novels show a different representation of time, character, and causation. These new representations "complicated the idea of what constitutes plot in fiction. The diurnal wanderings of a Leopold Bloom or a Clarissa Dalloway, for example, did not readily conform to the conventions of the 'represented action' schematized by the Neo-Aristotelian critics." Before Modernism, in the eighteenth century, plots were built, as J. Arthur Honeywell claims in *Plot in the Modern Novel* (1968), "around definite beginnings and endings". Honeywell states that the logical sequence of events was fundamental to plot-building in the nineteenth century. Modernism is different from previous representations because of the way it orders incidents in time. Modernism takes a different approach to the way that characters perceive time.

Swift's novels also present the reader with a representation of time different from the traditional one. His novel *The Light of Day* is similar to *Mrs. Dalloway*. In *The Light of Day*, like in *Mrs. Dalloway*, we notice a similar amount of time given to detective Webb's wandering on the streets of London, as he follows Bob and Kristina and reflects on their life and on his own. Unlike Woolf, though, Swift uses the London suburbs, not the center of London.

Woolf borrows the concepts of historical time (chronological time) and psychological time (subjective time) from Bergson's philosophy[2]. In Woolf's and Swift's novels both

[1] Creativewritingcoach.co/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/110918-Lyrical-novel.docx

[2] According to J.W. Graham, "Most critics feel that Virginia Woolf was deeply influenced by Bergson. Mr. William Troy, for example, declares that behind her writing lies all 'that resistance to the naturalistic formula, all that enthusiastic surrender to the world of flux and intuition, which constituted the influence of Bergson on the art and literature of the past thirty years.' (Literary Opinion in America, ed. Zabel, N.Y., 1951, p. 340)" (Graham 1956: 70).

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exterior time and interior time are present; however, the focus is on interior, subjective time. It is in her novel *Orlando* that Woolf writes about the "discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind" (Woolf 1998: 95). These can be regarded as equivalents for Bergson's concepts of *durée* (duration) and mechanistic time.

Ricoeur noticed a similar aspect in the representation of time: a tension between objective time and experienced time. He seems to accurately depict what Woolf achieves in her novels with the way she views time. Orlando notices that centuries pass while he/she lives on. Mrs. Dalloway's day passes while memories from many years ago are still very much alive and relevant for her, as the past continues to influence her present. *The Years* deals with the life story of some generations from the same family, while focusing on a few moments in their lives. *Jacob's Room* focuses on a few instances from Jacob's childhood and youth. In these few examples we see that exterior time is different from interior time. Objective time does not always coincide with subjective time. Characters do not always live completely in the present. For example, Clarissa's memories occupy her mind completely at times, and she no longer pays attention to the present. The reader eventually feels like a lot has happened in *Mrs. Dalloway*, even if the objective time duration of the plot is one day in the life of the characters. Sometimes insignificant-seeming incidents are omitted; sometimes other incidents are highlighted for a good part of the story. Even in their memories, characters may insist on certain incidents and develop them so that they come to occupy a significant space in the novel. As proof that past and present identities coexist (like in the theory of Wordsworth's double awareness of memory), Septimus experiences intense flashbacks from the war. At some point, Septimus is living in the past completely, no longer aware of the present or of objective, exterior time. Here we can say that exterior time is ignored, that it is only inner time that matters. The novel *The Voyage Out* focuses mainly on Rachel's voyage and on its effect on her evolution, leaving out other incidents from her life.

