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2021

## **“Her Feeling Had Come Too Late”: Emotion and Time in Virginia Woolf’s Modernism**

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“HER FEELING HAD COME TOO LATE”: EMOTION AND TIME IN VIRGINIA  
WOOLF’S MODERNISM

by

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A THESIS

Submitted to the graduate faculty of The University of Alabama at Birmingham,  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

2021

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WOOLF’S MODERNISM

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ENGLISH

ABSTRACT

Mikhail Bakhtin’s idea of chronotope, or time-space, encompasses the idea that time and space cannot be separated from one another; they are intertwined. This concept of Bahktin’s is seen in Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *Orlando* because of Woolf’s aim to more accurately depict the reality of modern life, something she deems necessary for modern writers in her essay “Modern Fiction.” Woolf makes use of various narrative techniques to experiment with her illustration of everyday life where she focuses heavily on the depiction of time-space through her illustration of consciousness. Woolf is able to add emotion to time-space through the idea of being “too late” or “too lateness,” a feeling that many of Woolf’s characters experience in her novels.

Being “too late” is seen in each of Woolf’s aforementioned texts, as it is an integral part of how one experiences life. Within each of her works, Woolf exhibits time-space-emotion through her unique crafting of time, space, and consciousness. By constructing her novels in this way, Woolf is able to show readers the complexity of the relationships that exist within them. The emotional layer Woolf employs serves to present the varying and complex emotions one associates with a particular memory. Memories, in this case, can be distant or recent as Woolf highlights how each impacts the lives of those who experienced it and how those memories are interpreted in different ways depending on the character whose mind readers are viewing it through. Through this article, readers

gain insight into how Woolf makes use of time-space-emotion and how it allows her to authentically represent consciousness.

Keywords: chronotope, Mikhail Bakhtin, too late, Virginia Woolf

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“HER FEELING HAD COME TOO LATE”: EMOTION AND TIME IN VIRGINIA  
WOOLF’S MODERNISM

In her essay “Modern Fiction,” Virginia Woolf critiques the way Victorian novels depict failed attempts at realism. She asks a key question about the structure of the novels: how can an author authentically portray the day-to-day lives of ordinary people while still adhering to a particular literary genre? While Woolf examines the disconnect between real life and how authors structure their novels attempting to depict it, she asks her readers, “Is life like this? Must novels be like this?” because “life, it seems, is very far from being ‘like this’” (Woolf 160). As she exemplifies in her own works, Woolf believes that modern authors should seek to depict life as realistically as possible, including the complex thoughts, emotions, and relationships that accompany real life. To do this, she explains, authors have to experiment with their writing to break free of the old forms. Woolf’s novels *To the Lighthouse*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *Orlando* each break free of the constraints previously set forth and challenge readers with its nonlinear plotlines and narrative shifts between characters’ consciousness. Although these aspects of Woolf’s Modernism can be challenging for readers at first, importantly, these innovative formal techniques present a more accurate illustration of both time and consciousness.

Woolf’s experimental approaches step away from the Victorian novel’s “two and thirty chapters” that “ceases to resemble the vision in our minds” and forms that more closely resemble life (Woolf 160). Through her use of nonlinear time, Woolf is able to show that “life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged;” life happens all at once (Woolf 160). For example, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa goes about her day reminiscing about the summer spent at Bourton with Sally Seton while she prepares for a

lavish party that she is hosting later that night; at the same time, somewhere across town, Septimus and his wife, Lucrezia, are attempting to cope with the life-altering impact that World War I has had on Septimus's mental health. To show that these two storylines are congruent, Woolf constructs her novel in a way that shifts between Clarissa, Septimus, and Lucrezia's consciousness. Because the novel does not move chronologically, Woolf is able to focus on the thoughts of each character as they occur, which in turn allows for a better understanding of the feelings they experience as well as how each character's life differs from another's.

Critics of Virginia Woolf's works, such as Henda Ammar-Guirat, Eleonora Federici, and Graham Fraser, have analyzed her use of time and space, especially in regard to *Mrs. Dalloway* and the "Time Passes" section of *To the Lighthouse*, but these critics largely separate the way Woolf uses emotion in her construction of time and space.<sup>1</sup> While significant critical work has been done on Modernism's interest in time-space, it is important to Woolf's text in particular that we see time-space as incorporating emotion to produce a unique view of everyday life in the modern world. Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of chronotope suggests that time and space are not separate entities in literature, they are one and the same: time-space. Bakhtin's chronotope has been used as a lens through which one can analyze Woolf's writing, but what is often left out of the discussion is the way emotions function within time-space. Time-space is not separate from human consciousness, and it is not able to be depicted in literature outside of a character or narrator's consciousness. As a result, time-space is intertwined with memories, thoughts, and feelings. In Woolf's novels in particular, a more accurate term would be time-space-emotion.

Woolf's use of "too late" in her novels functions as a way of depicting time-space-emotion. After Mrs. Ramsay's death in *To the Lighthouse*, for example, Lily Briscoe finds herself back at the Ramsay family's vacation home. As she is working on her newest piece of art, Mr. Ramsay approaches her and attempts to gain her sympathy over his wife's death. Because she realizes he is baiting for sympathy, Lily chooses not to give in to Mr. Ramsay. Instead, she stays quiet, but she later regrets her lack of compassion and thinks to herself that "her feeling had come too late; there it was ready; but he no longer needed it" (Woolf 154). This language indicates that Lily is feeling a mixture of emotions, including annoyance, regret, and finally, the delayed response Mr. Ramsay was hoping for: kindness. What this moment also shows is that Woolf's work goes beyond just experimenting with stream of consciousness to capture the reality of modern life. She includes in her representation of consciousness the sense of "too lateness," a means of conveying the way time is always already the past by the time we experience it as an emotion.

This idea of "too lateness," or being "too late," focuses on emotion, time, and space within Woolf's works. One does not realize they are "too late" until the moment has passed, as evidenced in the case with Lily Briscoe and Mr. Ramsay. By the time the characters have felt the emotions related to an experience, that experience is already a memory. It is always too late to experience any particular moment once that moment is in reflection, memory, and our thoughts. Any attempt to capture a single moment requires reflection. There is no way to conceive of an emotion in real time. Instead, we think back on moments, feelings, and thoughts and arrive at a story about them. But once we've arrived at that story, it is too late—the moment is over. The emotions that contribute to the feeling of being "too late" include sadness, regret, nostalgia, all feelings long



associated with Modernism. The characters within Woolf's novels are driven by the emotions they feel, whether it be Lily Briscoe withholding sympathy from Mr. Ramsay or Peter Walsh visiting Clarissa so many years after their last encounter.

Lily's sense of being "too late" in *To the Lighthouse* is not an isolated incident in Woolf's writing. Readers can see this same feeling that blends time and consciousness across *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Orlando*, and other characters throughout the novel. While it is common for characters across Woolf's works to feel as though they are "too late," the feeling can be accompanied by a variety of emotions, such as sadness and regret. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa Dalloway and Peter Walsh also experience significant feelings of being "too late." Peter and Clarissa both reflect on their youth and the summer they spent at Clarissa's family's home, Bourton. Although both characters reflect on the same summer, their memories, what stuck with them all these years, are quite different. Peter remembers his love for Clarissa and how that summer marked the end of his chance to gain her hand in marriage, while Clarissa reminisces on her summer love, Sally Seton. Additionally, *Orlando* portrays this "too lateness" by depicting Orlando reminiscing over the centuries she has lived through. Orlando has the opportunity to live through multiple generations of life, watching how England and the rest of the world progressed. Having this opportunity gives Orlando much to reflect on, including her transition from male to female and all that accompanied this change. As Woolf argues in "Modern Fiction," "life happens all at once," a concept I argue Woolf incorporates into her fiction with her experimental use of time-space-emotion, represented in her novels as a state of being "too late."

The way Woolf structures her works to include stream of consciousness differs novel-to-novel as well, but what stays consistent is her attempts to accurately depict

consciousness. This is evidenced by the famous “Time Passes” section of *To the Lighthouse*. Readers begin with a nonlinear sequence of events that transpire over the course of a day and are then catapulted years into the future where a summary of what occurred during those years is quickly given. By skipping ahead in this way, Woolf is giving a realistic view of how life moves forward. As time passes, one does not look back by experiencing each individual second they have lived through. Instead, they remember the significant ones. Just as in real life, what matters for the sake of this story are the key events that created the sense of abandonment felt by the Ramsay’s memories of the vacation home and the life they all once shared there.

Evidence of Woolf’s experimental techniques is seen as early as the first chapter of *To the Lighthouse*. She begins by thrusting readers into a conversation between Mrs. Ramsay and her son, James. They are not shown what James asks of his mother, but her response, the first few lines of “The Window,” indicate he is asking to sail out to the lighthouse. Mrs. Ramsay tells her son that he can go to the lighthouse “if it’s fine tomorrow” (3). Although readers understand that Mrs. Ramsay’s response gives room for the trip to the lighthouse to be postponed, her son, being the excited child that he is in this moment, does not understand this fact. Instead, to James, “these words conveyed an extraordinary joy, as if it were settled, the expedition were bound to take place, and the wonder to which he had looked forward, for years and years it seemed, was, after a night’s darkness and a day’s sail, within touch” (3). Woolf’s description of James’s joy captures the emotions of a child and helps to convey the significance of his hopefulness because the emotion is a childlike hope about the future. That is, it is not too late yet. But experienced readers know from Mrs. Ramsay’s vague response that this description of joy depicts how we react only a few times before we begin to realize that the real world

often forces us to change plans. Time-space-emotion are all in a complex relationship with memory, childhood, and disappointment.

In an interesting parallel, the end of the novel explores this same type of promised trip, highlighting the stark contrast between James's anticipatory joy as a child and the overall sense of being "too late" to share that joy when he is an adult. At the end of the novel, Mr. Ramsay wants to take James and Cam with him to visit the lighthouse, which offers a sense of closure regarding the missed trip from the children's childhood. By this point in the novel, ten years have passed, and the family has gone through significant loss. Mrs. Ramsay and two of her children have passed away. The outward joy that James once showed when offered the chance to visit the lighthouse is gone, just like his childhood. Henda Ammar-Guirat discusses the "tripartite circular structure" the novel takes and points to the fact that Part III revisits Part I (44). Ammar-Guirat states that "through fulfilling the desire to visit the lighthouse, Part III provides continuity and growth as the characters become more mature, come to terms with the past, and get reconciled" (44). While I agree that Part III of the novel offers a sense of growth for the characters, I argue that the reconciliation Ammar-Guirat suggests functions much differently when paired with the feeling of being "too late." At the end of the novel, James, Cam, and Mr. Ramsay set sail to the lighthouse, but the experience is much different now than it would have been years before. James is still excited to sail, but "he sat with his hand on the tiller sitting bolt upright, looking rather sulky and frowning slightly" (Woolf 206). The opportunity to sail when he was a child was missed, leaving James excited but unwilling to allow his true emotions to show. Cam takes notice of this act of her brother's, thinking to herself that he believes "They must think that he was perfectly indifferent" (206). James's decision to hide his emotions indicates that he has

not forgotten the disappointment that accompanied his father declining to take him to the lighthouse all those years ago. He does not want to admit that he still feels happy and excited to venture out onto the water and being able to sail with his father and sister.