Time in Swift's novels may be classified according to various criteria, such as linear-nonlinear, memories-present, cyclical (since history repeats itself), real and fictional, personal and public. As with Woolf's novels, the objective dimensions of time do not always make a satisfactory representation. Memory and effect cannot follow the directions established by objective time; they need a personal dimension which can be established by non-linear chronology or by personal time in general. The first striking aspect related to time in Graham Swift's novels is the existence of the non-linear chronology. Non-linear chronology is present in all his novels: *The Sweetshop Owner*, *Shuttlecock*, *Waterland*, *Out of This World*, *Ever After*, *Last Orders*, *The Light of Day*, *Tomorrow*, and *Wish You Were Here*. This is because the story's presentation follows the workings of memory, which move from the present of the story into the past and back. According to Van Brunt (2004), Postmodernist narratives are against linear, progressive time and thus against relationships of cause and effect. Postmodernism, like Modernism, attempts to move away from linear chronology, from causality and coherence of plot, according to Burgass (2000: 177). The consequences of such a narrative structure are that, just like in modernist novels, the reader is expected to participate in a reconstruction of the story by rebuilding the relationships of cause and effect and by putting incidents in chronological order.

The two types of time mentioned by Ricoeur show their influence on the novels' structure. Woolf and Swift focus on aspects which are not normally given so much attention in traditional novels (such as Mrs. Dalloway's or George Webb's walk in London while they reflect on their past and present life). This focus is reflected in the formal aspect of the narrative. Passages dealing with Mrs. Dalloway's or George Webb's reflections during their walks through London are extended over a number of pages. They are given more space on the page and consequently they take more of the reader's time. This is why a narratological approach may be used to explain uses of time in these novels. In turn, these uses of time

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account for a poetic effect on prose. Poetic language is used for these extended passages dealing with characters' thoughts and perceptions of their surroundings, and with their subjective perceptions of time.

Various instances of memories of the past are texts embedded in the larger text and described by lyrical monologues in the novel. The embedded text contains memories as well as a different time, which is the past.

Bal refers to the chronological order of incidents which may sometimes be changed in the story's presentation as deviations in sequential ordering. When sequential ordering deviates, it underlines some significant elements in a narrative: "Deviations in sequential ordering may contribute to intense reading [...]. If deviations in sequential ordering correspond with conventions, they will not stand out." (Bal 1997: 82) In Woolf and Swift, the influence of the past on the present is an important aspect; thus, such deviations may be regarded as underlining this. Characters' thoughts and memories move in time and create such deviations.

The idea that history repeats itself is emphasized by the use of deviations in sequential ordering, which suggests that time is cyclical. This idea is especially evident in *Waterland*. Virginia Woolf shared the same preoccupation with history, as well as with subjectivity and repetition. Woolf's essay *The Historian and the Gibbon* contains a quotation from J. B. Bury on the subjectivity of history, which "is in the last resort somebody's image of the past, and the image is conditioned by the mind and experience of the person who forms it." According to Allen McLaurin (2010: 158), Woolf's preoccupation with repetition is reflected in her view that history is repetitive. The "fictional equivalent" of history is plot; and there are cyclical repetitions in her novels. For instance, in *The Years*, a pattern appears under the form of preoccupation with death: the death of Parnell is later followed by the death of the King, nineteen years later (2010: 158-159). McLaurin speaks about the difference between Forster's story and plot: story is 'what happens next", while plot shows us why it happens. "Story simply changes, whereas plot needs some constant element, some underlying pattern" (McLaurin 2010: 159). McLaurin analyzes how Woolf's novels are distinctive, judging by the way she conceives of story, plot, repetition and situations:

> For plot some underlying principle is required, but Virginia Woolf is obsessed with the principle which underlies these principles, with repetition itself, and she wishes to dispense with both story and plot. In her diary she admits that 'I can make up situations, but I cannot make up plots'. […] *The Years* consists simply in a series of incidents which are repeated with slight variations throughout the novel. It is the history, the saga, of the Pargiter family, but these repetitions make it quite different from the traditional family saga. Her explicit concern with these repetitions can be seen in her diary, where she speaks of the composition of *The Years* in the following way: 'I must still condense and point: give pauses their effect, and repetitions, and the run-on'. (McLaurin 2010: 160)

McLaurin thus speaks of situations in Woolf's case, situations which replace the traditional kind of plot which indicates why something happens. The situations are also likened to the idea of the moment on which Woolf focuses. McLaurin notices in *The Waves* this idea expressed by Neville: "They want a plot, don't they? They want a reason? It is not enough for them, this ordinary scene". McLaurin then states that "Bernard recognizes that the moment is itself made up of other moments, or repetitions which come together" (2010: 161). In Swift, the same idea of circular time brings about a comparison with Woolf's conception of history as repetitive, an idea which is represented in the novel. This idea will be expressed not in the narrative mode but in the lyrical mode, by employing a technique specific to lyric poetry, namely that of images which will hold a certain significance for the characters' mood.

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The history that repeats itself is not always the history of public events, but most often that of personal life, or the public history that also has an impact on the characters' private lives.

Chronological deviations contain, at times, various lyrical scenes. The slow-down of poetic reflections or poetic aspects in general, or the existence of a dramatic aspect (where time goes on at a quick pace) draws attention to the lyrical scenes contained in deviations. Bal claims that sometimes anachronies involve those taking place in the consciousness of a character, when he remembers doing something which is different from the actual event. She calls this type of anachrony "unreal" and then points out that it is used "almost exclusively" in the "so-called 'stream-of-consciousness' literature" (1997: 87). Bal introduces the term "subjective anachrony" which, unlike "objective anachrony", "is an anachrony which can be regarded as such if the 'contents of consciousness' lie in the past or the future; not the past of being 'conscious', the moment of thinking itself" (1997: 87). The anachronies which take place in a character's consciousness are the memories which, as previously mentioned, may be regarded as instances of embedded text with their own time. Bal draws attention to the time that is needed by a narrator to talk about certain incidents from his memory. Bal tries to clarify this situation by drawing attention to the different way of thinking, to the different person that the narrator is at present and was at the time when the incidents in the memory (in the embedded text) take place. Indeed, "The moment of speech is simply part of the (chronological) story; only in the contents are past or future mentioned" (Bal 1997: 87). On some occasions, characters reflect to themselves or talk to other characters at the time of the story's present. In *Time and Narrative* (1991), Ricoeur states that "Everything that is recounted occurs in time, takes time, unfolds temporally." He goes to claim that "the common feature of human experience, that which is marked, organized and clarified by the fact of storytelling in all its forms, is its *temporal character*." The present in Swift's novels is usually the time when not much happens. It is the time when the characters reflect and maybe tell others the story of their past (the case of Tom Crick in *Waterland*, or of William Chapman in *The Sweetshop Owner*). The incidents have occurred in the past, a time which is remembered by the narrating, and it is through this narration that the readers find out the story. The memory is brought into the present time of the story but only by means of speech or reflections. Otherwise, what has happened remains in the past. The present may be defined as present by situating it in time after the readers have established the chronological order. Various incidents help the reader in locating the present time of the novel.

Other distinctions are also worth noting, such as the difference between the time of reflection and the time when various imagined scenes take place. Such a distinction, is supported by Postmodernism, as Postmodernism is preoccupied with boundaries between real time and fictional time and between various ontological categories (Burgass 2000: 177). Lyotard, in *The Postmodern Condition*, refers to this aspect when he says that there is a "'lack of reality' of reality", meaning that our notion of what is "real" is merely a construction (of language, discourse, technological media, etc.). Perhaps, then, even real time is not real but a construction. According to Bran Nicol, the most important features in Postmodern texts are the following:

(1) a self-reflexive acknowledgement of a text's own status as constructed, aesthetic artefact

(2) an implicit (or sometimes explicit) critique of realist approaches both to narrative and to representing a fictional 'world'

(3) a tendency to draw the reader's attention to his or her own process of interpretation as she reads the text. (Nicol 2009: xvi)

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These features relate to the use of fictional vs. real time in Swift, especially in *Ever After*, where Bill Unwin imagines himself as Hamlet. Because of this, we have a comment on texts as constructed since we have references to a previous one, *Hamlet*, but also since Unwin is writing about his own life and imagining scenes as in *Hamlet*. By doing so, Unwin creates an imaginary time. Unwin illustrates the third characteristic identified by Nicol since Unwin himself may be regarded as a reader who interprets *Hamlet* by comparing its situations with those in his own life. Unwin comments on his own fictional world. In *Ever After*, two times are juxtaposed: that of the real (or understood as real) time and life of Unwin and that of fictional time, the time when he imagines situations in his life by drawing parallels with *Hamlet*. However, those situations really occur and he only uses *Hamlet* to interpret them, so the boundaries between real and fictional in this case are questionable.