Mr. Ramsay's decision not to sail to the lighthouse with his children all those years ago impacted his relationship with his son far more than he could have anticipated at the time, leaving him "too late" to remedy the situation with James. Had Mr. Ramsay taken his children to the lighthouse when they were originally supposed to go ten years ago, James may have been willing to share his joy with his father and sister. Since the opportunity was missed, one cannot say what would have happened instead of James feeling as though he must hide his true emotions, so although James, Cam, and Mr. Ramsay do face a sort of reconciliation, it is not as simple as that. There are still negative feelings surrounding the trip to the lighthouse. If there were no negative feelings, James would not feel he must conceal his emotions, and similarly, Cam would not take notice of this act put on by her brother. Cam's understanding that James is happy but unwilling to show it speaks to the relationship he has with his family, especially his father, concerning their vacation home and the lighthouse.

Mr. Ramsay's consciousness of the rift in his relationship with James causes him to reflect on his past decisions and the memories he missed out on because of them. Much like James, Mr. Ramsay has hidden feelings about the lighthouse and the significance it has in reference to his family's past and present. Mr. Ramsay, in response to Mrs. Ramsay's answer to James asking to go to the lighthouse, says, "But. . . it won't be fine" (4). This seemingly minuscule comment plays a large role in the overall tone of James's relationship with his father. After his father declines his wish to sail to the lighthouse, James thinks to himself that "had there been an axe handy, or a poker, any

weapon that would have gashed a hole in his father's breast and killed him, then and there, [he] would've taken it" (4). James resents that his father will not take him to the lighthouse, but his father had his reasons for denying James's request. He believes "his own children, . . . should be aware that life is difficult; facts uncompromising" (4). Mr. Ramsay, also like James, remembers this encounter all those years ago, and the trip to the lighthouse that he encouraged now is a way for him to make amends. Mr. Ramsay may not necessarily regret his decision not to take his children to the lighthouse, but he does, at the least, feel that he missed the opportunity to strengthen his relationship with them by spending the time sailing to the lighthouse, especially knowing how much it meant to James.

Much like the infamous lighthouse, the Ramsay's vacation home holds an air of "too lateness" as well, reminding the family of what once was. In the "Time Passes" section of the novel, the family and their guests leave the vacation home to return to their regular, everyday lives. Woolf takes time in this section to describe the way the home was left:

What people had shed and left—a pair of shoes, a shooting cap, some faded skirts and coats in wardrobes—those alone kept the human shape and in the emptiness indicated how once they were filled and animated; how once the hands were busy with hooks and buttons; how once the looking glass had held a face; had held a world hollowed out in which a figure turned, a hand flashed, the door opened, in came children rushing and tumbling; and went out again. (Woolf 129)

The description Woolf offers here is reminiscent, one that illustrates how the home was once bustling with life and is now quiet and still, seemingly waiting for the family and their guests to return. While belongings were left at the Ramsay's vacation home as if the

family were to return sooner rather than later, the family does not come back until ten years later. Keeping this fact in mind, it becomes evident that although Woolf never gives an exact reason the family did not return to the home for those ten years, life had gotten in the way. Mr. Ramsay and his family grew in the years that passed, forcing them to come to terms with the events that transpired, such as the death of Mrs. Ramsay and two of the children. Many factors could have played into the absence of the Ramsay family, such as significant events like the war, but small, everyday events like work and social gatherings also play a role. Life is not strictly defined by major historical or life events, it is also defined by the reality lived every day that includes less significant occurrences, such as having meals with friends and family or spending the afternoon walking alone.

Although the Ramsays left their vacation home in a state that suggested they would not be away for too long, the reality is they were absent for a decade before returning, making the relationship between time and space in the novel that much more complex. Andrea Bernadelli and Eleonora Ferici state that literary chronotope is “a way to understand experience” and that “it offers models of the world [that] determine relationships between the context and real persons that live and act in it are reflected” (142). In *To the Lighthouse*, both the Ramsay’s vacation home and the lighthouse are significant settings that work to show what once was. By the end of the novel, the Ramsay’s ten-year absence is in the past, and they, along with Lily Briscoe, have returned to the vacation home. Their absence is felt by the home as it is covered in dust and is in need of attention. The years that passed are not lost on the home, just as the years are not lost on the Ramsay’s or their guests. The change each character, as well as the vacation home itself, has endured is evident amongst their arrival back to the home. What once was is no longer, and they cannot revive it; it is in the past. The ten years that

separated the Ramsays and their guests from the home cannot be undone. The memories that may or may not have happened remain unknown, just as the experiences the family and their guests potentially missed out on are.

In Woolf's novel, it is important to note that time and place shape emotion. Both the Ramsay's vacation home and the lighthouse are much different after the family's absence, both the literal structures and the atmosphere show signs of change. Where the Ramsay vacation home used to be full of life, echoing with the voices of various guests, it is no longer. Where the Ramsay children used to wish more than anything to visit the lighthouse with their father, they do not any longer. Each character is aware of the changes that have taken place, and their interactions with one another, as well as their thoughts, work to illustrate their consciousness of them. Bernadelli and Ferici state that time and space "do not only delineate the 'frame' within which the story is told, but can acquire a specific meaning directly connected to the story and its events" (143). "Therefore," they suggest, "some characters and facts become meaningful specifically for their relationship to space and time in the novel" (143). The lighthouse and the vacation home are not significant because of their literal, physical form; they are significant because of the memories they hold, both good and bad.

An important aspect of this pattern of feeling "too late" is that it does not have to stem from regret or missed opportunities; it can simply come from feeling reminiscent of the past because it reflects the way emotions about time passing are always out of sync with present realities. The Ramsay's absence from their vacation home offered a feeling of being "too late" by providing characters with both an awareness of memories missed out on and an opportunity to reflect on the memories that took place there. Gina Wisker states that "imprinted on the outer world and its spaces and places, are the concerns and

the experiences of those who have lived, argued, developed, and related there” (6). Each memory the characters have of their vacation home is what makes it a significant place to them. Their memories of events and loved ones live on despite the aging structure of the home, presenting readers with an accurate representation of how time and space work in everyday life.

By skipping ahead ten years, Woolf is able to show that time does not stop, no matter how much you have endured. Woolf’s portrayal of Lily Briscoe after she returns to the Ramsay’s vacation home shows her grieving for Mrs. Ramsay, indicating one of many ways someone can respond to tragedy. Despite the fact that it has been quite some time since Mrs. Ramsay’s death, Lily still mourns her deeply. As she is painting by the sea, Lily thinks to herself that “‘you’ and ‘I’ and ‘she’ pass and vanish; nothing stays; all changes; but not words, not paint” (179). Her reflection on life brings her to tears, crying out for the late Mrs. Ramsay, wondering if “even for elderly people, that this was life? — startling, unexpected, unknown?” (180). By showing readers how Lily’s pain affects her thoughts and actions, Woolf is getting as close as she can to depicting how minds and emotions work in the world outside of the novel. If readers were only shown Lily’s exclamations for Mrs. Ramsay and not her thoughts, they would not completely understand what led to her outburst. Instead, readers might think that Lily’s shouts come only from her mourning Mrs. Ramsay when it is much more than that. Lily is not only grieving for her friend; her pain has driven her to think critically about life and how time will continue to move forward, no matter what.

In addition to acknowledging that time does not stop for anyone, Woolf also accurately illustrates the feeling many experience after enduring tragedy, which is the strong desire to reflect on life. Tragedy, such as the loss of a loved one, causes one to



reflect on memories and life as a whole. An example of the lasting impressions the memories with loved ones made on the Ramsay's and their guests is seen, again, when Lily Briscoe thinks of the late Mrs. Ramsay and is mournful, thinking to herself that "if they shouted loud enough Mrs. Ramsay would return" (Woolf 180). The reality is that no matter how much Lily shouts for Mrs. Ramsay, she will not return. Lily is not naive to this fact, but she wishes nonetheless. It is a fact of life that at some point family members and friends are lost, and Woolf's work seeks to highlight the reality of feeling loss.

Woolf's 1925 novel *Mrs. Dalloway* is well-known for its interesting depiction of time. Unlike *To the Lighthouse*, the events that occur in *Mrs. Dalloway* take place all within a single day's time. An important distinction between the two works that must be mentioned is that *Mrs. Dalloway* does not jump years into the future at the end of the novel as *To the Lighthouse* does. This distinction is important because it highlights a difference in the technique Woolf uses to depict time. Instead of having the novel span across a decade, Woolf chooses to have the novel take place over one day, which introduces a new perspective in which readers can view the relationship between time-space-emotion. In *To the Lighthouse*, readers experience a summer day with the Ramsay's and their guests and are then taken ten years into the future. By structuring her novel in this way, Woolf is allowing readers to experience events with characters in real time before they become memories, which deepens their understanding of the feelings characters associate with the memories later on. Alternatively, *Mrs. Dalloway* only presents readers with memories of the past and the emotions that come with them. Readers never get a glimpse into Clarissa's mind while she's at Bourton, they only experience her thoughts of Bourton in the present day. Both of these experimental

portrayals of time manage to capture the relationship between time-space-emotion, just from different viewpoints.

Woolf makes use of different narrative techniques to experiment with her presentation of time, attempting to capture life as it really is. *Mrs. Dalloway* shifts between characters' consciousness in a way that can be disorienting at first. James Harker points to the author's presentation of consciousness, stating that "For Woolf, the modern literary experience derives from the nature of the faculties of perception, the tenuous points of connection between the inner and outer worlds" (2). Harker's point here aligns with what Woolf suggests in "Modern Fiction," but what is unique about Woolf, I argue, is the emotion she evokes from her characters through the feeling of being "too late." Woolf, as Harker points out, connects the inner and outer worlds by shifting continuously between inner thoughts and words spoken out loud. By making the decision to structure her novel in this way, Woolf is able to more accurately depict everyday life. Life is not strictly made up of words spoken, it is also filled with thoughts and emotions that are not voiced or shown. The only way one can know of these hidden thoughts or emotions is by being in one's head. Therefore, to accurately illustrate life and how consciousness functions within it, Woolf provides both the inner and outer to her readers. Not only do readers have the opportunity to experience what goes on inside the head of a character, they also gain the descriptions of the world inside the novel.

The omniscient narrative point of view Woolf establishes moves through various characters' consciousness across London throughout the day, allowing readers the opportunity to gather a more well-rounded understanding of the characters. Because readers experience both the characters' outward interactions and inner emotions and thoughts, they are able to better understand the relationships presented in the novel. For

example, if Woolf chose to show only Clarissa's thoughts, readers would not know how Peter truly feels about his past with Clarissa. Had Woolf chosen to include only one character's consciousness, *Mrs. Dalloway* would be an altogether different novel. Woolf's narrative technique gives readers the chance to experience both the outer and inner worlds of each character, which, in turn, helps one to better understand both how the characters themselves are feeling and how they feel about others. Having insight into the minds of characters and having the opportunity to experience their emotions regarding another adds an additional layer of understanding for readers. Although one cannot read minds or teleport outside of the world of literature, Woolf's narrative technique makes way for an accurate representation of the emotions and conversations one encounters as well as how memories last and impact one's life.

In the novel, Woolf makes use of Bourton, Clarissa's family's home, to show how emotions and memories can be associated with a place and not just a person. The time Clarissa spends at her family's home, Bourton, with Peter, Sally, and Richard influences the way she interacts with and thinks of those three characters throughout the novel. Woolf begins *Mrs. Dalloway* with a reference to Clarissa's past, highlighting its significance in relation to the party she is hosting later that evening. On the very first page of the novel, Clarissa is thinking of how she will have the doors taken off of their hinges for her party and how it reminded her of when she "had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air" (3). Bourton holds a special place in her memory, as it is the place she met Richard Dalloway, Peter Walsh, and Sally Seton. Bourton is more than just a home to her, it is the place where many significant life events took place. The lasting influence Bourton has on Clarissa's life is evident throughout the

novel, and by referencing Bourton so early on, Woolf is foreshadowing the significance of the home, the summer spent there, and all memories associated with it.

The relationships between Clarissa, Richard, Peter, and Sally have changed in the years that have passed since their time at Bourton together, often leaving the characters to reflect on their lives and how they could have turned out differently. Each character is subject to their own memories, many of which differ from one another. Because no character has the ability to fully know what someone is thinking or feeling, memories vary from person to person. Although Clarissa, Richard, Peter, and Sally all experienced Bourton together, what each character took away from their experience is different. For example, Peter Walsh thinks of that summer much differently than Clarissa does. In Peter's mind, that is the summer where he fell in love with Clarissa and lost any chance he had to marry her. Clarissa, on the other hand, does not remember this when she reflects on that summer. Instead, she remembers her friendship with Peter, her interest in Sally Seton, and, finally, her meeting Richard. The difference in Peter's and Clarissa's perspective of that summer is a point Woolf continues to showcase to her readers. After talking with Clarissa at her home, Peter is in Regent's Park reflecting on his childhood when he thinks to himself that "women live much more in the past than [men] do," suggesting that "[women] attach themselves to places" (55). Peter's thoughts here are ironic because, while Clarissa does reflect on the past, it is Peter in this moment that is preoccupied with what once was. On the surface level, it appears that Peter is thinking of his childhood and blaming his reflection on his encounter with Clarissa, but readers understand that he is referencing much more than just his childhood here. Peter's thoughts are filled with Clarissa, her life, and the summer they shared together when they were young. The emotions Peter feels while thinking back to all those years ago and how

his life has developed since then is significantly impacted by his feeling toward Clarissa, especially since speaking with her at her home. Peter is “too late” in the sense that he cannot time travel back to the summer at Bourton and change the outcome of his relationship with Clarissa, and even if he could turn back time, there is no guarantee he would be happier in the present day. Peter is left to wonder what could have been and how his life would be different if he had not been “too late.”

A key aspect of “too lateness” is Clarissa’s consistent awareness that she is aging. As Clarissa is growing older, she reflects on many aspects of her life, not just the summer spent with Peter, Sally, and Richard. While out preparing for her party, “[Clarissa] had the oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having of children now. . . this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway” (11). Clarissa is aware that she is aging and she wonders if “it matter[s] that she must inevitably cease to exist completely; [that] all this must go on without her” (9). Clarissa reflects on her past throughout the novel and remembers her relationships from Bourton, and although she is unaware what the day will bring in the beginning of the novel, she is given the opportunity to face those from her past. [JMJ1] Clarissa believes that her marriage is her identity and that she is no longer just Clarissa; she is Mrs. Richard Dalloway—a wife and a mother. She is aware that life will continue on once she is gone and that it is too late to go back and change the outcome of her life. Because of this awareness, the party she hosts works similarly to the scene in *To the Lighthouse* where Mr. Ramsay finally sails with his children; it is a sort of reconciliation. Richard, of course, sees his wife all the time, but the same cannot be said for Peter or Sally. Both Peter and Sally have not spoken to Clarissa since the summer at Bourton, and in their memory, Clarissa is still the young woman they once knew.

Although Clarissa remains unchanged in their memory and vice versa, once the three interact at the party, they understand that they all have changed, just as anyone does.

Woolf's work offers a narrative structure that allows characters to be connected no matter their relationship or location in the city, as evidenced by Peter and Clarissa, Clarissa and Septimus, and Septimus and Lucrezia. As more and more is revealed about each character, readers are able to better connect them to one another. Annalee Edmondson mentions Woolf's self-coined "tunnelling process" that she uses to craft more authentic connections between her characters. An example Edmondson gives is that "Clarissa, 'at least in the world of the novel, exists as much in the minds of others, especially Peter's, as she does in her own, 'private' existence" (22). Edmondson's point works hand-in-hand with time-space-emotion. Not only are the characters in the novel dealing with their own emotions, they are also speculating how each person they encounter is feeling or what they are thinking. This awareness of others' thoughts and emotions, much like Clarissa's awareness of her age, brings forth a plethora of emotion, especially the feeling of being "too late." An example of this is seen with Lucrezia in the park with Septimus. She is aware that others are noticing Septimus's strange behavior, and she thinks to herself that "she had done nothing wrong; she had loved Septimus; she had been happy. . . why should *she* suffer" (65). As readers know, Septimus is dealing with mental health issues, and that is the reason for his behavior, but Lucrezia does not know this. Dr. Holmes "said there was nothing the matter with [Septimus]," so she cannot make sense of his behavior (67). Lucrezia contemplates going back to her home in Italy, but she knows that her life is changed forever. She can return to her family's home in Italy, but the fact that she was Septimus's wife will not change. It is "too late" for her to return to what once was.

Through her portrayal of Septimus and Lucrezia, Woolf is able to highlight that every character in the novel has their own life that is filled with memories, feelings, and thoughts. Septimus, even more so than his wife, is under speculation from the public, creating a connection between him and his wife as well as between his wife and the public. Septimus is alone in the sense that no one he encounters seems to understand his situation. His doctor claims nothing is wrong, which directly influences the way Lucrezia views Septimus's mental health crisis. She does not believe there is anything wrong with her husband, and she is embarrassed by his sudden outbursts in public. Her and the public's response to Septimus's illness further distances him from reality, as he is without the help he needs and is left to be a spectacle for those who pass by to whisper about. Erin Greer notes, "There are more sides to a person . . . than any single pair of eyes can see. Difference . . . can neither be accurately represented through speech, nor overcome" (13). Greer rightly argues that differences cannot be represented through words, as evidenced by Septimus Smith. No one who passes him while out with Lucrezia knows of his past with the war. They have no understanding of what has led him to this point. They also do not understand the position Lucrezia is in, nor do they understand her pain. Although these observations are true, it is also a possibility that if one did take the time to understand Septimus's and Lucrezia's situation, they still would not completely understand what they are going through because there is no way for them to know exactly what the characters are feeling or thinking. As Greer points out, difference cannot be authentically represented through speaking alone. These strangers, if given the chance, could offer sympathy for Septimus's illness, but because they likely have not experienced something like it in their own lives, they cannot fully understand it. Unlike the strangers on the street, Woolf's readers do, at least to the best of their ability, understand

Septimus's and Lucrezia's situation due to her narrative structure. Because readers have the opportunity to experience the events that transpire from the perspective of Septimus and Lucrezia, they have a much better understanding than they may have had otherwise.

Another way Woolf is able to incorporate emotion into her presentation of time-space is by showing readers how characters are aware of others' consciousness. Not only do readers know that each character possesses their own emotions and feelings, but so do the characters. Because of this fact, the characters in the novel sometimes wonder or worry about what others are thinking. This awareness of others' consciousness allows for characters to reflect on interactions and determine whether or not they responded appropriately, depending on the conclusion the character comes to, this leaves room to feel "too late," as if there were something else that should have been done or added. Many characters in Woolf's works experience interactions that prompt them to think critically about what goes on in the minds of others, offering them a sense of understanding that influences their responses and actions. As is seen through Lily and Mr. Ramsay, Peter and Clarissa, and Septimus and Lucrezia, one is forced to interpret an interaction so they may respond accordingly. Yaxiao Cui states that "We make sense of other people's actions either based on a sort of theory that we have about the nature of behavior or through simulating that thinking of others by imagining what it would be like if we were in their situation" (216). Through this simulation Cui mentions, one is able to sympathize, or empathize, with others where they otherwise may not have if they had not stopped to consider others' situations. Cui's statement is relevant to Woolf's works because it points to something significant about real, everyday life. In life, one makes use of strategies, such as the simulation Cui mentions, so that they may better understand the situation at hand. By incorporating this element of reality into her novels, Woolf is



furthering the authenticity of her illustration of human consciousness. The characters' consciousness of others' thoughts is something present both inside and outside of the world of the novel, giving readers another aspect to resonate with.

Where *Mrs. Dalloway* takes place in a single day, and *To the Lighthouse* extends over a decade, *Orlando* spans across three centuries, giving readers an opportunity to observe the growth of Orlando's character as she moves through her life. Much like she did with the characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf's adds an emotional layer to Orlando's life to show how time, space, and emotion are intertwined. In the beginning of the novel, Orlando is a young nobleman who had much to learn about life, but, by the end of the novel, is a modern, twentieth century woman. Over the span of three centuries, readers follow Orlando through each major life lesson and the self-reflection that followed. Woolf allows readers to become well-acquainted with Orlando at each stage in her life, which allows them to take notice of how Orlando changes over time. With her transition from English nobleman to a modern English woman, time-space-emotion is ever present in the novel as she reflects on her life.

Throughout the novel, Woolf places people in Orlando's life that serve to teach her a lesson. In the beginning of the novel, when Orlando is still a young man, her relationship with Sasha serves as the first of many lessons she learns. Her romance with Sasha, and the pain that came from its ending, helped Orlando evolve into the person she is by the end of the text. Although Orlando felt heartbroken at the time, she overcame her pain and moved on. She remembers the situation with Sasha and uses that experience to help guide her in future decisions. Orlando continues this trend throughout her relationships with other characters as the novel progresses. Her emotions guide her to make decisions that she feels will keep her from experiencing pain as she once did. This

characteristic of Orlando is found to be the case for people outside of the novel as well. Learning from mistakes is all that can be done once the mistake has been made, and it is too late to go back and choose another course of action.