From the aspects discussed above, Swift's *Ever After* has a lot in common with Woolf's *Between the Acts*. In Woolf there is also a time thought of as real (that of the main characters) and a fictional time (that of the pageant). However, there too the two kinds of times interact and we have lots of comments on the various aspects of the pageant, on acting, on fictional texts (especially plays by Shakespeare), and parallels between past (fiction) and present (the 'real' time of the novel).

Of course, there is also the distinction between the time it would take for certain reflections in a real-life context and in textual time, the time the story's presentation dedicates to various aspects of the story, to reflections, to various scenes. The use of these types of time present to the reader a certain rhythm of the story. Various scenes may be more dynamic or static, more reflective, or dreamy. Another aspect of significance in Swift is that, in the story's presentation, the impression is given that characters who should be dead, judging by the time of the action of the story, have their own lyrical monologues. How can such a time be analysed and understood? What is its role? Is it all an illusion and if so, what is the part it plays with respect to the narrative?

Since in Swift's novels there is the opposition between personal and public histories (meaning incidents in the characters' personal lives, which are experienced subjectively, and public events in history which are known by their objective descriptions in history books), we see that there is also an opposition between personal time and historical time. The first refers to subjective time, experienced in private histories, and the second to the larger context of history. *Waterland* focuses on the subject of personal and public history, which implies a difference between personal and public time. What aspects are present in *Waterland* in relation to these types of time? First, there is the response of the young to history, and thus to historical time. The young are resistant to history; they feel that they should live in the here and now. Thus, they do not take into account the larger historical context. They only believe that subjective time is what matters. With respect to his student's claims, "Your thesis," Tom says, "is that history, as such is a red-herring; the past is irrelevant. The present alone is vital" (Swift 2008: 143). Tom teaches his students that the past matters, that it influences the present greatly, as far as both personal and public history, or both personal and public time are concerned. He tells them the story of his own life, starting with when he was a pupil just like them; he illustrates, by means of his own history, the way that history works, the way that the past influences the present of both personal lives and within the larger context of official history. Tom Crick's reflections on history and on "the here and now" show that public history and personal history intersect. Also, his reflections show the existence of the time of the imagination, of fairy-tales of childhood, as experienced in the context of personal time:

My earliest acquaintance with history was thus, in a form issuing from my mother's lips, inseparable from her other bedtime make-believe--how Alfred burnt the cakes, how Canute commanded the waves, how King Charles hid in an oak tree--as if history were a

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pleasing invention. And even as a schoolboy, when introduced to history as an object of Study, when nursing indeed an unfledged lifetime's passion, it was still the fabulous idea of history that lured me, and I believed, perhaps like you, that history was a myth. Until a series of encounters with the Here and Now gave a sudden urgency to my studies. Until the Here and Now, gripping me by the arm, slapping my face and telling me to take a good look at the mess I was in, informed me that history was no invention but indeed existed--and I had become a part of it. (Swift 2008: 53)

According to Crick's reflections, thus, private time may sometimes be part of the larger public, historical time. The "here and now" becomes an important time; it is the time of reality, both public and personal. Crick's student, Price, is concerned with the present and with the future; he believes that the past is not significant. He does not see the influence the past has on the present and on the future, in both personal and public histories. Price believes that explaining the past is the equivalent of avoiding the present: "Explaining's a way of avoiding facts while you pretend to get near to them" (Swift 2008: 145).