Each time Orlando moves through another phase of life, she learns more about herself and the world around her, just as everyone does as they age. Her time spent living abroad taught her much about other cultures and how they view life. Through her travels, Orlando learns to think critically about her life. Woolf highlights the significance of Orlando's time with the gypsies when Orlando is reflecting on a conversation she had with Rustum in which he asks, "What is your antiquity and your race, and your possessions compared with this? What do you need with four hundred bedrooms and silver lids on all the dishes, and housemaids dusting?" (326). Rustum's questions stuck with her because, in the past, she never stopped to think of why she needed such a large estate with so many servants. Looking back, Orlando realizes she did not need those things, but at the time, she deemed them a necessity. It was a necessity in her mind to continue to maintain the estate and the status that came with it. When thinking of her conversation with Rustum, she is able to reflect on how her priorities have shifted as she has grown older. As Orlando thinks back on her life, she realizes that the version of herself she was in the past is not who she is now. She mentally and physically evolves throughout the novel, and in the end, when she is able to look back at all the events of her life, she is nostalgic for what once was. It is not that she wishes to turn back time to relive these moments, she simply embraces the chance to reflect on her growth over the last three centuries. Much like how Clarissa reflects on her life in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Orlando recollects what she was like when she was young and compares it to where she is now. It

is too late for her to change who she was or what she did in the past. Now all she can do is embrace what she has learned and how she has changed over the years.

Through the ending of *Orlando*, Woolf is able to present her readers with a realistic glimpse into the mind of someone who is growing old. Because readers know what Orlando is thinking, they understand that she is reflecting on her life and all of the obstacles and lessons that made her who she is. If Orlando had the ability to go back and warn herself of what all her life would entail, she would not have gained all of the valuable lessons she learned along the way. Graham Fraser states that “our perceptions of things as stable and solid is in fact an illusion, generated by human desire, fear of loss, and the limited perspective of the human timescale” (118). Woolf’s choice to have Orlando live over the course of three centuries rather than what would constitute a normal lifespan works to show how humans grow as people the more they experience. Without all the decisions made, good or bad, life would look completely different. By highlighting this aspect of reality through Orlando’s consciousness, readers experience a realistic depiction of reflection. Although not every reader had found themselves nearing the end of their life, through Woolf’s use of stream of consciousness, they can better understand her nostalgia and desire to reflect.

Woolf offers readers a sense of reconciliation to Orlando’s earlier troubles with “The Oak Tree” at the end of the novel by showing her internal conflict over whether or not to bury her it. “The Oak Tree” symbolizes the personal growth Orlando experiences, as she has worked on it for the majority of her life, revisiting and revising as she saw fit. The manuscript pays homage to her past and present selves by representing key moments in her life. Just as the oak tree at Orlando’s estate, she and her manuscript “had grown bigger, sturdier” (324). In the beginning, she was discouraged by Sir Nicholas Greene’s

criticism of “The Oak Tree,” but she continued to write despite his words. She swore to only write to please herself, and that is a promise she kept. By the end of the novel, she no longer craved his praise, even though he gave it. The want for approval Orlando once had is now gone. When she felt she needed validation from Greene, he did not give it and now he is too late. She does not need it. Orlando is conscious of her personal growth, and that is why she “let her book lie unburied and dishevelled on the ground, and watched the vast view” (325). Instead of burying her manuscript, she chooses to leave it unearthed, just the same as she does with the people and places of the past. She does not hide from the past; she chooses to embrace her memories and all that come with them.

*To the Lighthouse* and *Orlando* share many similarities in the way they present memory, consciousness, and time, and one of the points Woolf makes in both of the novels is to emphasize the idea that some things have the ability to stay relevant, no matter how much time passes. The fear of being forgotten is present in *To the Lighthouse*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *Orlando*, first with Mr. Ramsay’s constant concern of whether or not he will be remembered for his academic works, then with Clarissa’s fear that she is nothing but “Mr. Richard Dalloway,” and finally, with Orlando’s interest in becoming like one of the popular poets she encounters throughout her life. Stephanie Heine mentions that “Woolf again and again takes into consideration that art—literature and painting, for example—has the capacity to endure” (121). Heine’s observation brings to mind a connection that can be made between *To the Lighthouse* and *Orlando* specifically. In *To the Lighthouse* when the Ramsays and their guests return to their summer home, Lily Briscoe begins to paint as she overlooks the ocean and the passage to the lighthouse. It is during the time that Lily is painting that she reflects on the events that have transpired in the ten years that have passed since she has been a guest of the Ramsay’s.

Her painting works as a form of expression where she can allow her mind to try and cope with the feelings she has surrounding the loss of Mrs. Ramsay. Lily's painting, as well as Orlando's manuscript, "The Oak Tree," work as reminders of times passed. Memories have the ability to fade away, but physical representations of memories, such as the painting or manuscript, can, like Heine stated, endure. Orlando and Lily both have something they now hold dear to them because of the significance it holds. All they have left are their recollection of relationships, memories, and feelings, so they must do what they can to preserve those things of significance before it is too late.

Similar to the Ramsay's vacation home in *To the Lighthouse* and Bourton in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Orlando's sprawling estate plays a key role in Woolf's portrayal of time-space-emotion in the novel. The estate, like Orlando herself, endures significant change as the years go by. While Orlando does not spend the entirety of the novel residing there, the home continues to be a place where she can return at any time. As years pass, the home ages and remnants of Orlando's past remain throughout, sitting and waiting to remind her of the defining moments of her life and the emotions that accompanied them. By the end of the novel, Orlando finds herself thinking back on the memories she has of her family home, and while inside, she describes the gallery as "a tunnel bored deep into the past" where "she could see people laughing and talking; the great men she had known" (Woolf 319). Orlando remembers her home the way it was all those years ago when she hosted visitors upon visitors and the home was full of life. Although the home is much different now, to her, it will always be that lively estate from all those years ago. Orlando's memory here simulates the reality of memories in everyday life. One does not remember a random day of the week when nothing of significance happens, but one will remember the days that hold meaning to them.

Orlando's past selves and the people who impacted her life haunt the rooms of her estate, reminding her of interactions and emotions from the past, which leaves her to acknowledge that all she is left with is her memory. Gina Wisker writes of Woolf's use of ghosts and hauntings, saying they "are a version of a continuation of the human" (Wisker 5). She explains that "Virginia Woolf, desiring to express a sense of continuity, needed to move beyond the tedious materialisms of Edwardian houses, their furniture, a compulsion to detail the real, but also to avoid the sentimentality of traditional ghost stories" (Wisker 5). Here Wisker gives an example of how Woolf makes use of the ideas she presents in "Modern Fiction" through her portrayal of people and places in her works. People from the past, along with the places and moments in time they inhabited, are gone. Woolf chooses to experiment with Orlando's estate, just as she does with the Ramsay's vacation home, to capture the idea that the ghosts we encounter in everyday life take shape in the form of memories. Orlando cannot undo the years that have passed or take back the mistakes she has made, but she can learn and grow through the memory of them.

Virginia Woolf's modernism blends time, space, and emotion to break free from old forms to more accurately depict real life. To do this, she experiments with her narrative technique, as evidenced by the significant differences found between *To the Lighthouse*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *Orlando*. Although each novel is different in its presentation of time, one aspect stays the same. Readers are given the chance to better understand the characters through Woolf's use of stream of consciousness. Sian White states that "Woolf's narrative discourse. . . offers a more complex, multilayered and far more intimate experience that includes character interiority while still reducing the telling voice of the narrator" (108). Because of her experimental depictions of time and consciousness, Woolf's readers gain a unique experience that would be impossible to

foster through a different narrative technique. The ability for readers to move from character to character in real-time helps establish this intimate experience. Instead of crafting a novel that makes no attempt to mimic the complex relationships that exist between time, space, memory, and emotions, Woolf takes the opportunity to move toward a narrative technique that offers some semblance of human consciousness and how it functions in our day-to-day lives.

Woolf's works illustrate the emotions people endure and how those emotions influence thoughts, both their own and other people's. Woolf is able to achieve what she deems a necessity for modern fiction, which is to depict life as it really is. In *Orlando* Woolf states that "Memory is the seamstress, and a capricious one at that. Memory runs her needle in and out, up and down, hither and thither. We know not what's next, or what follows after" (78). The language Woolf uses here points out that memory is complex. Humans are not magic, they are unable to predict the future. All one can be certain of is the memories they have of times passed. Memories can be forgotten, and then they are gone forever, leaving one "too late" to revive them. The addition of "too lateness" Woolf adds to her novels offers another layer of emotion to the stories, one many readers can identify with.

## NOTE

1. See Sian White's "The Dramatic Modern Novel: Mimesis and The Poetics of Tragedy in *Mrs. Dalloway*" and Pooja Mittal Biswas's "Queering Time: The Temporal Body as Queer Chronotope in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*."



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CONFERENCE PAPER: “Her Feeling Had Come Too Late”: Emotion and Time in  
Virginia Woolf’s Modernism

In her essay “Modern Fiction,” Virginia Woolf critiques the way Victorian novels depict failed attempts at realism. She asks a key question about the structure of the novels: how can an author authentically portray the day-to-day lives of ordinary people while still adhering to a particular literary genre? While Woolf examines the disconnect between real life and how authors structure their novels attempting to depict it, she asks her readers, “Is life like this? Must novels be like this?” because “life, it seems, is very far from being ‘like this’” (Woolf 160). As she exemplifies in her own works, Woolf believes that modern authors should seek to depict life as realistically as possible, including the complex thoughts, emotions, and relationships that accompany real life. To do this, she explains, authors have to experiment with their writing to break free of the old forms. Woolf’s novels *To the Lighthouse*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *Orlando* each break free of the constraints previously set forth and challenge readers with its nonlinear plotlines and narrative shifts between characters’ consciousness. Although these aspects of Woolf’s Modernism can be challenging for readers at first, importantly, these innovative formal techniques present a more accurate illustration of both time and consciousness.

Woolf’s experimental approaches step away from the Victorian novel’s “two and thirty chapters” that “ceases to resemble the vision in our minds” and forms that more closely resemble life (Woolf 160). Through her use of nonlinear time, Woolf is able to show that “life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged;” life happens all at

once (Woolf 160). For example, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa goes about her day reminiscing about the summer spent at Bourton with Sally Seton while she prepares for a lavish party that she is hosting later that night; at the same time, somewhere across town, Septimus and his wife, Lucrezia, are attempting to cope with the life-altering impact that World War I has had on Septimus's mental health. To show that these two storylines are congruent, Woolf constructs her novel in a way that shifts between Clarissa, Septimus, and Lucrezia's consciousness. Because the novel does not move chronologically, Woolf is able to focus on the thoughts of each character as they occur, which in turn allows for a better understanding of the feelings they experience as well as how each character's life differs from another's.

Critics of Virginia Woolf's works, such as Henda Ammar-Guirat, Eleonora Federici, and Graham Fraser, have analyzed her use of time and space, especially in regard to *Mrs. Dalloway* and the "Time Passes" section of *To the Lighthouse*, but these critics largely separate the way Woolf uses emotion in her construction of time and space.<sup>1</sup> While significant critical work has been done on Modernism's interest in time-space, it is important to Woolf's text in particular that we see time-space as incorporating emotion to produce a unique view of everyday life in the modern world. Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of chronotope suggests that time and space are not separate entities in literature, they are one and the same: time-space (Bakhtin). Bakhtin's chronotope has been used as a lens through which one can analyze Woolf's writing, but what is often left out of the discussion is the way emotions function within time-space. Time-space is not separate from human consciousness, and it is not able to be depicted in literature outside of a character or narrator's consciousness. As a result, time-space is intertwined with

memories, thoughts, and feelings. In Woolf's novels in particular, a more accurate term would be time-space-emotion.

Woolf's use of "too late" in her novels functions as a way of depicting time-space-emotion. After Mrs. Ramsay's death in *To the Lighthouse*, for example, Lily Briscoe finds herself back at the Ramsay family's vacation home. As she is working on her newest piece of art, Mr. Ramsay approaches her and attempts to gain her sympathy over his wife's death. Because she realizes he is baiting for sympathy, Lily chooses not to give in to Mr. Ramsay. Instead, she stays quiet, but she later regrets her lack of compassion and thinks to herself that "her feeling had come too late; there it was ready; but he no longer needed it" (Woolf 154). This language indicates that Lily is feeling a mixture of emotions, including annoyance, regret, and finally, the delayed response Mr. Ramsay was hoping for: kindness. What this moment also shows is that Woolf's work goes beyond just experimenting with stream of consciousness to capture the reality of modern life. She includes in her representation of consciousness the sense of "too lateness," a means of conveying the way time is always already the past by the time we experience it as an emotion.

This idea of "too lateness," or being "too late," focuses on emotion, time, and space within Woolf's works. One does not realize they are "too late" until the moment has passed, as evidenced in the case with Lily Briscoe and Mr. Ramsay. By the time the characters have felt the emotions related to an experience, that experience is already a memory. It is always too late to experience any particular moment once that moment is in reflection, memory, and our thoughts. Any attempt to capture a single moment requires

reflection. There is no way to conceive of an emotion in real time. Instead, we think back on moments, feelings, and thoughts and arrive at a story about them. But once we have arrived at that story, it is too late—the moment is over. The emotions that contribute to the feeling of being “too late” include sadness, regret, nostalgia, all feelings long associated with Modernism. The characters within Woolf’s novels are driven by the emotions they feel, whether it be Lily Briscoe withholding sympathy from Mr. Ramsay or Peter Walsh visiting Clarissa so many years after their last encounter.

Lily’s sense of being “too late” in *To the Lighthouse* is not an isolated incident in Woolf’s writing. Readers can see this same feeling that blends time and consciousness across *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Orlando*, and other characters throughout the novel. While it is common for characters across Woolf’s works to feel as though they are “too late,” the feeling can be accompanied by a variety of emotions, such as sadness and regret. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa Dalloway and Peter Walsh also experience significant feelings of being “too late.” Peter and Clarissa both reflect on their youth and the summer they spent at Clarissa’s family’s home, Bourton. Although both characters reflect on the same summer, their memories, what stuck with them all these years, are quite different. Peter remembers his love for Clarissa and how that summer marked the end of his chance to gain her hand in marriage, while Clarissa reminisces on her summer love, Sally Seton. Additionally, *Orlando* portrays this “too lateness” by depicting Orlando reminiscing over the centuries she has lived through. Orlando has the opportunity to live through multiple generations of life, watching how England and the rest of the world progressed. Having this opportunity gives Orlando much to reflect on, including her transition from male to female and all that accompanied this change. As Woolf argues in “Modern Fiction,” “life

happens all at once,” a concept I argue Woolf incorporates into her fiction with her experimental use of time-space-emotion, represented in her novels as a state of being “too late.”

The way Woolf structures her works to include stream of consciousness differs novel-to-novel as well, but what stays consistent is her attempts to accurately depict consciousness. This is evidenced by the famous “Time Passes” section of *To the Lighthouse*. Readers begin with a nonlinear sequence of events that transpire over the course of a day and are then catapulted years into the future where a summary of what occurred during those years is quickly given. By skipping ahead in this way, Woolf is giving a realistic view of how life moves forward. As time passes, one does not look back by experiencing each individual second they have lived through. Instead, they remember the significant ones. Just as in real life, what matters for the sake of this story are the key events that created the sense of abandonment felt by the Ramsay’s memories of the vacation home and the life they all once shared there.

Woolf’s 1925 novel *Mrs. Dalloway* is well-known for its interesting depiction of time. Unlike *To the Lighthouse*, the events that occur in *Mrs. Dalloway* take place all within a single day’s time. An important distinction between the two works that must be mentioned is that *Mrs. Dalloway* does not jump years into the future at the end of the novel as *To the Lighthouse* does. This distinction is important because it highlights a difference in the technique Woolf uses to depict time. Instead of having the novel span across a decade, Woolf chooses to have the novel take place over one day, which introduces a new perspective in which readers can view the relationship between time-

space-emotion. In *To the Lighthouse*, readers experience a summer day with the Ramsay's and their guests and are then taken ten years into the future. By structuring her novel in this way, Woolf is allowing readers to experience events with characters in real time before they become memories, which deepens their understanding of the feelings characters associate with the memories later on. Alternatively, *Mrs. Dalloway* only presents readers with memories of the past and the emotions that come with them. Readers never get a glimpse into Clarissa's mind while she's at Bourton, they only experience her thoughts of Bourton in the present day. Both of these experimental portrayals of time manage to capture the relationship between time-space-emotion, just from different viewpoints.

Woolf makes use of different narrative techniques to experiment with her presentation of time, attempting to capture life as it really is. *Mrs. Dalloway* shifts between characters' consciousness in a way that can be disorienting at first. James Harker points to the author's presentation of consciousness, stating that "For Woolf, the modern literary experience derives from the nature of the faculties of perception, the tenuous points of connection between the inner and outer worlds" (2). Harker's point here aligns with what Woolf suggests in "Modern Fiction," but what is unique about Woolf, I argue, is the emotion she evokes from her characters through the feeling of being "too late." Woolf, as Harker points out, connects the inner and outer worlds by shifting continuously between inner thoughts and words spoken out loud. By making the decision to structure her novel in this way, Woolf is able to more accurately depict everyday life. Life is not strictly made up of words spoken, it is also filled with thoughts and emotions that are not voiced or shown. The only way one can know of these hidden thoughts or emotions is by



being in one's head. Therefore, to accurately illustrate life and how consciousness functions within it, Woolf provides both the inner and outer to her readers. Not only do readers have the opportunity to experience what goes on inside the head of a character, they also gain the descriptions of the world inside the novel.

The omniscient narrative point of view Woolf establishes moves through various characters' consciousness across London throughout the day, allowing readers the opportunity to gather a more well-rounded understanding of the characters. Because readers experience both the characters' outward interactions and inner emotions and thoughts, they are able to better understand the relationships presented in the novel. For example, if Woolf chose to show only Clarissa's thoughts, readers would not know how Peter truly feels about his past with Clarissa. Had Woolf chosen to include only one character's consciousness, *Mrs. Dalloway* would be an altogether different novel. Woolf's narrative technique gives readers the chance to experience both the outer and inner worlds of each character, which, in turn, helps one to better understand both how the characters themselves are feeling and how they feel about others. Having insight into the minds of characters and having the opportunity to experience their emotions regarding another adds an additional layer of understanding for readers. Although one cannot read minds or teleport outside of the world of literature, Woolf's narrative technique makes way for an accurate representation of the emotions and conversations one encounters as well as how memories last and impact one's life.

Where *Mrs. Dalloway* takes place in a single day, and *To the Lighthouse* extends over a decade, *Orlando* spans across three centuries, giving readers an opportunity to

observe the growth of Orlando's character as she moves through her life. Much like she did with the characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf's adds an emotional layer to Orlando's life to show how time, space, and emotion are intertwined. In the beginning of the novel, Orlando is a young nobleman who had much to learn about life, but, by the end of the novel, is a modern, twentieth century woman. Over the span of three centuries, readers follow Orlando through each major life lesson and the self-reflection that followed. Woolf allows readers to become well-acquainted with Orlando at each stage in her life, which allows them to take notice of how Orlando changes over time. With her transition from English nobleman to a modern English woman, time-space-emotion is ever present in the novel as she reflects on her life.

Throughout the novel, Woolf places people in Orlando's life that serve to teach her a lesson. In the beginning of the novel, when Orlando is still a young man, her relationship with Sasha serves as the first of many lessons she learns. Her romance with Sasha, and the pain that came from its ending, helped Orlando evolve into the person she is by the end of the text. Although Orlando felt heartbroken at the time, she overcame her pain and moved on. She remembers the situation with Sasha and uses that experience to help guide her in future decisions. Orlando continues this trend throughout her relationships with other characters as the novel progresses. Her emotions guide her to make decisions that she feels will keep her from experiencing pain as she once did. This characteristic of Orlando is found to be the case for people outside of the novel as well. Learning from mistakes is all that can be done once the mistake has been made, and it is too late to go back and choose another course of action.

Each time Orlando moves through another phase of life, she learns more about herself and the world around her, just as everyone does as they age. Her time spent living abroad taught her much about other cultures and how they view life. Through her travels, Orlando learns to think critically about her life. Woolf highlights the significance of Orlando's time with the gypsies when Orlando is reflecting on a conversation she had with Rustum in which he asks, "What is your antiquity and your race, and your possessions compared with this? What do you need with four hundred bedrooms and silver lids on all the dishes, and housemaids dusting? (326). Rustum's questions stuck with her because, in the past, she never stopped to think of why she needed such a large estate with so many servants. Looking back, Orlando realizes she did not need those things, but at the time, she deemed them a necessity. It was a necessity in her mind to continue to maintain the estate and the status that came with it. When thinking of her conversation with Rustum, she is able to reflect on how her priorities have shifted as she has grown older. As Orlando thinks back on her life, she realizes that the version of herself she was in the past is not who she is now. She mentally and physically evolves throughout the novel, and in the end, when she is able to look back at all the events of her life, she is nostalgic for what once was. It is not that she wishes to turn back time to relive these moments, she simply embraces the chance to reflect on her growth over the last three centuries. Much like how Clarissa reflects on her life in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Orlando recalls what she was like when she was young and compares it to where she is now. It is too late for her to change who she was or what she did in the past. Now all she can do is embrace what she has learned and how she has changed over the years.