Within the two categories of time, of personal and public histories, there is another kind of time. It is the time of the youth of Tom and Mary and the others. This time appears differently since they were living in a world of their own. They had their own illusions without any idea that something could go wrong; they had not yet been affected by trauma. They were innocent, and did not know what they would later learn when Crick tells his story to his students. Swift associates that time with the time of the fairy-tales. Tom's parents used to tell him stories. He believed he lived in a "fairy-tale place", and the explanations for certain aspects in the world are given by using fairy-tale, not scientific, explanations: "Do you know what the stars are? They are silver dust of God's blessing…" As Landow states,

[…] before the murder of Freddie Parr he and Mary lived outside of time and history, outside that stream of events he is trying to teach to his class. But with the discovery of Freddie's body floating in the canal lock, and with the discovery of a beer bottle, Tom and Mary fall into time and history. Previously, "when Mary was fifteen, and so was I, this was in prehistorical, pubescent times, when we drifted instinctively" (44). As Tom explains, "it is precisely these surprise attacks of the Here and Now which, far from launching us into the present tense, which they do, it is true, for a brief and giddy interval, announce that time has taken us prisoner" (52).

Mary and Tom realize that their past or present deeds have consequences on the present or even on the future. It is only then that they become aware of the time of history. Then, they also understand that their personal time becomes part of the larger historical time. Landow believes that Crick's view on time corresponds to the views of philosophical anthropologists (Mircea Eliade is one of the representatives):

who emphasize that until human beings leave tribal, agricultural existence they live in an eternal present in which time follows a cyclical pattern of days and seasons. One becomes an individual only by botching a ritual, a universal pattern. One differentiates oneself and becomes an individual in such societies only by sin and failure.

This is the moment when an individual becomes aware of consequences of his deeds, when something goes wrong and when he needs to understand the connections. Until then, he lives in his own personal time, unaware of larger historical time, in a time of the imagination, isolated from the external world.

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Such a distinction between personal and public histories are, in some respects, equivalent with subjective time and objective time, or with inner time and exterior time. Historical time refers to external events in the large context of history, while personal time refers to the incidents in a person's life, or to one's subjective view on incidents in history. A different view on time may be found in this distinction, at least with respect to chronology or to official vs. personal experience of certain incidents or events.

By thinking of memories or reflections at the present time of the story in terms of embedded texts, we may draw a clear distinction between temporal relations. Other oppositions between various types of time presented here may also be thought of in terms of embedded texts. This clarifies not only boundaries between types of time but also situations where there may be some kind of overlapping. Such overlapping could occur when we are talking, for instance, of a subjective view on time, or when characters go through historical events but their version is not the official version of the events. The official version is the one found in history books; it is a version which is believed to be objective. Such could be the case of William Chapman in *The Sweetshop Owner*, whose perspective on events in the war is not the heroic version. His time is measured mostly by the letters he writes to and receives from his wife Irene and by his activity which is not on the war front.

In *Shuttlecock*, there are several types of time. First, there is the general time when Prentis' story takes place. Second, there is the time when his father's story takes place, as it is documented in his war memoir. Third, there is the time Prentis takes to read his father's war memoir. Prentis reflects on his father's experiences as the reader of the novel may reflect on the experiences of the characters. This is a metafictional aspect, together with the more obvious metafictional aspect of Prentis, who writes a book himself and comments on his writing experience. In the larger time when Prentis' story takes place, one may include the actual time when the incidents take place and the time he takes to write about them as he reflects on various issues. To these types of time, of course, the time of memories may also be added. Together with the main embedded story (included in Prentis' war memoir), which is included in Prentis' book, there are various reflections, and scenes, some of them imagined (especially those concerning the truth about his father's experience). All these embedded texts include a different kind of time. Here we may see the idea exposed by Bal, concerning unreal anachrony, at work. Remembering something is different from doing something. The time of remembering is also different from the time of doing something. The remembering occurs in a different context, and it shapes the telling of the story in a different way. What a character tells the reader is often different from the way the actual incidents occured or from the way the incidents were experienced at that time. What Prentis writes (and remembers as he tells his story) is going on at a different time than the time when the respective incidents had actually happened. The same goes for the experience of his father during the war: the time it actually happened is different from the time he wrote about it, and this is different from the time Prentis reads the memoir. Since the truth of the events described in the memoir is questioned, at least part of the experience described may have taken place during the time of the imagination.

Another novel where there are several layers of time is *Ever After*. Several stories with their own type of time intersect through Bill Unwin. At present he tries to deal with the grief over the death of his wife and with the memories of Ruth, which he shares with the reader. His memories of his wife are communicated through the overlap with the story of Hamlet. Here Unwin's stories belong to imaginary time, as he identifies with the character of Hamlet. Right from the start, when he tells us about himself, and about his family, in the first chapter, Unwin tells his readers "I have imagined myself […] as Hamlet" (Swift 1992a: 7). Unwin claims that he has always felt an affinity for Hamlet. After all, he perceives the situation in his family as similar to the one in Shakespeare's play because of his guilt over his father and his

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feelings about his mother. Later, when his wife is an actress, he also tries to be an actor because of his intrinsic identification with Hamlet. By identifying with Hamlet, Unwin tries to understand the situation in his own life. By doing this he tries to put some order in his life experiences, which would otherwise seem chaotic or make little sense. This time of identifying with Hamlet is for Unwin a time of contemplation and of confession. He confesses to the reader. A totally different period of time is illustrated by the Victorian age in the notebooks of Unwin's ancestor, Matthew Pearce. The two stories intersect by dealing with similar situations. Unwin tries to use his reading of his ancestor's diary to deal with his own situation, to solve his own dilemmas. The fictional diary works in the same way as an intertextual reference from other works, from other plays by Shakespeare such as *King Lear*, *As You Like It*, and *Anthony and Cleopatra* or Dante's *Inferno*. The situations in Pearce's diary mirror the situations in Unwin's life and thus offer a feeling of repetition, of motifs and images that repeat themselves. Pearce also struggles with dilemmas, such as a crisis over the loss of faith. Scenes, memories, and incidents which occur at the present time in the novel, as well as stories in notebooks or war memoirs are divided into embedded texts. This gives a clear picture of the uses of time involved in *Ever After*. For Swift, the relationship between past and present is very important. The identification of moments, when times in embedded texts overlap, helps in the better understanding of this relationship.

Repetitions offer a rhythm to the story similar to the way in which repetitions and variations of images offer rhythm to a poem. Together with the repeated images and situations comes a repetition of certain moods. Unwin's questioning mood or his nostalgic mood are reflected through, or projected on the reading of Pearce's diary. The aspect of rhythm is present not only because it explains why certain scenes are more dynamic or seemingly more static, but also because it shows a certain characteristic of the novel's overall structure. The narrative rhythm refers to the way a story progresses, whether faster or slower. In the case of *Ever After*, rhythm also refers to the way certain aspects are repeated. The repetitions affect the pace of the story, since certain moods or situations are insisted upon and since more time is spent on dealing with them. Claire Fabbri speaks about rhythm in *Ever After* in the following statements:

> It would have been too easy for Graham Swift to elaborate the most simple three-tier novel: "to be born, to love and to die". *Ever After* finds its originality in reshaping this most commonly accepted process: "to die, to be born, then to love". It gives the novel a completely different viewpoint and a new rhythm, which overturns the vision of the whole structure. As to the author, he considers the structure and shape of a novel "in terms of rhythm, movement, pace and tension [...]. And it isn't a very intellectual process. It's very much a sort of musical thing" (Smith, G9). The adjective "musical" is particularly significant in *Ever After* since the rhythm is built upon a movement in three time very much like the waltz. However, Swift innovatively beats an inverted time.
>
> "To die" appears to be the first beat of the musical cadence played irrevocably backwards.