Virginia Woolf's modernism blends time, space, and emotion to break free from old forms to more accurately depict real life. To do this, she experiments with her narrative technique, as evidenced by the significant differences found between *To the Lighthouse*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *Orlando*. Although each novel is different in its presentation of time, one aspect stays the same. Readers are given the chance to better understand the characters through Woolf's use of stream of consciousness. Sian White states that "Woolf's narrative discourse. . . offers a more complex, multilayered and far more intimate experience that includes character interiority while still reducing the telling voice of the narrator" (108). Because of her experimental depictions of time and consciousness, Woolf's readers gain a unique experience that would be impossible to foster through a different narrative technique. The ability for readers to move from character to character in real-time helps establish this intimate experience. Instead of crafting a novel that makes no attempt to mimic the complex relationships that exist between time, space, memory, and emotions, Woolf takes the opportunity to move toward a narrative technique that offers some semblance of human consciousness and how it functions in our day-to-day lives.

Woolf's works illustrate the emotions people endure and how those emotions influence thoughts, both their own and other people's. Woolf is able to achieve what she deems a necessity for modern fiction, which is to depict life as it really is. In *Orlando* Woolf states that "Memory is the seamstress, and a capricious one at that. Memory runs her needle in and out, up and down, hither and thither. We know not what's next, or what follows after" (78). The language Woolf uses here points out that memory is complex. Humans are not magic, they are unable to predict the future. All one can be certain of is

the memories they have of times passed. Memories can be forgotten, and then they are gone forever, leaving one “too late” to revive them. The addition of “too lateness” Woolf adds to her novels offers another layer of emotion to the stories, one many readers can identify with.

## NOTE

1. See Henda Ammar-Guirat's "Impersonality Theory as Spatial Imagination in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*," Eleonora Federici and Marilena Paralati's "Introduction: Body and Chronotope" in *The Body Metaphor: Cultural Images, Literary Perceptions, Linguistic Representations*, Graham Fraser's "The Fall of the House of Ramsay: Virginia Woolf's Ahuman Aesthetics of Ruin," and Sian White's "The Dramatic Modern Novel: Mimesis and The Poetics of Tragedy in *Mrs. Dalloway*."

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Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. Harcourt, 2002.

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Woolf, Virginia. *To the Lighthouse*. Mariner Books, 1989.



## POTENTIAL JOURNAL SUBMISSIONS

1. *Twentieth-Century Literature* is a literary journal where “‘Her Feeling Had Come Too Late’: Emotion and Time in Virginia Woolf’s Modernism” might conceivably be published as it is a text that includes a variety of works that explore the literary cultures of the 20th century.
2. *Woolf Studies Annual* is another literary journal that might publish this article. This journal publishes new scholarship that examines Woolf’s texts in new, substantial ways.
3. *Journal of Modern Literature* would be another good fit for “‘Her Feeling Had Come Too Late’: Emotion and Time in Virginia Woolf’s Modernism” because it accepts scholarship that explores works published after 1900.

## Potential Conferences

1. The 30th Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf hosted by the University of South Dakota is a potential fit for presenting “‘Her Feeling Had Come Too Late’: Emotion and Time in Virginia Woolf’s Modernism” as it asks presenters to explore the topic of profession and performance. This conference welcomes various types of presenters.
2. The 49th Louisville Conference On Literature and Culture Since 1900 is another potential conference where this article could be presented. This conference focuses on scholarship on works published during the 20th century and typically has a mix of both students and established scholars presenting.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ammar-Guirat, Henda. "Impersonality Theory as Spatial Imagination in Virginia

Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*." *Literary Imagination*, vol. 22, no. 1, March 2020,

Pages 42–57, <https://doi.org/10.1093/litimag/imz064>. Accessed 1 October 2020.

Henda Ammar-Guirat's article analyzes Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* through the lens of its spatial form. Ammar-Guirat states that "*To the Lighthouse* is informed by the desire for movement" and that "[t]his desire for movement is engendered by the need to espouse life in the face of death and finality and to find steadiness and continuity in the face of discontinuity and loss" (43). The author's focus on death and the imprint left on spaces closely aligns with some of the ideas presented in Gina Wisker's "Places, People and Time Passing: Virginia Woolf's Haunted Houses."

Ammar-Guirat begins her article by stating that "a focus on the temporal form of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* entails a reading of its narrative structure in terms of break and fissure rather than continuity or unity," which she further explains by describing how *To the Lighthouse*'s spatial form "ensures its unity through correspondence between the elements of its design and its subject matter, one that suggests that the novel is not only the literary equivalent or rendering of the impersonality theory and of the Woolfan conception of reality but also their very enactment through complex spatial figurations (42). As the article progresses, Ammar-Guirat makes insightful points regarding the scenes in *To the Lighthouse*, such as the claim that "the novel's concern with space is a concern with life and its fluctuations" (52). This focus on "life and its fluctuations" plays

into my thesis topic of being “too late” because it closely examines the idea of being reminiscent of times passed.

Ammar-Guirat’s article will be useful for me to reference in my thesis because of her analysis of specific sections of *To the Lighthouse* as well as her examination of the novel’s spatial form. Ammar-Guirat gives specific examples from *To the Lighthouse* where she believes Mrs. Ramsay, Mr. Ramsay, Lily Briscoe, James, and Cam to “move from death to life” (43). In short, the author suggests that by the end of *To the Lighthouse* each of the aforementioned characters is “reconciled” (43). Because the ending of *To the Lighthouse* is a key focus of my thesis, I plan to discuss and add to what Ammar-Guirat says in her article. For example, when writing about the long-awaited trip to the lighthouse, Ammar-Guirat states that “[t]hrough fulfilling the desire to visit the lighthouse, Part III provides continuity and growth as the characters become more mature, come to terms with the past, and get reconciled” (44). Although I believe this statement to be true, I would like to add that this delayed visit to the lighthouse evokes a feeling of being “too late.” Cam and James do not have the same desire they once had to visit the lighthouse. Their father did not take them to the lighthouse when they were children, which disappointed them immensely. This disappointment is not rectified by Mr. Ramsay’s choice to take them to the lighthouse so many years later.

Bemong, Nele, et al. *Bakhtin’s Theory of the Literary Chronotope: Reflections, Applications, Perspectives*. Academia Press, 2010.

In *Bakhtin's Theory of the Literary Chronotope: Reflections, Applications, Perspectives*, Nele Bemong and Pieter Borghart coauthor the introductory chapter which recapitulates Bakhtin's "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics" and explains some of the differing viewpoints of Bakhtinian scholars. This chapter highlights that "a definitive definition of [chronotope] is never offered," and that the idea is only conveyed through a compilation of examples (5). Bemong and Borghart also analyze the influence Albert Einstein and Emmanuel Kant had on Bakhtin's ideas, stating that "...Kant undertook a scientifically based attempt to gain *insight into the universal system* of human perception through time and space, Bakhtin was looking for *historical evidence* of such perceptual activity as manifested in literary text..." (4).

After beginning with an overview of Bakhtin's Chronotope, Bemong and Borghart's chapter begins identifying specific scholars and their understanding of how Chronotope is presented in texts. After examining these scholars, the authors state that "the interaction between the concrete chronotropic units of a narrative eventually leaves the reader with an overarching impression, which we call *major or dominant chronotopes*" (7). The authors continue on to say that "not every dominant chronotope will generate a particular literary genre; there are dominant chronotopes that have not--yet--become generics" (7). To conclude, Bemong and Borghart begin the "applications" section of their chapter, stating that "Bakhtin's assessment of narrative genres, moreover, contributes to a theoretical tradition that underscores the cognitive functionality of literary genres; the belief, that is,

that fixed poetic and narrative structures should be understood as means for storing and conveying forms of human experience and knowledge” (8).

This chapter, as well as other portions of the book, will prove beneficial as I read through Bakhtin’s original work surrounding chronotope. Not only does this chapter mention Bakhtinian scholars that will be helpful for me to research, but it also helps explain some of Bakhtin’s ideas and how they came to be formed. Because Bakhtin’s chronotope is the basis of my thesis topic, having this source to reference will help me further familiarize myself with the concept of chronotope.

Cui, Yaxiao. “Adjacency Pairs and Interactive Consciousness in Virginia Woolf’s Novels.” *Style*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2016, pp. 203–222. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/style.50.2.0203](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/style.50.2.0203). Accessed 25 Oct. 2020.

In “Adjacency Pairs and Interactive Consciousness in Virginia Woolf’s Novels,” Yaxiao Cui provides examples from *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* to showcase how adjacency pairs work within the novels. Cui believes that examining the way characters communicate through adjacency pairs in Woolf’s novels “is an effective linguistic mechanism for conveying the interactive quality of minds” (206). To conclude her article, Cui states that “...Woolf keenly explores the possibility of obtaining intimate knowledge of another mind in her experimental handling of consciousness presentation” (219).

After introducing readers to adjacency pairs and showing the gap in literature regarding them, Cui begins by explaining that she “endeavors to answer this call

for the linguistic study of social minds through an investigation of consciousness presentation in Virginia Woolf's novels" (204). To do so, Cui examines *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. The specific examples given are Elizabeth and Miss Kilman's conversation while having tea together in *Mrs. Dalloway* and Lily Briscoe and Mr. Ramsay's conversation when he wishes her to show him sympathy when they return to the holiday home in *To the Lighthouse*. These examples and Cui's analysis of them shows that "Woolf's employment of viewpoint shifts does not mechanically juxtapose different characters' minds; rather, the format of adjacency pairs effectively places different consciousnesses in interaction" (216). Finally, Cui argues that "the figural consciousness is presented in free indirect style, the narrative mode that conveys a great degree of immediacy, and often slips into the most direct mode--the interior monologue" (218).

Cui's article examines the exact exchange from *To the Lighthouse* that inspired my thesis topic, the scene where Lily Briscoe and Mr. Ramsay are having a conversation and Lily does not submit to Mr. Ramsay's unspoken request for sympathy. Cui's analysis of this exchange offers another perspective for me to keep in mind as I write about this scene and its relevance to Bakhtin's Chronotope and the feeling of being "too late." Cui notes that Lily is aware she is not giving Mr. Ramsay his "preferred response," but she chooses to respond anyway (214). By taking adjacency pairs and the expectations of how conversations work, I can more deeply analyze this scene between Mr. Ramsay and Lily as well as how characters interact in both *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Orlando* as well.

Edmondson, Annalee. "Narrativizing Characters in *Mrs. Dalloway*." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2012, pp. 17–36. *JSTOR*,

[www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/jmodelite.36.1.17](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/jmodelite.36.1.17). Accessed 25 Oct. 2020.