Here Fabbri refers to the way the story is structured so as to induce a certain rhythm. The story is told backwards. It starts with Unwin's trauma (the death of his wife), then it continues with the story of his relationship with his wife. The strength of the trauma is underlined by the word used for the section, "death", which is also built into an image of Dante's version of hell. The reversal of chronological time suggested in the title of the sections does suggest a different rhythm, an order given by emotional experience. The trauma suggested by the first section is then followed by an analysis of the past and also by a situation of grief (lost love) with which Unwin must come to terms, finally accepting his loss.

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The emotional experience which structures the story suggests the organization of a lyric poem. The novel is, after all, a confession. The way Fabbri compares the structure of the novel with a musical piece played backwards shows the power of the emotional experience. The story in the novel has a poetic or musical rhythm. By referring to *Ever After*, Fabbri notices aspects of rhythm which interfere with the story's non-linear chronology. Non-linear narration thus becomes an occasion for poetic aspects, since it also generates a certain rhythm which resembles the structure of a musical piece. The time in the story's presentation is inverted by comparison to the time of life. The way the chapters are presented, in terms of "to die, to be born, then to love" structures the reader's experience of time in a different way. The main character structures the story of his experiences according to the way he feels about them and about life. Non-linear narration offers the presentation of Bill Unwin's experience as composed by three stories, or three embedded texts, ordered according to the way he feels about the experience at the time he decides to tell his story. He structures time and imposes his view of time on the reader, who will have the experience of a dramatic and poetic story. The representation of time thus has its role in bringing forward poetic and dramatic aspects in this novel. Fabbri's observations apply to most of Swift's novels. The main idea is that emotional experience leads characters to experience time in a certain way. Because of this, they try to shape the reader's experience of time so that they can portray a certain atmosphere and communicate the significance of various experiences. Lyrical and dramatic aspects go hand in hand with the way they try to shape the reader's experience of time.

Grief, an emotion which causes characters to experience time in a certain way, is also part of the same idea. It allows characters to communicate their subjective views to the reader. David Ritchie, in *Loss, Grief and Representation: Getting on with it* (2003), speaks about mourning as a necessary process for allowing the mourning person to let go of the lost one, differentiating this from melancholia: the inability to let go of the lost person which leads to pathological consequences. Ritchie notices the Romantic roots of the use of grief in his article:

> Early nineteenth-century interest in the connection of insanity and creativity owes much to the cultural influence of romanticism. For the romantic poet, insanity or displacement (caused by loss of self or grief) was seen as a source of creative vision. Strangeness, eccentricity as well as pathological insanity seemed to enable purer emotional states and retreat into the self. (Ritchie 2003)

It is because of this, perhaps, that grief offers occasions for reflective moments expressed in the lyrical mode in Swift's novels. There are lyrical moments in Swift which are reminiscent of the Romantic creative visions, or of Woolf's "moments of being". The emotional experience is represented in Swift's novels. The majority of Swift's narrators are not insane. They are just affected by traumas and by grief, yet they are not completely the Romantic figures of the madmen. Sophie in *Out of This World* may go to a therapist; other characters like Unwin may suffer from the loss of a dear one; however, the border between sanity and insanity is questioned with characters such as Mary in *Waterland* who has religious visions, or with the husband and wife in *Wish You Were Here*, who see the dead brother coming to life as a ghost, another representation of grief. Ritchie's view of the need for the construction of a biographical narrative fits in with the representation of grief in Swift's novels:

> Howarth suggests that, to regain ontological security, the individual must construct a biographical narrative which restores not only a sense of meaning, but a continuity—a new

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biography that includes a place for the dead person and the events that led to the present, in the ongoing trajectory of the individual's own changing self-narrative. (Ritchie 2003)

Unwin and other narrators of Swift's novels who experience traumas go through this process. They attempt to write in order to understand their experiences. The use of other texts has the same function, as already seen in *Ever After*. The time found in the experience of grief is a way in which the past interferes with the present. The present in this case is the time of the trauma, the time when Unwin reflects. The past is the time of the loss, the time Unwin grieves for. The story's presentation includes non-linear chronology, various lyrical or dramatic scenes (where time moves faster or slower, or where time is more poetic or more dramatic) and aspects of rhythm. It also creates an illusion for the reader that the time of the action is stopped as reflections interfere (action falls for a while into the background). Sometimes, non-linear chronology interacts with rhythm, causing a certain shaping of the experience of time in the story's presentation for the reader. Poetic aspects thus may be seen as belonging not to the use of language exclusively, but also to the way the story's presentation is structured.

To what extent are the uses of time in Swift's novels similar to Postmodern views on time? First of all, Postmodern time is not linear or chronological. According to Paul Smethurst, in *The Postmodern Chronotope*,

In the chronotopes of postmodern novels, non-linear time and temporal displacement are often integral to the thematic structure and *content* of the novel: they are not just stylistic elements [...] they are designed to problematise scientific, social and cultural constructions of time, constructions that are associated with western concepts of reality. (Smethurst 2000: 174)

This aspect left aside, Postmodernism makes use of phenomenological time, in the sense that time is fluctuating, it does not have a pattern, it does not make the plot coherent. As Patrick Slatery claims,

The postmodern phenomenology of time is more than a mere rejection of historical time and Aristotelian notions of time as a series of "nows" in succession. Time, in the Heideggerian sense, is presence; temporality, in the Whiteheadian sense, is process. (Slatery 1995: 616)

Slatery goes further in claiming that "Time is understood as internal experience, becoming, and process." (1995: 616) Moreover,

The postmodern challenge is to integrate the past and the future into the existential present — or "presence" as Martin Heidegger (1972) writes — allowing the process of becoming, rather than artificial demands of clocks and linear sequences, to dominate our personal and professional lives. (Slatery 1995: 616)

With Postmodernism, we deal with a temporal maze, as time does not have a precise beginning or a precise end. "We are always in the middle of this time", as Ali Nojoumian, in *Time in Postmodernist Literature*, claims.

Swift's novels show this Postmodern use of time. The difference between Modernist time and Postmodernist time lies in the fact that in Modernism, non-linear time is apparent only in form, while in Postmodernism, non-linear time is part of the real. As A. Sentov claims, "in modernist fiction non-linear time is used as a matter of form only, distanced from reality" (2009: 124). In the Postmodernist novel, Smethurst (2000: 174) claims that

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non-linear time and temporal displacement problematise the real by calling into question scientific laws that govern the temporality of the modern world, and by questioning social and cultural constructions of time that underpin western versions of reality… In postmodern novels such as Peter Ackroyd's *Hawksmoor*, there are no rational explanations for the time slips that occur between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries and, in some respects, the novel is a problematisation of that rational thinking that seeks causality and linearity.

A. Sentov summarizes these differences as follows: "Non-linear time is incorporated in the fabric of the real, not distanced from it, so the reader has to accept this concept of time in order to understand the novel." (2009: 124) Swift's novels begin *in medias res*, which is however not an uncommon feature of novels or stories. The phrase *in medias res* has appeared since Horace, who believed that this technique was a mark of the ideal epic poet, employed it. Stories and novels before Modernism and Postmodernism have started in medias res. Even so, the feature of non-linear time is more pronounced in Swift and in Modernism or Postmodernism than in other narratives preceding them. Afterwards, characters return to the past, to their memories, trying to establish the way the past influences and determines the present. The active reader will try to work through these dilemmas together with the characters. As Bran Nicol claims, "Postmodern fiction presents a challenge to the reader. […] postmodern writing challenges us because it requires its reader to be an active co-creator of meaning rather than a passive consumer. More than this, it challenges its readers to interrogate the commonsense and commonplace assumptions about literature which prevail in our culture." (2009: xiv) In Swift's novels, the reader participates together with the characters in order to understand various connections among incidents as they occur in the memories of the characters.

Uses of time will always influence the story's presentation and the novel's structure in Swift and Woolf. While doing this, they will also shape the reader's experience of time in relation to their novels.

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