Annalee Edmondson's article "Narrativizing Character in *Mrs. Dalloway*" focuses on *Mrs. Dalloway* and Woolf's narrativization of characters. Edmondson's argument is that "though these characters *are* connected by 'the coincidences of public life,' ... what marks them as so highly intersubjective are the ways... their consciousnesses register the other consciousnesses they encounter" (19).

Edmondson seeks to highlight the importance of the fact that readers do not gain a "complete knowledge of [Woolf's] character[s]' interiority," instead, they must rely on the narrativization of characters, such as Clarissa, by other characters in the novel, like Peter Walsh (20).

To support her claim, Edmondson provides examples from Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, and E.M. Forster's *Aspects of the Novel*. The inclusion of Forster's work is used by Edmondson to explain to the reader that "perfect knowledge is an illusion" (20). She then proceeds to explain Woolf's "tunnelling process," which is a term coined by Woolf to showcase that she "dig[s] out beautiful caves behind [her] characters" to develop "humanity, humour, [and] depth" in her works (22). Edmondson proceeds by stating that the reason for Woolf's tunnelling process "is to foreground the deeply intersubjective nature of her characters' minds--the ways in which they are continually interpreting each others' behaviors and casually attributing thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and desires to each other" (22). Finally, to end her article, Edmondson

suggests that “[t]hi, then, is the way we are to narrativize Mrs. Dalloway, the same way she narrativizes Septimus meeting his doctors--by guessing what she might think and feel, even by imagining what she might have said" (28).

Edmondson’s article offers an in-depth analysis of the way in which readers do not receive full knowledge of Woolf’s characters and how we must attribute emotions and thoughts to characters based on the limited knowledge we have of them. This article will work well to support my thesis because of the way the author describes consciousness. I plan to use quotations from the most relevant parts of this article and add on to what Edmondson is saying. I will agree with Edmondson that “...what marks [Woolf’s characters] as so highly intersubjective are the ways... their consciousnesses register the other consciousnesses they encounter,” and add that this idea plays into my thesis topic of being “too late” (19). For example, Lily Briscoe does not intend to be mean or rude to Mr. Ramsay when he seeks comfort from her in *To the Lighthouse*, and she later feels sorry for how she acted because she thinks of the pain he must be going through after the death of his wife.

Federici, Eleonora, and Marilena Parlati. “Introduction: Body and Chronotope.” *The Body Metaphor: Cultural Images, Literary Perceptions, Linguistic Representations*, Morlacchi Editore UP, 2018, pp. 141–152.

Eleonora Federici and Marilena Parlati’s introduction in *The Body Metaphor: Cultural Images, Literary Perceptions, Linguistic Representations* is much like Nele Bemong’s *Bakhtin’s Theory of the Literary Chronotope: Reflections*,



*Applications, Perspectives* in that it begins with an overview of what Chronotope means and how the idea came about. Where Federici and Parlati differ from Bemong is that after this overview of Chronotope, the authors move into their argument, which is that "...author[s] can utilize a precise modality to represent the relationship between narrative space and time (the chronotope) in the novel, relatively to the category of the characters' gender (genderization of the chronotope)" (Federici and Parlati 150).

After introducing readers to Chronotope and genderization, Federici and Parlati make use of quotations from various texts such as Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris*, Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, and Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* to demonstrate their argument. The authors state that through their essay, "[they] want to demonstrate how the relationship between space and time in modern and contemporary novels is fundamental to the development of the narrative structure" and further this by saying that "[f]rom this perspective, space and time are tools that the author utilizes to give a specific meaning to actions and events in his/her text" (143-144). As the essay progresses, the authors use quotations from the novels listed above as evidence to support that "the genderization of the chronotope is not only finalized to the development of the story--it is not only a textual-rhetorical device--but mirrors the ideological ideas of a historical period including its gender roles" (151). At the end of the essay, the authors note that "the presented spaces are not only made of landscapes and settings but also of individuals whose mind and body act and are represented

through a cultural and ideological filter shaping the characters....according to gender/class differences...” (152).

Federici and Parlati’s essay will work well to support my thesis topic because of the authors’ mention of the idea that actions and events can work as characters in novels as well as their primary focus on gender and Chronotope. I plan to use this essay when noting the significance of the trip to the lighthouse in *To the Lighthouse*, Orlando’s final moments at her estate in *Orlando*, and Clarissa’s party in *Mrs. Dalloway*. All of these events will work as evidence to support the feeling of being “too late,” which is found in Woolf’s works. As for the authors’ primary focus on gender and Chronotope, I plan to cite this source when analyzing Orlando’s character as she moves through time and space before ending the novel at her home.

Fraser, Graham. “The Fall of the House of Ramsay: Virginia Woolf’s A Human Aesthetics of Ruin.” *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2020, pp. 117-141. EBSCOhost, [search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=202019534468&site=ehost-live](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=202019534468&site=ehost-live). Accessed 19 Nov. 2020.

Graham Fraser’s article examines ruin through the lens of time and space in Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* to show that “our perception of things as stable and solid is in fact an illusion, generated and amplified by human desire, fear of loss, and the limited perspective of the human timescale” (118). Fraser primarily analyzes the actual home of the Ramsay’s, beginning by saying that “as

a summer home, the house is already defined by the ebb and flow of the seasons-- by time” (118). Woolf’s crafting of the Ramsay’s summer home, Fraser suggests, “explores a duality inherent in ruin: while the physical site of ruin is spatial, the decay of the house is the signature of the passage of time” (119).

After giving a few examples of how ruin is shown through the Ramsay’s summer home, Fraser states that “ruins as *ruin* gestures towards the fluidity, both forwards and backwards, of time, a ‘double exposure to the past and the present’” (119).

Fraser also notes that “the passage of time may erode off the cliff, collapse the house, bring death to Mrs. Ramsay and some of her children, but this ‘destruction’ or defeat only from the human perspective that wants to preserve these things,” which is evident through characters after “Time Passes” (121). Through Fraser’s article, it is evident that “Woolf’s writing of the ruin leads us towards a different understanding of the change unfolding before us” (124). Throughout the article, Fraser offers specific examples of characters and their reaction to change, such as Mrs. Ramsay, Lily Briscoe, Mr. Ramsay, and some of the Ramsay children. Near the end, Fraser makes the observation that “Lily’s brushstroke closes the book, but what ‘remains’ most powerfully... is not only the awakened awareness of how time passes through our lives and our world, bringing with it inevitable changes and loss, but also the afterimage of Woolf’s vision of... this world... without us” (135).

Fraser’s article closely resembles my argument that Woolf’s Modernism creates a feeling of being “too late” amongst her characters because it focuses on the idea of ruin and how it relates to the passage of time and space, creating an awareness

that nothing lasts forever. Where Fraser focuses primarily on the Ramsay's summer home and what it represents, I am more so examining the characters' perception of time and their reminiscent memories. However, Fraser's article will help support many of my points surrounding time and space presented in Woolf's novels.

Greer, Erin. "A Many-Sided Substance': The Philosophy of Conversation in Woolf, Russell, and Kant." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2017, pp. 1-17. EBSCOhost, [search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2017381790&site=ehost-live](https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2017381790&site=ehost-live). Accessed 19 Nov. 2020.

Erin Greer's article "'A Many-Sided Substance': The Philosophy of Conversation in Woolf, Russell, and Kant" explores the conversations found in Woolf's works and how Immanuel Kant and Bertrand Russell's "influences are subtly present throughout the text[s]" (3). Greer notes that her "argument is not that Woolf intentionally crafts a philosophy of conversation from her interpretations of Kant and Russell, but that such a philosophy... emerges when we reconstruct a conversation among three writers interested in art's relation to 'subject and object and the nature of reality'" (4). Greer's article looks at various works by Woolf and the conversations presented in them to examine how they function to showcase the inner and outer world of Woolf's characters.

Greer begins by stating that "in Woolf's work, silence is also 'in the middle' of the most verbal, everyday, and "English" art of conversation," which sets the tone

for the rest of her article (2). She notes that “the moments of greatest connection between Woolf’s characters are frequently moments when verbal conversation occurs alongside a different sort of ‘conversation,’” one that “signifie[s] a process of ‘turning with’ others toward and through shared experiences (2-3). She, then, introduces readers to both Kant and Russell and how Woolf’s conversations seem to coincide with their philosophies. Greer primarily examines *The Waves*, but she includes examples from both *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, specifically the scene in *To the Lighthouse* where Lily Briscoe reflects on her relationship with the late Mrs. Ramsay. Greer says that “as far as Lily is concerned, Mrs. Ramsay’s guidance indeed gave the moment of dinner table conversation the qualified permanence possible in the “sphere” of memory” (5). Toward the end of her article, Greer focuses on this idea of dinner table conversations and ends by stating that “aesthetic work is conversational when it seeks not to multiply the perspective of one’s neighbor, not to popularize or impose a singular perspective, but to contribute sides to the ‘one thing seen by many eyes simultaneously’” (15).

Greer’s article will work well to help support and inform my argument that Woolf’s works offer readers an inside look at her characters and their reminiscent thoughts about the past. Lily Briscoe reflects on her time with the Ramsay family before the death of Mrs. Ramsay and, although she is in the present, seems to mostly be concerned with the past. This is evident through her conversations later in the novel with Mr. Ramsay, and this type of reminiscent thoughts can be seen in both *Mrs. Dalloway* and *Orlando*. These thoughts, along with the conversations Greer examines, are what allow readers a “narrative intimacy,” which is discussed

in Siân White’s article “The Dramatic Modern Novel: Mimesis and The Poetics of Tragedy in *Mrs. Dalloway*.”

Grisot, Giulia, et al. “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? Readers’ Responses to Experimental Techniques of Speech, Thought and Consciousness Presentation in Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs Dalloway*.” *Language and Literature*, vol. 29, no. 2, May 2020, pp. 103–123, doi:10.1177/0963947020924202. Accessed 1 October 2020.

Giulia Grisot, Kathy Conklin, and Violeta Sotirova’s article addresses the gap in literature regarding “the investigation of difficulty in narrative texts,” which the authors state is “almost non-existent” (104). To bridge this gap in literature, the authors conducted an experiment to determine which aspects of Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* are difficult for readers to navigate through while reading. To execute this study, Grisot, Conklin, and Sotirova compiled a number of excerpts from both *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* and asked participants, who varied in age, educational background, and experience with Modernist literature, to read the excerpts, evaluate the reading, and answer questions. The findings from the study achieved its goal, which was to “validate... the theoretical assumptions of difficulty concerning the two novels and to provide insight into further exploration of difficulty within narrative texts” (104).

To begin, the authors introduce the need for the study they conducted and shift into describing how “Modernist narratives feature a departure from previous

literary traditions, limiting the role of the narrator and breaking the spatial and temporal constraints of the traditional plot in an attempt to convey the complex dynamics of real life experiences” (105). The authors then begin discussing Woolf specifically, saying that “techniques of *free indirect style*, along with IM and FDS, are prominent in both *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, which focus almost entirely on the representation of the characters’ vices and consciousnesses” (106). Before describing the results of the study, the authors note that “Woolf’s way of handling these techniques often make it difficult to understand whose voice and/or consciousness is represented, and to understand what act is being portrayed, as well as to understand where the boundaries between the different techniques are located in the text” (106). The results of the study confirmed the authors’ thoughts of “whether perceived difficulties in Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs. Dalloway* are caused by her use of speech, thought and consciousness presentation techniques” (118).

Grisot, Conklin, and Sotirova’s article will work well to support my thesis topic because of the authors’ attention to Modernist narratives and the “breaking [of] spatial and temporal constraints of the traditional plot in an attempt to convey the complex dynamics of real life experiences” (104-105). Not only does this article directly reference two out of the three novels I am examining in my thesis, but it focuses on the difficulty readers may have while reading Woolf’s novels due to her use of a non-linear narrative technique. This article will help support my claim that Woolf’s Modernism is both difficult and unique because of her ability to include an emotional element to time-space.

Harker, James. "Misperceiving Virginia Woolf." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2011, pp. 1–21. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/jmodelite.34.2.1](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/jmodelite.34.2.1). Accessed 17 Nov. 2020.

James Harker's article "Misperceiving Virginia Woolf" introduces readers to some of the characteristics of Virginia Woolf's Modernism, beginning with part of "what is distinctive about Woolf's narrative fiction," which Harker states is that "characters are constantly observing and thinking as they navigate the world, whether that means sitting alone in a room contemplating an ordinary object, taking a walk, going to a party or looking out the window" (2). Once he highlights more characteristics of Woolf's Modernism, Harker examines many of Woolf's works, such as "Modern Fiction," "Character in Fiction," *To the Lighthouse*, *The Waves*, and many others. Harker goes through each of these works to showcase the way in which Woolf presents characters and their perception of both the inner and outer world.

To begin, Harker notes that "one of the most curious and pervasive features of Woolf's oeuvre is that characters are so frequently wrong in their perceptions," which he later adds to by saying that "Woolf's fiction and essays show a rhetorical reliance on misperception--it is a central theme in her fiction, and it is also central to her conceptions of the work of author and reader" (2). Once Harker begins discussing *To the Lighthouse*, he defines "change blindness," which he states "suggests that our perception of continuity is often erroneous" (12). This term, change blindness, helps analyze Lily Briscoe and Mrs. Ramsay's character



as well as “contributes to the rhetoric of misperception in Woolf’s conceptions of mind and truth” (12).

The sections of Harker’s article that will prove to be beneficial for my thesis are the introduction and the section covering *To the Lighthouse*. The introduction gives me a better understanding of Woolf’s Modernism and what Harker, as well as other literary critics, have to say about her portrayal of the “inward” and “outer” self. The section that covers *To the Lighthouse* gives specific examples of Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe’s misperceptions in the novel, but the one most relevant to my topic is the example given of Lily Briscoe returning to the Ramsay’s summer home after the death of Mrs. Ramsay. Harker states that Lily Briscoe’s “vision” to paint Mrs. Ramsay is “a conceptual variation on the phenomenon of change blindness” (18). I agree with the point Harker makes here, and I wish to add how these feelings Lily encounters once she returns to the Ramsay’s summer home creates a reminiscent feeling of being “too late.”

Heine, Stefanie. “Forces of Unworking in Virginia Woolf’s ‘Time Passes.’” *Textual Cultures*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2019, pp. 120–136. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/26662807](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26662807). Accessed 25 Oct. 2020.

In Stefanie Heine’s article “Forces of Unworking in Virginia Woolf’s ‘Time Passes’” she discusses the significance of the “Time Passes” section in *To the Lighthouse*. This section of Woolf’s work is one that many academics like Heine have studied. Heine’s article “look[s] into what is described as a ‘wordless hint’ towards the temporality of art and how it may remain” (121). To set up her argument, Heine introduces readers to Giorgio Agamben and Maurice Blanchot

who she believes offers a “framework against which Woolf’s writing in *To the Lighthouse* can be read” (124).

In the beginning of her article, Heine states that “... Woolf again and again takes into consideration that art--literature and painting, for example--has the capacity to endure, such assumptions are often severely qualified, sometimes undone: the stone outlasts Shakespeare” (121). This observation is how Heine analyzes Lily Briscoe and her painting in *To the Lighthouse* as well as how she transitions into her focus on the Anthropocene. After introducing readers to the Anthropocene, she says that “‘Time Passes’ opens by presenting the diminishing voices of the characters in the holiday house hand in hand with a decrease in daylight” which she believes “introduces a post-apocalyptic setting” (123). Heine notes that “[d]espite its apocalyptic implications, the ‘downpouring of immense darkness’ in ‘Time Passes’ does not denote an endpoint; rather, other agencies subtly awaken with the disappearance of the humans” (125). As the article progresses, Heine begins analyzing Woolf’s writing and editing process when composing “Time Passes,” stating that “Woolf’s editing processes echo a dynamics of unworking in a Blanchotian sense” (127). To close, Heine mentions that “[i]t is a moment of utter uncertainty in which everything is simultaneously falling apart and coming together-- a moment that... maintains traces of how the text itself came to be” (134).

Although Heine’s article includes analysis of “Time Passes” and Woolf’s writing and editing process, I plan to reference the portion that focuses on “Time Passes.”

The idea that certain settings in *To the Lighthouse* appear post-apocalyptic works well with my thesis topic of being “too late,” especially Heine’s mention of Lily Briscoe and her painting. Heine also spends time analyzing the Ramsay’s holiday home and how it comes back to life in a sense. I will address this particular section of Heine’s article to support that, although the Ramsay’s holiday home was able to be repaired, it is not the same as it once was. The Ramsays are now “too late” to repair the home to its previous state.

White, Siân. “The Dramatic Modern Novel: Mimesis and The Poetics of Tragedy in *Mrs. Dalloway*.” *Woolf Studies Annual*, vol. 24, 2018, pp. 101–134. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/26475576](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26475576). Accessed 16 Nov. 2020.

Siân White’s article “The Dramatic Modern Novel: Mimesis and The Poetics of Tragedy in *Mrs. Dalloway*” examines Woolf’s Modernism in terms of how she had the “ability to produce an intimacy of the narrative moment, with a dramatic effect achieved through formal juxtaposition that is felt by both the citizens of the 1923 story world and the reader of modernist narrative in the reading present” (101). White’s focus on analyzing Woolf’s Modernism works to support his claim that the ending of *Mrs. Dalloway* “offers a paradoxical closing and reopening that reflects an interpretation of modernity in which strangers reach across lines of otherness to forge fleeting but surprising generative connections with one another (104). Whites supports this claim by offering readers an in-depth analysis of *Mrs. Dalloway* through the lens of what he coins “narrative intimacy.”

White’s article begins by introducing readers to Woolf’s understanding of drama in relation to plays versus prose. By doing this, White is able to lead into what

Woolf believed to be the type of drama modern readers would enjoy. White exposes his readers to this information to set the foundation for his claim and define what he calls “narrative intimacy.” Narrative intimacy “converts the isolated, passive reader of the didactic novel into a reader who privately but actively collaborates in the reading experience” (104). While analyzing *Mrs. Dalloway*, White suggests that Woolf, like Aristotle, “prefers a likeness to life over a distancing, telling narrative voice” (105). Woolf’s narrative intimacy allows her narrative discourse to “offer a more complex, multilayered and far more intimate experience that includes character interiority while still reducing the telling voice of the narrator” (108).

For the purpose of my thesis, White’s idea of narrative intimacy will help support my claim that Woolf’s Modernism offers a sentimental and reminiscent feeling of being “too late.” This narrative intimacy gives readers the opportunity to see how each character acts and thinks, giving them insight into both the outer and inner world of Woolf’s fiction. This insight afforded to readers is part of what makes Woolf’s works unique in her portrayal of everyday life through a nonlinear timeline.

Wisker, Gina. “Places, People and Time Passing: Virginia Woolf’s Haunted Houses.”

*HECATE: A Women’s Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2011, pp. 4-26.

*EBSCOhost*,

[search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2016871616&site=ehost-live](http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mzh&AN=2016871616&site=ehost-live). Accessed 1 October 2020.

Gina Wisker's article "Places, People and Time Passing: Virginia Woolf's Haunted Houses" examines Woolf's use of "the supernatural, of hauntings, returns, the importance of belief in a lingering human presence, and the imprinting of the human on places..." (4). This focus on humans and their impact on the people and places they encounter in life is interesting when considering the idea of the supernatural. Wisker's article suggests that Woolf does not make use of the supernatural in the traditional sense but that "her ghosts and hauntings are a version of a continuation of the human" (5).

Wisker begins her article by noting that her essay "considers Woolf's use of the supernatural, of hauntings, returns, the importance of beliefs in a lingering human presence, and the imprinting of the human on places, particularly houses" (4). This focus on Woolf's "hauntings" is further explained when Wisker states that "Woolf's continuing concern [is] with exploring a sense of continuity of existence, the continued presence of the human imprinted on places and others' lives" (5). Wisker looks specifically at *To the Lighthouse* to give examples of how "Woolf's locations are... laced with the traces of those who have lived in those places; argued, loved, grown up, related to others" (5). Wisker suggests that "when looking at how Woolf used spaces and places in her fictions we need to do as she does: move between inner and outer" (6). One of the specific examples Wisker uses from *To the Lighthouse* to support her argument is Mr. Ramsay's life after his wife's death. Wisker notes that "while Woolf is sceptical regarding the mechanisms of supernatural encounter, she knows and writes of the importance of a 'continuum' of existence, sought by Mr. Ramsay who invests in 'what lasts'"

(9). Wisker's focus on the lasting impression of Woolf's characters will work to support the claim of my thesis.

Wisker's article helps support my thesis topic, the idea of being "too late," by exploring Woolf's inclusion of "ghosts" in her novels. For example, while analyzing *To the Lighthouse*, Wisker states that "in [Woolf's] focus on the hauntings of homes, the return of lost loved ones, she works in ways familiar to women writers of the ghost story and supernatural who use these tropes to suggest neglect, oppression, loss and obsession" (6). These suggestions, such as loss and neglect, can be connected to the feeling of being "too late" which is found in *To the Lighthouse*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *Orlando*. Specifically, this article relates well to the moment in *To the Lighthouse* that inspired my thesis topic, which is the moment when Lily Briscoe and Mr. Ramsay are going back and forth about the loss of Mrs. Ramsay. Mrs. Ramsay left an imprint on the Ramsay's vacation home and the lives of her loved ones, which left her children, her husband, and her friend to reminisce about the past when they return to the house.